

WIPO STANDING COMMITTEE ON COPYRIGHT AND RELATED RIGHTS

29th Session: Geneva, 8- 12 December 2014

Agenda item 6: Limitations and exceptions for libraries and archives

I am speaking on behalf of Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL) that works with libraries in more than 60 developing and transition economy countries. My comment relates to ‘Support for Research and Human Development’ in Objectives and Principles in document SCCR/26/8 / Topic 2 in SCCR/26/3.

I work in a university library in Armenia, a country at the crossroads of Western Asia and Eastern Europe. Copyright is important to libraries in Armenia. The law has been under review for over two years, and we are working hard to ensure that library voices are heard during the process. But copyright is new to many of our librarians, and we have to first explain the concept before we can explain the rules. And it’s sometimes hard to explain the rules when copyright is often viewed as a frustration that prevents information from being used.

Our lecturers cannot understand why we were refused permission to place a copy of an expensive textbook, of which the library has already purchased 15 printed copies, in the university's Virtual Learning Environment i.e. a secure electronic reserve of materials available to a group of registered students and faculty members attending a course. At the same time there is no electronic version available from the publishers and the purchase price of the book that is equivalent to the monthly rent of a studio flat in Yerevan, is out of the question for students.

I will highlight a copyright restriction that I encounter on a regular basis relating to document delivery (requests by students and teachers for specialist material not available in our library) when requests sent through our international document supply system to other libraries are often cancelled. For example, just last week a request for two short book chapters for a researcher on improving coursework presentation through drama was denied. Yet the book, published in 1987, is out of print and is not available in any library in Armenia. In fact the closest library that has the book is more than 1,000km away. How can I explain that copyright supports education and research? How does this encourage respect for copyright?

Testimonies from libraries at SCCR/27 showed that cross-border document supply is a critical supplement to library information services everywhere. Yet the chart in the updated Crews study shows that only 10% of copyright laws permit document supply.

Dear delegates, libraries must be able to make reasonable copies for reasonable purposes. We need a global exception so that libraries in Armenia and other countries can send and receive content, as I have described, in support of education and learning. Then our librarians can better explain the concept of copyright, and our users will better understand, and respect, the rules.

Thank you for your attention.