CloudPublish

Unlocking COUNTER API, formerly SUSHI: Transforming Usage Statistics Management for Digital Publishers

Introduction

The world of scholarly publishing has changed dramatically, not just moving from print to digital, but reshaping how publishers, libraries, and institutions connect, share, and measure their success. Today, platforms hosting journals and books require accurate, real-time usage data. For publishers, this data isn't just numbers; it's a vital tool to grow, build partnerships, and gain trust.

But keeping track of who's reading what, when, and how often can be overwhelming, especially for smaller and mid-sized publishers without large data teams. That's where COUNTER API, formerly SUSHI comes in. The COUNTER API is a quiet but powerful protocol that makes managing usage data simple, automatic, and reliable across all your platforms.



1: What is COUNTER API (SUSHI) — and Why Should Publishers Care?

COUNTER API is a protocol that automates how usage data is shared between publishers and libraries. Instead of manually downloading reports, emailing files, or managing spreadsheets, COUNTER API does the work for you, delivering real-time usage reports directly to your partners.

At its core, COUNTER API ensures your reports follow industry standards called COUNTER. This standard clearly defines what counts as a 'download,' 'view,' or 'session,' so everyone's on the same page. COUNTER API doesn't set these definitions but acts as the engine that pulls usage data from your hosting platforms and sends it to libraries accurately, on time, and in a format they trust.

COUNTER API works alongside other key standards like KBART (which streamlines sharing book and journal info), OAI-PMH (for sharing metadata across repositories), and CrossRef (which manages digital object identifiers or DOIs). Together, these standards create a connected, transparent digital publishing system. COUNTER API is the vital pipeline that ensures usage stats

flow smoothly from your platform to your partners.

2: The Business Value of COUNTER API (SUSHI) for Digital Publishing Leaders

For smaller publishers, COUNTER API is a game-changer. It automates the collection and delivery of usage data, saving your team hours of manual work. Instead of chasing reports, you get accurate, up-to-date data sent directly to your library clients—quickly and reliably.

But it's not just about saving time. COUNTER API helps you build trust. When your reports are consistent and follow industry standards like COUNTER, libraries see you as a reliable partner. Since many academic and institutional decisions depend on usage data, having trustworthy stats can make or break your chances of winning library contracts. Transparency and accuracy aren't optional—they're essential.

Beyond trust, COUNTER API gives you strategic insights. Clear, reliable data turns raw numbers into business intelligence. You can make smarter decisions on what content to invest in, identify marketing opportunities, and negotiate better deals with libraries or aggregators—especially when budgets are tight and choices are many. Robust usage data puts you ahead in the competitive publishing landscape.

3: Inside the COUNTER API (SUSHI) Workflow – Technology and Integration Essentials

Think of COUNTER API as an automated chat between your platform and a library's system. When a library wants the latest usage data, like how often a specific eJournal or eBook was accessed, it sends a request. Your platform, using the COUNTER API protocol, responds instantly with a detailed usage report in a standard format like JSON.

Setting this up isn't automatic, you'll need to establish secure connections, handle authentication (like unique Customer ID), and ensure your internal logs match the COUNTER standards. Typically, you'll work with your platform provider, your IT team, or specialists to make sure everything integrates smoothly.

Be aware of potential issues. Older systems might not support COUNTER API out of the box, and differences in metadata or content types can cause inconsistencies. For smaller publishers, especially those new to hosting platforms, choosing a partner that supports COUNTER API and provides clear documentation is crucial. Testing thoroughly before going live will save you headaches later.

4: Getting Started with COUNTER API (SUSHI): Tips for Small and Mid-sized Publishers

Where do you begin? The key is leadership recognizing usage data as a vital asset. Start with an audit: is your current platform COUNTER API- and COUNTER-compatible? If not, look for providers that include these features as standard, and choose vendors with good support.

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Next, involve your team. Even if your platform handles the technical side, everyone—from editors to sales—should understand what COUNTER metrics mean, how COUNTER API reports arrive, and what your library partners expect. Set clear workflows so everyone knows where to find usage data and how to respond to questions.

You don't need a big IT team. Many hosting platforms now include COUNTER API as a simple, 'set-and-forget' feature. For publishers working with multiple sources or wanting integrated analytics, consulting a third-party expert may be helpful.

Most importantly, keep an eye on data quality. Inaccurate or late reports can damage trust with your library clients. Properly integrating COUNTER API sets the stage for renewal contracts and future growth.

5: Why COUNTER API (SUSHI) is Essential for the Future of Publishing?

COUNTER API isn't just a helpful tool, it's become a necessity for publishers of books, journals, and multimedia content. As digital catalogs grow, COUNTER API helps manage everything smoothly, even with limited staff. For online-first or hybrid publishers, COUNTER API supports continuous publication: each new release is automatically tracked from day one.

It also boosts discoverability. Libraries need to justify their budgets, and being able to show high, transparent usage data gives publishers a competitive advantage. Mastering COUNTER API means winning more contracts, strengthening library relationships, and standing out on distribution platforms.

As the industry moves toward more dynamic, real-time content sharing, accurate, automated reporting becomes even more critical. For digital publishers, COUNTER API isn't just a technical protocol, it's a strategic tool for operational excellence and sustainable growth.

Final Thoughts

COUNTER API is changing the game for digital publishers. It makes collecting, sharing, and using usage data easier, helping you work smarter and build stronger relationships with libraries and institutions. Whether you're distributing eBooks, managing eJournals, or hosting a lively catalog, now's the perfect time to make COUNTER API a core part of your operations.

For further information, feel free to contact sabineguerry@cloudpublish.co.uk

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