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

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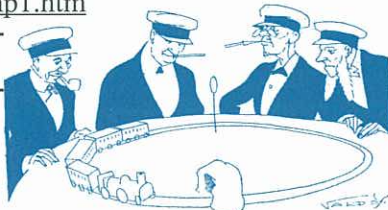
Please note — We are looking for a second column editor for Innovations Affecting Us. If any of you out there are interested, please contact Katina <strauchk@cofc.edu> or Norm <normd@providence.edu>.— KS

In an earlier column (*ATG*, February, 1999, **Restraints 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 collecting 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 domestically and internationally.

If this pilot project is successful, as expected, we can soon anticipate the abatement of the music industry's opposition to digital publishing and distribution. This turn of events could result in the appearance of new music formats and new distribution agreements that could prove equally beneficial to publishers and performers. 

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