

The Usage Factor Project

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In 2002 Richard Gedye of Oxford Journals
founded the Usage Statistics organisation
COUNTER

6 years ago, COUNTER set out to make usage
statistics...

Consistent

Standard format usage reports now adopted
by over 100 publishers and hosts

Credible

Formal auditing process started in 2007

Compatible

Yes, but.....

How successful has COUNTER been?

The challenge.....

- COUNTER statistics provide a reliable comparison of amount of use between journals
- But they don't provide a meaningful usage-based measure of relative quality or value
- All other things being equal, a journal publishing 2000 articles a year will generate significantly more downloads than one publishing 50.

The challenge

- ISI's Impact Factor compensates for the fact that larger journals will tend to be cited more than smaller ones
- Can we do something similar for usage?
- In other words, should we seek to develop a "Usage Factor" as an additional measure of journal quality/value?



For example.....

Usage Factor =

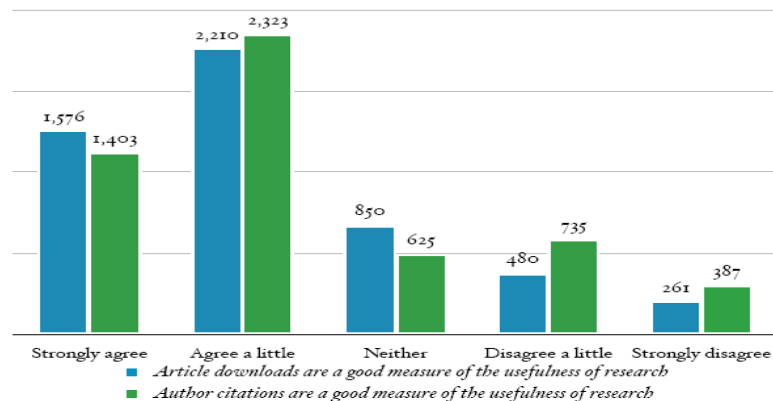
$$\frac{\text{Total usage over period 'x' of articles published during period 'y'}}{\text{Total articles published during period 'y'}}$$



Some initial evidence...

Figure 14: Attitudes towards journal metrics (n=5,513)

Numbers of respondents



From *New journal publishing models: an international survey of senior researchers*; Ian Rowlands and Dave Nicholas, A CIBER report for the Publishers Association and the International Association of STM Publishers, 22 September 2005



Some initial evidence...

CIBER KEY FINDING 10

DOWNLOADS RULE!

Researchers believe that article downloads (mean 3.81) offer a better measure of the 'usefulness of research' than author citations (mean = 3.66).

Chi square = 1,528.98, d.f. = 25, p < 0.001

From *New journal publishing models: an international survey of senior researchers*; Ian Rowlands and Dave Nicholas, A CIBER report for the Publishers Association and the International Association of STM Publishers, 22 September 2005



Some initial evidence...

“Note that the question explored the measurement of utility rather than ‘quality’ but this is nonetheless a surprising finding and it may indicate that **download metrics would have considerable credibility amongst the author community.**”

“Alternatives to the traditional impact factor, based on article downloads and modeled using the same time windows as are used to construct impact factors might offer a very interesting and worthwhile direction for future research and development: **they would certainly be of great appeal to librarians and many publishers.**”

From *New journal publishing models: an international survey of senior researchers*; Ian Rowlands and Dave Nicholas.
A CIBER report for the Publishers Association and the International Association of STM Publishers,
22 September 2005



COUNTER

Counting Online Usage of
Networked Electronic Resources

- So in 2007 the UKSG launched the Usage Factor Project in collaboration with COUNTER

UK
SG
UNITED KINGDOM
SERIALS GROUP

Usage Factor Project – Stage 1

- **Phase 1 October 2006 – January 2007**
 - COUNTER Director Peter Shepherd carried out a series of in-depth interviews with:-
 - 7 authors
 - 9 librarians
 - 13 publishers
- **Phase 2 March 2007**
 - Broader web based survey of:-
 - 155 librarians
 - 1400 academic authors
- **June 2007**
 - Final report published by UKSG



Phase 1 Headline Results Users

- Would Journal Usage Factors be helpful to you in assessing the value, status and relevance of a journal?
 - Librarians – YES 100%
 - Authors - YES 100%



Phase 1

Usage factor advantages

- A useful counterweight to Impact Factors
- Especially helpful for journals and fields not covered by ISI
- Especially helpful for journals with high undergraduate or practitioner use
- Especially helpful for journals publishing relatively few articles
- Data available potentially sooner than with Impact Factors

Phase 1

Usage factor advantages

- “Authors select journals that will give their articles prestige and reach. Impact Factor is a widely used surrogate for the former, while perceived circulation and readership reflect the latter. But usage is becoming more important as a measure of reach”

Carol Tenopir

- “Many of the publications in which I publish and in which I would like to publish do not have IFs and the current system almost requires serious authors to publish in journals that have IFs.”

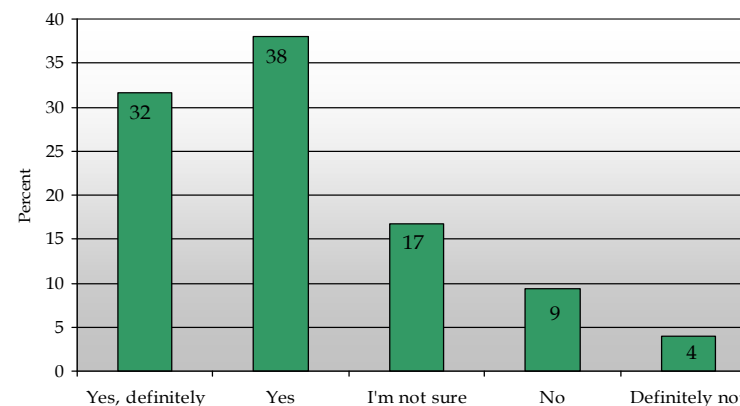
Author

Research.....

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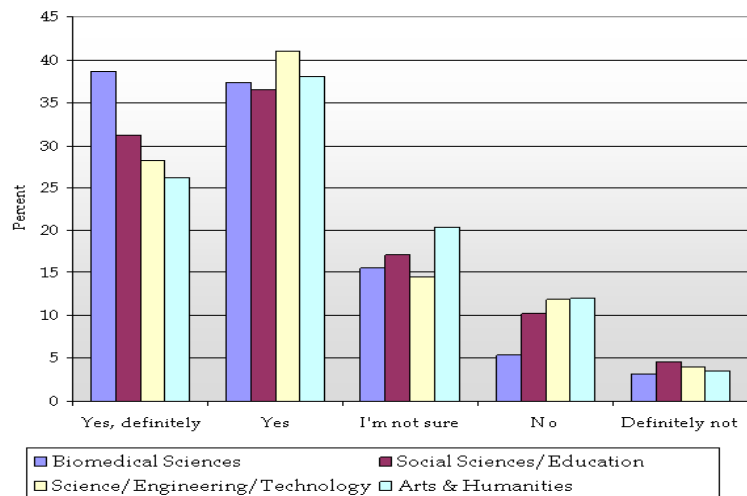
Phase 2

Author results - Support for a new, usage based measure



■ Would you welcome the development of new quantitative measures to help assess the value of scholarly journals based up verifiable data which describes the number of times articles from those journals have been downloaded?

Figure 10: Proportions of academic authors who would welcome a new measure for the assessment of the value of scholarly journals based on article downloads [by broad subject area]



Phase 2 Librarian results: new journals

Ranking without Usage Factor

1. Feedback from library users
2. Price
3. Reputation/status of publisher
4. Impact Factor

Phase 2 Librarian results: existing journals

Ranking without Usage Factor

1. Feedback from library users
2. Usage
3. Price
4. Cost per Download
5. Impact Factor
6. Reputation/status of publisher

"I would view Usage Factor as an aid for collection rather than cancellation decisions. Usage per se is a more suitable tool for us when considering cancellation."

Stage 2 – The Plan

- Journal usage logs from multiple publishers to be ingested and converted to uniform standard report format for analysis by expert third party
- RFP currently being drafted for third party selection process

Stage 2 – The Plan



- RFP seeking expert third party to be published later this year after outstanding issues addressed:-
 - to agree final detailed format of standard report
 - to ensure data consistency, integrity, and fitness for purpose.
- For example:-
 - Measuring number of qualifying “items” published
 - Assigning a correct publication year for each item
 - Excluding spiders, crawlers, etc



Stage 2 – The Deliverables



- **A report (early 2009) which will:-**
 - Outline the various metrics assessed
 - Recommend which of them prove consistent and robust enough to be adopted for scaled up onward monitoring
 - Suggest any ways in which data providers might amend the way they capture, structure, label, and maintain their data which would make the measurement of Usage Factors:-
 - Easier
 - More reliable
 - Propose ways to audit Usage Factors for accuracy



Usage Factor Project



- More information at:-
 - <http://www.uksg.org/usagefactors>
- Or contact:-
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Questions?

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THANK YOU