

## People in the News

### Lorraine Estelle

I met up with one of our own *Insights* Co-Editors, Lorraine Estelle, to find out about her new role as Director of COUNTER. 'Being appointed to this role is a great honour but also a great responsibility', she said. 'COUNTER was one, if not the first, standards organization established for the modern information environment. It has succeeded in bringing together a collaboration of publishers and librarians to develop and maintain the standard for counting the use of electronic resources. It has also ensured that most major publishers and vendors are compliant by providing their library customers around the world with COUNTER usage statistics. I am taking over from Peter Shepherd, who led COUNTER since it started 13 years ago until he retired this summer. He is a hard act to follow and I have a lot to live up to but, fortunately, I don't think I've broken anything yet!'

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I asked Lorraine what she particularly likes about the new role. 'The great thing about working for COUNTER is that it is a community-led organization', she said emphatically. 'Our Board, our Executive Committee and our working groups are the heart of what we do and I am really enjoying working with the library and publishing experts who so generously give their time to COUNTER. I am also enjoying working at an international level. The engagement is fantastic, for example, we are running an online consultation at the moment to inform the next release of the COUNTER Code of Practice and it's quite a thrill each morning to see responses coming in from libraries and publishers from all around the world.'

Every job has its challenges and I asked Lorraine what she considers the greatest hurdles. 'The practical challenges are those that any international organization faces, with time zones and languages. I very much appreciate our working group members who are joining our conference calls at 6:00am their time – it's not easy to think or talk about the COUNTER-SUSHI Implementation Profile before you have had two cups of coffee!' she explained. 'One of COUNTER's great successes recently was to fund the establishment of the Usus website. A group of librarians and consortium, publisher and vendor representatives established Usus last year, and it is already building a community engaged in best practices. COUNTER has supported the technical development of Usus, but is editorially independent and is designed to provide a space for all of those engaged in the information ecosystem to discuss electronic resource usage, including how use is measured, known issues with reports and potential future changes to the COUNTER standard. I very much hope we can now get support to create Usus in some of the other major world languages.'

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6 Our other challenges are around ensuring that COUNTER remains relevant as the information environment changes. For example, in the current release of the Code of Practice we have the Gold Open Access reports, increasingly of interest to librarians in countries that are making large investments in funding article processing charges. Another interesting development is the Code of Practice for Articles, which could play an important role in altmetrics. COUNTER is also working with several publishers through CrossRef on proposed DOI event-tracking APIs that would enable consolidation of usage data from different platforms and other services. This means users would be able to see the total use of an article both on the publisher's platform and in repositories. Although COUNTER developed this Code of Practice primarily for journal articles, it can be applied to all categories of individual content items that have metadata associated with them, so there is potential to use this standard to measure the usage of research data and other non-traditional research outputs.

These are exciting developments in terms of being able to understand the use and reach of research outputs, but I wanted to know what Lorraine saw as the priorities for libraries in her first year. 'I'm glad you've asked that because librarians all over the world are answering the same question in their response to our online survey. These responses are clear and consistent. Librarians tell us that they want to see the COUNTER Code of Practice for Articles implemented by more publishers, both subscription publishers and open access publishers.

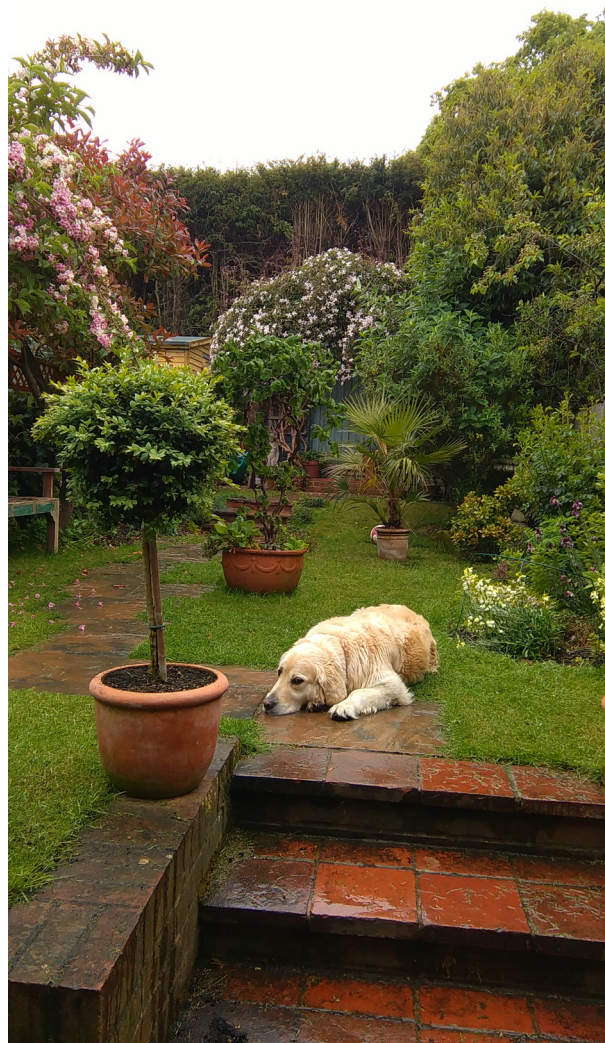
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They have also expressed a demand for the implementation of usage factors. The COUNTER Code of Practice for Usage Factors (referred to as UF) is designed for publishers, research institutions, researchers, funding agencies, librarians and others who require a reliable usage-based measure of journal impact. UF would enable these organizations and individuals to compare usage factors for different publications to make more complete, evidence-based evaluations of the impact and value of journals and to make better-informed publishing or acquisition plans. Usage statistics alone do not provide the whole picture, particularly for humanities journals that tend to publish far fewer issues per year than science titles, so the UF, if implemented, would be a helpful tool in the evaluation of journals. Librarians are under pressure to present usage statistics when making the case for their budgets, but find that these indicators can be misleading or misunderstood. The UF would greatly help librarians make the case, particularly for journals that publish less frequently or that are used predominantly by students and practitioners rather than researchers.

The other top priority for our library members is to see much greater COUNTER compliance by publishers, especially those who publish in languages other than English. One librarian responding to our online survey said, 'Put energy and resources into vendor COUNTER compliance and complete SUSHI implementation. That will be your contribution to librarianship'. The message to COUNTER is loud and clear. We need to reach out to publishers and explain why consistent and credible usage statistics are so important to their library customers. We also need to explain why SUSHI is essential as the efficient mechanism for a library or library consortium collecting usage data from many different publisher platforms. However, it is not just about advocacy, we also need to make it easier for publishers to become compliant, and next year hope to launch a technical forum and a *Friendly Guide to COUNTER*, which will make the procedural aspect of becoming compliant much clearer for them.'

'We need to reach out to publishers'

The COUNTER Director works from home, so I asked Lorraine how she has adapted to that change. 'I love it', she said. 'My commute to work is a short one now – just to the shed at the bottom of the garden. I say shed, but it is quite a nice shed, and my dog Freddy joins me every day. As a work companion he is easy-going – but he doesn't contribute much to the brainstorming and never takes his turn at making the coffee', she sighed. It sounds as if Lorraine and Freddy have a lot of work to do over the next year. 'Indeed, we do', she said, 'but it's an enjoyable challenge and there is still time to be Co-Editor of *Insights*.'



Co-worker Freddy waits patiently for the Director to begin her long commute to the garden office

*Lorraine was interviewed for 'Insights' by Andrew Barker.*

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