Alma Advantages

Alma is the culmination of an Ex Libris initiative launched in 2007 to develop a new kind of library system. Ex Libris understood that economically driven decisions are becoming increasingly important in the library market and, as a result, efficiency and reducing the total cost of ownership were the primary drivers in designing Alma.

Developed in partnership with leading academic libraries, Alma streamlines procedures by incorporating the management of all resources – electronic, digital, and print - into one system. Provided on a software-as-a-service (SaaS) basis, Alma enables libraries to reduce the burden of implementing software updates. As a result, the library can focus more of its resources on supporting the academic objectives of the university. Finally, best-in-class analytics show libraries exactly how their resources and services are being used and help managers make effective, data-driven decisions.

Together, the Ex Libris Primo discovery and delivery system, the Rosetta system for the long-term preservation of digital assets, the Leganto system for managing course resource lists, the Esploro system for maximizing visibility, efficiency, and compliance of research activities, and the Alma library management solution constitute a platform for transforming the collection-focused library into an essential, service-focused component of a research institution.

An Easy Move to Alma

Alma is not a big capital project, and you may find that the annual subscription is not much different from what you’re already paying for your solutions. When you add your current hardware and maintenance overheads into the equation, Alma might well be considerably less expensive - even before you’ve taken into account all the efficiency and workflow advantages that Alma gives you.

As for implementation, you don’t need to tie up a large part of your staff in a time-consuming process. A cloud-based solution, Alma is quick to implement, requiring little time from your staff to bring it into production.

The SaaS Model

Alma’s SaaS model ensures that monthly updates are made with no involvement from your team, enabling them to focus on other important activities.

With data centers across the globe, your data will be stored in the center closest to your institution, ensuring, for example, that European data stays in Europe. Each data center meets the most rigorous standards related to security, high availability, and cloud computing and complies with local data privacy and security laws. In addition to a dedicated security officer, our dedicated cloud team monitors operations on a 24 x 7 x 365 basis. For additional information, see https://www.exlibrisgroup.com/services/cloud-services/.

A Unified Design

Unlike services that are essentially a collection of separate software environments linked together, Alma provides one service that consolidates the functions needed to manage all your electronic, digital, and print resources. Alma supports the entire suite of library operations - selection, acquisition, metadata management, digitization, and fulfillment - for the full spectrum of library materials, regardless of format or location. By unifying management and workflows across diverse collection and locations, Alma generates cost savings for individual institutions as well as consortia, and helps your library
work more efficiently and effectively.

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### Analytics and Data-Driven Decision Making

Alma includes a strong suite of analytics tools that collect and analyze many kinds of data, such as cost and usage statistics, to help library staff and managers make informed decisions. Working behind the scenes, Alma Analytics enables libraries to extract and interpret the information that they require from across the library. For example, library staff can monitor the usage of resources from a specific vendor and also examine the relationship between expenditures on subscriptions packages and their usage.

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### Customization

Alma was designed with the understanding that each library has its own requirements for a library solution. To fulfill the specific needs of every institution, a business-process engine sits behind all the workflows in Alma and enables each library to set its own rules and customize its automated workflows. System-managed workflows enable Alma to automate many workflows that currently require manual work. As a result, staff members need to deal only with exceptions that they have previously defined and tasks that require decision making.

Information in Alma is interconnected, allowing a user to, for example, navigate from a purchase order line to the linked vendor, fund, or license.

Each page in Alma displays a persistent link to the task list, helping staff keep focused on the jobs at hand. Everything within Alma - from the personalized dashboard to the ever-present menu bar to the search box - has been designed with built-in flexibility to suit the workflows of each library and librarian.

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### Shared Data: The Institution and Community Zones

To promote sharing across the Alma community, Alma’s metadata-management environment supports a Community Zone containing shared metadata provided by libraries around the world, including national libraries. While they keep ownership of their metadata and authority files, the Community Zone allows open access to the data. As part of our commitment to an open-data policy, Ex Libris has set up an advisory group that is tasked with safeguarding it.

Alma’s Collaborative Networks enable consortia and individual institutions to collaborate in more streamlined and efficient ways. The network of collaborations enables institutions to partner with peers to achieve goals. In addition, Alma’s Institution Zone makes a library’s local catalogs visible only to users of the specific library.

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### An Open System

Using web-based open interfaces, you can integrate Alma seamlessly with other systems, including external campus systems, and you can develop adapters and apps to meet your institution’s unique needs. All the information about Alma’s web services and integration options resides in a single place, on the Alma Developer’s Platform website. There, you can view and download APIs, web services, examples, documentation, and integration tools.

Ex Libris envisions a future in which the library integrates not only with traditional campus (enterprise) environments (such as financial and student information systems), but also interacts with e-research environments and the other components of the dynamic scholarly communications infrastructure.
Collaboration

Alma institutions can quickly and easily share setups and configurations with the worldwide Alma community, contributing to and copying from the community.

Normalization rules, cataloging templates, import profiles, publishing profiles, and more can be contributed to the Community Zone and copied from the Community Zone, after which they can, if necessary, be modified for local use.