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information community



UKSG – Journal Usage Factor Project

<http://www.uksg.org.uk/usagefactors>

Invitation to Tender

Stage 2 of a Study to investigate and test the feasibility of developing a new metric, the Journal Usage Factor, based on COUNTER-compliant usage data

A. Summary

1. Stage 1 of this project (1), a survey into the feasibility of developing and implementing a new metric – the Journal Usage Factor (JUF) - demonstrated not only that the concept is a meaningful one, but also that there is considerable support from the publisher, librarian and research communities for this new metric. UKSG, in association with the Research Information Network (RIN), now invites proposals to take this forward by undertaking a Stage 2 study to explore further the practical issues associated with the implementation of a Journal Usage Factor derived from COUNTER usage data.

2. Funding of around £50,000, including VAT, will be available for this study

The major financial sponsors are UKSG and RIN, with additional funding provided by ACS Publications, ALPSP (the Association of Professional and Scholarly Publishers), Nature Publishing Group, Springer, and STM (the International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers).

3. The deadline for receipt of proposals is Wednesday 26 August 2009.

B. Background

1. UKSG [www.uksg.org], a non-profit organisation that connects the information community, exists to encourage the exchange of ideas on electronic information sources, including serials, e-books and databases, and their place in the process of scholarly communication. In a dynamic environment, UKSG works to promote discussion and the free flow of information on these resources and their

associated technology; to develop links between all parties in the serials and e-resources information chain; and to encourage professional awareness, stimulate research and provide a programme of training and education. UKSG is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. It is the only organisation spanning the wide range of interest and activity between e-resource producers and users. With a membership of around 500 organisations, a third of them based outside the UK, UKSG engages a broad cross-section of stakeholders concerned with the publication, distribution and use of serials and other e-resources.

2. The RIN (www.rin.ac.uk) was established in 2005 and is funded by a consortium of the UK's four higher education funding bodies, the three UK national libraries and the seven research councils. Its mission is to develop the evidence base, provide guidance and advice and promote change in matters relating to the provision of research information in the UK.

We work in partnership with our funders and other stakeholders to:

- develop the evidence base on the behaviours, perceptions and information needs of researchers
- provide authoritative advice and guidance to the research community and others
- promote change in research information policies and services
- broker relationships with key groups in research communications.

3. COUNTER (Counting Online Usage of NeTworked Electronic Resources) [www.projectCounter.org] is a multi-agency initiative whose objective is to develop a set of internationally accepted, extendible Codes of Practice that will allow the usage of online information products and services to be measured in a credible, consistent and compatible way. Release 1 of the COUNTER Code of Practice for journals and databases was published in January 2003. Release 3 was published in August 2008 and will be implemented by vendors by 31 August 2009. COUNTER is actively supported by the international community of librarians and publishers, and by their professional organisations.
4. ISI's journal Impact Factors, based on citation data, have become generally accepted as a measure of the quality and impact of scholarly journals, and are widely used by publishers, authors, funding agencies and librarians as measures of journal quality. It is clear from the results of Stage 1 (1) of this study, however, that there are misgivings about the over-reliance on Impact Factor alone in this respect and a general desire for additional metrics.
5. The availability of the majority of significant scholarly journals online, and of increasingly credible COUNTER-compliant online usage statistics, raise the possibility that a usage-based measure of journal performance might become a viable and valuable additional metric. The Journal Usage Factor could be calculated as illustrated in **Equation 1** below for an individual journal:

Equation 1

Journal Usage Factor =

$$\frac{\text{Total usage over period 'x' of items published online during period 'y'}}{\text{Total items published online during period 'y'}}$$

Authors and librarians included in the Stage 1 study generally thought that JUF would be helpful in assessing the value, status and relevance of a journal. The majority of the publishers also thought it would be useful, but their support would depend on having confidence in the basis for the JUF calculation (**Equation 1**).

Key issues to address in this calculation are:

- Specified usage period (period x in Equation 1): the majority of those surveyed thought that the specified usage period should be one calendar year. One publisher suggested a two-year period (year of publication plus the following year), and this is worth further consideration, as it takes into account two significant peaks in usage; the first peak when an article is published, the second when it begins to be cited.
- Total number of items published online: there are two facets to this part of the equation. First, the items to be counted: simply adopting items identified by ISI as 'source items' may be inadequate for two reasons:
 - ISI does not cover all scholarly journals; a methodology for identifying the items to be counted in the majority of journals would have to be agreed
 - there is a feeling that the ISI definition of 'source items' is too narrow when measuring usage and that other categories of content published in journals are part of the value offered and should be counted.
 The second facet is the definition and recording of online publication date of a particular item, which is not currently consistent across all publishers. Consistency in the definition, recording or derivation of online publication dates is a requirement for the calculation of JUFs.
- Specified Publication Period (Period y in Equation 1)
Arguments were advanced for this being short (2 years maximum) and being long (5 years +), as well as for having several JUFs, covering more than one period. At this stage there are insufficient data to support the selection of any of these options; nor would it be appropriate simply to opt for the two year publication period on the basis that ISI use this period. Tests using real data will be required before any firm conclusions can be drawn.

C. Objectives of the Journal Usage Factor Stage 2 Study

The overall objective of the Journal Usage Factor Stage 2 study is to assess the viability of JUF as a reliable, implementable, cost-effective tool for assessing the relative status and value of journals by testing each of the individual elements in Equation 1 above *using real publisher usage data from a range of vendors*. Some specific issues to be addressed are:

1. total usage (numerator) based on COUNTER compliant usage data from publishers delivered to the specification indicated in Appendix A
 - recommend best practice for publishers consolidating the usage statistics for their journals from a variety of sites. While it is envisaged that ultimately publishers will do this, they are not yet ready to do so. In this study the contractor will be responsible for consolidating usage data for journals from some participating publishers with usage data for the same journals from EBSCOhost.
 - test different 'specified usage periods'.
2. total number of items published online:
 - assess whether the COUNTER definition of items to be covered (full text articles) is sufficient to reflect the value of online journal content
 - develop a methodology for counting the number of valid items
 - develop a methodology for consistently and accurately assigning 'online publication date' to individual articles
 - test different 'specified publication periods' ,
3. Processes for JUF data gathering, JUF calculation and reporting:
 - assess how much of the process for collecting usage data, calculating and reporting JUFs can be handled by publishers/vendors themselves; review the existing COUNTER vendor audit process and

- investigate how it would have to be extended to cover the JUF calculation
- describe the role that an independent organization could have in setting standards and monitoring vendor adherence to agreed standards. (The merits of different organizational scenarios should be discussed)

4. Qualifying journals

Finalise with each participating vendor/publisher the set of their journals that will be included in the Stage 2 study and assign a subject classification to each journal according to the Dewey Decimal system, as implemented by the British Library, so that any differences in usage patterns between academic subjects can be observed and appropriate recommendations made on how these variations might impact on either ideal metrics by subject area or on the way that any single metric should be interpreted in the light of known usage variations by subject. COUNTER-consistent usage statistics will be provided for these journals in the format specified in Appendix A.

It is envisaged that a number of scenarios for Equation 1, with different values for x and y, will be tested:

It is also envisaged that a 'usage immediacy factor' will be tested using data from one or more participating vendors. This factor is likely to be based on usage during the first 12 months since publication, of articles published in the previous 12-24 month period.

D. Requirements and methodology

As part of the tender application UKSG will expect an appropriate methodology for conduct of the study to be proposed. Issues that are likely to affect the validity, value or interpretation of the JUF (for example, subject area of journal, readership profile of journal, mix of article types in journal, distribution of publication dates of journal issues), should be identified. As reviewing and building upon the evidence provided by Stage 1 of this project will be important, parties interested in submitting a tender will be provided with the full final report of Stage 1, which contains more information than the published report.

Several major COUNTER-compliant journal publishers and aggregators have agreed not only to provide their usage and other relevant data from a selection of their journals for this study, but will also be actively involved as members of the UKSG Working Group that supervises it. (ACS Publications, EBSCO, Institute of Physics Publishing, Nature Publishing Group, Emerald, HighWire Press, Oxford University Press, Sage, and Springer have agreed to participate on this basis). The successful tender is likely to be one that provides evidence of previous productive work with major publishers, aggregators and librarians.

A proven knowledge of quantitative metrics, online journal publishing and the capability to manage and analyse large volumes of publisher usage and other data will also be required.

This project will be organized in 3 Phases. Tenders may be submitted that cover all 3 Phases, or Phases 1 and 2 together, or Phase 3.

- Phase 1: Confirm the practicability of the definitions, provided in the Background section above, of the components of the Journal Usage Factor and proposals for how these components might be identified and measured
- Phase 2: Data gathering and processing

- Phase 3: Modelling and statistical analysis

A specification for the data outputs that will be provided by the participating publishers/aggregators for Phase 2 (data gathering and processing) will be found in Appendix A, attached. This should be reviewed and if necessary refined in Phase 1 of the project and when delivered will form the basis for the carrying out of Phase 3.

E. Project participants

The active participation of COUNTER in the study will be required and the Director of COUNTER will co-operate fully with the successful tender. Other project participants should comprise:

a. Librarians and academic library schools

An appropriate number of librarians should participate in the study, particularly to review the outcomes.

b. COUNTER-compliant vendors

Only usage data from COUNTER compliant vendors that already provide COUNTER Journal Report 1 will participate in the study. The following vendors have committed to collaborate in providing data:-

ACS Publications (American Chemical Society)
EBSCO Publishing
Emerald
HighWire Press
Institute of Physics Publishing
Nature Publishing Group
Oxford University Press
Sage Publications
Springer

c. Other organizations, which can provide relevant expertise

F. Timescales, Deliverables and Management

1. Timescales

- a. This Invitation to Tender (ITT) is issued on 1 July 2009. The deadline for submission of full proposals is 1 pm on 26 August 2009. Bidders will be notified of the outcome of their proposal by 9 September 2009.
- b. The study should begin on 15 October 2009, or as soon as possible thereafter. A progress report must be submitted to UKSG by 16 January 2010, with the final report by 9 April 2010.

2. Deliverables

The deliverables associated with this study include:

- Informal updates on progress to be made at regular intervals through the course of the study (at intervals to be agreed with the successful bidder following award of contract).
- Progress report by 16 January 2010

- Final report by 9 April 2010. The final report should detail the outcomes of the study, together with accompanying documentation and recommendations. The final report will be reviewed by the Working Group prior to acceptance.

3. Intellectual property

Usage and other data provided by individual vendors remains the property of that vendor and may not be disclosed outside the UKSG Working Group without the express, written permission of the vendor.

Any other information gathered during the course of this study and not already in the public domain is deemed to be the property of UKSG. The information provided in the final report and the rights to all other output shall become UKSG's property.

4. Management of the Study

The study will be overseen by a Working Group that has been nominated by UKSG and chaired by Richard Gedye of Oxford University Press.

G. Proposal Content and Submission Deadline

1. Submission of proposals

Proposals should be a maximum of 8 A4 pages plus Appendices. The text must be in no less than 10pt font.

- a. Proposals should include:
 - i. detailed work plan showing objectives, key dates and deliverables
 - ii. summary of relevant experience to undertake this project
 - iii. CVs of key personnel proposed for this project. A project manager, who will be the main point of contact for all correspondence relating to the study, should be identified
 - iv. details of how the study will build on the results of Stage 1
 - v. methodologies to be adopted
 - vi. a breakdown of costs, including a statement on VAT costs
 - vii. An assessment of risks that might impair the successful completion of the study
 - viii. An outline of areas to be covered in the final report
 - ix. Contact details of previous clients who may be approached for reference purposes

2. Proposals should be sent by email to Alison Whitehorn, UKSG Business Manager (alison@uksg.org). It is the responsibility of the bidder to ensure that the email has arrived by the deadline outlined above.

3. A copy of the proposal should also be posted for receipt by the same deadline to:

Alison Whitehorn
UKSG Business Manager
Hilltop
Heath End
Newbury
RG20 0AP
U.K.

Faxed or late copies will not be accepted.

4. Evaluation Process and Criteria

The Working Group established by UKSG will evaluate the proposals. The criteria used in this evaluation will include assessments of (in no particular order):

- Feasibility of the study within the given timescale
- Robustness of the methodology
- Analysis of the risks to the completion of the study
- Relevant experience and expertise of staffing resources
- Costs
- Value for money

It is envisaged that a short list of candidates will be invited to interview by the Working Group prior to the final selection being made. These interviews will take place in Oxford on one day between 9 and 19 September 2009. Candidates should note these dates.

H. Terms and conditions

1. Successful bidders will be asked to sign a letter of agreement confirming terms and conditions for the project work.
2. Successful bidders will be expected to allocate a minimum of 3 days in their work plan for meetings with members of the Working Group.

I. Further information

Queries regarding the tender process should be addressed to Richard Gedye of Oxford University Press, Chair of the Working Group.
(richard.gedye@oxfordjournals.org).

J. References

1. Usage Factors Study: Final Report: <http://www.uksg.org/usagefactors/final>

UKSG reserves the right not to select any proposal to undertake the study.