

# INDUSTRY

Entertainment

# ORGANIZATION

ASCAP



## SOLUTION

Over 70,000 musicians, writers and other performers rely on ASCAP to track the royalties for their work. MetaViewer ensures it is done smoothly, timely and that each artist gets their just due.

ASCAP, the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers recognized it was frustrating its 71,000 members with endless rounds of telephone tag. It licenses and accounts for the performing rights of these members.

Whenever a song or piece of music is played in public on radio, TV, elevators, bars and restaurants a royalty is paid. ASCAP makes money by issuing licenses. Broadcasting companies can obtain an annual blanket license to play any song covered by ASCAP; your local school can buy a single use license.

An immense amount of data has to be collected, collated and accounted before quarterly statements can be sent to writers and publishers. The statements, issued in 11 different runs a year, are detailed. They list the number of occasions a song is played, the percentage due and the amount. These statements mostly run from two to 100 pages and in some cases could even go up to 1,000 pages for a single artist.

Under their old system, the Royalty department sent the statement tapes to a service bureau for microfilming. The turnaround time was about two weeks. Each telephone inquiry was manually routed to the person the switchboard operator thought was best able to handle it. Often, a call was bounced between departments before it reached the right person.

"For a short statement this took about 20 minutes, including the return phone call to the member," says Steve Russell, vice president, information services. "For a long statement, locating the correct section took an inordinate amount of time, assuming the fiche was correctly filed."

In 1994, under the direction of Al Wallace, chief operating officer, ASCAP began reengineering their back office operations.

First, they set up a separate Member Service Department. This centralized

department would handle all member's questions. Centralizing the queries would solve the problem of telephone transfers, but there would still be delays.

Although the accounting information for the statements was prepared quickly on IBM computers, the problem was gaining access to this information. They decided to look for a computerized search and retrieval system. Leading this effort was John Fiorillo, project manager.

Fiorillo and ASCAP's records management systems analysts, Richard McKay, listed their requirements: It had to have a fast search time. It had to provide a 152 character line, instead of the normal 132.

Every character needed to be string searchable. It had to be able to print out exact replicas of the original statement.

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**"THE \$100,000+  
SAVED ANNUALLY IN  
MICROFICHE SERVICES  
MORE THAN PAYS FOR  
THE WHOLE SYSTEM."**

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A COLD system seemed most suitable for their requirements. Searching via a PC is much faster than going through microfiche.

The internet like full-text search capability of the Metafile Solution allows for much greater flexibility when locating specific song titles

While evaluating COLD vendors, they found that most COLD systems could not access Xerox Metacode used to create the statement printing overlays. ASCAP uses 17

different statements, depending on the type of member, whether or not a check is being sent, etc. They do not use pre-printed forms because it is quicker to code the data for the type of form, rather than sort the statements into statement type and have 17 different print runs.

Just as they were at the point of eliminating the exact statement replicas as a requirement, and reconciling to trying to work around the problem, they came across Metafile which could read Xerox Metacode. In October 1995 they awarded the contract. All the equipment was in place by mid-December and they were doing test runs. The department was staffed mainly by new hires. Existing staff were freed to do the job they were hired for.

"It was a very, very easy implementation," Fiorilla says. "Metafile ordered all the equipment, tested it and sent a staff member to oversee the installation." They opened the newly established, 11-station Member Services Department in January 1995, ASCAP has since upgraded their MetaViewer retrieval to a full site license server over 500 workstations.

The centralized department has 10 full-time reps on staggered shifts to answer quests, two reps who do research and one employee who updates the database. Operating costs have been reduced from 19% to 18%. The legal department, analysis and distribution, and adjustments all have COLD workstations. The \$100,000-plus saved annually in microfiche services more than pays for the whole system.

**METAFILE**  
The Total Solution  
**APPLICATION  
OVERVIEW**