Introduction to the Fifth Global Congress on Intellectual Property and the Public Interest

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The Global Congress on Intellectual Property and the Public Interest has become the largest and most important international convening of academics and advocates working at the intersection of intellectual property and the promotion of the public interest. The core goal of the Congress is to promote evidence-based policy-making in knowledge governance systems by fostering partnerships between academics and policy advocates from around the world. Its primary participants are academic and policy advocates. Its planning partners are composed of university-based or NGO projects that involve both research and advocacy components.

The Fifth Global Congress returned to American University Washington College of Law where the Congress was founded in 2011. It was organized by the Program on Information Justice and Intellectual Property, the O’Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law at Georgetown University Law Center, Public Citizen,

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and dozens of planning partners. Major funders of the Congress

1. Dozens of planning partners support the Congress by planning sessions. The planning partners for the 2018 Congress included:

- Access to Knowledge for Development Center, American University in Cairo
- American Assembly
- American University
- Authors Alliance
- Author’s Interest Project
- Center for Law and Intellectual Property, Texas A&M University School of Law
- Centre for Innovation
- Centre for International Governance Innovation
- Centre for Internet and Society-India
- Centrum Cyfrowe Foundation
- COMMUNIA International Association on the Digital Public Domain
- Computers and Communications Industry Association
- CREATe – University of Glasgow
- Creative Commons
- Danube-University Krems (Austria)
- Electronic Frontier Foundation
- Federal University of Paraná
- Health Action International
- Health GAP
- i-mak.org
- Intellectual Property and Competition
- Internet Governance Lab, American University
- InternetLab
- Lawyer’s Collective
- Library Copyright Alliance
- Max Planck Institute for Innovation and Competition
- Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF)
- Medicines Law & Policy
- National Law University Delhi
- Northeastern U. School of Law. Center for Law, Innovation and Creativity
- O’Neill Institute for National & Global Health Law, Georgetown University Law Center
- Open AIR
- Public Citizen
- Public Knowledge
- Re:Create
- SECTION27
- UAEM
- UNDP
- Via Libre Foundation / Flacso Argentina

The Fifth Global Congress hosted over 400 in-person participants and connected to hundreds of others through live webcasts of its main sessions. The Congress spanned six days, beginning with capacity-building workshops and trainings for a selected group of international policy advocates, building to a large public international conference webcast to the world.

The First Global Congress on Intellectual Property and the Public Interest was held in August 25th-28th, 2011, at American University Washington College of Law in Washington, DC. The primary goals of the Congress were to articulate a positive agenda for IP policy reform and to strengthen international capacities for evidence-based policymaking. Some 200 participants from over 30 countries over 3 days, leading to the publication of the Washington Declaration on Intellectual Property and the Public Interest. Organizers of the first Congress included American University’s Program on Information Justice and Intellectual Property, Columbia University’s American Assembly, the Center for Technology and Society at the Getulio Vargas Foundation (Brazil), and the Center for International Trade and Sustainable Development (Geneva). Subsequent Congress meetings were hosted by Centro de Tecnologia e Sociedade, FGV Direito, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, by University of Cape Town IP Unit, Cape Town, South Africa, and by the Centre for Internet and Society, New Delhi, India.

The focus of the Congress is evolving from one primarily looking at intellectual property policy to a more expansive set of knowledge governance issues. At the Fifth Congress, the Congress Steering Committee agreed to expand the subjects of the Congress to a range of “IP” issues beyond Intellectual Property. The Congress has long considered information, Internet and innovation policy issues not strictly governed by intellectual property laws. The next Congress will seek to invite reflection on these broader issues more directly by defining its focus as “Information Policy.”

The change in the naming of the Congress reflects the growing attention of Congress members and partners to broader issues. The Fifth Global Congress included deliberations on issues such as data protection and privacy, accountability mechanisms for platforms, mechanisms for promoting innovation outside of the patent system (including for so-called neglected diseases), and the formation of “E-commerce” and “digital trade” disciplines in free trade agreements and at the World Trade Organization. As always, the key contribution of the Congress was to connect these and related policy frameworks to empirical research.

The outcome of this and past Congresses has been the support of a closely-knit global network of over 1000 researchers and advocates from around the world who work in partnership on a wide variety of projects that seek to promote public interest information policy. These networks are promoting the globalization of fair use and other user rights in the digital environment, furthering the invention of and access to affordable medications for all, and protecting democratic values in Internet policy. Concrete outcomes of past Congresses have included books, articles, research partners, advocacy campaigns, declarations, and policy proposals.

This volume is one concrete outcome of the Fifth Global Congress, continuing a long-term partnership between the Congress and the American University International Law Review. I am thankful to all the scholars who have chosen to publish here and to the American University International Law Review for the hard work it took to edit and publish this important volume.