






Copyright Awareness Among Future Media Specialists: Survey Results in Bulgaria

Tereza Trencheva^(✉) , Evelina Zdravkova , and Ivan Trenchev 

University of Library Studies and Information Technologies, Sofia, Bulgaria
{t.trencheva, e.zdravkova, i.trenchev}@unibit.bg

Abstract. The present paper outlines a scientific study that focuses on the methodology and outcomes of a survey conducted to assess the current level of awareness regarding copyright issues among trainees in the media field. To collect relevant data on students' knowledge, awareness levels, and attitudes toward copyright, the authors developed a survey instrument consisting of four sections with a total of 40 main questions. The survey was carried out in nine universities in Bulgaria within Public Communications and Information Sciences professional field, encompassing specialties such as journalism, media, PR, public relations, arts, and creativity. The survey took place between April 1st and May 26th, 2021. A total of 449 Bulgarian students enrolled in “Bachelor” “Master” and “PhD” programs effectively participated in the survey. The selection of participants followed the principle of systematic random sampling, with stratification to ensure representation of approximately 10% of students within the aforementioned professional field. Data collection was conducted using a Google survey platform.

Keywords: Intellectual property · copyright literacy · media industry · social sciences

1 Introduction

The significance and role of creativity and innovation in contemporary societies have been emphasized in various strategic documents, including the Europe 2020, a Strategy for Smart, Sustainable, and Inclusive Growth (COM/2010/2020 final), and the European Commission's Green Paper on Unlocking the Potential of Cultural and Creative Industries. These documents highlight the importance of establishing a robust, competitive, and diverse industrial foundation to foster knowledge, creativity, and innovation, which represents a shared objective of the European Union. This objective necessitates adopting a differentiated approach to address social, economic, cultural, and educational disparities among member states. To shape the future cultural landscape of society, it is essential to develop new forms and policies that depart from the existing ones. Achieving such a state of cultural advancement requires strategic support for crucial initiatives such as the preservation and promotion of cultural diversity, facilitating creative mobility, protecting Intellectual Property (IP) rights, and enhancing society's understanding of IP. Additionally, it entails creating an enabling environment for the growth of cultural and

creative industries and ensuring the provision of quality education in the field of culture, information, and creative industries [1]. This preliminary proposal aligns seamlessly with the aforementioned strategic documents and the National Research Strategy 2017–2030. It encompasses two primary objectives: first, to investigate the existing level of IP literacy within the university information environment among students and teachers; and second, to stimulate a public discourse that raises awareness and cultivates a culture of IP literacy within academic circles. This initiative is both timely and imperative, considering the pressing need to address IP issues in the present context [2].

IP pertains directly to the information encapsulated within its objects. Essentially, IP encompasses the ownership of the information embedded within intellectual creations, granting exclusive rights to their creators. The legal framework governing IP serves to regulate public relations concerning the creation, recognition, dissemination, distribution, inheritance, and legal protection of IP objects, including copyright and related rights. In the context of a knowledge-based economy, professionals such as librarians, information specialists, media experts, and journalists play a crucial role as they possess the expertise to interpret and navigate issues pertaining to IP [3].

IP can be considered as an integral component of Information Literacy (IL) within the university information environment. IL refers to the knowledge and skills required to discover, analyze, retain, and effectively utilize specific information. It encompasses the ability to make informed selections in the information age. Information literate individuals possess the aptitude to locate, assess, and employ information from various sources, including computers, books, news agencies, films, and other supplementary resources, to solve problems or make informed decisions. To thrive academically and in life, students must acquire proficiency in efficiently and effectively utilizing a wide range of information and communication technologies. They should be capable of conducting comprehensive searches, organizing and analyzing information, and critically evaluating its credibility. Furthermore, they must grasp the ethical considerations associated with information usage, including respecting IP rights, such as avoiding plagiarism by using copyrighted literature, art, and scientific works, patented inventions, designations (trademarks, geographical indications, domain names, business names), without proper authorization from the creators. Ultimately, students need to synthesize this knowledge and apply it to produce effective end products. This necessitates the development of fundamental skills encompassing scientific research, technological proficiency, critical thinking, and evaluation [4]. Conducting research on IP matters as part of IL, particularly copyright literacy, in the contemporary university environment is contingent upon several prerequisites.

There are several key factors that necessitate further research and exploration in the relationship between IP and IL. Firstly, there is a lack of comprehensive independent studies on a national level that specifically examine the correlation between IP and IL. Secondly, it is crucial to examine existing models and best practices for training non-specialist lawyers in the field of IP, both in Europe and globally. Thirdly, an analysis of the educational content and curricula responsible for imparting knowledge in this domain is needed. Fourthly, studying the experiences of established IP-awareness networks in other countries is necessary. Finally, it is important to investigate the level of

awareness regarding intellectual-legal issues in the fields of humanities and social sciences, among both educators and students in the university environment [5–7]. In light of these considerations, it is evident that positioning IP within the broader framework of IL is not only relevant but also timely and essential.

The present paper addresses a highly relevant and current topic that has been partially explored by other authors but has not yet been fully examined. This significant characteristic underscores the scientific and practical significance of the project titled “A Conceptual Educational Model for Enhancing Information Literacy in a University Information Environment.” The project is funded by the National Science Fund of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria under Contract No. KP – 06 – H35 / 10 dated 18.12.2019. The project is led by Prof. DSc Stoyan Denchev.

2 Literature Review

The existing body of literature pertaining to IP/copyright literacy among information professionals, including library, museum, and archival specialists, as well as the field of copyright academic education, is extensive. Due to its breadth and depth, a comprehensive review of this literature is beyond the scope of this paper. The literature review focused on the media specialists found that a comprehensive interdisciplinary study of issues related to IP literacy, especially in Public Communications and Information Sciences with a focus on future media specialists and journalists as well as on the level of copyright awareness of these specialists - does not exist [2]. This review aims to provide an overview of key documents, initiatives, and publications in the field under examination. The following are some of the notable ones as discussed by Tsvetkova et al., [2]. While the literature acknowledges the significance of media ethics and media literacy, certain themes, such as copyright awareness and the incorporation of copyright education into information literacy programs, as well as the integration of copyright and licensing issues into the curriculum for future media specialists, are currently pertinent and warrant further examination. The ever-evolving landscape of higher education has introduced new priorities that highlight emerging aspects of daily life. IP, particularly copyright, has gained even greater relevance due to the growing trend of individuals creating and promoting their work through increasingly accessible online media platforms. Consequently, there is a continuous need to expand our knowledge in this domain to ensure optimal utilization of information and media resources.

3 Copyright Awareness Among Future Media Specialists: Survey Methodology and Results

3.1 The Aim and Methodology

The authors developed a survey instrument with the purpose of gathering data from students, specifically those aspiring to become media specialists, to assess their level of copyright awareness. The survey aimed to examine their knowledge of copyright acquired during their studies, their practices related to using media content, and the extent to which they recognize and respect copyright in journalistic work [8]. To achieve the

objectives outlined in the project, a survey was conducted among students enrolled in the professional field of “Public Communications and Information Sciences.” This survey took place in nine accredited universities in Bulgaria that offer Bachelor’s, Master’s, and PhD programs in the aforementioned field. The survey followed a systematic random sampling approach with stratification, targeting 10% of the students within this field.

Data collection for the survey was conducted using a Google survey platform. It is important to clarify that the survey targeted students from five different towns in Bulgaria, namely Sofia, Blagoevgrad, Shumen, Burgas, and Veliko Turnovo. A total of 618 students specializing in fields such as journalism, media, PR, public relations, arts, and creativity were invited to participate in the survey. Upon the completion of the survey, the final dataset consisted of 449 valid responses from adult Bulgarian citizens who were students in the aforementioned professional field. This sample size ensures that the survey results are representative of the entire country. After the online survey closed on May 26, 2021, the collected data underwent thorough logical inspection and quality control measures.

The questionnaire is composed of four sections, each containing a set of questions designed to gather specific information. The questions are structured in a combination of closed-ended and partially open-ended formats, utilizing a 5-degree Likert scale. The primary objective of the **first section** is to obtain demographic data and information regarding the education and citizenship status of the participants. This section comprises a total of nine questions. **The second section** aims to assess the level of awareness among respondents regarding copyright issues. It consists of ten multiple-choice questions, seeking to gauge the participants’ understanding of various aspects related to copyright. **The third section** of the questionnaire is designed to measure the respondents’ knowledge regarding copyright issues in eleven questions. **Lastly, the fourth section** of the questionnaire focuses on capturing the respondents’ attitudes towards the practical implementation of copyright protection and it’s encompassed in ten questions.

The empirical study, “**Current State of Copyright Awareness in the University Environment**” took place from April 1st to May 26th, 2021. The study targeted trainees from nine Bulgarian universities and aimed to assess their knowledge and awareness of copyright. During the questionnaire development, emphasis was placed on adhering to national legislation and utilizing guidelines from the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). The study provides valuable insights into the copyright awareness of future media specialists within the context of the modern information society. It is worth noting that the survey was conducted at a time when the rights of authors and journalists were of significant importance and subject to public debates, making the responses of the participants influential in shaping these discussions related to IP.

3.2 Demographics

The survey garnered 449 complete responses by students from 9 Bulgarian universities, as follows: (1) University of Library Studies and Information Technologies - 180 (40%); (2) Sofia University - 100 (22%); (3) Burgas Free University - 43 (9,6%); (4) Veliko Turnovo University - 25 (5,6%); (5) University for National and World Economy – 28 (6,2%); (6) Shumen University – 14 (3,1%); (7) South-West University – 24 (5,3%); (8) New Bulgarian University – 30 (6,7%); (9) American University in Bulgaria – 5 (1,1%).

Out of 449 respondents, 292 (65%) are female, 157 (35%). On the status of their degree, 357 (79,5%) are in their bachelor's degree, 61 (14%) in master's degree, and 31 (6,9%) in their PhD degree.

3.3 Findings of the Survey

The collected data provide evidence of the strong interest and dedication displayed by the students towards the research conducted, underscoring the importance and necessity of investigating this particular issue. The substantial percentage of respondents guarantees a high level of reliability and representativeness regarding the survey results among students. The active participation of students indicates a significant reservoir of potential among young individuals within the university environment. It is crucial to capitalize on this potential optimally and enhance copyright literacy in the media sphere. **The questionnaire incorporates** a series of identical questions, enabling a parallel presentation and analysis of the responses. Additionally, there are specific questions tailored for the respondents, which will be presented and analyzed separately, distinct from the shared questions.

The primary objective of the initial inquiry in the questionnaire is to evaluate the media engagement patterns of the survey participants. The query, phrased as **“What do you engage in most frequently?”** offers a range of predefined options from which respondents can make a selection. The options include: *Watching TV news and publicist programs; Listening to radio news; Reading periodicals; Reading news online; Reading books (printed or electronic); Playing video or computer games; and Using the internet on their phone.* A total of 62 different multiple-choice responses were recorded for this question. The most common response, selected in 9.8% of cases (44 responses), was a combination of **“Reading news online, Reading a book (printed or electronic), and Using the internet on my phone.”** This line of inquiry serves to explore the participants' role as consumers of media content, implying that their subsequent answers may be influenced by their direct involvement with the media and their level of satisfaction.

In terms of assessing the perceived usefulness and value of various media platforms among the respondents, the second question inquires, **“Which media is the most useful and valuable for you?”** The results indicate that “Internet” and “Social Networks” were cited by 16% of the participants. A comprehensive breakdown of the responses can be found in Table 1, where it is evident that the Internet was mentioned as a possible answer in 76.5% of the multiple responses. This outcome aligns with the expectation and established knowledge that the contemporary information-driven society seeks rapid and convenient access to information facilitated by electronic and emerging media channels. Consequently, ensuring an immediate and continuous flow of information through electronic media and social networks can be regarded as a strategy to enhance copyright literacy within the media domain and engage the attention of modern learners, who largely constitute the primary user base of such platforms.

The subsequent question aims to ascertain the respondents' satisfaction regarding the content they consume. The question presented is: **“What types of information do you find most interesting in the media?”** The provided options include: *News and information programs; Documentaries and documentary information; Sports information and broadcasts; Youth programs; Entertainment programs; Talent discovery*

Table 1. Usefulness of Media

Selected Answer	Number	%
Internet	153	34,1
Internet, Social networks	72	16,0
Print media	9	2,0
Print media, Internet	12	2,7
Print media, Social networks	2	0,4
Radio	7	1,6
Radio, Internet	11	2,4
Radio, Internet, Social networks	3	0,7
Radio, Print media	1	0,2
Radio, Print media, Internet	2	0,4
Radio, Social Networks	2	0,4
Social media	34	7,6
Television	31	6,9
Television, Internet	36	8,0
Television, the Internet, Social Networks	37	8,2
Television, Print media	2	0,4
Television, Print media, Internet	4	0,9
Television, Print media, the Internet, Social networks	2	0,4
Television, Radio	5	1,1
Television, Radio, Internet	7	1,6
Television, Radio, Internet, Social Networks	3	0,7
Television, Radio, Print media, Internet	1	0,2
Television, Radio, Print media, Internet, Social Networks	6	1,3
Television, Radio, Social Networks	1	0,2
Television, Social networks	6	1,3
Total	449	100,0

programs; Fashion; TV series / Soaps; Movies; Music, music videos and programs; Culture; Nature and nature conservation; Business and finance; Computers and Technology; Games; Religion; I cannot decide; another type of information. The analysis of multiple responses reveals that the most frequently mentioned categories are “News and Information programs” (178 out of 449 responses), “Documentaries and documentary information” (105 out of 449 responses), and “TV series / Soaps” (91 out of 449 responses), as illustrated in Fig. 1.

The question “**Have you created any of the following media content in the last year?**” provides respondents with the following response options: *I wrote literary works*

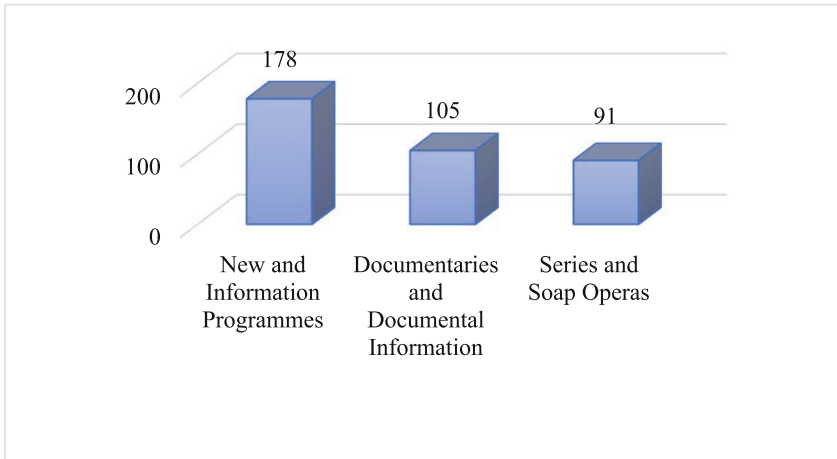


Fig. 1. The most interesting information in Media.

(book, essay, poem, blog, article); Video or audio materials (film, animation, song, video, meme, photo); I wrote a letter to the newspaper; I wrote a news story or a magazine article; Something else. Among the given options, the majority of respondents (49.89%) answered that they did not create any media content in the past year. The next most selected response was “Video or audio material” (film, animation, song, video, meme, photo, etc.), chosen by 14.48% of the participants.

The subsequent question in the survey pertains to **the participants’ level of familiarity with copyright**. It is a closed-ended question with several response options: *very low, low, moderate, high, and very high*. These options represent a scale for assessing the respondents’ personal opinions regarding their knowledge of copyright. The question serves to introduce the respondents to the study’s objectives and the specific topic being explored. Based on the provided data, the majority of respondents (234 out of 449) indicate a moderate level of familiarity with copyright. There are 24 respondents who claim to have no familiarity, while 5.35% state very low familiarity. Additionally, 22.05% of the respondents (99 individuals) report having only a limited understanding of copyright. These findings are visually represented in Fig. 2.

The question “**To what extent are you interested in media copyright issues?**” aims to determine the level of interest among the respondents, who are media content users, regarding copyright issues. The majority of them (43.88%) indicate a moderate level of interest in copyright-related issues in the media.

For the analysis, it is particularly important to focus on respondents who show an interest in intellectual property rights, specifically copyright and related rights. These individuals should be the target of proactive communication efforts, employing various communication models, to enhance copyright literacy within the university media environment (See Fig. 3).

In terms of professional orientation and awareness, the question is “**How integral is a comprehensive understanding of copyright to the practice of your selected**

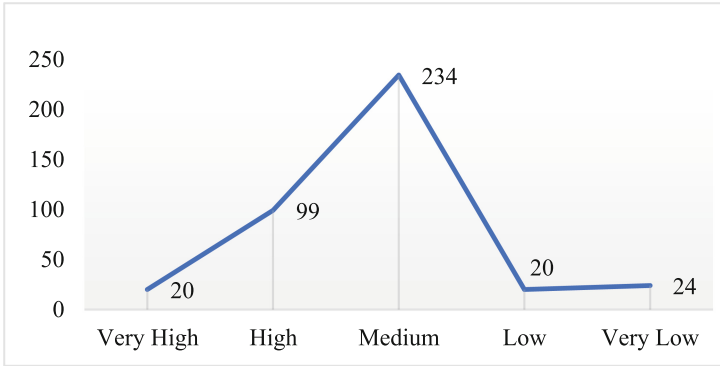


Fig. 2. The level of copyright familiarity.

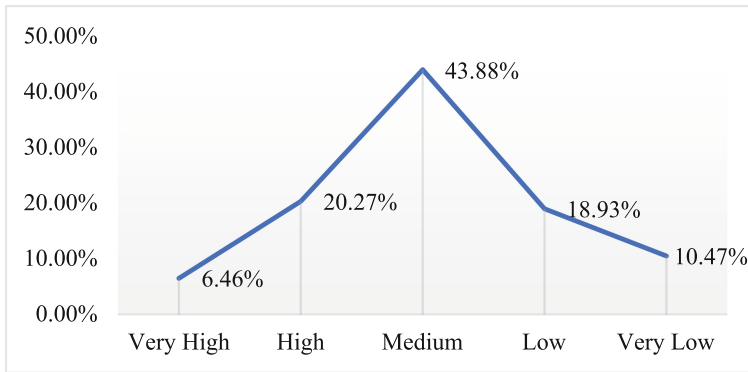


Fig. 3. To what extent are you interested in media copyright issues?

profession?” The largest percentage (37.19%) of respondents answered “High” (See Fig. 4).

In response to the question, “**Are you interested in copyright in the media you read on the Internet?”** the smallest number of respondents (38) expressed a high level of interest. It is noteworthy that the number of respondents identifying as ‘slightly interested’ (112) is nearly equivalent to those who responded as ‘I’m not interested, I’m interested’ (93). The majority of respondents demonstrated a level of concern for the copyright of authors whose works and materials they consume. This is evident from the responses: 157 respondents rated themselves as ‘rather interested,’ 112 as ‘slightly interested,’ 93 as ‘as much as I’m not interested, so much I’m interested,’ and 49 as ‘not interested at all.’ The number of respondents indicating a strong interest is also significant. It is important to recognize that while the respondents are not indifferent to the topic, a considerable portion of them believe that the respect for authors’ work in media content falls short. This lack of interest can manifest in a lack of commitment to issues of intellectual property rights, demotivation towards creativity and uniqueness, as well as a passive stance on the matter within the university environment. These findings

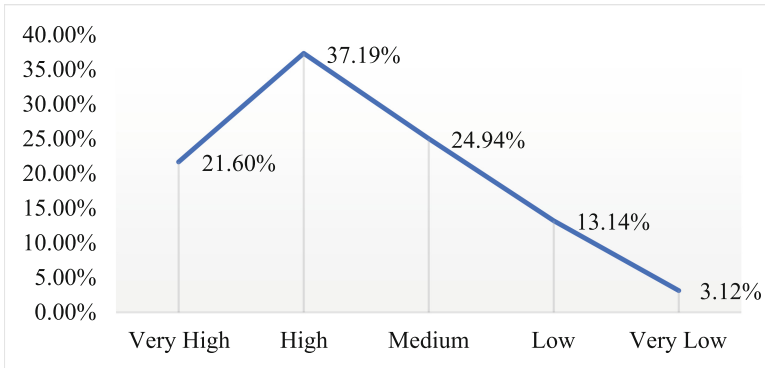


Fig. 4. Integration of copyright understanding in the practice of the profession

highlight the need for measures to enhance intrinsic motivation towards understanding IP rights issues.

The conclusion drawn from the survey is that the level of copyright literacy among students is predominantly moderate to low. This observation is reflected in the majority of respondents' answers. These findings align with the well-known fact of a significant lack of awareness and understanding of copyright and related rights within society. Of particular concern are the respondents who express disinterest in copyright issues in the media. Active engagement of this group is essential to enhance copyright literacy. This can be achieved through practical-focused training courses specifically designed for students studying fields directly related to IP rights. The questionnaire includes this question to explore potential reasons for low copyright literacy and to serve as a measure of control regarding media-related copyright literacy.

The survey also seeks to assess respondents' awareness of additional training opportunities on copyright-related matters. In response to the question, "**To what extent are you interested in media initiatives to raise your awareness of copyright issues?**", the largest percentage (37.64%) of respondents expressed interest. However, 19.15% indicated a lack of interest equivalent to their level of interest, while 24.72% showed only slight interest. The smallest group (6.24%) expressed strong interest. In summary, the general conclusion is that a significant part of the respondents pays attention to initiatives aimed at raising awareness of copyright issues, albeit to varying degrees.

The respondents assess their awareness of copyright issues in the media as insufficient. The survey examines the extent to which copyright is present in the curricula of programs.

To the question "**How extensively is copyright incorporated into the curriculum?**" the largest percentage (27.62%) indicated a low level of inclusion. The response options provided were: *Very high*, *Very low*, *Low*, *High*, *As low*, *As high*. Approximately 16.26% of respondents believed that copyright in the media is minimally represented in educational content, while 17.82% considered it to be highly integrated. A small part (5.35%) indicated that the researched issues were extensively covered in the curriculum of their studies. Interestingly, there is a notable overlap in quantitative terms between the percentages of respondents indicating a high grade (17.82%) and those indicating a very

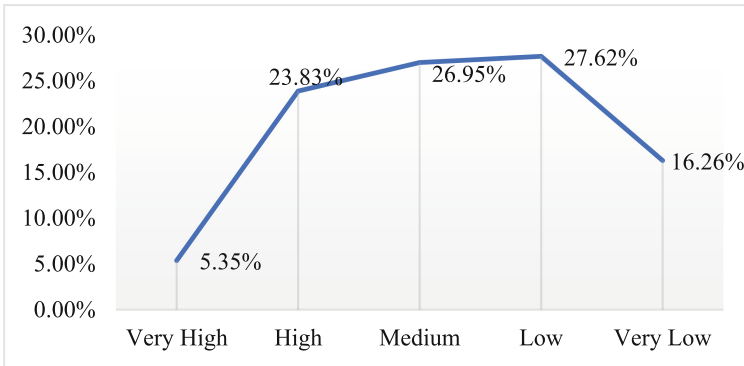


Fig. 5. How extensively is copyright incorporated into the curriculum?

low grade (16.26%). These closely aligned opinions suggest a lack of substantial coverage of copyright in the media within the curriculum, highlighting the need for additional information. Based on the obtained data, a more proactive approach is recommended for presenting copyright in the media, engaging in effective communication with learners (refer to Fig. 5). To address these findings, it is crucial to optimize the current training approach, identify measures, and take action to promote IP rights in the media. This may involve implementing specialized courses, additional classes, and practical exercises to enhance the understanding and awareness of disciplines intersecting with media and media policy. Such efforts will contribute to raising awareness and the importance of conveying consistent messages in the public space by students, journalists, and society at large, ultimately promoting IP rights in practice.

The findings of the study lead to the conclusion that alongside the imperative of actively disseminating information on IP rights, it is crucial to identify the specific type of information that students seek. This includes determining whether their interests lie in copyright, related rights, industrial property, or practical information that directly relates to their involvement as participants in media content. To ensure a comprehensive analysis of the collected data, it would be beneficial to involve an expert in the field of sociology who can define, analyze, and assess the reliability of the data based on objective criteria in the future analyses. Additionally, the influence of external factors on respondents' opinions should be considered in order to draw accurate conclusions from the study.

4 Conclusion

The survey results substantiate the well-established fact of low copyright literacy among the current generation of media-exposed students. The control questions further validate the initial findings of the respondents. The answers regarding the use of online materials without proper compensation reveal a lack of knowledge on the subject and a tendency towards inertia. Respondents generally accept the prevailing notion in the public and media sphere that everything on the internet is free, without questioning its accuracy.

Proactive communication, comprehensive provision of information on IP rights, and ongoing education are essential to gradually raise awareness, enhance understanding, and foster respect for journalistic work, as well as cultivate a legal culture. The evaluation of the respondents highlights a significant challenge in organizing and conducting continuous training on IP in the media.

Recommendations based on the survey results revolve around the imperative to increase copyright awareness among creators and users of media content. This includes fostering consensus on crucial media-related topics concerning IP rights, promoting unity in the messaging of media content creators, establishing active partnerships with media outlets and copyright-related institutions such as the Ministry of Culture, the Patent Office, WIPO, and non-governmental organizations dedicated to media literacy. These efforts aim to gain wider visibility and enhance the legal culture and specifically copyright awareness among young people in Bulgaria. In summary, the presented data reveal that the respondents identify similar issues, affirming the assertion of a lack of copyright awareness among educators involved in media content creation and consumption. Despite existing law courses, an educational program focused on media copyright literacy among students is necessary.

Acknowledgements. This research was made possible through the financial support provided by the following project: "A Conceptual Educational Model for Enhancing Information Literacy in a University Information Environment", financed by the National Science Fund of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria with Contract № KP – 06 – H35 / 10 or 18.12.2019, led by Prof. DSc Stoyan Denchev.

References

1. Titu, M., Oprean, C., Stan, S., Titu, S.: The place and role of intellectual property policies in an advanced scientific research and education university. *Int. Conf. Knowl. Based Organ.* **23**(1), 479–488 (2017)
2. Tsvetkova, E., Zdravkova-Velichkova, E., Planska-Simeonova, K., Dimitrova, S.: A bibliographical overview of intellectual property literacy as a part of information literacy at university environment. In: 13-th International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies, Palma de Mallorca, pp. 4376–4385. Spain (2021)
3. Todorova, T., Trencheva, T., Kurbanoglu, S., Dogan, G., Horvat, A., Boustany, J.: A multinational study on copyright literacy competencies of LIS professionals. In: Kurbanoglu, S., Špiranec, S., Grassian, E., Mizrachi, D., Catts, R. (eds.) *Information Literacy. Lifelong Learning and Digital Citizenship in the 21st Century*. CCIS, vol. 492, pp. 138–148. Springer, Cham (2014). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-14136-7_15
4. Todorova, T., Peteva, I.: Information literacy competency of LIS students in SULSIT with a special focus on intellectual property. In: Kurbanoglu, S., Grassian, E., Mizrachi, D., Catts, R., Špiranec, S. (eds.) *Worldwide Commonalities and Challenges in Information Literacy Research and Practice*. CCIS, vol. 397, pp. 610–616. Springer, Cham (2013). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-03919-0_82
5. Trencheva, T.: The new reality of intellectual property at the state university of library studies and information technologies: project initiatives. In: 3rd International Conference "The New Perspectives in Science Education", pp. 228–231. Florence, Italy (2014)

6. Denchev, S., Trencheva, T.: Intellectual property as a basic part of the university's information literacy. In: 2nd International Conference on Education and Management Science (ICEMS 2016), pp. 74–78. Beijing, China (2016)
7. Planska-Simeonova, K.: Copyright protection of photographic information in compliance with the new regulations of the European Union. In: 11th Annual International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies, Palma de Mallorca, pp. 5040–504. Spain (2019)
8. Trencheva, T.: Information literacy in the framework of higher education: focus on intellectual property training. In: 14th International Technology, Education and Development Conference, pp. 6555–6561. Valencia, Spain (2020)