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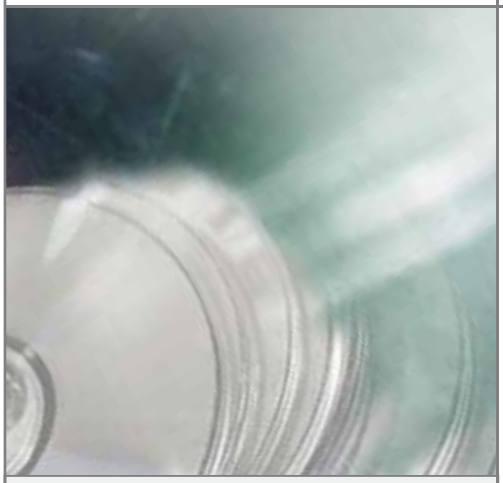
CREATING A FUTURE FOR MUSIC

mcps PRS
THE MUSIC ALLIANCE



Music is Big Business

But how does the money reach the writers and publishers?

Paying royalties accurately to composers and songwriters has always been a challenge. Now those responsible are enlisting the help of technology to enable even more accurate payments.

Composers, lyricists and publishers have always been owed a royalty payment for every work of theirs copied (eg to CD or DVD) or performed in public (eg downloaded, broadcast or played in a pub or club). It's always been important that the right royalty payment is made for the right song and to the right creator.

In the UK, that's the job of the MCPS-PRS Alliance. They are responsible for processing the playlists received from broadcasters and matching those lists to their comprehensive database. This database contains details of all music for which royalties are payable, and contains information about who is entitled to those royalties. Matching the musical works on the playlists to the musical works on the database is a key function of the organisation.

Hitting a wrong note

The challenge, of course, comes from the sheer volume of information that must be matched: thousands of different productions, songwriters and songs. Making the process even more difficult were the variations that develop when information is flowing in from so many sources.

Take, for example, the famous songwriting team of LENNON and McCARTNEY. They might also be submitted as "JOHN LENNON/PAUL McCARTNEY" or even "JOHN WINSTON LENNON/JAMES PAUL McCARTNEY." And that's just a start.

- Song titles are often abbreviated or the spelling may be deliberately changed. So FALLING is written as FALLIN' or LOVING is written as LUVIN'.
- Extra punctuation is introduced so that "PETROL" becomes "P.E.T.R.O.L."
- Many songs have parenthetical titles that may be omitted. Thus "SWEET DREAMS (ARE MADE OF THIS)" may be written as "SWEET DREAMS."
- Writing teams who perform as groups may be credited by their group name or their personal name. Thus "BILLIE JOE ARMSTRONG/GREEN DAY" is the same as "ARMSTRONG BILLIE JOE/WRIGHT FRANK E III/PRITCHARD MIKE."
- Productions suffer from similar variations so that "A COOK'S TOUR OF FRANCE" (with an accent rather than apostrophe) may appear as "COOKS TOUR OF FRANCE."
- Some information must be recognised as being completely superfluous to the matching. "STAR TREK 1/3" must be recognised as "STAR TREK (SERIES 1 EPISODE 3)".

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Adrian Lotter,
Information Systems Director,
MCPS–PRS

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It was clear to the MCPS-PRS Alliance that they needed a better way to track and match this information. "While planning the replacement of a legacy mainframe system, we identified a need for a package to perform the critical 'matching' function, and to provide benefits from improved matching accuracy and performance," explains Adrian Lotter, Information Systems Director.

According to Lotter, the new system had to do at least three things. "First it must accurately match reported music against a central database, in order to identify the musical works involved. Secondly it must match reported film and TV productions, in order to identify the productions involved. And finally it must maintain a central database of productions and the musical works used therein.

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Though Identity Systems' software is usually used to match identities such as person names, company names or addresses, it is just as effective in matching any identity where error and variation occurs naturally and unavoidably. Indeed, Identity Systems' previous experience developing identity search and match systems for other major players in the music industry made them a prime candidate to help the MCPS-PRS Alliance develop the matching module of a new system.

Working in concert

Identity Search Server (ISS), the flagship product of Identity Systems, was installed at the offices of MCPS-PRS in London and a pilot project was started.

"Initially the product was better at identifying candidates than definite matches," said Lotter. "In some areas this is a strength, but for this application, where definite match 'accuracy' is very important we had to set match thresholds very high."

Experts from Identity Systems worked with the MCPS-PRS staff to produce a customised population for music and productions that was ideally suited to the identity data being input to the system. Following further assistance with the overall system design "the technology is living up to expectations" confirms Lotter. "The key benefit realised was an improved automatic matching of reported music."

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For more information about The MCPS-PRS Alliance, please visit http://www.mcps-prs-alliance.co.uk

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>
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About Identity Systems

Identity Systems is the pioneer in enabling organisations to build and maintain high-quality identity data search and matching software solutions. Identity Systems develops and markets software products that significantly enhance an organisation's ability to search, find, match, and group identity data within its computer systems and network databases.

Identity Systems has been in this area of specialisation for more than 18 years, and has over 500 clients worldwide who rely on its robust, enterprise-wide software. The Company has offices in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, and agents in other countries.

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