

IFRRO GENERAL PAPERS

III

RROs and IFRRO

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1 What are RROs?

Reproduction Rights Organisations (RROs) started operating in the 1970s in response to the need to license wide-scale photocopy access to printed works. RROs license reproduction of copyright-protected material whenever it is impractical for rightholders to act individually. RROs derive their authority from national legislation and mandates from rightholders. Each year, RROs license hundreds of thousands of users to copy from millions of titles published throughout the world.

RRO licences typically grant authorisations to make a limited number of copies of a portion of a publication for internal use. Some RROs, such as the Copyright Licensing Agency (CLA) in the United Kingdom, are specialist organizations which only deal with reprographic and related reproduction rights. Others are part of literary rights societies, such as VG WORT in Germany and Literar-Mechana in Austria, which deal with literary rights in general. A third type of RRO, such as KOPIOSTO in Finland, are "coalitions" which administer a variety of rights on behalf of different groups of rightholders.

The first RRO to be established was BONUS in Sweden, which began licensing in 1973. Today, IFRRO has 30 member RROs in 25 countries in all continents. Many RROs are in the process of formation.

2 IFRRO - the international link

The International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organisations (IFRRO) links together all RROs as well as national and international associations of rightholders.

According to its [Statutes](#), IFRRO facilitates and supports the following activities:

(A)

Any joint attempt by authors and publishers in any nation in creating and developing Reproduction Rights Organisations (RROs).

IFRRO has an extensive regional development programme which is coordinated through regional committees: Europe; Asia/Pacific; Latin America and the Caribbean; Africa and the Middle East. Each committee adopts a focused approach to its region, concentrating on countries where the prospects for operational RROs appear to be best, based on thorough analysis of the situation in each country.

(B)

Development of formal agreements and informal relationships between, among and on behalf of its members.

(C)

Development of effective methods for conveyance of rights and fees between and among rightholders and users, consistent with the principle of national treatment.

In order to collect royalties and convey authorisations internationally, RROs enter into reciprocal agreements with one another. These agreements provide for the exchange of licensing authority (as required) in national repertoires of works. Reciprocal agreements may also allow for the conveyance of royalties back to the rightholders via their national RROs. IFRRO has developed a set of model reciprocal agreements.

(D)

Development of increased public awareness of the need for effective RROs in most countries of the world.

IFRRO speakers regularly take part in seminars and meetings aimed at the general public, national governments and rightholders. IFRRO may be the sole organizer of such events, or may be a co-organizer with other international organizations and organizations in the country concerned.

(E)

Development of studies and information-exchange systems.

IFRRO publishes a bi-monthly [newsletter](#) and frequently publishes material on the work of RROs, including up-to-date statistics on tariffs, collections and distributions. In addition, detailed information is available on [different RROs](#).

(F)

Representation of the views of its membership at various international copyright fora.

As an international federation IFRRO is eligible to speak on behalf of its members before a variety of international bodies such as: the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO); UNESCO; the European Community; the Council of Europe.

3 IFRRO history

IFRRO began in 1980 as a working group of the Copyright Committee of the International Publishers Association (IPA) and the International Group of Scientific, Technical & Medical Publishers (STM). In the early eighties authors' representatives joined the working group. Several RROs, including KOPINOR in Norway, and the Copyright Licensing Agency (CLA) in the UK were established in this period. It was at the May 1984 meeting in Oslo that the working group became an informal consortium known as the International Forum for Reproduction Rights Organisations. This change acknowledged the more direct participation of authors and other rightholders within the working group. It was also at this meeting that the term "RRO" was adopted to designate collecting societies whose central concern is the reprographic reproduction right.

At this stage, in the mid-eighties, IFRRO did not have a fixed membership or formal governing structure. Administration was carried out by a voluntary secretariat. IFRRO's first Secretary General, until 1988, was John-Willy Rudolph of KOPINOR.

The 1986 meeting in Heidelberg adopted the following declaration emphasising IFRRO's dedication to the establishment of RROs in countries where none existed:

"We hereby declare our intent to encourage any joint attempt by authors and publishers to establish national collecting societies in the field of reprography. We are ready to offer co-operation to the establishment in a positive spirit."

In April 1988 in Copenhagen, IFRRO became a formal federation eligible to speak on behalf of its constituents before various international bodies such as the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), UNESCO, the European Community, and the Council of Europe. At that time IFRRO had 12 RRO members, 13 National Associate Members and 4 International Associate Members. IFRRO adopted formal statutes and appointed an Executive Committee to be its governing body. IFRRO officers consisted of the Secretary General and Chairman. Joseph S. Alen of the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) in the USA was appointed to the office of Secretary General. The first Chairman was Ferdinand Melichar of VG WORT, Germany, who held this office until 1993 when he was succeeded by Tarja Koskinen-Olsson of KOPIOSTO, Finland.

In September 1992 in Helsinki, IFRRO adopted new statutes and guidelines which provided for the establishment of a Board of Directors and a professional part-time secretariat, based in Munich. In addition, the office of Vice-Chairman was created. IFRRO's board is structured to represent and reflect the membership: four board members represent RRO members and two board members represent Associate Members. In addition, there are two substitute board representatives, one for RRO members and one for Associate Members. Both the Chairman and Vice-Chairman must represent an RRO member.

In May 1996 in London, the decision was taken to expand IFRRO activities in many areas. In particular, it was decided:

- to move from a part-time to a full-time Secretariat,
- to create an IFRRO Development Fund to finance special projects and assist new RROs, and
- to reinforce and enlarge the committee structure.

Much of IFRRO's work is performed by a variety of committees. These provide many individuals from RRO Members and Associate Members with the opportunity to participate in the work of IFRRO. Four types of committee may be distinguished:

- Regional development committees
- Technical committees
- Specialist committees
- Administrative committees

4 RROs, IFRRO, and the future

Today IFRRO has 30 RRO members, 30 National Associate Members and 7 International Associate Members. In 1995-96, these RROs collected about DEM 300 million (USD 200 million). In the same year they distributed DEM 252 million (USD 166 million) to authors and publishers.

IFRRO's information and educational programmes have achieved a significant increase in the awareness of, and respect for, copyright throughout the world. In spite of this, illegal copying is still widely practised in many countries. The emergence of digital technologies further intensifies the requirement for organised and timely responses to the needs of both users and rightholders.

In 1992, IFRRO signed a joint statement on the electronic storage of scientific, technical, and medical material with STM, the International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers. This has been widely welcomed as a major advance in determining the role of RROs in the digital field. In 1994, a second joint statement was agreed between IFRRO and an international coalition of writers' groups concerning digital uses. In 1996, the IFRRO AGM adopted a position paper on "Collective Management of Digital Rights".