



COUNTER

Release 5.1

The Friendly Guide to

COUNTER
Attributes, Elements
and Other (Slightly)
Techy Things

This is part of a suite of Friendly Guides demystifying Release 5.1 of the COUNTER Code of Practice

The complete series is:

- Introducing COUNTER Reports
- Introducing COUNTER Metrics
- COUNTER Attributes, Elements, and Other (Slightly) Techy Things
- COUNTER and Open Access
- Becoming COUNTER Compliant
- COUNTER for Consortia
- Changes in Release 5.1

Note: for ease of reading we have used plain English in all the Guides. For technical reasons, the Code of Practice itself uses underscores to link words – thus Data Type is actually Data_Type, and Total Item Investigations is Total_Item_Investigations.

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Attributes

There are four main Attributes in R5.1: Access Type, Data Type, Access Method, and Year of Publication.

Access Method is what separates real user activity (Regular) from text and data mining activity (TDM).

Year of Publication, or YOP, is the four-digit year in which the content was formally published. You may also see YOP as 9999 for things that are in press, or 0001 for things where the date of publication is unknown.

Access Type and Data Type are a bit more complicated, so they're explained in more detail here.

Access Types

Access Types split out subscription materials from those that are open access or free to read. R5.1 overhauls our older definitions for Access Types to make them more generally applicable and easier to understand.



Figure 1. The three Access Types in Release 5.1

R5.1 also introduced two clear principles about how to use Access Types:

- The Access Type you'll see in a COUNTER Report relates only to the platform producing the report. That means an OA book in a database that is only available to subscribers will be reported as Controlled.
- A content item can only have one Access Type. So if a journal article has freely available metadata but restricts the full text for subscribers, all usage of that article, even usage of the free metadata, needs to be reported as Controlled.

Controlled

Content that is reported under Controlled is material that is only available to authorized users. Authorization is typically in one of two ways: the most common is to link authorization with subscription, so that authorized users are affiliated with a subscribing library (a paywall). The second common option is to require users to register but not require a subscription (a datawall). In either case – subscription or registration – any content that can only be accessed by authorized users is Controlled.

Open

At times, there seem to be as many definitions of OA as there are members of COUNTER. COUNTER has to remain neutral to serve the full breadth of our community, so for Open we have avoided any link between the Access Type and (a) business models or terms like Gold, and (b) specific licenses like Creative Commons. Open therefore covers any content item that the publisher asserts is OA, no matter what the license is, or whether the item was originally Controlled (e.g. until after an embargo).

This definition of Open means publishers who make materials freely available (sometimes called ‘bronze’ OA) will be able to report their usage as Open, provided they intend to keep those materials openly available.

Free To Read

This Access Type applies to materials that are temporarily freely available to everyone. A good example of Free To Read would be the special collections of coronavirus papers that many publishers made freely available during the early days of the Covid pandemic.

Content that is only free to some people should still be reported as Controlled. Something that is only free in certain countries, for example, is using geo-location as a way to authorize users.

Data Types

We use Data Type as a way to distinguish between different types of content, for example so that usage of a book is reported separately from usage of a video. R5.1 includes a wider range of Data Types than previous versions of the Code of Practice.

Components

Components are optional in R5.1, which should make it easier for publishers to deliver item-level reporting.

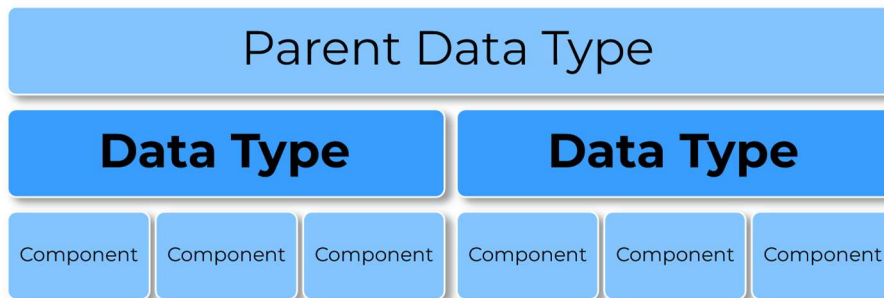


Figure 2. Relationships between Data Type, Parent Data Type and Components

Components are a subunit of Data Types that may appear in Item Reports. A dataset may be a component of a journal article, as an example.

Elements

Elements are simply the column headings you'll see in COUNTER Reports and Standard Views of COUNTER Reports – if you look at a Platform Report, you'll see that Attributes often do double-duty as Elements. There are samples of the COUNTER Reports in the Code of Practice if you want to see what this looks like in practice (<https://cop5.projectcounter.org/en/5.1>).

Host Types

Not strictly either an Attribute or an Element, Host Types are an essential part of the Code of Practice: a publisher platform's Host Type determines which reports it must deliver, based on the kind of content it offers. Some platforms have mixtures of content types, so they fit into multiple Host Types.

The table below includes a short description of each Host Types and the COUNTER Reports they need to offer, but if you'd like to know which Standard Views of COUNTER Reports to expect, take a look at the *Friendly Guide: Introduction to COUNTER Reports*.

Host Type	Description	COUNTER Reports
A&I Database	Abstracting and indexing databases that support discovery	Platform Report Database Report
Aggregated Full Content	Databases of full text and other materials	Platform Report Database Report Title Report
Data Repository	Research data repositories	Platform Report Item Report
Discovery Service	Indices of articles, books, and other metadata	Platform Report Database Report
eBook	Individual ebooks or ebook packages	Platform Report Title Report
eBook Collection	Ebook collections that behave like databases	Platform Report Database Report Title Report
eJournal	Serials (journals, conferences, newspapers, etc.) available as individual titles or packages	Platform Report Title Report
Full Content Database	Databases of content items not otherwise part of an eJournal or eBook platform	Platform Report Database Report
Multimedia	Individual items of audio, video, or other multimedia content	Platform Report Item Report
Multimedia Collection	Multimedia collections that behave like databases	Platform Report Database Report
Repository	Institutional and subject repositories offering access to research output, which may include but is not exclusively data	Platform Report Item Report
Scholarly Collaboration Network	Services used by researchers to share information about their work	Platform Report Item Report

Customizing and Extending Reports

While we try to make sure that the Code of Practice covers all eventualities we know that some publishers may want to customize their reporting, so this section of the *Guide* introduces the basics of customization.

Reserved Elements

There are some common use cases that are not required within the Code of Practice, but which we have accommodated through the use of Reserved Elements.

Customer ID and **Institution Name**. COUNTER Reports are usually for single institutions. For multi-institution reporting (e.g. for consortia), usage should be broken down by institution, with the correct Customer ID and Institution Name.

Reports can also be broken down geographically, which is particularly helpful for global reports (there's more information about global reporting in the *Friendly Guide to COUNTER and open access*). For country-level breakdowns, the reserved elements are **Country Name** and **Country Code**, while if you want more granular geographical information you would use **Subdivision Name** and **Subdivision Code**. Another helpful mechanism to break down global reports is the Attributed element, which specifies whether or not usage could be tied to an institution.

The final reserved element is **Format**, which has reserved values of HTML, PDF, and Other. This element is highly restricted: it may only be used in Title Reports for Total Item Requests, or in custom reports.

Custom Values

As explained above, COUNTER Attributes work using controlled lists. Publishers can add custom values to those controlled lists using a {namespace}:{value} structure, like so:

- Data Type. Custom example *PubA:YouTube Embeds*
- Access Type. Custom example: *PubA:Federated*
- Access Method. Custom example: *PubA:Free Marketing*
- Metric Type. Custom example *PubA:Total Linkouts*.

Other things to watch for

Zero usage

COUNTER Reports do not include zero-usage, partly to keep report sizes manageable and partly for technical reasons to do with publishers' subscription records and usage reporting tools often being separate. If you

need to identify subscription titles with zero usage, check out NISO RP-26-2019, KBART Automation: Automated Retrieval of Customer Electronic Holdings (<https://www.niso.org/publications/rp-26-2019-kbartautomation>).

Missing and Unknown Values

Some values for Elements might not be known to the publisher, for example books without an ISBN. Where that is the case, the value needs to be left blank in COUNTER Reports.

Find out more

There is a lot more information in the full Code of Practice (<https://cop5.projectcounter.org/en/5.1>) and of course in the COUNTER Media Library (medialibrary.projectcounter.org).

If you have questions that haven't been answered elsewhere, please don't hesitate to email our Project Director:
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COUNTER

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