

# Optimizing student success: Leveraging technology to connect libraries, faculty and students



Survey results reveal students need faculty and libraries working together to provide easy, no-cost access to course reading materials.

**ExLibris**  
Part of **Clarivate**

## Introduction

**Universities around the world** are feeling a post-pandemic financial pinch. Increasingly, they are challenged to show value in return for the time and money students invest in them. Libraries, with their vast collections, technology and capital budgets, are among the areas most vulnerable to budget cuts – but in their day-to-day interaction with students and faculty across disciplines, they are also positioned to directly impact student success. This is a **powerful return on investment in alignment with nearly all university missions**.

So, how do libraries impact student success? **Clarivate commissioned wide-ranging global surveys to gain insight** into this elusive question. We partnered with Library Journal to field separate surveys of librarians and faculty to understand their perspectives. These surveys closely examined how faculty and the library perceive and work with each other. In a separate study, we partnered with research organization Alterline to survey students on what they feel **they need to be successful** – particularly when it comes to **accessing and using course materials**.

In this paper, we explore the findings of those surveys and what is revealed when we compare student, faculty and library attitudes to course resources. Since **access to materials plays such a fundamental role in how libraries support students**, we focus particularly on barriers faculty and library staff experience in integrating library resources into coursework – and why, **for students, it is imperative to their success** that these barriers are overcome.

In looking at these surveys holistically, **we also uncover a fundamental misunderstanding faculty and library staff have about student engagement with course materials: It's less about lack of interest than prohibitive access and cost of these materials**. We conclude with some observations and recommendations to facilitate better collaboration between faculty and libraries to meet the explicit needs of students.

As one UK student surveyed within the Alterline report put it: **“Lecturers and the library should work together to provide a wider range of reading material and course resources to better facilitate student success in their assignments and examinations.”**

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**“Provide free access to all mandatory readings. If a required or highly recommended reading is not available in the library/for free, provide some important quotes/a summary of the text for students who can't purchase it.”**

**Australia student, Arts**

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## Barriers to better collaboration: the faculty perspective

According to the Library Journal survey of faculty, 65% of faculty reported they “always” or “usually” integrate library resources with course work, and when setting course requirements, seven out of ten noted they “always” or “usually” consider the availability of library resources.

However, **80% of faculty have experienced barriers** to integrating more library resources into course work:

- **34%** say the library **doesn't have the necessary resources** they want
- **13%** say the library deliberately **refuses to purchase** their requests
- **25%** said coordinating with the library is **too much hassle**
- **20%** said there was a **lack of communication**/input from the library
- **12%** said there were other barriers and among write-in responses, faculty largely **indicated that the students were the barrier to faculty making more use of library resources.**

## Barriers to better collaboration: the library perspective

Meanwhile, nearly all library respondents said that **“providing library resources to support coursework” is one of the most significant ways they contribute to student success.** The biggest obstacles libraries have in making a greater contribution to student success are time, money and staff. One-half (52%) of libraries noted that “lack of communication from faculty about course needs” also is an obstacle. Additionally, **37% found “lack of interest from students”** to be a barrier for libraries in contributing to academic success.

In contrast to the faculty perceptions of difficulty in working with the library, most library staff find faculty receptive to collaboration: Eight out of ten libraries believe that faculty in their institution are receptive to the idea of integrating library resources with coursework, with 22% saying they are “very” receptive.



**80% of faculty report some kind of barrier to integrating more library resources into coursework.**

## The student perspective: the impact of cost on academic success

On average, **the number of students who report reading all assigned course work is disappointingly low at 31%**, and 36% said they read more than half but not all. But it's not necessarily due to lack of interest as some faculty and library staff presumed.

**Nearly 70% of students surveyed noted the high cost of course materials can have a negative impact on their success as a student.** If the cost of course materials is too high, students are most likely to obtain an old version of the materials (48%). This is followed by not reading the materials (39%).

**The majority of students (63%) said the cost of course materials is a critical factor when determining enrollment in a class or module.** The expense of course materials has deterred 1 in 5 students from enrolling in a particular class or module.

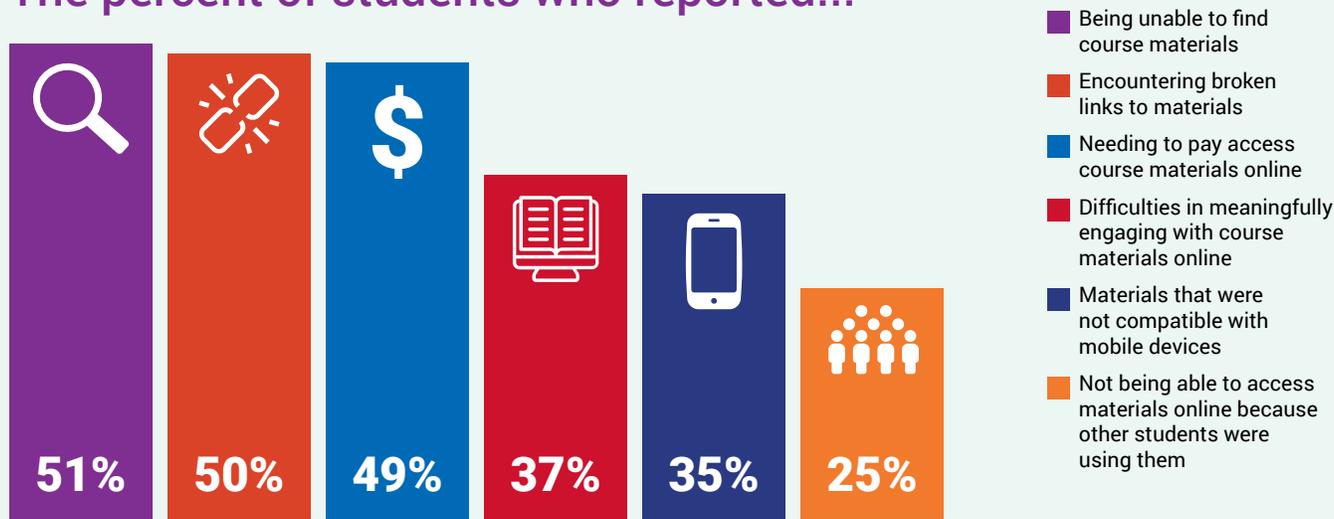
**The key resources that students want to see more of are links to online sources and resources available from institution's library;** PDFs of books, book chapters or articles; and videos.

Students are likely to prefer more online course materials, with 82% saying they would like more of at least one of the online material types, compared to 61% who said they would like more of at least one of the offline material types.

“Usually, material that comes with a cost are high quality academic sources that provide useful and meaningful insight into a topic. Not being able to look at it puts you in a position where you're missing out on something that can help you to develop further.”

UK student, Social Sciences

### The percent of students who reported...



# Analysis and recommendations

## Streamline access and collaboration

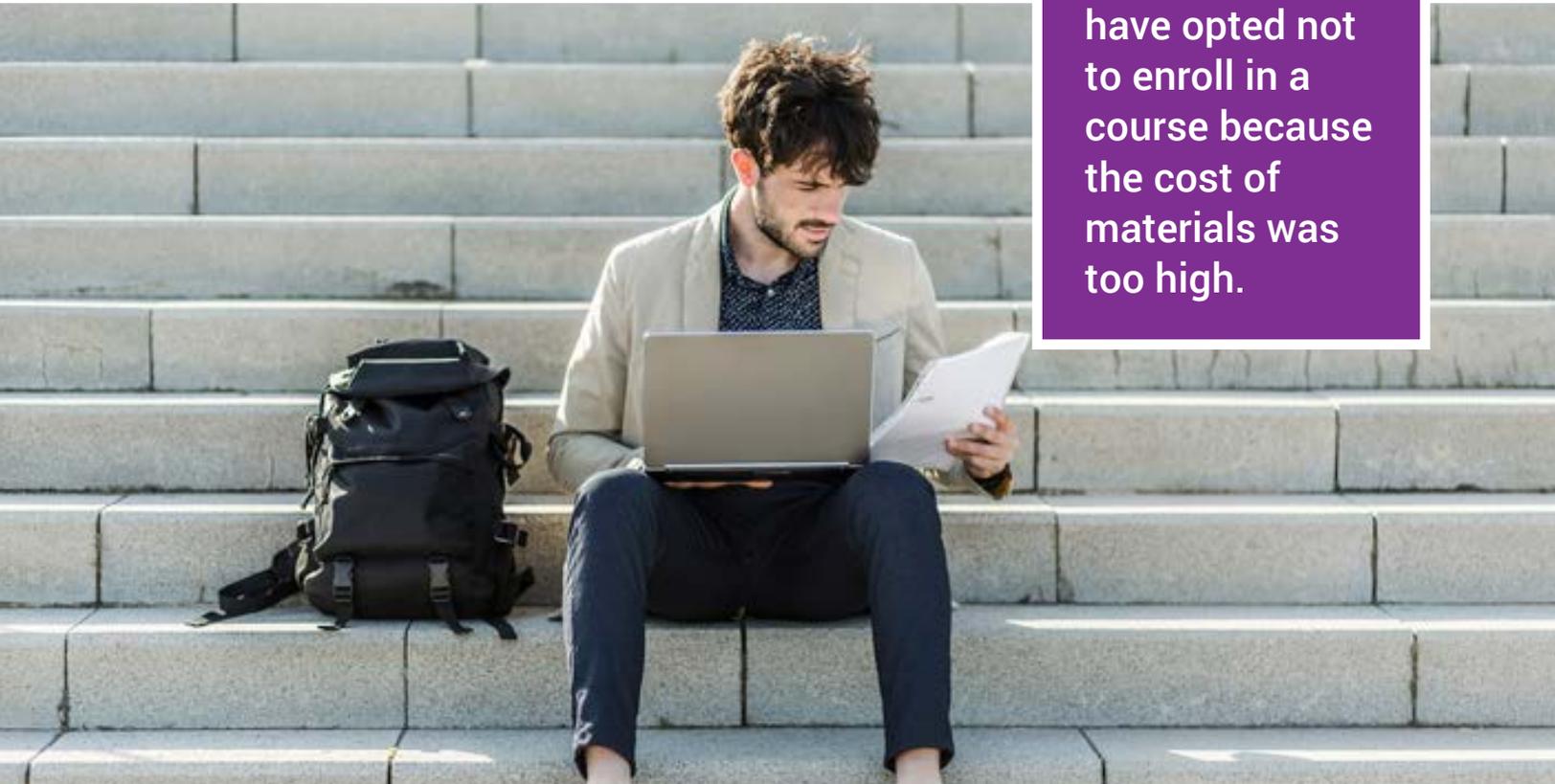
**Students' engagement in course materials is key to students' academic success;** however, students across the globe face barriers in accessing these resources. The results of these surveys surface a mandate for faculty and libraries: **Improve collaboration to ensure students can surface available library resources quickly.**

The results of such collaboration can also demonstrate to stakeholders the commitment libraries and faculty have for students' financial health by opting for resources that are available in the library's collection or as open access content.

A current challenge librarians reported in the *Library Journal* survey is the time and effort it takes to foster effective connection and communication with faculty. A potential solution can be found in ongoing advancements in technology developed to **enhance and simplify collaboration between faculty and libraries in support of student success.**

Resources like the **Leganto® course resource list solution** from Ex Libris, part of Clarivate, are designed specifically to **streamline access to course materials, reduce their cost to students and make it easier for libraries and faculty to collaborate.**

Embedded in the institution's learning management system, the Leganto solution is tightly integrated with the Ex Libris Alma® library services platform, as well as with library discovery services, mobile apps, citation tools, and other campus systems. The result is **an integrated system that connects faculty and students with the library's collections.**



**22% of students have opted not to enroll in a course because the cost of materials was too high.**

## How Leganto helps

Libraries with Leganto offer their faculty an intuitive course materials development system. As they select their course materials, Leganto checks for availability in the library, including resources that list creators have uploaded or found elsewhere (through publisher websites, scholarly databases, or online bookstores). If a resource is available through the library, the Leganto solution automatically creates a link that enables students to access the resource through the library's subscriptions or provides information about physical holdings. If it's not available freely, Leganto suggests comparable no-cost materials, making it **simple for faculty to eliminate a barrier to access**.

Leganto is a robust solution that **highlights libraries' institutional impact and value** by:

- **Showcasing** library collections, expertise and services
- **Reducing the cost of course materials** for students and schools by leveraging library-owned resources, open educational resources (OER), and open-access materials
- Developing library collections according to **students' needs**
- Increasing library involvement in teaching and learning through **automated workflows** for provisioning course materials
- Reducing the risks associated with **copyright** infringement
- Supporting faculty in building lists of resources that include all material types and leverage resources for **active learning**.
- **Modernizing the students experience** by enabling access to all course materials in one place and from any device



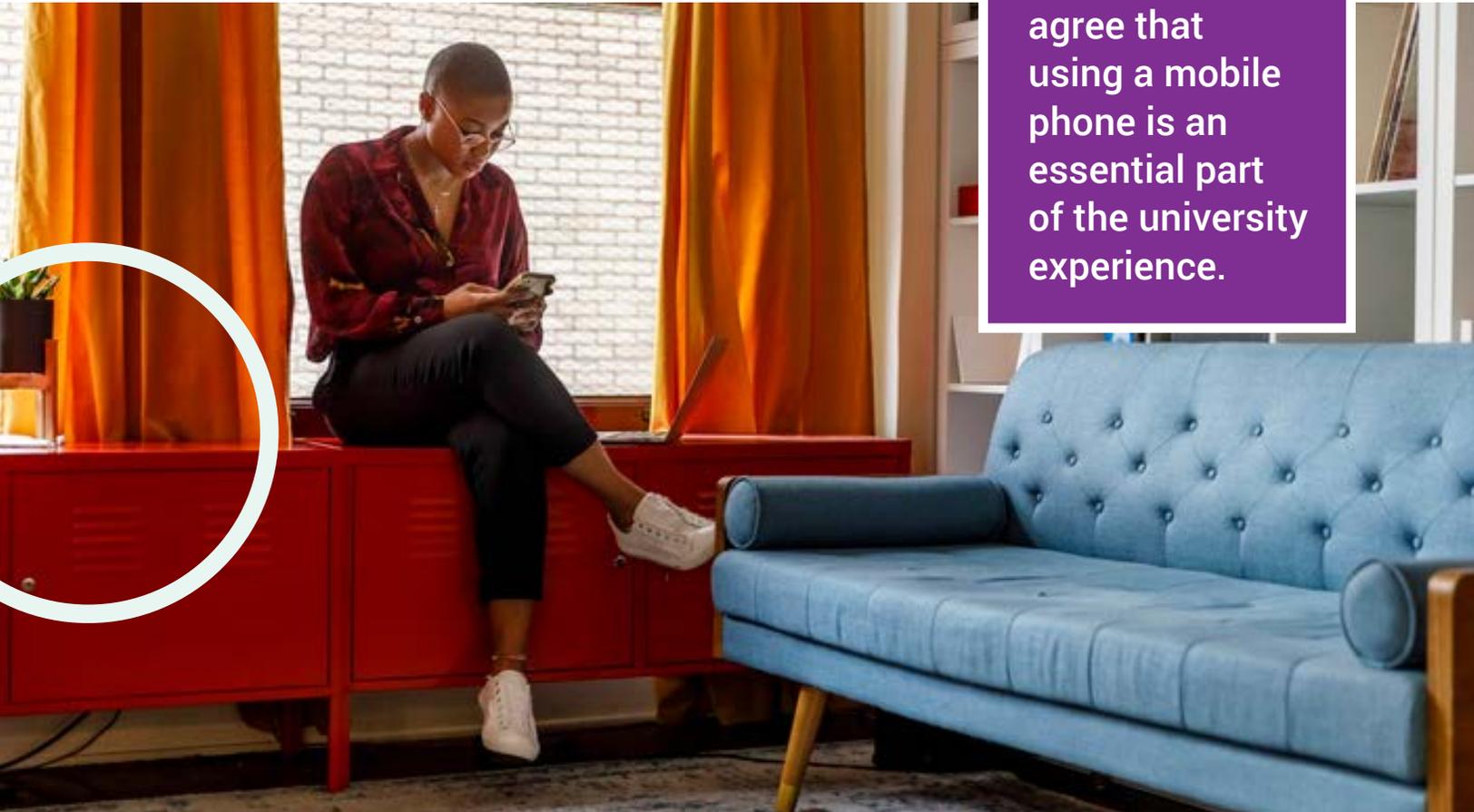
## Broaden outreach to students

While collaborating with faculty to expose students to library resources is critical, connecting with students directly is similarly important. In the Library Journal surveys, more than a third of librarians and 12% of faculty noted that a barrier to students using the library was their lack of interest. Making the library more accessible and more prominent in students' daily lives is a step forward. Technology can again provide a solution by **placing the library where students spend much of their time: on their phones.**

According to the Alterline report, nearly three-quarters of students agreed that a mobile phone is an essential part of their university experience, while 54% indicated that **they commonly use smartphones to read course materials.** Phones are even more important for part-time students. They were among the least likely to use a laptop or desktop computer to do the reading, and they are more likely to prefer using their phone, tablet, or e-book reader than their full-time counterparts.

New apps like campusM Library from Ex Libris deliver the personalized digital experience that students have come to expect. **campusM Library embeds access to library services and materials, along with other campus resources, in students' established routines,** encouraging communication and campuswide student engagement.

For example, campusM Library supports students' independent learning with self-checkout, room booking that makes it easy to find a quiet place to study or collaborate with others. By surfacing institutional resources and tailoring results to each user, campusM Library **makes it easier for students to access the right services to be successful** – especially among those who count their phones as their preferred device over laptops, tablets and e-book readers.



73% of students agree that using a mobile phone is an essential part of the university experience.

## Optimize student success with technology

The last few years have made it clear that the future of higher education is hard to predict. But one thing is consistently certain: a top priority for faculty and academic libraries is supporting students in successfully achieving their academic goals. In a fast-evolving, digitally dependent world, this means **library systems that meet the changing needs of students today – and into the future – require agility and technological innovation.**

In reviewing the results of the surveys discussed here, improved collaboration between faculty and libraries can make a significant difference in the success of students. With librarians and faculty already stretched, solutions like Leganto that automate processes and connections make it easier to work together in serving their shared goal of helping students achieve their goals.

Adopting a unified strategy bridges service gaps and helps libraries amplify their presence on campus. **Dive into our [complimentary whitepaper](#) and explore how academic librarians have demonstrated the library's role in boosting institutional worth, empowering both users and staff with efficient library solutions.**

### Sources

[Impact of Academic Libraries on Student Success: Survey Report](#)

[What students want and need: How to deliver course materials to drive student success](#)

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“Keep providing course materials, keep adding content for the modules and reading material. Links to helpful websites and videos we can watch to enhance our knowledge on the subjects”

**UK student, Social Sciences**

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