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## Expanding access to copyrighted materials for blind focus of UN-backed meeting



A portable braille printer

14 July 2009 – Speeding up access to copyright-related material can benefit over 160 million blind or visually impaired people around the world, participants at a United Nations-backed intellectual property gathering have said.

Member States of the UN World Intellectual Property Organization ([WIPO](#)), reading-impaired organizations, publishers and others met in Geneva yesterday to discuss how to make published works available in formats accessible to reading impaired people as quickly as possible.

According to WIPO, the proliferation of digital technologies has altered the balance between the protections available to owners of property rights and the needs of specific groups, such as the blind.

Social, economic, technological and legal factors – including copyright protection systems – are converging to thwart access to copyright-protected content to the blind or other print-disabled people, it added.

Opening the meeting, WIPO Director General Francis Gurry [announced](#) that, as part of its visually impaired initiative (VIP), the agency will be launching a website to allow people to exchange views.

According to the UN World Health Organization (WHO), there are 314 million visually impaired people in the world, of whom 45 million are blind, with the majority living in developing countries.

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