



**INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION®**  
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## Message from the Chair

Dear Friends,

As Chair of the Technology Law Committee, I would like to welcome you to a new year with renewed hope.

Due to the COVID pandemic, we have been unable to connect with each other in person for over a year, to come together at various (and extremely popular) networking events and Retreats, as was the practice, or to keep abreast of the new technologies and developments in law worldwide during our knowledge sessions. Instead, many of us have had to adjust to working from home in rooms that habitually served as the kitchen, basement or even the bathroom, but overnight became the offices for the requisite quiet from children attending virtual school.

Over the last several months, we have seen each other only through computer camera lenses. The IBA has continued to try and adapt to the new norms, collaborating to deliver valuable programming virtually at a unique annual conference that seeks new ideas and opportunities to connect with its members, even as we remain physically remote.

For me, the year 2021 began with presenting the inaugural lecture at the Annual Meeting of the Asian Law Students' Association (ALSA). Held virtually and coordinated by ALSA leadership at Mandalay, Myanmar, from 22-24 January, the event, as also my inaugural speech, focused on digital literacy. It was exciting to revisit this subject that is key for all of us, given that we work in the developing world.

For the developing world, digital skills are crucial, opening the door to social inclusion. Yet it took a global pandemic to highlight the issue and compel the world to closely examine the gaps in policies and ground reality.

At the Technology Law Committee, we tend to take digital literacy for granted, as the world often does with basic literacy. Today, as everyone sees physical interactions being replaced by virtual existence, we realise the vital importance of immediate measures for digital inclusion. And the time for action is now.

As COVID gained momentum in 2020, the world's survival depended largely on digital technologies. The 'normal' for technology lawyers -virtual - became the new normal for the world. Last year, everyone lived a virtual life in more ways

than we ever imagined when we had met earlier at the 2019 IBA Annual Conference in Seoul. From working to learning and even socialising, everyday life and living were completely transformed.

Whereas we, as technology lawyers, may be among the more fortunate, where does 2021 leave those who may not have the necessary skills or tools to use digital technologies? Across the world, social isolation has been particularly challenging for the elderly, many of whom have preferred to stay away from technology. Then other impediments, such as poverty and the lack of access to technological assets, have paralysed other sections of humanity. Cost, complexity and a perceived 'lack of interest' have, until recently, kept a large section of the world offline.

Can anyone afford to be offline in 2021 while COVID continues to keep us virtual? What social and economic implications would such a state bring? Such questions compel remedial action. The responsibility to address the challenge of digital inclusion is not the preserve of a select few. It is the collective responsibility of individuals and organisations to create a global framework of cooperation to close the digital gap. As technology lawyers, we can play an active and effective role in bridging the digital divide by cooperating with other stakeholders; private organisations, governments, NGOs, non-profits and academia. Unless we bond at a global level, the digital divide will continue to create inequalities.

The mission of our Committee and the motivation of each member is more important today than ever before. It is in this vein that I write to seek your inputs on what we, as the IBA Technology Law Committee, can do to remain engaged and relevant to each other and to societies around us.

This year, with your active contribution and guidance, we aim to recast the activities of the IBA and our Committee. We seek your help in an agenda that triggers awareness of the latest technologies and their interplay with law, enables digital inclusion, stimulates lively social interactions and offers educational opportunities across a wide range of areas of expertise.

Whether you are a Committee Officer, a long-time member of the IBA or not yet actively involved, I invite you to actively participate in events this year. To begin with, please send in your suggestions for the Committee to consider and implement. Attend upcoming virtual programs, read our informative newsletter and check your email for the latest activities and programmes. For those who have shown an interest in getting even more involved, the best way to grab our attention is to start where we can see your value to the Committee and its activities.

Please don't hesitate to send in your suggestions to [me](#).

Warm regards from Bangalore, India,

Sajai Singh

*Chair, IBA Technology Law Committee*

[sajai@jsalaw.com](mailto:sajai@jsalaw.com)

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Our mailing address is: International Bar Association, 4th Floor, 10 St Bride Street, London, EC4A 4AD, United Kingdom Tel: +44 (0)20 7842 0090, Fax: +44 (0)20 7842 0091