

Abertay University

Quest for Efficiency
Leads to Deeper Campus
Engagement



Abertay University

Needing a better way to manage course resources and help students find readings, Abertay University library implemented the Leganto course resource list solution - leading to greater library efficiency, better student engagement with readings, and deeper relationships with academic staff.

 **ExLibris** Leganto

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Jean McGuinness, Abertay University



About Abertay University

Located in Dundee, Scotland, Abertay University is the number one institution in Europe for computer games degrees. With a rich history going back to 1888 when it was founded as Dundee Technical Institute, Abertay is a small university with approximately 4,000 students and 180 academic staff. Courses are offered in a diverse range of fields by the University’s four academic schools – Design and Informatics; Social and Health Sciences; Science Engineering and Technology, and Dundee Business School. Abertay is also a Scottish leader in Widening Access to HE and has particularly strong links to the college sector.

Small Requests, Huge Inefficiencies

At Abertay University, helping students with their course readings uncovered signs that there was a systemic problem. As Jean McGuinness, Library Services Team Leader explains: “Students would turn up at the inquiry desk, saying ‘My lecturer recommended this book. I can't find it.’ Or ‘I don't know what to read for this module, can you help me find some materials?’ Either they weren't finding the item, or they weren't finding the reading list at all.”

These simple requests were turning into full-fledged investigations. “Recommended readings were in lots of different places all at once,” she relates. “They could be within the virtual learning environment, in lecture slides, in program handbooks, in the module descriptor — not easy for the students to find. Often, the title or author name was wrong. Sometimes the library didn't have the item at all, which was a big problem.”

The work required was laborious. “The academic librarian for each school would go into the VLE, look at module descriptors and handbooks, anywhere the lecturer might have recommended readings. We had to search to see what was available, while having vendor platforms open to see where we could buy ebooks and so on. It was a very resource-intensive, manual process to gather all that information and order materials where needed. Lots of spreadsheets.”

Simpler Workflows, Easy for Students and Staff

The search for a solution led to a demo of the Leganto course resource list solution. “We looked at the workflows for ourselves, but also for the students and academic staff,” recalls McGuinness. “It looked easy to use.”

At the time, the library was in the process of moving to Ex Libris Primo and Alma. “It all came together beautifully for us,” she states. “That we could use the functionality within Alma to drive Leganto and vice versa was a crucial factor. We're a relatively small university, with a small library team, technical team, and a corporate information systems team. Yet we have to do all the things the library staff at bigger universities have to do. Knowing that the integrations already worked and were easy to set up was a big advantage for us.”

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Better Management Information

With Leganto in place, says McGuinness, “Overall workflows are simpler, and we’re getting a lot more information to help us make decisions. For acquisitions and ordering, it’s easy for library staff to see that we don’t have enough copies, or that we need to change the loan period on the copies that we do have. We can also see the various courses where a resource is used. It was a nightmare to get that information before we had Leganto.”

Leganto is also playing a key role in evaluating library holdings. “In preparation for the next phase of refurbishing the library, we’re doing a huge withdrawal and stock-editing exercise,” she reports. “The information about items on reading lists has been invaluable. It’s easier to find out why we might need to keep an item than ever before. We also run reports on items that haven’t been borrowed in so many years and interestingly, some of those items are on reading lists. That gives us an opportunity to go to academic staff and suggest that you might want to replace those items with something else.”

Streamlining Copyright Compliance

Leganto will also help in other ways, according to McGuinness. “We already work closely with lecturers to ensure the use of book chapters and journal articles does not infringe copyright and advise them to use links rather than PDFs. Once implemented, the Leganto integration with the CLA Digital Content Store (DCS) will enable library staff to search for licensed digitised PDF extracts and automatically embed a secure link in the reading list. This should streamline our current workflows and will give us even more confirmation that we are fully compliant with copyright.”

38% Increase in Library Resource Use

“We have 268 modules running this term, and 84% of them have a reading list,” McGuinness recounts. “That’s much, much higher than we’ve had with any previous method we’ve used to make reading lists available.” And the library has definitely seen more resource use. “Our overall loans for physical items went up by 38% in 2017 compared to 2016, and e-book use went up by the same amount. Whether that’s all due to Leganto, I’m not 100% sure, but if it isn’t a factor, it’s an extraordinary coincidence.”

The library’s goal is to see Leganto used in 100% of the modules for which reading lists are relevant. Sharing feedback from students gathered in module surveys is one of the means by which the library is encouraging adoption among academic staff. “In the short space of time that we’ve been using Leganto, reading lists have become a student expectation,” explains McGuinness. She shares a typical comment: “‘There is no list in this course, why not?’ It’s actually gone beyond that, to students asking why there aren’t more journal articles in the list. Students are not only expecting the reading-list links to be there, they’re looking more critically at the content in the lists.”

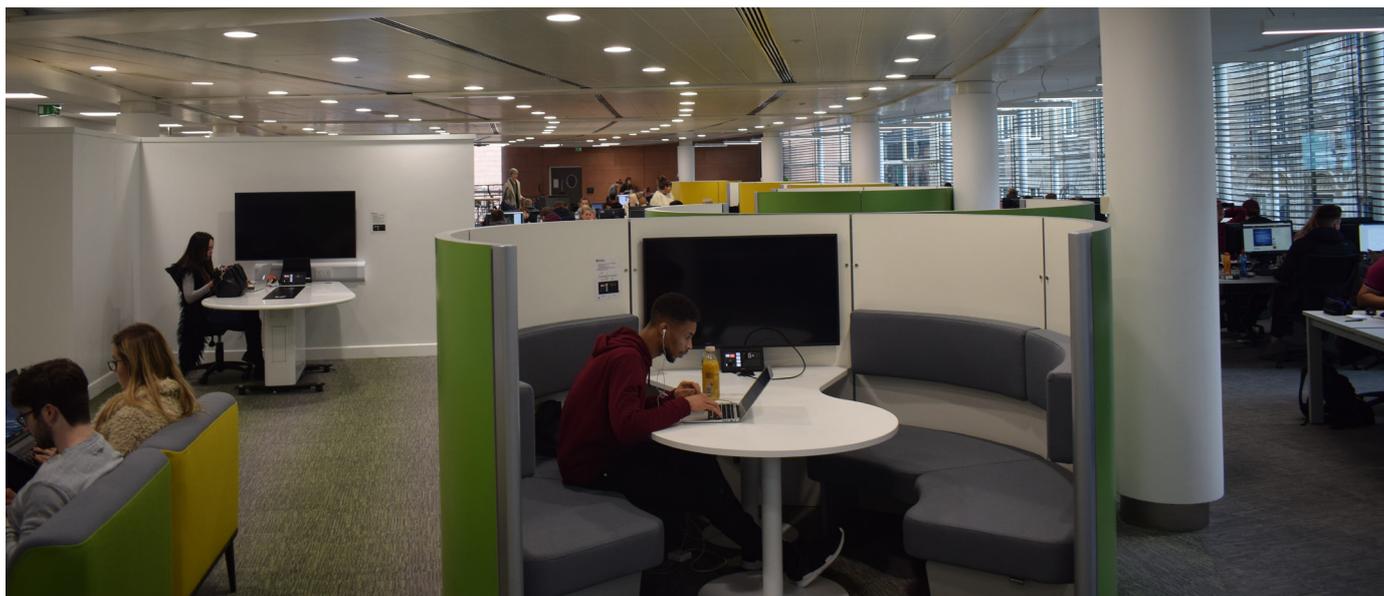


Deeper, Wider Campus Engagement

What about the academic staff? “The way we’re presenting Leganto is that it can make their life easier and has a big impact on the student experience. I was showing Leganto to one of our lecturers and pointed out where he could see how many times an item had been used. That led to a conversation about how we could get students to read more.”

In the big picture, McGuinness declares, Leganto has raised the profile of the library. “In the past, academic staff might have contacted us to arrange information literacy sessions or ask about availability of certain items or journals, but they didn’t really interact with us about the broader issues. Using Leganto has generated communication and engagement with a wider range and a much bigger number of academic staff.

“The staff are keen to emphasize the value of the library in supporting learning and teaching. I think it’s true with a lot of universities — the library is often seen as a physical entity, the building with books in it. Having Leganto is bringing the focus back to what the library really is, which is delivering resources and providing service.”



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