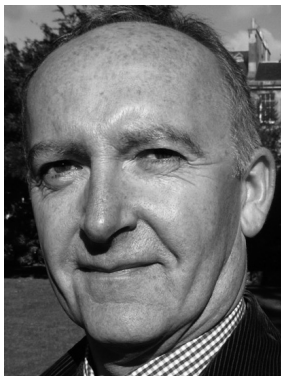
The COUNTER Code of Practice for Books and Reference Works – a primer

Release 1 of the COUNTER Code of Practice for Books and Reference Works was published in 2006 and provides an international standard for vendor recording and reporting of the usage of e-books and reference works. By July 2009, 23 vendors were compliant with this Code of Practice. It has much in common with the well-established COUNTER Code of Practice for Journals and Databases but it also has a number of important features that take into account the greater diversity of e-books. This article provides a guide to the Code of Practice for both vendors and librarians, and addresses compliance issues relevant to both groups.



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Introduction

Online collections of books and reference works are an increasingly important feature of the product offering of most learned and professional publishers. They and their customers want to understand better how these online resources are used. Publishers want to know how the information they produce and disseminate is being accessed. Librarians and other customers want better insights into the way the information they purchase from a range of vendors is being used, and also whether they are receiving value for money. Meeting these publisher and customer objectives requires usage statistics that are credible, compatible and consistent. An important step towards achieving this has been the development of agreed international Codes of Practice governing the recording and exchange of usage data.

The first COUNTER Code of Practice, covering journal and databases[1], was published in 2003 and has now become a well-established and widely-used industry standard, providing both vendors and their customers with useful insights into the online usage of these products. The COUNTER Code of Practice for Books and Reference Works[2] has the potential to do the same.

Release 1 of the COUNTER Code of Practice for Books and Reference Works was published in 2006 and provides an international standard for vendor recording and reporting of the usage of e-books and reference works. It has much in common with the well-established COUNTER Code of Practice for Journals and Databases but it also has a number of important features that take into account the greater diversity of e-books. As technology and e-book publishing models evolve, the Code of Practice will be revised and modified, with new 'Releases' that will take new developments into account. This approach has worked well for journals and databases

In July 2009 there were 23 vendors compliant with the Code of Practice for Books and Reference Works. More vendors need to follow their example and become compliant with this Code of Practice. A rapidly expanding number of e-books are becoming available; libraries are purchasing access to these and librarians expect to be provided with credible usage statistics to help them assess the value of the e-books and packages of books that they buy[3,4]. COUNTER-compliant vendors are able to do this by providing their customers with credible usage statistics in a familiar, recognized format.

The full text of Release 1 of the COUNTER Code of Practice for Books and Reference Works is freely

accessible on the COUNTER website[5] . This primer is designed to provide those e-book vendors who wish to become COUNTER compliant with further guidance on how to do so. The primary features of the Code of Practice, as well as the main steps to be taken for compliance, are described below.

Definitions of terms used

The original Code of Practice for Journals and Databases contains an extensive list of data elements and other terms used in the usage reports and other parts of the Code[6]. This has been expanded to cover books and reference works. New definitions include:

- **chapter:** a subdivision of a book or of some categories of reference work; usually numbered and titled
- **entry:** a record of information in some categories of reference work (e.g. a dictionary definition)
- **reference work:** an authoritative source of information about a subject: used to find quick answers to questions
- **section:** a subdivision of a book or reference work (e.g. chapter, entry).

As with journals and databases, where an appropriate existing definition exists this has been used and the source, such as NISO (the National Information Standards Organization), has been given. The other definitions were developed by the COUNTER e-books task force, using a number of sources.

Also defined are the protocols to be observed when an aggregator or gateway is involved in the delivery of vendor content to the customer. These protocols are particularly important to avoid duplicate counting of usage by publisher and aggregator in situations where an intermediary aggregator or gateway is involved.

Data processing and auditing

The way usage records are generated differs from one platform to another and it is impractical to describe all the possible filters used to clean up the data. Instead, the Code of Practice specifies the requirements to be met by the data to be used for building the usage reports. A guiding principle is that only intended usage should be recorded, and all requests that are not intended by the user are removed. To this end, all double clicks on an HTTP-link within ten seconds of each other will be counted as only one request. Where a PDF-link is involved, this filter is set at 30 seconds, due to the longer time it takes to render a PDF.

Auditing of vendor usage reports and processes by an approved third party is *not* required for Release 1, but it will be a requirement for compliance with future Releases of the Code of Practice.

Usage reports

The Code of Practice provides a set of six basic usage reports that cover full-text requests for a whole title, as well as for sections (chapters, encyclopaedia entries, etc.) within a title. Searches, sessions and turnaways are also covered.

These reports are:

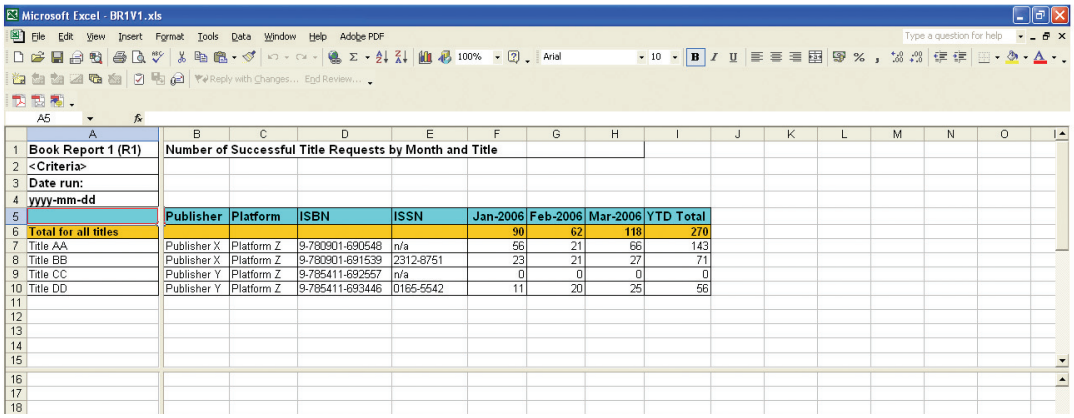
Book Report 1: Number of Successful Title Requests by Month and Title (BR1)
Book Report 2: Number of Successful Section Requests by Month and Title (BR2)
Book Report 3: Number of Turnaways by Month and Title (BR3)
Book Report 4: Turnaways by Month and Service (BR4)
Book Report 5: Total Searches and Sessions by Month and Title (BR5)
Book Report 6: Total Searches and Sessions by Month and Service (BR6)

The list of vendors compliant with the Code of Practice for Books and Reference Works is shown in Table 1.

The report formats, data processing guidelines and delivery protocols are largely the same as those already in use for journals and databases. Likewise, searches, sessions and turnaways have been defined in the same way as for journals and databases, and the usage reports relating to these (3,4, 5 and 6 above) parallel those for journals and databases. The new reports are Book Report 1 and Book Report 2. Examples of both reports are shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Vendor	BR1	BR2	BR3	BR4	BR5	BR6
Blackwell Publishing Ltd		Yes		Yes		Yes
Credo Reference (formerly Xrefer)	Yes					Yes
ebrary		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Greenwood Publishing Group	Yes	Yes			Yes	
IEEE Computer Society	Yes					Yes
Informa	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes
Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE)	Yes					Yes
Institute of Physics Publishing	Yes					Yes
John Wiley & Sons Inc		Yes			Yes	
Karger AG		Yes				Yes
MetaPress	Yes	Yes				Yes
MPS Technologies (MPS Insight)	Yes					Yes
MyiLibrary		Yes	Yes			Yes
Nature Publishing Group	Yes					Yes
Ovid Technologies	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes
Oxford Scholarship Online		Yes	Yes		Yes	
Palgrave Connect	Yes					Yes
Royal Society of Chemistry	Yes					Yes
Safari Books Online		Yes		Yes		Yes
Sage Publications		Yes				Yes
SpringerLink	Yes	Yes				Yes
Thieme Medical Publishers		Yes				Yes
Value Chain International	Yes					Yes

Table 1. List of vendors compliant with Release 1 of the COUNTER Code of Practice for Books and Reference Works



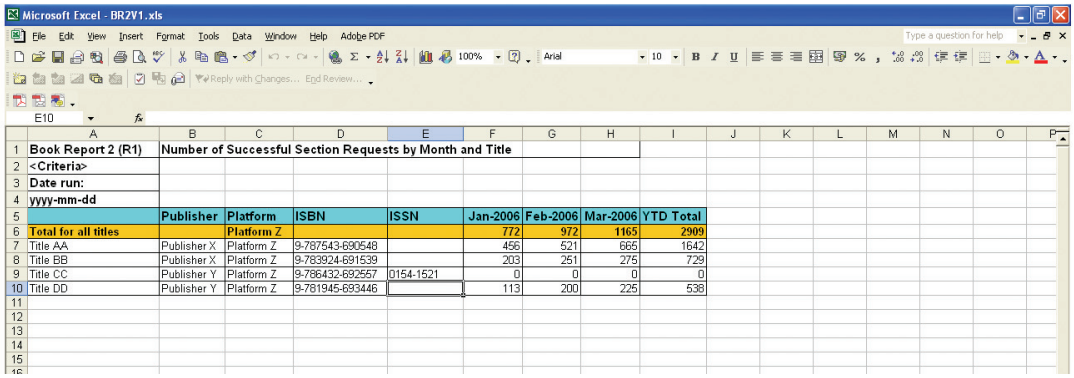
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	Book Report 1 (R1)	Number of Successful Title Requests by Month and Title							
2	<Criteria>								
3	Date run:								
4	yyyy-mm-dd								
5		Publisher	Platform	ISBN	ISSN	Jan-2006	Feb-2006	Mar-2006	YTD Total
6	Total for all titles					90	62	118	270
7	Title AA	Publisher X	Platform Z	9-780901-690548	n/a	56	21	66	143
8	Title BB	Publisher X	Platform Z	9-780901-691539	2312-8751	23	21	27	71
9	Title CC	Publisher Y	Platform Z	9-785411-692557	n/a	0	0	0	0
10	Title DD	Publisher Y	Platform Z	9-785411-693446	0165-5542	11	20	25	56

Figure 1. Book Report 1: Number of Successful Title Requests by Month and Title (Full title and ISBN are listed.)

Note:

1. For 'criteria' specify, for example, the organizational level to which the usage reports refer, e.g. 'Harvard University', 'Department of Chemistry'.
2. the 'Total for all titles' line is provided at the top of the Table to allow it to be stripped out without disrupting the rest of the Table, as the number of books included may vary from one month to another.

Book Report 1 is designed to provide usage statistics for those titles that can only be downloaded in their entirety and for which online usage cannot be monitored further by the vendor.



Microsoft Excel - BR2V1.xls

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	Book Report 2 (R1)	Number of Successful Section Requests by Month and Title							
2	<Criteria>								
3	Date run:								
4	yyyy-mm-dd								
5		Publisher	Platform	ISBN	ISSN	Jan-2006	Feb-2006	Mar-2006	YTD Total
6	Total for all titles		Platform Z			772	972	1165	2909
7	Title AA	Publisher X	Platform Z	9-787543-690548		456	521	665	1642
8	Title BB	Publisher X	Platform Z	9-783924-691539		203	251	275	729
9	Title CC	Publisher Y	Platform Z	9-786432-692557	0154-1521	0	0	0	0
10	Title DD	Publisher Y	Platform Z	9-781945-693446		113	200	225	538

Figure 2. Book Report 2: Number of Successful Section Requests by Month and Title (Full title and ISBN are listed.)

Note:

1. For 'criteria' specify, for example, the organizational level to which the usage reports refer, e.g. 'Harvard University', 'Department of Chemistry'.
2. the 'Total for all titles' line is provided at the top of the Table to allow it to be stripped out without disrupting the rest of the Table, as the number of titles included may vary from one month to another.

Book Report 2 is designed to allow the vendor to measure usage of individual sections within a title. A 'section' is the next level of organizational structure below the complete title, such as 'chapter' or 'entry'. We felt that this single report based on the more comprehensive definition was more appropriate than having separate reports for 'chapter', 'entry', etc., as a title whose structure is based on 'chapters' is unlikely to contain 'entries' and vice versa.

Report delivery

In response to customer requirements, report delivery must conform to the following standards:

- reports must be provided either as a CSV file, as a Microsoft Excel file, or as a file that can be easily imported into Microsoft Excel
- reports should be made available on a password-controlled website (accompanied by an e-mail alert when data is updated)
- reports must be provided at least monthly
- data must be updated within four weeks of the end of the reporting period
- all of last calendar year's data and this calendar year's to date must be supplied.

Vendors: how to comply with the Code of Practice

Any vendor of e-books or reference works may apply for COUNTER-compliant status. The procedure is as follows:

Step 1: Review the Code of Practice for Books and Reference Works on the COUNTER website at http://www.projectcounter.org/cop/books/cop_books_ref.pdf

Step 2: Decide which of the usage reports listed in Section 4 of the Code of Practice are relevant to your publications. Note: to be compliant you will be required to provide:

- either Book Report 1 or Book Report 2

AND

- either Book Report 5 or Book Report 6.

Book Report 3 and/or Book Report 4 will be required *only* where the title or service is provided on the basis of a simultaneous user licence.

Step 3: Ensure that the terms in the selected usage reports are consistent with the COUNTER definitions of these terms, which are found in Section 3 of the Code of Practice.

Step 4: Ensure that you adhere to the customer category requirements for usage reports as specified in Section 4.2 of the Code of Practice and to the report delivery specifications in Section 4.3.

Step 5: Follow the rules for data processing, as outlined in Section 5 of the Code of Practice.

If expertise does not exist within the organization to convert the raw logfiles into the COUNTER usage reports (by applying the required data filters, formatting the resulting usage statistics according to the specifications of the COUNTER

reports, etc.), there are a number of suppliers who can provide this service. They are listed on the Compliant Vendors page of the COUNTER website[7]. Vendors who require further advice on suppliers may contact COUNTER directly (e-mail: pshepherd@projectCounter.org).

Step 6: Having prepared the relevant usage reports according to the specifications of the Code of Practice, inform the COUNTER office by e-mail (pshepherd@projectCounter.org) that the reports are ready. The COUNTER office will arrange for the reports to be reviewed by our library test sites.

Step 7: Once the usage reports are approved as being COUNTER compliant by the library test sites, the vendor will be required to complete and sign the Declaration of COUNTER Compliance (Appendix B of the Code of Practice) and to pay the Vendor Registration Fee of £250. (This fee is waived for COUNTER members). When this process is completed the vendor will be added to the Register of Vendors on the COUNTER website. Only vendors and reports listed there may be regarded as being COUNTER compliant.

Vendors who are already compliant with the Code of Practice for Journals and Databases have to apply separately for compliance with the Code of Practice for Books and Reference Works.

Librarians: how to encourage vendors to provide COUNTER-compliant usage statistics

Most larger publishers, if they publish e-books, are capable of generating the relevant COUNTER usage reports. Smaller publishers of e-books may not have this capability, but a number of suppliers now provide this service. These suppliers are listed in the COUNTER Register of Vendors[8]. In this context it is now reasonable for librarians to insert the following clause in all vendor licences covering e-books:

> *'The licensor confirms to the licensee that usage statistics covering the online usage of the books included in this licence will be provided. The licensor further confirms that such usage statistics will adhere to the specifications of the COUNTER Code of Practice, including data elements collected and their definitions; data processing guidelines; usage report content, format, frequency and delivery method'.*

Next steps

As a significant number of vendors only became compliant with Release 1 of this Code of Practice in the course of 2009, we have decided to take more time to monitor how this Release is working from the perspective of vendors and libraries before firming up the timetable for refining the COUNTER usage reports for books and reference works. During the remainder of 2009 and in 2010 we shall systematically obtain feedback from vendors and their customers and will use this to inform the next Release. Users are also encouraged to submit comments direct to COUNTER via the website.

We shall also be taking into account the findings of the JISC national e-books observatory project, whose final results will be available during 2009[9].

Announcements for the timetable and process for the development of the next Release of the Code of Practice for Books and Reference Works will be made on the COUNTER website. We do not anticipate publishing a new Release before mid 2010, with implementation no earlier than 2011.

Further information

Vendors, publishers or librarians seeking further information on compliance with the Code of Practice for Books and Reference Works, or on any other aspect of COUNTER, please contact the Project Director, Dr Peter T Shepherd (details below).

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