SUNCAT User Experience Survey June 2015

Introduction

Jisc conducted an online survey on SUNCAT between May to June 2015 to ascertain information about:

- Who is using the service
- How the service is being used
- How SUNCAT benefits users
- The current level of satisfaction with the service
- How users would like to see the service develop

Respondents

Role

Of the 34 respondents the vast majority, 91%, identified themselves as Information Professionals. The remaining 9% identified themselves either as “Other” or did not provide any details.

Affiliation

Over half of the respondents, 56%, reported affiliation to An HE institution, with around a quarter, 26%, affiliated to specialist institutions and smaller numbers to NHS, FE or a National Library.
Usage of SUNCAT

Frequency of Use

Half of the respondents reported using SUNCAT at least one per week, with a further quarter using it at least once per month.

Purposes for Using SUNCAT

The most popular reason selected for using SUNCAT, with 74% of the responses, unsurprisingly related to locating serials for either themselves or end users. However, a high number of respondents, just over half, also indicated that they used the service to check bibliographic information, with smaller numbers reporting usage to support creating or upgrading bibliographic records for their local catalogue, collection management or general research.
Key Features of SUNCAT

Respondents were asked to state how useful they found a small number of new features on the service. The most popular was the Browse facility with around 40% finding this very or quite useful. However, in most cases almost one third of the participants had not yet used the new features.

When asked for examples of why they had used the new features, the library and location limits proved useful for:

- Limiting results to high quality CONSER records for updating local catalogue records
- Filtering out libraries already applied to for interlending requests
- Directing users to copies of journals held locally
“I edit our library records with CONSER records as example; therefore I use the library limit in every search”

The format limit proved useful for:
- Narrowing down variant titles
- Limiting to print only material to ensure users will have simple walk-in access
- Limiting to electronic journals only

“Licenses often mean users from other institutions can only access print format.”

The post search filters helped respondents to:
- Distinguish between journals with similar titles
- Guide users to journal copies held locally
- Differentiate between semantics of similar terms

“Place of publication is useful as sometimes journals have similar titles. Location is useful because users often wish to access a journal close to their home or university”

The browse facility enabled respondents to:
- Again distinguish between similar titles
- View titles with multiple records
- Find titles where unsure of details

“To check ‘vague’ details supplied, e.g. to distinguish similar titles”

Respondents were also asked about their overall favourite aspects of SUNCAT. Speed and ease of use topped the list with two thirds of respondents selecting this. However, accuracy and currency of data; the aggregation of serials and holdings data and the comprehensiveness of coverage came in as close joint second. The holdings information and display came in next being highlighted by just over half of respondents.
### Time Saving

Seventy-one percent of respondents reported that SUNCAT saved them time and no one stated that it did not save them time.

The main reasons reported as to how or why SUNCAT saved respondents’ time included:

- That it provides an aggregation of serials information and holdings in one source
- The speed and ease of use of the interface compared to similar services
• That it provides reliable and quality information and serials records for creating or upgrading local catalogue records
• That it provides comprehensive coverage and an overview of collections across the UK research community
• That it is a dedicated source of information about serials

“I can go to quality records easily, trusting the information there, without wasting time browsing in places like COPAC etc”

“Enables me to locate locations to apply to for ILLs without needing to check individual library catalogues or use Worldcat which is often unreliable”

“There are a number of things I can see at a glance from the result page. When upgrading serial records, I can quickly move between several records in the SUNCAT display and the layout is easy to navigate.”

“It is a more convenient union catalogue to use than copac for searching journals only, as it immediately shows all available holdings data for different institutions on each catalogue record. It also seems to run faster than both copac and Search25 much of the time”

The amount of time SUNCAT saves respondents varies with the most common being several hours per month.

**Experience of Using SUNCAT**

• 77%, reported that the effectiveness of the SUNCAT search was either “Good” or “Very good”.
• 74% reported that with regard to ease of use SUNCAT was either “Good” or “Very good”.
• 74% also indicated that their overall satisfaction with the service was either “Good” or “Very good”.
• No one reported the service as “Poor” or “Very poor” for any of the above

Respondents were also asked to rate on a scale, of 1 (very unlikely) to 10 (very likely), how likely they would be to recommend SUNCAT to others. Eighty-three percent rated this likelihood at 7 or above.

The most common reasons for recommending SUNCAT included:
• That is clear, easy and quick to find information
• That is comprehensive coverage of both journal bibliographic information and UK holdings information
• That it saves time
• That is an ideal tool for interlending purposes
• That is the best single source of journals information
“In terms of locating UK serials information it’s unrivalled. Copac is not as comprehensive, Worldcat a lot more unwieldy.”

“Very useful for checking journals holdings for lots of libraries at once - ideal for sourcing locating for ILLs”

“As it is based on British libraries’ holdings it often records more obscure and rarer European periodicals, especially in foreign languages, than perhaps WorldCat. It is invaluable as a source of bibliographic information on serials as well as a record of quite detailed library holdings.”

“It is so useful to have all serials in one catalogue to locate which library has what you want. Also saves a lot of time.”

“Very clear interface. Comprehensive coverage.”

**Desirable Improvements for SUNCAT**

Finally, respondents were given the opportunity to suggest how SUNCAT could be improved or developed in the future. These are summarised below with responses from EDINA.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested Improvement</th>
<th>EDINA’s response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better deduplication</td>
<td>Duplication is a common problem across union catalogues. The major reason for duplication in SUNCAT is due to the variation in data provided by the Contributing Libraries, plus the additional sources we harvest and licence bibliographic records from. This variation in data makes it extremely difficult to match records for the same title together. The issue of variable serials data quality pre-dates SUNCAT and will continue into the foreseeable future. However, EDINA is aware of the importance of this issue and is continuing to make efforts to improve the quality of data in SUNCAT. Further, in the next phase of the redevelopment, we plan to investigate improving our existing matching algorithm and thereby hope to reduce the level of duplication in the medium to long term.</td>
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<td>Provide ability to limit to exact titles</td>
<td>SUNCAT does have an Exact Title search on both the Basic and Advanced search pages, as well as an Exact Title browse. This search covers a more restricted set of fields compared to the Title Keyword search in order to cater for known item searches and reduce the</td>
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number of results returned. However given the wide variation in how titles are catalogued from such a wide range of record sources, we have erred on the side of caution so that variations of the same title are not excluded and so have included some additional title fields. We will re-evaluate this search shortly.

We would suggest using the post search filters along the left hand side of the results screen to reduce results to the most relevant records. Alternatively the ISSN search should produce the most precise results.

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<tr>
<th>Improve the visibility/prominence of post search filters</th>
<th>A review of the post search filters is planned.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Remove or make the Contributing Libraries map less prominent</td>
<td>EDINA will review the prominence and amount of space given to the map and if this screen space could be better utilised.</td>
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<td>Provide a way of clearing previous search terms (e.g. reset button or automatically clear previous terms when user starts to enter new terms)</td>
<td>EDINA will add this into the list of developments planned for the next year.</td>
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<td>Provide more frequent updates</td>
<td>The majority of libraries provide monthly updates to SUNCAT, with some smaller libraries who make fewer changes to their serials records updating less frequently, e.g. quarterly or semi-annually.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide more accurate holdings information</td>
<td>EDINA does display as accurate and detailed information as possible. However, this is wholly dependent on the accuracy and level of information recorded in Contributing Libraries’ local catalogues and subsequently supplied to SUNCAT.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Display holdings data for all Contributing Libraries</td>
<td>EDINA does display as detailed holdings information as possible. However, this is wholly dependent on the level of information recorded in Contributing Libraries’ local catalogues and subsequently supplied to SUNCAT. Where a Contributing Library is unable to supply detailed holdings information EDINA believes it is still useful to indicate that the Library holds or has online access to the title.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve the visibility/prominence of the Advanced Search &amp; Browse options</td>
<td>EDINA will review how these options can be made more visible on the basic search page.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enable viewing of older as well as most recently published articles via ToCs page</td>
<td>The API provided by Zetoc only enables the most recently published articles to be viewed. However, it is possible to</td>
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<tr>
<td>view older articles via the JournalToCs tab on the SUNCAT ToCs pages, up to 1000, where these are made available via the JournalToCs service. EDINA is currently investigating how older articles might be better displayed.</td>
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The following additional comments were also received and will be reviewed and evaluated by EDINA for possible further action.

- Provide range of online availability on results page
- Change text to darker colour
- Improve the overall aesthetic design of the interface to make it less boxy
- Improve speed of use
Summary and Comments

The results should be considered in the context of the respondents’ grouping or designation. Almost all of the respondents were library or information professionals with only a handful of potential end-users. In this respect the survey provides a useful insight into the use of SUNCAT as a professional tool and the benefits for these users and their opinions on potential improvements for the service.

Looking more closely at the respondents the majority, 82%, were affiliated to research libraries, either in HE or specialist institutions, with only a small number from either FE or NHS libraries which may indicate possible areas of future promotional activity for the service.

Overall the results of the survey are very positive for SUNCAT. Respondents continue to have a high level of satisfaction with the service, finding it fast and easy to use. The redeveloped search platform has now had the opportunity to become embedded and appears to have been well received. However, the results also highlight a number of areas where improvements could be made. EDINA is aware of and has development plans around some of these and will investigate others as potential future developments.

SUNCAT’s primary role as a centralised source of serials information and UK holdings was confirmed, with 74% of responses stating locating serials and articles, either for end users or for professional purposes, as their purpose for using the service. Further, around 56% also used it for checking serials’ bibliographic information. Smaller numbers also used the service for upgrading records on their local catalogues and for collection management support, around 15% of respondents in each case.

The key features highlighted by the respondents included SUNCAT’s comprehensive coverage; its aggregation and display of serials information and UK holdings; the accuracy and currency of the data provided; with the most popular feature being the speed and ease of use of the service, commented on by two thirds of the respondents. The importance given to these features corresponds with the type of usage of SUNCAT mentioned above.

When asked about the usefulness of specific new features including a range of pre and post search filters, the Browse facility proved to be the most popular. However, a rather disappointing one third of respondents had not used the new features. It is planned to conduct a review of the filters which will include looking at how these might be improved and also made more visible to users.

With regard to satisfaction measures the service scored well with the following percentages of respondents rating the service as “good” or “very good”

- 77% for the effectiveness of the search
- 74% for ease of use
- 74% for overall satisfaction with the service.

Further, 71%, indicated that SUNCAT saved them time and 83% that they would be likely or very likely to recommend the service to others.

In relation to desirable improvements for the service, several of these relate to the data provided by the SUNCAT Contributing Libraries. These include the detail or accuracy of holdings information. EDINA does aim to display as much information and detail as possible, but unfortunately, has no control over the level of information
its Contributing Libraries record in their local catalogues and subsequently supply to SUNCAT. Where a Library is unable to provide any detailed information, EDINA believes it is still useful to simply record that the Library holds the title.

EDINA will review the post search filters and the possibility of making these more visible. We will also look at making the Advanced Search and Browse options more prominent and at adding in a search reset function into the Basic Search/Homepage. The possibility of making older ToCs available is also currently under investigation.

Another improvement requested, that of better deduplication, is particularly difficult to achieve. The major reason for duplication in SUNCAT is due to the variation in data provided by the Contributing Libraries making it extremely difficult to match records for the same title together. EDINA is aware of the importance of this issue and is continuing to make efforts to improve the quality of data in SUNCAT. Further, in the next phase of the redevelopment of the service, we plan to investigate improving our existing matching algorithm and thereby hope to reduce the level of duplication in the longer term.

The remaining suggestions will be considered and investigated by EDINA and where feasible, added to a list of requirements to be included in future development work.