

COUNTER Code of Practice

General Information

COUNTER serves librarians, vendors, intermediaries and others by facilitating the recording and exchange of online usage statistics. The COUNTER Code of Practice Release 4 provides guidance on data elements to be measured, definitions of these data elements, output report content and format, as well as on data processing and auditing. To have their usage statistics and reports designated COUNTER compliant, vendors must provide usage statistics that conform to the Code of Practice.

Information about [The Code of Practice Release 5](#) can be found in the separate tab on this website.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the COUNTER Code of Practice is to facilitate the recording, exchange and interpretation of online usage data by establishing open, international standards and protocols for the provision of vendor-generated usage statistics that are consistent, credible and compatible.

1.2 Scope

This COUNTER Code of Practice provides a framework for the recording and exchange of online usage statistics for the major categories of e-resources (journals, databases, books, reference works, and multimedia databases) at an international level. In doing so, it covers the following areas: data elements to be measured; definitions of these data elements; content and format of usage reports; requirements for data processing; requirements for auditing; guidelines to avoid duplicate counting when intermediary gateways and aggregators are used.

1.3 Application

COUNTER is designed for librarians, vendors, intermediaries and others who require reliable online usage statistics. The guidelines provided by this Code of Practice enable librarians to compare statistics from different vendors, to make better-informed purchasing decisions, and to plan infrastructure more effectively. COUNTER also provides vendors/intermediaries with the detailed specifications they need to generate data in a format useful to customers, to compare the relative usage of different delivery channels, and to learn more about online usage patterns. COUNTER also provides guidance to others interested in information about online usage statistics.

1.4 Strategy

COUNTER provides an open Code of Practice that evolves in response to the demands of the international library, publishing and intermediary communities. The Code of Practice is kept continually under review; feedback on its scope and application are actively sought from all interested parties. See Section 8 below.

1.5 Governance

The COUNTER Code of Practice is owned and developed by Counter Online Metrics, a not-for-profit company registered in England. Counter Online Metrics is governed by a Board of Directors. An Executive Committee reports to the Board, and the day-to-day management of COUNTER is the responsibility of the Project Director.

1.6 Definitions

This Code of Practice provides definitions of data elements and other terms that are relevant, not only to the usage reports specified in Release 4, but also to other reports that vendors may wish to generate. Every effort has been made to use existing ISO, NISO, etc. definitions where appropriate, and these sources are cited. See [Appendix A](#).

1.7 Versions

The COUNTER Code of Practice will be extended and upgraded as necessary on the basis of input from the communities it serves. Each new version will be made available as a numbered Release on the COUNTER website; users will be alerted to its availability. Release 4 of the Code of Practice replaced 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. The deadline date for implementation of this Release was 31 December 2013. After this date, only those vendors compliant with Release 4 were compliant with the Code of Practice.

1.8 Auditing and COUNTER compliance

An independent annual audit is required of each vendor's reports and processes to certify that they are COUNTER compliant. The auditing process is designed to be simple, straightforward and not to be unduly burdensome or costly to the vendor, while providing reassurance to customers of the reliability of the COUNTER usage data. See Section 6 below and Appendix E for more details.

1.9 Relationship to other standards, protocols and codes

The COUNTER Codes of Practice builds on a number of existing industry initiatives and standards that address vendor-based network performance measures. Where appropriate, definitions of data elements and other terms from these sources have been used in this Code of Practice, and these are identified in [Appendix A](#).

1.10 Making comments on the Code of Practice

The COUNTER Executive Committee welcomes comments on the Code of Practice. See Section 8 below.