

Photocopy tariff plan 40 cents per page levy on copyright

By STELLA LEE

ANYONE photocopying copyright publications will have to pay 40 cents a page under the levy system proposed by a new organisation.

The tariff, to be collected by the soon-to-be-established Hong Kong Copyright Licensing Society and distributed to the copyright holders, would be 30 cents for the Government and 20 cents for students.

The system, outlined in a Law Reform Commission report, aims to minimise copyright abuse – estimated to cost copyright holders \$30 million a year alone in the libraries of colleges, polytechnics and universities.

A final decision on the charge will be made by the board of directors of the society, which is to be formed as a non-profit making company in two months.

A spokesman for a working committee, Tom Ng Yun-lam, expected the system to cover all protected materials of local and foreign copyright holders belonging to the society and overseas collecting associations.

"I expect all the local copyright holders will join the society.

"While the system will help protect creations, it will also benefit users because they will no longer need to locate the copyright holder first before making a photocopy. This is usually a very time-consuming process," Mr Ng said.

The board will comprise eight members from the publishing industry, copyright holders, and users' representatives.

Mr Ng said the preparatory committee had invited 96 organisations, including publication copyright holders, publishing companies and users to attend a consultation meeting on September 22 on the formation of the society.

He said the society would first target government and tertiary institutions in December.

It is estimated \$5 million can be collected from the Government and \$1 million from each of the institutions a year.

The society would move on to schools next April and to larger private companies and individuals in 1996.

A scheme would have to be worked out with photocopying shops so they could collect the tariff from customers, Mr Ng said.

A total of \$30 million was expected to be collected a year when the system was in full swing, Mr Ng said.

He said the income would be distributed to copyright holders after deducting a service charge by CASH – the Composers and Authors Society of Hong Kong – which would help administer the collection. Another \$1 million would pay administrative costs.

Mr Ng said publications would be categorised and the society would calculate the share for each of the category based on the photocopying frequency.

The share for each of the categories would then be divided among the respective copyright holders, Mr Ng said.