

ISNI – Frequently Asked Questions

What is ISNI?

The International Standard Name Identifier (ISNI) is an ISO Standard 16 digit number assigned to your **Public Identity** as an individual author, artist or poet. This is similar to an ISBN but is attached to a person rather than a work.

For example, two different authors named 'John Smith' will have their own unique ISNIs, which will allow users around the world to unambiguously understand the distinction between the two authors whose Public Identity is John Smith.

The music industry has successfully used similar numbers for songwriters and music publishers to help facilitate the flow of royalties worldwide for many years.

Stakeholders, including authors associations and collective management organizations, have worked jointly over a number of years to develop the ISNI as a global identification system.

What is the advantage of having an ISNI?

The ISNI will help to ensure the accurate identification of you and your works and, as a result, will assist in making sure your rights are protected. For Access Copyright, this means that we will eventually be able to use the ISNI to efficiently collect royalties for you from around the globe.

Until now, there have been instances where locating and/or verifying the identity of a creator has been complex and time-consuming, delaying royalty payments. The ISNI would make sure that you receive the royalties owed to you rather than having them directed to an author with the same name who lives in Australia.

In addition, the ISNI will protect your rights because it will accurately establish your identity.

How will ISNI technically work?

ISNI will take information from previously unconnected databases from around the world (like Access Copyright's) and assign individual ISNIs to each unique author, artist or poet. This will be stored in one central database and used for tracking royalty payments. Any organization, worldwide, that collects and distributes royalties will use this database to confirm to whom the royalties need to be sent and the agency that acts on their behalf to collect and distribute royalties (in this case Access Copyright on your behalf).

Funded by consortium members, the ISNI International Agency (ISNI-IA) will complete the development of the innovative ISNI database by mid-2011.

What is the ISNI International Agency?

The ISNI-IA is a UK registered company, based administratively at the Authors Licensing and Collection Society (ALCS). ALCS works closely with the two UK Writers' Unions (the Society of Authors and the Writers' Guild of Great Britain), the National Union of Journalists, the Personal Managers Association and the Association of Authors' Agents.

Why was Access Copyright asked to contribute data to the ISNI database?

Access Copyright is a member of the International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organisations (IFRRO) who is a founding member of the ISNI consortium. As a result, Access Copyright was invited to apply for an ISNI on behalf of each of our affiliates.

What information will Access Copyright provide to the ISNI-IA?

The data that will be provided by Access Copyright to the ISNI-IA includes the following publicly available information, which will be retained by the ISNI-IA in its database:

- Your public name (forename, middle name, surname)
- Any variations we have on record of your public name (except pseudonyms, see below)
- Your creation role (e.g. author, artist)

The ISNI-IA has also requested the following information which will not be made publicly available (unless it is already publicly available because you have previously provided it):

- Date of birth
- Date of death (for estates)
- A sample of your works from Access Copyright's database

This information is not mandatory but is requested in order to further assure identity and best manage rights.

Please note that Access Copyright has decided not to provide pseudonyms to the ISNI-IA.

Will this cost me money?

The ISNI-IA has offered to provide ISNIs to our affiliates with no acquisition fee in order to establish the initial database. There will be no future fees required to maintain your ISNI registration number (as there are no future fees required to maintain an ISBN). We see this as a great opportunity and want to make sure that you, our affiliates, are involved.

However, if you opt out, there may be a cost in the future to acquire an ISNI. Access Copyright does not know what this cost may be.

Why is this being done on an opt-out basis?

Access Copyright believes that the ISNI offers a great opportunity and will be a tool that will help our affiliates protect their rights and receive royalties quickly and efficiently. IFRRO has kept Access Copyright updated as the ISNI protocol has developed and we feel confident that this opportunity provides a real service to our affiliates. This is a one time opportunity to acquire an ISNI free of charge, and we want all of our 10,000 creator affiliates to benefit from this initiative.

Why was there such a tight deadline?

The ISNI database is scheduled to be launched by October 2011. The data received internationally will be in many different formats and it will require a considerable amount of work and time to compare and standardize the data in order to assign an ISNI to all Public Identities by October of this year. The original deadline of March 31, 2011 was set by the ISNI-IA Board of Directors and was not set by Access Copyright. As a result of pressure from Access Copyright and other organizations, the ISNI-IA has agreed to extend the deadline to June 15, 2011.

What do I need to do next?

Access Copyright will be providing the ISNI-IA with the information above on your behalf. If you do not want Access Copyright to apply on your behalf for an ISNI, please let us know at affiliates@accesscopyright.ca on or before by June 15, 2011.