

THE DATA GAP & ISNI

YouTube is to adopt the ISNI (International Standard Name Identifier) for creators (authors, performers and others) who contribute to music on the platform. This could be a significant step towards closing music's Data Gap.

Data Gap

A Data Gap often exists between those stakeholders who receive the information that music usage generates and the creators whose music is being used. To bridge the data gap two things are necessary. Firstly in order to send usage data to the relevant creators, the industry needs to be able to **verify the identities of creators**. Secondly subject to consumer privacy and rights, the rich **data generated from activity on streaming services, festival apps and other connected activity needs to be shared with creators**. Digital distribution services are increasingly adept at providing data direct to creators, but usage data often sits with intermediaries (publishers, collective management organisations, labels, promoters, etc) out of reach for creators. Only creators and consumers are active across all four sectors of the music industry (publishing, brand, live, recording), only creators could aggregate the data from all user activity (including across the artists own social media) and use that data to fully map audiences and their activity. Creators with better access to data would be able to make better informed strategic decisions throughout their careers. We have already seen evidence of that approach in the European Union's copyright reform process (in the amendment tabled by MEPs Roza Thun and Michal Boni¹ during the Internal Market Committee deliberations). What sort of an industry would not want to seize its big data opportunity?

Most recently during its Big Questions panel at last weeks Eurosonic conference², IMMF and its members have been asking why the music industry operates so many dysfunctional creator and content ID systems. The authors collective management (CMO) sector uses the respected IPI³ system, but even that has its flaws, and the situation is even worse in the recording sector with competing ID codes being created and no joined up record label adoption of a standard creator ID. Various lawsuits⁴ and the US' Music Modernisation Act⁵ have highlighted the failure of the music industry to deliver a functional link between ISRC⁶ (recordings) and ISWC⁷ (works/compositions/lyrics), although SoundExchange⁸ and others are working on solutions. However ISNI which identifies creators not their content is often overlooked. For all the potential of some of the initiatives, as is so often the case music is not speaking with one voice, and is overlooking creator centric solutions to prioritise sectoral agendas.

¹ <http://bit.ly/2p8xbDm> European Parliament Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer / Copyright in the Digital Single Market Proposal for a directive / Amendment 515 Article 14 – paragraph 1

² <https://www.eurosonic-noorderslag.nl/en/>

³ <https://www.ipisystem.org/>

⁴ <http://money.cnn.com/2018/01/03/technology/spotify-lawsuit-wixen-songs/index.html>

⁵ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/4706>

⁶ <http://isrc.ifpi.org/en/>

⁷ <http://www.iswc.org/>

⁸ <https://www.soundexchange.com/news/soundexchange-launches-public-search-website-with-access-to-industrys-best-isrc-data/>

Creators wear many hats, they need only one ID.

Authors of music are often also performers, and performers who make recordings also play live, take photographs, and many write books, appear in films, etc etc. They need a single ID for all their activity, or for sector ID's to link together to a single point (one ID!). As we saw at Tallinn Music Week⁹ the Estonians have technology to create trust in digital ID's for citizenship and various public services, including medical records. We also expect news from the Ment Conference¹⁰ in Slovenia about ledgers (blockchain etc) and AI for creating trusted metagvdata registries. The trusted ID technology is already available, creators need a single ID, and the industry needs to adopt it as key metadata for all activities.

Creators and their managers and lawyers can insert a clause into all author and performer contracts requiring intermediaries to use an ID such as ISNI, this would create metadata standards through gradual adoption of a standard practice driven from the creator end of the supply chain. First a consensus is required on which ID to use. ISNI because it is an ISO¹¹ standard, and because librarians and their expertise is involved, has long been the leading candidate. YouTube will now drive adoption of ISNI from the B2C end of the supply chain. We look forward to hearing reaction to this news from B2C platforms like Facebook and Spotify at Ny:Lon Connect¹² (co-organised by MusicBiz¹³).

Initially meeting in semi secret, in basements below conferences, then gradually widening the discussion to include more stakeholders Music Biz's Metadata Workgroup led by Bill Wilson has been building consensus on industry standards. With so many stakeholders involved in the supply chain, gradual is the only way to build consensus. However change doesn't always wait for consensus. IMMF will discuss this latest opportunity with its members during February conference calls, it will continue to meet with artists representatives from Japan, China, Korea, India, Indonesia, Africa, and LATAM to ensure they and others are included. The industry needs to have one voice. It's reaction to today's news should be less about YouTube and more about ISNI and solutions to musics data gap.

About ISNI

ISNI's mission is to assign to the public name(s) of a researcher, inventor, writer, artist, performer, publisher, etc. a persistent unique identifying number to resolve the problem of name ambiguity in search and discovery; and diffuse each assigned ISNI across all repertoires in the global supply chain so that every published work can be unambiguously attributed to its creator.

The ISNI is becoming a critical component in Linked Data and Semantic Web applications, and is already used extensively by libraries and archives to share catalog information.

ISNI is part of the ISO family of international standard identifiers that includes identifiers of works, recordings, products and rights holders in all repertoires. Over 10 million ISNIs have been assigned to date; many music creators already have one.

⁹ <https://tmw.ee/>

¹⁰ <https://www.ment.si>

¹¹ <https://www.iso.org/home.html>

¹² <http://nylonconnect.com/>

¹³ <https://musicbiz.org/>