



Contributing Libraries: benefits and expectations

SUNCAT, with its remit as the national union catalogue of serials for the UK research community, is a co-operative activity. It depends upon the engagement of the SUNCAT Contributing Libraries (CLs) as much as it does upon the funding from the JISC and the achievement of the SUNCAT Project Team that includes access to expert advice and input from specialists. During Phase 1, the Project Team, itself a collaboration with Ex Libris, and the UK national libraries and up to twenty of the larger university libraries, worked successfully together to build the service available at <http://www.suncat.ac.uk>.

SUNCAT was launched as a full service in August 2006 and has since worked with university, public and specialist research libraries to extend the coverage of the catalogue. SUNCAT now contains around six million records from 70 CLs, the CONSER database, the ISSN Register and the Directory of Open Access Journals. In making best use of existing data records the contribution of libraries and their staff is of critical importance, to ensure the effective and coherent display of data in a national tool for researchers to discover and locate serials.

SUNCAT has two main functions, both based on the matching of item records to provide information on serial titles. As finding aid, it is geared to assist end users, researchers of all hue, and their library help staff. SUNCAT unlocks the nation's scholarly and research literature. SUNCAT is the principal means to find serials that are not held locally, with the potential to be used within libraries as part of their key facility for journals and other serials. Second, it provides CLs with the means to upgrade records in their own OPACs.

The second function for SUNCAT is geared to library staff, with a purpose-built user interface. Contributing Libraries will have the facility to download records through Z39.50 access to the SUNCAT catalogue in order to upgrade their local catalogues. For many serial titles, there will be more than one, often numerous, records in the SUNCAT database. The matching process used within SUNCAT is geared to make the best quality MARC21 record available for download. SUNCAT includes a million records from the CONSER database of high-quality, MARC21 records, ensuring high-quality records for a substantial proportion of the titles in SUNCAT. There are also records from the ISSN Register, to assist the crucial task of identification. The quality and extent of records in SUNCAT that have been contributed by UK libraries vary. SUNCAT will

therefore be the focus for the co-operative upgrade of the UK's serials records, and part of the work of the project will be co-ordination of the upgrade of records so that SUNCAT eventually includes a high-quality record for each title. As SUNCAT matures, it will become an invaluable resource for Contributing Libraries in providing access to high-quality records for most titles held in the UK.

Key benefits

In addition to the major benefit for the UK and international research community, as a whole, of providing a single central source of information about the existence and location of serials held in the UK, there are a number of key benefits for SUNCAT Contributing Libraries (CLs). These include

- Increased exposure of their serials collections to the UK research community and beyond
- Increased recognition of the CL with involvement in a high profile national service
- Access to a repository of high quality bibliographic records which can be downloaded to upgrade the CL's local catalogue and to streamline the cataloguing of new serials
- Opportunity to focus on improving local serials data: SUNCAT data specifications can highlight problems of low quality, inconsistency or anomalies with CLs' serials records
- Opportunity to review serials collections policy: SUNCAT will enable CLs to determine information about their serials collection, including the number of unique serials held in each CL and any overlap with other CLs which may be of interest on a geographic or subject level basis
- Knowledge and experience gained on transmitting electronic subscription information for serials as a result of SUNCAT's involvement with testing the ONIX for Serials Format

Key tasks and expectations

Below are outlined the key tasks and expectations for SUNCAT CLs. The timing and resource implications will vary for each library. The time taken to export an initial file and updates will be influenced by existing export procedures. Libraries that regularly export records to other union catalogues may have established procedures and will have a model for estimating how much resource is used by this process.

The level of resource required in CLs to check load reports, check the output of the matching process (i.e. to verify that unmatched records are unique or to identify the preferred records with

which they should match), and to upgrade records will depend on the quality of data provided. For example, very brief records are less reliable than full records as definitive identifiers of the titles described and thus are less likely to match other records in SUNCAT. Consequently, very brief records may require manual checking by CLs.

Supplying records to SUNCAT

The SUNCAT Bibliographic team has created a guide for CLs which outlines procedures for supplying records to SUNCAT. Available on request are guides for libraries that use Aleph (including instructions on supplying an Aleph sequential file) and those libraries using Talis in a non-MARC21 format (including instructions on supplying a CSV/text output if desired).

In the first instance, a SUNCAT Team member will contact CLs to agree a date on which the CL will supply a file of serials records. Two weeks prior to that supply date, the SUNCAT team will provide details of how to ftp the file to the SUNCAT server. Along with the file, CLs will be asked to provide a completed questionnaire describing their data. This will be used by the SUNCAT team, in consultation with staff at CLs to complete a data specification which describes any manipulation required to normalise the CL data for storage and display in SUNCAT. Following load to SUNCAT, CLs will be asked to check that data are displayed correctly. CLs will also be provided with reports of rejected records and invalid characters from their serials files. They may revise these rejected records and provide them as updates. The CL must decide the timescale for this activity. The level of resource will depend on the number of records rejected; this is determined by the SUNCAT record 'entry standard' (i.e. the record will be rejected if it lacks one or more of the following after processing):

- Leader cp 7 = s, i or b (i.e., will be coded as a serial)
- 008 (a dummy 008 tag can be inserted in data manipulation if necessary)
- 245\$a (i.e., has a title)
- 852 (i.e., has holdings)

(1) *A Contributing Library will be asked:*

- *to send a file of serials records by ftp to the SUNCAT server;*
- *to complete a questionnaire describing the data and provide this to the SUNCAT team when it sends its file of records;*
- *to consult with the SUNCAT team, as required, to specify any data manipulation that is required to 'normalise' the serials file for coherent display in SUNCAT;*
- *following load, to check that its data display is as expected in SUNCAT; and*
- *to revise rejected records and provide them as updates.*

The resource required to do these tasks will vary from library to library as described above.

Matching and merging all records for a single title

Bibliographic records (including holdings data) from all libraries are stored in a single database. A matching process is designed to group all records for a single title. These are then de-duplicated to view, i.e. a single bibliographic record (the 'preferred record') is displayed; holdings from all matched records are displayed with that preferred record. Libraries may be asked to check records from their serials files that remain unmatched after this process. For each of these the library may be asked to either verify that it is unique within SUNCAT or to identify the 'preferred record' that it should match. EDINA hopes to introduce a facility to assist this process when it supplies CLs with reports of unmatched records. Work to improve matching of records in SUNCAT is ongoing. The checking process has not been tested and there is no indicative information about the level of resource required.

(2) A Contributing Library may be asked to:

- *Check each unmatched record and either verify that it is unique within SUNCAT or identify the record that it should match;*

The resource required to process unmatched records will vary from library to library depending on their quality and brevity. The SUNCAT team has no indicative information as this process has yet to be tested.

Updating of records (including amendments and deletions)

After a CL provides a full file of its serials records, it will be asked to provide regular updates; preferably a file containing only updates (including amendments and deletions) but if a CL is unable to extract only updates, a current full file may be provided at regular intervals, to be determined through correspondence between the SUNCAT team and the library. This may be monthly, or less frequently; SUNCAT would expect two updates a year as the minimum requirement.

(3) A Contributing Library will be asked to provide regular updates (including amendments and deletions).

Upgrading of low-quality records

When work to resolve unmatched records is complete, poor-quality preferred records and poor-quality unique records will be identified. SUNCAT requires a single high-quality record for each serial title. CLs will be asked to take responsibility for upgrading records that are both 'poor quality' and are either unique or preferred. The timescale for this work will be discussed between CLs and the SUNCAT team.

(4) A Contributing Library may be asked to upgrade those records in its file that both require upgrading and are either unique or preferred.

Downloading of records

Contributing Libraries are able and, indeed, encouraged to download records from SUNCAT to improve the quality of records in their local OPAC. A Contributing Library may copy/save these records to a local system(s) and amend or combine these records for use within local systems for non-commercial purposes. In certain cases there may be specific licence requirements and SUNCAT will make Contributing Libraries aware of these. A Contributing Library may also distribute records to other libraries and/or co-operative services for non-commercial purposes.

Précis of expectations

(1) Supplying records

A Contributing Library will be asked to:

- *send a file of serials records by ftp to the SUNCAT server;*
- *complete a questionnaire describing the data and provide this to the SUNCAT team when it sends its file of records;*
- *consult with the SUNCAT team, as required, to specify any data manipulation that is required to 'normalise' the serials file for coherent display in SUNCAT;*
- *following load, to check that its data display is as expected in SUNCAT; and*
- *to revise rejected records and provide them as updates.*

The resource required to do these tasks will vary from library to library as described above.

(2) Matching and merging

A Contributing Library may in the future be asked to:

- *Check each unmatched record and either verify that it is unique within SUNCAT or identify the record that it should match;*

The resource required to process unmatched records will vary from library to library depending on their quality and brevity. The SUNCAT team has no indicative information as this process has yet to be tested.

(3) A Contributing Library will be asked to provide regular updates (including amendments and deletions), monthly in the first instance.

(4) A Contributing Library may be asked to upgrade those records in its file that both require upgrading and are either unique or preferred.

Experience of Contributing Libraries

In addition to the documentation on the SUNCAT website, about supplying and updating data, there are also case studies of the work undertaken by CLs using a range of different library management systems.