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Zetoc usage and attitude survey: 2019 Survey Findings

5 key takeaways

1. **Academic researchers and lecturers are the primary users of Zetoc**, with recommendations from librarians as the main route to discovery.

2. **Alerts and current awareness are the primary use cases**, and are valued highly. Alerts mean that time poor academics and researchers are able to stay up to date with new research in a low effort way.

3. **Satisfaction and recommendation scores are high**, with a 90% satisfaction rating overall, and +52 Net Promotor Score. Satisfaction is driven by the convenience of having publication alerts delivered directly to them and the ease of setting up the alerts. Dissatisfaction is driven by difficulties with the user interface, including linking through to full text and delays to alerts following publication.

4. **The broad coverage is valued**, and respondents like the range of subjects and publishers indexed. However, there are **concerns about the loss of key publications in recent years**, and the limited journals for some subject areas, e.g. nursing. Zetoc is populated daily with data received from the British Library, who index and own the data once received from the publishers. While coverage may be controlled by the British Library, improved communication around this area may help to alleviate concerns.

5. **Ease of use scores are less positive**. Although most find Zetoc easy to set up, there are comments around the difficulties linking though to full text, dated functionality and design, and issues with some of the data including incomplete table of contents for some alerts (this is due to the fact that alerts are sent instantly as the data is received from the BL rather than awaiting all records for an issue). As Zetoc is an abstract and indexing database, full text links are dependent upon the subscriptions of individual institutions but, again, improved communication could help clarify how to access articles. Additionally, as recommended in previous user testing research*, Zetoc would benefit from renewed attention to user experience and redevelopment of the interface.

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Background and Sample

Background and objectives

Background

Zetoc is one of the world's most comprehensive research databases, giving access to over 35,200 journals and more than 58 million article citations and conference papers through the British Library's electronic table of contents.

The service is an abstract and indexing database, with the availability of full-text links for articles dependent upon subscriptions at the user's institution. OA articles are also indexed from PubMed and can be linked to directly.

The last user survey was run in 2014/15 and so a new survey was needed to provide up-to-date information.

Overall objective: To inform the service development process with up-to-date feedback from users

Research objectives:

- Understand the profile of users of the service and any difference in experience by user group
- Explore frequency of use of the service and rationale for use
- Understand overall service satisfaction
- Understand what is working well about the service and what could be improved

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Method and overall sample

A 16 question online survey was distributed in February/March 2019, and was live for 4 weeks. 165 responses were received, with the majority of responses from higher education institutions in England.

Online survey distributed through Zetoc alert emails, and on the Zetoc website

165 responses

Higher Education: 129
Health: 16
Further Education: 5
Research Council: 4
Public Sector: 2
Cultural Heritage: 1

England: 124
Scotland: 22
Wales: 5
Northern Ireland: 5
Ireland: 3

22

5

3

5

124

Q12: What is the name of your institution. (n=150)
Q13: In which country/nation is your organisation principally based? (n=161)
Q14: Which of the following best describes the sector you work in? (n=164)
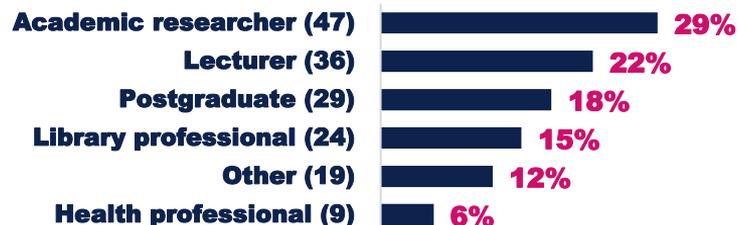
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Sample characteristics

The majority of the sample are academic professionals, with over half (51%) identified as an academic researcher or lecturer. The highest number of respondents selected health and subjects related to medicine, but there was a wide variety of subject areas represented.
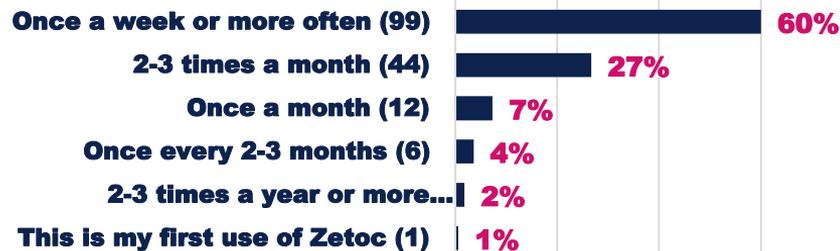
Subject area (mapped to JACs principal subjects)	
Health & subjects related to medicine (e.g. nursing & nutrition)	25
Social studies (e.g. economics, sociology & politics)	17
Medicine & dentistry	14
Physical sciences (e.g. physics & chemistry)	13
Historical & philosophical studies	12
Biological sciences	10
Languages & literature	9
Education	8
Engineering & technology	7
Business & administrative studies (e.g. marketing & accounting)	6
Creative arts & design (e.g. fine art, drama and dance)	5
Agriculture & related subjects	4
Mass communications & documentation (e.g. information science)	4
Veterinary science	2
Computer sciences	2
Mathematical sciences	1
Architecture, building & planning	1

Academic researchers and lecturers make up 51% of the sample

Academic researcher (47)	29%
Lecturer (36)	22%
Postgraduate (29)	18%
Library professional (24)	15%
Other (19)	12%
Health professional (9)	6%

60% use Zetoc once a week or more often

Once a week or more often (99)	60%
2-3 times a month (44)	27%
Once a month (12)	7%
Once every 2-3 months (6)	4%
2-3 times a year or more...	2%
This is my first use of Zetoc (1)	1%

Q15: How would you best describe your role within your organisation (n=164)
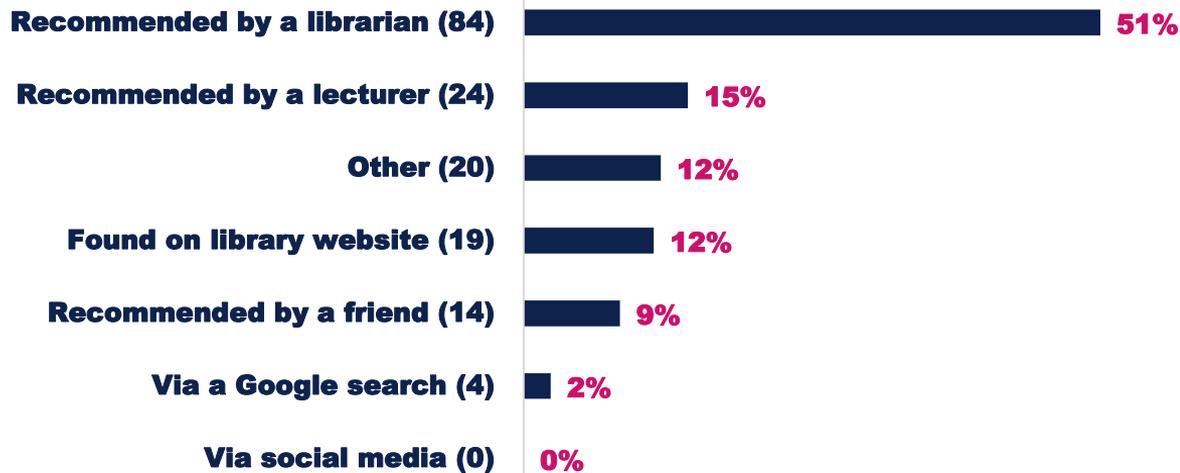**Q15b: Please tell us your subject area (n=140) | Q2: On average, how often do you use Zetoc (n=165)**

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Use of Zetoc

Route to Zetoc

Recommendations are the most important route to Zetoc, with recommendation by a librarian being the most selected. Overall, 75% found Zetoc through recommendations, either by a librarian, lecturer or friend. None of the respondents to this survey had found Zetoc via social media and only 4 through a Google search. This suggests that social media marketing and search engine optimization could be considered in future marketing strategies.

How did you discover Zetoc?

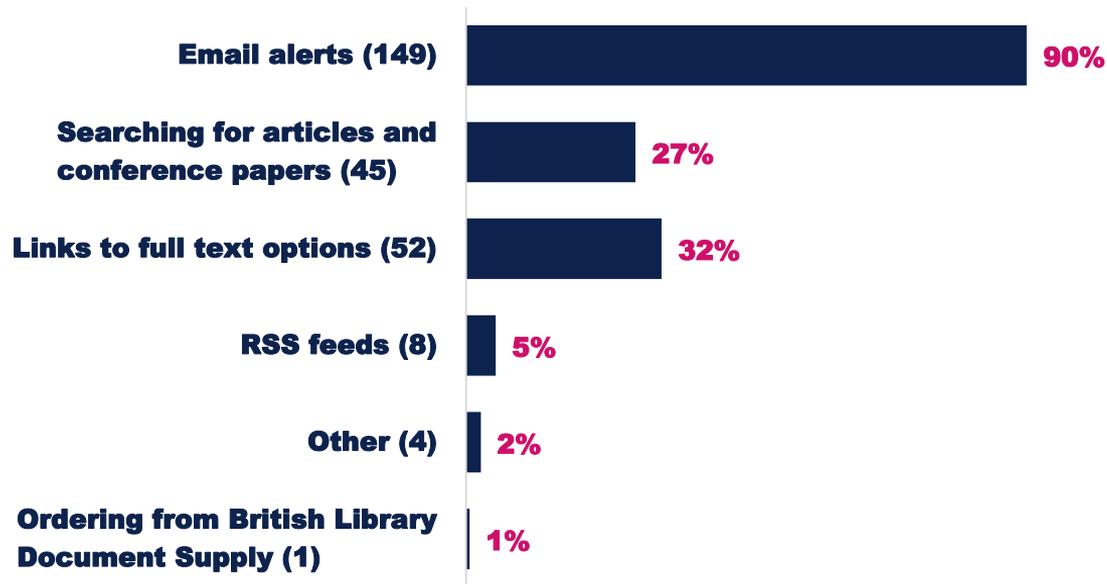| Route	Percentage
Recommended by a librarian (84)	51%
Recommended by a lecturer (24)	15%
Other (20)	12%
Found on library website (19)	12%
Recommended by a friend (14)	9%
Via a Google search (4)	2%
Via social media (0)	0%

Other

20 people selected 'other' for this question. Of these, 14 answered that they had been using Zetoc for so long that they couldn't remember how they found it, which indicates loyalty for this service.

Q1: How did you discover Zetoc? (n=165)

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Most popular uses of Zetoc

Email alerts are the most used feature, with 90% of the sample indicating they use Zetoc for this purpose. This aligns with the usage statistics for this service.

Use	Percentage
Email alerts (149)	90%
Searching for articles and conference papers (45)	27%
Links to full text options (52)	32%
RSS feeds (8)	5%
Other (4)	2%
Ordering from British Library Document Supply (1)	1%

Other services used (top 5):

1. Google Scholar
2. Individual publisher sites
3. None (only Zetoc)
4. Own library site
5. Web of Science

*Respondents were given the option to choose all that apply for this question. Percentages shown are % of respondents who selected each answer option.
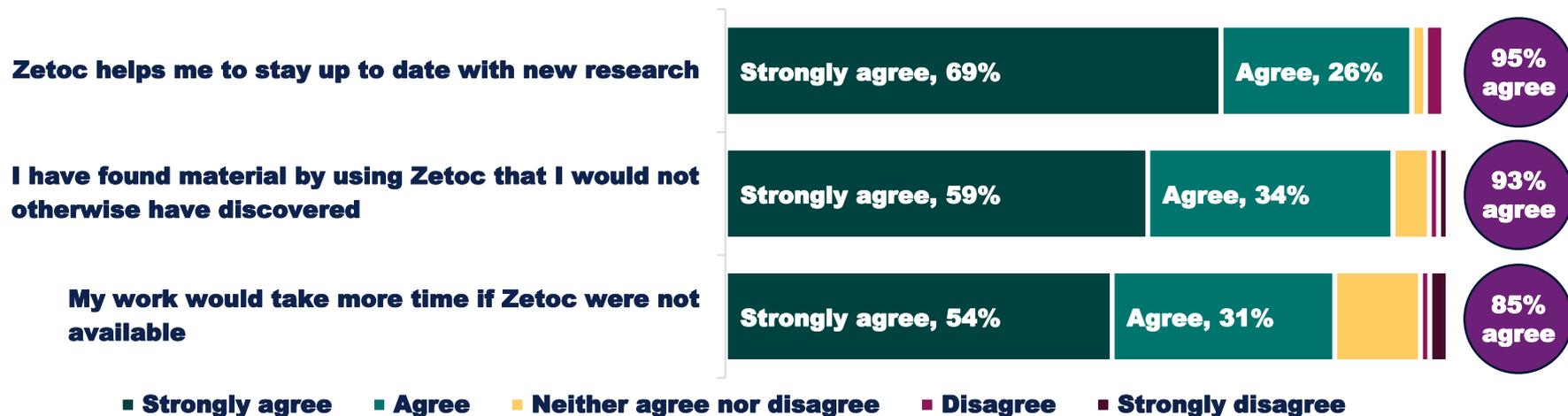
Q3: What what purpose(s) do you use Zetoc? (n=165)
Q4: What other services do you use to monitor and search for research articles and journal titles? (n=121)

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Value of Zetoc

Value of Zetoc

Respondents indicate that the primary value of Zetoc lies in its ability to keep them up to date with new research (95% agree) and to alert them to material they might otherwise not have found (93% agree). Fewer respondents agree that their work would take longer without Zetoc but, while more are unsure, only 4% disagree with this statement.

Zetoc helps me to stay up to date with new research

Strongly agree, 69% | Agree, 26% | **95% agree**

I have found material by using Zetoc that I would not otherwise have discovered

Strongly agree, 59% | Agree, 34% | **93% agree**

My work would take more time if Zetoc were not available

Strongly agree, 54% | Agree, 31% | **85% agree**

■ **Strongly agree** ■ **Agree** ■ **Neither agree nor disagree** ■ **Disagree** ■ **Strongly disagree**

* 'Don't know' answers have been excluded from this analysis.

Q5: Thinking about your use of Zetoc, please tell us how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.(n=159. don't know excluded)

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Most valuable

136 respondents provided comments. Echoing the responses to what is most used, alerts was the most mentioned benefit, with 80 references to this functionality. Related to this, 49 references are made to the fact that Zetoc helps to keep them up-to-date with new material in their field, and 17 refer to the convenience of having the material sent directly to them.

Top 5 references

Alerts: general (80 refs)	Keeping up-to-date (49 refs)	Convenience (17 refs)	Frequency of updates (12 refs)	Breadth of coverage (9 refs)
Many responses refer to the value of the alerts. For these comments, the value comes simply from the fact that alerts are available to them.	Again with reference to alerts, these comments see value in the fact that Zetoc gives them a simple way to keep up to date with new research in their field.	Respondents value the fact that new research is delivered directly to their inbox, meaning they did not have to search multiple databases to find the material themselves.	Respondents value the regularity of updates, the fact they can set the frequency of emails, and the fact that material is sent to them as soon as possible after publication.	The range of material across disciples is valued, and respondents mention the fact that a wide range of publishers are indexed.

Q6: What do you find most valuable about Zetoc? (n=136)

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Most valuable - quotes

Alerts: general (80 refs)	Keeping up-to-date (49 refs)	Convenience (17 refs)	Frequency of updates (12 refs)	Breadth of coverage (9 refs)
"The Zetoc Alert service means that I don't need to visit individual journals to view their TOCs to see if there's any articles of interest in the latest issue." *"That all the new journal articles related to my research topic come up and are sent to me automatically"*	*"Being kept up to date with multiple journals and authors without multiple separate search engines notifications."* *"Keeps me up to date on all of the latest academic publications, which I might not hear about otherwise."*	*"I don't have to remember to check journals every few months, Zetoc sends them to me instead."* *"Having the contents pages in my inbox saves me having to login/ search various different library databases just to check."*	*"That I get an update anytime something new is published - not just a contents page."* *"Daily alerts simple and non-repetitive alert of papers in my field."* *"The steady supply of up to date listings and the increasingly good links through to journals,"*	*"Comprehensive and helpful across a wide range of disciplines."* *"Range of subject matter is very big."*

Q6: What do you find most valuable about Zetoc? (n=136)

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Overall experience of Zetoc

Satisfaction with Zetoc

Satisfaction with Zetoc is high, with 90% indicating they are satisfied.

97 respondents provided comments. Positive comments praise the way Zetoc helps them keep up to date along with the convenience and ease of use. Negative comments relate to some aspects of functionality, particularly difficulties in linking through to full text articles and delays to the delivery of alerts after the publication of research papers . Some comments also express dissatisfaction at the loss of journal coverage from the service.

| Very satisfied 50% | Fairly satisfied 40% | 5% | 4% | | 90% satisfied |

1%

■ Very satisfied   ■ Fairly satisfied   ■ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied   ■ Fairly dissatisfied   ■ Very dissatisfied

Q7: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with Zetoc? (n=165)

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Reasons for satisfaction or dissatisfaction

Top 6 references

Alerts & keeping up to date (22 refs)	Convenience and ease of use (18 refs)	Coverage (17 refs)	Links to full text (9 refs)	User experience/ interface design (8 refs)	Delays to notifications (7 refs)
Comments in this category are positive, supporting the finding that Zetoc is valued for its alerts and ability to keep people up to date with new research.	Again, a number of comments praise Zetoc's convenience and the benefit of having information delivered directly to them.	Comments related to coverage are less positive, with 14 out of 17 references asking for more journals to be indexed. This is exacerbated by the fact that Zetoc has lost journal coverage in recent years.	Most references to the process of linking to full text would like the process to be smoother. Although Zetoc does not have control over the availability / entitlement of full text at user's institutions, comments suggest linking is too convoluted at present and could be explained more clearly.	Comments suggest that the interface could be updated, both in terms of design and interface functionality.	Comments in this category suggest that some alerts are being sent too late after publication of the article.

Q7a: Please tell us why you are satisfied/dissatisfied with Zetoc? (n=97)

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Reasons for satisfaction or dissatisfaction - quotes

Alerts and keeping up to date	Convenience and ease of use	Coverage	Links to full text	User experience/ interface design	Delays to notifications
"It's invaluable for me in keeping up to date. I recommend it to all my students" *"The alerts make my life easier. Rather than having to keep track of individual journal issues myself, Zetoc alerts gather that information for me."*	*"You make it so easy! List arriving in my inbox regularly."* *"Quick, simple to use, great access to articles and way of keeping up to date."*	*"Allows access to many fields of research on one site."* *"I regret the fairly recent substantial reduction of the number of journals covered by Zetoc."* *"The range and frequency of alerts is falling,"*	*"Clicking through to DOIs of papers must be made easier. It's far too convoluted at the moment."* *"I can't link through easily to the article or see an abstract to decide if I want to follow up."*	*"Simple updates, but the web page for configuration of what to receive and when needs better user experience design."* *"Interface could be more modern."* *"The search option to find one's university is laborious on a smartphone."*	*"Just occasionally it is very delayed in picking up key articles."* *"Overall, Zetoc is good. However, there are sometimes significant delays in new journal issues being indexed, meaning I receive multiple alerts close together or simultaneously."*

Q7a: Please tell us why you are satisfied/dissatisfied with Zetoc? (n=97)

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Likelihood to recommend and Net Promotor Score

Recommendation and NPS scores are high and over half (65%) are promotors. An NPS score of +52 is a very positive result and indicates clear value for users.

13%	22%	65%	NPS +52

■ Detractors (0-6)   ■ Passives (7-8)   ■ Promotors (9-10)

NPS asks users rate how likely they are to recommend Jisc services on a scale of 0 to 10. Typically:
Detractors (0-6) are unhappy and will create negative word of mouth and may eventually leave
Passives (7-8) are not necessarily unhappy or dissatisfied but may use competitors
Promoters (9-10) are fully engaged, willing to try new services. Likely to attract other members through recommendation
The NPS score is calculated by detracting the detractors from the promoters

Q8: How likely is it that you would recommend Zetoc to a peer or colleague? (n=165)

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Ease of use

Ease of use scores are good, with 84% agreeing that Zetoc is as easy to use as they would expect it to be. However, comments suggest that improvements could be made with the interface.

72 respondents provided comments. Those who strongly agreed praised the fact that Zetoc is straightforward and easy to set up. In comparison, those who disagreed, highlighted issues with the unintuitive and somewhat dated interface, including search options. Comments were also made about the difficulties around linking to the full text of articles.

Strongly agree 38% | Somewhat agree 46% | 8% | 6% | 3% | 84% agree

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree

Q9: How much do you agree or disagree with "Zetoc is as easy to use as I'd expect it to be"? (n=165)

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Reasons for ease of use scores

Top 5 references

Straightforward and easy to set up (30 refs)	Links to full-text (15 refs)	Unintuitive or dated interface (15 refs)	Data quality and duplication (7 refs)	Help and support materials (5 refs)
The highest number of responses relate to the easy set up of alerts. Commenters find it straightforward to use.	13 of the 15 responses expressed frustration at the process of clicking through to articles. While Zetoc does not have control over full-text access / entitlement at a user's institution, comments highlight the number of steps from Zetoc alert to full text, and suggest that a Google search is often quicker if they want to access the material.	In contrast to point one, a number of commenters suggested that the interface could be improved, both in terms of search functionality and user flow. Some find it difficult to set up and edit their alerts. Four responses were also made to the dated interface.	Comments refer to confusing, missing or duplicate data in the alerts. These comments also highlight delays between publication and the alert.	Most comments within this theme were positive about the help materials, e.g. videos and instructions available. Two responses asked for more support.

Q8: Please tell us why you find Zetoc easy/difficult to use? (n=72)

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Reasons for ease of use scores - quotes

Straightforward and easy to set up (30 refs)	Links to full-text (15 refs)	Unintuitive or dated interface (15 refs)	Data quality and duplication (7 refs)	Help and support materials (5 refs)
"I was able to set up alerts easily even though I hadn't used Zetoc for a while." *"I mostly use the Alerts service and once I've selected the journals I'm interested in, there's nothing else to do - and most of the time I can access an abstract on Zetoc just by clicking the article link."*	*"If I discover a paper of interest through Zetoc alerts, I have to do a Google search for it - clicking the link is hopeless."* *"Quite a process to click through to a full text article, have to go through a number of intermediary pages. Easier to search on google."*	*"Setting up alerts could be more streamlined. Why is the number of journals per alert limited? The need to do an annual extension on alerts is annoying."* *"It would be great if one could combine more search terms. It seems that Zetoc is stuck in an 1990s mode of data structure and search."*	*"The Alert system is basically good. But, there are long delays in alerting many issues, and not all contents lists are complete so that some issues are alerted twice."* *"Sometimes the contents list of an issue is not in its proper order but all jumbled up, so that articles are hidden in (or after) the book reviews, which means things can be missed. Also sometimes the alerts come a long time after the issue was published.*	*"It's very straightforward, and the usage guide is clear."* *"Straightforward and good videos."* *"When I set up my email alerts, I felt there could have been some slightly clearer step by step instructions at the outset - I remember feeling a little unclear."*

What would improve your experience of Zetoc?

When asked what would most improve the experience of Zetoc, comments echo earlier themes of the survey. While a number of comments indicate happiness with the service, the following improvements were suggested: increasing coverage, improving links to full text, solving data issues within the alerts, refining search options, improving user experience, and speeding up the process from publication to alert.

Nothing, happy with Zetoc as it is (23 references)

Increase coverage (21 refs)

Improve links to full text (17 refs)

Solve data issues (11 refs)

Refine search options (10 refs)

Improve user experience of web interface (9 refs)

Speed up process from publication to alert (8 refs)

Renewal process (4 refs)

Improve the user experience of emails (4 refs)

Alert me when journals are removed (2 refs)

Introduce suggestions/recommendations (2 refs)

Allow export to reference managers (1 ref)

"Reinstate more journals and please don't remove any more otherwise Zetoc will have limited value"

"Clicking through to DOIs of papers must be made easier. It's far too convoluted at the moment."

"What's the most frustrating is when a Zetoc Alert only lists the partial contents of an issue - sometimes this can be as little as just a single article."

"Make the email alerts look more contemporary and user friendly."

"Stay up to date with notifications - often they arrive months after publication."

"Perhaps use categories on top of search words to narrow down search results."

Q10: What is the single most important thing that we can do to improve your experience of Zetoc? (n=118)

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Summary

- 165 responses were received, with the majority of responses from higher education institutions in England. Over half (51%) identify as an academic lecturer or researcher, and the highest number of responses are from health subjects.

- Recommendations are the most important route to Zetoc. 75% found Zetoc through recommendations, either by a librarian, lecturer or friend. None of the respondents to this survey had found Zetoc via social media and only 4 through a Google search. This suggests that social media marketing and search engine optimization could be considered in future marketing strategies.

- Email alerts are the most used feature, with 90% of the sample indicating they use Zetoc for this purpose. Respondents also indicate that the primary value of Zetoc lies in its ability to keep them up to date with new research (95% agree) and to alert them to material they might otherwise not have found (93% agree).). 84% of respondents agree that their work would take longer without Zetoc and only 4% disagree with this statement.

- Satisfaction with Zetoc is high, with a 90% satisfaction rating, and an NPS of +52. Positive comments praise the way Zetoc helps them keep up to date along with the convenience and ease of use. Negative comments relate to some aspects of functionality, particularly difficulties in linking through to full text articles and delays to the delivery of alerts after the publication of research papers . Some comments also express dissatisfaction at the loss of journal coverage from the service.

- Ease of use scores are good, with 84% agreeing that Zetoc is as easy to use as they would expect it to be. However, comments suggest that improvements could be made with the interface. Happiness is driven by the fact that Zetoc is straightforward and easy to set up. In comparison, those who disagree, highlighted issues with the unintuitive and somewhat dated interface, including search options. Comments were also made about the difficulties around linking to the full text of articles.

- When asked what would improve their experience of Zetoc, the highest number of comments claim they are happy with the service as it is. However, comments also ask for an increase in coverage, better links to full-text, and a refined user experience.

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Comments

Some very positive comments were provided by respondents about the Zetoc service and the features they valued the most. A small selection of the comments can be found below:

- "The regular alerts for my specialist field - saves an enormous amount of time and introduces me to articles/authors I might otherwise not see."

- "The alerts make my life easier. Rather than having to keep track of individual journal issues myself, Zetoc alerts gather that information for me."

- "Very useful service, I have been kept informed of developments in journals that I wouldn't have come across otherwise & shared with colleagues. Thank you."

- "I can keep up to date with minimal effort. Without Zetoc alerts I would be completely lost."

- "Quick, simple to use, great access to articles and way of keeping up to date."

- "Comprehensive and helpful across a wide range of disciplines."

- "Its invaluable for me in keeping up to date. I recommend it to all my students."

- "Regular up to date info, easy to access and move to full text from email alert."

- "Email alerts from key journals allow me to quickly scan titles and pick up interesting new material from across my field."

- "so so positive, I tell everyone about it and recommend new students find out about it - life saving service."

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