



Contributing Libraries: benefits and expectations

Introduction

SUNCAT, <http://suncat.ac.uk>, is the national Serials UNion CATalogue for the UK research community. It is a free Jisc service which is delivered by EDINA (<http://edina.ac.uk>). The service contains the serials holding information of around 100 Contributing Libraries (CLs) from both the UK and Ireland. CLs include:

- The British Library
- The national libraries of Scotland and Wales
- All the remaining UK legal deposit libraries and Trinity College, Dublin
- The largest UK Higher Education (HE) libraries
- A range of specialist and public libraries

SUNCAT also contains records from:

- The CONSER database (<http://www.loc.gov/acq/conser/index.html>)
- The ISSN Register (<http://www.issn.org/>)
- The Directory of Open Access Journals (<http://doaj.org/>)

In total, SUNCAT contains over 7.5 million records.

SUNCAT has a number of functions. As a finding aid, it is geared to assist both end users, researchers of all hue, and library staff. It 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 locating journals and articles. In addition the service can also be used to compare holdings and electronic subscriptions across institutions and, therefore, is a valuable collection management tool. As such, SUNCAT currently provides an automated holdings comparison service for the UK Research Reserve (<https://www.ukrr.ac.uk/>), assisting them with the scarcity checking for journal submissions from their member libraries.

Another function geared to library staff, is the facility for CLs to download records through Z39.50 access (<http://www.suncat.ac.uk/support/z-target-auth.shtml>) to the SUNCAT catalogue in order to upgrade their local catalogues. SUNCAT includes one 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, as well as records from a selection of SUNCAT CLs. The quality and extent of records in SUNCAT that have been contributed by UK libraries vary, but by providing free access to a wide range of records the service provides a means for CLs to improve information and serial discovery at the local level. Serial discovery is also then improved at the national level as the CL sends any new or upgraded records to SUNCAT via their regular updates.

In summary:

Both library professionals and researchers can use SUNCAT to:

- Discover the existence of serials in a particular subject area
- Determine the location of particular titles (and the articles they contain), including detailed holdings information for most CLs
- Find directions and contact details for CLs holding any desired titles
- Link through to the Table of Contents (ToCs) of selected titles and to the full text of journal articles they are authorised to access

Library professionals can additionally use SUNCAT:

- To obtain the British Library codes and Inter-Library Loan contact details for making requests to holding libraries
- To compare serials holdings with all the CLs or a preferred selection of CLs
- To check on the bibliographic details of serials
- To consult MARC records to update local catalogue information
- CLs can download MARC21 records directly into their local catalogue via a free Z39.50 connection to upgrade existing records or to create records for new subscriptions

Key benefits for Contributing Libraries

SUNCAT is a co-operative activity. It depends upon the engagement of the SUNCAT CLs as much as it does upon investment from Jisc and the expertise of EDINA that includes access to informed advice and input from specialists.

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 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
- Free 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
- Ability, with one search, to be able to compare local subscriptions and holdings with other SUNCAT CLs
- 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

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.

Supplying records to SUNCAT

A guide for CLs which outlines procedures for supplying records to SUNCAT is available at <http://www.suncat.ac.uk/librarians/techdocs.html>.

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)

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 SUNCAT and the library. This may be monthly, or less frequently; SUNCAT would expect two updates a year as the minimum requirement.

Linking to SUNCAT

Contributing Libraries are encouraged to provide links to SUNCAT on their local library website or portal. A guide on how to integrate SUNCAT into your library services is available at http://www.suncat.ac.uk/docs/integrate_suncat.pdf and includes information about adding SUNCAT to link resolvers, federated or cross search services, OPACs and website pages as well as information about our Facebook application.

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.

Experience of Contributing Libraries

In addition to the documentation on the SUNCAT website, about supplying and updating data, there are also case studies (<http://www.suncat.ac.uk/librarians/casestudies.html>) detailing the contributing experience of a number of CLs using a range of different library management systems.

Further, there are also case studies on how SUNCAT has been used by a variety of services to assist or improve their workflows, available at <http://www.suncat.ac.uk/description.html>.