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Innovations Affecting Us —
RIAA Opposition to Digital
Publishing May Soon Crumble

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Please note — We are looking for a second column editor for Innovations Affecting Us. If any of you out there are interested, please contact Katina
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In an earlier column (ATG, February, 1999, Restrains to Electronic Publishing on the Horizon?, p.78, 80.), we mentioned that the
RIAA (Recording Industry Association of America) staunchly opposes the introduction
of new media and new formats and that it could
adopt an unremovable watermarking technology
to control access to digital music. That
opposition may begin to crumble in the not too
distant future. On March 3, 1999, ASCAP
(American Society of Composers, Authors
and Publishers) announced a pilot project to
 watermark International Standard Work
Codes (ISWC) with ARIS Technologies’
MusiCode audio watermarking system.

David E. Leibowitz, President of ARIS
Technologies, Inc. (Cambridge, MA) said,
“The ISWC is the musical work’s license plate
as the work travels in broadcasts and along the
information superhighway. We are proud to
be working with ASCAP to assure that ISWC
codes remain secure and, through the use of
MusiCode, are able to deliver comprehensive,
automated, and accurate information of vital
importance to its members.”

ASCAP, established in 1914, comprises
over 80,000 composers, lyricists, and music
publishers. It is the world’s largest performing
rights organization, committed to protecting
the rights of its members by licensing and collect-
ing royalties for the public performance of their
copyrighted works and then distributing these
fees to members based on performances. ARIS
Technologies focuses on the varied copyright
protection, royalty distribution, marketing,
market research, and product distribution needs
of the music industry. Its MusiCode system
was recently honored by Discover magazine
as the “Technology of the Year” in the Sound
Category.

The pilot project between ASCAP and
ARIS Technologies is the result of more than
a year of testing of the ARIS MusiCode
watermarking technology identifying nonfeature and other musical performances.

ASCAP will begin issuing the unique
codes in predetermined amounts so that the
ISWC numbers can be embedded into
recorded music via ARIS’s
MusiCode. ASCAP wants to establish
the ISWC as the standard numbering
system for audio watermarking by its
members.

Al Wallace, ASCAP’s Chief Operating
Officer said, “The ISWC, already
recognized as the world standard for
numbering musical works, is a critical
ingredient for the success of audio
watermarking in the next millennium.
With this pilot project, we solidify the
ISWC’s ongoing role, as well as offering
ASCAP’s writers and publishers a
choice in their selection of
watermarking technologies.”

ASCAP, in cooperation with ARIS,
will soon finalize the list of ASCAP
members who will participate in the
pilot project which extends ASCAP’s
recently announced strategy of working
closely with a core group of qualified
audio watermarking providers to
best serve members in monitoring
music use in analog and digital media.
This arrangement is non-exclusive. ASCAP
announced that it will work with ARIS,
as well as other watermark, security,
and information service companies to
develop the key components of audio
watermarking. And ARIS will continue
to work closely with other musical
rights societies and others in the music,
recording, advertising, programming,
and broadcast industries, both domes-
tically and internationally.

If this pilot project is successful, as
expected, we can soon anticipate the
abatement of the music industry’s oppo-
sition to digital publishing and dis-
tribution. This turn of events could res-
ult in the appearance of new music
formats and new distribution agree-
ments that could prove equally ben-
eficial to publishers and performers.