

# COUNTER Release 5 transition: a community call for compliance

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Representatives of the international academic library community are urging content providers to expedite a transition to Release 5 (R5) of the COUNTER Code of Practice through a statement published this week.

Since publication of the first Code of Practice in 2003, the COUNTER (Counting Online Usage of Networked Electronic Resources) standard has facilitated the recording and reporting of online usage statistics in a consistent and comparable way. Developed in consultation with the supplier and library community, the COUNTER standard enables all parties to engage in evidence-based conversations about the value and impact of e-resources. Engagement with publishers, vendors, librarians and relevant initiatives has been critical to COUNTER's ongoing evolution. This broad collaboration has supported development of an effective standard with global adoption and use.

COUNTER Release 5, which became effective in January 2019, seeks to address changing reporting needs in an evolving e-resource landscape with reducing the complexity of the Code of Practice. It offers:

- greater consistency in report layout and between different formats
- more consistency in vocabulary and terminology
- fewer reports and metric types but greater flexibility to compare and combine
- flexibility to access standard reports that meet common use cases in addition to reports that can be filtered to meet highly specific use cases

COUNTER Release 5 enables content providers to produce consistent, comparable and credible usage data for e-resources. This enables librarians to accurately compare the usage data they receive, and to understand and demonstrate the value of their electronic resource subscriptions. COUNTER Release 5 compliance by all providers is critical to informing decisions and stewardship of funds.

However, since becoming effective in January 2019, many content providers have been slow to transition to Release 5 and have continued to offer only Release 4 usage data which is no longer compliant with the standard.

Jisc's established JUSP service and the international CC-PLUS initiative are working with COUNTER usage data at scale and recognise the challenges for libraries currently in working with a mixture of COUNTER Release 4 and Release 5 reports. Additionally, many library management systems and statistical analysis tools that consume COUNTER reports are dependent on a sufficient aggregation of Release 5 data being available to deliver appropriate functionality.

A statement coordinated by Jisc, SCONUL, RLUK, COUNTER, and the CC PLUS Steering Committee, and supported by international library consortia asks content providers to prioritise this critical work.

The statement requests that non-compliant providers:

1. Prioritise development of a COUNTER 5 service and communicate publicly their expected service release date.
2. Sign the [declaration of COUNTER compliance](#).
3. Schedule a COUNTER audit.

[The statement is available here.](#)

These views are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the views of UKSG.



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