

Abraham L. Kaminstein

Abraham Lewis Kaminstein was appointed Register of Copyrights effective December 24, 1960, by Librarian of Congress L. Quincy Mumford. Before being named Register, Mr. Kaminstein had served in the Copyright Office for 13 years. He was appointed the first chief of the Examining Division when it was formed in 1947. In 1959, he was made deputy Register of Copyrights and chief of the Examining Division. He became acting Register upon the death of Arthur Fisher in November 1960.

Born in New York City on May 13, 1912, Mr. Kaminstein was educated in the public schools there and in 1932 received a B.S.S. degree from the College of the City of New York. In 1935 and 1936, respectively, he received the LL.B. and LL.M. degrees from the Harvard Law School, where he was a research fellow in 1936 and 1937. He began his government career in the latter year and served as an attorney in various agencies before coming to the Copyright Office.

Mr. Kaminstein was a leading force in adapting the copyright registration system to the public interest, and established many of the examining procedures still in use.

As head of the Copyright Office, he gave new impetus to the movement for the general revision of the copyright law. He presided over numerous meetings of the panel of expert consultants on general revision; and his leadership resulted in molding recommendations for the new statute and in keeping the revision effort alive despite legislative inactivity in the Senate during the years following passage of the general revision bill by the House of Representatives in 1967. The bill finally enacted by Congress in 1976 was, in its major features, the measure prepared under his direction. In addition, he took a leading part in international copyright affairs and had a pivotal role in coping with the broad issues in the field of intellectual property. He was the author of numerous articles on copyright law, including an important study on "Divisibility of Copyrights."

He retired as Register in 1971 because of ill health and was appointed at that time Honorary Consultant in Domestic and International Copyright Affairs by the Librarian. In that same year, he received the Richard Strauss Medal from the German Society for Performing and Mechanical Rights in Music, the first American so honored. He also received the Jefferson Medal of the New Jersey Patent Law Association and the 1977 Award of the Copyright Society of the U.S.A. Mr Kaminstein died in Washington, D.C., on September 10, 1977.

