

Project COUNTER

www.projectcounter.org

COUNTER Compliance

A step by step Guide for Vendors

Introduction

Launched in March 2002, COUNTER (Counting Online Usage of Networked Electronic Resources) is an international initiative serving librarians, publishers and intermediaries by setting standards that facilitate the recording and reporting of online usage statistics by vendors in a consistent, credible and compatible way. These standards are contained in two Codes of Practice, one covering journals and databases and the other covering books and reference works. This Guide is designed to take vendors, step-by-step, through the COUNTER compliance process.

The full texts of the COUNTER Codes of Practice may be found on the COUNTER website at: http://www.projectcounter.org/code_practice.html

The COUNTER compliance process

Step 1: Review the COUNTER Codes of Practice and decide which of them applies to your products. COUNTER publishes two Codes of Practice. The Code of Practice for Journals and Databases applies if you publish online full-text journals (or other periodicals) or databases (such as bibliographic databases). The Code of Practice for Books and Reference Works applies if you publish online books, or book-like products.

Step 2: Once you have decided which Code of Practice applies, you should select the usage reports that are relevant to your products. Some of the usage reports are obligatory for COUNTER compliance, while others are optional. The obligatory usage reports, which need only be provided if you publish the relevant products, are listed below:

Code of Practice for Journals and Databases

- Journal Report 1: Number of successful full-text article requests by month and journal – required from all publishers publishing full-text online journals

- Journal Report 1a: Number of successful full-text article requests from an archive by month and journal – required from all publishers providing Journal Report 1, who sell full-text journal archives as separate products (see also Journal Report 5, below)
- Journal Report 2: Turnaways by month and journal – applies **only** when the vendor has implemented a licence in which a limit is set on the number of simultaneous users.
- Journal Report 5: Number of successful full-text article requests by year and journal – as with Journal Report 1a above, the purpose of this report is to enable customers to distinguish usage of separately acquired archives from the total usage reported in Journal Report 1. The range of years reported in Journal Report 5 must, therefore, enable them to do this. Journal Report 5 is an alternative to Journal Report 1a, for archives for which the latter report is not appropriate.
- Database Report 1: Total searches and sessions by month and database – must be provided by vendors providing bibliographic and other databases, where searches and sessions may be recorded for a particular database
- Database Report 2: Turnaways by month and database - applies **only** when the vendor has implemented a licence in which a limit is set on the number of simultaneous users.
- Database Report 3: Total searches and sessions by month and service – must be provided by vendors providing bibliographic and other databases as part of a larger service, where searches and session are across the entire service
- Consortium Report 1: Number of successful full-text journal article or book chapter requests by month – this report is a single XML file, broken down by consortium member, which must be provided to library consortium customers whose members have access to full-text online journals from the vendor.
- Consortium Report 2: Total searches by month and database – this report is a single XML file, broken down by consortium member, which contains the search counts for each database taken by individual consortium members. It must be provided to library consortium customers whose members have access to databases from the publisher

Code of Practice for Books and Reference Works

- Book Report 1: Number of successful title requests by month and title – this report applies **only** to those titles where the entire title may only be requested by customers as a single file, as opposed to by individual sections, in which case Book Report 2 below applies
- Book Report 2: Number of successful section requests by month and title – this report applies to all book titles not covered by Book Report 1. A Section is a subdivision of a book or reference work (eg a chapter or encyclopaedia entry), which is the next organizational level down from the complete title.

- Book Report 3: Turnaways by month and title - **applies only** when the vendor has implemented a licence in which a limit is set on the number of simultaneous users.
- Book Report 4: Turnaways by month and service – applies **only** when the vendor has implemented a licence in which a limit is set on the number of simultaneous users.
- Book Report 5: total searches and sessions by month and title – this report is to be provided only for those titles where searches and sessions can be counted at the title level. In most cases, searches and session are at the level of the service, in which case Book Report 6 below applies.
- Book Report 6: Total searches and sessions by month and service

Step 3: preparing the COUNTER compliant reports: once you have decided which usage reports apply to your products, the process for converting your raw logfiles into the COUNTER usage reports needs to be addressed. The specifications for this are provided in Sections 4 and 5 of the Codes of Practice. Section 4 specifies the COUNTER report content and formats, the customer categories to be used, and the rules for delivery and customer access. Section 5 provides the data processing requirements, in terms of http return codes, time filters, etc.

If your organization does not have the IT knowledge or capability to transform the raw logfiles into the COUNTER usage reports, COUNTER can advise on suppliers who can provide this service.

Step 4: application for COUNTER compliance: once you have prepared the usage reports, COUNTER must review them prior to recognizing them as COUNTER compliant. This review is carried out by one of the COUNTER library test sites; it normally takes no more than a few days and highlights any deviations from the COUNTER standard that must be remedied prior to your being added to the official list of COUNTER compliant vendors.

Step 5: addition to the Register of COUNTER Vendors. Once the library test site approves the usage reports as COUNTER compliant, you will be asked to complete the Declaration of COUNTER Compliance (Appendix B of the Code of Practice). Upon receipt of this, together with the US\$500 Registration Fee, the vendor will be added to the Register of COUNTER Compliant Vendors. Note: the Registration Fee is waived for COUNTER Members.

Post-compliance action

- The independent audit: in order to maintain COUNTER compliant status, vendor reports must undergo an independent audit within 6 months of being added to the Register, and annually thereafter. COUNTER will accept an audit by any Chartered Accountant (UK), CPA (USA), or their equivalent elsewhere. Alternatively, COUNTER will

also accept an audit by one of the two COUNTER-approved auditors, ABCe or BPA

- Feedback from customers: even after a vendor's usage reports have been reviewed and have passed the independent audit, it is possible for infelicities to creep into the COUNTER reports, as a result, perhaps, of a modification to a system or platform. Such problems are often noticed by the customers receiving the vendor reports before they become apparent to the vendor. For this reason we urge all COUNTER compliant vendors to register with the lib-stats mailing list, which is the main forum for online librarian discussion of usage statistics. Lib-stats is managed by the University of Newcastle:
<http://www.lib-stats.org.uk/>

If you have any questions about the COUNTER compliance process, contact COUNTER by email at pshepherd@projectCounter.org

