



Lancaster University and Ex Libris

Lancaster University is a public, research institution in the United Kingdom with faculties of Arts and Social Sciences, Health and Medicine, Science and Technology, and a Management School. Its student body numbers 13,300. Lancaster has a main library and two smaller libraries, one in Ghana, and a staff of 54 FTE. Library collections include 500,000 print volumes, 77,000 print journal volumes, over 70,000 e-books, and 44,000 e-journals.

Previous ILS/Systems: Ex Libris Aleph, SFX, MetaLib

Summary of Institutional Benefits:

- Alma gives staff power and control to work effectively
- Streamlined workflows enable staff to expand expertise for new initiatives
- Alma Analytics supports daily operations as well as large-scale projects

Moving to Alma

The decision to look for a new library system came during a time of transition for Lancaster University. Under new leadership, the University had ambitions to improve its rankings and had begun a period of reinvention and innovation. The Library wanted to play a part in this transformation and put forth a vision and plan for a cutting edge, digital library by the year 2020. The Library's vision included more self-service options for users, leading to less clerical, transaction-based staffing. A more flexible management system would support this vision as well as staff restructuring to gain expertise for open access initiatives and research data management. Alma was the most developed and forward-looking system available. The consolidated digital vision of Alma, combining analytics, course reserves, and digital asset management, was a big selling point. Lancaster had already introduced Primo in 2010. Alma in the Cloud would promote new ways of working and efficiencies to advance the library's vision.

Impact of Alma: Extending Power to Colleagues

Lancaster has leveraged the streamlined Alma workflows to empower staff with more interesting and integrated work. Their goal has been to distribute work to the appropriate level of staff and to give those staff control over the workflow. With staff more involved in various processes, they are engaged in problem-solving and challenged to look for better ways to do their work.

In the Acquisitions area, library assistants are importing quality records at the time of ordering, speeding the processing of orders. Workflows and staffing for e-books are now integrated with print units, with ordering and activating processes for e-books paralleling the ordering and receiving processes for print.

This wider access to Alma workflows has led to a greater understanding of e-books and higher-quality work available for this level of staff. The ability to use the Community Zone (CZ) records for



“Alma has extended, democratized, and widened the range of people in control of the work”

David Summers, Deputy Director of Library Services

e-book ordering and activation has simplified the workflows, and the use of import profiles to re-link active CZ portfolios with good quality local bibliographic records has improved the discoverability of the resources purchased for library patrons.

Acquisitions staff now process rush purchase requests within 24 hours and e-books within 48 hours from ordering to activation.

With Acquisitions staff importing high quality bibliographic records and managing the workflows for e-books, Lancaster’s small professional Metadata team has been able to take on extra responsibilities requiring their more advanced skills while redistributing more routine tasks to the department’s library assistants. Inventory management has moved entirely to the library assistants, who were recently able to manage the Alma processes for a significant weeding project. By handling the uploading of files and running withdrawal routines, the staff reduced the collection by 20% over a 12-month period. Metadata professional staff have learned to modify Alma configurations and write normalization rules. They have developed expertise with creating sets and running batch processes to change material types, locations, and loan policies for a major relocation of materials during the library renovation project. Metadata staff are now able to concentrate on implementing RDA and investigating the potential of BIBFRAME and linked data. They have begun to work on metadata for Open Access initiatives and the Institutional Repository.

Lancaster’s fulfillment environment is heavily self-service. The staff are

very positive about Alma’s request workflows, including hold shelf lists, pickup lists, and transit lists. They find resource-sharing easy to use, with opportunities to involve more staff in handling the workflow. The fulfillment staff appreciate the improved communication with students through Alma’s weekly patron activity report and the ability to save e-mails as attachments. Lancaster eliminated fines for non-recalled books and changed many loan policies; staff were able to make the necessary configuration adjustments themselves, without support from Ex Libris.

Analytics

According to John Krug, Systems and Analytics Manager, Alma Analytics was a priority to enable Lancaster to move toward more evidence-based librarianship. His role has evolved; John can now look beyond maintaining operational tasks and focus more on strategic, analytical work. John calls the empowering of staff to develop and run their own reports, “trickle-down analytics.” He started out re-creating the reports needed for daily operations by working through the process together with the staff. As they gained Alma Analytics skills, the staff began to develop their own reports and now ask for help only when needed.

All teams have taken advantage of the flexibility and power of Analytics to support daily operations as well as special needs. The library renovation and stock management project required analysis of previous usage activity in order to select appropriate collections for tempo-





rary locations and to assign spaces for materials. The building project also required a reduction in inventory and Alma Analytics provided the data needed to identify candidates for weeding. Staff were also able to examine the effects of the location changes on loans.

Lancaster runs numerous reports on a regular basis, including: daily fulfillment statistics, use of digital titles, long overdue items, fines and fees; daily budget reports for monographs and serials, allocations, payments, and free balances; and, materials added by format and call number. Staff commented that all the data they need is available and they can easily combine subject areas, filter, edit, and drill down to very specific statistics.

Lancaster noted the power of the advanced repository search to create sets and run jobs against them. They create local collections for e-books and identify sets of PDA records. Using the combination of Analytics and advanced search, staff can respond to complex queries from faculty. Alma makes use of all the data in MARC records for reporting, including the codes and values in 008.

Alma Empowerment

Masud Khokhar, Head of Digital Innovation, points out that “Alma comes with more than just Alma, it also supports other services around it.” Systems staff can integrate Alma and Analytics reports with Primo or other systems via API. Masud points to the power of the Alma Developers Network – the extent of services offered and the ability to test integrations and APIs, adding to the control Alma offers to library staff.

Alma has allowed Lancaster library staff to develop additional skills and Alma's workflow integration has enabled everyone to do more; there are no more one-dimensional jobs.