Chapter 2
COUNTER:
Standardization of E-Books Statistics

ABSTRACT

Until more recently, COUNTER reports were predominantly used by content providers and consumers of electronic journals and databases. One of the most significant developments with COUNTER Release 4 is that it integrated book reports as part of the latest COUNTER Code of Practice. Release 4 makes it possible for academic libraries to assess e-books usage in a consistent, credible, and comparable manner. However, in implementing the COUNTER standards for book usage reporting, the variant practices among e-book vendors impose challenges for librarians to correctly interpret vendor COUNTER reports. Therefore, it is crucial for librarians to consult the Code of Practice and COUNTER implementation guidelines in order to better understand COUNTER reports by individual vendors. Chapter 2 discusses each COUNTER standard report for e-book usage data, pointing to potential issues as they have been implemented by e-books vendors.

INTRODUCTION

The success of COUNTER standards is evident from its wide implementation by vendors and publishers and the abundant COUNTER literature since its conception. However, until more recently, COUNTER reports were predominantly used by content providers and consumers of electronic journals and databases. The COUNTER reports for e-books were not implemented by

most vendors until *The COUNTER Code of Practice, Release 4* (2012). For example, ebrary, one of the major e-books vendors, only started providing COUNTER reports in late 2013.

One of the most significant developments with Release 4 is that it integrated the book reports as part of the latest COUNTER Code of Practice. "Release 4 of the Code of Practice replaces both Release 3 of the Code of Practice for Journals and Databases and Release 1 of the Code of Practice for Books and Reference Works" (p. 3). For librarians, the availability of these additional COUNTER reports provides the opportunity for assessment of electronic book usage in a standardized way.

COUNTER USAGE REPORTS FOR E-BOOKS

Release 4 of the Code of Practice lists 36 usage reports, covering various types and formats of electronic resources. These COUNTER reports are categorized either as standard or optional reports. COUNTER requires that a vendor must provide standard reports in order to be COUNTER compliant. The COUNTER standard reports pertinent to e-books usage are Book Reports 1-5 and Platform Report 1.

Book Report 1 (BR1) provides the number of successful title requests by month and title. The report lists individual book titles with associated usage statistics, as well as identification information, such as Publisher, ISBN, Book DOI, and Proprietary Identifier. This report informs customers how many titles were requested, and how many times and in which month(s) they were requested. By specifying individual titles, it also provides insight into what titles were accessed by the user. BR1 is to be provided only if a vendor delivers an entire e-book in a single file.

If a vendor provides an e-book in multiple files, then Book Report 2 (BR2) should be used instead. BR2 contains the exact same data categories as BR1. The only difference between the two reports is that BR1 counts at the *title* level while BR2 measures usage at the *section* level. The Code of Practice defines *section* as "[t]he first level of subdivision of a book or reference work." The BR2 report includes individual titles and number of section requests for each title, although it does not specify what particular sections were requested.

Book Report 3 (BR3) contains the exact same data categories as BR1 and BR2, except that instead of successful requests, it counts the number

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