

Pop music recordings pose a particularly challenging task to any library when attempting to successfully catalogue what are unique non-print, multi-format collection items often with numerous contributors and authors. This is particularly true of the British Library (BL). Even though recorded music is not included in Legal Deposit legislation (instead the BL implements a far reaching voluntary deposit scheme with record companies), the Sound Archive at the British Library has a huge collection of pop music, in fact one of the largest in the world, comprising over 1 million discs and 185,000 tapes (BL Website, 2016. [www.bl.uk/subjects/sound](http://www.bl.uk/subjects/sound)). The multi-performer/multi-author nature of pop music, combined with the bewildering array of sub-genres that come under the broad term of pop music, added to the fact that changes in technology have led to the same releases on various formats (LPs, 7" and 12" singles, EPs, CDs, box sets, and now digital downloads), means that the cataloguing of recorded pop music is a very tricky business. The BL Sound and Moving Image catalogue (SAMI) has been designed so as to overcome the very particular problems that sound and vision collection items raise for libraries.

The Sound and Moving Image Catalogue at the BL, SAMI <http://cadensa.bl.uk/cgi-bin/webcat> , organise data in to three basic levels.

**Product Level Data** – Discographical data about the logical entity. This includes data such as title, artist, duration of track, etc.

**Recording Level Data** – Data that is about individual tracks. This would include track name, performers, what instruments the performers played, etc.

**Work Level Data** – Data to do with the work or composition that is being performed with regard to who wrote lyrics and/or music and composition.

Figures 1, 2 and 3 show three screenshots of examples of product, recording and work entries on SAMI relating to The Charlatans debut album *Some Friendly* released in 1990. Figure 1 shows a product level entry from SAMI, for the LP vinyl version of The Charlatans debut album *Some Friendly*. Figure 2 shows a recording level entry from SAMI. It is for the track "Then" from the album *Some Friendly* by The Charlatans. It shows all the different products that the song appears on, including the vinyl LP from Figure 1. Figure 3 shows a work level entry from SAMI. It goes in to more detail regarding the actual musical work. For instance, it lists Burgess, Timothy (lead singer Tim Burgess of The Charlatans) as author composer for words and music.

**BRITISH LIBRARY** **SOUND & MOVING IMAGE CATALOGUE**

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record 3 of 4 for search "Some Friendly"

**Mark**

Nearby items on shelf

**Search for**

Explore the British Library catalogue

**Some Friendly**

**SHELFMARK:** 1LP0020743  
**Product title:** Some Friendly  
**Record company name:** BEGGARS BANQUET  
**Label:** SITUATION TWO SITU 30  
**Label match:** SITUATIONTWO SITU30  
**ENAN/PC/CFN:** 5012083153018  
**Publication date:** 1990  
**Product copyright:** Dead Dead (Good/Situation2/Begg  
**Format:** 1 disc 2 sides 30 cm 33 rpm stereo  
**Other ref. no.:** ND 1443890  
**Copy condition code:** A

**Holdings**

PRODUCT	Copies	Material	Location
1LP0020743	1	Analogue disc	Store

Figure 1. Screen shot of a product level entry from SAMI, Shelf mark 1LP0020743.

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record 9 of 17 for search any words or numbers "the charlatans" and "then"

**Mark**

Nearby items on shelf

**Search for**

Explore the British Library catalogue

**Try these too...**

Burgess, Tim

**Then/Blunt**  
The Charlatans Group

**FIND WORK DETAILS:** Then/Blunt

**SHELFMARK:** 1CD0046814  
**SHELFMARK:** 1CA0007482  
**SHELFMARK:** 2CA0003210  
**SHELFMARK:** 1CD0028306  
**SHELFMARK:** 1CD0021282  
**SHELFMARK:** 2CD0006930  
**SHELFMARK:** 1TH0011875  
**SHELFMARK:** 2TH0008858  
**SHELFMARK:** 1SE0010475  
**SHELFMARK:** 2SE0007055  
**SHELFMARK:** 1LP0020743  
**SHELFMARK:** 1CD0025387  
**SHELFMARK:** 1LP0022192  
**SHELFMARK:** 2LP0009289  
**Other ref no.:** ND 8009421  
**Contributor:** The Charlatans Group  
**Contributor:** Nagle, Chris Producer  
**Item duration:** 8 min, 52 sec  
**Tag:** Pop music  
**Recording note:** 1990 Original recording (P) date  
**Playback mode:** 5

Figure 2. Screen shot of a recording level entry from SAMI.

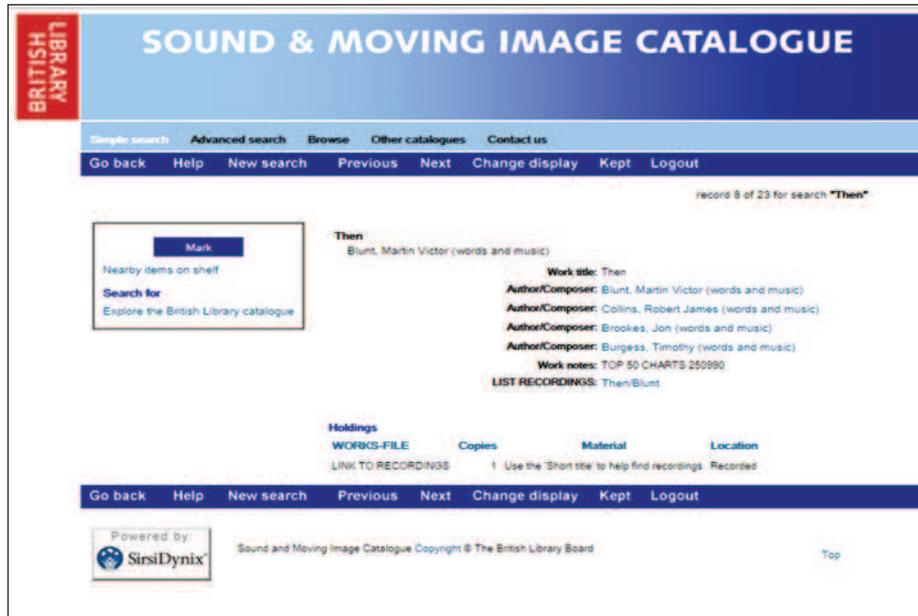


Figure 3. Screen shot of work level entry from SAMI.

The above examples from SAMI highlight a major problem regarding cataloguing and displaying catalogue entries in pop music with particular reference to tracks on albums or EPs. Kiichiro astutely recognises this as “one medium multi pieces (one material usually contains two or more pieces)” (Kiichiro, 2015, p. 118). Also there are often problems with the way pop music is described on library catalogues. This is with particular reference to the composer of a piece of music not always being very clear in catalogue records (Kiichiro, 2015). As Kiichiro discovered, recorded music in online library catalogues often does not give the composer’s details but only the performer’s. Added to this, the metadata for live performance recordings can be quite poor and information such as venue, date, and the name of a festival or tour is invariably incomplete. Recorded music has very different traits than printed material, and so needs a tailored catalogue to enable successful searching (Kiichiro, 2015). This is what SAMI is trying to do, rather than the more general BL catalogue of Explore.

In cataloguing, various levels are not completely distinct; each level relies on the accuracy of the others to build a complete and accurate picture. This allows patrons at the BL to get the most information possible from the catalogue. The Google effect, whereby we are all used to typing search terms in to a box and just expect the results to appear at the top of a grand list of returns, means that patrons often are not well versed in searching library catalogues. SAMI works on a Boolean search method; this may be a slightly longer process for the patron but it is worthwhile. All collection items found on SAMI are also on Explore, the main catalogue of the British Library. Explore is set up to automatically add an “AND”, which means each word in a search by a patron is searched in every catalogue field. This is in keeping with the Google effect of very easy searching based on algorithms. SAMI does not do this, so manual Boolean searching is needed. However, Explore only has partial cataloguing metadata for audio-visual items, whereas SAMI has full catalogue entries for audio-visual material which means the metadata is much richer and fuller.

In the audio-visual domain, cataloguing is not just of interest to library users and staff. The BL has a catalogue that is not only used by BL readers to order recordings, but also accessed by people in the music business to settle rights issues. Metadata in the music business is a highly prized asset. The landscape of identifiers and metadata is quite fragmented across the music industry. There is a huge amount of data related to pop music recordings in various commercial databases which use many and disparate identifiers. I have listed below just some of the identifiers used in the music industry. These identifiers have a similar function as the three basic levels followed by the BL on SAMI: Abstracts (works); identifiers for expressions (recordings); and Identifiers for manifestation (products).

## Works

**ISWC (International Standard Musical Work Code):** ISWC codes are unique identifiers for musical works similar to an ISBN. An ISWC begins with the letter “T” followed by a nine-digit unique number. ISWC identify works, not recordings. The descriptive metadata is made up of the title of a work, all composers, and in the case of cover versions the identification of the work from which the version was made. ISWC identifies musical works rather than a manifestation or object such broadcast. <http://www.iswc.org/>

## Recordings

**ISRC (International Standard Recording Code):** This uniquely identifies sound recordings and music video recordings. This is, according to Knight, Top Fargion, and Linehan (2016), the most used identifier within the music industry. However, it is not perfect. “After an initial ISRC code is issued to a label or artist the subsequent codes are self-issued, leaving the identifier susceptible to human error, erroneous or duplicate issue and a host of other manual malpractices.” (Knight et al., 2016, p. 56) <http://isrc.ifpi.org/en/get-isrc>

**RIN (Recording Information Notification):** This is potentially a very positive development in the metadata of recorded music. RIN is currently being developed by DDEX and it will let producers and engineers create rich and meaningful metadata at the point of audio file creation (Knight et al, 2016). It will allow manufacturers of music to store essential metadata and communicate it through the supply chain alongside audio files. RIN will be interoperable with all other DDEX standards, and as the BL use DDEX this will help to create better metadata at the Sound Archive for all products acquired digitally. <http://www.ddex.net/recording-information-notification-rin>

## Products

**EAN/UPC (European Article Numbers / Universal Product Codes):** This is a cross industry identifier that can be expressed as a barcode. It is used to identify the carrier of the recorded music such as CD, mini disc, vinyl LP, vinyl 7” single, etc. <http://www.ean-int.org/barcodes/ean-upc>

**IPI (Interested Party Information Number):** This is a unique number for the identification of rights holders of a particular recording. Identifiers for composers and writers [http://www.bmi.com/faq/entry/what\\_is\\_an\\_ipi\\_cae\\_number](http://www.bmi.com/faq/entry/what_is_an_ipi_cae_number)

**ISNI (International Standard Name Identifier):** ISNI is a unique identifier for the identities of contributors to media content. <http://www.isni.org/>

At this point it would be amiss not to mention FRBR, which is making great strides in improving best practice for cataloguing of non-print items.

**FRBR (Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records):** is a conceptual model and standard bibliographic records which was released by IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations) in 1997 and is in part an attempt to address some of the issues and complexities around cataloguing recorded sound and non-print media. <http://www.ifla.org/publications/functional-requirements-for-bibliographic-records>

The above list shows just how fragmented and how little uniformity there is in the area of audio standards. This is an area where the BL, with its expertise in cataloguing and metadata, could take a lead. As the *Analysis of the UK Recording Industry Landscape* report makes clear the ISNI is very keen on the idea of the BL taking on a role as the issuer and database for ISNI for the UK music industry. This would be ideal, particularly in regard to creating rich and stable metadata for pop music recordings at the BL. As Knight believes “The potential for utilising ISNIs as a unique identifier in SAMI to augment Name Authority files is attractive. Our catalogue will potentially be enhanced by the use of ISNIs particularly in terms of how ISNIs link between artists’ aliases and their group affiliations.” (Knight et al., 2016, p. 59) This would be very useful in cataloguing pop music recordings where many solo artists were previously part of a group, or have various side projects in tandem to their solo career. This could create extremely good linkage in the catalogue between sound recordings involving a particular artist.

I hope this brief look at the challenges of cataloguing recorded pop music has been illuminating, and hopefully has highlighted the benefits of good metadata to the wider music industry beyond the BL.

## References

Knight, J, Top Fargion, J. & Linehan, A. (2016). *Analysis of the UK recording industry landscape*. (Unpublished internal document for the British Library, July 2016). London: British Library.

Kiichiro, K. (2015). Manually identifying the entities of work and expression based on MARC data: towards automatic identification for FRBRizing OPACS. *Fontes Artis Musicae*, 62(2), 118-128. Retrieved from <http://www.iaml.info/fontes-artis-musicae>.