COUNTER: a librarian’s strategic view

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17th March 2011
“If value is our capacity to satisfy users’ needs, our library tries to measure it as follows:

1. Monitoring if the information resources provided are used, because the most valuable library is one that’s used.

2. Measuring users’ satisfaction with the systems and facilities we offer that provide access to information resources.”

Gerado Marraud, University Library Director, Universidad de Vigo, Spain
Source: Elsevier, Library Connect, No 12, 2010
Why collect usage data?

- To demonstrate to institutions that the library provides value for money
- To assist in strategic planning
  - budgeting (bidding for & allocating funds)
  - key performance indicators
- To assist in collection development, management & marketing
- To assist benchmarking
  - SCONUL statistics
Why is usage data even more important than ever?
Why is usage data even more important than ever?

- The funding of UK HE is changing
- Browne Report (Lord Browne of Madingley)
- Radical shake-up of HE in England
- “Student Finance Plan” – no student will pay anything until they graduate & are in work earning over £21K
- Current up-front fee of £3,290 removed
- Recommended level £6K p.a. from 2012/13
- Some universities already announced £9K
The image shows a signpost with the following directions:

- Lost
- Confused
- Unsure
- Unclear
- Perplexed
- Disoriented
- Bewildered
The short-term outlook for libraries in all sectors is a challenging one, given the slowdown in the economy in many parts of the world. It is clear that most libraries are feeling the pinch, with budget settlements for the current financial year that are either stand still or smaller than last year.

CIBER, *The economic downturn & libraries*, 2009
Looking further forward
Outlook for total library budget in two years’ time compared with today, ignoring inflation: column percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Public sector and government</th>
<th>Corporate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than 10% down</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>7.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Less than 10% down</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>11.5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>More than 10% up</td>
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The short term outlook for a sizeable minority of libraries is likely to go beyond efficiency savings into real cuts.
Impact on library budgets

• “Much of the shortfall will be absorbed through reduced spending on information content, with 69.1% of respondents expecting to spend the same or less than they do today in absolute terms. Since ‘publisher inflation’ has historically been running at a higher level than general retail inflation, this suggests some big changes”

[CIBER]
What’s at risk? Journals & the ‘big deals’?

• impact of the big deal with year-on-year price increases
• e-journal big deals are consuming an ever increasing proportion of the acquisition budget
• lack of flexibility to break up the big deals
• likelihood of big deal cancellations
• journals usage statistics of paramount importance
What e-journal big deal metrics do we use?

- **Basic metric**
  - number of titles
  - total annual full-text downloads
  - downloads per FTE student/staff/total
  - number and % of titles in usage groups zero/low/medium/high
  - top 20 titles as % of total downloads

- **Value metrics**
  - average number of requests per title
  - total cost as % of information provision expenditure
  - average cost per title
  - cost per full-text download
  - average cost per FTE student/staff/total
What e-journal big deal metrics matter?

- Average cost per title?
- Cost per download
- Number of titles with high use?
- Percentage of zero use titles – the long tail?
- Cost to replace the highly used titles?
- ILL equivalent costs if titles were not taken?
Metrics for individual e-journals

• Value metrics
  • average number of requests for the title
  • average cost per title
  • cost per full-text download
  • average cost per FTE student/staff/total

• Journal Usage Factor (JUF)
  • an additional measure of journal quality/value launched in 2007 by UKSG & COUNTER
  • total usage (COUNTER JR1 data for a specified period divided by total number of articles published online (during a specified period)
  • report on Stage 2 of the project dues to be published shortly

• http://www.uksg.org/usagefactors
Metrics for decision making

- all of them tell a story about the resource
- danger of relying just on cost-per-use
- e.g. Cranfield: highest c-p-u had 2nd highest usage
- Usage statistics are only 2 dimensional – they should never be used in isolation
- Other factors that must be used in decision making process includes qualitative local knowledge e.g.
  - Local academic’s ‘top journal’ for their discipline
  - Small (but income generating) research areas
  - Groundbreaking research information needs
Making strategic decisions

• The majority of academic libraries have problems with space
• Clearing back issues of journals from shelves and replacing with digitised back files may be a solution
• What is the role of usage data?
• May be able to point to usage of existing back files to encourage university to invest further
• COUNTER Journals CoP Release 3 - back files usage must be separated from current usage
What’s at risk? Books?

- Library book purchasing has decreased over a number of years
- Many librarians think it is time to reverse the slide
- Is it time for a radical re-think? (Kent study: 40% of printed books had never circulated during 6 year period)
- Are e-books the future?
- Customer-driven e-book purchasing
- E-book usage statistics will help us resolve some of these issues
- 31 vendors/publishers compliant with COUNTER Books & Reference Works Release 1
Information resources in detail

How institutions plan to manage information resources cuts over the next two years.

- Print books (not monographs)
- E-books
- E-only journals
- Databases
- Monographs
- Print only journals
- Print/electronic journals

Notes

This question gauges the pressure on various types of information resource on a four-point scale where 4 is ‘very likely’ and 3 is ‘likely’. Clearly, all formats are under pressure, especially print only journals and print books and monographs. Print formats appear to be slightly more protected in large libraries, although this is not statistically significant.

Journals in both formats and database subscriptions look fairly vulnerable, but the real story here is the position of e-books which are relatively sheltered from the coming storm, especially in corporate (x=1.9) and public sector libraries (x=2.0).

Print formats are highly vulnerable targets for cost savings; the outlook for e-books is strong.
What’s at risk?
E-databases?

• many libraries report cancellation of e-databases to protect primary resources (Jill Taylor-Roe, UKSG survey)
• retention/ cancellation decisions are taken on usage and subject coverage
• recognition that, specifically with e-databases, there can be inconsistencies with COUNTER/non-COUNTER statistics
• but…..reality is that research (CIBER, British Library) consistently demonstrates that internet search engines are the first port of call for students and researchers for information searching
The competitive nature of HE means that librarians are often required to provide statistics which benchmark their collections & services against similar institutions.

- SCONUL Annual Library Statistics
- Major changes for the better for 2009/10
  - Full-text article requests (COUNTER JR1) now includes ALL article requests, including serials collections (e.g. Science Direct) and aggregator databases (e.g. ABI/INFORM, JSTOR)
  - Section requests for e-books (COUNTER BR2)
Journal Usage Statistics Portal (JUSP)

- JISC Collections in collaboration with Mimas, Evidence Base & Cranfield University
- A one-stop-shop to view and download usage reports from NESLi2 publishers
- Launching October 2010
  - Limited to an agreed number of institutions, publishers, gateways and host intermediaries
- Fully comprehensive service providing usage statistics to all UK academic libraries by the end of 2011
- Ability for libraries to view their use of titles in current NESLi2 deals separately from use of titles in a back file
JUSP will provide a ‘shared service’ to libraries which:

- Does the task of usage data collection once for many libraries
- Is a huge time-saver & a huge effort saver for librarians
- Does the task of implementing SUSHI* once for many libraries
- Allows benchmarking

JUSP will provide JISC Collections Negotiating Team with:

- Aggregated usage statistics for specific NESLi2 deals
- Average cost per download for deals
- Zero, low medium high use within deals
SUSHI

Standardized Usage Statistics Harvesting Initiative (SUSHI)

About SUSHI


The protocol was designed to be both generalizable and extensible, meaning it could be used to retrieve a variety of usage reports. An extension designed specifically to work with COUNTER, reports is provided with the standard, as these are expected to be the most frequently retrieved usage reports.

The standard is built on SOAP (Simple Object Access Protocol) for transferring request and response messages. The GetReport method is used for transferring ReportRequest as the input message and returning ReportResponse as the output message.

The standard includes a versioned Web Services Description Language (WSDL), to describe the Web service namespace and operations, and a generalized XML schema with the syntax of the SUSHI protocol. Rules for report naming are outlined and complemented by an external reports registry, which provides for the definition of both COUNTER and non-COUNTER reports.

About COUNTER

Launched in March 2002, COUNTER (Counting Online Usage of Networked Electronic Resources) is an international initiative serving librarians, publishers and intermediaries by setting standards that facilitate the measurement and reporting of online usage statistics in a consistent, reliable and

www.cranfield.ac.uk
What is the Journal Usage Statistics Portal?

Electronic journals represent a significant and growing part of the academic library’s offerings. In 2007, the academic community spent £80 million on e-journal licenses and collectively those purchases have yielded more than 102 million downloads. Increasingly it is important to have reliable information with which to evaluate the impact of the increase in access and availability of online journal content. However it has been difficult, if not impossible, for librarians to obtain meaningful usage data from publishers of electronic journals.

JISC Collections commissioned Evidence Base and Mimas to produce a technical design and prototype for a Journal Usage Statistics Portal (JUSP) to assist and support libraries in the analysis of NEELU2 usage statistics and the management of their e-journals collections.

Read More

Library Participation Agreement

“This is indeed really a milestone on its way”

“It’s exactly what all stats librarians need and a very positive step in the right direction for data collection”

Accessibility | Privacy Policy
Institutional Usage Statistics

Institution: University of Liverpool
Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool, PO Box 123
Liverpool
Merseyside
L69 7SA
United Kingdom

Contact: Mr Terry Bucknell
0151 794 2892
t.t.bucknell@liverpool.ac.uk

Usage Reports for 2008

January
February
March
April
May
June
July
August
September
October
November
December

Cumulative Report
COUNTER* JR1 Full-Text Report
COUNTER* JR1 Archive Only Report
Summary Report
Subscription Report

[By Journal] [By Usage] [CSV] [Top Articles] [Top Advanced Access]
The monthly usage of Elsevier journals at Dummy Institution for All years

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In conclusion

- The COUNTER Codes of Practice have improved our ability to measure, and assess the value of, our e-collections
- COUNTER usage statistics are of vital importance to publishers and libraries
- SUSHI implementation will be a big leap forward
- COUNTER Board & Executive Committee understand that there is still lots of work to do