SafeNet Survey

SafeNet is a Jisc-run project to develop the foundations of national archive infrastructure to host a UK collection of archived e-journals and clarify continuing access rights through use of an entitlement registry that will record subscription history. The intention is to simplify the route to articles when a current subscription is no longer in place and access via the publisher's platform is either unavailable or unaffordable. To find out more about the SafeNet project and read our blog, please visit http://safenet.blogs.edina.ac.uk/

In order to understand the post-cancellation access needs of its customers, in January Jisc Collections carried out a survey of its members. This report outline the results of that survey. 37 people completed an online questionnaire which was sent out on three mailing lists aimed at librarians. The detailed free text responses given to many of the questions will take longer to analyse, so this preliminary report is designed to give early indicative feedback to the community.

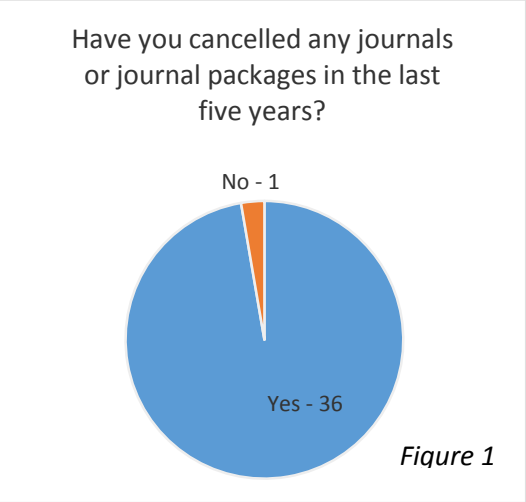

Figure 1

Responses

The first question (figure 1) was designed to clarify the extent of journal cancellations to make sure this is something which is effecting UK academic libraries, and the answer was a resounding 'yes' (97%).

A number of institutions – although not all – have existing mechanisms in place to manage post-cancellation access, and publishers often provide it on their own platforms. So the next question asked whether the current costs of continued access to cancelled journal content is reasonable. For most people cost appears not to be a significant issue (figure 2).

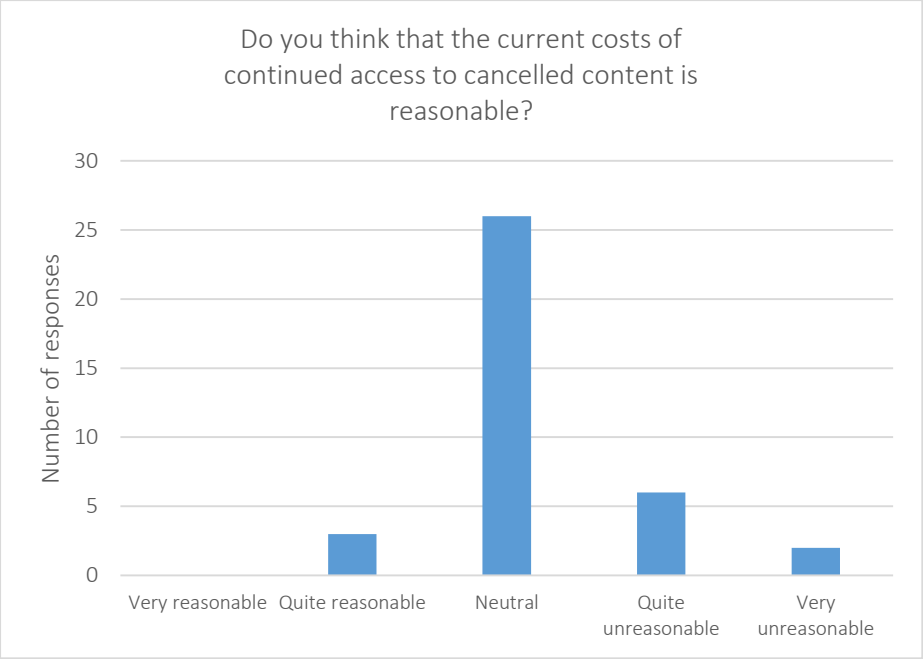

Figure 2

However, asking ‘how easy have you found the process of continued access to purchased content which you no longer subscribe to’ revealed that the difficulty of the process is slightly more of a concern than cost, with 43% of respondents stating that the process was ‘quite difficult’ or ‘very difficult’ (figure 3). There is marked variation between publishers regarding this point.

So far these responses align with Jisc previous understanding of the situation. Libraries are cancelling some journals, and there are existing processes and services which are not excessively onerous for librarians but could perhaps be improved. The following two questions highlight the real concern – the risk that access to journal content could be lost.

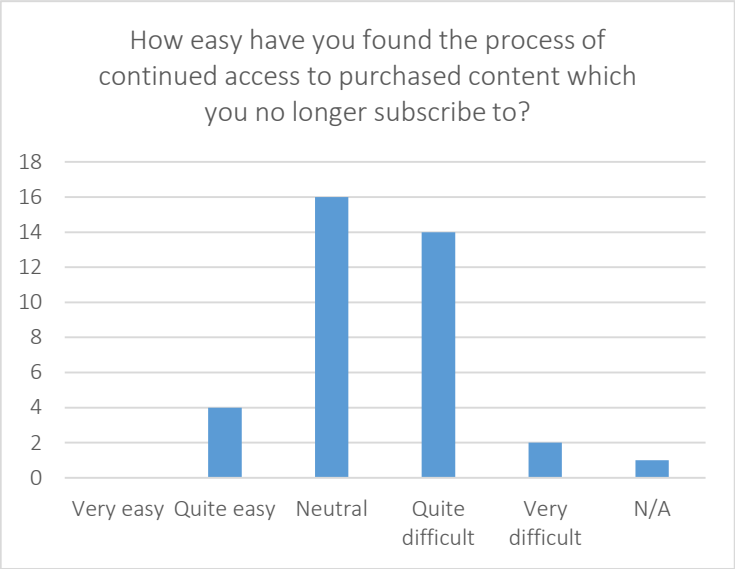

Figure 3

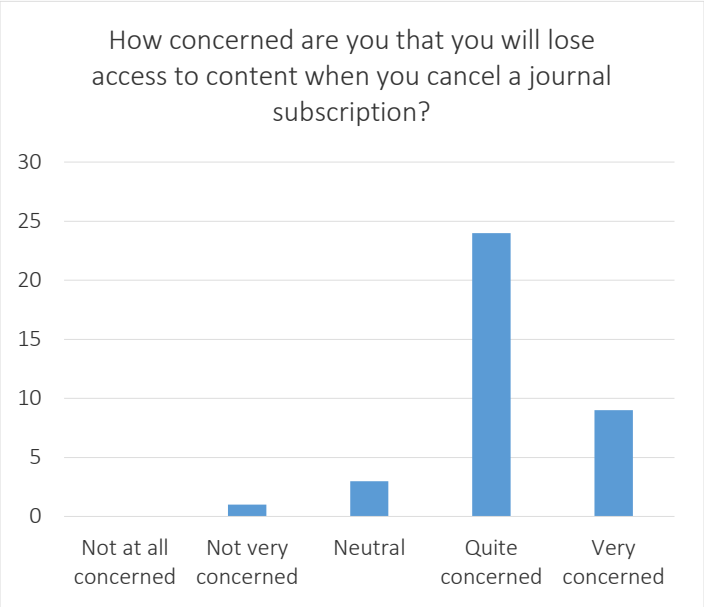

Figure 4

Figures 4 and 5 show the level of this concern. 89% of respondents said that they were ‘quite concerned’ or ‘very concerned’ that that they will lose access to content when they cancel a journal subscription. Post-cancellation terms have been included in Jisc Collections licenses for many years and there are several existing solutions to providing it. The concern demonstrated by respondents shows that there is still more work to be done to improve the stability of the situation.

The question in figure 5 is the one that was most important for the purposes of the SafeNet project: 'How useful would a UK managed post-cancellation access solution, consisting of an archive of journal content and a registry of entitlement information, be to your library?' 36 (97%) or respondents replied 'quite useful' or 'very useful', with 60% stating 'very useful' and one neutral response. This gives Jisc a clear mandate to continue pursuing the project and discussing terms of participation with publishers. The free-text question 'What improvements to managing post-cancellation access would make your life easier?' revealed discussion about, and support for, an entitlement registry.

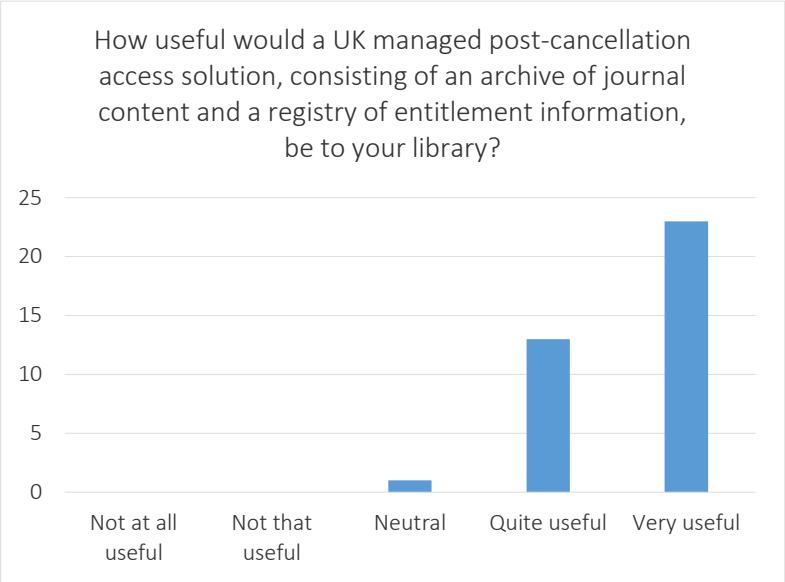

Figure 5

While the main focus of the survey – and the SafeNet project – is on post-cancellation access, we are additionally considering whether the service could provide access to journals in the event of temporary loss of access on the publisher's platform. Figure 6 shows that this is also a concern for librarians so Jisc will continue to explore the possibility of SafeNet facilitating temporary access.

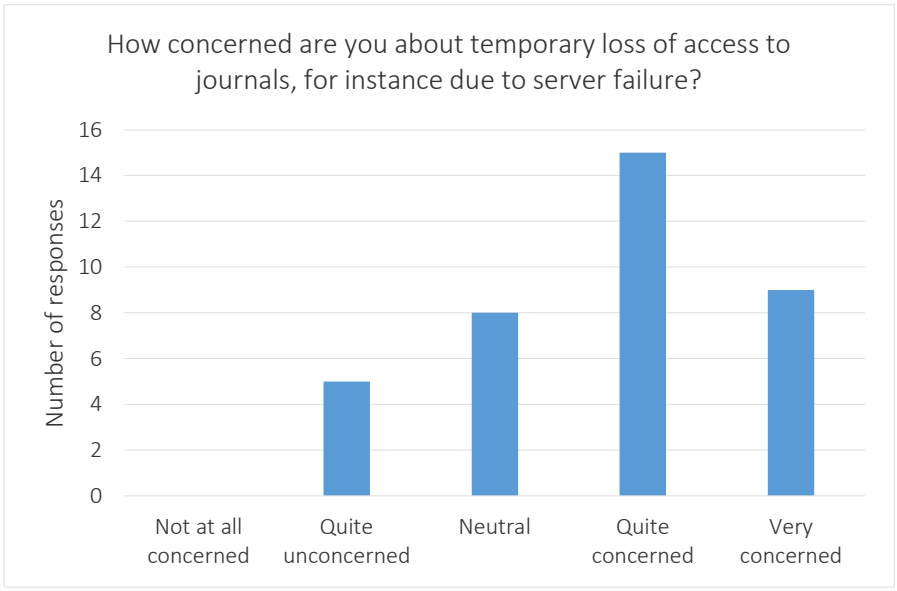

Figure 6

Next steps

The project will deliver a working service by July 2016. In the lead up to that time, Jisc will continue to consult with the library community as the project develops. The SafeNet blog will track the process and feel free to contact the project team at EDINA if you have any further questions.

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