COUNTER: an overview

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Director
COUNTER
September 2006
Why COUNTER?

- Libraries and consortia need online usage statistics
  - To assess the value of different online products/services
  - To support collection development
  - To justify their materials expenditure budget proposals

- Publishers need online usage statistics
  - To experiment with new pricing models
  - To assess the relative importance of the different channels by which information reaches the market
  - To provide editorial support
  - To plan infrastructure

- COUNTER’s Goal
  - To develop “Codes of Practice” which will generate credible, compatible, consistent publisher/vendor-generated usage statistics for the global information community
COUNTER: strategy for developing Codes of Practice

- Respond to the requirements of the international librarian, publisher and intermediary communities
  - An open, inclusive and interactive process
  - Representation of all three communities on COUNTER

- Limit scope of first Code of Practice to journals and databases

- Systematically extend scope of the Code of Practice
  - Horizontally, to cover other content types, such as e-books
  - Vertically, to provide more detailed statistics on journals

- A cost effective process for all parties involved
COUNTER Codes of Practice

- Definitions of terms used
- Specifications for Usage Reports
  - What they should include
  - What they should look like
  - How and when they should be delivered
- Data processing guidelines
- Auditing
- Compliance
- Maintenance and development of the Code of Practice
- Governance of COUNTER
1) Journals and databases

- Release 1 Code of Practice launched January 2003
- Release 2 published April 2005 replacing Release 1 in January 2006
- Now a widely adopted standard by publishers and librarians
- 60%+ of Science Citation Index articles now covered
- Librarians use it in collection development decisions
- Publishers use it in marketing to prove ‘value’

2) Books and reference works

- Draft Code of Practice published in February 2005 for comment
- Final version incorporating feedback was launched March 2006
- Relevant usage metrics less clear than for journals
- Different issues than for journals
  - Direct comparisons between books less relevant
  - Understanding how different categories of book are used is more relevant
Core COUNTER metrics

- Requests for specified content units
  - Journals: full-text articles
  - Books: whole title; sections within title (Chapter, entry)
- Searches
- Sessions
- Turnaways
  - Simultaneous user licences
Usage Reports

- **Journal Report 1**
  - Full text article requests by month and journal

- **Journal Report 2**
  - Turnaways by month and journal

- **Database Report 1**
  - Total searches and sessions by month and database

- **Database Report 2**
  - Turnaways by month and database

- **Database Report 3**
  - Searches and sessions by month and service
## Journal Report 1

Full text article requests by journal

Release 2 of the Code added a publisher field

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Print ISSN</th>
<th>Online ISSN</th>
<th>Jan-2005</th>
<th>Feb-2005</th>
<th>Mar-2005</th>
<th>YTD Total</th>
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<th>YTD PDF</th>
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</table>
Release 2 of the Code added a “Platform” column to facilitate merging of stats from multiple vendors.

| A                   | B                   | C     | D     | E     | F     | G     | H     | I     | J     | K     |
|---------------------|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Journal Report 1 (R2) | Number of Successful Full-Text Article Requests by Month and Journal |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Sample University   |                     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 2005-04-05          |                     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 5                   | Publisher           | Platform | Print ISSN | Online ISSN | Jan-2005 | Feb-2005 | Mar-2005 | YTD Total | YTD HTML | YTD PDF |
| 6                   | Total for all journals | EBSCOhost | 3942 | 10005 | 11093 | 25041 | 15776 | 9265 |
| 7                   | Harvard Business Review | Harvard Business | 1117 | 707 | 702 | 2526 | 1591 | 935 |
| 8                   | Scientific American | Scientific American | 92 | 230 | 221 | 543 | 342 | 201 |
| 9                   | Reading Teacher     | International Read | 11 | 190 | 179 | 380 | 239 | 141 |
| 10                  | Economist           | Economist Newspaper | 33 | 95 | 155 | 283 | 178 | 105 |
| 11                  | Child Development   | Blackwell Publishing | 32 | 68 | 103 | 203 | 128 | 75 |
| 12                  | American Journal of Public Health | American Public Health | 59 | 48 | 80 | 187 | 118 | 69 |
| 14                  | Explicator          | Heldref Publications | 12 | 196 | 188 | 396 | 249 | 147 |
| 15                  | Sports Marketing Quarterly | EBSCOhost | 10 | 121 | 32 | 163 | 103 | 60 |
| 16                  | Journal of Learning Disabilities | PRO-ED | 24 | 122 | 142 | 288 | 181 | 107 |
### Journal Report 1

**Full text article requests by journal**

**Html and PDF totals reported separately**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Platform</th>
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<th>Online ISSN</th>
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<td>107</td>
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</table>
Report layouts clearly stated

1. **Cell A1** contains the text “Journal Report 1(R2)”

2. **Cell B1** contains the text “Number of Successful Article Requests by Month and Journal”

3. **Cell A2** contains the “criteria” as defined in the COP (eg “NorthEast Research Library Consortium” or “Yale University”)

4. **Cell A3** contains the text “Date run:”

5. **Cell A4** contains the date that the report was run in yyyy-mm-dd format. For example, a report run on 12 Feb 2005 would show “2005-02-12”.

6. **Cell A5** is left blank

7. **Cell B5** contains the text “Publisher”

8. **Cell C5** contains the text “Platform”

9. **Cell D5** contains the text “Print ISSN”

10. **Cell E5** contains the text “Online ISSN”
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# Database report 1: Searches and Sessions by Database

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<td>Publisher X</td>
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<td>Database BB</td>
<td>Publisher Y</td>
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<td>Publisher Y</td>
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## Database report 2: Turnaways by Database

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Database report 3: Searches and Sessions by Service

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<th>D</th>
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<td>12677</td>
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</table>
Data processing guidelines

- Only valid requests counted
  - Return Code 200 (OK)
  - Return Code 304 (Not modified)

- Filter out multiple successive clicks on same link by same user
  - 10 seconds for html
  - 30 seconds for PDF
Who counts full text requests?

Q: Who counts full text requests?
- Publisher?
- Aggregator?
- E-journal gateway?
- Link resolver?

A: The party that delivers the full text to the user.
User finds citation of interest in an A&I database. An OpenURL link is provided.

1. A&I Database
2. Citation
3. Link Resolver
4. Link menu
5. E-Journal Gateway
6. Abstract or TOC
7. Full Text
8. Publisher site

**Full text**
User finds citation of interest in an A&I database. An OpenURL link provided.
Delivery of usage reports

- CSV, Excel or a file that can be imported into Excel (XML is also an option)
- On a password controlled website
- E-mail alert of availability of updated reports
- Provide reports monthly
- New reports available within 4 weeks of end of reporting period
- Current and previous calendar year’s data available
Consortium reporting requirements

- Only two reports apply
  - Journal Report 1: Number of successful full text article requests by month and journal
  - Database Report 1: Total searches and sessions by month and database

- Vendor must provide (in separate files)
  - Aggregated reports for entire consortium
  - Individual reports for each member institute

- Aggregated reports include totals for the whole consortium
Compliance

- Vendor submits reports to COUNTER for initial check.

- Then at least one COUNTER “library test site” reviews them, highlighting any modifications necessary to achieve compliance.

- Once they are deemed to be compliant, vendor signs a declaration and the compliant product(s) are added to the Register at www.projectcounter.org.

- Within 18 months, compliance must be confirmed via an independent audit.
Audit

- Required within 18 months of compliance; annually thereafter
- Independent auditor
- Online audit
- Audit will check each report for
  - Layout (correct rows, columns, headings)
  - Format (CSV or Excel)
  - Delivery (E-mail alert, access on password-controlled website)
  - Accuracy (Tolerance is -8% to +2%)

More details of the auditing process can be found at:-
www.projectcounter.org/r2/R2_Appendix_E_Auditing_Requirements_and_Tests.pdf
COUNTER: an application

- JISC (UK Joint Information Systems Committee)
  - Funded by UK higher education funding councils
  - Supports higher education in the use of information and communications technologies
    - Access to information and communication resources
    - Advice on creation and preservation of digital archives
    - Implications of using ICT
    - Network services and support
    - Research to develop innovative solutions

- National overview of online journal usage
  - Develop a reliable, widely applicable methodology
  - Use COUNTER Journal Report 1 ‘article full-text requests’
COUNTER data was analysed in relation to:
- usage range
- Price band
- Subject category

Metrics derived from this analysis
- Trend in number of full-text article requests
- Full text article requests per title
- Full text article requests per publisher package
- Full text article requests per FTE user
- Most requested titles
- Usage of subscribed vs.. unsubscribed titles
- Cost per full-text article request
- Cost per FTE user

Summary report available at:
www.ebase.uce.ac.uk/projects/NESLi2.htm
COUNTER - based metrics

- Growth in article downloads
  - Publisher A: 12%- 208%
  - Publisher B: 12%- 59%
  - Publisher C: 23%- 154%
  - Publisher D: 22%- 81%

- Cost per download
  - Publisher A: £0.97- £5.26
  - Publisher B: £0.70 - £2.91
  - Publisher C: £0.80 - £3.29
  - Publisher D: £0.45 - £2.26
Draft Code of Practice for books

- Covers online books, encyclopaedias, reference works
- Developed by a task force of publishers and librarians with expertise in online books
- Comments on draft were accepted February through December 2005
- Final version published in March 2006
Draft Code of Practice for books

- Unit of access may include
  - Entire book
  - Chapter, entry (‘Section’)
  - Page
  - Paragraph

- Access depends on interface and organization of content
  - Entire book may be one PDF
  - Each chapter may have own PDF
  - Reference works may be organized by section, or entry
Draft Code of Practice for books

- **Book Report 1**
  - Number of successful requests by month and title
- **Book Report 2**
  - Number of successful *section* requests by month and title
- **Book Report 3**
  - Turnaways by month and title
- **Book Report 4**
  - Turnaways by month and service
- **Book Report 5**
  - Total searches and sessions by month and title
- **Book Report 6**
  - Total searches and sessions by month and service
Current issues

- **Interface and user behaviour effects on usage statistics**
  - E.g. downloading HTML and PDF of the same article in one session
  - COUNTER is testing data filter solutions, but what does the duplicate downloading signify?

- **Reporting separately purchasable digital archive usage**
  - Currently all usage for a journal is usually reported together
  - Separately purchasable archives mean we need separate reports for archival content, or a year of publication breakdown of usage

- **What to count and what not to count:-**
  - How to deal with partial open access journals
  - How to deal with journals whose content becomes free after a fixed time period
  - What about free sample issues
  - Oxford Journals is developing reports to take all these factors into account
Current issues

Do we need a Usage Factor?

“If I was guided solely by usage statistics, I would cancel all my subscriptions to humanities journals, which tend to publish far fewer issues per year than the large science titles”

Terry Bucknell, Electronic Resources Manager at Liverpool University

- How comparable are usage statistics when individual journals, databases, and books vary so much in size?

- UK Serials Group has launched a research project June 2006 to assess how practical it would be to develop a formula that would allow a more meaningful comparison of individual journal usage

- A Usage Factor would be particularly helpful in applied fields, where citation levels are lower
Current issues - Institutional repositories

- Growth in Institutional Repository (IR) content
- Need for credible IR usage statistics
  - Authors, publishers, editors, IR administrators, research funders
- IR usage statistics already being collected
  - But no standards yet in place for comparable repository statistics, especially at the journal level
New Development - SUSHI

- Standardized Usage Statistics Harvesting Initiative (SUSHI)
  - No mechanism yet for automatically retrieving, combining, and storing COUNTER usage data from different sources
  - NISO-sponsored XML-based SUSHI aims to provide a means to do just this, via a standard model for machine to machine automation of statistics harvesting.
  - COUNTER and NISO have signed an agreement to work together on the development of SUSHI. More details of SUSHI can be found at:

  http://www.niso.org/committees/SUSHI/SUSHI_comm.html
Conclusions

- Usage statistics are one indicator of usage, success and value, provided that...
  - They are reliable
  - Universal standards are adopted
  - Online products are structured to allow reporting of usage statistics at different levels

- But...
  - They should not be over-complicated or over-interpreted
  - They should be used in context with market research
  - Both publishers and librarians are going to have to organize themselves to generate and handle usage statistics
COUNTER Membership

- Member Categories and Annual Fees (2006)
  - Publishers/intermediaries: $775
  - Library Consortia: $515
  - Libraries: $387
  - Industry organization: $387
  - Library affiliate: $156 (non-voting member)

- Benefits of full membership
  - Owner of COUNTER with voting rights at annual general meeting, etc.
  - Regular bulletins on progress
  - Opportunity to receive advice on implementation
Apply for COUNTER membership

COUNTER - Counting Online Usage of Networked Electronic Resources

Update
Release 2 of the Code of Practice for Journals and Databases now published

Click here to apply for COUNTER Membership

About COUNTER

The use of online information resources is growing rapidly. It is widely agreed by producers and purchasers of information that the use of these resources should be measured in a more consistent way. Librarians want to understand better how the information they buy from a variety of sources is being used; publishers want to know how the information products they disseminate are being accessed. An essential requirement to meet these objectives is an agreed international set of standards and protocols governing the recording and exchange of online usage data. The COUNTER Codes of Practice provide these standards and protocols and are published in full on this website. Currently available are:


Release 2 of the COUNTER Code of Practice for Journals and Databases (published April 2005)

Draft Release 1 of the COUNTER Code of Practice for Books and Reference Works (published for comments in January 2005)

COUNTER Organizational Structure

In 2003 COUNTER was formally incorporated in England as a not-for-profit company, Counter Online Media Limited. Details of Counter Online Media Limited's articles of association are available at the Companies Registration Office.
http://www.projectcounter.org

Thank you!

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