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MPS TECHNOLOGIES AND IBM PARTNER FOR SHARPER STM USAGE ANALYSIS



** MPS Technologies, a division of Macmillan launched in January 2004 to concentrate on the provision of technology services for scholarly communication, announced a partnership with IBM last month to develop the Surfaid product to meet the usage analytics needs of STM publishers and societies. The partners have now announced several major publishers using the product and are seeking to roll it out to other STM customers and triallists.*

by Nick Dempsey, Analyst

MPS Technologies has worked with IBM on developing the Surfaid product to support STM publishers and societies with a “suite of tools” for analysing usage of their online offerings. In practice this means a web-based interface that allows publishers to create and run their own custom reports or choose from over 60 different standard ones, including geographic breakdown; institutional and consortia usage; reports on how users navigate through sites; and visitor stickiness. Useful as such tools are, the ability to compile sophisticated web usage data is nothing new and IBM’s is just one offering in a crowded market (though it has been working in this area since 1998 and can claim to have rubbed off rather more sharp edges than some of its competitors).

However, the MPS product is built on the standard COUNTER reports that librarians require from complying publishers in order to measure usage of different online content offerings in a standardised fashion. COUNTER, which emerged in 2002 from the PALS (Publisher and Library Solutions) grouping of JISC, ALPSP and The Publishers Association, now has 30 vendors of STM information – publishers and intermediaries – who are compliant with its usage reporting standard. They are typically the major players: over 50% of the articles produced annually, according to ISI’s Science Citation Index, are COUNTER-compliant.

The MPS product will be sold as a means of reducing the cost of COUNTER compliance, with extra functionality for the publisher as a bonus – for example allowing marketing teams to analyse the effectiveness of online campaigns or promotions. David Sommer (Commercial Director, MPS Technologies) sees the partnership as helping “publishers better understand not only what content and services their users are accessing, but also how they are accessing them”. The “what” feels like the COUNTER bread and butter in this offering, with the “how” as the analysis jam. MPS Technologies may well look to build a user base among the major players, who are seeking to reduce their COUNTER costs and sharpen their usage analysis, before selling the product to smaller players as a solution that will enable them to meet COUNTER requirements without crippling costs. With more libraries expecting compliance and with plans in development to add e-books and reference works to COUNTER, this argument may well become more compelling. In fact, this could be an example of a technology product helping to drive an industry standardising project – just as the DSpace software and

Proquest's "repository in a box" are likely to drive forward the Open Archives Initiative.

Certainly, technology players such as Atypon and BSG (who developed Extenza's platform) will be looking closely to see what tools for the STM industry this new Macmillan division will work on next. Macmillan India, which has direct ties with MPS Technologies, has traditionally focused on STM typesetting operations, but has also now moved into software development and service provision, along with most Indian publishing outsourcing players. Such a move has the potential to add the development scale and expertise to MPS's knowledge of the sector.

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Press Release: <http://www.mpstechnologies.com/News.htm>

IBM Surfaid: <http://www.ibm.com/surfaid>

Project COUNTER: <http://www.projectcounter.org>

PALS usage statistics working group: <http://www3.oup.co.uk/central/pals/>

DSpace software: <http://www.dspace.org>

Proquest's "repository in a box":

<http://www.il.proquest.com/division/pr/04/20040625B.shtml>

Atypon: <http://www.atypon.com>

BSG: <http://www.bsg.co.uk>

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<http://www.epsltd.com/accessArticles.asp?articleType=2&articleID=298&imiID=61>

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<http://www.epsltd.com/accessArticles.asp?articleType=1&updateNoteID=871>