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Comments sought on the draft COUNTER Code of Practice for Books and Reference Works

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Comments sought on the
draft COUNTER Code of Practice for Books and Reference Works

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The draft of Release 1 of the new COUNTER Code of Practice for online books and reference works was published in January 2005. This marks the first expansion of COUNTER's coverage beyond journals and databases. The Code of Practice for online books and reference works has been developed with input from a task force of librarians and publishers with expert knowledge of these products and is the first attempt to introduce a comprehensive industry standard for the recording and reporting of online book usage data. Its overall format and structure are consistent with the existing COUNTER Code of Practice for journals and databases: only the content of the usage reports has been changed and the set of definitions of terms expanded. The specifications for report delivery, data processing, auditing, and compliance are identical to those already prescribed in the Code of Practice for journals and databases.

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One of the main challenges we faced in developing this draft Code of Practice was the lack of consistency among publishers in the ways in which they define, structure and distribute online books. In the case of online journals, there was a wide consensus that the most important content unit whose usage should be measured is the full-text article. Even before COUNTER most journal publishers were measuring downloads of full-text journal articles. COUNTER’s main role was to ensure that they all did so using the same standards and protocols. For books there is no such consensus. Some publishers make online books available only as a single file that can be downloaded in its entirety, with no further vendor monitoring of usage being possible. Other publishers allow the downloading of individual chapters or entries, such as dictionary definitions or chemical structures. In such cases, it was appropriate to consider both these scenarios in the draft Code of Practice and this is reflected in the Usage Reports described below.

The full text of Release 1 of the COUNTER Code of Practice for Books and Reference Works is freely accessible on the COUNTER Website (www.projectcounter.org). It is available for comment until December 2005. Both vendors and librarians are encouraged to review the document and to submit their comments to the COUNTER Project Director. It is planned to publish the final version of this Code of Practice in early 2006. Its main features are summarised 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. Where possible, existing definitions from NISO, ISO, ARL and other organizations have been used. Among the terms defined are “Vendor,” “Aggregator,” “Search,” “Item request,” “Consortium” and “Consortium member.” This comprehensive list of definitions is proving to be a useful industry resource and is becoming more and more widely used for purposes not directly related to COUNTER. It has now been expanded to cover books and reference works. New definitions include:

- **Book**: “A nonserial printed publication of any length bound in hard or soft covers or in loose-leaf format. Also called monograph.” (NISO)
- **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) given. Other definitions have been developed by the 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 article link within 10 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 will be a requirement for compliance when the Code of Practice for books and journals is implemented. Detailed auditing specifications are provided as an Appendix to the Code of Practice.

**Usage reports**

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

The reports specified are:
- **Book Report 1**: Number of Successful Title Requests by Month and Title
- **Book Report 2**: Number of Successful Section Requests by Month and Title
- **Book Report 3**: Number of Turnaways by Month and Title
- **Book Report 4**: Total Searches and Sessions by Month and Title
- **Book Report 5**: Total Searches and Sessions by Month and Service

The report formats, data processing guidelines and delivery protocols are essentially 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 and 5 above) parallel those for journals and databases. For this reason attention here will focus on Book Report 1 and Book Report 2, as these contain the key new elements on the draft Code of Practice and merit further discussion. Book Report 1 is designed to provide usage statistics for those titles that can only be downloaded in their entirety and which online usage cannot be monitored.
IMHBCO (In My Humble But Correct Opinion) — Four Mantras for the Patron-Centered Technical Services Librarian

by Rick Anderson (Director of Resource Acquisition, University of Nevada, Reno Libraries; Phone: 775-784-6500 x.273) <rickand@unr.edu>

In the interest of promoting a more patron-centered approach to technical services work, I'd like to offer four mantras that we can all chant every morning as we prepare for the day. May they help all of us to align our service chakras more effectively.

**Mantra #1: My job is not to manage information, but to deliver it.**

In the work that we do, all of us have both intermediate tasks (the things we work on and try to accomplish every day) and ultimate goals (the larger things that we hope our intermediate goals will add up to). As librarians, our ultimate goal should be to get the best possible information to our patrons as quickly and effectively as possible, and to do so in the way that works best and makes most sense for our particular patrons. The intermediate tasks that we set for ourselves should be ones that move us toward the ultimate goal of effective patron service. We catalog our resources so that our patrons can find them; we fine-tune approval plan profiles to bring them into better conformity with our patrons' needs; we monitor usage of e-journals and databases so that we can target our scarce resources more accurately to the needs and interests of our patrons.

The problem comes when we get intermediate tasks and ultimate goals confused. Especially for those of us who work in technical services, it's easy to develop a kind of professional myopia — the kind that leads us to lose sight of our ultimate goal as we focus more on the intermediate tasks that lie directly in front of us.

Most of the intermediate tasks in technical services areas have to do with managing information. Thus, the more myopic we get, the easier it becomes to think that our real goal is to create and maintain a well-managed collection. But a well-managed collection is really only a means to an end. The end towards which we're working is our patrons getting the information they want, when they want it, in the format that works best for them. Our ultimate goal is not to manage information, but to deliver it. This doesn't mean that we neglect important management tasks, of course, but it does mean that we design them with our patrons in mind — our real patrons, not necessarily those who do what we wish they'd do or who know what we wish they'd know.

**Mantra #2: I will not try to think like a good librarian, but like a bad patron.**

Despite all the progress we've made over the past ten years, our libraries are still primarily designed as if our patrons lived in a world in which good information is hard to get. To really make effective use of a research library, you should know how to use Boolean logic; you need to know how to formulate a good search strategy; you need to be willing to ask for help when you need it (and you will). For some bizarre reason, we librarians tend to see this complexity as a badge of honor — as part of what separates us from (insert derivative snort here) the Google world.

The problem is that Google is not simply a new, simplified window on the same old world of online information. By virtue of its straightforward user-friendliness and the quality of the results it delivers, Google itself has fundamentally changed the world of online information. In general, we librarians are not doing a good job of adapting to this new world. One problem, I think, is that we're still trying to think like good librarians. When faced with the Internet, we ask ourselves all the Good Librarian questions: "How can we categorize this mass of information?" "How can we guide our patrons away from the garbage and toward the gold?" "How can we make our online interface more like the traditional catalog that our patrons know and (we're pretty sure) love?"

People prefer Google because it's designed for bad patrons, not for good librarians. The ideal Google user is someone who doesn't know how to use Boolean logic; who doesn't want to ask for help; and, most importantly, who is much more interested in finding information than in perfecting her searching skills. If we really want to be of service to our patrons, I suggest that we'd do well to focus less on teaching them how to search and more on making it easier for them to find.

**Mantra #3: Not everything worth doing is worth doing well.**

Your father was wrong about this. Here's the harsh reality: almost all of us have more work to do than we have time available to do it. If you do the math, that means the option of doing everything well is not available to us. Instead, we have three choices:

1. **Try to do everything well.** Unfortunately, this way madness lies, and also ineffectiveness. Try to do everything well and you'll end up doing a few things well and everything else will come out more or less half-baked.

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tered further by the vendor. 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.

**Compliance with the Code of Practice**

As with journals and databases, compliance with this Code of Practice will be encouraged in two ways. First, customers will be urged to include a clause in all relevant license agreements specifying that vendors provide usage statistics that are COUNTER compliant. A standard form of words for this clause is provided in the Code of Practice. Second, to obtain "COUNTER-compliant" status for their usage reports vendors will be required to sign a formal Declaration of COUNTER Compliance and to allow COUNTER to review those of their usage reports that they claim are compliant. These reports will then be listed in the Register of Vendors on the COUNTER Website. Only reports listed there may be regarded as being COUNTER compliant.

**Report Delivery**

Report delivery will have to 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 email alert when data is updated).
- Reports must be provided 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 and librarians are encouraged to [review the draft Code of Practice for Books and Journals and to pass comments to the COUNTER Project Director before the end of 2005 via the COUNTER Website](http://www.projectCounter.org).