

University of Salford MANCHESTER

University of Salford and Ex Libris

The University of Salford is a public university in the UK with undergraduate and post-graduate programs in the liberal arts, business and law, health, media, and the built environment. Salford serves 17,000 students on its campuses near Manchester. Salford's three libraries have a combined staff of 81 FTE, and the collections include 350,000 books, 23,000 e-journals, and 575,000 purchased e-books.

Previous ILS/Systems: Capita Alto (previously known as Talis Alto), SFX

Summary of Institutional Benefits:

- Alma and Primo provide one-stop discovery and access to resources for users
- Alma gives library staff control to move collections and make policy changes
- Libraries can measure their performance and effectiveness using Alma Analytics

Moving to Alma

Salford's consideration of a next generation library system began with a proposal to the University to support a digital library, including self-service, RFID, and a discovery system. The University had also invested in a campus presence at MediaCityUK, which houses the BBC, ITV, and other media-related businesses. The Library needed systems, technologies, and collections to support the teaching at this campus.

To leverage the potential of Primo, which had already been implemented, the Library needed to consider its Library Management System (LMS). Their goal was to create a gateway for all library services, providing discovery and access to resources and improving the student experience. Salford's previous LMS had not been updated to keep pace with the increase in electronic resources' acquisition and usage, resulting in many workarounds, manual processes, and spreadsheets. The server was controlled by the University IT

department, which had its own priorities for upgrades and programming. Basic needs such as fiscal year rollover had to be planned months in advance, and enhancements for the Library frequently waited in a queue. Salford was paying additional money for development and consulting to integrate their LMS with external systems, such as their self-check machines. They wanted to streamline to fewer systems, improve their control, and plan for the future based on the needs of their user community.

With a need to spend the capital money devoted to their digital library project within the University's timetable, Salford issued a tender and prepared a business case with a total cost of ownership comparison. Alma was the clear winner.



“Moving to Alma reinforced Salford’s strong focus on students and improving the user experience”

Angela Walker, Digital Library Manager

Impact of Alma

The Libraries Gain Control

Adopting Alma made it possible for the Salford libraries to address strategic priorities in timely and responsive ways. The library staff could take on work that had previously been performed exclusively by their vendor or by the university IT department. In the past, vendor and IT priorities were not always aligned with the libraries’ goals and the libraries often had to wait for their needs to be addressed. With Alma, library staff have taken control of identifying and prioritizing their requirements. Access to Alma configurations allows the staff to make needed changes quickly and to introduce new policies and programs to support their users.

A major strategic priority for the Salford libraries involves creating a digital library environment, adding technologies to support increasingly electronic collections and services. This project includes closing and consolidating libraries, moving and reducing physical collections, renovating spaces in the main library, and providing dynamic physical collections that would reflect learning needs when and where they are needed. In this context, it was important for Salford to be able to manage their print collections easily. In their old system, moving a collection when a library closed would have taken weeks. With Alma, it took them half an hour to create sets and apply a process to change the necessary locations.

Salford has taken advantage of the

flexibility offered by Alma’s configuration options in many ways that would have required external consultants or additional licenses in the past. Staff have set up their own integrations with external interfaces, including RFID. They have configured rules to allow for online fine payments. Library staff can edit patron letters to include desired wording; for example, they added text to promote elections for student union. Alma gives them easier ways to communicate with their users.

Configuration control allowed Salford to test a proposal to eliminate most fines. Staff were able to set up scenarios on Salford’s Alma Sandbox, try different options, and implement the changes. The staff felt comfortable that they could respond quickly if there were any issues. There were no major problems, however.

Other functions where Salford staff enjoy the benefits of configuration control include: EDI record loading; batch changes, where the library staff can see their files and resolve problems if necessary; import profiles and normalization rules, now handled by the metadata librarian; adding new vendors; and, adding new users. For Salford, taking control means taking responsibility for setting priorities and enabling staff to perform needed changes in support of those priorities.

Access to Alma in the Cloud provides additional capabilities that support decision-making and strategic priorities. Alma allows the library staff to be mobile and has





enabled analyses of in-house usage of materials. With Alma on a tablet, staff can easily capture usage by walking through the building. Information about collection usage is important to support the Library's ongoing transition to consolidated collections. Staff can make informed decisions about which materials to move, store, or discard. Access to the Alma Cloud page also supports business continuity priorities with Alma's 24x7 monitoring and the transmission of emergency notifications when issues arise.

With their greater understanding of Alma configurations and their data, the Salford libraries are now in a stronger position to provide input into campus IT developments that affect them. They are better able to identify needs and issues, and can be more demanding and challenging in articulating what is required to improve their service to users.

Analytics for Management and Assessment

Salford was very interested in the capabilities of Alma Analytics. Their workflows were already streamlined, but they did not have good management information on whether their processes were efficient. With Alma Analytics, the Collections manager has a view of the department's activities and how well the library's suppliers are performing. Staff are setting up scheduled reports to pull together management information for all of their libraries. Salford can see that future developments in Alma Analytics will further support their efforts to provide good value for the University's investment in Alma.

In addition to management information, Salford expects to develop reports to analyze how well users are taking advantage of the libraries' services. There are national projects in the UK to collect data to assess library impact and to correlate use of the library with student success. Salford hopes to make more use of Analytics to extract this data.

Improved User Experience

Salford is a teaching university with a strong emphasis on students and the user experience. According to Angela Walker, Digital Library Manager, reducing the number of systems a student needs to use in order to find information was a primary goal when Salford selected Alma and Primo. The library removed the online catalog and created a one-stop shop for users on Primo. Alma workflows are visible to staff and students in Primo. Users can see their account information and follow the progress of new materials as they are processed and moved to their home location. Alma provides an audit trail for staff, making it easy to track materials in transit. New electronic resources purchases are quickly discoverable and accessible to users in Primo thanks to Alma's efficient e-resource acquisitions and management workflows.



Challenge Alma



The Salford libraries have begun an initiative they call “Challenge Alma.” The goal is to motivate and empower the staff to speak up and identify training needs, get involved in finding ways to take advantage of Alma functionality, and report problems. Staff are being challenged to engage with Alma, to rethink processes and workflows to realize its potential. They are looking at ways in which Alma can make a difference in their daily work. The initiative promotes communication and understanding.. As early adopters, Salford library staff are pleased to see how far Alma has come in its development and are celebrating their role in advancing Alma.