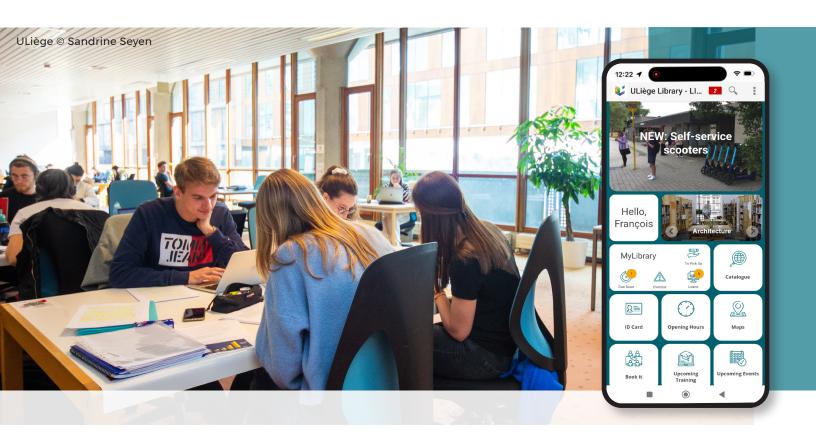


The University of Liège deploys Ex Libris Library Mobile app to create streamlined mobile gateway to its libraries



Patrons have begun to expect 24/7 library services. With Library Mobile, the University of Liège is empowering patrons to access digital services and resources at any time and on any device.





Executive Summary

An Ex Libris customer from 2006, the University of Liège (ULiège) libraries are committed to delivering seamless library experiences to their patrons. Disruptions to teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic and the heightened need for remote library services led ULiège libraries to launch their Ex Libris Library Mobile App in February 2022. With the app, ULiège librarians are offering patrons a single, mobile access point to key services that complements the libraries' overall integrated online experience strategy.

Key Takeaways

- 2,000 registered users since February 2022, with between 600 and 700 active monthly users
- My Account (Primo) is the app's most-used feature, followed by the LibCal spacebooking tile
- Collaborated with student associations and other university services to garner feedback and tweak features before the app's go-live
- Implementation team was small and was able to configure the app quickly with very little IT intervention

About the University of Liège

The University of Liège, or ULiège, is a major public university based in Liège, Wallonia, Belgium. The university, with four campuses in three cities, has 11 faculties and over 25,000 students. There are 5,500 employees at ULiège, including 1,400 academic staff and 3,000 researchers.

The ULiège library operates 15 branches across its various campuses and has 110 staff members. Strongly involved in promoting information literacy and open access, the library offers access to more than 700,000 ebooks and 83,000 electronic periodicals. In addition, library holdings include 6,500 manuscripts among approximately 1.5 million print resources.



ULiège © Michel Houet

Evolving the patron experience with a dedicated mobile app

Offering an overall seamless library experience is a top priority for ULiège libraries. The library website and the Ex Libris Primo discovery platform are strongly integrated to give users the impression that there is a single access point to all online services. When ULiège librarians started exploring options for a mobile library app, Ex Libris Library Mobile's ability to give patrons a single mobile interface through deep integrations with Primo and Alma was key.

Alongside the desire to provide a mobile digital experience that equaled its consolidated desktop experience, over the course of the pandemic librarians were seeing a marked change in patron expectations from the library's online services.

"During the Covid-19 pandemic the library was one of the few services that continued to be open and to serve patrons and the whole community," shares François Renaville, Head of Library Systems at ULiège.

"There was a huge need for remote library services and I think it's going to increase with time ... For some services patrons expect the library to work 24/7; I don't foresee this changing in the short-term."



ULiège © Barbara Brixhe

Incorporating the student-patron voice within the app

To ensure the success of Library Mobile, Renaville and the implementation team included student-patron perspectives within the app. To accomplish this, the team tried to work closely with student associations, other university services (like the Mobility service) and beta testers before launch to understand what they wanted and how they could improve the app.

In a separate effort to maximize patron inclusion within the app, the implementation team decided to take advantage of the app's multiple language packs to create an English-language user profile in addition to its French profile.

"We didn't want to offer just a Library Mobile in French – We thought it was important to offer an English profile. In the usage 95% of the usage is the French profile, but we couldn't imagine launching Library Mobile without an Englishlanguage option for foreign students and other users."

Utilizing mobile tools to help students navigate the library

ULiège currently has no university app, which gave librarians the opportunity to look beyond traditional library services and fill in broader digital gaps in designing their app. For example, Renaville configured

a detailed Maps tile to make it easier for patrons to navigate between library branches, study rooms, cafeterias and bookshops and where bike racks and parking places for scooters on the campus could easily be located.

"Maps is a powerful tool for patrons and especially for students to discover the campus and some library branches and study rooms and so on," says Renaville. "We have 15 library branches across 4 campuses in Liège. We noticed that patrons are used to going to the same library branch, but they may not be aware that there is a closer one or one that's full of empty spaces. Maps can empower them to discover other library branches."

What's next for Library Mobile at ULiège

Renaville sees even greater potential for the app in the future. He plans on utilizing the app's single-question Quick Polls feature to engage with patrons and capture feedback about library activities. The libraries are also looking to work more closely with the university's mobility department to share information about transportation on campus.

In the more near-term, the library will be running a joint UX survey in 2022-2023 with the University of the Littoral Opal Coast to capture feedback from a broad range of Library Mobile users.

ULiège tips for implementing Library Mobile

- Do not wait until the app is finished to present it to library stakeholders. Involve the library manager from the beginning so that changes can be made in real time if necessary.
- Beta testing the app is important. ULiège used beta testers from the library as well as several external testers to prepare for the official app launch in February 2022.
- Libraries do not need a large team to implement Library Mobile. While Renaville did require minimal assistance from IT during implementation, he thinks that "one person can do the job on their own, provided that person is in contact and consults with other people on the team."



ULiège © Sandrine Seyen

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