

Linda Hall Library

The transition that
changed everything



LINDA HALL LIBRARY
SCIENCE • ENGINEERING • TECHNOLOGY

Alma's centralized collection management and process automation introduced efficiency, insights and comprehensiveness across the library, saving staff time and helping them better serve their patrons.



“Alma helped bring our science and technology library into the 21st century, and allowed us to meet our patrons where they are and deliver resources in a way that we had never been able to do before”

Jane Davis, Vice President for Access and Digital Services, Linda Hall Library



About Linda Hall Library:

Linda Hall Library is an independent, privately funded science, technology and engineering research library in Kansas City, Missouri. Founded in 1946, it is free to the public and has recently begun serving virtual patrons as well. Recognized globally for its unique collections, the library is home to about 1.5 million items, including over half a million monograph volumes, approximately 100,000 rare books, and more than 48,000 journal titles in science, engineering, technology and their histories. The collection covers 82 languages and material from 1472 to the present. The Linda Hall Library staff is just under 75 people.

The Time to Transition

Linda Hall Library initiated a three-year strategic plan to enhance its connection to the Kansas City community and beyond. Achieving this objective required adopting new approaches to many core functions, the integration of emerging technologies, providing real-time and on-demand digital access to important works, and the addition of virtual platforms.

The integrated library system Linda Hall Library was using could no longer fully meet their needs.

Library leadership recognized that they needed a solution for more effective and efficient management of rare books, serials, patron requests, and digitization. The decision was made to upgrade the library management system to a more modern platform, which would save staff time and help them serve patrons better. To that end, it was unanimously agreed to migrate to a cloud-based system.

A Major Shift

Linda Hall Library issued a public call for proposals. Ex Libris, part of Clarivate, presented its Alma library services platform for unified management of print, electronic, and digital materials. Everybody in the library who would be using the new system or be affected by it was invited to provide their feedback. After hearing what each vendor had to offer, the library staff was overwhelmingly in favor of Alma.

The library began evaluating workflows and training staff to use Alma long before it went live, so that the staff would be familiar with the system and the transition would be seamless. The Ex Libris implementation team worked closely with library leadership to determine what processes could and should transfer to the new system as well as those that needed to be rethought or streamlined. Staff members were involved in shaping the new workflows, increasing their engagement and personal investment in a successful migration.

With Alma's cloud-based convenience, the migration and necessary reorganization of items continued even when the entire staff had to stay at home due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Even those who normally worked the stacks were drafted to assist with the implementation and thus remain employed.

“It has been a really big shift,” according to Jane Davis, Vice President for Access and Digital Services at Linda Hall Library, “yet this was the smoothest implementation I’ve ever been through.”

Even More Than Expected

Alma’s centralized collection management and process automation capabilities addressed all the key issues Linda Hall Library sought to resolve with the transition to a more comprehensive platform – and more.

An effective migration to Alma simplified the management of the library’s extremely large and dynamic collection of print journals. The library receives about 20,000 issues from up to 2,000 active print serial titles every year, each one of which has to be checked in and cataloged. Alma’s automated workflows have streamlined the intake of new issues and titles, considerably reducing the time and effort needed to handle such a large volume of journal issues.

The bibliographic data of the library’s large collection of rare books were standardized and incorporated in the unified Alma catalog for easier search and organization.

Linda Hall Library was already using Ex Libris Primo for discovery, but its functionality was exponentially improved by the seamless integration with Alma. As the vast majority of the Linda Hall Library collection is closed-stack, patrons expressed great satisfaction with the fact that their requests for items are now automated and quickly fulfilled, in contrast to the time-consuming, multi-step manual process in the previous system.

As a library focused entirely on print materials, the library is not subscribed to any digital resource databases. However, Linda Hall Library regularly provides patrons with on-demand digitization services to make research more convenient. Alma has made it possible to fulfill digitization requests that previously may not have been accepted, as they are now comprehensively and efficiently tracked, preventing needless duplication of effort and ensuring a more accurate record of library activity.

Alma Analytics makes it easy to create automated regular reports on all library activities, with robust statistics on

circulation, check-ins, new acquisitions, patron trends, specific collection usage, and more. Relevant staff members can have access to that information, with no need for another employee to create the report (a full-time job with the previous management system). Once a report is designed, it can be immediately run and shared as often as needed – daily, weekly, or monthly.

The analytics feature has also made the library’s accrual accounting faster and easier. Library managers are able to get a real-time picture of expenditures, available funds in each department, return on investment in various collections, and other cost and revenue details.

In the event of questions that arise when using Alma, Linda Hall Library staff turns to Ex Libris documentation and the product Knowledgebase. With these resources at their fingertips, they are able to resolve most issues independently in-house. When escalation is necessary for any reason, Ex Libris is quick to assist or provide in-depth clarifications.

Overall, the staff of Linda Hall Library is very pleased with the transition to Alma. In fact, some long-term staff have not just succeeded in adapting to the new platform, they have started suggesting ways to use it even more effectively.

“The biggest complaint we’ve had about Alma from library staff,” Jane said, “is that we didn’t get it earlier!”

Joining the Ex Libris Development Team

Alongside its free services, Linda Hall Library charges a fee for some document delivery and interlibrary loans. Once Rapido was introduced into the Ex Libris portfolio and integrated with Alma, the library decided to become a Rapido development partner.

The library team and Ex Libris are working on including fee-based lending in Rapido’s existing resource-sharing structure.

“We were concerned about how we could include our interlibrary loan model in our new Alma-based infrastructure,” Jane said. “It looks like we are getting exactly what we need - thanks to Ex Libris.”

About Ex Libris, Part of Clarivate

Ex Libris, part of Clarivate, is a leading global provider of cloud-based solutions that enable institutions and their users to create, manage, and share knowledge. In close collaboration with its customers and the broader community, Ex Libris develops solutions that increase library productivity, maximize the impact of research activities, enhance teaching and learning, and drive student mobile engagement. Ex Libris serves over 7,500 customers in 90 countries. For more information, see our [website](#) and join us on [LinkedIn](#), [YouTube](#), [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#).

