Over 1.5 million downloads per month: IRUS-UK measuring usage of UK institutional repositories

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What is IRUS-UK?

Institutional repositories (IRs) are important research management tools that can give increased visibility to the outputs of the UK academic community. IRUS-UK[1] is helping librarians and repository managers to demonstrate the value and impact of their IRs, by providing consistent and comprehensive usage statistics, which allow benchmarking at a national level. By collecting and processing raw data on behalf of our participating repositories we are helping the community to interrogate, share and compare their statistics with IRs across the UK.

Although statistics were previously available through the various repository interfaces, without an agreed standard it was not possible to measure usage across a range of IRs accurately. IRUS-UK, funded by Jisc[2], is a national aggregation service, containing details of all content downloaded from participating IRs in the UK. Through collecting raw usage data and processing them into COUNTER[3]-compliant article-level usage statistics IRUS-UK provides comparable and authoritative standards-based data and also acts as an intermediary between UK repositories and other agencies.

By consolidating COUNTER-compliant statistics[4] the service provides opportunities to demonstrate the value and impact of IRs. It:

- facilitates comparable, standards-based measurements
- provides an evidence base for repositories to develop policies and initiatives to help support their objectives
- provides consistent and comprehensive statistics, presenting opportunities for benchmarking at a national level
- develops a user community that will ensure that the service is responsive to user requirements

Mimas, part of the Jisc portfolio, is working in collaboration with Cranfield University and Evidence Base to produce IRUS-UK, a community-driven development, built-in response to demand from UK Higher Education.

IRUS-UK recently reached a milestone; we now have 50% of eligible UK repositories participating. As a user-driven service, we regularly collect user feedback. In our last annual user survey, 68% of respondents felt that IRUS-UK had improved their statistical reporting. 66% of respondents reported that IRUS-UK saves them time in collecting statistics, and 66% reported that IRUS-UK enables reporting they were previously unable to do.

What can you do in IRUS-UK?

All institutional members of the UK Access Management Federation, whether or not their institutional repository is an IRUS-UK participant, can log in to the IRUS-UK portal and view the statistics and reports. There they can:

Look at summary reports
IRUS-UK provides a number of summary tables and reports which give an overview of downloads from our participating repositories. You can see:

1. An overall summary of downloads for all participating repositories
2. Total number of downloads for each individual participating repository

3. A breakdown of repository participation and number of downloads by selected countries in the UK (England, Scotland, Wales)
4. A breakdown of repository participation and number of downloads by platform used (DSpace, Eprints or Fedora)
5. Numbers of each type of item downloaded and number of downloads of each type of item for all participating repositories
6. Numbers of each type of item downloaded and the number and percentage for each item type which have DOIs available in the metadata that we harvest
7. An analysis of the data ingest process for each repository showing raw data, exclusions for robots and double clicks, and the resulting number of downloads showing in IRUS-UK

Run reports to examine usage in more detail

Item Report 1 provides the number of successful item download requests by month and repository identifier for a selected repository.

Item Report 2 provides the number of successful item download requests by month and item type for a selected repository.

Electronic Thesis or Dissertation Report 1 provides the number of successful thesis or dissertation download requests by month and repository identifier for a selected repository.

Repository Report 1 enables you to view the number of successful item downloads by month for all participating repositories. The report can be filtered to limit the results to a selected item type, Jisc Band and/or Country

See usage of different item types

We map the hundreds of different item types used by our participating repositories to a core set of 25 item types. We store all the original item types so that items can be subsequently remapped if necessary. The choice of the 25 item types was informed by a major piece of work examining both metadata guidelines for repositories and actual use of item types[5].

In the IRUS-UK portal you can see for each item type the number of items downloaded and the number of downloads.

Search for usage of an individual item

You can search for words or phrases in the title or author for all repositories or for an individual repository and for all item types or a specified item type. Search results include basic metadata, a link to the item in the host repository, numbers of downloads and additional statistics relating to the item.

Check out items with DOIs

IRUS-UK extracts DOIs from downloaded item metadata and provides two tables:
1. A summary for each item type of the number and percentage that have DOIs across all repositories.
2. A breakdown of article DOI availability by repository.

View robot usage and double clicks, which have been excluded from the data

In order to produce COUNTER-compliant usage statistics, IRUS-UK excludes downloads by robots and double clicks on individual items. A table provides an analysis of the ingest process for each participating repository. We have a position statement on the treatment of robots and unusual usage[6] and are undertaking further work to refine this process.

How can you use IRUS-UK data?

IRUS-UK data can be used for a number of different purposes, some of which have been highlighted in a series of use cases. The use cases are summarised below; full versions are available on the IRUS-UK website. All data within IRUS-UK can be viewed online or exported.

Providing reliable and consistent statistics

Repository statistics, as with any web statistics, can be inconsistent and various factors can affect the quality of the data provided including unusual usage and robot activity. IRUS-UK provides repositories with comparable, authoritative, standards-based data. The data undergoes a series of machine based and human checks. Any anomalies are checked and investigated, and efforts made to filter robot usage out. Due to these processes and adherence to the COUNTER Code of Practice, institutions can be confident that the data they receive from IRUS-UK is accurate and reliable.

Reporting to institutional managers

It is useful for institutional managers to understand the usage of items in the institutional repository. This might include, for example, obtaining high-level statistics of total downloads from the repository, or gaining an understanding of the items that have higher downloads. The usage statistics within IRUS-UK can be used to report on downloads for institutional managers. You can find out the total downloads IRUS-UK has recorded from each repository, or you can use the focused reports for more granular information such as downloads by item (to help you identify items receiving high numbers of downloads), downloads by item type, downloads of Electronic Theses and Dissertations, and number of downloads from all participating repositories, which you can filter by item type, Jisc band, or country (or a combination).

Reporting to researchers

Researchers are often interested in knowing the usage statistics of their items in the institutional repository; this could be for review purposes, for reporting to Research Councils, or just for curiosity. Additionally, a researcher may be involved in dissemination or publicity (e.g. a conference presentation) that refers to their research, and they may wish to see if this has resulted in an increase in the number of downloads of the item. In the IRUS-UK search you can search for a specific item to report on the downloads of the item. The result shows monthly downloads for the item since a download was recorded in IRUS-UK, and daily downloads for the last month.

Benchmarking

Being able to benchmark institutional repository statistics is valuable, both with your own data (to look at trends), and with other institutions (to allow comparisons to be made and to provide a wider context within which to interpret the performance of an institutional repository). The standardised COUNTER-compliant statistics available through IRUS-UK enable reliable benchmarking, both with your own data for longitudinal analysis, and with other institutions within IRUS-UK. You can view total downloads recorded by IRUS-UK for all participating repositories, or you can look at monthly data for all participating repositories to look at trends. You can also filter repositories by different groupings (Jisc band or Country) or filter by item type (for example if you are just interested in downloads of Articles), and combine any of the filters.

Supporting advocacy

The data within IRUS-UK can be used to support advocacy by sharing headline download figures from all participating repositories, reporting on an overall total number of downloads from your repository since joining IRUS-UK, showing monthly download figures (and trends), identifying items with high levels of downloads, gathering statistics on downloads of different item types within your repository, or sharing downloads for particular researchers or research areas. These statistics can then be used in a number of different ways including presentations, newsletters, blog posts, reports, social media,

meeting updates, etc. These may be focused specifically on your repository, or more broadly on Open Access.

How can you find out more about IRUS-UK?

You can visit our website at http://irus.mimas.ac.uk, and if you are responsible for an institutional repository and would like to join, please contact us at irus@mimas.ac.uk and we will be able to advise you.

References:
1. IRUS-UK: http://www.irus.mimas.ac.uk/

2. Jisc: http://www.jisc.ac.uk/

3. COUNTER: http://www.projectcounter.org/index.html
4. COUNTER Codes of Practice: http://www.projectcounter.org/code_practice.html

5. IRUS-UK Item Type Mappings:
http://www.irus.mimas.ac.uk/help/toolbox/IRUS_item_type_report_v3.3.pdf

6. Position statement on the treatment of robots and unusual usage:
http://www.irus.mimas.ac.uk/news/IRUS-UK_position_statement_robots_and_unusual_usage_v1_0_Nov_2013.pdf

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