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**Computer Law  
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Editorial: In Memoriam

## Sylvia Mercado Kierkegaard (1953–2015)

*Katina Michael*




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Professor Sylvia Mercado Kierkegaard was a Philippine jurist specialising in computer law. In 2009 she attained the position of Visiting Professor in the Faculty of Law at the University of Southampton, in the United Kingdom researching a diverse range of topics including, comparative contract law, alternative dispute resolution, intellectual property rights, European Union law, privacy, electronic commerce, cybersecurity, computer law, and data protection. Professor Kierkegaard was a lifelong learner who had vast knowledge with a strong multidisciplinary approach to her work. Remarkably, her breadth of knowledge never came at the expense of her depth of legal knowledge.

Sylvia obtained her first academic degree, a Bachelor of Mass Communications (Journalism), in the early 1970s from

the University of the Philippines and later studied at Stanford University where she completed her Masters in Asian Studies. In 2003, she duxed her class, attaining her Masters in European Union Business and Law at the University of Aarhus. In addition to living in the Philippines and Egypt (the two countries where her three children were born), the family moved several times due to her husband's work transfers. Living in Greece and Germany respectively, Sylvia was active as a born-again Christian Minister, serving the Lord and preaching to others. In 1992, Sylvia and her husband, Allan Kierkegaard, decided to move the whole family back to Copenhagen, Denmark. Sylvia continued with her ministries whilst taking care of her three children.

It was in Copenhagen, that Sylvia felt she could well and truly re-enter the workforce full time as her children were older, and sincerely begin her career as an academic in the field she so loved. She began to publish articles on topical themes. She also participated in several conferences, at which time she realised there was a stark gap in the field. In 2006, Sylvia swiftly moved to establish the International Association of IT Lawyers (IAITL) targeted at lawyers and legal practitioners who had an interest in Information Technology Law. The association's mission sought to promote the study and further research in Computer Law through international engagement and conferences, the formation of transnational networks and networking events, the publication of members' research, and the timely announcement of new job openings. In the same year that Sylvia formed IAITL, the first IAITL conference was held in Hamburg with great success. This was followed annually by conferences in Copenhagen, Istanbul, New York, Beijing, Prague, Malta, Barcelona, Nicosia, Athens, Bangkok and Lisbon. These conferences were known for their high standard in paper submission and service, as

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well as by loyal conference participation by delegates, year after year. For those of us who have had the good fortune to host, organise, and program large-scale events such as this, it usually is a one off thing, like building a house. Sylvia built many houses in her time, had the ability to mobilise volunteers, and was a visionary.

Sylvia was a deep thinker about the future for numerous reasons. First, she had children, and felt it a duty to provide ways for which legal framework solutions could be used to protect humans. She was incredibly “international” or “bloc” focused in her research having understood the forces of globalisation so well from the perspective of a Danish resident and Philippine citizen. For instance, she could especially see how new technologies could impact people (e.g. women and children) and how the law needed to rapidly develop to face the challenges (e.g. cyberbullying). She also knew well the digital divide between countries in Asia and the rest of the world.

Prof. Kierkegaard also liked to tackle looming problems and help bring some definition to them. She would often consider what was “the right thing to do”, and did not mind being faced with what others believed to be insurmountable barriers, challenges or impossibilities like catching out regulators for their lack of enforceability of given laws. To her there was no problem that was unresolvable. It just took hard work, perseverance and persistence. Sylvia needs to be remembered as a trailblazer, a first mover in the European Union, especially in relation to topics that were complex and highly significant to long-term stability of the human race. She was a fierce advocate of data protection, and in the protection of children, and that new technologies should not encroach on an individual’s right to privacy. This editorial is devoted to the celebration of her academic work while she made a seminal contribution at the University of Southampton, throughout Europe and internationally.

I provide here a list of highlights between 2009 and 2013 as they demonstrate the breadth of the research Prof. Kierkegaard was engaged in:

- Keynote speaker at the 16th Eurasia Summit on Information and Communication Technologies



- Invited lecture on the “Present State and Future Developments in EU Data Privacy and Protection and Info-Network Security” at Technion Israel Institute of Technology
- Recipient of an EU grant to conduct a visualization and privacy study in Israel
- Speaker and panellist at the Ankara Bar Congress
- Speaker and moderator at the Workshop on IPR, INPR Court in Bangkok
- Keynote speaker at the Digital Agenda Assembly of the European Commission Department of Information Society and Media and the European Parliament
- Chair at the EU Workshop on Cultural Heritage, Private Law and IPR from a global and EU-China Perspective
- Keynote speaker on Cybercrime Prevention organised by the Internet Fraud Association, Australian Police and International Association of Cybercrime Prevention in Sydney
- Keynote speaker on “Copyright, Patent, and Trademark” for the Perth Judiciary conference
- Summer School chairman: organized by the University of Vienna Economics, University of Gottingen, University of Hamburg, and Utrecht University
- Chairman for the Conference in Public law, Private law, Trade law in Cyprus
- Chair and workshop in Turkish Cyprus for the Supreme Court on Regulating Cyberspace
- Various lectures at Beijing Normal University, Communication University of China and Renmin University
- Keynote speaker, World Congress of Forensics, Chongqing China
- Workshop chairman for CASS for the China Supreme Court, for Hong Kong University of China, and the University of Macau
- Panel chairman for Challenges in Cybersecurity - Risks, Strategies, and Confidence-Building workshop organised by the Free University of Berlin, the University of Hamburg, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research in Geneva and the Federal Foreign Office Berlin
- Conference chairman and speaker, Cyberconference, Netherlands Antilles
- Speaker at the International Information Marketing Association Conference, Texas, USA
- Speaker at the Famagusta Law Conference in Turkish Cyprus
- Chairman, Hans Bredow-Max Planck Workshop on IP Law: “Regulating IPR”, Hamburg, Germany
- Speaker, panellist, ESF Strategic Workshop on Cybersecurity, Budapest, Hungary
- China IP Summer School Program in X’ian, Nanjing and Shanghai
- Keynote speaker, Cybercrime Conference, Brazil for ILA
- Chairman, speaker, IPL Conference, Barcelona, Spain
- Keynote speaker, Social Networking Workshop, Finland
- Chairman, co-Reach Workshop on IPR and ISP Liability, London, UK
- Chairman, co-Reach Workshop on IPR and Collective Society, Database, and Jurisdiction, Vienna
- Keynote speaker, EU Medforist Project under the auspices of Princess Sumaya of Jordan
- Keynote speaker and moderator, Workshop on Digital Convergence and Cyberlaw, Malaysian Centre of Regulatory Studies, Malaysia

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