

METADATA & CREDITS DUE

Knowledge Toolkit



THE IVORS
ACADEMY

METADATA AND CREDITS DUE

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INTRODUCTION

In today's digital music ecosystem, [metadata](#) is the invisible infrastructure that ensures songwriters and composers get both credited and paid for their work. Whether your song streams on Spotify, plays on BBC Radio, appears in a TV programme, or is used by any of the thousands of other platforms and services worldwide - it's metadata that connects your creative work to your identity and your bank account. Yet despite its fundamental importance, metadata remains one of the most misunderstood and mismanaged aspects of the music business.

The shift from physical to digital distribution fundamentally broke many of the music industry's metadata workflows. In the pre-digital era, record labels couldn't manufacture a CD or vinyl without first obtaining a mechanical licence from MCPS, which required them to provide complete songwriter information. This built-in checkpoint ensured accurate credits flowed through the system. Today, a song can go from studio to streaming platform in days, often without any songwriter information attached. The result? Thousands of works sitting unmatched in collection society databases, with both recognition and revenue trapped in limbo.

For UK songwriters and composers, understanding metadata isn't just about technical compliance - it's about protecting your creative legacy and livelihood. Whether you're self-published or working with a major publisher, whether you're writing pop songs or composing for media, the principles remain the same: accurate metadata starts with you. This section will equip you with the knowledge and tools to ensure your works are properly identified, your credits are preserved, and your royalties find their way home.

The two sides of metadata

At its core, the metadata challenge involves two distinct but interrelated rights: the moral right to be identified as a creator (attribution) and the economic right to be paid for your work (remuneration). While these are often bundled together in current systems, understanding their distinction is crucial. A songwriter might be properly credited on Spotify but still not receiving mechanical royalties, or vice



versa. Both failures represent significant problems, but they require different solutions.

ESSENTIAL IDENTIFIERS

IPI (interested party information) number: Think of this as your songwriter's passport. Also known as CAE (Compositeur, Auteur, Editeur) in older systems, this number uniquely identifies you across the global royalty system. Issued by your CMO when you become a member, you may have different IPIs for different names - one for your legal name and another for your professional name or pseudonym. Both link back to you, but using the correct one ensures smooth royalty flows.

ISWC (international standard musical work code): This identifies your composition itself. Unlike an IPI which identifies you as a person, an ISWC identifies a specific song or instrumental work. It's assigned after your work is registered with a CMO and remains with that work forever, regardless of who publishes or records it.

ISRC (international standard recording code): This identifies a specific recording of a work. While ISWCs identify compositions, ISRCs identify the actual recorded performances. The same song might have dozens of ISRCs (for different recordings, remixes, or versions) but only one ISWC.

ISNI (international standard name identifier): A newer ISO standard identifier that works across all creative industries, not just music. While not yet universally required, forward-thinking creators are obtaining ISNIs as they're increasingly used in digital systems and may become essential for AI attribution and global rights tracking.

IPN (international performer number): If you're also a performing artist, this identifier (sometimes called IPN) specifically identifies you as a performer on recordings, distinct from your role as a songwriter.



Joining things up: Every recording (identified by an ISRC) must be matched to the underlying composition (identified by an ISWC). This match is what ensures mechanical royalties flow correctly from streaming services through to songwriters. Missing or mismatched identifiers anywhere in this chain can break the flow of both credits and money.

WHERE METADATA BREAKS DOWN

At creation

The most critical moment for metadata is often the most chaotic - the creative session itself. Whether in a professional studio or a bedroom setup, the excitement of creation often overshadows administrative concerns. Yet this is when core information must be captured: who contributed what, contact details, publishing affiliations, and at minimum, agreement on the song title.

During distribution

The journey from studio to streaming service is where metadata often goes missing. Aggregators and distributors historically haven't required songwriter information, focusing only on recording artist data. This means a track can be generating millions of streams while the songwriters remain completely uncredited in the system.

Through industry changes

Publisher consolidation creates particular challenges. When catalogues change hands - BMG to Universal, Razor & Tie to Concord - songwriter relationships often fall through the cracks. Historical metadata problems compound: works with translated titles, covers with variant spellings, or songs registered under different names may never reconnect with their creators without manual intervention.

The real cost

The impact isn't theoretical. Professional songwriters report hundreds or thousands of unmatched works in collection society databases. Each represents not just lost income - though the amounts can be substantial - but lost



opportunities. Credits are currency in the creative industries, opening doors to new collaborations, sync opportunities, and commission work. When your biggest hit isn't connected to your name, your career suffers.

SOLUTIONS IN PRACTICE

Immediate actions

The Credits Due campaign provides practical tools for capturing metadata at the point of creation. The [split sheet template](#) ensures all essential information is documented before anyone leaves the session. While it might feel administrative in a creative moment, it's far easier than trying to reconstruct details months or years later. The Ivors Academy champions these tools and practices as part of our commitment to empowering songwriters and composers with the resources they need to protect their rights from day one.

Ongoing management

For self-published writers, regular audits of your works in CMO databases can catch problems early. Check not just your home territory (PRS/MCPS in the UK) but also major international societies where your works might be earning. For published writers, maintaining communication with your publisher - especially through catalogue transfers - is essential.

Industry evolution

Positive changes are emerging. ICE (International Copyright Enterprise) is developing systems to separate attribution from payment disputes, potentially allowing writers to be credited even while financial splits are being resolved. The MLC in the US is creating portals for published writers to flag problems directly. The UK government's metadata working group brings together publishers, societies, and technology companies to establish better standards.

What you can do

Perfect metadata starts with songwriters and composers taking ownership of their creative information. This means:



- Treating your IPI number as carefully as your passport.
- Documenting every creative session, however informal.
- Understanding your rights in different territories.
- Building metadata requirements into your working practices.
- Working with organisations like The Ivors Academy to advocate for better systems.

The metadata challenge won't be solved overnight, but every properly documented work is a step toward a more transparent, fair music ecosystem. Your creative work deserves to be found, credited, and compensated. Understanding metadata is the first step in making that happen. The Ivors Academy provides the tools, knowledge, and collective voice needed to drive positive change in how our industry values and tracks creative contributions.

CORE METADATA SET AND DATA FLOW

The Essential Metadata Set

Every musical work requires a core set of metadata to function in the global royalty system. Missing even one element can prevent proper matching and payment.

Minimum Required Information

For the Work Itself:

- Song title (exactly as registered).
- Alternative titles (including translations).
- ISWC (once assigned).
- Duration (for some uses).
- Language of lyrics (if applicable).
- Genre/classification (increasingly important for digital platforms).

For Each Creator:

- Full legal name.



- IPI/CAE number (essential for matching).
- Role (composer, lyricist, or both).
- Percentage share.
- PRO affiliation (PRS, ASCAP, BMI, etc).
- Publisher information (if applicable).

For Published Writers:

- Publisher name.
- Publisher IPI.
- Publisher share percentage.
- Territory of agreement.
- Rights controlled (mechanical, performance, sync).

For Recordings (the ISRC-ISWC link):

- Recording artist name(s).
- ISRC code.
- Label/distributor.
- Release date.
- Version information (remix, live, acoustic, etc).

HOW DATA FLOWS THROUGH THE SYSTEM

Step 1: Creation and documentation

The journey begins in the writing room. Whether it's a professional studio or your kitchen table, this is where metadata must first be captured. Use a split sheet or digital tool to document all creators and their contributions immediately.

Step 2: Registration Pathways

For Self-Published Writers:



1. Direct registration with PRS (for performing rights).
2. Direct registration with MCPS (for mechanical rights).
3. Claim creation in PRS/MCPS online portals.
4. Data enters CIS (Common Information System).

For Published Writers:

1. Publisher receives your split sheet/creation documentation.
2. Publisher registers via CWR to societies worldwide.
3. Publisher may also use direct registration portals.
4. Data flows through publisher's systems to CMOs.

Step 3: Society Processing

- PRS/MCPS validate the registration.
- Check for conflicts with existing claims.
- Assign ISWC if criteria are met.
- Share data with international partners via CIS.

Step 4: International Network Distribution

- Your work data flows to affiliated societies globally.
- Each society imports to their local systems.
- Reciprocal agreements ensure coverage.
- Some delays normal (weeks to months).

Step 5: Usage Matching

When your work is:

- Streamed: DSPs report ISRCs, which must match to ISWCs.
- Broadcast: Stations report performances against registered works.
- Performed live: Venue reports match to your registered works.
- Synced: Production companies clear rights using your registration data.



Step 6: Royalty Flow

- Usage data matches to registration data.
- Societies calculate royalties based on shares.
- International societies exchange royalties.
- Money flows back through the network to you.

COMMON BLOCKAGES AND BREAKDOWNS

At creation

- No documentation of session participants.
- Disagreement on splits left unresolved.
- Missing publisher information.
- Use of nicknames instead of legal names.

During registration

- Typos in creator names.
- Wrong or missing IPI numbers.
- Incorrect publisher information.
- Mismatched song titles.

In international exchange

- Translation issues.
- Different spelling conventions.
- Incomplete reciprocal coverage.
- System incompatibilities.

At point of use

- ISRCs not linked to ISWCs.
- Cover versions not properly attributed.



- Live performances misreported.
- Streaming services missing songwriter data.

Best practices

1. **Be consistent:** Use exactly the same spelling of names and titles everywhere.
2. **Be complete:** Never leave fields blank - use "N/A" if truly not applicable.
3. **Be accurate:** Double-check all numbers, especially IPIs and shares.
4. **Be timely:** Register works as soon as splits are agreed.
5. **Be vigilant:** Regularly check your data has flowed through correctly.

Metadata is only as good as its weakest link. One error anywhere in this chain can stop your royalties from flowing.

GLOSSARY OF METADATA TERMS, CODES, AND IDENTIFIERS

Core identifiers

CAE (compositeur, auteur, éditeur)

- Legacy name for IPI number.
- From French: Composer, Author, Publisher.
- Still appears in older systems and documents.
- Functionally identical to IPI.

IPI (interested party information)

- Unique identifier for creators and publishers.
- Format: 11-digit number (e.g., 00123456789).
- Issued by PROs when you join.
- Multiple IPIs possible for pseudonyms.
- Essential for international royalty tracking.



IPN (international performer number)

- Identifies performers on recordings.
- Different from IPI (which is for writers).
- Used by PPL and similar organisations.
- Links performances to royalty payments.

ISNI (international standard name identifier)

- ISO standard identifier for creators.
- Works across all creative industries.
- 16-digit number (e.g., 0000 0001 2345 6789).
- Increasingly important for AI and global systems.
- Can link to multiple other identifiers.

ISRC (international standard recording code)

- Unique identifier for recordings.
- Format: CC-XXX-YY-NNNNN (e.g., GB-ABC-20-00001).
- Different ISRC for each version/remix.
- Assigned by labels or distributors.
- Critical for streaming royalty matching.

ISWC (international standard musical work code)

- Unique identifier for compositions.
- Format: T-123.456.789-C.
- One ISWC per song (regardless of recordings).
- Assigned after society registration.
- Key to international royalty tracking.



INDUSTRY FORMATS AND STANDARDS

CIS (Common Information System)

- Global database of works information.
- Maintained by CISAC member societies.
- Enables international royalty exchange.
- Contains billions of work registrations.

CISAC (International Confederation of Societies of Authors and Composers)

- Global network of CMOs.
- Sets international standards.
- Manages IPI system.
- Facilitates reciprocal agreements.

CWR (Common Works Registration)

- Industry standard file format.
- Used by publishers to register works.
- Current version: 2.2 (version 3.0 in development).
- Text-based format from 1990s.
- Cannot handle rights relinquishment.

DDEX (Digital Data Exchange)

- XML-based standard for digital supply chain.
- Used between labels, distributors, and DSPs.
- Links recordings to metadata.
- Enables automated processing.

MRT (Music Recognition Technology)

- Audio fingerprinting technology.
- Identifies music automatically.



- Used by broadcasters and venues.
- Helps track unreported performances.

MWL (Musical Work Licence)

- Emerging standard for digital licensing.
- Aims to streamline sync and micro-licensing.
- Still in development/early adoption.

RIGHTS AND LICENSING TERMS

Mechanical Rights

- Right to reproduce music in physical/digital form.
- Administered by MCPS in UK.
- Covers streaming, downloads, CDs, vinyl.
- Different rates for different uses.

Neighbouring Rights

- Rights for performers and record labels.
- Separate from songwriting rights.
- Administered by PPL in UK.
- Covers broadcast and public performance.

Find out more in The Ivors Academy career guides - [Neighbouring rights 1 - simple UK guide](#), [Neighbouring rights 2 - UK and international](#) and [What is “equitable remuneration”?](#)

Performing Rights

- Right to perform music publicly.
- Administered by PRS in UK.
- Covers live, broadcast, streaming.



- Usually split 50/50 writer/publisher.

Find out more in The Ivors Academy career guide - [What are “performance rights”?](#)

Synchronisation Rights

- Right to use music with visual media.
- Not collectively licensed.
- Negotiated directly or via publishers.
- Covers TV, film, games, advertising.

Find out more in The Ivors Academy career guide - [Sync licensing.](#)

ORGANISATIONS AND ROLES

CMO (Collective Management Organisation)

- Society that manages rights collectively
- Examples: PRS, MCPS, PPL
- Also called PRO or MRO
- Member-owned in most countries

Find out more in The Ivors Academy career guides - [Introduction to collective licensing](#), [What is PRS?](#) and [What is PPL?](#)

DSP (Digital Service Provider)

- Streaming platforms and download stores.
- Examples: Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon.
- Report usage to rights holders.
- Pay royalties based on usage.



ICE (International Copyright Enterprise)

- Joint venture of PRS, STIM, GEMA.
- Processes multi-territorial licensing.
- Handles billions of transactions.
- Provides conflict resolution services.

MLC (Mechanical Licensing Collective)

- US mechanical rights organisation.
- Created by Music Modernization Act.
- Handles streaming mechanicals only.
- Funded by DSPs, not writers.

MPA (Music Publishers Association)

- UK trade body for publishers.
- Operates MCPS.
- Advocates for publishing rights.
- Provides industry education.

PRO (Performing Rights Organisation)

- Society managing performance rights.
- Examples: PRS, ASCAP, BMI.
- Issues blanket licences.
- Distributes royalties to members.

TECHNICAL TERMS

Reciprocal agreement

- Deal between societies to represent each other's repertoire.
- Enables global royalty collection.



- May exclude certain rights or territories.
- Check your society's agreements.

Split Sheet

- Document recording session participants.
- Lists shares and contact information.
- Should be signed by all creators.
- Essential for avoiding disputes.

Territory

- Geographic area for rights administration.
- Can be single country or region.
- "World" means all territories.
- Important for publishing deals.

Unmatched Works

- Songs earning money but not linked to rightsholders.
- Major problem in digital era.
- Billions in "black box" globally.
- Can be claimed if properly documented.

Work Registration

- Process of notifying societies about your songs.
- Includes creator, publisher, share information.
- Triggers ISWC assignment.
- Must be done in each relevant territory.



COMMON ACRONYMS

- **APRA/AMCOS** - Australasian Performing Right Association/Australasian Mechanical Copyright Owners Society
- **ASCAP** - American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers
- **BMI** - Broadcast Music, Inc.
- **BUMA/STEMRA** - Dutch performing/mechanical rights societies
- **GEMA** - Society for Musical Performing and Mechanical Reproduction Rights (Germany)
- **JASRAC** - Japanese Society for Rights of Authors, Composers and Publishers
- **MCPS** - Mechanical-Copyright Protection Society
- **PPL** - Phonographic Performance Limited
- **PRS** - Performing Right Society
- **SACEM** - Society of Authors, Composers and Publishers of Music (France)
- **SESAC** - Originally Society of European Stage Authors and Composers
- **SGAE** - General Society of Authors and Publishers (Spain)
- **SOCAN** - Society of Composers, Authors and Music Publishers of Canada
- **STIM** - Swedish Performing Rights Society

Remember: The music industry loves acronyms, but don't let them intimidate you. Most represent simple concepts. Understanding them empowers you to manage your rights effectively.

You can find out more in The Ivors Academy career guide - [Music industry acronyms](#).

METADATA AND CREDITS DUE FAQs

How do I document song ownership splits as a UK songwriter?

Use a split sheet at the end of every writing session. The Credits Due campaign provides a [free template](#) that captures all essential information: each writer's legal name, IPI number, publishing affiliation, contact details, and agreed percentage splits. Have everyone sign it before leaving the session. This simple document can



prevent years of disputes and ensures everyone can be properly registered with PRS/MCPS. If splits aren't finalised, at minimum document who was present and contributed creatively.

What happens under UK law if we don't agree on splits beforehand?

Without a written agreement, UK law presumes equal splits between all contributors to a joint work. However, proving who contributed what becomes extremely difficult without documentation. This can lead to registration conflicts at PRS/MCPS, delayed royalty payments, and expensive legal disputes. Unlike some territories, UK law doesn't distinguish between lyrical and musical contributions in determining splits - all creative input is valued equally unless otherwise agreed in writing.

How are joint works treated differently in the UK versus the US?

In the UK, joint authorship requires collaboration with a common design where contributions aren't distinct. Each co-author owns the entire work jointly and needs permission from others to license it exclusively. In the US, joint authors can independently grant non-exclusive licences and must account to co-writers for profits. This difference becomes crucial when working internationally - you may need different agreements for different territories to ensure your work can be properly exploited worldwide.

What happens to my song rights when working with international co-writers?

Your song becomes subject to multiple copyright laws simultaneously. Each co-writer's home territory laws may apply to their contribution. Best practice: agree in writing which country's law governs your collaboration and register the work in each writer's home territory. Ensure all writers are members of their local CMOs and that reciprocal agreements exist between societies. Use IPI numbers rather than just names to avoid confusion across different registration systems.



What's an IPI number and how do I get one?

An IPI (Interested Party Information) number is your unique international identifier as a songwriter - think of it as your creative passport. You automatically receive one when joining PRS as a writer member. You may have multiple IPIs: one for your legal name and others for professional names or pseudonyms. Keep all your IPIs handy as you'll need them for split sheets, registrations, and any time you're identifying yourself in the global music system. Your IPI stays with you throughout your career, regardless of publisher changes.

Why do I see different names for the same identifiers (like CAE vs IPI)?

The music industry loves its acronyms, and many identifiers have evolved over time. IPI (Interested Party Information) used to be called CAE (from the French: Compositeur, Auteur, Editeur). They're the same thing - your unique songwriter/publisher number. Similarly, you might see "IPN" or "International Performer Number" for performer identifiers. When in doubt, the newer terms (IPI, ISNI) are generally preferred, but older systems might still show the legacy names. Your PRS documentation might reference either, but the actual number remains the same.

What do I do if my works are showing as unmatched in collection society databases?

First, identify which publisher controlled the works when they were created. If you're self-published, you can often fix issues directly through PRS's online portal. If published, you'll need to work through your publisher - but this becomes complex with catalogue acquisitions. Create a spreadsheet documenting all unmatched works, including original registration details and any variant titles (especially translations). If your publisher is unresponsive, PRS can sometimes help mediate. The Ivors Academy can provide additional support and guidance in resolving these issues - another benefit of membership for songwriters facing metadata challenges.



What information should I collect in a writing session?

Essential information includes: everyone's legal name and IPI number, publishing affiliation (even if self-published), performing rights organisation membership, contact details (email and mobile), and role in the creation (lyrics, music, or both). Also document: the date and location of the session, working title of the song, and any samples or interpolations used. If you're producing a recording simultaneously, note the artist name and who's handling distribution. The [Credits Due split sheet template](#) covers all these elements.

How do metadata problems affect my streaming royalties?

Streaming services pay both recording royalties (to artists/labels) and publishing royalties (to songwriters/publishers). Without proper metadata linking your composition to recordings, you miss all mechanical royalties from streams. Even one missing data point - a misspelled name, missing IPI, or incorrect publisher - can prevent matching. The impact compounds: a song with millions of streams could have significant royalties sitting unclaimed. PROs report billions in unmatched royalties globally, much of it from streaming.

What happens to my metadata when my publisher sells my catalogue?

Unfortunately, there's no automatic notification system when catalogues change hands. Your songs' metadata should transfer to the new owner, but registration updates often lag or get missed entirely. Writers report finding out about catalogue sales months or years later, with royalties potentially misdirected in the interim. Protection strategies: include notification clauses in your original publishing deal, maintain your own database of works with registration numbers, regularly check your royalty statements for anomalies, and ensure your agreements specify how catalogue transfers must be handled.

Can I register my songs with PRS before I have a publisher?

Yes - in fact, you should. [PRS](#) membership is separate from [publishing](#). As a PRS member, you can register works as self-published, ensuring you capture performance royalties immediately. If you later sign a publishing deal, your publisher will update the registrations to claim their share. Don't wait for a



publisher to start protecting your rights. Early registration also helps establish creation dates and ownership, valuable evidence if disputes arise later.

What's the difference between moral rights and financial rights in my metadata?

Moral rights include your right to be identified as the creator (attribution) and to object to derogatory treatment of your work. In the UK, you automatically have moral rights unless you waive them in writing. Financial rights determine who gets paid. Current systems bundle these together - you can't be credited without also addressing payment splits. This creates problems when splits are disputed but everyone agrees on who created the work. Industry initiatives are exploring ways to separate attribution from payment, allowing creators to be credited immediately while financial details are resolved.

IVORS ACADEMY RESOURCES

[On demand content – Metadata and Credits Due](#)

[Career guide - Introduction to data and music](#)

[Industry template contract - Songwriter split sheet template](#)

[Career guide - What is PRS?](#)

[Career guides - publishing](#)

[Career guide - Neighbouring rights 1 - simple UK guide](#)

[Career guide - Neighbouring right 2 - UK and international](#)

[Career guide - What is “equitable remuneration”?](#)

[Career guide - What are “performance rights”?](#)

[Career guide - Sync licensing](#)

[Career guide - Introduction to collective licensing](#)

[Career guide - What is PPL?](#)

[Career guide - Music industry acronyms](#)



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