



Los Rios Libraries - Empowering Automation and Efficiency with Alma's Library Open Workflows

Overview

The Los Rios Community College District in California serves over 22,000 full-time-equivalent students across four colleges and a number of satellite campuses. The college library teams, though small, are dedicated to supporting curriculum and student needs with robust reserve and circulating collections, growing technology collections, and a wide range of electronic resources.

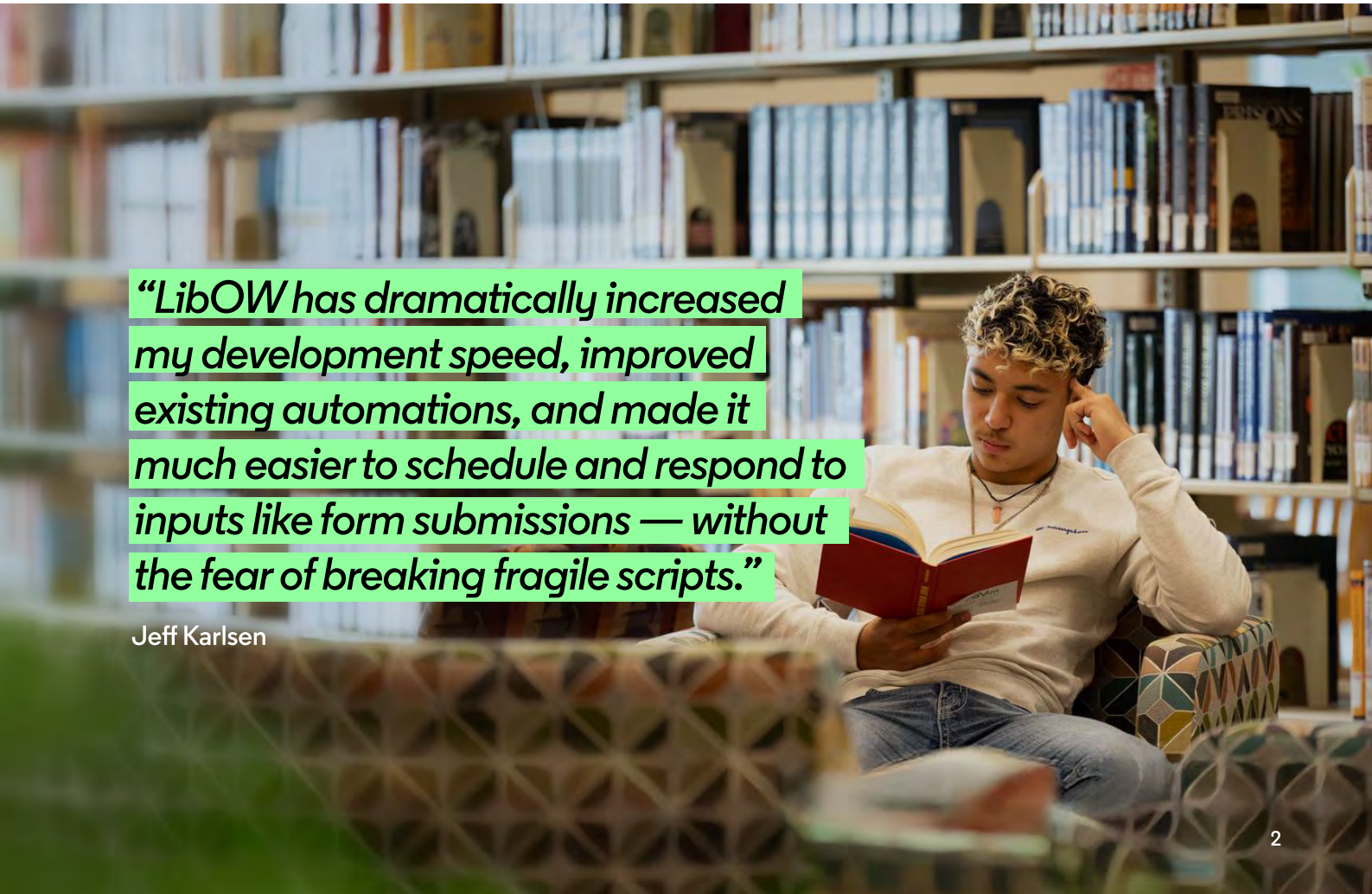
The district libraries collaborate closely within a shared Alma institution on systems, technical services, fulfillment, electronic resource management, Analytics, and discovery, often working together through committees. As part of the statewide Alma collaborative network, the libraries benefit from shared expertise and innovation.

Transforming workflows with Alma's Library Open Workflows (LibOW)

According to **Jeff Karlsen, Technical Services Librarian at Sacramento City College**, the district libraries previously relied on custom PHP and Python scripts to automate processes like updating item-level data or running API-driven tasks.

With LibOW, the Los Rios Libraries gained a powerful tool that made automation development faster, easier, and more reliable. The platform enabled workflows that had previously been unfeasible due to resource constraints, opening up new possibilities for integration and efficiency.

Although colleagues have yet to dive in, Karlsen sees LibOW as an opportunity to reduce reliance on technical experts and make workflows accessible to a wider group of staff.



“LibOW has dramatically increased my development speed, improved existing automations, and made it much easier to schedule and respond to inputs like form submissions — without the fear of breaking fragile scripts.”

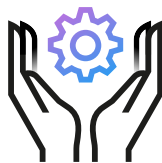
Jeff Karlsen

Key use cases implemented in LibOW



Bursar Integration

Automated checks between Alma and bursar records prevent fee discrepancies and protect students from unnecessary charges.



Item Tracking

LibOW updates transit reports automatically, reducing manual work and speeding delivery of materials to students.

These workflows, already implemented in LibOW, prevent student billing errors and reduce manual work, ensuring faster and more reliable delivery of services. They significantly reduce routine busywork for staff, speed up the development of automations and integrations, build confidence in adapting and refining processes, and create opportunities for broader staff involvement in technical work.

“I saw specific features I suggested implemented, which made me feel that our input truly mattered. It made me confident that, if this product remains a priority, it will continue to be improved.”

Jeff Karlsen

Collaboration with Ex Libris

Karlsen described the college’s role as a development partner for LibOW as highly positive and productive. Ex Libris developers were “extremely responsive,” actively listening to feedback from partners and rapidly incorporating suggestions into the product.

Looking Ahead

Karlsen would like to see expanded auditing features in LibOW — such as the ability to quickly identify which workflows use certain nodes — to make updates more seamless.

Final Thoughts

For the Los Rios Libraries, LibOW has proven to be a transformative tool that bridges the gap between technical ambition and limited resources.

Karlsen recommends LibOW to institutions of all sizes, particularly those eager to maximize their use of Alma APIs while minimizing reliance on scarce technical resources.

“It is extremely helpful to have a tool where, if I can map out the logic for some operation using Alma APIs, I can build the workflow step-by-step, testing as I go, despite my limited coding skills”.

Jeff Karlsen



About Ex Libris, part of Clarivate

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