



The Bavarian State Library's Journey with Alma's Library Open Workflows

Photo: BSB / H.-R. Schulz

*“Both coders and non-coders
can now work efficiently while
IT resources are freed for more
complex challenges.”*

Dr. Mathias Kratzer, Chief Information Officer


Introduction

When the Bavarian State Library (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek – BSB) migrated its systems to the cloud with Alma, the goal was to modernize infrastructure and free staff from the overhead of local database management, scripts, and manual jobs. Alma provided a robust, cloud-based platform for core library operations.

Yet, while Alma’s APIs are powerful, they remain primarily the domain of technically skilled staff. Library Open Workflows (LibOW) transformed this dynamic. It offered a cloud-based environment where scripts could

still be run to perform API requests, but just as importantly, it opened the door for staff across departments to design and run processes independently. With minimal initial support from IT, librarians could become self-sufficient, while IT could focus on more advanced technical challenges.

Recognizing this potential, BSB became one of the first Development Partners for LibOW — helping to shape the platform while gaining early access to its capabilities.



“For us at BSB, the flexibility struck me immediately — it added a level of customization and efficiency that supported our day-to-day work.”

Peter Heller, System Librarian

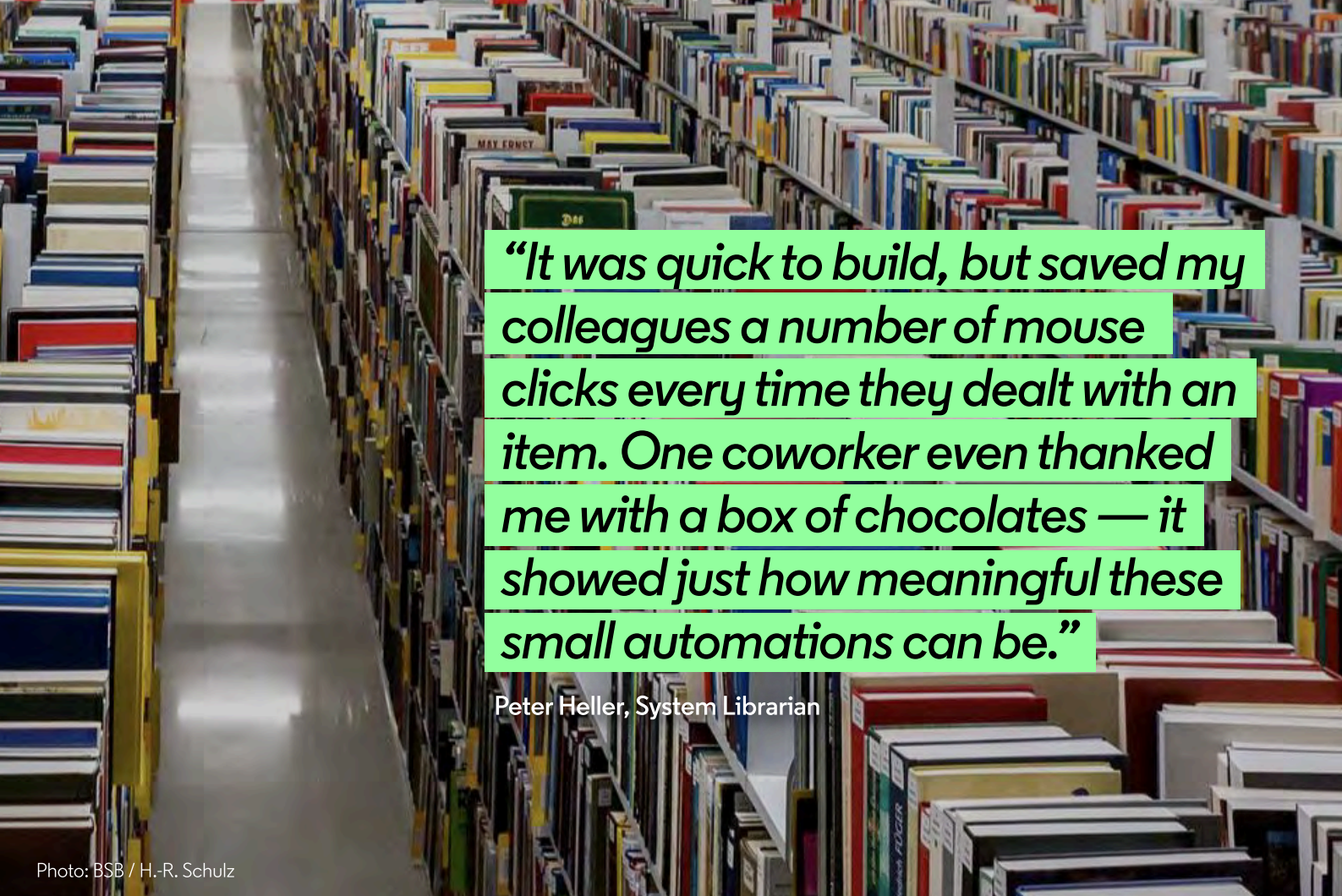


Photo: BSB / H.-R. Schulz

“It was quick to build, but saved my colleagues a number of mouse clicks every time they dealt with an item. One coworker even thanked me with a box of chocolates — it showed just how meaningful these small automations can be.”

Peter Heller, System Librarian

Flexibility, Faster Learning, and Real-World Impact

For System Librarian Peter Heller, LibOW stood out during a presentation at IGeLU (The International Group of Ex Libris Users) 2024. While Alma jobs efficiently handle large-scale updates, they apply uniform values across records. At BSB, some updates required greater variation. With LibOW, staff could process a single list where each line carried different values — all in one workflow.


That flexibility quickly translated into practical wins. One of the most popular examples was a workflow related to PO Lines.

While the early learning curve was sometimes challenging, adopting LibOW became easier thanks to community resources. Power Hours provided inspiration, blog posts gave practical examples, and within months documentation had expanded significantly.

Partnering with Ex Libris

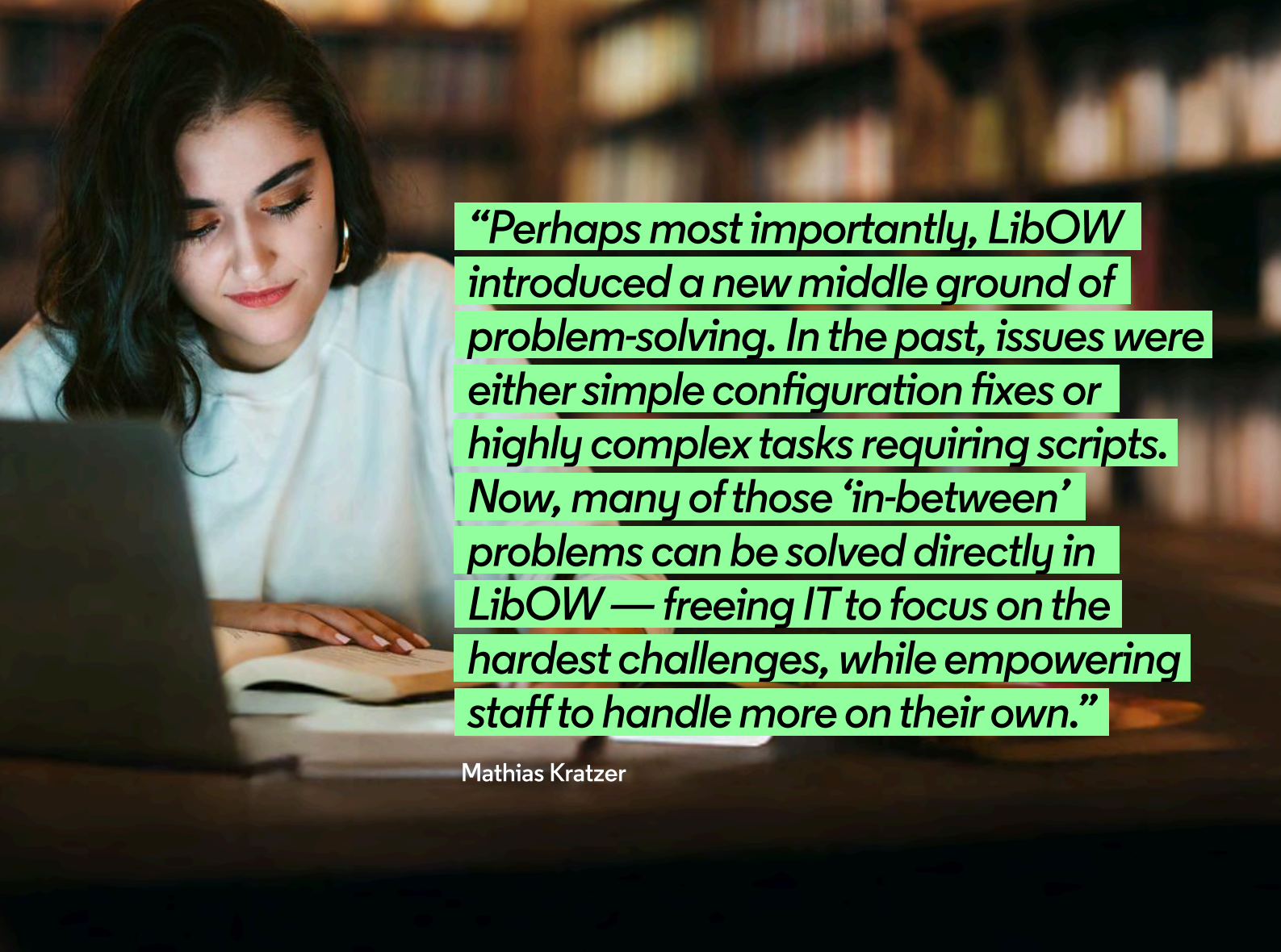
BSB's experience was shaped not only by the software itself, but also by close partnership with Ex Libris. As a Development Partner, BSB worked side by side with Ex Libris, receiving quick responses to questions and seeing their feedback incorporated directly

into new LibOW releases. This role gave staff the opportunity to contribute ideas that not only improved their own workflows, but also helped shape the evolution of LibOW for the Alma library community.



“As a customer, I was used to submitting enhancement requests and waiting. As a Development Partner, I could help shape the product — not just for us, but for the entire community.”

Mathias Kratzer



“Perhaps most importantly, LibOW introduced a new middle ground of problem-solving. In the past, issues were either simple configuration fixes or highly complex tasks requiring scripts. Now, many of those ‘in-between’ problems can be solved directly in LibOW — freeing IT to focus on the hardest challenges, while empowering staff to handle more on their own.”

Mathias Kratzer

Shaping Collaboration Beyond IT

From the outset, BSB made LibOW a collaborative effort. Administrators from nearly every department joined the project, tested workflows, and shared feedback.

This inclusivity shifted ownership. Workflows were no longer the exclusive domain of IT. Librarians and administrators gained the

confidence to create and test their own solutions, leading to more creativity, faster problem-solving, and stronger cross-department collaboration. The broader Ex Libris community further accelerated this progress by exchanging examples and success stories.

Conclusion

For the Bavarian State Library, Library Open Workflows has been more than a technical tool — it has been a catalyst for cultural change. Building on Alma's solid foundation, LibOW empowers both coders and non-coders, reduces bottlenecks, and fosters collaboration across departments. Staff are more confident and engaged, IT can focus on strategic initiatives, and the library benefits from shared expertise across the global community.

At BSB, LibOW is not just improving workflows — it is reshaping how staff work together and reimagining what is possible for libraries.

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](#).



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