



# COUNTER METRICS

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**The R5.1 Friendly Guide to**

# Changes in Release 5.1

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**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 and Open Access
- Working with COUNTER Reports
- COUNTER for Consortia
- Becoming COUNTER Compliant
- COUNTER Attributes, Elements, and Other (Slightly) Techy Things
- 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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## The headlines

Key aspects of the Code of Practice are the same in R5.1 as they were in earlier releases: the Platform, Database, Title and Item Reports and their derivative Standard Views remain in place, and the metrics themselves (Investigations, Requests, Searches, and Denials) are similarly unaffected.

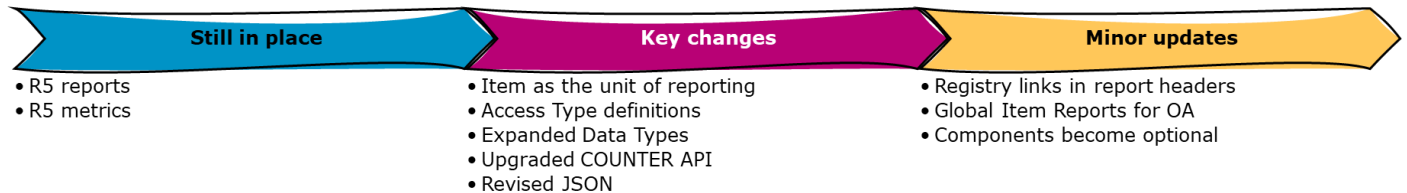


Figure 1. The headline changes between Release 5 and Release 5.1 of the COUNTER Code of Practice.

The primary changes in R5.1 are: a more consistent focus on Items as the unit of reporting; improved definitions of Access Types; an extension of the list of Data Types, and some significant upgrades to the COUNTER API (formerly sushi) protocol and associated JSON report structures. Many of these changes affect COUNTER Attributes, so you may find it helpful to also read the *Friendly Guide to COUNTER Attributes, Elements, and Other (Slightly) Techy Things*.

### Item as the unit of reporting

Improved OA reporting is one of the major objectives of R5.1, which requires reporting at the level of the item. This doesn't affect most types of content, so usage for journals, databases, multimedia and so on will continue to be reported in the same way as it has been historically. However, this change does affect some book metrics, including books that are classed as reference works (e.g. encyclopedias).

#### Book metrics

Book usage is reported using both Item and Title metrics. The Title metrics are not affected by the move to item-level reporting, but the Item metrics are.

Let's take a scenario where a publisher platform offers books on a chapter-by-chapter basis, as well as journal articles. A user has elected to download a full 10-chapter book plus ten journal articles. In Release 5 there was no mechanism for a publisher to report the usage of those chapters independently, but with item-level reporting in place the publisher can accurately report usage of chapters while at the same time not inflating the book-level Title usage metrics – take a look at the table below to see how it works.

	Books, R5	Books, R5.1	Journals, R5	Journals, R5.1
Total Item Investigations	1	10	10	10
Unique Item Investigations	1	10	10	10
Total Item Requests	1	10	10	10
Unique Item Requests	1	10	10	10
Unique Title Investigations	1	1		
Unique Title Requests	1	1		

### Section Types

A knock-on effect of the move to item-level reporting is that the old Section Type Attribute is no longer required. Section Types were used in conjunction with Data Types to provide more granularity about usage – for example, book usage would be reported against Data Type Book, Section Type Chapter. The Item Reports also offered the concept of a Parent Data Type, allowing a third tier of granularity. Since usage can now be reported directly against granular Data Types (e.g. Data Type Book Segment), Section Type is no longer relevant.

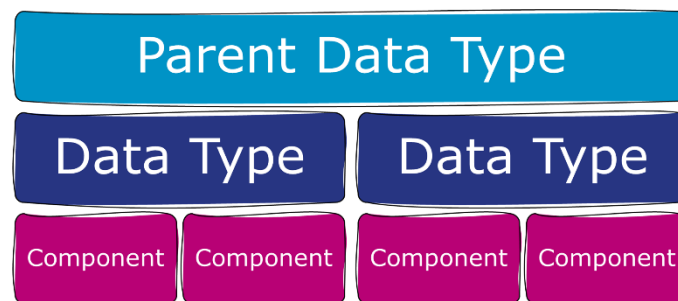


Figure 2. How Data Types work – Or, why we don't need Section Types in R5.1.

## Expanding the list of Data Types

For Release 5.1 we expanded the list of Data Types, as well as clarifying some confusing Data Type definitions and including Data Type as an essential part of the four main COUNTER Reports. This will make it easier for publishers to report granular usage information and for libraries to compare usage across publishers and over time.

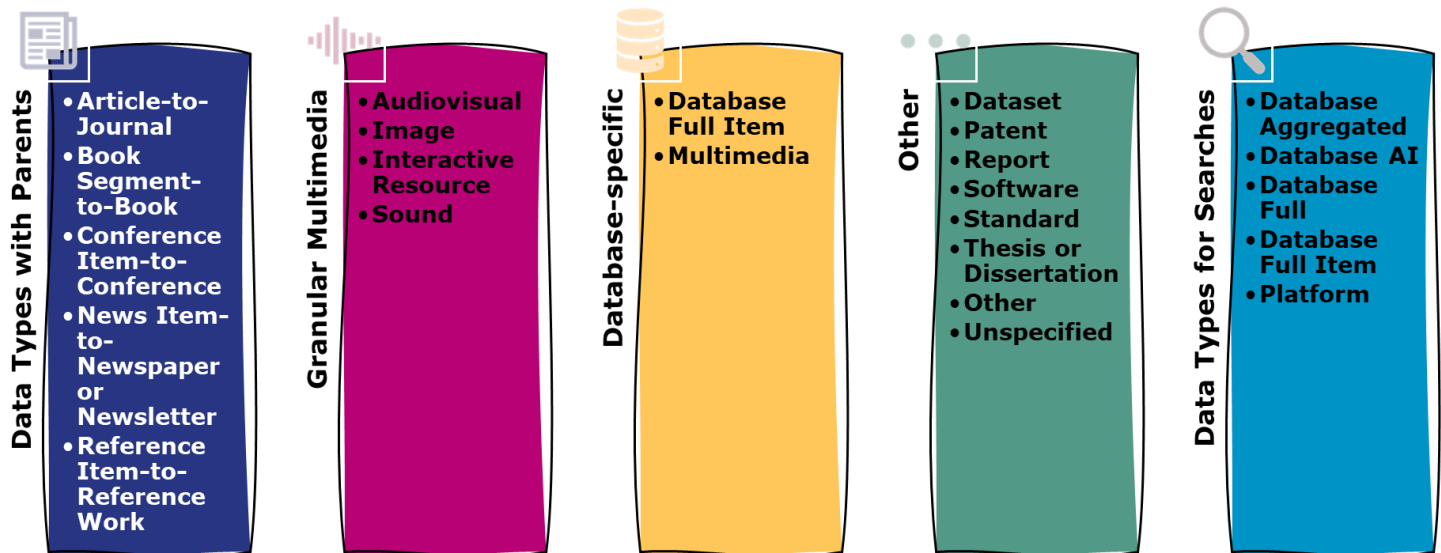


Figure 3. Data Types in Release 5.1

By expanding the list of Data Types we have changed what is reported in some of the Standard Views of COUNTER Reports. For example, publishers who adopt the new Conference Data Type won't report usage of conference proceedings in the TR\_J1 Standard View. This is resolved by using the Title Report instead of the Standard View, as the Title Report can be easily filtered to show the Data Types

## Clarifying the definitions of Access Types

In earlier releases of the Code of Practice we weren't clear enough about where COUNTER Access Types apply, so in R5.1 we introduced the following principles:

- 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. That means if a journal article has freely available metadata but restricts the full text for subscribers, all usage of that article needs to be reported as Controlled.

Similarly, our older Access Type definitions were a bit confused, and only two (Controlled and OA Gold) were in common use. For R5.1 we wanted to avoid any description of OA that referenced a business model or a specific type of OA license, and we needed to help publishers report on usage of materials they have made freely available. After many months of discussion, and feedback from the community through the R5.1 consultation, we have agreed on these Access Types:

- Controlled. Material that is only available to authorized users (e.g. subscribers or registered users).
- Open. 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).
- Free To Read. Materials that are temporarily freely available to everyone (e.g. special collections of coronavirus papers during the early days of the Covid pandemic).

The main impact here is on the TR\_B1 and TR\_J1 Standard Views of the Title Report. Historically these Standard Views only excluded OA chapters or articles. In R5.1, TR\_B1 and TR\_J1 will also exclude Free To Read book and journal content. This is resolved by using the Title Report instead of the Standard Views, as the Title Report can be easily filtered to show the Access Types you are interested in.

A secondary impact is that the principles behind Access Types, combined with our definition of Open, means publishers who make materials freely available (sometimes called 'bronze' OA) will be able to report their usage as Open instead of Controlled, as was previously the case.

## Report Headers

Librarians often tell us that they are unsure whether their reports are being provided by COUNTER-compliant publishers, or are just structurally similar. For R5.1 we're making it easier to check this by asking every publisher to include a link to their record in the COUNTER Registry, which provides details of every platform that offers audited, COUNTER-compliant usage reports. You can find out more at [registry.projectcounter.org](https://registry.projectcounter.org).

## COUNTER API and JSON changes

### COUNTER API (formerly sushi)

There are two obvious changes here. The first is that we're calling API the COUNTER API (formerly sushi). The second obvious change is that from R5.1, the Code of Practice release number will be included in the URL (e.g. <https://usage.reporting/counter/r51>).

We're dropping IP-based authentication for COUNTER API services to make the API more robust. Publishers can choose to implement API Key authentication if they want a replacement.

There are also some changes to the API endpoints:

- /status will be public, so you can easily check whether a specific service is live.
- /reports is being expanded to show information about the first and last months for which data are available.
- New parameters are being introduced to cover the common extensions to COUNTER reports.

### JSON

The JSON schema for R5.1 uses OpenAPI3.1 and is more compact than the old schema, so the files are easier to produce, validate, and use. This means changes like avoiding duplicate item and parent metadata, simplifying the Performance structure, and simplifying value lists.

We've also made sure that the JSON and tabular reports match by removing some extra fields that only appeared in JSON reports, making it easier to compare across report formats.

## Smaller changes

There are some changes which should be noted, but which aren't likely to impact your day-to-day experience of COUNTER Reports.

- Components, an aspect of the Item Report, are now optional, with the hope of encouraging more publishers to offer the Item Report.
- We're encouraging every publisher to offer Global Item Reports – there's more about that in the *Friendly Guide to COUNTER and Open Access*.

### 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 on our website at <https://countermetrics.org>.

If you have questions that haven't been answered elsewhere, please don't hesitate to email our Executive Director: [tasha@countermetrics.org](mailto:tasha@countermetrics.org)





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