

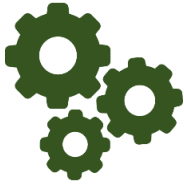


GET INTO... WIPO

World Intellectual Property Organisation

The World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), based in Geneva, is the United Nations agency responsible for copyright and other intellectual property issues. Established in 1967, its official mission is to lead the development of a balanced and effective international intellectual property (IP) system that enables innovation and creativity for the benefit of all.

IFLA has official observer status at WIPO, together with the International Council of Archives (ICA), the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and around 250 other non-governmental organisations. For libraries, WIPO is not only the primary focus of efforts to promote better copyright laws internationally, but also a potential partner in supporting the library field. Additionally, its meetings provide a good opportunity to meet with senior national officials who may otherwise be difficult to engage.



How Does it Work?

WIPO deals with all types of intellectual property: copyright, patents, trademarks, industrial designs, geographical indications and traditional knowledge.

As well as preparing treaties (such as the Marrakesh Treaty for people with print disabilities), WIPO also produces research and guidance, conducts capacity-building programmes, offers advice, and helps to resolve disputes. It has 191 members and is largely funded through fees for filing patents.

Work takes place under the supervision of committees of national representatives. For copyright, the Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights (SCCR) is the most relevant, although copyright can also be discussed in meetings focused on development, indigenous knowledge, and enforcement.

SCCR meets twice a year for a week at a time, usually in May and November. Member States are sometimes represented by an official from their capital, sometimes by a diplomat based in Geneva, or a mixture of the two. Not all Member States regularly attend, although all major countries are usually there.

Member states coordinate within regional groups: Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Group B (industrialized countries), Asia-Oceania, Central Asia (CACEEC), and Central Europe and the Baltic States (CEBS). China is its own group. Often, only the group 'coordinator' speaks on behalf of the group as a whole.

NGOs, such as IFLA, can also have a place in the room, and are generally invited to speak, especially on areas where they have expertise.

Currently, there are two main documents concerning libraries and archives in front of the Committee: a [summary](#) of the key issues under discussion, intended to promote further debate; and a [draft action plan](#) aimed at focusing the Secretariat's work on libraries and archives.

How Does Engaging in WIPO Help?

WIPO, as a UN agency, is the main forum for adopting global legal instruments on the topic of copyright. The WIPO Copyright Treaty of 1996, and the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled are two examples.



Both instruments have led to accelerations in national reform programmes and are the only sure means of responding to

concerns about cross-border application of exceptions to copyright. In the case of limitations and exceptions for libraries, there are still 28 countries with no provisions at all.

Libraries' presence on the agenda at SCCR provides a very visible platform from which to argue to governments the case for effective exceptions and limitations to copyright in all countries. It is also the only venue capable of addressing the challenge of how to share information and collaborate across borders.

However, WIPO also offers many other opportunities, including training programmes, regional workshops, guidelines, best practices and research. The Crews studies on limitations and exceptions for libraries and archives ([2008](#), [2015](#), [2017](#)) – originally commissioned at the urging of IFLA - are a good example, providing an authoritative survey of copyright laws worldwide affecting libraries.

Overall, being present at WIPO allows IFLA to educate decision-makers about the needs of libraries when establishing copyright policies, to push for stronger laws and guidance internationally, and to advocate for WIPO-supported capacity building. IFLA's presence also serves as a critical counter-weight to the voices of those who oppose change or promote the weakening of exceptions and limitations. To guarantee our continuing impact effect, more library voices are needed, in particular at a national level, in order to ensure maximum support in Geneva for better policies for libraries.



Why Should You Get Involved?

While it may not be possible to bring lots of people to Geneva, the success of IFLA's work there depends strongly on engagement at the national level. An official who knows that the national library community is mobilised and supportive of progress is more likely to work with IFLA. It is also true that in many cases, organisations that would prefer to restrict or remove exceptions to copyright are already lobbying. It is vital to balance this message.

As well as helping IFLA, your engagement can also advance your own objectives, providing a valuable rationale for being in touch with the national copyright office on a regular basis. You can ask the IFLA team to talk with people from your government attending SCCR. WIPO events in your country can provide a useful opportunity to communicate with ministers and experts.

What Can You Do?

Regularly engage on copyright issues nationally, through meetings with officials, participation in consultation meetings, and mobilising your colleagues.

For WIPO, the below offer some suggestions of how to get involved:

- Learn more by [watching our webinar](#) and **following IFLA on [social media](#)**. We'll be using the hashtag **#Copyright4Libraries** during SCCR.
- Apply to join the **IFLA CLM [Network](#)**, a world-wide group of experts on copyright and libraries. You can share news on copyright reforms in your country, as well as receiving updates on our work with SCCR, and find many allies ready to help you in your own advocacy work!
- **Identify your national representatives to SCCR**. Every UN member state is represented at WIPO, although not all attend. If you can't find out from your copyright office, ask IFLA who went to the previous meeting (if anyone).
- **Write to the government** ahead of SCCR meetings, highlighting what libraries are doing and what's at stake. Make sure they have heard about the concerns of the library sector.
- **Let IFLA know if there are any issues to raise with your representatives in Geneva**. It may be difficult to contact senior officials at home, but within WIPO it can be easy. IFLA is happy to make points for you during SCCR sessions in Geneva.
- **Become an Observer at WIPO**. A number of library associations have official observer status. This is useful for IFLA, as it enables us to make more interventions in meetings, and to ensure that governments hear multiple, informed voices. To become an observer, you should submit [this form](#).
- **Let IFLA know what you've done!** Share your stories [with us](#).