JAL Sterling – In Memoriam

17 April 1927–29 November 2020

Of Middle Temple, Honorary Member, BLACA, Consultant to Lamb Chambers, Professorial Fellow, Queen Mary Intellectual Property Research Institute, Queen Mary University of London

John Adrian Lawrence Sterling was a colossal figure in the advocacy and teaching of copyright law and policy. Having read law at the University of Sydney, Adrian was admitted to the Bar of New South Wales in 1949, and thereafter to the English Bar (Middle Temple) in 1953. He commenced his copyright journey by joining the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI), London, as Assistant to the Director-General. Eventually working his way to become the Deputy Director-General of IFPI, Adrian's work would entail making representations on copyright and related rights to Governments and NGOs throughout the world, including attending landmark copyright Conferences ranging from the Rome Convention (1961) to the WIPO Internet Treaties (1996). After stepping down from the IFPI in 1973, Adrian began the second major stage in his journey, namely resuming practice both in Sydney and in London, specializing in national and international copyright law and data, and of course publishing – including some of the earliest discourses on performing rights and sound recordings. The third stage, and perhaps what he enjoyed most, was when he became a copyright teacher at the age of 65 years. He was appointed first to Queen Mary University of London and then subsequently also to King's College, London. By the time he retired, he had been elected as Vice-President of the British Copyright Council, as Honorary Member to the British Literary & Artistic Copyright Association (ALAI-UK), and appointed as Emeritus Vice President of the British Copyright Council. He had published six books, including the iconic *Sterling on World Copyright Law*, several articles and studies and given over a hundred lectures and conference addresses. Adrian was proficient in French, German and Italian, which was used to much effect not only for exploring the national laws of many jurisdictions, but also to explore his love for music, literature and medieval iconography.

His main legacy is the generations of academics, students and practitioners, who were imbued with his unique expertise and his unwavering enthusiasm for copyright. He was unabashedly dedicated to his students and helped many of them to become established and recognized professionals in their fields. In return there is so much affection for him around the world. Legendary were the Hampstead Heath walks with both Adrian and Caroline which took in Lord Mansfield and John Keats, as well as the summer picnics for students and faculty in Ladbroke Square. He was undoubtedly a mentor and a father figure to many people.

Professor Sterling's CCLS colleagues at Queen Mary, University of London,
December, 2020