

## Chapter 4

# Case Study Part 2: Apples, Oranges, and Pears

### ABSTRACT

*Apart from the overall success of COUNTER Release 4 in further enabling e-book vendors to provide standardized usage reports, some major “roadblocks” remain. The fact that publishers and vendors of e-books deliver their products differently led to COUNTER’s development of book reports to cover the diversity of e-book platforms. Consequently, COUNTER allows vendors to choose between BR1 and BR2, and other “alternatives.” What are the consequences when COUNTER provides vendors with choices among the standard book reports, while the “alternatives” are not quite the same? Chapter 4, the second part of case study, examines COUNTER data in detail. It explores the implications of the fact that vendors do not provide same COUNTER book reports and/or implement the COUNTER standards differently. The chapter identifies issues in interpreting vendor-provided COUNTER reports with examples and data illustrations.*

### INTRODUCTION

Apart from the overall success of COUNTER Release 4 in further enabling e-book vendors to provide standardized usage reports, some major “roadblocks” remain (Pesch, 2011). The fact that publishers and vendors of e-books “define, structure and distribute” their products differently, i.e. some deliver e-books in a single file and others in individual chapters, sections, or entries, led to

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COUNTER's development of book reports (such as BR1 and BR2) to cover both scenarios (Shepherd, 2006). Consequently, COUNTER allows vendors to choose between BR1 and BR2, and other "alternatives."

In BR2, the concept of "section" as a counting unit has multiple implications. Although section is defined by COUNTER as "the first level of subdivision of a book or reference work," the type of sections varies among individual vendors, depending on the structure of the content and delivery, and vendors' interpretation. In reality, section types are diverse even among a single vendor's products. As result, the definition of section type in BR2 may vary among vendors, or a single BR2 report may include multiple section types.

This chapter aims to examine the degree of credibility, consistency, and comparability of the COUNTER reports by ebrary, EBSCO, and Safari as pertinent to this case study. It focuses on the following issues and questions:

1. Not all COUNTER standard book reports are available from all COUNTER-compliant vendors. What does this mean to their customers?
2. COUNTER provides vendors with choices among the standard book reports. However, the "alternatives" are not quite the same. How will this work in practice?
3. In BR2, COUNTER leaves the section type for individual vendors to define. What are the consequences?
4. In BR2, COUNTER allows multiple section types but only the predominant type is to be listed in the report. What impact does this have on the customer who interprets the data?

## EBSCO BR1 VS. BR2

The difference between BR1 and BR2 is that one counts usage at title level while the other counts at section level. As *Friendly Guide to COUNTER* explains, "[BR1] is only to be used when books are delivered in their entirety; where book sections are viewed separately, use BR2" (Mellins-Cohen, 2016, p. 10). The Guide also describes how data is recorded for each COUNTER book report. In both BR1 and BR2, usage is counted when a user requests a page. The difference between the two is that the request in BR1 displays or downloads a complete book while BR2 displays a book section.

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