

PERFORMING RIGHTS SOCIETIES
IN
THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

Copyright has always been confronted by technological innovations. The Internet is the latest step in this evolution. While scholars have written extensively on the substantive issues raised by the Internet and the possible application of copyright in the digital age, performing rights societies remain absent from the discussions. Yet, copyrights would be of little value without the collective management performed by these societies. During a forum on copyright management that was held in 1986 at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in Geneva, Dr Arpad Bosh, the then Director General of WIPO, stated that “With galloping technological developments, collective administration of such rights is becoming an ever more important way of exercising copyright and neighbouring rights. Taking into account its increasing importance, much more attention should be paid to it, both at the national and at the international levels”. The goal of this paper is to address this concern. Based upon a non random sample of interviews that were conducted in December 2005 and January 2006 with 7 performing rights societies (4 European, 2 North American and 1 Japanese), this exploratory research aims at finding how performing rights societies operate in the digital environment regarding the ubiquitous nature of the Internet, and what their concerns and perspectives are for the future.