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# Right to Read Campaign

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*Amending Indian Copyright Law for the benefit of  
millions with Print Impairment*

**26<sup>th</sup> September, 2009**

**at Loyola College, Chennai**



# Right to Read Campaign - An Overview

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## Fast Facts

- At least three hundred million people around the world with sight problems and dyslexia cannot read standard print. India may be home to at least 70 million of these persons.
- Globally, a massive 96 percent of books are never made available in formats that persons with print disability can enjoy and in India almost 99% books are unavailable in accessible formats.
- Every day millions of adults and children are denied vital information for education, work, daily life as well as being denied the joy of reading a world of books.
- The Indian Copyright Act 1957 does not permit conversion and distribution of books in accessible formats to persons with print disabilities.

## Problem at hand

Millions of Indians are unable to read printed material due to disabilities. There are technologies available which can help them read print if the material is converted into an alternate format such as large print, audio, Braille or any electronic format. While the Indian constitution guarantees the “right to read” as a fundamental right, the *Copyright Act of 1957* does not permit the conversion of books into accessible formats for the benefit of persons with print impairment, as a result of which a “book famine” is created. International conventions that India is a party to specifically require it to amend its copyright laws for the benefit of persons with disabilities and to make available information and material to them on an equal basis as others. Publishers also do not make books available in accessible formats as a result of which less than 0.5% of them are available. As a result, persons with print impairments get excluded from the education system and it impacts their career choices. In addition to this, there are no national policies or action plan to ensure that publications in accessible formats in all Indian languages are available to persons with print disabilities all over the country.

## **Current situation in India**

The Indian Copyright Act, 1957 does not make any provision for the conversion and distribution of books in accessible formats for print impaired persons. Hence organizations serving them have to get permission from copyright holders for conversion. Because of this, other countries do not lend books in accessible formats to print impaired persons in our country.

In the case of books published in India, there are no accessible copies readily available in the market and while many publishers in principle are not averse to giving permission, the unwanted fear of piracy and lack of awareness prevents them from allowing organizations to undertake conversions. Consequently print impaired persons are denied the freedom to choose and read any book which is freely available to the public.

## **Solution**

- The Government of India must immediately modify the Indian Copyright Act 1957 to permit conversion and distribution of books in accessible formats to persons with print disabilities.
- India should support the Treaty on Copyright and the Reading Disabled being tabled at WIPO's Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights by the Governments of Brazil, Ecuador and Paraguay based on a text originally drafted by a global expert committee under the auspices of the World Blind Union, which is aimed at harmonization of copyright laws at an international level.

## **Objectives of the Right to Read Campaign**

- To accelerate change in copyright law
- To raise public awareness on the issue
- To gather Indian support for the Treaty on Copyright and the Reading Disabled being tabled at WIPO's Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights by the Governments of

Brazil, Ecuador and Paraguay based on a text originally drafted by a global expert committee under the auspices of the World Blind Union.

## Campaign Managers

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**Centre for Internet and Society ([www.cis-india.org](http://www.cis-india.org)):** The Centre for Internet and Society critically engages with concerns of digital pluralism, public accountability and pedagogic practices in the field of Internet and Society, with particular emphasis on South-South dialogues and exchange. In association with the Daisy Forum of India and Bookbole, the CIS is engaged in conducting the Right to Read Campaign supporting the acceleration of amendments in Copyright Law, creating public awareness and by gathering Indian support for the Treaty for the Blind proposed by the World Blind Union at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

**DAISY Forum of India ([www.daisyindia.org](http://www.daisyindia.org)):** DFI is a forum of 75 Not for Profit organizations from India who are involved in production of books and reading materials in accessible formats for persons who cannot read normal print.

The DAISY Consortium envisions a world where people with print disabilities have equal access to information and knowledge without delay or additional expense. The DAISY Forum of India endorses this vision and is working towards its realization in India.

**Bookbole ([www.bookbole.com](http://www.bookbole.com)):** Bookbole is a library of books in multiple formats which can be accessed by persons using screen readers. Bookbole allows users to find, share, and manage personal libraries in a very easy fashion. This website has been developed by Inclusive Planet, a social venture involved in creating web based products and services for the differently-abled.

**Loyola College (Chennai)** ([www.loyolacollege.edu/index.html](http://www.loyolacollege.edu/index.html)): Loyola College has played an important role in the history of education in India. Founded in 1925 by Rev. Fr. Bertram, S.J., who himself was twice the acting Vice - Chancellor of the Madras University, Loyola College has emerged in the last seventy-five years as a premier educational Institution in the country and it is striving to break new paths in education. One of the major breakthroughs in its history is the autonomous status it received in the year 1978. Situated in the heart of Chennai, and having a large campus of about 98 acres, this institution provides an ideal environment for both teachers and students to enrich themselves intellectually, emotionally and physically by actively participating in the academic and co-curricular activities. Loyola has started several Centres of Excellence such as LIFE, (Loyola Institute of Frontier Energy) Entomology Research Institute, ACE, (Academy for Cumulative Excellence) Culture and Communication, LIVE (Loyola Institute of Vocational Education) and LISOR (Loyola Institute of Industrial and Social Science Research).



## Campaign activities

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The nationwide Right to Read Campaign seeks to achieve the objective through a series of events like,

- Nationwide road-shows
- Public rallies
- Televised debates
- Online petitions
- Signature campaigns

- Audio-video clips
- Stalls where accessibility tools are demonstrated
- Submission of a legal paper to the government on international scenario and constitutional compulsions for the amendment of the copyright law.

## **Social Networks**

The Right to read campaign has been active on various social networks like blogs, Twitter and Facebook. The campaign has been well received by the users and is succeeding in raising awareness on the issue.

## **Media Coverage**

Even before its first event, the R2R campaign attracted significant press coverage in both Bangalore and Chennai. For details of the articles on the campaign in various newspapers both before and after the campaign please refer to Annexure A.

## **Website:** [www.righttoread.in](http://www.righttoread.in)

This website, dedicated for the Right to Read campaign has details about the issue faced with regard to the copyright law and the objective of the campaign. It has a provision for signing the online petition and declaration forms. It has regular updates on the events being conducted and provides an opportunity to exploit ones creativity by blogging, shooting videos, clicking photos and writing slogans about the campaign. Its major objective is to spread awareness about the campaign.

# Launch of Right to Read Campaign

The first roadshow of the R2R campaign was launched at Chennai.

**Venue:** Loyola College

**Date:** 26<sup>th</sup> September, 2009

**Time:** 9:30 AM

**Topic:** Amend copyright law to grant access to reading materials for the print impaired

**Agenda:**



## 'RIGHT TO READ' CAMPAIGN 26.09.2009 INAUGURAL SESSION - AGENDA

Silent Prayer

Lighting the lamp

Welcome Address

Balanagendran  
*III<sup>rd</sup> – B.Com*

Introducing the Campaign

Rev. Dr. Albert Muthumalai SJ  
*Principal, Loyola College*

Felicitations

Introducing the Guests of Honour

Dipendra Manocha  
Exec Comm Member  
World Blind Union

Dr. K.S. Antony Samy  
Dean of Students, Loyola College

RAJA HUSSAIN  
Program Coordinator – NSS  
University of Madras

Dr. Joseph Chandra  
Dean of Arts, Loyola College

Introducing the Chief Guest

Prof. Robert Bellarmine  
*Head, Department of Sociology*

Chief Guest's Address

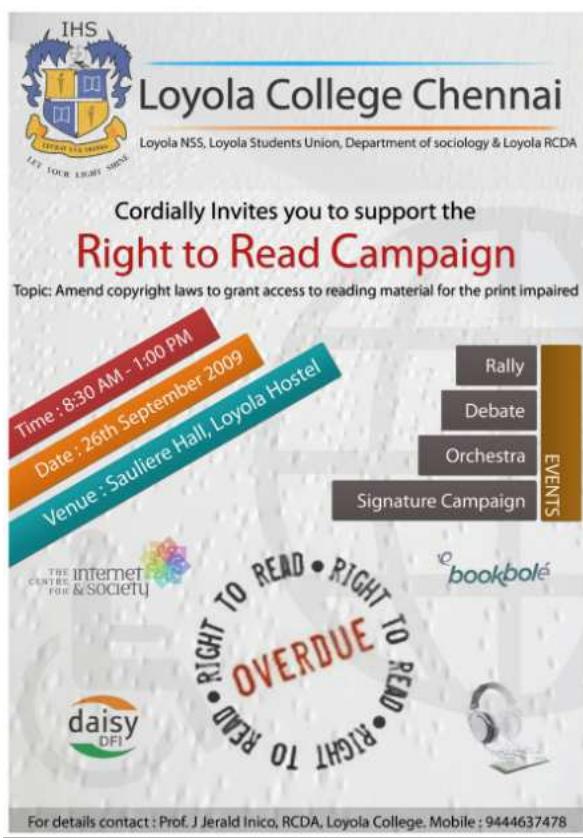
Mr. Shreekumar Varma  
*Activist & Writer*

Vote of Thanks

Ms. Nirmita Narasimhan  
*Programme Manager*  
*Centre for Internet & Society*

#### *Events Coordination*

Dr. S. Alphonse Raj, *Vice-Principal & Faculty of Sociology Department, Loyola College*  
Prof S. Iyyappan, *Co-coordinator, Extension service Department (NSS), Loyola College*  
Prof J. Jerald Inico, *Faculty In-charge, Resource Centre for the Differently Abled (RCDA) & Faculty of Computer Science Department, Loyola College.*



## Launch of the campaign

This was the first major event with respect to the Right to Read campaign. A wide range of dignitaries were invited for the launch. The audience included students, social activists and visually challenged people. About 400 students from 100 colleges around Chennai and 150 NSS volunteers attended from outside and an almost equal number of students participated from

within Loyola College to make this a very large gathering of almost 800-1000 persons. The event was organized by the students of Department of Sociology at Loyola College, Chennai in collaboration with the campaign managers.

The Chief Guest of the event was Mr. Shri Kumar Verma, a well known writer, social activist and a professor of creative English and English literature. He spoke about the issue faced by print impaired persons and how apprehensive people are about sharing books in accessible formats as it is a legal infringement. He appreciated the fact that people have recognized the need for attention to this issue. He observed that Loyola College was the most appropriate venue for this event since students are proactively engaged with social issues. He promised to take initiatives and spread awareness about the campaign and expected the same from others.

Other dignitaries who honored the event were Dr. N. Raja Hussain, Program coordinator, NSS, University of Madras; Mr. Dipendra Manocha, Member, Executive Council, World Blind Union and President, Daisy Forum of India; Mr. Chandrasekar, Treasurer, National Association for the Blind; Ms. Nirmita Narasimhan, Programme Manager, CIS and Mr. Rahul Cherian, Policy Head, Inclusive Planet.

They spoke about the need for the amendment and importance of spreading awareness about this burning issue. In her introduction to the campaign, Nirmita explained that it was not a question of just making the books available in particular formats. If people can read books, it will help literacy, education, employment and promote independent living. A majority of the visually impaired population don't pursue courses because they don't have study materials in accessible formats. This is substantiated by looking at the statistics of Delhi University - they have about 1,500 seats reserved for the handicapped. Despite that, in 2008, only 270 students applied and in 2009, only 350 applied. This just goes to show that in addition to making reservations, it is also necessary to provide an enabling reading framework to persons with disabilities by providing materials in accessible formats and a good support system. This statistics served as an eye opener to the audience.



## Signature Campaign

The launch was followed by a signature campaign where a huge banner supporting the campaign was signed by the dignitaries and other participants of the event. In addition to this, volunteers were committed to the task of carrying out a signature campaign on paper. Supporters of the campaign were invited to sign on the declaration and to put down their names to volunteer for the campaign or to help out the print impaired in a sustained fashion by specifying the manner in which they would like to contribute.



## Rally

The students had organized a rally supporting the need for amendment of the copyright law and to spread awareness about the campaign. 200 students walked around the 97 acre campus with 100 banners carrying slogans like- "Support the Right to Read", "Change Copyright Law,- free a world of knowledge", "One Alphabet- several words; one book- several formats ", "Different states, different languages, different cultures- why not different formats? And so on.



## Declaration forms

Interested people signed the declaration forms to endorse the campaign by voluntarily engaging themselves in any of the activities like creating awareness among public, gathering public support for The Treaty for the Blind at WIPO, online petitions and promoting the campaign online.

[Refer Annexure B]

## **Panel Discussion - 'We the people'**

The panel discussion kicked off at 1130 hrs with the Master of the Ceremony introducing the panelists; Mr. Dipendra Manocha, President, The Daisy Forum of India (DFI); Prof. Sivaraman, Professor of English, Presidency College, Chennai and Mr. Vijaykumar, Advocate. Ms. Nirmita Narasimhan, Programme Manager, Centre for Internet and Society (CIS) and Mr. Rahul Cherian, Co-founder and Policy Head, Inclusive Planet, were the moderators of the discussion. A salient point to be noted here was that all the panelists present were totally/partially visually challenged.

The discussion started off with Prof. Sivaraman citing his experiences with access to literature other than printed format since 2004. He shared information on the technology that he had been using to 'read' books that were prescribed for the students. These were text books or reference material that had been used over a period of time. However, he also threw light on the shortcomings – that newly published text books or literature were not readily available in accessible formats. It usually takes him a considerable amount of time and effort to get materials in Braille or audio formats and hence it is impossible for him to keep abreast of contemporary literature.

An equally important concern that was raised was that only new books with clear print and paper could be accurately scanned electronically owing to quality of the printed characters as well as deterioration of paper quality over time. Any pictorial representation including figures, charts or graphs and even italicized words present problems during scanning. Thus,

What is most urgently required to solve this problem is a digital library as in the case of USA, where the publishers deposit the electronic files of the books. These can be picked up and converted into any accessible format required for a print impaired person without wasting much time, effort and resources. Taking it a step further, he also put forth his views on the unauthorized access and ill-use that electronic books or e-books are put to. Persons who are not visually challenged can also access such books that are present online without any restrictions. Websites that are designed to be used by the visually challenged specifically state in their *Terms of Use* that accessing/reading of downloading of e-books are strictly meant for

persons with partial/total sight impairment, persons with other forms of disabilities that would prevent them from reading printed material or for persons/aides assisting the above mentioned and that any download made by people other than those mentioned would be treated as infringement of the law. But not many people take these terms seriously and still would download such books that are meant for the visually challenged. Right now, there are no technological/legal measures in place to check this infringement owing to the inability to track the perpetrators identity/location. Since it is almost impossible to restrict the access to e-books to only the visually impaired, this acts as a serious set-back in persuading the government to amend the Copyright Act.

Mr. Vijaykumar continued the discussion, citing *Article 14* of the Constitution of India which mandates *Equality before law* and equal protection for everybody, saying that the fundamental right of Indian citizens – the right to read for everybody has not been upheld in India owing to the restrictions imposed by the *Copyright Act of 1957* and that the Copyright Act, by not including any exceptions or provisions, has failed to protect the interests of persons with visual impairment.

Mr. Dipendra Manocha, President, Daisy Forum of India, gave the international and technological perspective to the panel discussion. He explained about the DAISY (Digital Accessible Information System format) format which acts as a standard format to make 1 source document. This can then be used to convert into other accessible formats. He enlightened the crowd about the three factors that would help in solving the problems currently faced by persons with print impairment in India: First, technology such as Laptops or DAISY players and other handheld devices/readers that would assist in translating/reading out aloud e-books. Secondly, creation of e-books in accessible formats, the current high cost-of-conversion of which can be brought down by volunteering and thirdly by bringing in a change in the government policy on Copyright law. Mr. Manocha also informed the audience of how the US Government had amended their copyright law to include provisions for the visually challenged. This has brought down the cost of conversion of printed material into accessible formats to Rs. 2,000 from a whooping Rs. 20,000. He also highlighted the fact that in a

developing country like India, it is not feasible to spend Rs. 20,000 for conversion of just one copy.

Answering the question as to what steps the Daisy Forum of India is taking with respect to making accessible formats available to the print-impaired, Mr. Manocha responded by saying that the DFI has been negotiating a deal with Adobe Systems Inc. USA, provider of the .pdf format of e-books, to include an option to *Save As Daisy format*. Also, providing books in accessible formats at the same cost as that of its printed counterpart was one of the visions of DFI.

When asked by a member of audience if we can take the law in our hands and start uploading/using e-books from the internet, Mr. Manocha again pointed out that it is the duty and responsibility of the Indian govt. to provide equal opportunities to everybody. In case the government fails to do that, citizens can take measures that would help alleviate the pains caused. But such measures should be taken keeping in mind all the stakeholders involved. Large-scale usage of electronic forms of literature would affect the business of authors/publishers. Hurting publishers is never the intention of this campaign. Mr. Manocha, Mr. Vijaykumar and Prof. Sivaraman made it clear that a coordinated effort was required on the part of all the stake-holders viz. the government, the copyright owners (authors, publishers etc.), the persons with print impairment and the organizations representing them, as well as the general public. The amendments to the Copyright Act should take into consideration the interests of all stake holders.

When the floor was opened to questions, the participation from audience was overwhelming. Many of the questions were from print impaired persons in the audience who were students in colleges or represented a disability organization like the National Federation for the Blind (NFB) and so on. Due to paucity of time, the interactive question and answer session was restricted to half an hour post the panel discussion but the audience were invited to discuss further questions with the panelists after the session.



## Musical Extravaganza

After some serious food-for-thought, the silence of the convention hall was broken by a musical performance rendered by a Music Band from NFB Chennai. The performance began by two singers rendering a song in praise of the Gods and then went on to lighter numbers like *Jai Ho*, from the movie *Slumdog Millionaire* and songs from some Tamil movies, which left the audience speechless.

## Vote of Thanks

The volunteers from Loyola College presented the Vote of thanks to all the dignitaries and panelists on stage and also to the audience present in the function after which the National Anthem was played. Later, the guests and the audience proceeded for lunch.

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to take this opportunity to specially thank  
Rev. Fr. K. Amal SJ (Rector, Loyola College);  
Rev. Fr. Albert Muthumalai SJ (Principal, Loyola College);  
Dr. S. Alphonse Raj (*Vice- Principal & Faculty of Sociology Department*, Loyola College);  
Prof S. Iyyappan (*Co-coordinator, Extension service Department (NSS)*, Loyola College)  
Prof J. Jerald Inico, Faculty Incharge, Resource Center for Differently abled (RCDA);  
Prof. Robert Bellarmine (Head, Department of Sociology);  
Department of Sociology; students from RCDA; NSS; Students Union;  
the teaching and non-teaching staff of Loyola College, who helped in organizing the campaign  
and without whom the first road show of the nationwide campaign would not have been a  
grand success that it has been. We look forward to their continued support in the campaign.

We would also like to thank all the students and guests who came from different parts of the city and participated in the campaign.

## **Annexure A**

### **Media Coverage**

Details of the articles on the campaign in various newspapers both before and after the campaign are given below:

- **DNA – Bangalore, 24<sup>th</sup> September, 2009**

CIS campaign to alter copyright law to favour visually impaired - An article by N T Balanarayan, DNA Bangalore - 24th September, 2009

[http://www.dnaindia.com/bangalore/report\\_cis-campaign-to-alter-copyright-law-to-favour-visually-impaired\\_1292662](http://www.dnaindia.com/bangalore/report_cis-campaign-to-alter-copyright-law-to-favour-visually-impaired_1292662)

As Indians we enjoy our right to education and to read, but should learning be restricted to books provided in school? What if, some wish to broaden their horizon and learn more, only to realize there are no books available?

That's the situation the visually impaired in India face now. But Bangalore-based Centre for Information and Society (CIS) is out to change it. They're starting a new campaign-- Right to Read--demanding changes in the copyright law so that books can be converted into a medium with which the visually impaired will feel more comfortable.

According to the group, only 0.5% of the books available in India can be accessed in Braille or audio format. Further, the World Blind Union estimates that only five per cent of the total books that get published in developed countries are converted into accessible formats.

According to Nirmita Narasimhan who works with CIS, it's not a question of just making the books available in particular formats. "If people can read books, it will help literacy, education, employment and promote independent living. A majority of the visually impaired population don't pursue courses because they don't have study materials in accessible formats. This is substantiated by looking at the statistics of Delhi University -- they have about 1,500 seats reserved for the handicapped. Despite that, in 2008, only 270 students applied and in 2009,

only 350 came forward. This just goes to show that in addition to making reservations, it is also necessary to provide an enabling reading framework to persons with disabilities by providing materials in accessible formats and a good support system," she says.

"Further, it is not necessarily any particular format--with technologies and the prolific use of computers; accessible electronic formats (not being jpeg images which screen readers can't make sense of) are most appreciated. One will find that blind persons are always reaching out to each other for study materials in accessible formats--this varies from materials for board exams to text for competitive exams," she adds.

Through the campaign, a road show scheduled to start on September 26 at Loyola College, Chennai, the group wants changes to be made in the copyright law. The roadshow will be organized in three other metros as well.

The event will comprise presentations, debates and demonstrations along with book reading sessions and stalls where various accessibility tools will be demonstrated.

- **Times of India, 26<sup>th</sup> September, 2009**

Tara Textreader, a boon for the visually-challenged – by M Ramya

<http://m.timesofindia.com/PDATOI/articleshow/5058157.cms>

CHENNAI: Mahendran loses track of time as he listens to portions from Romeo and Juliet through Tara. The final year B A (Tamil) student of Loyola College is pleased with the Rs 1.35-lakh Tara Textreader that allows him to access printed material without help and convey information without a scribe. "The Sangeetha software has an Indian accent. So I have no problem accessing material in English," says Mahendran, who has visual disabilities. Earlier, students like him could not access printed material that hadn't been digitized. Their computer systems could not read material that wasn't pre-recorded. Professor Jerald Inico, a lecturer in the computer science department and faculty in charge of the college's Resource Centre for Differently Abled, says the Textreader need not even be connected to a computer. He says: "We were trying to come up with a formula to evaluate students with visual disabilities because we felt that when scribes write down the answers for the students some of the content would be lost in translation. The equipment can scan the question paper and read it

out and will also allow the student to answer verbally and store it as an audio clip. For students who become blind later in life and have not learnt Braille this is a big help." Tara, purchased from funds provided by the ministry of social justice and empowerment, can only speak English; now through Sangeetha the college is trying to install a Tamil optical character recognition software. While the students use Tara to read books now the equipment will be tested for exam evaluation during the April 2010 semester exams. But Mahendran is a bit wary. "If we can use Tara and still get extra time for the exams it will prove beneficial, but if we are given the same time as the others because we are using the textreader it will take time to comprehend what is being read to us and give the appropriate answers." The college is also supporting a nationwide Right to Read' campaign for persons with print impairments to be launched in Chennai on Saturday. Nirmita Narasimhan, programme manager at the Centre for Internet and Society (CIS) which is one of the organisers of the campaign, says: "Two years ago when we proposed a change in the Copyright Act a clause was incorporated that said that books can be reproduced in formats exclusively for the use of the blind. This limits the reproduction to one or two options and newer technologies cannot be used. It also leaves out people with other disabilities like the dyslexic who also have print impairments. Technology is enabling, but law is disabling. We want to create awareness of the issue through the campaign."

Registration for the campaign begins at 8 am at the college. The CIS, DAISY Forum of India and Bookbole will take the campaign to other cities in the country.

- **The Hindu – 29<sup>th</sup> September, 2009**

'Right to read' campaign launched

<http://www.hindu.com/2009/09/29/stories/2009092957440200.htm>

CHENNAI: About 100 National Service Scheme (NSS) volunteers from various colleges in the State kick-started a 'right to read' campaign at Loyola College recently. The aim of the campaign is to make books accessible to persons with disabilities.

The speakers, who included the visually challenged, persons with low vision and dyslexia, said the Copyright Act did not allow persons with print impairments to convert reading matter using

assistive technologies to accessible formats. Dipendra Manocha, executive committee member of World Blind Union, said: "We need organisations, individuals and volunteers to contribute and create accessible books."

Nirmitha Narasimhan, programme manager of the Centre for Internet and Society felt access to information would ensure a better contribution by the visually challenged to society. "It is not that we are insensitive. The suggestion for amendments to the Copyright Act has not yet been incorporated," she said.

Writer Sreekumar Varma, who inaugurated the campaign, recalled his experience as a scribe during his days as a lecturer. C.P. Chandrasekar, treasurer, National Association for the Blind, and Loyola College Principal Albert Muthumalai spoke.

- **Deccan Herald – 29<sup>th</sup> September, 2009**

'Right to Read' campaign launched - Fighting against copyright regulations – an article by L Subramani.

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/27678/right-read-campaign-launched.html>

To highlight the issues faced by persons with print disability – those deprived of Indian books due to unfriendly copyright regulations – a group of organisations launched the Right To Read (R2R) campaign on September 26.

The campaign, jointly launched by the Bangalore-based Centre for Internet and Society (CIS), Daisy Forum of India (DFI), bookbole.com and Inclusive Planet, kickstarted at Loyola College in Chennai on Saturday.

"This campaign was part of the World Blind Union's (WBU) global campaign," said Nirmita Narasimhan, Programme Manager, CIS. "We are asking all the organisations to lend their support to our initiative."

The campaign comes at a time when the Indian government is preparing to consider changes to the copyright law, which it failed to implement two years ago after disability rights campaigners objected to the proposal to make books and other print materials be made in an "exclusive" format.

Nirmita said that this would also be an occasion for activists to urge Government of India to throw its weight behind a WBU treaty tabled at the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) asking for a global copyright regulation that takes into account the needs of persons with print disabilities.

"The treaty is coming up for discussion at Geneva (WIPO's head quarters) in December," Nirmita said and added: "Right now only three Latin American nations are supporting it. Since India has the largest number of persons with print disability, which includes the visually challenged, persons with autism and children with learning difficulties, our support would likely tilt the balance in favour of the treaty." Now, the campaign will be gradually taken to other parts of the country, said Rahul Cherian from Inclusive Planet. A signature campaign and distribution of a declaration supporting accommodation of persons with print disability in copyright laws will also be held as part of the campaign.

- **NDTV – Hindu**

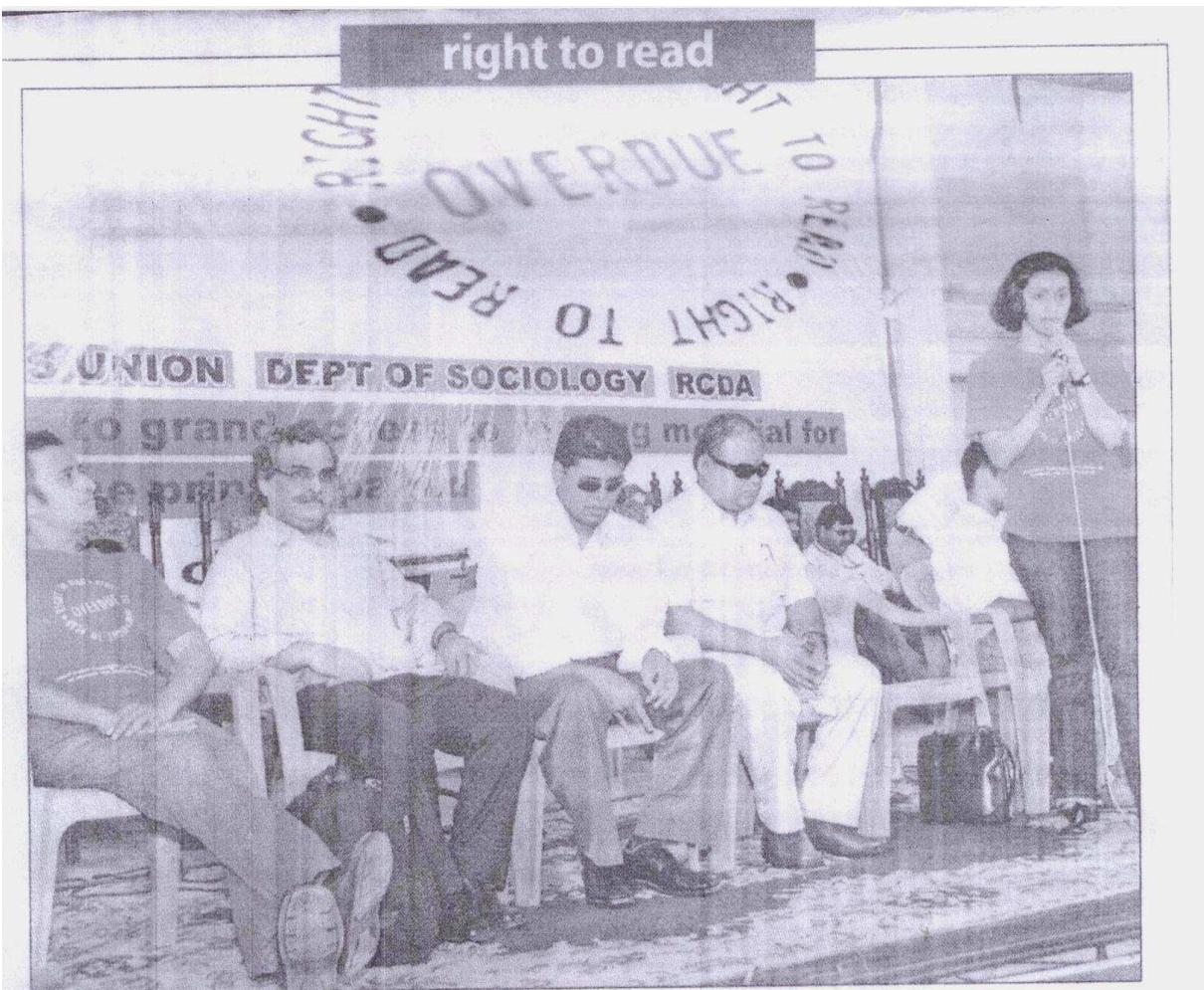
The first event was covered by NDTV Hindu and an interview with Rahul Cherian and Nirmita Narasimhan was also telecast on 26<sup>th</sup> September. A brief excerpt from the interview can be viewed at:

Part 1: <http://www.youtube.com/user/ndtvhindu#play/uploads/16/o4sQ-ycaoBw>

Part 2: <http://www.youtube.com/user/ndtvhindu#play/uploads/15/Q5HCm2evUYE>

- **Deccan Chronicle – 27<sup>th</sup> September, 2009**

Nirmita Narasimhan, Programme Manager, CIS, speaks at the launch of 'Right to Read' campaign. Loyola College in the city on Saturday launched the campaign to amend the Indian Copyright Act, 1957, and give visually challenged and dyslexic people better access to printed books in the form of Braille copy and big prints.



A participant speaks at the launch of 'Right to read' campaign. Loyola College in the city on Saturday launched the campaign to amend the Indian

Copyright Act, 1957, and give visually challenged and dyslexic people better access to printed books in the form of Braille copy and big prints.

PHOTO: DC

## Annexure B

### Declaration on the Right to Read

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**Background:**

- At least three hundred million people around the world with sight problems and dyslexia cannot read standard print. India may be home to at least 70 million of these persons.
- Globally, a massive 96 percent of books are never made available in formats that persons with print disability can enjoy and in India almost 99% books are unavailable in accessible formats.
- Every day millions of adults and children are denied vital information for education, work, daily life as well as being denied the joy of reading a world of books.
- The Indian Copyright Act 1957 does not permit conversion and distribution of books in accessible formats to persons with print disabilities

**We believe that:**

- Everyone, regardless of disability, has the right to read. Being blind, partially sighted, having dyslexia or another print-reading disability should not be a barrier to reading.

**Solutions:**

- The Government of India must immediately modify the Indian Copyright Act 1957 to permit conversion and distribution of books in accessible formats to persons with print disabilities.
- India should support the Treaty for the Blind proposed at the World Intellectual Property Organisation by the World Blind Union (WBU), which is aimed at harmonisation of copyright laws at an international level.

We invite publishers and authors to join us in opening up the world of reading to persons with print impairments by making books available in accessible formats like Braille, large print, audio and electronic formats.

Join us in our campaign to convince the Government that urgent action is needed. If you believe that everyone has the right to read, help us unlock a world of books by adding your name to the global declaration. We need your support.

**Sign the Declaration**

If you wish to support our campaign, add your details below and email the declaration to [support@righttoread.in](mailto:support@righttoread.in)

Your name	Address and/or email	Tick*


\*The personal details you provide will be used only for the Right to Read Campaign. Please tick alongside your email address if you are happy to receive email and other electronic forms of communication regarding the Right to Read Campaign.

You can also print this document, collect signatures from your friends and family, and send a scanned copy of the same to [support@righttoread.in](mailto:support@righttoread.in) or post it to The Right to Read Campaign, Centre for Internet and Society, No. D2, 3rd Floor, Sheriff Chambers, 14, Cunningham Road, Bangalore - 560052

#### **Thank you for your support**

Campaign  
Managers

**Daisy Forum of India** ([www.daisyindia.org](http://www.daisyindia.org))  
**Bookbole.com** ([www.bookbole.com](http://www.bookbole.com))  
**Centre for Internet & Society** ([www.cis-india.org](http://www.cis-india.org))

*This initiative is a part of the official global Right to Read campaign launched by the World Blind Union.*

**Report Prepared by**

**Centre for Internet and Society**

[www.cis-india.org](http://www.cis-india.org)

29<sup>th</sup> September, 2009