

# **SFX Miscellaneous**

# **Free Ejournals Target**

Usage Survey among the SFX Community

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# SFX Miscellaneous Free Ejournals Target: Usage Survey among the SFX Community

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## Abstract

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In June 2014, the SFX® MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS target contained more than 24,000 portfolios of all kinds. The SFX Knowledge Base Advisory Board (KBAB) decided to carry out an international survey to get an overview of the usage that is done of this target by the SFX community and to precisely identify what could be done to improve it. The target is widely used among the community. However, many respondents complained about these top three problems: (1) Incorrect parse params (broken links); (2) Full texts actually not free; (3) Incorrect or missing thresholds.

## Context

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SFX<sup>®</sup> was the first OpenURL link resolver, and remains the one most widely used, having been adopted by over 2,400 libraries<sup>1</sup>. The OpenURL framework has its roots in the SFX-research conducted by Herbert Van de Sompel, Patrick Hochstenbach and colleagues at Ghent University (Belgium) from 1998 to 2000. In early 2000, Ex Libris Group<sup>2</sup> acquired the SFX server software from Ghent University. Ex Libris re-engineered the software and marketed it to libraries as an autonomous, reference linking service component that fits in the OpenURL framework<sup>3</sup>.

The OpenURL framework was introduced by the NISO (National Information Standards Organization) OpenURL Standard<sup>4</sup> which defines the OpenURL Version 1.0. The NISO OpenURL standard built on the work done by the researchers at Ghent University, standardized it, and developed a framework for defining metadata element sets so that the OpenURL could be used in a wide variety of domains beyond what had been defined in the original Ghent document. That version of the OpenURL has been now referred to as OpenURL 0.1. SFX supports both OpenURL 0.1 and the OpenURL 1.0 NISO standard.

The strength of SFX rests also on a huge knowledge base. “The SFX KnowledgeBase serves as a central data repository to support all SFX features and services and to furnish institutional availability information to external systems. Information from the SFX KnowledgeBase is the key to linking end users quickly and accurately to the material they need”<sup>5</sup>.

Basically, the SFX KnowledgeBase quality relies on the interaction of three agents:

1. The KnowledgeBase team collects, checks, enriches, and corrects data on behalf of the customers.
2. The publishers/vendors/aggregators provide the necessary materials to increase and improve the content of SFX KnowledgeBase.
3. The libraries whose staff (mostly local SFX administrators) participate in the knowledge base development by suggesting new content and reporting errors to the KnowledgeBase team (broken links, coverage problems...).

Librarians’ contributions can be reported to Ex Libris via the Salesforce Support Center, the “Send to EX Libris” link available for SFX customers via the SFX Admin or, since spring 2013, via

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<sup>1</sup> SFX – the OpenURL link resolver and much more, <http://www.exlibrisgroup.com/category/SFXOverview>. Retrieved 2014-12-15.

<sup>2</sup> Ex Libris Group, <http://www.exlibrisgroup.com>. Retrieved 2014-12-15.

<sup>3</sup> Van de Sompel, Herbert; Oren Beit-Arie (March 2001). "Open linking in the scholarly information environment using the OpenURL framework". *D-Lib Magazine* 7(3). doi:[10.1045/march2001-vandesompel](https://doi.org/10.1045/march2001-vandesompel). Retrieved 2014-12-15.

<sup>4</sup> The OpenURL Framework for Context-Sensitive Services (ANSI/NISO Z39.88-2004 (R2010)) [http://www.niso.org/apps/group\\_public/download.php/6640/The%20OpenURL%20Framework%20for%20Context-Sensitive%20Services.pdf](http://www.niso.org/apps/group_public/download.php/6640/The%20OpenURL%20Framework%20for%20Context-Sensitive%20Services.pdf). Retrieved 2014-12-15.

<sup>5</sup> SFX KnowledgeBase: at the heart of SFX, <http://www.exlibrisgroup.com/?catid={E95BFDD4-3D90-429D-BE04-277929E39997}>. Retrieved 2014-12-15.

the 'Contribute' button (applied with SFX minor release 4.5.0), also directly available in the SFX Admin. The 'Contribute' button enables libraries to actively share local data with the global SFX community. Libraries can disseminate local changes directly from the SFX Admin by clicking the new 'Contribute' button (visible in the 'View Object portfolio' window) for the 'Miscellaneous' targets, notably the MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS target which contains more than 24,000 object portfolios.

Maintaining the quality of a database as the SFX KnowledgeBase is a very difficult task, if not endless, in terms of quality of the metadata and of linking parameters (thresholds, parse params, etc.). Therefore, the International Group of Ex Libris Users (IGeLU)<sup>6</sup> and the Ex Libris Users of North America (ELUNA)<sup>7</sup> decided to create a joint group whose goal is to promote first class quality of the data stored in the SFX KnowledgeBase by reviewing the quality assurance policies and processes together with Ex Libris. The SFX Knowledge Base Advisory Board (KBAB<sup>8</sup>) was founded in 2013 as a result of discussions at the IGeLU 2012 Zurich Conference.

## Survey

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MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS is a very large target (more than 24,000 portfolios of all kinds) that was often mentioned in messages sent on the SFX international discussion list end of 2013 and early 2014. SFX administrators pointed out then some weaknesses of that catch-all target and complained about many errors (broken links, incorrect thresholds, not all contents are free...). In April 2014, KBAB members decided to analyze a random sample of the existing 24,236 portfolios and systematically checked all parse params of 484 portfolios (i.e. every 50th portfolio), that is to say 2% of the whole target. They discovered that 1 out of 5 parse params of the sample was not correct!<sup>9</sup>

In order to get a representative idea of the usage that is done by librarians of the MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS target and to precisely identify what could be done to improve it, KBAB decided to launch a survey among the SFX community. As it was an institutional survey, only one response per institution was expected. The survey contained 8 multiple-choice and open questions related to that specific target and was open from June 23 until July 16, 2014. The question list is available at the end of this report.

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<sup>6</sup> International Group of Ex Libris Users, <http://igelu.org>. Retrieved 2014-12-15.

<sup>7</sup> Ex Libris Users of North America, <http://el-una.org>. Retrieved 2014-12-15.

<sup>8</sup> Knowledge Base Advisory Board, <http://igelu.org/products/sfx/knowledge-base-advisory-board>. Retrieved 2014-12-15.

<sup>9</sup> Renaville, F., & Needleman, M. (2014, September 16). *SFX Knowledge Base Advisory Board (KBAB): goals and achievements after one year*. Paper presented at IGeLU 2014 Conference Oxford, Oxford, United Kingdom. <http://hdl.handle.net/2268/171986>. Retrieved 2014-12-15.

## Analysis

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The survey received 122 responses from 18 countries: Australia (5), Belgium (3), Brazil (2), Canada (3), Denmark (2), France (7), Germany (6), Israel (4), Italy (2), Netherlands (3), New Zealand (1), Norway (2), Portugal (1), Spain (2), Sweden (3), Switzerland (3), United Kingdom (11), United States (62).

### Question 1:

#### ***Do you use the MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS target?***

From the 122 respondents, 114 (93.4%) use the target, only 8 (6.6%) do not. The reasons put forward for not using it are linked to the quality of the database and to the error rate that appeared to be very high:

- Broken links (2)
- Incorrect thresholds (3)
- Journals offered articles for purchase (2)
- Many journals are not scholarly journals, have a lot of advertisements (2)
- Quality of the objects' metadata (languages, publishers, ISSN) (1)

Moreover, one respondent explained they have hardly enough “staff or time to fully maintain the resources that [they] actually pay for” and that free electronic resources, especially if their quality is not appropriate, have less priority. Another respondent assured they would use the MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS target:

- if local updating of portfolios could more systematically be used to contribute to improve the Central KnowledgeBase (CKB) quality (for example with a popup invitation to use the ‘Contribute’ button every time thresholds or parse params have been locally updated);
- if languages, publishers and ISSN could locally be updated;
- if portfolios (especially thresholds and parse params) were more systematically checked;
- if scholarly journals could be set apart from non-academic journals.

Two respondents acknowledged they previously activated that target, but deactivated it later for quality reasons and because “libraries received complaints from their users”.

Those who answered No to this first question were brought to Q8, Q2-Q7 being unavailable to them.

## Question 2:

### ***Do you activate all of the object portfolios in the target or only selectively?***

From the 114 users of the target, 48 respondents (42.1%) activate all the object portfolios, 66 (57.9%) activate only a selection.

The most frequent reasons for ALL activation include:

- Not enough staff to go through the whole target and check each portfolio (19)
- Want to provide as many (free) resources to users as possible (10)
- Rely on CKB quality and presume that free full-text is available for all titles (4)
- Request by specialist/public services librarians (2)

In 8 cases, the respondents explained they activate all portfolios but then deactivate individual titles where problems are reported by users or other librarians. In most comments, respondents specify that the problems are then reported to Ex Libris.

The reasons for selective activation are varied and include:

- Only activate titles that are requested or of interest to the users (36)
- Links are too often broken (18)
- Titles are not really free or Open Access (10)
- Duplicates with other preferred targets like DOAJ or HIGHWIRE\_PRESS\_FREE (8)
- Incorrect thresholds (4)

Of the 36 respondents who activate portfolios on the basis of what could be of interest to their users, several point out that the target contains a lot of uninteresting titles and low quality material; three focus on the language variety as annoyance source (English-only titles are preferred); one says that “target is not updated often enough to be reliably accurate” without providing any additional detail.

Most of the reasons that explain why libraries do selective activation are the same as those that are put forward for not using MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS at all.

## Question 3:

### ***Do you set auto-activate on for this target?***

From the 114 users of the target, 56 respondents (49.1%) have set auto-active on for MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS, 58 (50.9%) have not.

From the 58 who do not use the auto-activate function, 24 (41.4%) point out it is important to them to manually select and check any title available to their end users (“Because we feel that we would have to test each link individually; there is little credibility”, “We do not want to add titles we do not know anything about”, “Too much noise for 'All portfolios'”, “Very much of them are inappropriate for us”).

Seven of them (12.4%) complain that titles are not always free. This is rather surprising since Auto-activate is intended to automatically activate newly added portfolios with the weekly CKB updates. One would rather expect that new portfolios added by Ex Libris are correct and provide accurate information that has normally been checked very recently. Therefore, parse params, thresholds and the free nature of the new portfolios are expected to match the reality. That complaint about the fact that titles are not always free in MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS, even in the case of newly added portfolios, indicates a measure of distrust of CKB updates.

#### Question 4:

##### ***Do you add local object portfolios to this target?***

From the 114 users of the target, 36 respondents (31.6%) say they never add any local object portfolio to the MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS target, 28 (24.6%) rarely do, 38 (33.3%) sometimes add some portfolios, and 12 (10.5%) often do.

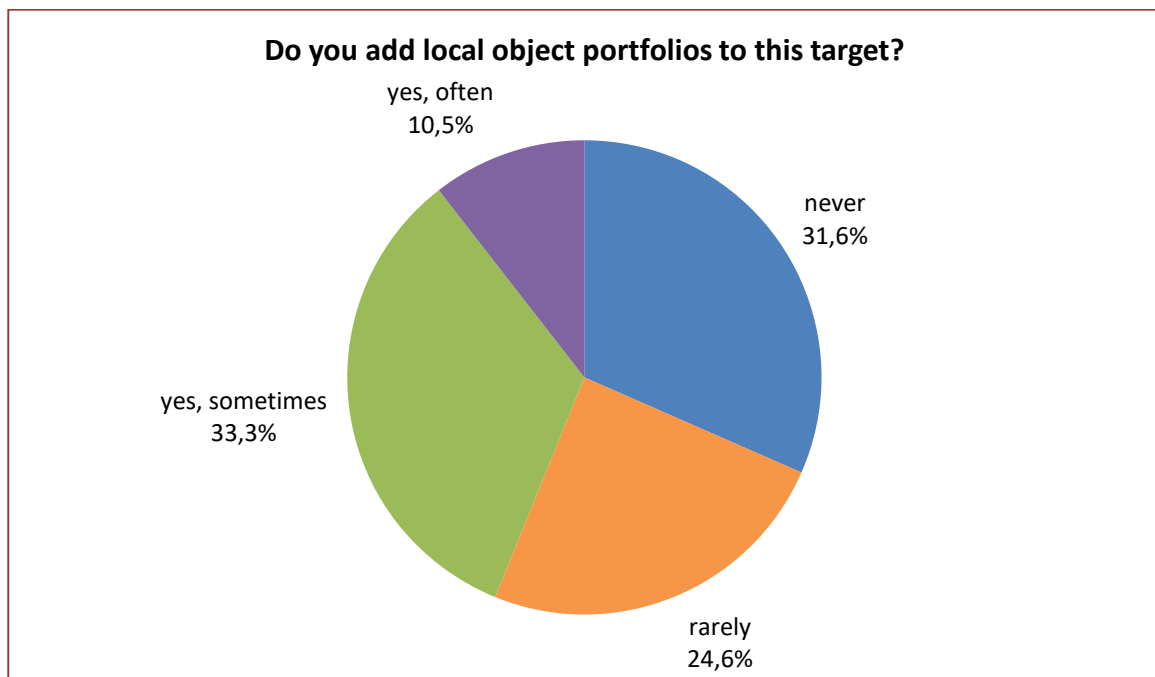


Chart 1

The 50 respondents who answered YES were asked a complementary question related to their involvement in the growth of the CKB:

##### ***If yes, do you contribute? Do you request Ex Libris to add them to the CKB?***

Of the 12 who said they often add local portfolios, 4 respondents (33.3%) said that they never request Ex Libris to add them in the CKB, 3 (25.0%) said they rarely ask for it, 2 (16.7%) sometimes and 3 (25.0%) often. Thus in this survey sample, more than the half of those who (very) actively create local portfolios rarely or never request Ex Libris to add them in the CKB.

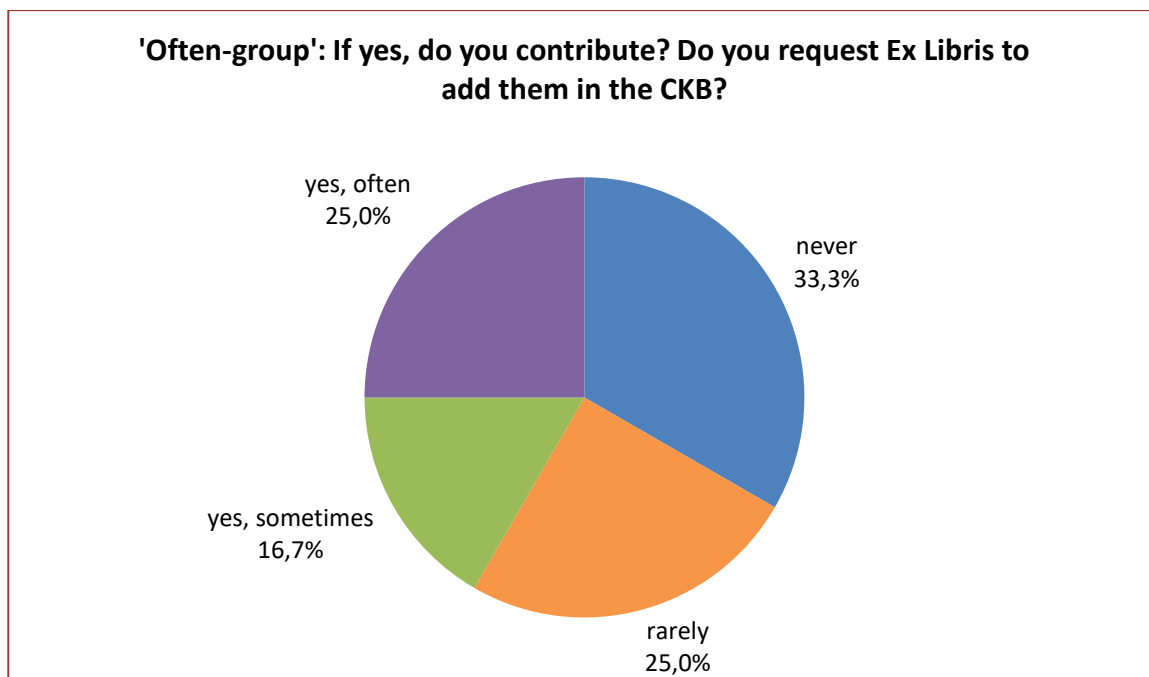


Chart 2

Of the 38 who said they sometimes add local portfolios, one respondent (2.6%) said that he/she never requests Ex Libris to add them in the CKB, 12 (31.6%) said they rarely ask for it, 12 (31.6%) sometimes and 13 (34.2%) often. In other words, more than two thirds of those who sometimes locally create portfolios take the trouble to share the information with Ex Libris and to contribute to the growth of the target.

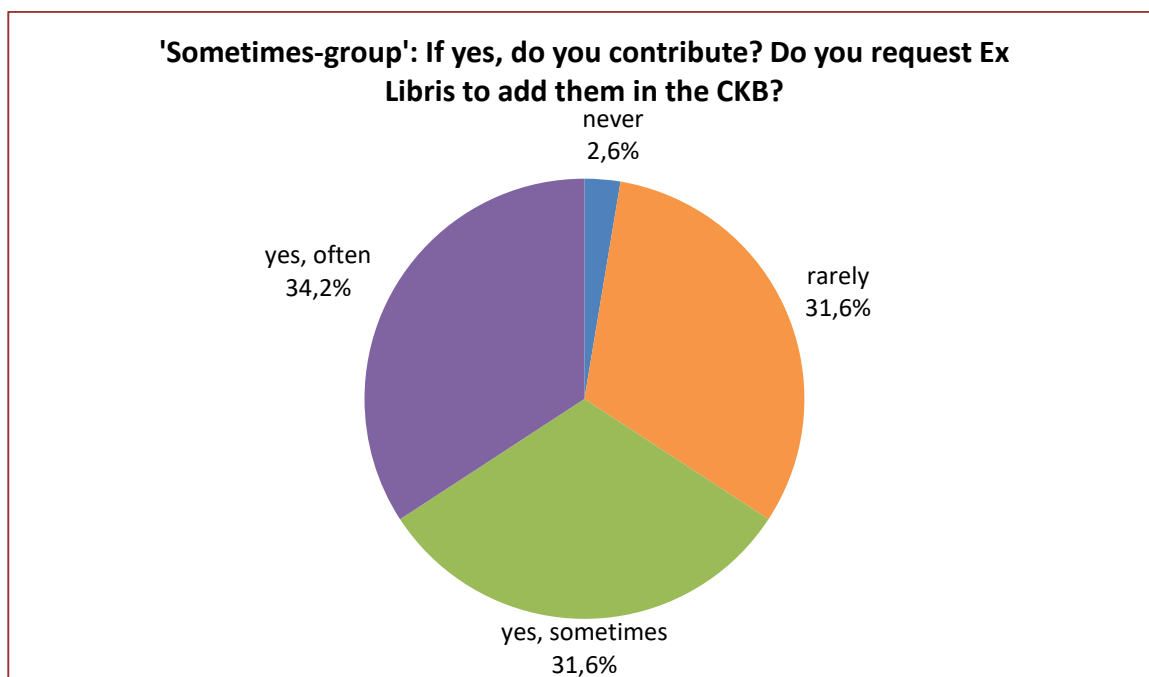


Chart 3



From those responses, it appears that those who are the most active in contacting Ex Libris to get local objects added as global objects in the CKB are those who also create fewer local portfolios. Those who create more local portfolios, certainly considering as a necessity to improve their own KB, are less inclined to contribute to the CKB (lack of time? Impression it would not fit with other users' need?).

The number of responses (50) is certainly too low to draw any clear and definite conclusion, but the findings that the more active one is locally the less active one is globally would certainly need to be examined in more detail.

### Question 5:

#### ***Do you locally correct thresholds or parse params of any of the portfolios in this target?***

Of the 114 users of the target, 11 respondents (9.6%) answered they never locally correct thresholds or parse params of any of the MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS portfolios, 32 (28.1%) rarely do, 47 (41.2%) sometimes locally correct thresholds or parse params, and 24 (21.1%) often do. So, 103 respondents (90.4%) feel the need to varying degrees to make up for the errors or lack of precision within the MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS target.

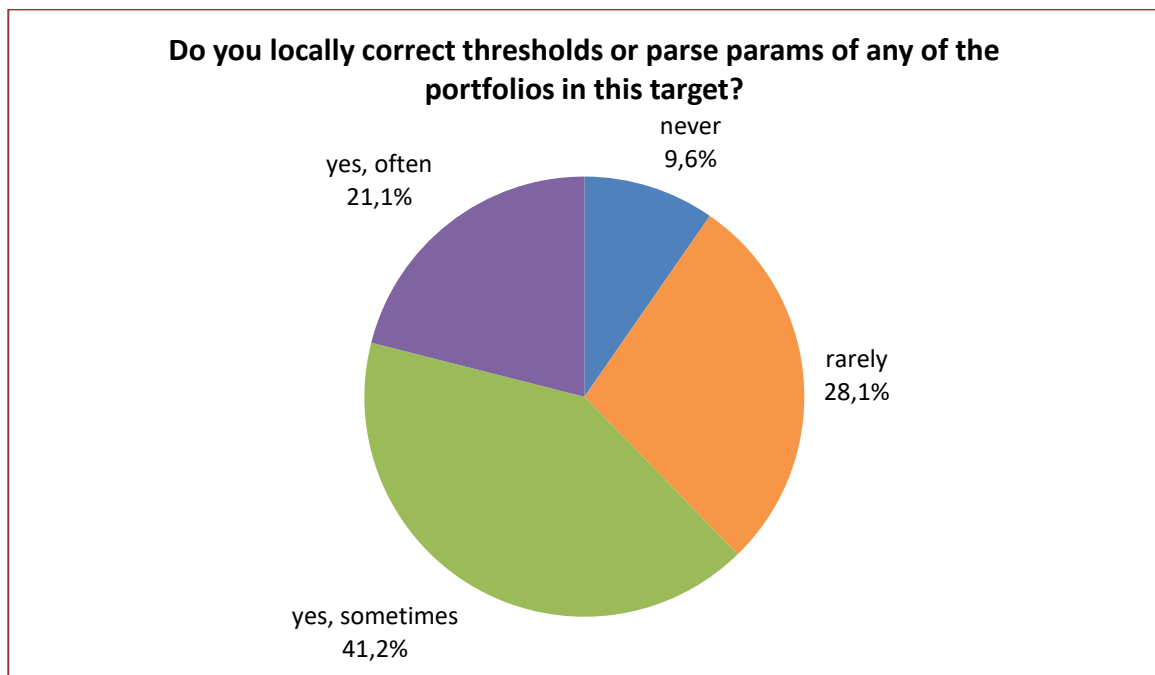


Chart 4

The 71 respondents who answered “Yes, sometimes” or “Yes, often” were asked a complementary question related to their involvement in the quality of the CKB:

***If yes, do you contribute? Do you request Ex Libris to correct them in the CKB?***

Of the 24 who said they often locally correct thresholds or parse params within the target, 6 respondents (25.0%) said that they never request Ex Libris to correct the portfolios, 7 (29.2%) said they rarely ask for it, 4 (16.7%) sometimes and 7 (29.2%) often.

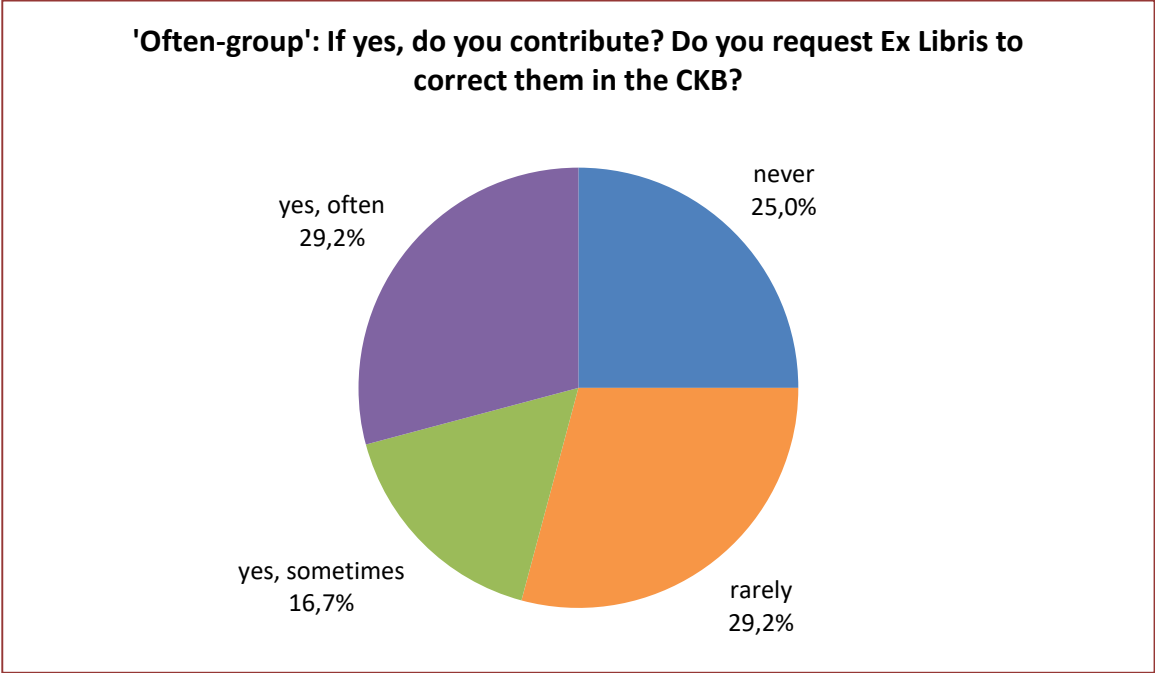


Chart 5

Less than the half of those who are very active in locally correcting portfolios in their instance take the time to contribute and to inform Ex Libris in order to improve the quality of the CKB.

Of the 47 who said they sometimes locally correct thresholds or parse params, 5 respondents (10.6%) said that they never request Ex Libris to correct the portfolios, 10 (21.3%) said they rarely ask for it, 21 (44.7%) sometimes and 11 (23.4%) often.

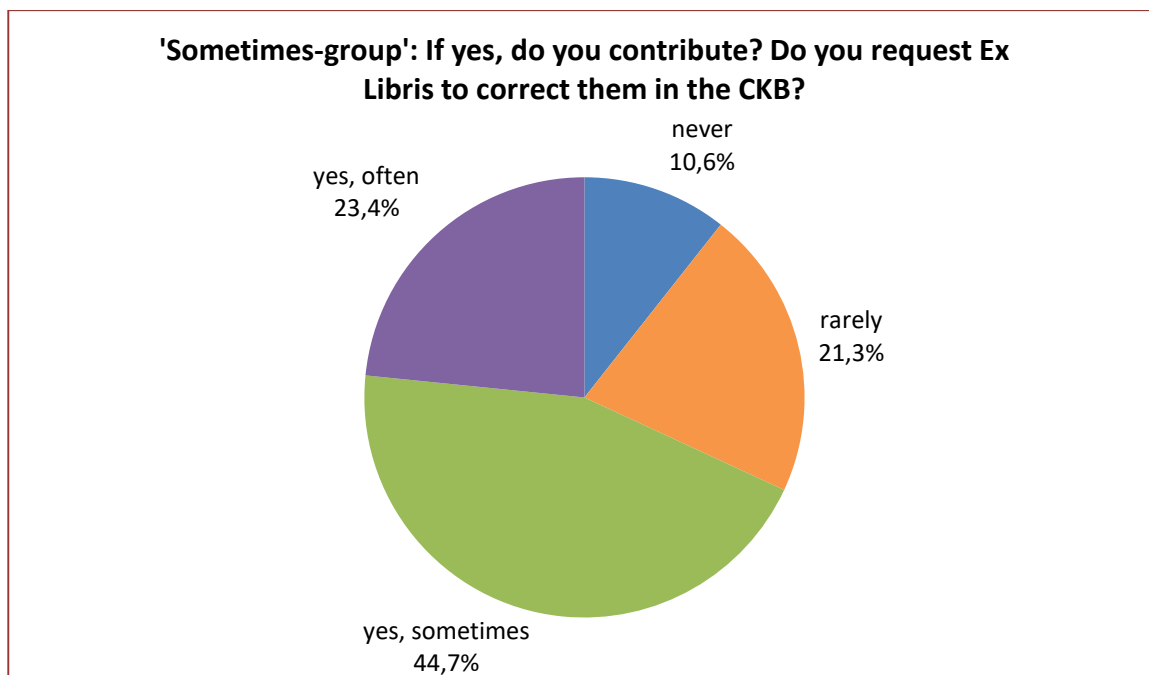


Chart 6

Here again, it appears that those who are less active in locally correcting MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS portfolios are much more inclined to contribute and to improve the general quality of the CKB.

The 28 respondents who answered “Never” or “Rarely” to the additional question “*If yes, do you contribute? Do you request Ex Libris to correct them in the CKB?*” were also asked to explain why they do not or rarely contribute:

***If rarely or never, please explain why.***

Not everyone answered this question; however, two main reasons come up:

- 10 respondents pointed out it would take them too much time to contribute;
- 7 admitted they did not know it is possible or do not know how to configure the Contribute functionality.

Finally, one said it is useless; another, that work should be achieved by the Ex Libris teams.

“No time”-feedbacks:

1. “It is an extra step to click on another button and open a new window.”
2. “It takes time to report them and there is a good chance that the information will have changed by the time the change is implemented. I also already spend enough time reporting other issues (some related to SFX, some not) to vendors.”
3. “No time to do it.”
4. “I find the process cumbersome to contribute, and sometimes Ex Libris takes a very long time to incorporate. It doesn't seem worthwhile.”

5. "I have not updated/configured my instance to be able to contribute (yet) and in the past asking EL to correct the data in this target generally led to them saying they did not manually correct this target but relied on feeds only and so it was a waste of my time."
6. "Because corrections seem to never show up in the KB, it is a waste of my time."
7. "No time."
8. "Low priority, large amount of work."
9. "It's just another thing to do; Ex Libris should do this."
10. "It's another action, logging into Salesforce, raising a query. I already have too many changes on the KB."

"Do not know"-feedbacks:

1. "Because we never did set SFX up to automatically report to Ex Libris."
2. "The way to do this has never been clearly communicated to me."
3. "Not sure how it would work, with our consortium set-up. Have had little to no training in use of SFX."
4. "'Send to Ex Libris' button didn't work when last tried."
5. "I'm quite new to SFX and did not know you could do this."
6. "Because we didn't realize we could."
7. "Since the new Salesforce system we can't rapport directly from our SFX instance - unfortunately. Our IT-department hasn't prioritized this tack."

From these comments, it appears that Ex Libris should certainly be advised to (again) communicate about the 'Contribute' button and to find ways to make it work more quickly and with as little configuration as possible.

**Question 6:**

***What would you like to see happen with this target? What could Ex Libris do, in your opinion, to improve this target?***

To answer this question, five statements were proposed to the respondents. They were asked to grade each of them from #1(= Least Desirable) to #5 (= Very Desirable), with #3 being the most neutral position. More precisely, the first statement was related to what Ex Libris could do to improve the target as it is now. The second and third were suggestions related to the future of the target (what could happen to it). The fourth and fifth statements concerned the 'Contribute' button:

1. Checking the portfolios (thresholds and parse params) more systematically?
2. Creating a new specific MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_SCHOLARLY\_EJOURNALS for academic journals only? All the other journals would then stay in MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS.

3. Deleting from MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS all portfolios which already exist in another FREE or OPEN\_ACCESS target?
4. Promoting the use of 'Contribute' button?
5. Getting a popup invitation to use the 'Contribute' button every time I have locally updated a threshold or a parse param?

### 6.1 Checking the portfolios (thresholds and parse params) more systematically?

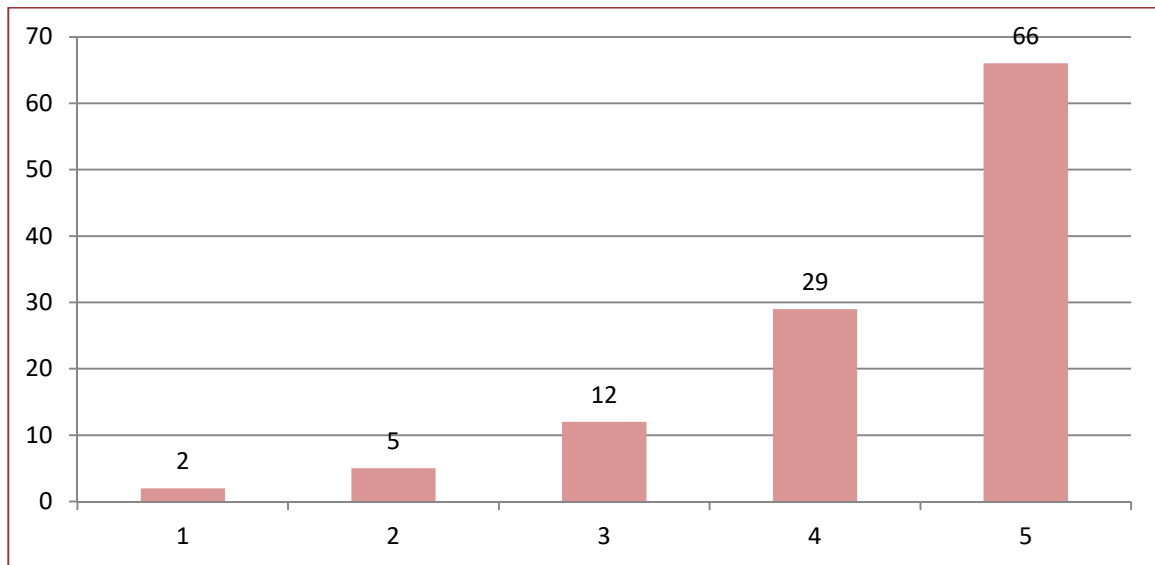


Chart 7

Of the 114 respondents, 95 (83.3%) think that Ex Libris should pay more attention to checking the portfolios of the target more systematically. Very few, only 7 (6.1%) consider it is not a priority. However, some respondents have doubts about how quality control can practically be maintained for more than 24,000 records and suggest a closer collaboration with clients:

“Checking portfolio thresholds and parse params would be great but unrealistic. This should be done centrally but I do not expect Ex Libris to do it. (Could this be a cooperative venture among volunteer libraries?) A smaller target that is well maintained is a more realistic and better alternative. Ex Libris already does a good job of promoting use of the Contribute button, catching me when I forget.”

**6.2 Creating a new specific MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_SCHOLARLY\_EJOURNALS for academic journals only? All the other journals would then stay in MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS.**

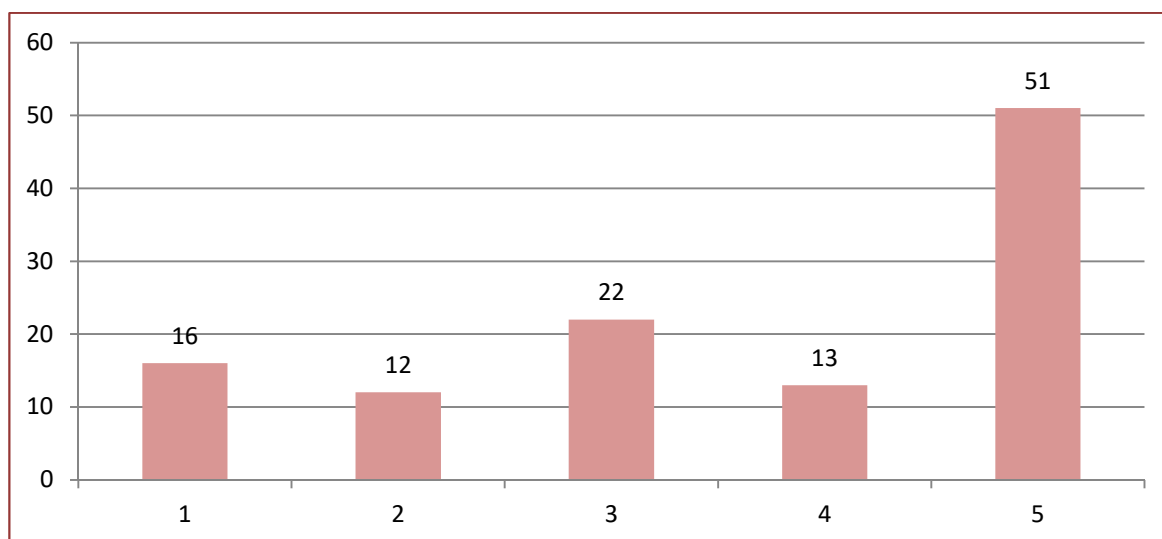


Chart 8

Globally, 64 respondents (56.1%) do think it would be a good idea to take scholarly journals out of the MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS and to create a new specific MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_SCHOLARLY\_EJOURNALS for academic journals only, while 28 (24,6%) do not agree.

However, if such a new target is created, one has to define how the scholarly nature of an object would be established, the peer-reviewed criterion only being inadequate because too restrictive, especially for free journals. This would certainly not be an easy task.

Here again, some respondents also point out that Ex Libris would certainly need the collaboration of libraries to create the target, if not thematic subdivisions like MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_SCHOLARLY\_EJOURNALS\_BUSINESS, MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_SCHOLARLY\_EJOURNALS\_MEDICINE...

For another, a smaller, more focused target may make things easier to maintain: "If Ex Libris wants to prioritize maintenance for a smaller target, then OPEN\_ACCESS\_SCHOLARLY\_EJOURNALS may be a useful target to establish".

Finally, a user finds there is a real opportunity for information literacy in separating scholarly journals from the other ones: "Separating out the scholarly would help me show my students more easily what the differences are between scholarly and non and enable them to be more confident about the choices they make independently".

**6.3 Deleting from MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS all portfolios which already exist in another FREE or OPEN\_ACCESS target?**

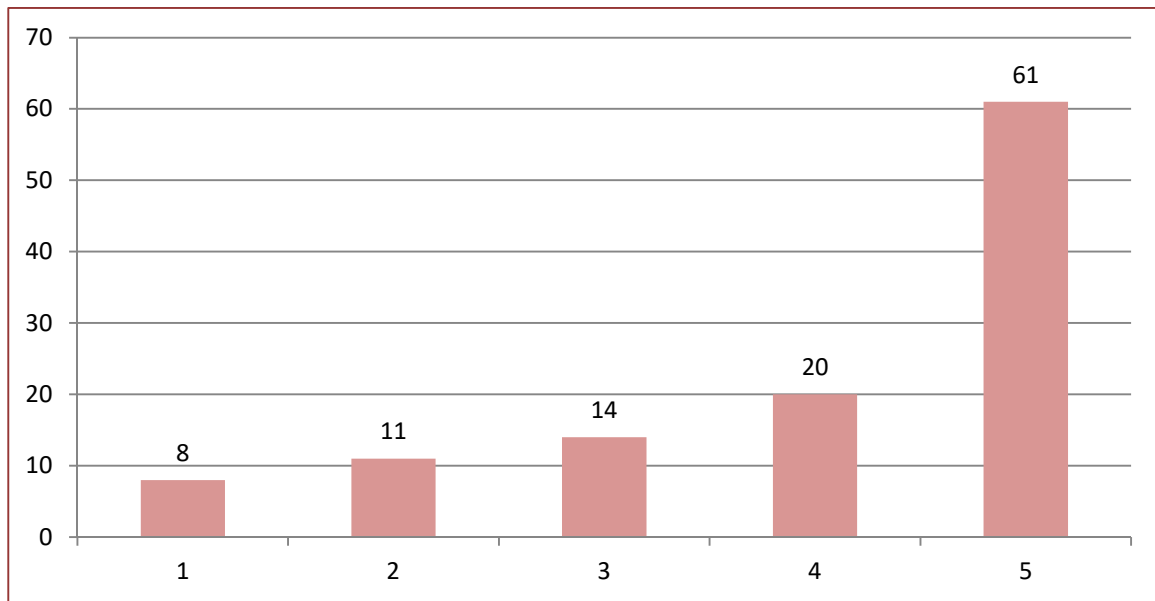


Chart 9

A majority of 81 respondents (71.1%) like the idea of "de-duplicating" the target from other existing free or Open Access targets, so that MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS has only unique entries.

A user suggests that deleting an object portfolio from MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS is controversial, because one given institution may have only enabled this target, and explains that to hide a portfolio from this target in the SFX menu, one can simply add a new display logic rule like "if any getFullTxt available > do not show MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS". However, using logic rules in order to hide MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS from the SFX menu may also be a drastic solution with very little flexibility (if any).

#### 6.4 Promoting the use of 'Contribute' button?

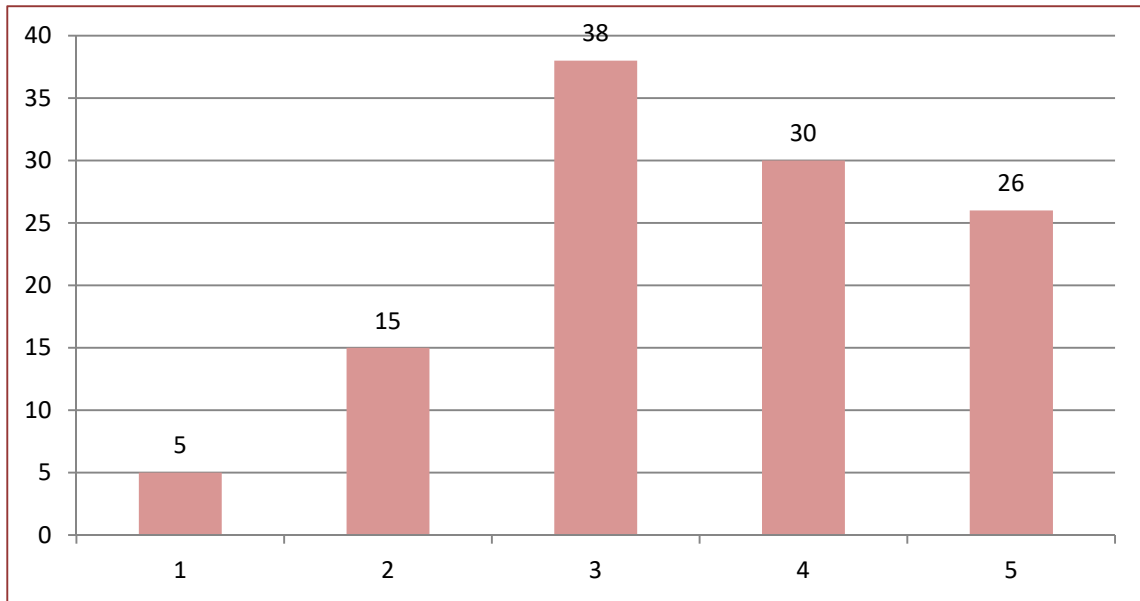


Chart 10

Less than the half of the respondents (49.1%) think that the use of the 'Contribute' button should be promoted among the SFX community, one third of the respondents have no real opinion, and 20 (17.5%) are rather against that idea.

#### 6.5 Getting a popup invitation to use the 'Contribute' button every time I have locally updated a threshold or a parse param?

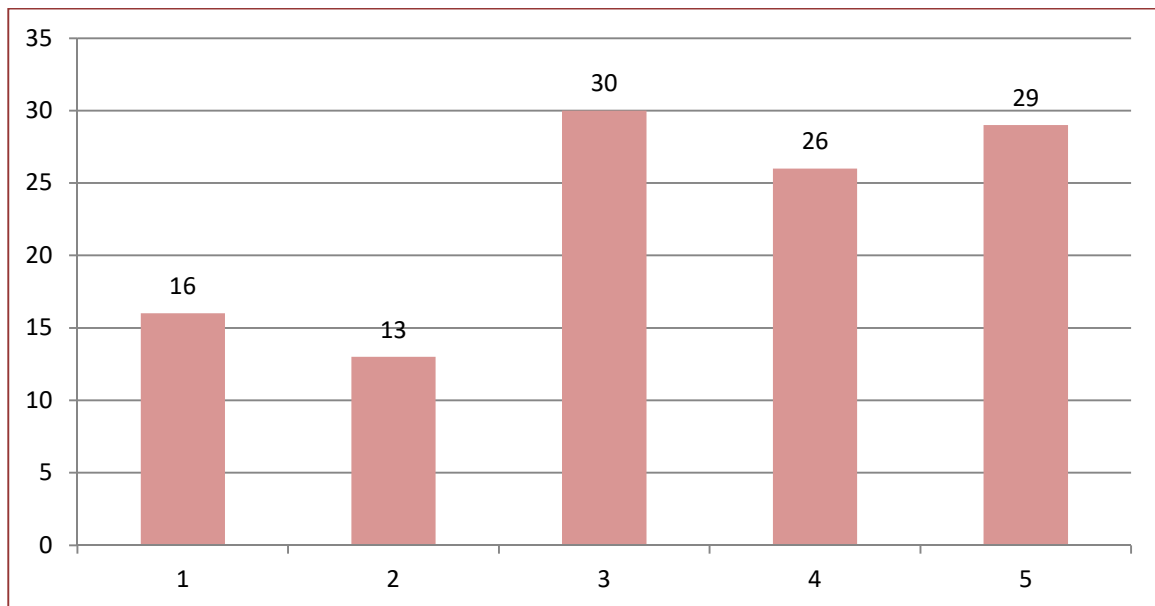


Chart 11



Only 55 users (48.2%) think that getting a popup invitation to use the 'Contribute' button would be an improvement, while 29 (25.4%) are against it. Of the five statements, this is the one with the most people against it. From the comments, it appears that getting a popup is considered as a too invasive solution:

- "I think a popup is too invasive, but it would be good to make it easier for sites to Contribute."
- "The promotion for the Contribute button is unnerving already. [...]. An additional popup would be further unnerving."
- "And, if the Contribute button is somehow promoted (NOT with a popup, because those interfere with workflow), that would be a great community asset."

The high percentage of indecisive users for questions 6.4 and 6.5 can also be compared with the relative high number of users who admitted they rarely or never contribute because they do not know it is possible or do not know how to configure the 'Contribute' functionality (7 out of 28 who rarely or never contribute).

Among the other comments, some users also proposed to group free journals by languages (2), by domains (such as .gov) and by countries.

Three respondents (from the USA) spontaneously suggested in Q2 and Q6 to create specific targets by language. According to them, grouping journals by language (at least for the main ones) in separate targets would probably be helpful to SFX administrators. Moreover, it would certainly be easier to create than by the scholarly nature of the titles. However, this proposal has not been submitted to the SFX community through the survey, and making such separate targets relies also heavily on the metadata quality of the objects themselves.

### **Question 7:**

***What kinds of particular problems do you have with this target? Please try and classify them from largest to least important problem.***

The dissatisfaction with this target expressed by many respondents is a reaction to what may be summed up as its unreliability, as evidenced in a number of specific problems. Of the 114 users of the target, 84 respondents (73.7%) have left a comment on this open question. Some answers only focus on one or two problems while others point out up to five. Three issues come up clearly and are very often classified in the top level:

1. Incorrect parse params, broken links – mentioned by 52 respondents (61.9%)
2. Full texts actually not free (subscription required, hybrid journal) – mentioned by 35 respondents (41.7%)
3. Incorrect or missing thresholds – mentioned by 32 respondents (38.1%)

Among the other problems, eight have been mentioned by at least 2 respondents:

1. Journal also available in other Open Access or free targets (9)
2. Linking only available on journal level, not article (5)
3. Target is too big, making it difficult to maintain by Ex Libris and the clients (4)
4. Too many languages (4)
5. Too many mixed subjects, disciplines (4)
6. Poor quality of the KB object metadata (4)
7. Non-academic journals (3)
8. Duplicates within the target (2)

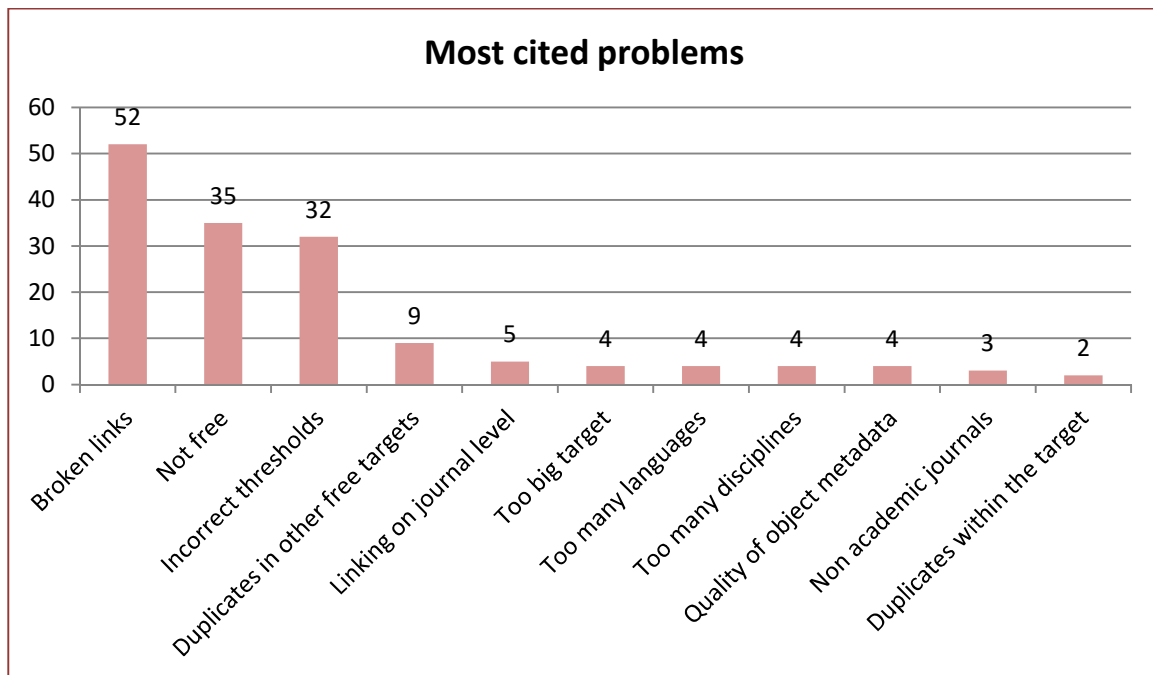


Chart 12

There is a general view that the target is not maintained well enough by Ex Libris, and perhaps is not a top priority, leading to the problems experienced – in addition to problems that are the responsibility of the journals’ publishers.

One respondent commented: “With users being accustomed to use of Google and Google Scholar (often as first choice source) they may find free material on their own. Is this target atavistic?” Another says the target as it is gives satisfaction: “I am glad this target exists and I do use it. I do not think anything needs to change.”

One suggestion for dealing with some of the target’s problems (too big to be correctly maintained) is to break it up by creating specific Open Access targets for topics or individual publishers, e.g. OXFORD OPEN, THIEME OPEN.

One respondent reported having “found more quality control problems since users can Contribute, e.g. URL doesn't work on a newly added OP”. The broken-link problem for newly added portfolios has also been pointed out by another user.

Finally, three respondents made software suggestions that could improve the target usage:

- Certainly considering that “Send to Ex Libris” functionality is not enough in Alma, a user would like to have the ‘Contribute’ button in Ex Libris next generation LMS as well: “Currently there is no Contribute functionality adopted in Alma. This would also be very desirable. So that all Ex Libris customers have the same options.”
- Used sources: “I do not know what the source is for these free portfolios but I feel like once a portfolio is created there isn't any follow up. It's nice to be provided with free options, but if they are going to be provided they should be monitored and updated. When this survey is complete and the results hopefully shared, maybe you could also include the 'source/s' for these portfolios if you know.”
- Possibility of integration with other systems (i.e. a process for requesting ISSNs, to create CONSER cataloging records).

One of the most interesting developments that has been occurring in recent years and one that will have great impact on link resolvers like SFX is the growth of hybrid journals. Hybrid journals contain both licensed and open access content. Since the SFX Knowledgebase only maintains information at the journal level (and not at the article level) being able to provide free access to the open access articles in a hybrid journal while maintaining authenticated access to the other material in the journal poses some interesting challenges that will need to be dealt with, especially as the number of hybrid journals continues to increase.

A related challenge is the desire of link resolver customers to have their link resolver provide access to other content types besides the full text of journal articles that they currently deal with. Resolvers are beginning to deal with Ebooks (although they pose some interesting problems) but customers are beginning to want their resolvers to provide access to other content type like audio, video, multimedia, and the like. The OpenURL framework introduced by the NISO standard provides the mechanism for describing such content in an OpenURL. However, how access to that content will be made available in link resolvers like SFX will be an interesting challenge.

## **Question 8:**

### ***Other comments you might have about MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS.***

This last question was open to every respondent; even those who answered No to the first question could leave a final comment. Most of the 30 comments echo issues raised in Question 7 regarding the target:

- Unreliability
- Redundant portfolios (with other free targets)
- Difficult to manage
- Poor maintenance and questionable commitment on the part of Ex Libris

- Too large
- Lack of clarity regarding criteria for inclusion
- Suspicions regarding some Open Access/free titles
- Patrons are confused and inconvenienced by problematic aspects of the target, requiring explanations and caution from the library, such as disclaimers in the user interface

At the same time, it is seen as potentially valuable if efforts could be made to address the drawbacks and correct progressively some of them. It has the merits of introducing users to many journals that were hitherto unknown to them and making accessible journals in local languages not covered by other targets. It seems that precisely because of the collection's great potential, there is frustration and disappointment due to its various problems. In a sense, the strength of MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS is also its weakness.

## Conclusions

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Due to the dynamic nature of online journals and many other factors, maintaining the KnowledgeBase for SFX or any other OpenURL link resolver has been and will be a challenge. SFX MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS target is particularly challenging, as found by the SFX Knowledge Base Advisory Board (KBAB), with the error rate in parse params as high as 20%. On the other hand, as the number of free (or Open Access) journals in the world is exploding, information professionals and the information industry cannot afford to ignore them.

The survey done by KBAB in 2014 offered an overview how the SFX MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS target is used by libraries across the world. The survey found that 93.4% respondents use the target, but most (57.9%) use it selectively. 50.9% do not use the SFX "auto-activate" function for this target, meaning that these libraries do not want to automatically accept journals added to this collection by SFX. As evidence that most librarians not only use this free journals target on SFX but also actively make contributions to the target, 68.4% respondents have added free journals (at least locally), and 90.4% corrected errors in coverage years and links in this target in one way or another. 83.3% respondents think that Ex Libris should check the portfolios of this target more systematically. The majority of respondents like the ideas of re-organizing and re-arranging the journals in the target by scholarly/academic nature and by "de-duplicating" the target from other free journal targets. A few respondents wrote suggestions that journals in this target be re-grouped by language.

When asked to list the biggest problems of this target, respondents gave these top three problems: (1) Incorrect parse params (broken links); (2) Full texts actually not free (subscription required, hybrid journal); (3) Incorrect or missing thresholds. In summary, libraries would like to use this SFX free journals target, but found that it has more problems than other targets.

Some potential solutions were also discussed by the respondents of this survey. We hope Ex Libris will take the respondents' comments and suggestions into account in order to improve that widely used target.

*December 2014*

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## Annex

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The survey was composed of 8 questions related to the MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS target:

1. Do you use the MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS target?

- Yes
- No

If not, please explain why not.

2. Do you **activate all of the object portfolios** in the target or only selectively?

- All portfolios
- Only a selection

Please explain why.

3. Do you set **auto-activate** on for this target?

- Yes
- No

If not, why not?

4. Do you **add local** object portfolios to this target?

- Yes, often
- Yes, sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

If yes, do you contribute? Do you request Ex Libris to **add** them to the CKB?

- Yes, often
- Yes, sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

5. Do you **locally correct** thresholds or parse params of any of the portfolios in this target?

- Yes, often
- Yes, sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

If yes, do you contribute? Do you request Ex Libris to **correct** them in the CKB?

If rarely or never, please explain why.

6. What would you like to see happen with this target? What could Ex Libris do, in your opinion, **to improve this target?**

Legend: 1 = Least Desirable; 5 = Very Desirable

- Checking the portfolios (thresholds and parse params) more systematically?
- Creating a new specific MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_SCHOLARLY\_EJOURNALS for academic journals only?

All the other journals would then stay in MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS.

- Deleting from MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS all portfolios which already exist in another FREE or OPEN\_ACCESS target?
- Promoting the use of 'Contribute' button?
- Getting a popup invitation to use the 'Contribute' button every time I have locally updated a threshold or a parse param?

7. What kinds of **particular problems** do you have with this target? Please try and classify them from largest to least important problem.

8. Other comments you might have about MISCELLANEOUS\_FREE\_EJOURNALS.