



Historical Texts user survey '17

Summary of findings

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A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a white rectangular card. The hand is positioned at the top and bottom edges of the card, with fingers visible. The card is held against a blurred background of a person in a dark suit. The text on the card is in a bold, dark blue font.

Background objectives and methodology

Background

Historical Texts provides access to over 400,000 late 15th to 19th century texts. It brings together three historically significant collections: Early English Books Online (EEBO), Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO) and 65,000 texts from the British Library 19th Century collection.

The last user survey was run in 2015 and so a new survey was needed to provide up-to-date information.

Objective

To inform the service development process with up-to-date feedback from users.

Core 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
- » Explore reactions to different service elements
- » Understand what is working well about the service and what could be improved
- » Test the attractiveness of potential enhancements to the service going forwards.

Similar to 2015, over half of those in our sample (65%) use Historical Texts once a week or more often, with only 4% being first time users of the service.

15 minute online survey.....



Survey In Field:

31st October – 1st December 17

2015 n=137 completes
(survey in field mid Jan- mid March)

Frequency use service	% of total completes	% 2015
Several times a week	45%	44%
Once a week	20%	24%
Once or twice a month	22%	23%
Less often	9%	6%
This is my first use	4%	3%

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a white rectangular card. The card is held between the thumb and the other four fingers, which are visible at the top edge. The card has the text 'Sample characteristics' written on it in a dark blue, sans-serif font. The background is a plain, light color.

Sample characteristics

The majority of the sample are within HE institutions, with one response from an FE college providing HE provision. 6% of the sample said they do not belong to an institution.

105 responses
from 45
institutions

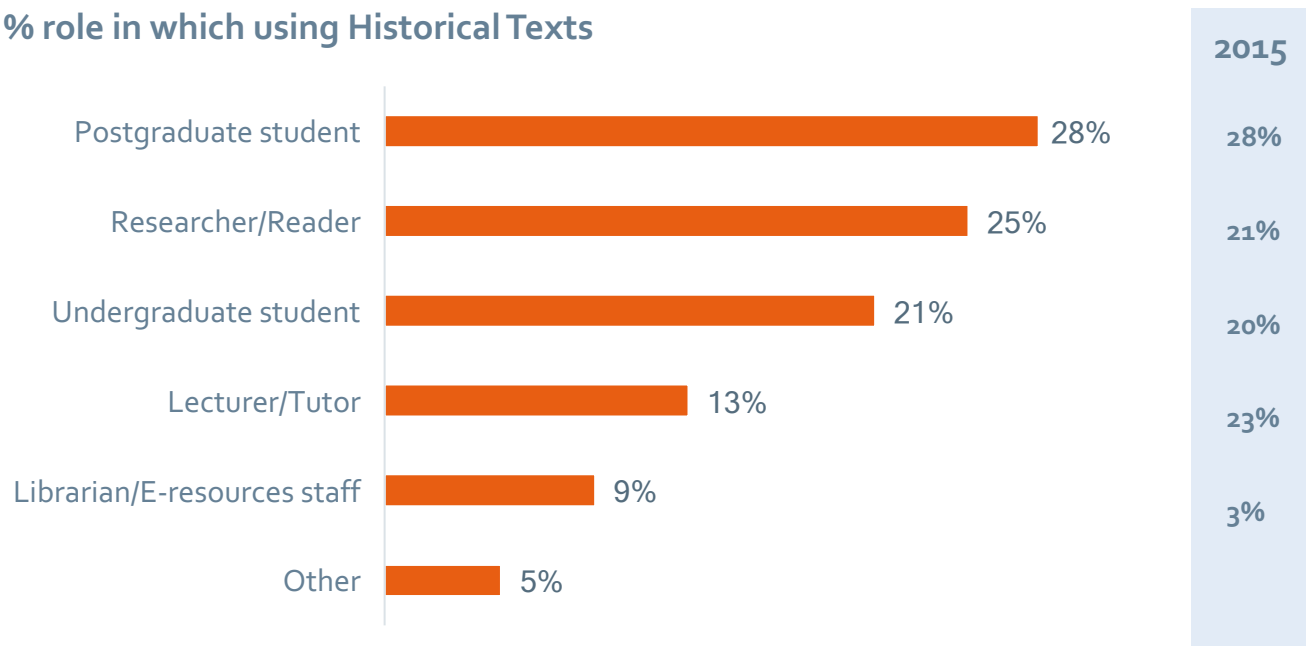
1 response from
an FE college

7 indicate
they do not
belong to an
institution

Role in which they access Historical Texts

The majority of the sample (53%) are either a postgraduate student or a researcher/reader. This is similar to 2015, where 51% of responses came from this group. However there are fewer responses from lecturer/tutors this year (13%) compared to 2015 (23%).

% role in which using Historical Texts



*Other: teacher, retired/emeritus professor (x2), private study, 'fly-by-night'

History is the most popular subject area with over half of the sample (67%) selecting this. Other popular subject areas include English literature, religion and theology, and book history.

Subject area of user (top 10)	%
History	67%
English literature	38%
Religion and theology	16%
Book history	13%
Philosophy	11%
Art history	9%
Languages and linguistics	9%
Law	8%
Political studies	8%
Other*	7%

2015
classifications
not
comparable

*Other: creative writing, lexicography (x2), complementary medicine, 'polymath', information professional, British food and cookery

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a white rectangular card. The card is held between the thumb and the other four fingers, which are visible at the top edge. The card has the text 'Usage of Historical Texts' printed on it in a dark blue, sans-serif font. The background is a plain, light color.

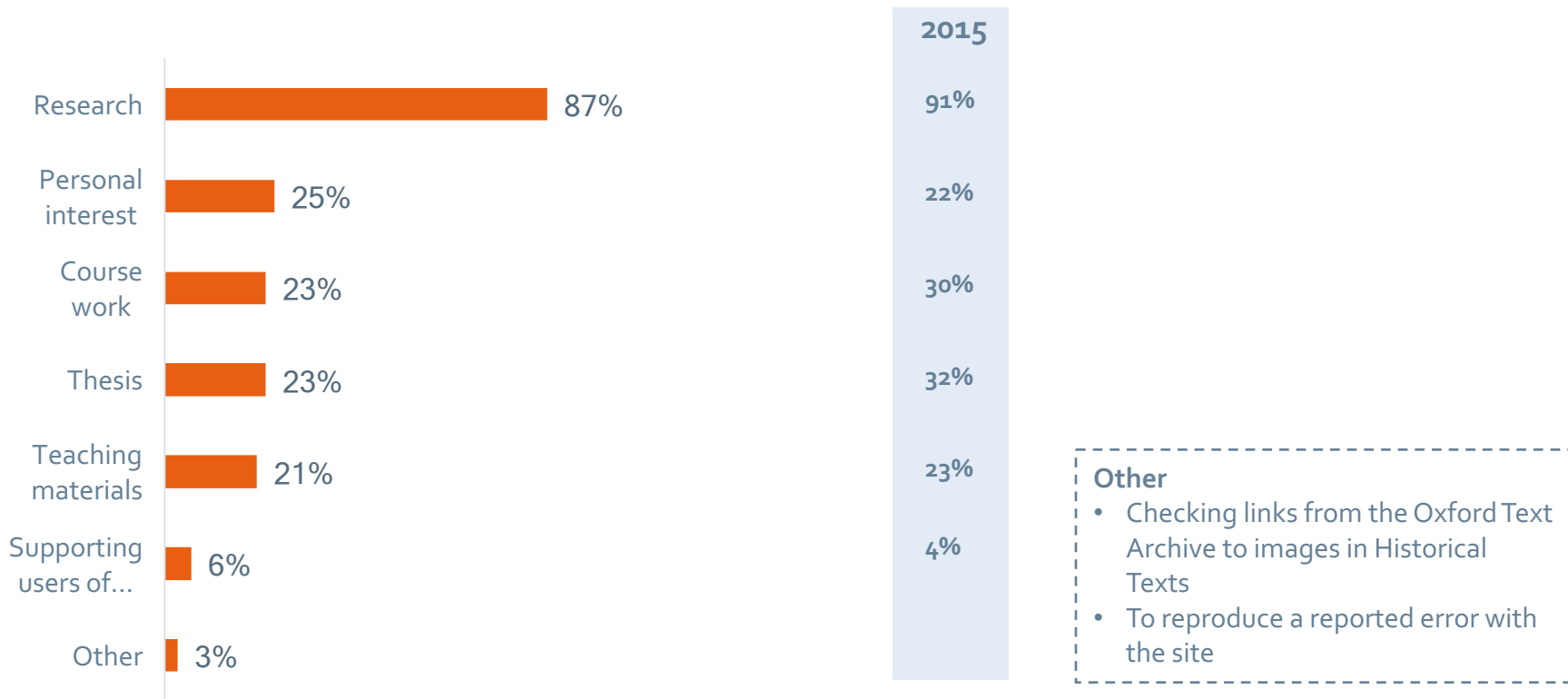
Usage of Historical Texts

Recommendations are the most important route to Historical Texts, with recommendation by a lecturer being the most selected. However, it is important to note that this question was only answered by 33% of the sample.

<i>Found on/discovered by...</i>	Library website	3%
	Google search	3%
<i>Recommended by...</i>	Lecturer	62%
	Librarian	8%
	Friend	11%
	Colleague	8%
<i>Other...</i>	Other**	5%

**Twitter, don't recall

As in 2015, research is by far the biggest reason for using Historical Texts, which reflects the high numbers of postgraduate researchers and readers in our sample.



A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a white rectangular card. The hand is positioned with the thumb at the bottom and fingers at the top, gripping the card. The card is held against a blurred background of a person's torso in a dark suit. The text 'Historical Texts evaluation' is printed in a dark blue, sans-serif font on the right side of the card.

Historical Texts evaluation

Satisfaction with Historical Texts is high, with 78% indicating they are satisfied. 24 respondents provided comments. Positive comments praise the accessibility of materials and the range of content available, while negative comments focus on difficulties with locating materials, and frustration with the search/browse functionality.

Satisfaction scores (including don't know)



Satisfaction scores (excluding don't know)



Don't know

Very dissatisfied

Fairly dissatisfied

Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

Fairly satisfied

Very satisfied

[Question not asked in 2015]

Recommendation and NPS scores are high with over half (55%) indicating they would be extremely likely to recommend Historical Texts. An NPS score of +49 is a very positive result and indicates clear value for users. 49 respondents provided comments, with most comments from promoters. Promoters value the accessibility and range of materials, while detractors suggest that improvements could be made to the search functionality.



+49
NPS score

NPS score measures member advocacy, by asking them to 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

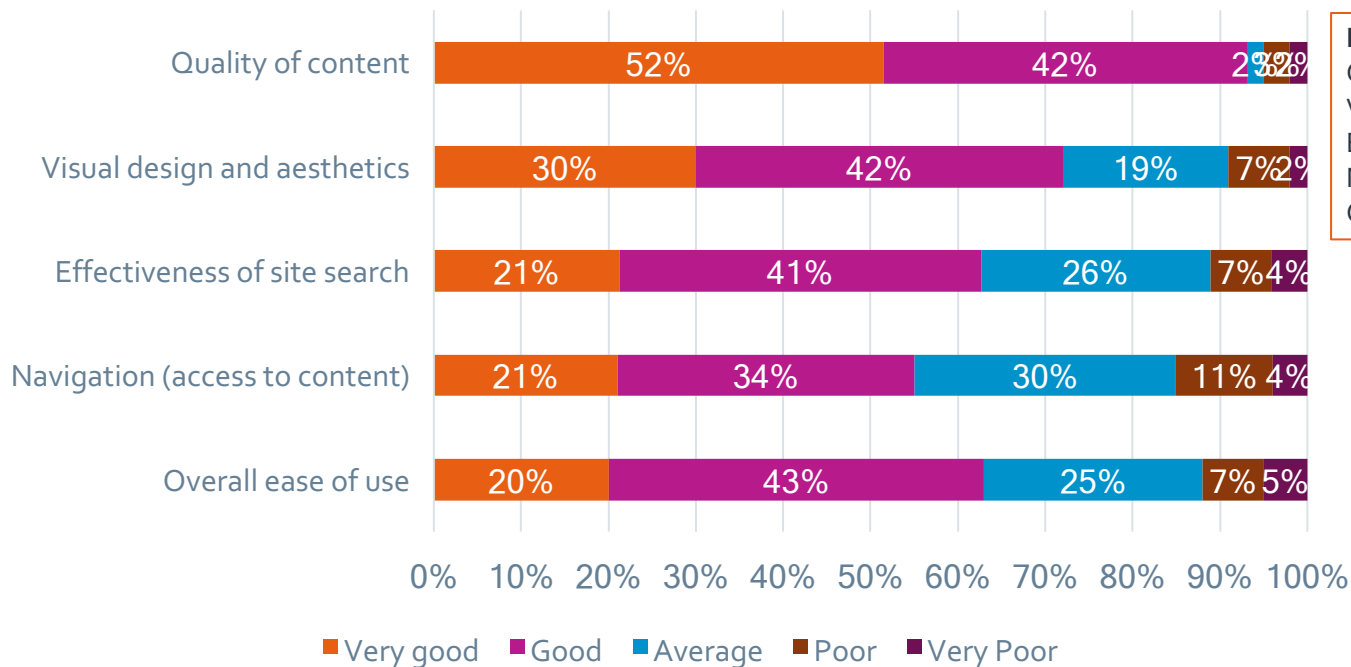
Passives (7-8) are not necessarily unhappy or dissatisfied but may use competitors

Promoters (9-10) are fully engaged, willing to spend more and try new services. Likely to attract other members through recommendation

The NPS score is calculated by deducting the detractors from the promoters

[1-10 scale used in 2015, so not comparable]

Quality of the content is given the highest rating by this sample, with 94% choosing very good or good. Visual design and aesthetics are also rated highly. Navigation (access to content) and search are areas where improvements could be made, with higher proportions rating these areas as average, poor or very poor.

**N.B. Don't know removed**

Quality of content= 0%

Visual design & aesthetics= 1%

Effectiveness of site search= 0%

Navigation (access to content)= 0%

Overall ease of use=1%

Content and range of materials receive the highest number of comments, indicating that users value the ability to access a variety of primary material online. The interface and overall functionality also attract a number of positive comments.

58 responses received. Comments within fell into 4 broad categories...

**Quality
content and
the range of
material.**

27 references

**Interface,
functionality
and viewer.**

16 references

**Easy access
to hard-to-
reach digital
materials
from home.**

15 references

**Serendipity -
discovery of
texts they
would
otherwise be
unaware of.**

3 references

How can Historical Texts be improved?

67 responses were received with most requests (21) focusing on improvements to the search interface. Other recurrent themes focus on increasing the range of content, improving navigation within texts, and transcription and digitisation.

Simplify search interface

7 comments

Improve accuracy of search results

6 comments

Add specific functionality, e.g. proximity search

4 comments

Enhance searching within texts

4 comments

Increase content range

7 comments

Improve quality of digitization/transcription (OCR)

7 comments

Develop navigation within texts and thumbnails

10 comments

In terms of future development of the service, the addition of more content is clearly preferred over the development of tools to use existing content. This is congruent with findings around what is liked about the service and how it could be improved, with content featuring strongly as a theme in both of these questions.



69%
Adding
more content

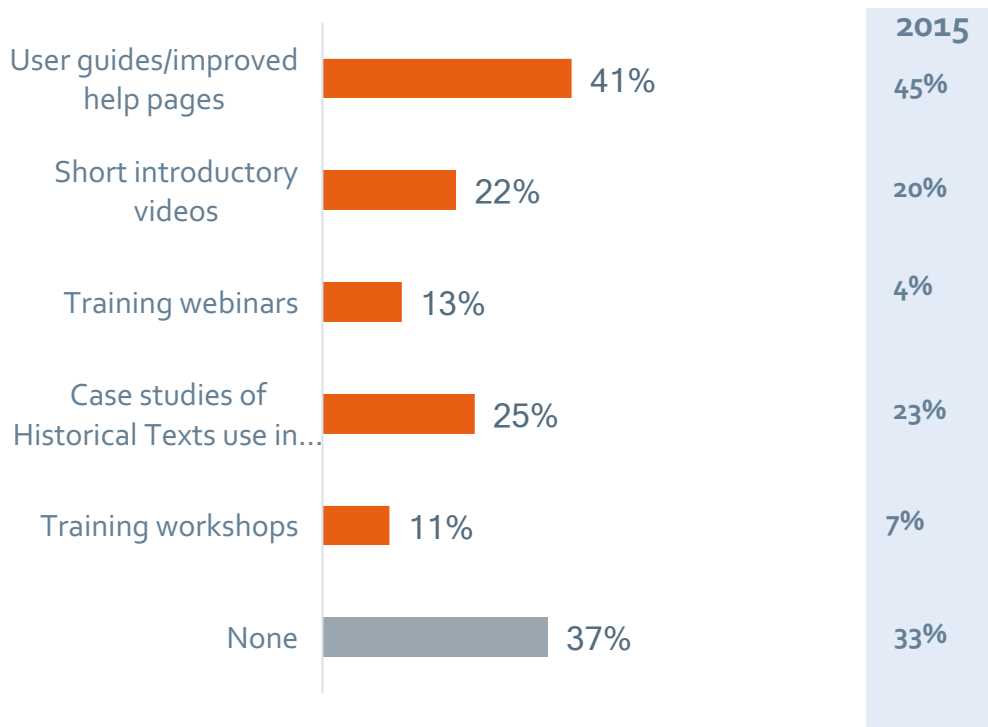
31%
Developing more tools
to use existing content
(e.g.
visualisations/APIs)

82% agreed their work would take longer without Historical Texts, which is a slight drop from the 2015 figure of 85%. Taking into account comments around accessibility of materials, the high percentage of agrees could be explained by the ease of access to documents that previously may have been unavailable online, or inaccessible due to travel restrictions.

My work would take longer if Historical Texts were not available.....



Similar to 2015, user guides/improved help pages are the most popular support option, followed by case studies and introductory videos. There is a slight increase in the numbers requesting webinars and workshops.



Other Suggestions

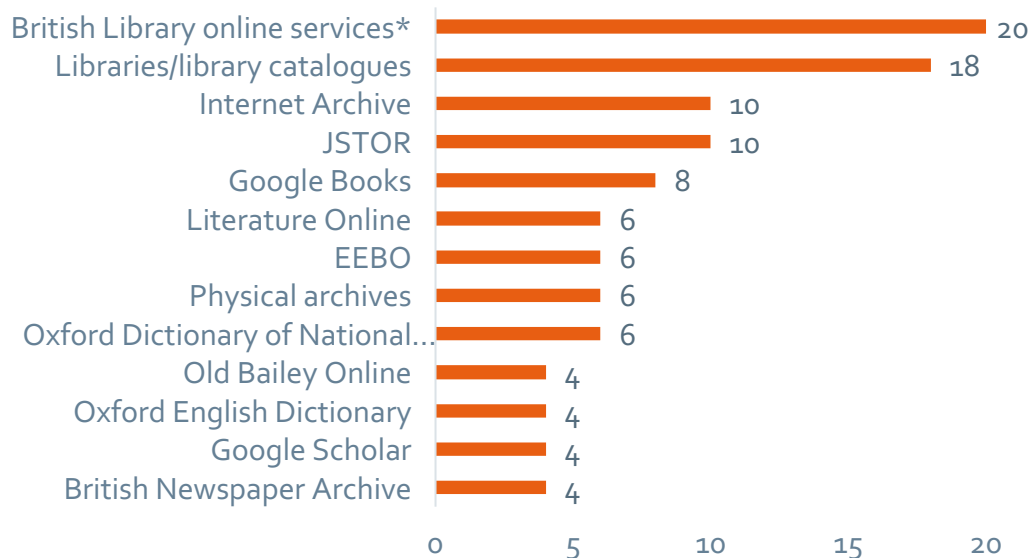
- Search tutorials – how best to utilize the search function
- Access to the catalogue or index to all or part of the collection
- Referencing guide
- Opportunities at transcribing work as part of undergraduate experience

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a white rectangular card. The hand is positioned at the top and bottom edges of the card, with the thumb and index finger visible. The card is held against a blurred background of a person's shoulder and arm in a dark suit. The text 'Other sources used' is printed in a bold, dark blue font in the center of the card.

Other sources used

A range of other sources and services are used, both print and digital, with the most popular being British Library services, other libraries/library catalogues, JSTOR and Archive.org.

Resources and services with 4 or more mentions



*British Library Online (10), English Short Title Catalogue (7), Burney Collection (3)

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Conclusions and recommendations

Historical Texts users and usage:

- As in 2015, the majority of the sample are postgraduate, with 53% being either a postgraduate student or a researcher/reader. There is a lower proportion of lecturer/tutors compared to 2015, (from 23% to 13%), and numbers of undergraduates remain low at 21%.
- Reflecting the high numbers of postgraduates, research is by far the biggest reason for using Historical Texts at 87%.
- The majority are from HE institutions, with over half (67%) studying history. Other popular subject areas include English literature, religion and theology, and book history.
- Recommendations are the most common route to Historical Texts, with 89% of those who responded choosing these options. Recommendation by a lecturer is the most popular option at 62%.

Evaluation of the service:

- Overall, results are positive and show Historical Texts is valued by users:
 - Satisfaction with Historical Texts is high, with 78% indicating they are satisfied or very satisfied.
 - Recommendation scores are also high with a very positive NPS of +49. Over half indicate they would be extremely likely to recommend the service.
 - Key benefits are the ready access to digital materials and the wide range of content available, suggesting that online availability of primary historical texts breaks down barriers previously imposed by travel and inaccessible archives.
 - Linked to this, over two thirds of users (82%) agree their work would take longer without Historical Texts, highlighting a clear time saving benefit.

Evaluation of the service continued:

- Comments around satisfaction and improvement indicate some clear areas for improvement:
 - In terms of future development, the addition of more content is clearly preferred over the development of tools to utilise existing content (e.g. visualisations/API's). For this service, content is key and the availability of materials spanning a wide date range is clearly of benefit.
 - However, navigation (access to content) and search are areas which higher proportions rate as average, poor or very poor, indicating that they would benefit from development. This is supported by comments, which highlight some difficulties with locating materials they know to be in the database, frustration with the complexity of the search functionality, and erroneous search results.
 - Similar to 2015, user guides/improved help pages are the most popular support option, followed by case studies and introductory videos. There is a slight increase in the numbers requesting webinars and workshops and, as in 2015, a large number (37%) indicate that they don't need support and training.

Other resources used:

- A range of other sources and services are used, both print and digital, with the most popular being British Library services, other libraries/library catalogues, JSTOR and Archive.org.

Recommendations

- Recommendations from lecturers is the most important route to Historical Texts, but engagement with the survey from this group has fallen, and some comments indicate that they would be reluctant to recommend the service to undergraduate students. Further investigation and liaison with this audience group would be advisable to avoid further drops in engagement.
- Improving the search functionality is likely to improve satisfaction with Historical Texts. Task-based usability research with some participants would help to identify and prioritise issues, but survey data suggests that refining the search options, better filtering/facets, and improved search and navigation within the texts themselves is expected.
- Increasing the content range would be welcomed by this sample. However, the data also suggest that improving digitisation and transcription of the content already within Historical Texts would also improve satisfaction levels.

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