

Appendix J: Unique article identifier briefing paper and questionnaire

Text for email

Counter Online Metrics: Improving the comparability of usage statistics and the implementation of unique article identifiers project

Dear X

Last December, you were contacted by Peter Shepherd from project COUNTER and kindly agreed to take help us with the above research project. A key aspect of the project involves investigating the implementation of a 'unique article filter' as a means of improving the reliability of COUNTER compliant usage statistics. In order to investigate these aspects Dr Angela Conyers and Pete Dalton from Evidence Base Research and Evaluation Services are conducting the following important aspect of the project.

There are two elements to the research in which we ask you to participate . The first is a brief survey of your current practice on the use of unique article identifiers and the second a test of a proposed new COUNTER metric for unique article requests. These are outlined in the attached document XYZ. We would be extremely grateful if you could read this document and follow the instructions contained within it. The deadline for completion of the first aspect is March X and the deadline for the second aspect is April X. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to finding out about your current use of unique article identifiers and the results of your testing.

Best wishes

Possible text for a document outlining this aspect of the research

Improving the comparability of usage statistics and the implementation of unique article identifiers

COUNTER and Unique Article Identifiers

One of the main objectives of COUNTER is to ensure that the online usage statistics provided by vendors for their librarian customers give useful insights into usage without placing an undue administrative or financial burden on the vendor providing the usage statistics. Our Codes of Practice reflect this philosophy and they focus on providing a limited number of metrics that are credible, compatible and consistent.

One metric that we are considering for a future Release of our Code of Practice for Journals and Databases is the 'number of unique article requests per session'. This would measure the number of unique requests for the full-text of a journal article, irrespective of the format (html, PDF, etc.) requested. Thus, if a given article is requested, in a single session, twice in html format and once in PDF format, this would count as one successful request for that article in that session. The purpose of this research study is to examine the feasibility of a new metric that can serve to eliminate or at least dampen the effect a user interface may have on reporting of

usage data. ***It should be noted that this new metric is proposed as additional and not a replacement for an existing metric***

A unique article filter has been developed and tested by Elsevier and EBSCO on their usage data. The initial results are very promising and before proceeding further we are now seeking feedback from other key vendors on the viability of implementing such a filter in their systems. If it works we shall consider adding 'number of unique article requests as an additional COUNTER metric in a future release of the Code of Practice.

In order to count the number of unique article requests per session vendors would need not only to be applying the same definitions for full-text article, successful request and session (all of which are already defined by COUNTER), but also to have a unique article identifier that identifies a particular full-text article, irrespective of format. In most cases this identifier is likely to be the Digital Object Identifier (DOI). In order to discover whether this could be developed as a robust metric we are seeking feedback from participating vendors. The feedback we require has two elements which are outlined below:

- 1. Investigating current practice in using unique article identifiers***
- 2. Vendor testing of the proposed unique article identifier methodology***

The requirement for each element is as follows:

1. Gathering feedback from vendors on their current use of unique article identifiers

To assess the feasibility of developing this metric we need to gather feedback from vendors /you on their current practice in this area. In order to do this we are asking vendors /you to consider the list of questions in the **attached** document entitled **XYZ**. We will then contact vendors /you to arrange a convenient time to speak to you/ vendors from **6th March** onwards on the telephone to get your responses. We expect that the call will take no longer than 30 minutes. You may need to consult colleagues when considering the questions so we are aiming to allow vendors/you time to do so. We are aiming to complete this element of the project by 31st March 2006.

2. Vendor testing of the proposed unique article identifier methodology

In order to establish whether the new metric will be robust in practice we are asking vendors to test a proposed methodology that can be used to run tests on this new metric and determine the best way to handle long sessions. The protocol for testing is in the attached document XYZ. We are asking vendors to run the tests outlined in this document by **10th April 2006**. Once you have conducted the test we would be grateful if you could contact us so that we can arrange to speak to you on the telephone to find out the results of your tests. We aim to have collated the feedback from this element of the project by 28th April 2006.

NB. Vendors are not required to wait for the survey in step 1 to be conducted before progressing onto the testing in step 2 as it would be possible for the research team to gather evidence on both aspects at once for those vendors who prefer to carry out both aspects early on.

This aspect of the project is being conducted by Dr Angela Conyers and Pete Dalton from evidence base research and evaluation services at the University of Central England. If you have any queries about any aspect of this work please contact us:

Angela.Conyers@uce.ac.uk

Pete.Dalton@uce.ac.uk

We thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Possible text for questions

Questions about vendors current use of unique article identifiers

We would like you to consider the following questions. Section A concerns your current use of unique article identifiers and Section B considers the extent to which vendors currently have the prerequisites to be able to develop the transaction log for calculating this proposed metric.

We will be contacting you shortly to arrange a suitable time to telephone you to get your responses. We expect that the call will take no longer than 30 minutes. You may need to consult colleagues before considering the questions so we are aiming to allow vendors/you time to do so. We are aiming to complete this element of the project by 31st March 2006 and gather telephone feedback between 6th March and 21st March.

Section A

- 1)
 - a. Do you attribute the same Unique Article Identifier to a particular full-text journal article, irrespective of format (PDF, html, etc)?
 - b. Is this then a permanent attribute of that article?
- 2) If so, do you use DOI for this purpose? If not, what is your current practice?
- 3) At what stage in the publishing process do you apply the unique article identifier? Are different article identifiers applied at different stages of the publishing process e.g. pre publication and publication.
- 4) In which formats do you publish full-text journal articles?
- 5) Are you able to identify activities for a given user session within the usage logs?
- 6) How do you identify the user session?
- 7) Would it be a problem for you if COUNTER specified a new report requiring that the number of unique article requests in a given session be counted, in which the DOI was required as a unique article identifier, to provide a permanent attribute for each full-text article, irrespective of format?
- 8) Do you have any other comments?

Section B

The prerequisites for the transaction log for calculating the proposed metric are as follows:

1. At minimum all HTML requests and PDF Requests must be logged
2. The logged events include the article's unique identifier (e.g. DOI, PII or other unique ID)
3. The same unique identifier is used for all formats of the same article (e.g. the PDF and HTML of the same article have the same DOI).
4. Transaction log must include an element (or series of elements) that uniquely define a user session (e.g. user session cookie plus Machine Cookie or IP (if Machine Cookie is not available))
5. Transactions within the log for the user session have time-stamps that record the transaction time to the accuracy of at least the second.
6. If multiple servers handle sessions, logs will be consolidated into a single transaction database for the study (all activity captured)
7. If multiple servers handle activities for a single session, the clocks on the servers should be synchronized

Do you meet all of the above criteria?