

**SCONUL ERM Project:
Electronic Resource Licensing & Management – Use Case
Workshops**

University for the Creative Arts (UCA)

**USE CASE NOTES
(Use case 16 –Usage Statistics)**

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People

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Use Case

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CONTENTS

Usage data (Use case 16) Generic description	3
What happens	3
Activity.....	3
Volumes.....	3
Actors	3
Data involved	3
Workflows	3
Motivation–what are the pain points	3
Current problems.....	3
Efficiency Assessment	4
Economy assessment	4
Effectiveness assessment	5
Intended benefits– what’s the business case	5
Library service.....	5
Users	5
Suppliers.....	5
Consequences of doing it ‘above campus’	6
The proposition.....	6
What will happen.....	6
Potential risks	6
Potential opportunities	6
Consequences of not doing it.....	7
Implementation pointers	7
Mechanism.....	7
Inputs and outputs.....	7
Standards and protocols	7
Existing systems	7
Staffing	7
Challenges & costs	7
Set up and transition	7
Ongoing.....	7

Usage data (Use case 16) Generic description

The library wishes to carry out an annual review of all their electronic subscriptions. They wish to get reports offering 'per use' or 'per download' costs for each resource, and to compare their usage with average use across similar institutions.

What happens

Activity

Although usage statistics have been gathered for several years it is only recently that these have started being reported back in SCONUL returns, and in documents such as the library annual report. The library gets data from various E-platforms and tries to get this into a consistent format that can be used internal (library) and externally (institution).

For individual e-journal titles (have around 100 titles not part of a package) we go to the publisher website, the SWETS online content admin area, or the Serial Solutions admin area and then reformat the result. We intend to feed the data into the annual resource review meetings agenda. We are also evaluating the JISC Usage statistics Portal (JUSP)

Volumes

12,000 e-journal titles (100 individual titles, 3000 free, 9000 in subscribed packages), 500 print only journals, 50K ebooks (Ebrary package), 300 individual ebook titles via Coutts (MyiLibrary).

Actors

Library staff— Lincoln and David plus an e-services support person

Data involved

COUNTER spreadsheets (the JR1 number of access/hits is the key stat we looks at). Statistics from Athens (inc. identification of courses—see below)

Workflows

Pull down data from various platforms— 18 (e-journal) + 25 or so databases. These are combined into 2-3 spreadsheets to provide aggregation and analysis to feed into the review meetings
Can get ebooks access statistics (COUNTER compliant) from Ebrary and Coutts from the admin side of Ebrary and Coutts MyiLibrary platforms.

Motivation-what are the pain points

Current problems

Gathering the (COUNTER) data is time consuming—multiple source, variety of access methodologies and passwords.

Comparing like with like --is a key issues. For example is an 'access' same as a 'download'. Definition of use needs clarity. The UCA focus is currently on number of accesses.

Granularity –

- Which groups (courses, study levels, etc.) have been using which resources.
- Which parts of a resource have they been using? Can we drill down to title level use for ejournals that are part of a packaged service? If an online service provides a range of material (ejournals, reports, images, etc,) can we see which parts of it are being used or can we only get overall usage statistics?
- When have students been using the resources – peak times, etc.
- Where have they been using them from – on or off campus? Overseas?

It often isn't possible to get this information with any consistency or accuracy.

This sort of information could help inform us on the sort of promotional work we might need to do and the sort of user support required.

There are issues with on-site and off-site access. On campus the user may not be so well identified as IP authentication is used for most resources. The student course code can be used as a 'group' in Athens and statistical analysis can be done on resource usage by group. However, for most resources users only log in via Athens off campus, so this doesn't give a very complete picture of who is using what.

Also, although most student Athens accounts are created by bulk upload at the beginning of the academic year, some are created during the year individually and staff doing this often forget to link the user to the course group. We are also about to implement a proxy server, so off site access to many resources will also essentially be by IP.

Efficiency Assessment

Process of gather statistics is clearly inefficient at the moment—multiple types of data being obtained from a variety of sources (platforms).

Economy assessment

Right now the process is not taking up too much local resource -- but that is partly because at the moment library and university management are not asking for much formal data on e-resource usage to be reported back and it remains a back line service. This is likely to change as expenditure on these resources increases and as e-resources make up a increasingly large proportion of total library information resources.

Effectiveness assessment

There is generally very good feedback from academic staff and students on the library's electronic collections. A crude comparative assessment of value for money is done by dividing the subscription costs by number of accesses. However, some resources are disproportionately expensive, notably those that are primarily produced for use in business / industry rather than the academic environment e.g. online fashion trends services; market and business analysis reports, etc. So it can be difficult to balancing these resources against demand. And this requires sensitivity and judgment -- 'cost per use' is not the same value proposition for all resources.

Intended benefits- what's the business case

Library service

The key driver is to justify value for money: evidence to back up purchasing decisions. Are we buying the right resources? Does a resource need promoting more? These questions could be better answered by having not just the capability to look at statistics locally but also to compare across institutions.

The library needs to demonstrate value to wider organization. For example statistics in the annual report to outward justify what library does. Ebook usage is now a domain performance (SCONUL) indicator.

Users

Better statistics should enable the library to demonstrate to users wise spending of student fees. Resources will better fit course needs better. Students should be assured they get the best resources at the best value, although we have to be careful (cf above) about too simplistic 'cost per use' equations.

With sufficient granularity, statistics might tell us more about specific groups of users, enabling us to target resources better or reveal new relevant resources

Suppliers

Better usage data can point suppliers to particularly look at low use, as that is often the trigger for subscription cancellation. Low use might be caused by a number of factors, not just that the information is not relevant. e.g. a poor user interface; clumsy login and authentication methods; poor customer support from the supplier; poor or few promotional / training materials provided.

Data will also provide better overall assessment of market demands and potentially, if there is sufficient enough granularity, to see how (and why) usage between institutions varies.

Possibility for improved licensing which better fits the profile of an institution (e.g. rather than say JISC banding)–leading to better uptake of products and service because they better meet specific institutional needs.

Having a one–stop stop above campus statistics interface may save individual suppliers’ time and costs in maintaining and supporting their own separate statistics platforms. This could be particularly useful for small suppliers.

Consequences of doing it ‘above campus’

The proposition

Usage statistics for all platforms and all users will be gathered and aggregated centrally with local data being made available for the participating institutions. A common set of use attributes so the library will know they are comparing like with like (access/ download/view).

What will happen

A HE e–resource usage statistics ‘platform’ would not only provide statistics for individual institutions to help them evaluate and manage their licensed resource, but would also, by fact of aggregation, enable useful, inter–institutional comparisons to be made. (cf Ulrich's Serials Analysis System¹ to enable institutions to compare collections)

Potential risks

It is unlikely that all data relevant to a resource will be collected, so there is a consequent danger of simplistic judgments (cf above). The lure of (easily available) statistics may cloud judgment. How far is the usage of an image database comparable to the usage of a full text service?

All and sundry might see your underused resources without an appreciation that there can be important local reasons for low use.

Potential opportunities

See usage of other institutions and potentially use them as a model. Great opportunity to reduce duplication of effort across HE. Instead of each individual institution having to understand the peculiarities of the way an individual platform/ resources count usage, this knowledge could be held centrally and shared.

¹ <http://www.serialssolutions.com/ulrichs–serials–analysis–system/>

Consequences of not doing it

More and more time is going into gathering statistics. It will only get bigger as the pressure to show value increases and as our e-collections increase. We will need to look harder at the value of each subscription. This will be more complex, time consuming and costly if the institutions have to do it all themselves.

Implementation pointers

Mechanism

Is JUSP a good prototype for extension?

Inputs and outputs

The inputs will come from the authentication/authorization infrastructure for the most part.

Standards and protocols

COUNTER SUSHI are already established and UKSG is doing work on standards and protocols for usage²

Existing systems

The Knowledge Base is the key to local holdings so the accuracy of this is vital. Is there is a need for Integration with campus access/authentication systems (e.g. Active Directory; Athens, Shibboleth; proxy servers, etc.)?

Staffing

Want as little local staff input as possible. But right now such a service will be hard to justify based on staff time cost savings alone (see above) this activity it not (yet) soaking up a lot of local staff time—because UCA (and probably many others) aren't gathering statistics in the detail that they could.

Challenges & costs

Set up and transition

Needs some local work to identify title and packages held (in KB)

Ongoing

Will need to continue to maintain some local data as some databases are not encompassed/compatible with existing Knowledge Base, particularly online services from small suppliers.

² E.g. see <http://www.uksg.org/usagefactors/progress>