

THE VALUE OF COUNTER DATA

to content and
platform providers

Case Study

COUNTER

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THE VALUE OF COUNTER DATA TO CONTENT AND PLATFORM PROVIDERS

In this case study, a variety of content and platform providers gave their feedback on COUNTER data and the value it adds.

COUNTER AND RELEASE 5

Release 5 (the current version of the COUNTER Code of Practice) includes four Master Reports. The reports a publisher needs to provide depends on their Host Type (i.e. the type of content they host). Master Reports cover a wide spectrum of activities. For ease of use, each of the Master Reports has one or more pre-set Standard Views that summarises particular types of activity, such as usage or access denials. All types of publishers provide their customers with Platform Master Reports, which show activity across all metrics for their entire platforms.

EXAMPLE PLATFORM MASTER REPORT					
Label	Value				
Report_Name	Platform Master Report				
Report_ID	PR				
Release	5.0.2				
Institution_Name	Sample University				
Institution_ID	ror-01jktjc68				
Metric_Types	Total_Item_Investigations; Unique_Item_Investigations; No_License				
Report_Filters	Access_Method=Regular				
Report_Attributes					
Exceptions					
Reporting_Period	2021-01-01 to 2021-06-30				
Created	2021-07-25				
Created_By	Publisher Alpha				
Platform	Data_Type	Access_Type	Access_Method	Metric_Type	Reporting_Period_Total
PPA	Journal	Controlled	Regular	Total_Item_Investigations	10
PPA	Journal	Controlled	Regular	Unique_Item_Investigations	6
PPA	Book	Controlled	Regular	Total_Item_Investigations	5
PPA	Book	Controlled	Regular	Unique_Item_Investigations	5
PPA	Book	Controlled	Regular	Unique_Title_Investigations	2
PPA	Database	Controlled	Regular	No_License	3

Release 5 of the COUNTER Code of Practice is designed to ensure a level playing field, regardless of the technologies, UX designs, or platforms that providers use to deliver their content. For example, some platforms take the user directly to the HTML, and in Release 4, this could lead to higher counts than for platforms that would take the user to an abstract before they would view the HTML or download a PDF.

Some publishers choose to implement COUNTER themselves whilst others find economies of scale through using a third-party service, such as [Scholarly iQ](#).

THE VALUE OF COUNTER DATA

COUNTER offers a range of benefits to platform and content providers, regardless of size or content.

1. Standardised data to support evidence-based communication and decision making

The COUNTER Code of practice and audit processes ensure that COUNTER data is consistent and reliable across platforms:

As providers are regularly audited, there is a regular third-party check and verification to ensure that consistency is assured across providers and over time. It is not just a self-certification, which may otherwise be open to misuse and misrepresentation.

Most of our customers understand and use COUNTER data, and where they don't, it is useful to direct them to COUNTER as the standard we work to. Increasingly, those regions who were not as versed in COUNTER are becoming more aware.

In managing library resources in today's exploding world of information, independent usage reporting is critical in demonstrating content value. The COUNTER Code of Practice and audit processes ensures that libraries receive trusted, consistent, credible, and comparable usage statistics.

It is useful to have a standard to compare traffic across several platforms.

Some organisations specifically commented on the value of COUNTER data in supporting communication with their customers:

We prefer to use COUNTER data because it is reliable - we understand it. I always use COUNTER data, where available, to report to our board, editors, to the society, and internally to see what bits of content are being used or which are more popular.

It is helpful to use the same usage criteria as universities because it enables you to act proactively. For example, you can track total user engagements at universities to see if you need to contact an instructor and see why they're not using the tool.

COUNTER data can also assist clients when trialling new products and resources:

I utilise COUNTER from the sales and marketing point of view and working with academic research libraries... When we do trials for new customers... COUNTER data helps them get word out to the student body and professors and see, where needed, that what they buy is based on greatest usage.

When a customer is trialling a product, we monitor the usage to support and promote the trial.

The COUNTER Release 5 reports provide flexibility to look at data in detail or at a high level to suit varying requirements:

The COUNTER Release 5 standard has greater reporting flexibility than ever with further insights on metrics, such as investigations and unique title or item counts. This is vital in taking a more informed look at the resources a library has acquired in these cost-conscious times.

2. Data to Support Customers' Requirements

Generally, librarians and other clients expect to be provided with consistent and reliable data to inform monitoring, evaluation, and decision-making. COUNTER data provides this:

Customers do expect COUNTER stats, for sure... There are some states in USA, North and South Carolina - if you don't offer COUNTER statistics you cannot sell to them. They will not buy from you unless they can review their COUNTER statistics.

COUNTER data is established as a common, agreed industry standard, providing scrutiny and review from clients' peers in its value and application.

Some organisations commented on how library clients appreciated the ease of obtaining COUNTER statistics:

We have an admin panel for each organisation, so librarians can access usage statistics anytime and with a few clicks. We also use SUSHI, so the librarians can fully automate the collection process without the need to go into each different system.

It is key to provide convenient and eye-catching information and links for easy access to COUNTER via the publisher's Administrator Page for each library - this is the one stop location for all your librarians' activities.

JSTOR's COUNTER reporting interface is one of our most highly rated admin services. Users know what to expect, and as long as you follow good UX practices, they are typically happy with the experience of getting COUNTER data.

In addition to meeting individual clients' expectations, COUNTER data supports organisations in meeting usage data requirements in consortium licence agreements and tenders.

COUNTER is an important feature in tenders. Without COUNTER compliant usage, you would not be considered for most tenders.

3. Business Intelligence, Product and Sales Support

COUNTER Release 5 provides data on controlled usage, as well as Gold Open Access (GOA). This can be an important feature of the COUNTER Release 5 data, enabling content and platform providers to look at the proportion of open access vs controlled use across their portfolio and identify changes over time.

More recently, one of the projects we have been doing is evaluating Gold Open Access vs controlled usage. This is definitely a plus point that has come out of R5. We will also use it as a start for transition agreements.

Some content and platform providers have developed, or are exploring, other services and functionality that can combine and incorporate COUNTER Release 5 data. Having a standard, consistent measure of usage for such developments was considered important:

It's like using the COUNTER metric as the trusted currency but working with it in a different way. COUNTER metrics provide a trusted quantitative measurement, which can deliver more value through expanding the parameters or values for which it was used, or by using with other qualitative metrics.

COUNTER data can be combined with other data to explore trends over time and even to make predictions:

The nice thing about COUNTER data is you've got performance data for a period and can see what's trended over time... As such, if you've got data over time and can interpret those trends, you have prediction potential to see patterns. AI and predictive modelling need reliable, consistent metrics and I think that that's where COUNTER comes into this, because we're dealing with something that we know what it is, rather than its hits or views or whatever else that may not be the same for everyone.

The development of the COUNTER Code of Practice has resulted in reliable and consistent usage data, which can provide the “groundwork” for other data driven services:

If you're a publisher, and you're publishing content, and you're tracking all that engagement for it, you're the custodian of that data. Why would you not want that data to be as rich as it could possibly be? Particularly if it's trusted data that's audited.

Data driven business intelligence is a top priority for the business, and we are in the process of bringing together a large number of customer data sources, COUNTER usage data being one of them, to drive this going forwards.

COUNTER data is beneficial in supporting the sales process and package selection:

Our sales team will review the COUNTER usage reports before beginning sales or renewal discussions with customers.

Sales side is to look at usage, we look at turnaways to see if there are any other journals in our packages getting attempted usage that might provide other opportunities.

CONTRIBUTORS

We are grateful for the following organisations who provided feedback:

Bioscientifica

<https://www.bioscientifica.com/>

Bioscientifica exists to support biomedicine. Through their expertise in publishing, events and association management, they strengthen biomedical communities to advance science and health. Bioscientifica is owned by the Society for Endocrinology, and all their profits are redistributed to support biomedical research and practice.

BMJ

bmj.com/company

As a global healthcare knowledge provider, BMJ publishes one of the world's most cited general medical journals, *The BMJ*, and over 70 specialty journals. The company also offers digital professional development courses and clinical decision support tools to help health professionals improve the quality of healthcare delivery.

BMJ work with a strong vision of a healthier world, which defines them as an organisation. They hope that vision resonates with you, and that you choose to join them in working towards a healthier world for all.

ITHAKA/JSTOR

<https://ithaka.org/>

<https://www.jstor.org/>

ITHAKA helps to make higher education and access to knowledge more affordable. They improve outcomes for students and researchers, and they preserve knowledge for future generations. JSTOR is an ITHAKA service that provides journals, books, images, and primary sources on a platform for teaching and connecting ideas.

OpenEdition

<https://www.openedition.org/>

OpenEdition is a portal of electronic resources in the humanities and social sciences.

Scholarly IQ

<https://scholarlyiq.com/>

SiQ supports over 175,000 librarian reporting users, including over 9,000 SUSHI accounts, and processes over 150 million page views per month for COUNTER reporting customers. SiQ is currently the only fully audited, compliant, independent provider of COUNTER reporting services with a comprehensive suite of wholly owned and developed solutions for COUNTER reporting. SiQ has over 18 years extensive experience of both academic publishing, and data management and analytics.

This unique blend has enabled SiQ to build a team of industry leading professionals who deliver the business support, data management knowledge, and COUNTER expertise required to fully support vendor and client requirements.

Social Explorer

<https://www.socialexplorer.com/>

Social Explorer allows users to visualise and interact with data, create maps, charts, reports, and downloads. Users can explore hundreds of thousands of built-in data indicators related to demography, economy, health, politics, environment, crime and more.

Unlimited Priorities

<https://www.unlimitedpriorities.com/>

Unlimited Priorities® provides support services to organisations operating within the information arena, including publishers, scholarly societies, libraries, trade associations, museums, and historical societies.

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