**The Inventor’s Laboratory Notebook**

**Why should I keep a Laboratory or Inventor’s Notebook?**

A laboratory notebook is a comprehensive documentation of all things that occur in the laboratory such as when an idea occurred, who contributed, how was the idea tested and validated and all the relevant dates. For purposes of determining patentability, laboratory notebooks establish such critical issues and dates as dates of conception and reduction to practice of an idea to an invention. They are considered the primary source of information on invention and discovery by the patent courts.

**Can’t my electronic records and files serve the same purpose?**

Electronic files can be changed, manipulated and as such courts still rely upon the inventor’s primary source of record-keeping, the laboratory or inventor’s notebook.

**What constitutes a laboratory notebook?**

Laboratory notebooks should be permanently bound notebooks, so pages cannot be removed or re-inserted. The pages should be consecutively numbered, don’t leave blank pages. Begin the notebook with your name and date of first use on the inside cover of the notebook. Periodically (e.g. monthly or semi-annual basis depending upon the advances occurring with the work) the laboratory notebook should be reviewed by someone trusted and knowledgeable in your field. After the review, this person should sign and date the notebook indicating what pages they reviewed. This person reviewing the notebook should not be considered a co-inventor to the research. An example is: "Read and understood by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_" (e.g. name, title, date).

Use ink and don’t use white-out to make changes; cross through the error and initial. Do not modifyentries, instead make a new entry with a new date and cross-reference it to the previous entry. If you abbreviate or use specific, non-standard terms, include an explanation.

**What types of information do I record?**

Use the laboratory notebook with chronological entries to record ideas, drawings, important conversations about the concept with others or demonstrations. Record all relevant experiments, who participated, equipment used and date performed.

**How long should I save my notebook and start another notebook?**

Completed notebooks should be stored safely in your office or laboratory such as in a locking file cabinet. Number the next notebook sequentially and again in the inside cover the same notation with your name and date. If your research ends up being patented, the laboratory notebook, as evidence of discovery, should be safely stored for the life of the patent and another seven (7) years.