

Submission to the Copyright Review Committee

Disability Federation of Ireland

May 2012

The Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Copyright Review. The Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) represents the interests and the expectations of people with disabilities to be fully included in Irish society. It comprises organisations that represent and support people with disabilities and disabling conditions.

DFI 's vision is Irish society being fully inclusive of people with disabilities and disabling conditions so that they can exercise their full civil, economic, social and human rights and are enabled to reach their full potential in life. DFI's mission is to act as an advocate for the full and equal inclusion of people with disabilities and disabling conditions in all aspects of their lives.

Access by people with disabilities to learning

The education disadvantage that has been experienced by people with disabilities is diminishing, albeit far too slowly. The number of people with disabilities pursuing education has, and will continue, to increase significantly. The *Programme for Government* commits that "we will also facilitate people with disabilities in achieving a greater level of participation in employment, training and education".

Many students, both those who are blind or visually impaired and those with dyslexia and other conditions, have problems accessing education material produced in traditional print format. They have a "print disability". Measures to enable them to use the resources on an equal basis with the non-disabled are required if the Government's commitment is to be honoured, and educational services are to be available to all in practice.

Copyright legislation offers a means of overcoming a serious disadvantage that those with print disabilities continue to endure. As explained in the submission to the Review by our member, AHEAD, these students have difficulty getting core textbooks in alternative formats in real time so that they do not fall behind their classmates. The disadvantage would be addressed if publishers made electronic textbooks available in an "Intermediate File" i.e., one that can be easily converted into different types of accessible copy.

In taking legislative measures to reduce the barriers to people with disabilities participating in society, Ireland would be joining with many other states in Europe and beyond.

Recommendations for improving access

Government needs to engage publishers in the process of alternative formats, so that they understand the principles of accessible information and the rationale for alternative formatting. People with disabilities need to be involved as well so that the legislation is fit for purpose.

It is DFI's view that the legislation should establish a duty on the textbook publishers to provide intermediate electronic versions of text in an accessible format and in a timely manner. The intermediate electronic versions should be required to be structured in a format, and to a minimum standard of accessibility, that allows all the information to be read. The legislation should enable educational institutions to procure immediate electronic copies promptly from publishers on behalf of students with print disabilities.

Requiring the application of technology as proposed will support people with print disabilities to succeed in education. It will be a valuable example of technological development contributing to social inclusion. We ask the Copyright Review Committee to consider our recommendations.



**Representing the interests and expectations of people with disabilities to be fully included
Comprising organisations that represent and support people with disabilities**

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There are over 130 organisations within membership, or as associates, of DFI. DFI also works with a growing number of organisations and groups around the country that have a significant disability interest, mainly from the statutory and voluntary sectors. DFI provides:

- Information
- Training and Support
- Networking
- Advocacy and Representation
- Research and Policy Development / Implementation
- Organisation and Management Development

DFI works on the basis that disability is a societal issue and so works with Government, and across the social and economic strands and interests of society.

For further information go to www.disability-federation.ie

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