Chapter 3
Case Study Part 1:
Sorting Out the Data Mess

ABSTRACT

Chapter 3 introduces a case study, which involves a medium-sized academic library that has been acquiring e-books primarily through large subscription packages from three major vendors. All three vendors in this case study – ebrary, EBSCO, and Safari – provide COUNTER usage reports to their customers. All three vendors have joined the COUNTER membership and been registered as COUNTER-compliant. The chapter describes their current implementation of the COUNTER book reports. The usage reports discussed throughout the case study were retrieved from each vendor for the academic year of July 2015–June 2016, and include COUNTER and non-COUNTER reports. The chapter also identifies what COUNTER reports each vendor provides and evaluates the degree of their compliance. Despite the variations in the COUNTER reports they implement, all three vendors supply their customers with essential COUNTER data on e-books usage, i.e. the numbers of successful requests, turnaways, and searches. In addition to the COUNTER reports, they all provide non-COUNTER reports to their customers. Although the number of non-COUNTER reports vary widely among ebrary, EBSCO, and Safari, all three vendors provide abundant and unique usage data.

INTRODUCTION

This case study involves a medium-sized academic library that holds about 350,000 print volumes and 200,000 electronic books. The library has been acquiring e-books primarily through large subscriptions and purchased packages from three major vendors – ebrary (Academic Complete), EBSCO (EBSCOHost eBook Collection), and Safari (Safari Books Online). All three vendors have joined the COUNTER membership and been registered as COUNTER-compliant. The usage reports discussed throughout the case study were retrieved from each vendor for the academic year of July 2015–June 2016, and include COUNTER and non-COUNTER reports.

COUNTER REPORTS BY VENDOR

According to the "Usage Reports" section of the *COUNTER Code of Practice Release 4*, vendors must supply the relevant COUNTER-compliant usage reports for their products. The COUNTER website (2016) FAQ page provides the following guidance to vendors for how to become COUNTER compliant: "Some of the usage reports are obligatory for COUNTER compliance; these are listed as 'standard' in this guide. However, only the 'standard' reports which are relevant to the categories of content that you publish are required for COUNTER compliance." The Code of Practice lists the names of usage reports and indicates the status of each as either standard or optional.

The *Friendly Guide to COUNTER*, a manual to assist publishers and vendors with implementing COUNTER, explains that categories of content determine which reports they should deliver. The Guide uses this example: "If you publish full-text journals but no books or databases, then you need to supply the 'standard' set of journal reports, but no book or database reports" (Mellins-Cohen, 2016, p. 8). This suggests that vendors should supply the standard reports for the category of content they publish. However, as reviewed in Chapter 2, COUNTER only requires e-book vendors to implement either BR1 or BR2, BR3 or BR4, and BR5 or PR1. The reason COUNTER gives e-book providers choices is that unlike journals and databases, where "Articles" as units can be counted consistently across vendors, e-books are structured and delivered in a variety of ways. This makes it very challenging to design

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