

Metadata of Digital Music Files: The Key Findings of the Study

ECSA, Wien 13.10.2017

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Background

- The aim of the study was to:
 1. Produce information on the current status of the metadata delivery chain
 2. Make suggestions how to correct or improve the flow of metadata.
- The study was commissioned by Elvis ry in co-operation with Society of Finnish Composers, Teosto, Finnish Musicians' Union, and Finnish Music Publishers' Association, whose representatives also formed the project steering group
- The study was supported financially by Ministry of Education and Culture
- The study was done by Consultant, Ph.D. Jari Muikku of Digital Media Finland during the period of April-June 2017
- The study was based on:
 - Literature
 - Interviews (24, involved 32 persons)
 - Muikku's own professional background

Problems & Challenges: General

- **The flow of metadata is shattered and modular by nature.** Each party sees and is concerned only of its own part of the process and not of the process as a whole.
- The national and international metadata **development projects treat symptoms and do not affect the diseases** or the root problems. Processes can be made more fluent but deep structures and operational cultures are difficult to change.
- Even though music business has gone digital, **the business culture is still rooted, at least partly, into the world of physical products.**

Challenge 1

- **The collection of metadata in studios is not systematic. Responsible persons (mainly studio producers) do not have financial incentives to produce data of best quality.**
- Possible solutions:
 - Taking studio lists back in use in digital form.
 - Creating incentives for producers to deliver metadata of best possible quality.

Challenge 2

- A new work may be registered to CMO databases only long after the release of its recording.
- Possible solutions:
 - Speedier registration process incl. composers and publishers

Challenge 3

- **Problems in matching registrations if a work has more than one composer and publisher.**
- Possible solutions:
 - Harmonization of processes and usage of identifier codes.
 - Development of registration systems.

Challenge 4

- **Attitude problems and lack of business skills among smaller indie labels, which produce metadata of poor quality.**
- Possible solutions:
 - Training and education in various forms.
 - Suitable combinations of sanctions and incentives set by distributors.

Challenge 5

- **DSPs are depended of the metadata produced by the record labels.**
 - **Getting information on works directly from CMOs is difficult.**
 - **DSPs do not currently get reliable and comprehensive data on musicians anywhere.**
- Possible solutions:
 - CMOs and back office service providers make their databases available in a more accessible manner.
 - Studying possibilities of getting more extensive information on performers by using in a similar way the databases of neighbouring rights societies.

Challenge 6

- **Moral rights are not fulfilled, as the UXs of DSPs do not provide users with information on authors and musicians.**
- Possible solutions:
 - DSPs require this data from labels and distributors, and explore the possibilities of using fore-mentioned databases.
 - Recording contracts include clauses concerning delivering complete performer data to DSPs.
 - The additional value of presenting richer metadata in the UXs is studied: e.g. using metadata for better ad targeting, differentiation of free and premium services, reducing CHURN, improving customer retention, and deepening of artist-fan relationships.
 - Implementation of moral rights by judicial means.

Challenge 7

- **The complex ownership structure of works and administration.**
- Possible solutions:
 - Making the databases available on wider scale than today.
 - Collecting data into larger pools.
 - Harmonizing of the usage of identifier codes and processes among industry parties.

Conclusions 1

- The root reason behind many problems is the traditional division in business between recordings and works.
 - Both sides have their established models, practises and cultures, which are difficult to change or even unify within a short timespan.
 - Unifying the business cultures of physical and digital recordings will take some time as well.
- The fore-mentioned setting can be seen, for example, in the variability in the usage of identifier codes and the quality of processes.
 - The result reminds the classic whispering game.
- The solution of one global database has failed time after time due to financial and political disagreements.
 - The current prevailing approach is to combine various kinds of data pools by using open and standardised interfaces.

Conclusions 2

- Another problem of metadata development projects is lack of depth.
 - Progress has made in the field of technical solutions, but
 - The projects have not touched the underlying structural and cultural issues.
- The common nominator for all initiatives is a motive, which can be endorsed by all business parties: finding big enough economic incentives, both in forms of additional income, savings, and efficiency.
- Sanctions are problematic and difficult to implement due to the global nature of business and the challenges of enforcement.
 - However, in everyday business both sanctions and incentives are needed.
 - The relation between “stick and carrot” should be pondered in each contract and metadata development project.

THANK YOU!



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