



PRESS RELEASE: THE LAUNCH OF IFLA

The international television format trade is now 50 years old, the first television format sale being "*What's My Line*" which was sold from America to the UK for broadcast on the BBC. The worldwide trade in television formats is now worth over \$1billion, but remarkably there is still considerable uncertainty as to what protection the law gives for the creators of television formats from plagiarism or outright theft.

At present no country in the world gives the television industry statutory protection to regulate the trade in television formats via its copyright legislation. That means that anyone seeking to protect their rights in a valuable television programme has to some extent had to rely on the creativity and ingenuity of their lawyers to prevent unauthorised exploitation of them.

In a number of countries with well-developed television industries a small number of specialist television lawyers have developed a body of practical expertise to deal with these problems, and to protect the investment made by their clients in creating new television formats. In particular these lawyers have developed both practical and technical expertise in the field, giving practical legal advice to the industry, and presenting seminars and papers on the subject.

One of those lawyers is an entertainment and media lawyer based in Munich, Dr Marc Heinkelein. His book ("*Copyright Protection for Creators of Television Shows and Television Show Formats*") is the authoritative text for the German industry. Another is Jonathan Coad, a specialist media lawyer based in London who has extensive experience in this field, and has written widely on the subject and delivered seminars both in the UK and Europe based on his experience acting for ITV.com in the dispute over the rights to "*I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here*".

In 2004, Dr Marc Heinkelein and Jonathan Coad identified the need for the television industry to have access to legal expertise in this field on a worldwide basis, because very often infringing programmes are broadcast outside the country of origin. So they came up with the idea of creating an international network of leading format lawyers to provide this service. Their idea was that it would also be a forum to discuss how the law can be harmonised internationally so that producers and broadcasters know that their formats will receive equal protection in all countries where they are broadcast.

So the International Format Lawyers Association was born, and it is delighted to be able to say that it has the full support of FRAPA, with which it intends to work closely in developing standard form contracts, model legislation, and a body of case law to ensure legal protection for those that create and earn rights in television formats.

The IFLA has therefore already established its members in Germany and the UK. We already have one representative from the United States of America, and look forward to initially establishing a network to include France, Spain, The Netherlands, Scandinavia, Australia, Japan, Russia and China.

The IFLA will have a presence at all the major television festivals, present lectures and workshops about format protection, produce publications to inform the industry widely about developments in the field. It also plans to gather a fighting fund so that when suitable test cases arise, there will be funding to secure authoritative court decisions to improve both the quality and certainty of legal protection for television formats.

IFLA will be formally launched on 7 May 2005 at the 45th Rose d'Or Festival, and is also delighted both to receive the support of Rose d'Or and to be associated with it. Visit our website at www.ifla.tv.

["The International Network of Leading Format Lawyers"](http://www.ifla.tv)