

# **Jisc digital archival collections platform charging survey - summary report**

Summary analysis of a Jisc insights survey into platform charging for digital archival collections (DACs) by UK publishers

# Introduction

## Survey objectives

We define DACs as “products such as static primary source archives, book or periodical archives or databases that are typically acquired by libraries as one-off perpetual purchases”.

Through earlier work, Jisc became aware that our members are not satisfied with the charges being levied by publishers. We determined that more detailed data was needed to inform future strategy and help members benchmark and achieve greater transparency around these, so-called, platform charges (also known as hosting fees). Specifically we wanted to:

- Explore the scale and extent of publisher platform charges for content purchased in perpetuity
- Explore the limitations and barriers of platform service level agreements
- Understand the issues associated with platform charges/hosting fees
- Investigate the provision of text and data mining (TDM) service by publishers and associated charges
- Develop a set of principles to support Jisc’s negotiations with publishers

# Method and overall sample

A 28 question online survey was distributed in February/March 2019, and was live for 4 weeks. 70 responses were received from 67 identified institutions. Responders were all at managerial or strategic level.



**Online survey** distributed with the help of **SCONUL** and **RLUK**. Institutional responses were requested



**70** overall responses  
**67** identified institutions



**67%** Manage resources and feed into the decision making process  
**33%** Have a strategic role and a key decision maker

# Sample: organisations

All nations are represented, with the majority from higher education institutions in England. Most responses come from institutions within the biggest Jisc bands, 5A and 5B. 5 out of the 7 institutions in band 2 responded (71%), suggesting that DACs are important to institutions at this level.

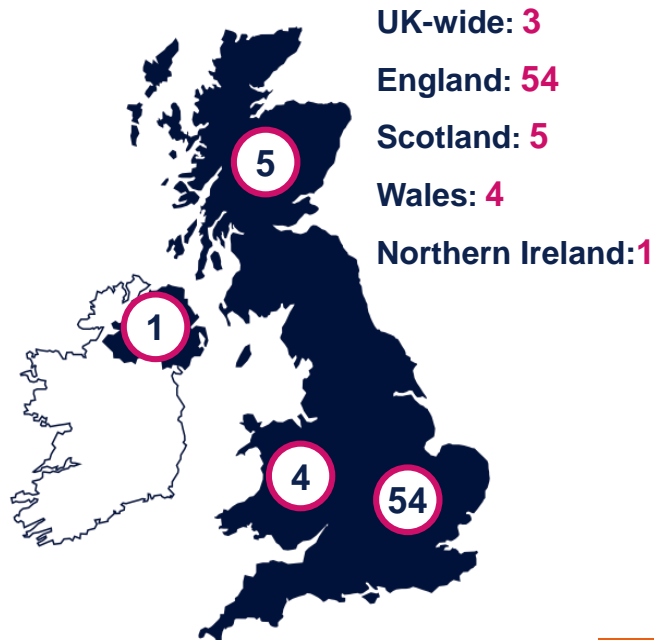


HE institutions: **63**  
 FE institution: **1**  
 Academic related affiliate: **1**  
 Non-academic affiliate: **1**  
 Research council institution: **1**



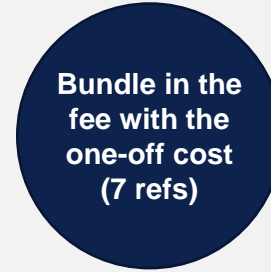
HE institution  
 profile  
 (n=63)

Jisc Band	1	2	3	4	5A	5B	6	7	8	9	10
No. of Institutions within band	5	7	8	10	21	25	21	21	2	22	20
No. of Survey Responses	3	5	4	6	13	13	10	6	1	1	1
% of Total Band	60%	71%	50%	60%	62%	52%	48%	29%	50%	5%	5%



# What changes would have the most positive effect?

**Top 3** →



**Transparency in pricing** is the number one referenced theme for this question, with a plea for more consistent or banded pricing. Respondents want more information about **what is covered by platform/hosting fees** and, more broadly, would prefer this to be linked **to platform development**. **Improved discoverability of the materials through library discovery systems and better metadata** are also referenced in five comments.

Following this, there is an **appeal for platform/hosting fees to be made more affordable**. Respondents are concerned that one-off purchases, often made with surplus budget, become another subscription that is difficult to pay for year-on-year. Overall, **reducing costs feature heavily as a theme** with calls for lower outright purchase costs, realistic and more reasonable price increases, and consideration given to discounts and negotiation. The data suggest that the **preferred agreement is for fees to be bundled with the one-off price** so that costs are not incurred on an ongoing basis, however five comments request **more flexibility** within purchasing options and another five request **capping or fixing** the hosting fees. **Better support for text and data mining (TDM)** also emerges as a theme, despite the low numbers of institutions who are currently engaging in this activity.

# Summary findings

The survey was produced for internal strategic purposes but we want to share some of the key findings

# One off purchasing expenditure

Finding

**56%** spent up to **£10,000** on one-off purchase costs averaged over the **last 5 years**

Finding

**16%** spent up to **100K** and **26%** spent over **100K** averaged over the **last 5 years**

# Platform charges (hosting fees)

Finding

**46%** spent up to **£5,000** on platform/hosting fees in **the last academic year**.

Finding

**One third** (33%) spent over **£15,000**, which represents a substantial amount of money



# Value for money

## Finding

On a scale of 1-10, where 1=poor value for money and 10=excellent value for money, **73% (51 institutions)** rate the value for money of their platform/hosting fees at **5 or below**, with no institutions rating at 10, and only one at 9

## Finding

Respondents have difficulty assessing value for money for platform/hosting fees, exacerbated by **a lack of consistency and transparency around how these fees are calculated**

## Finding

Some respondents assess value for money by evaluating platform **reliability, functionality, usability, and monitoring whether regular developments/updates are applied**

# The value of statistics

## Finding

**88% access usage statistics** for their collections and **90%** find it valuable to have access to such statistics

## Finding

Respondents use statistics to **inform collection development, evaluate return on investment, and to trigger potential engagement activities with faculties**

## Finding

Responders highlight that, for content that has been purchased outright, **it is difficult to justify the cancellation of platform/hosting fees, even if usage is low**

# Experience of purchasing DACs

## Finding

A range of approaches to platform/hosting fees are in use across publishers, with **charging by individual collection receiving the most responses**

## Finding

In terms of experience, **86%** indicate they always or sometimes have access to **clear and transparent information** before purchasing DACs

## Finding

**Once collections are purchased**, the ongoing **experience is less positive**; only 26% always or sometimes agree that platform/hosting fees take account of their institution's overall spend and holdings

## Finding

**Only 27%** indicate they are always or sometimes able to **negotiate fees with publishers**

# Member priorities and key principles

Respondents were asked to prioritise a number of principle statements to inform negotiations:

- **Price transparency** emerges as the number one priority for license agreements.
- While commenters accept that ongoing fees could be acceptable in some circumstances, the overall theme is that the agreements are unacceptable at present and **more flexibility in agreements is needed**.
- **COUNTER compliant statistics** are essential to evaluating the use of DACs with **90%** finding it valuable to have access to such statistics
- Ranked at number one for principles relating to the release of public domain materials is that these **should be released into the public domain, once license periods agreed between publishers and institutions end**.
- The main priority for **text and data mining (TDM)** is that content should be made available **in the institution's platform of choice**.
- Comments stress that **TDM should be an integral part** of purchasing a digital archive, and that **undermining TDM by treating it as an added extra is unacceptable**.
- **89% have not, or do not know** if they have conducted TDM on their collections but **the majority** of those that are conducting TDM **have experienced associated fees** for TDM activities.
- Comments suggest that charges are made **for hard drives, access to material outside of subscriptions, and for access to platforms**.



Analysis by Lisa Charnock  
Research analyst, product

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[customerservices@jisc.ac.uk](mailto:customerservices@jisc.ac.uk)

[jisc.ac.uk](http://jisc.ac.uk)

