

Counting Numbers and Use of Ebooks in a Large Academic Library

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Question 1: The University reports the number of ebooks to ARL each year, but bases the number on a count of titles. This method results in an undercounting of ebooks from vendors with ebook series with many distinct volumes of the same title. Could we get a better count of the distinct ebook volumes in our collection and a sense of how the collection has grown?

Desired Solution: Use number of ebooks in COUNTER Book Report 2 usage reports in order to get a more accurate count for all 28 vendors.

Obstacles:

- 1) Vendors without usage reports. (4 vendors)
- 2) Vendor usage data not including unused titles. (5 vendors)
- 3) Vendor usage data including all titles offered by vendor regardless of ownership by library. (1 vendor)
- 4) Vendor usage reports for retrospective years including all ebooks owned at time of report download rather than those owned for the period covered by the report. (4 vendors)
- 5) Vendor usage reports in non-COUNTER formats that did not list all titles for a reason similar to those above, or because they listed usage only by designated ebook "collections." (5 vendors)

Compromise Solution: Use hybrid of ARL numbers of usage reports.

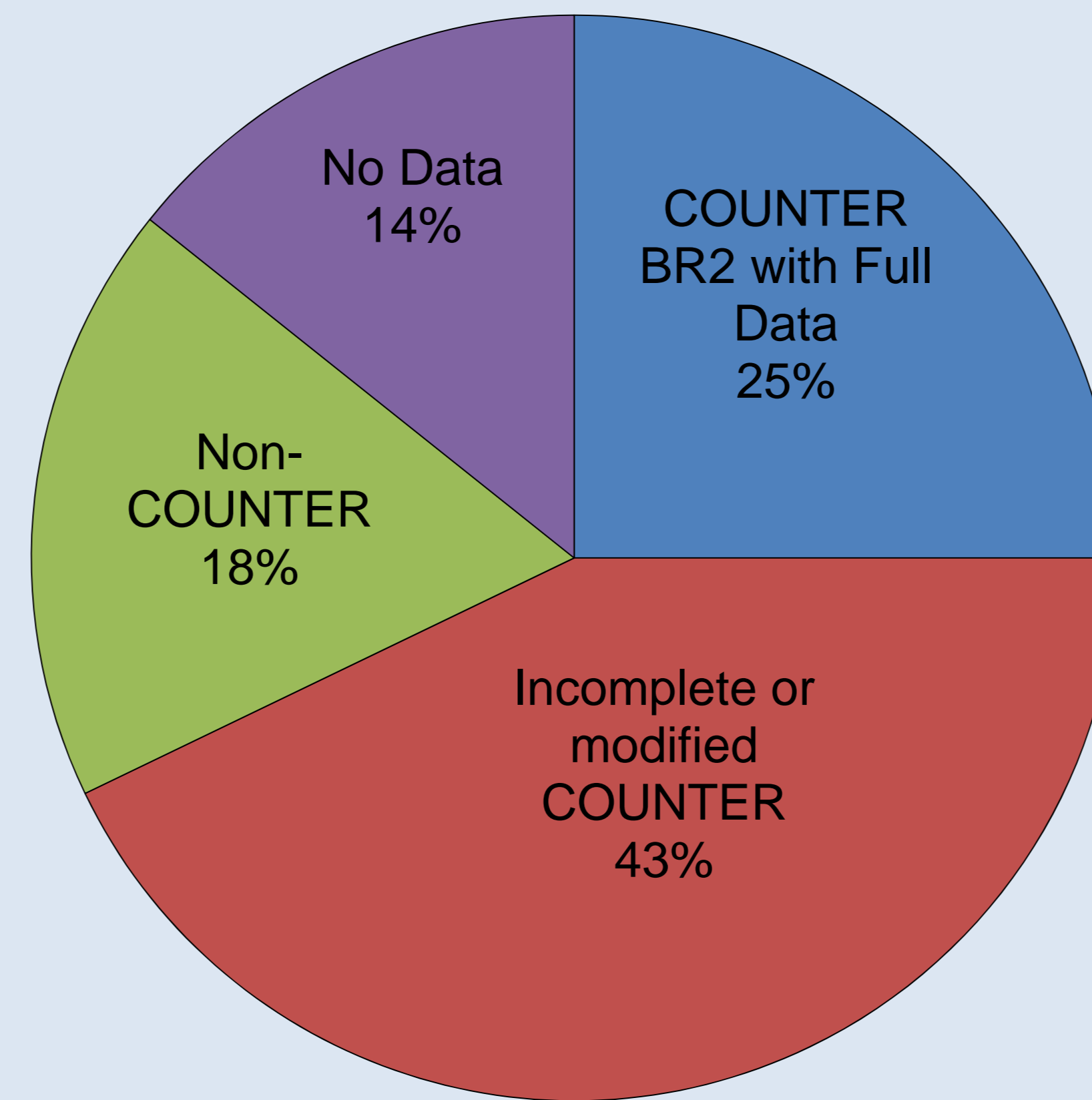
- 1) Start with ARL numbers for each vendor by year as baseline.
- 2) Use better numbers from usage reports where possible by replacing ARL numbers for a vendor in a given year with number from appropriate usage report.

Outcomes:

- 1) Better estimates of actual number of ebooks, despite continued undercounting. Undercounting more pronounced for years previous to fiscal year 2011 due to reports with incorrect retrospective data.
- 2) Better estimates of cost per ebook due to improved count of ebooks.
- 3) Ability to make fuller assessment of known problems with ebooks in the catalog. A project in Spring 2012 used ebook vendor data to find and include titles missing from the catalog for two vendors of chemistry titles—including almost 1/5 of the titles for one vendor.

Year	ARL Estimated #Ebooks	Revised Estimated #Ebooks
2008	319,533	345,186
2009	377,686	411,364
2010	453,562	484,768
2011	583,919	614,203

Form of Ebook Usage Data (as % of All Vendors)



Question 2: How much is the University's ebook collection used, and how much has use grown over the past years?

Desired Solution: Use data from current and retrospective COUNTER Book Report 2 usage reports to gather number of uses by fiscal year. A "use" for BR2 refers to a download or viewing of a particular section (i.e., chapter) of an ebook.

Obstacles:

- 1) Vendors without usage records. (4 vendors)
- 2) Vendors reporting book use in COUNTER journal reports instead of book reports. (1 vendor)
- 3) Vendors using COUNTER Book Report 1 for usage of all or some ebooks because these ebooks only viewable/downloadable as a whole rather than by section. (2 vendors)
- 4) Vendors using modified COUNTER or non-COUNTER reports. (7)
- 5) Variable availability of retrospective data: vendors that only have usage data available for a limited retrospective period due to late implementation of reports or because retrospective usage data only available for a set number of years that roll forward.

Compromise Solution: Use all available data compatible with COUNTER BR2 data, or, in the case of COUNTER BR1 data, because it is the best possible data for that collection.

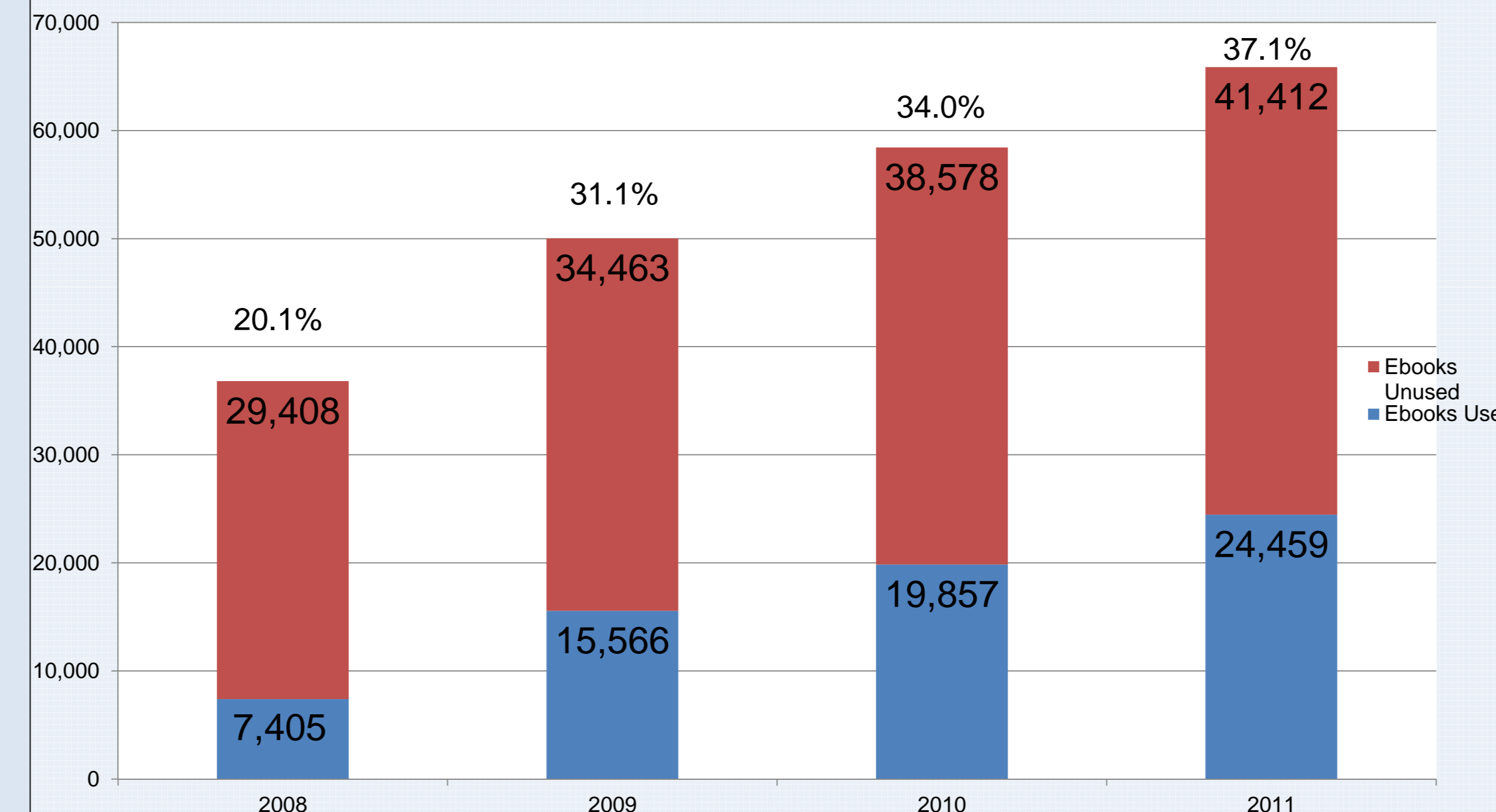
Outcomes:

- 1) Strong estimates of use by number of sections accessed for most recent fiscal year in study (2011).
- 2) Good estimates of use for previous years, but with more risk of undercounting in earliest fiscal years of study (2008, 2009).
- 3) Ability to estimate growth in use for entire ebook collection and for ebooks provided by specific publishers.
- 4) Ability to estimate cost per use of each ebook per fiscal year.
- 5) Ability to estimate average number of uses for ebooks and proportion of ebooks used for some vendors, and see most and least used ebooks.

Improving Ebook Data Collection

- 1) Some vendors still need to begin providing ebook usage data.
- 2) Other vendors still need to transition to COUNTER reports to maximize comparability of data.
- 3) Existing COUNTER reports may need yet more improvement (through more complete adherence to the standard or through further development of the standard) in order to provide the most complete and usable information:
 - a) Reports should show all zero-use items (all ebooks owned).
 - b) Reports should show only ebooks owned by library in the timeframe of the report.
- 4) The best vendors allow institutions to specify the timespan of the report (i.e., in order to download results by fiscal year instead of calendar year).

Total Ebooks Showing Number Used for Four Publishers Combined



Year	Estimated #Uses
2008	151,089
2009	251,273
2010	563,871
2011	709,944