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A Researcher's Curiosity, a Risk Manager's Temperament, and an Educator's Commitment

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Abstract

I am Mayya Revzina, originally from Kirov and Moscow, Russia, currently living in Bethesda, Maryland. I am a publishing professional with experience in communications and international publishing in Russia, the U.K., and the U.S. I began my career in publishing in 2006 working for a small Russian publisher, OGI Press (United Humanities Press), famous for its publications of poetry, non-fiction, and contemporary novels. When interviewed by a panel of officers from World Bank Publications at the London Book Fair 2007, where I was competing with fellow graduate students from U.K. universities for the World Bank Publishing Internship Prize, I confessed that my dream job would be to become a rights manager and facilitate translations into different languages. For the past 15 years, I have been working as a copyright and publishing rights manager at the World Bank. At the moment I am focused on safeguarding the success of the Bank's Open Access Policy and Open Knowledge Repository, as well as educating my colleagues, including researchers, communication professionals, and knowledge managers, about copyright, open access and public licensing. In 2017 I launched the Copyright Coffee educational series at the World Bank Group library, which have generated great demand.

Keywords: Careers, copyright librarianship, copyright, rights, publishing

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The compliment friends most often paid me in Russia was “tenacious.” I hope I have managed to preserve this quality through the years. I grew up in a provincial town in the north of Russia and my high school years coincided with Gorbachev’s time of perestroika and glasnost. I believed that the whole world was open to me. My favorite subjects were English and literature, and eventually I spent eight years studying them at the Faculty of Philology of the Moscow State University. By the time I graduated, however, things had changed dramatically: professors and scholars were no longer paid decent salaries, and everyone wanted to go into business.

I started my career in public relations, but in 2005, the small PR agency I worked for in Moscow went out of business, and I decided to do everything possible to be among “book people” again — I strongly felt that this was where I belonged. But where should I start? How could I stand out among younger people, eager to work hard while earning less? I was a single mother, so it was not only about my own desires. Learning by listening to friends proved to be helpful. A friend of mine told me about a British Council poetry translation competition. I participated, won second prize, and learned about other British Council programs, including the Chevening Scholarship. A year later, as a scholar of the British Government, I was on my way to London to pursue a master’s degree in Publishing at Kingston University.

In early 2006, while negotiating the hurdles of receiving a scholarship, I joined OGI Press (United Humanities Press), a small Russian publisher, famous for publishing poetry, non-fiction, and contemporary novels, and soon realized what I would like to do within the publishing universe — I fell in love with intellectual property rights! When interviewed by a panel from World Bank Publications at the London Book Fair 2007, where I competed with fellow graduate students from U.K. universities for the World Bank Publishing Internship Prize, I confessed that my dream job would be a rights manager facilitating translations into different languages. On a hot and sunny day in June 2007, I started as a summer intern with the World Bank Office of the Publisher, Rights Team. I was also invited to a summer internship with the World Health Organization in Switzerland, but chose to go to Washington, D.C. — a once in a lifetime opportunity to see the United States!

My 16 years of working in publishing include almost 15 years as a copyright and publishing rights professional at the World Bank. I think copyright is a fascinating subject, and I enjoy every day of being a copyright officer. Helping authors to understand the nuances of copyright in the digital environment and the benefits of open access, educating Bank staff about Creative Commons licenses and public domain, negotiating publishing agreements with scholarly publishers and intergovernmental organizations — this is what my working day looks like. When I first joined, it was something of a challenge to work for a big international institution, with people from all over the world and various backgrounds, some of whom spoke languages I had never heard of. I would say my job requires a researcher's curiosity, a risk manager's temperament, and an educator's commitment. Furthermore, the copyright officer's mission is not fully appreciated by everyone. It often depends on people's own knowledge of copyright and understanding of its role in the development of culture and society. The main challenge is to effectively communicate the importance of copyright and be prepared to suggest creative solutions to emerging copyright issues.

My initial role was to increase dissemination of publications by negotiating and entering into publishing agreements, especially for translations, with partners around the globe. A new, even more interesting period began in 2010, when the World Bank announced its open knowledge agenda. These days, I am focused on safeguarding the success of the Bank's Open Access strategy, including the [Open Access Policy](#) and [Open Knowledge Repository](#), and educating colleagues, such as researchers, information and communication professionals, and knowledge managers, about copyright and open access. There has been a long journey of self-education, not only about copyright. I have never learned so intensively in practice, experienced such a high level of job satisfaction, or felt so proud to be one of a team of professionals, all incredibly supportive and eager to share their own knowledge and experience with me. I was among "book people"!

At the beginning of my career, Bank researchers and other content producers occasionally brought copyright questions to the Library helpdesk or emailed them to me. By 2012, when World Bank data and publications were freely available to the public under open licenses, access to and re-use of the Bank's content had substantially increased, while copyright issues and questions had become increasingly more complex and difficult to manage. We were in an environment where more people encountered copyright in their daily work. In support of the Open Access Policy for World Bank Formal Publications, issued by the Office of the Publisher in 2012, my team, in consultation with the Legal departments of the World Bank Group institutions, published

the Copyright Directive in 2015. I learned a lot about how to build trust and influence without formal authority. I also represented the Bank on an inter-agency open licensing working group intended to create a version of the Creative Commons (CC) suite of licenses consistent with the legal requirements of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) around the globe and started negotiating and concluding Green Open Access institutional agreements with academic publishers to allow Bank authors to publish journal articles in compliance with the Open Access Policy.

As awareness of copyright issues increased within the World Bank Group, so did the demand for copyright education. In May 2017, supported by the Publishing Program and the World Bank Group Library, I launched the *Copyright Coffee Series* for World Bank staff. We started small with face-to-face sessions at the WBG library attended by 35-40 people on average. Sessions were based on lessons learned from real-life copyright management scenarios. Moving to an entirely virtual format from April 2020 proved a boon for attendance: four years and three months after it was launched, the *Copyright Coffee Series* had a record 357 participants registered for its latest virtual session.

When I began this work, I wondered how I would manage motherhood and my career. In 2018, I first spoke at an international publisher's conference in Vienna, Austria, while my daughter, a young researcher, went to her first professional conference in Paris, France. The whole world was open again. My career made this possible. How does one get there? A researcher's curiosity, a risk manager's temperament, and an educator's commitment! And, of course, support from many wonderful people you meet along the way.

This article was written before February 24, 2022. So now, most importantly: NO TO WAR!¹

¹ On February 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2022_Russian_invasion_of_Ukraine

