

## Colonial Legacies of Intellectual Property

Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, London

**workshop 30 January 2026**



Library of Congress, International Copyright Conference, 1952

It is no coincidence that justifications and historiographies of intellectual property law often neglect colonial pasts. Expanding globally in the late nineteenth century, copyright, trademarks, and patents were often imported or projected by colonising powers to protect and exploit settlers' inventions, books, and art. Similarly, colonial expeditions to extract natural resources and industrial agricultural experiments continued haunting the iterations of plant intellectual property in the twentieth century. These were fundamental to the emergence of intellectual property as a distinct field of law.

This workshop aims to explore the role of colonialism in the making of intellectual property from its earliest days to the present. The main goals are to consider these colonial legacies, and to examine how and why the discipline continues to neglect them in the way it historicises and theorises its own making. If you wish to participate, please contact us at:

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*Provisional Programme*

**9.45-10.00**

***Opening Remarks***

Anna Marie Skråmestø Nesheim, University of Oslo and Jose Bellido, University of Kent

**Session 1. 10.00-11.00**

***Narrating Coloniality: Errors and Omissions, Silences and Advocacy***

Kathy Bowrey, University of New South Wales

***What was, and is, colonial copyright?***

Alexander Hartley, Harvard University

**Coffee break. 11.00-11.30**

**Session 2. 11.30-13.00**

***Authorial Attribution in 19th century Cape catalogues***

Ashleigh Harris, Uppsala University

***Whither Swaraj: On the Genealogy of International Copyright Thinking?***

Lokesh Vyas, Sciences Po

***Mindlessly Mining the Archives - Legal and Ethical Issues in Museum Use of Historical Colonial Archival Images of Marginalized Peoples***

Dr. Toni Lester

**Lunch break. 13.00-14.00**

**Session 3. 14.00-15.30**

***Intellectual property regimes in Congo, Rwanda and Burundi: A historical study of the transitions to the colonial and early decolonization periods (from the late 19th century to the 1970s)***

Véronique Pouillard, University of Oslo,

***Brazaville, 1963***

Jose Bellido, University of Kent

***Punished by Culture: Solomon Linda's 'Mbube' and the Copyright/Public Domain Enigma***

Daniel Acquah, University of Liverpool

**Coffee break. 15.30-16.00**

**Session 4. 16.00-16.45 Roundtable discussion on sources, archives and libraries**

With Eng Sengsavang (UNESCO), Colin Wells (WIPO), Marilyn Clarke (IALS)

**Closing Remarks. 16.45-17.00**