



photo: John Rodsted

Human Rights Internet (HRI) is a world leader in the exchange of information within the international human rights community. The organization acted as the secretariat for the Vienna Plus Five Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) International Forum held in Ottawa, June 22 to 24, 1998.

Launched in the United States in 1976, HRI has been based in Ottawa since 1990. Executive Director and co-founder, Canadian Laurie Wiseberg, looks back on the organization's beginnings. "In the late

"In the early 1970s, Harry and I did our first study of an international interest group — Amnesty International — to see whether and under what circumstances it was effective."

"For myself, my concern about the role of NGOs emerged from my PhD research on the politics of the international relief operations in Biafra during the Nigerian civil war."

"We started our first research in Los Angeles, where I was doing my PhD and Harry was a professor of Political Science. Human Rights Internet was formally

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1960s, my late husband, Harry Scoble, had a Brazilian student, Bolivar, who was thrown into prison by the military when he went home to São Paulo to do his PhD research. That's when Harry discovered Amnesty International and worked with the organization to get him out of prison. Bolivar is now a key human rights advisor to the current Brazilian president."

launched when we were both teaching at the University of Illinois in Chicago."

"Then in 1978, we decided that if we were to do this properly, we had to be based in an information centre, which in the United States would be Washington or New York. Since the Carter administration had just come into office, making human rights part of their agenda, we moved to Washington in 1978. We operated out of our house for the first five years."

"In 1985, Harvard Law School invited us to move to Boston. And in 1990, shortly after the death of my husband, I decided to take HRI home to Canada."

HRI's primary role is to serve the information needs of international scholars, human rights activists, asylum lawyers and organizations via its extensive documentation centre and databases.

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