Summon: Using the Summon API

- **Product**: Summon

Where can I find information on the Summon API?

The Summon API suite allows your library the opportunity to build your own search and results interfaces powered by the Summon service. The API provides access to two functions:

- **Search: Search the Summon Unified Index.** This exposes all of the search capabilities of the Summon service. The API is an HTTP-based service and supports requests via the HTTP GET and POST methods. Currently there are two available response formats: XML and JSON. All requests to the API require authentication via private-key digest. The API receives requests and returns responses encoded in UTF-8. The data that can be retrieved from the Search API include meta documents, facet counts and spelling suggestions.

  In addition to the traditional parameter-based query system, the Search API includes a new, command-based query system that can stand-alone, or be used in conjunction with parameters. Commands provide some unique benefits over raw parameters, because they can provide additional information to the API about the action being performed. When the API knows about actions being performed by the user, it can execute common search logic -- such as paging and "did you mean" -- on the user’s behalf. This can greatly simplify the ease and speed of implementation.

- **Availability: Fetch real-time availability of catalog records.** This function allows retrieval of catalog item-availability statuses. The service allows batch requests for efficiency. This means only one service call is necessary for a page containing multiple catalog items. The Availability API is not an authenticated service. The response format is available in three versions: XML, JSON, and streaming JSON. Because an availability status calls can take a relatively long time, the streaming JSON format allows availability statuses to appear on the page as soon as they are retrieved, even if there are still other statuses being retrieved. The combination of batch requests with streaming responses allows for a fairly responsive feel to the UI while only tying up one valuable browser thread. For more information, see [Availability](#).

Access to the API

Programmatic access the API is available via an authentication key. When you are ready to start working with the API, or to host your own instance of the user-interface application, review and sign the XML API Terms of Use (TOU) agreement. Two PDF versions of the agreement are available:

- Use this [Terms of Use](#) document if internal staff from your institution will be using the API.
- Use this [Terms of Use](#) (third party) document if an agent (a party not affiliated with your institution) will be using the API on your behalf.

Use the [Support Portal](#) (accessible from the More Sites drop-down menu above) to send us a signed TOU agreement.

Once a completed and signed TOU agreement has been received we will provide you with a fully executed copy, and an API account will be configured for you, including the Authentication Key.

Once you receive your Authentication Key:
Create a **User Account** in the [API Documentation Center](#) by clicking on the "Create new account" link below the Username and Password fields on the left side of the screen. You will need your **API Access ID** and **Secret Key** in order to create your user account.

For more information, see:

- [API Documentation Center](#)
- [Summon: Custom Search Box (Widget)](#)
- [Integration with VuFind](#)

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- **Date Created:** 9-Feb-2014
- **Last Edited Date:** 16-Feb-2017
- **Old Article Number:** 8866