

COUNTER Release 5.1

Community Consultation for CoP Release 5.1

For public release 05 July 2022

Background

First released in 2017, Release 5 of the COUNTER Code of Practice (CoP) incorporates the concept of continuous maintenance. Thus far changes to Release 5 have been very small. In the last year COUNTER's volunteer teams, led by the Technical Advisory Group, have been working on a more significant update to the Code of Practice designed to better facilitate Open Access reporting, among other matters.

Key aspects of the CoP remain unchanged: the Platform, Database, Title and Item Reports and their derivative Views remain in place, and the metrics themselves (Investigations, Requests, Searches, and Denials) are similarly unaffected.

The primary changes we are introducing are: a more consistent focus on Items (chapters, articles) as the unit of reporting, in place of the traditional focus on Title-level (book) metrics; improved definitions of access types (open versus controlled); and some significant upgrades to the SUSHI protocol and associated JSON report structures.

As with all significant releases of the CoP, Release 5.1 is subject to community consultation: please get involved by responding to us in any of the ways we've made available to you:

- Through our GitHub repository: https://github.com/Project-Counter/Consultation_5.1/wiki
- Through our Google form: <https://forms.gle/v1QeA9rSSiyv9jgk8>
- By emailing our Project Director: tasha.mellins-cohen@counterusage.org

How this consultation is structured

You'll see that this consultation is split into sections. Within each section there is a headline describing the key change we're proposing, followed by the specific question(s) we have for our community. For those who are interested in the details, we've also included our rationale for each change. There's no need to answer every question, or to send all of your responses at one time.

Demographics

To help us understand your answers, please tell us about yourself.

1. Are you: A librarian; A consortium manager; A publisher; An organisation providing COUNTER reports on behalf of publishers; A funder; Other (please specify)
2. Which country are you based in?

Required changes affecting implementation

1. Item becoming the unit of reporting

We are making it clear that the Item is the unit of reporting, rather than the Title.

Impact: By making the item (e.g. an article or chapter) the reporting unit, we are making usage metrics for all Data_Types more comparable, while removing the need for Section_Types. The knock-on effect is that Item counts for content providers offering full book downloads will increase; however, Title metrics remain unaffected.

Questions

3. Do you agree with the proposal to make items the unit of reporting? Yes; No; I have a comment (specify)

Rationale

Improved OA reporting is one of the major objectives of R5.1, which requires reporting at the level of the item. For books this would typically mean reporting at the chapter level, which conflicts with the current rules stating that a full book download must be reported as 1 Total_Item_Request. We therefore propose to make the content item (chapter, article, etc.) the reporting unit. This will mean that where publishers make their books available as individual chapters, while also offering a full book download, the full book download would now be reported as 1 Total_Item_Request per chapter.

2. Updating the list of Data_Types

We are expanding and clarifying Data_Types and including this element in Reports.

Impact: By expanding the list of Data_Types we are making it easier for publishers to report granular usage information, while the inclusion of Data_Type in the four Reports will simplify comparison across publishers and over time. However, this expansion may result in changes in usage metrics in some reports (e.g. conference proceedings will no longer be included in TR_J1).

Questions

4. Is the list of Data_Types provided below comprehensive? Yes; No; I have a comment (specify)
5. Do you agree with the proposal to make Data_Type a mandatory field in the Platform, Database, Title and Item Reports, and in the PR_P1? Yes; No; I have a comment (specify)

Rationale

Many publishers have reported difficulties with the restricted list of Data_Types provided in Release 5 of the Code of Practice, so for Release 5.1 we have expanded the list of Data_Types and clarified any definitions which had caused confusion. Release 5.1 will include details about how to use these Data_Types in IR where a Parent_Data_Type is also required (e.g. Parent_Data_Type=Journal, Data_Type=Article).

Note on Section_Type: should the recommendation to make Item the unit of reporting be accepted during consultation, Section_Type will become defunct.

Data_Type	Description
Article	An article from a compilation, such as a journal or newspaper, or available as a standalone content item outwith the serial in which it was originally published, for example in an institutional repository. Data_Type Article applies where journal content is being broken down in an Item Report, or when reporting on standalone article content
Audiovisual	A form of multimedia, typically describing video content.
Book	A monograph text, edited volume, textbook, reference work, or other form of book.
Book_Segment	A book segment (e.g. chapter, section, etc.) available as a standalone content item, outwith the context of the book in which it was originally published, for example in an institutional repository. Applies where book content is being broken down in an Item Report, or when reporting on standalone book content
Chapter	A chapter within a book but available as a standalone content item. Applies where book content is being broken down in an Item Report, or when reporting on standalone book content
Conference	A collection of papers, posters, or recordings of material associated with a conference. Typically part of a serial publication.
Database_AI	A fixed database where bibliographic metadata is searched and accessed in the context of the database. A given item on the host may be in multiple databases but a transaction must be attributed to a specific database. Only applicable for Searches and Access Denied at the database level. Applies to the Host_Type A&I_Database
Database_Full	A fixed database where full content items are searched and accessed in the context of the database. A given item on the host may be in multiple databases but a transaction must be attributed to a specific database. Applies to the Host_Type Full_Content_Database
Database_Aggregated	An aggregated pre-set database of full text and other content where content is accessed in the context of the licensed database. A given item on the host may be in multiple databases but a transaction must be attributed to a specific database. Applies to the Host_Type Aggregated_Full_Content
Dataset	Data encoded in a defined structure, for example data associated with a research project.
Image	A form of multimedia describing a static visual image
Interactive_Resource	A form of multimedia, typically describing materials that require user interaction to be understood, executed, or experienced (e.g. quizzes)
Journal	A serial that is a branded and continually growing collection of original articles within a particular discipline.
Multimedia	Multimedia content such as audio, image, streaming audio, streaming video, and video, that cannot be easily classified as a specific multimedia Data_Type.

Data_Type	Description
Newspaper_or_Newsletter	Textual content published serially in a newspaper or newsletter.
Platform	A content platform that may reflect usage from multiple Data_Types. Data_Type Platform is only applicable for Searches_Platform.
Proceeding	A single paper, poster, or recording of material associated with a conference. Typically part of a serial publication.
Report	A document presenting information in an organized format for a specific audience and purpose, such as a policy report.
Repository_Item	A generic classification used for items stored in a repository.
Software	Source code or compiled software, or a virtual notebook environment used for programming
Sound	A form of multimedia, typically describing materials that are audio-only, such as radio programmes
Standard	A document outlining processes agreed and established by authority or by general consent (e.g. materials from NISO)
Thesis_or_Dissertation	A thesis or dissertation, such as one written by a PhD candidate.
Other	Content that cannot be classified by any of the other Data_Types. Other MUST NOT be used if there isn't sufficient information available to classify the content.
Unspecified	Content that cannot be classified by any of the other Data_Types due to lack of sufficient information. Note that content providers are expected to make all reasonable efforts to classify the content and that using Data_Type Unspecified may affect the result of an audit, see Section 3.3.10 for details.

3. Access_Types

We're making it easier to report on OA usage with clearer, simpler Access_Type definitions.

Impact: the introduction of Free_To_Read means that TR_J1 and TR_B1 reports are likely to show decreased usage of Controlled content, as report providers will be able to more accurately report on usage of materials they have made freely available. This may make it challenging to compare between Release 5 and Release 5.1 reports.

Questions

6. We introduced a principle that Access_Type relates to access on the platform where the usage occurs. Does this make sense to you? Yes; No; I have a comment (specify)
7. With reference to the definition of Access_Type=Controlled, where "At the time of the Request or Investigation the content item was restricted to authorized users (e.g. behind a paywall) on

this platform. This includes free content that is only available to authorized (registered) users”: Is this an adequate definition of Controlled content? Yes; No; I have a comment (specify)

8. With reference to the definition of Access_Type=Open: we were faced with a challenge in balancing the wide variety of definitions of Open Access. Is our definition of Access_Type=Open, where “At the time of the Request or Investigation the content item was available to all users on this platform, regardless of authorization status, under an Open Access model. Open applies where the content provider asserts that the content is Open Access, irrespective of the license associated with the content item (that is, while the content item may be under a Creative Commons license this is not essential). Open content items may be in hybrid or fully Open Access publications. Open content items may have been Open from the day of publication, or after expiry of an embargo, but it is not intended to return to Controlled status” an acceptable compromise for your purposes? Yes; No; I have a comment (specify)
9. With reference to the definition of Access_Type=Free_To_Read, where “At the time of the Request or Investigation the content item was available to all users on this platform, regardless of authorization status, but was not Open. The content item may or may not have been Controlled at some point in the past, and may or may not return to Controlled status in the future (e.g. promotional materials where these can be tracked by the platform, or archival content a publisher has made free to read)”: Is this an adequate definition of freely available content that is not Open Access? Yes; No; I have a comment (specify)
10. The new definitions mean that so-called “Bronze” open access materials, which previously fell under Access_Type=Controlled, will be reported instead under Access_Type=Open. If this is a source of concern for you, please explain the issue here:
11. Will introducing these new Access_Type definitions help you to better report on and understand usage of different types of content? Yes; No; I have a comment (specify)

Rationale

We have not previously been sufficiently clear about where COUNTER Access_Types apply, so have introduced the following principles:

- Access_Type relates to access on the platform where the usage occurs: if access to a content item is restricted on a platform (for example because the article is included in an aggregated full-text database available to subscribers only) the Access_Type is Controlled, even if the content item is Open on a different platform.
- Access_Type applies to all parts of a content item. That is, the metadata, the full-text (if any) and supplementary materials (if any) all share a single Access_Type. For a journal article, for example, an Investigation of the article metadata must be reported under the same Access_Type as a Request for the full article.

Similarly, our older Access_Type definitions created confusion, with one (OA_Delayed) never being implemented, and another (Other_Free_To_Read) restricted to institutional repositories. When constructing our updated definitions we had to account for several points of contention, namely: that we wanted to avoid any description of OA that was dependent on business model; that we have no mechanism of auditing the license status of an item (i.e. whether CC or Copyright); and that we needed to address publishers’ need to show usage of materials they have made freely available.

After many months of discussion, we propose the following updates to Access_Types:

Access_Type	Release 5.1 updated definition	Old description
Controlled	At the time of the Request or Investigation the content item was restricted to authorized users (e.g. behind a paywall) on this platform. This includes free content that is only available to authorized (registered) users.	At the time of the Request or Investigation the content item was not open (e.g. behind a paywall) because access is restricted to authorized users. Access of content due to a trial subscription/license would be considered Controlled. Platforms

Access_Type	Release 5.1 updated definition	Old description
		providing content that has been made freely available but is not OA_Gold (e.g. free for marketing purposes or because the title offers free access after a year) MUST be tracked as Controlled.
Open	At the time of the Request or Investigation the content item was available to all users on this platform, regardless of authorization status, under an Open Access model. Open applies where the content provider asserts that the content is Open Access, irrespective of the license associated with the content item (that is, while the content item may be under a Creative Commons license this is not essential). Open content items may be in hybrid or fully Open Access publications. Open content items may have been Open from the day of publication, or after expiry of an embargo, but it is not intended to return to Controlled status.	At the time of the user Request or Investigation the content item was available to all users on this platform, regardless of authorization status, under an Gold Open Access license (content that is immediately and permanently available as Open Access because an article processing charge applies or the publication process was sponsored by a library, society, or other organization). Content items may be in hybrid publications or fully Open Access publications. Note that content items offered as Delayed Open Access (open after an embargo period) MUST currently be classified as Controlled, pending the implementation of OA_Delayed
Free_To_Read	At the time of the Request or Investigation the content item was available to all users on this platform, regardless of authorization status, but was not Open. The content item may or may not have been Controlled at some point in the past, and may or may not return to Controlled status in the future (e.g. promotional materials where these can be tracked by the platform, or archival content a publisher has made free to read).	At the time of the transaction the content item was available as free to read (no license required) and did not qualify under the OA_Gold Access_Type. NOTE: this value is for institutional repositories only. Institutional repositories may also use Access_Type Other_Free_To_Read in the Master Title Report if this report is offered.

4. Components

“Components” will become optional.

Impact: Item Reports may become less granular, but we hope that making Components optional will encourage more publishers to offer these useful reports.

Questions

12. As a publisher / report provider, will removing Components make you more likely to offer an Item Report? Yes; Possibly; No; I have a comment (specify)
13. Is reporting on Components valuable to you? Yes; Possibly; No; I have a comment (specify)

Rationale

Release 5 introduced “Components” as subunits of pieces of content - for example, a dataset may be a component of a journal article. Feedback from repositories and publishers suggests that few users actively wish to analyse usage at this level of detail, while the requirement to deliver such granular

information makes generating an Item Report very difficult. By making “Components” optional - that is, allowing report providers to deny a request for Components by delivering an Exception - we make it easier for providers to deliver item-level reporting.

5. Report headers

Report headers will include a link to the COUNTER Registry.

Impact: adding a Registry link will make it easy to see whether report providers have been audited as COUNTER-compliant.

Questions

14. Are you aware of the Registry? Yes and I use it; Yes but I don't use it; No but I'm interested; No and it isn't relevant to me; I have a comment (specify)

Rationale

Librarians often tell us that they are unsure whether their reports are being provided by COUNTER-compliant publishers, or are just structurally similar. We're therefore asking everyone to include a link to their record in the COUNTER Registry, which provides details of every platform that offers audited, COUNTER-compliant usage reports. You can find out more at <https://registry.projectcounter.org/>.

SUSHI and JSON changes affecting implementation

6. JSON reports

We're reducing the size, improving the readability and simplifying the processing of JSON reports.

Impact: this will require some re-work by both report providers and consumers, but the new report structure is significantly easier to produce and to work with.

Questions

15. Having viewed the sample files held in our GitHub (https://github.com/Project-Counter/Consultation_5.1/discussions/6), do you have any concerns about the proposed new JSON structure? Yes; No; I have a comment (specify)
16. Will removing the differences between the JSON and tabular Item Reports be beneficial for you? Yes; Possibly; No; I have a comment (specify)
17. Do you have any concerns about removing Customer_ID from the JSON report header? Yes; Possibly; No; I have a comment (specify)

Rationale

COUNTER's JSON working group has come to the conclusion that our JSON format should be changed to be more compact, resulting in smaller files that would be easier to produce, validate, and consume, as well as easier to read and more "JSON like". Key changes are to avoid duplicate item metadata; to simplify the Performance structure; to move multi-value attributes into Performance; to avoid duplicate parent metadata; and to simplify Type/Value and Name/Value lists.

The proposed new format could be converted back to the Release 5.0 structure, but some other changes in this consultation will mean the reports may not be directly comparable.

Making the change to our JSON structure means we will be upgrading to the OpenAPI 3.1/JSON schema.

Relatedly, we aim to resolve the discrepancy between the JSON and tabular Item Reports. Some elements in the JSON Item Reports are more complex than the corresponding elements in the tabular

reports, such as Item_Contributors and Item_Attributes. By replacing the JSON elements with the tabular report elements, we aim to resolve any issues encountered by users requesting these elements, as well as introducing more consistency between report formats.

We propose removing Customer_ID from the report header, as some content providers have multiple internal identifiers for customers and this can create conflicts when requesting reports.

7. SUSHI

We're making SUSHI more robust and easier to use.

Impact: this will require some re-work by both report providers and consumers, but the new services for delivering and collecting JSON reports through the SUSHI protocol will be more robust.

Questions

18. Do you have any concerns about removing IP-based authentication as an option for SUSHI services? Yes; No; I have a comment (specify)
19. As a publisher / report provider, do you think you will implement APIKey as an authentication mechanism? Yes; Possibly; No; I have a comment (specify)
20. Will information about the dates for which reports are available through the new /reports endpoint be useful to you? Yes; Possibly; No; I have a comment (specify)
21. What challenges do these proposed SUSHI changes present you with?

Rationale

IP-based authentication for SUSHI services is not robust, so for Release 5.1 of the CoP we are removing this as one of the acceptable authentication and authorisation methods. For publishers or providers who wish to implement a more robust replacement, we recommend APIKey.

Another issue relating to SUSHI security is the variety of endpoints which may currently be used to test that the API URL is correct. We are proposing that the "/status" endpoint should be public (i.e. unprotected) to allow users to easily check whether a specific SUSHI service is live. Relatedly, all other API endpoints should be covered by one authentication and authorization mechanism.

Libraries and other report consumers have raised problems in regard to not knowing the date range for which reports are available - that is, the months for which data have been processed. We are introducing a new response to the /reports endpoint to return information about the first and last months for which data are available.

We are introducing separate parameters to our SUSHI API for common extensions to make it possible for report consumers to request filtered views of a Report (e.g. filtering by country_code for the common Country_Code extension).

And finally, starting with Release 5.1, the release version number will need to be included in the SUSHI URL path, like so: <https://usage.reporting.service/counter5/sushi/r51>.

Optional changes affecting implementation

8. Global reporting

We recommend that publishers / report providers offer global reports (i.e. not broken down by institution) to facilitate Open Access reporting.

Questions

22. Should COUNTER introduce a standard Customer ID for requesting global usage reports? Yes; No; I have a comment (specify)

23. As a publisher / report provider, will global reports be difficult to implement? We already have them; They won't be difficult; They'll be tricky but we can do it; We can't or won't offer global reports.

Rationale

In Release 5 we introduced the concept of "The World" reporting - that is, a report showing total global usage of content, wherever it comes from (institutional or otherwise). With the increasing prevalence of Open Access content it's becoming more important for everyone - publishers and libraries - to understand total usage, and therefore we now recommend that all publishers / report providers, particularly those offering Open Access content, should provide reports at the global level.

9. Item Reports

We recommend that all publishers / report providers should offer Item Reports for granular usage information.

Impact: while essential for Open Access, Item Reports can be very large.

Questions

1. As a publisher / report provider, will Item Reports be difficult to implement? We already have them; They won't be difficult; They'll be tricky but we can do it; We can't or won't offer Item Reports

Rationale

As with global reporting, the increasing prevalence of Open Access content has made it important for everyone to understand usage more granularly, for example at the level of a journal article or book chapter, rather than relying on title level information. We therefore recommend that all publishers / report providers, particularly those offering Open Access content, should provide Item Reports, together with the IR_A1 for eJournal platforms.

Note that the proposed new JSON format will make reports more compact.

Changes not affecting implementation

10. Report naming

"Master Reports" are being renamed "Reports", and we are considering a new name for "Standard Views".

Impact: no impact, just a terminology change.

Questions

24. For the reports that are currently called "Standard Views", which are derived from Reports, please indicate your preferred term from this list: Derived Report; Report View; Summary Report; Standard View.

Rationale

We have become aware that our original naming structure for reports was insensitive, and in response to community requests we will rename "Master Reports" as simply "Reports". Relatedly, the term "Standard View" does not properly communicate that these reports are derived from the Reports, and we wish to clarify that relationship.

11. Audits

We're making the audit process simpler and more transparent.

Impact: we hope these changes will encourage more report providers to undergo an audit and become COUNTER-compliant.

Questions

25. We recommend that reports are run through the COUNTER Validation Tool prior to starting an audit. As a publisher / report provider, do you do this? Yes; No; I have a comment (specify)
26. Considering the qualification criteria for publishers / report providers to apply for permission to be audited on an alternate-year basis.
 - a. We propose a maximum of 150 books for alternate-year auditing. Is this too high, too low, or about right?
 - b. We propose a maximum of 15 journals for alternate-year auditing. Is this too high, too low, or about right?
27. Are you in favour of introducing community validation in place of audits for institutional repositories? Yes; No; I have a comment (specify)
28. What is your view of COUNTER extending the community verification process to not-for-profit publishers who also meet the criteria for alternate-year audits? I think it is a good idea; I think it is a bad idea; I'm not sure; I have a comment (specify)

Rationale

Audits in Release 5 focused on "Standard Views" before looking at the "Master Reports" from which they are derived. For Release 5.1 we're swapping that order, so that auditors are able to catch problems much earlier in the process. In a similar vein, we're encouraging all publishers / report providers to use the Validation Tool regularly, but particularly before they begin an audit, to catch problems and resolve them before launching into the audit process.

Release 5 carried forward the concept of annual audits as the default, with small publishers being able to apply for alternate-year or biennial audits, to be granted at the discretion of the Project Director. In Release 5.1 we want to introduce transparent criteria about which publishers are eligible for alternate-year audits, namely: publishers / report providers delivering COUNTER reports for a single platform, where that platform includes up to 150 books OR 15 journals OR one database. Publishers / report providers which meet these criteria but which are part of a larger organisation that includes other platforms are not eligible. Publishers / report providers which exceed the threshold in the time between audits will move to an annual cycle from the date of the next audit.

For Release 5.1 we would like to introduce a new community-driven process to help institutional repositories have their reports validated, without having to undergo a full audit. They would need to prove that their reports pass the COUNTER Validation Tool, and have a letter verifying successful retrieval of reports from a COUNTER-approved consortium.

12. Versioning

The CoP will use Explicit Versioning, in the format Release.Breaking.Feature.Fix.

Impact: increased transparency about how we manage versioning, and the timelines we expect to follow.

Questions

29. To make the update process less onerous we would like to be able to update the CoP more frequently for "Fix" changes (e.g. typographic errors) and "Feature" changes (both backwards compatible and optional). Would a maximum of once every six months be acceptable? Yes; Possibly; No; I have a comment (specify)
30. "Breaking" releases require publishers and providers to make changes to their implementations of the CoP. We propose no more than one "Breaking" release every 24 months, which would need to be subject to community consultation, with the existing 18-month implementation timeline. Would this proposed schedule be acceptable? Yes; Possibly; No; I have a comment (specify)

Rationale

Release 5 introduced the concept of continuous maintenance but did not properly define a versioning process. Rather than semantic versioning, the Technical Advisory Group feels that Explicit Versioning better fits our needs. In addition to the usual three-part numbering, where “Breaking” indicates changes that are not backwards compatible, “Feature” indicates new features or extensions that are backwards compatible, and “Fix” is used for typographic corrections and similar small amendments, Explicit Versioning allows for us to change the Release number where changes are so comprehensive that Release 5 would no longer apply.

As well as making our versioning process clearer, we wish to introduce some transparency over the timelines for different version types, in terms of frequency of smaller and larger updates and the length of time publishers and providers have to implement any mandatory changes.

Other matters

If you look at the main GitHub repository (<https://github.com/Project-Counter/cop5/issues>) you’ll see that we’re also making some minor textual changes to make the CoP easier to read. These changes are not part of the consultation process, as they do not affect implementation of the CoP, but please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.