

# Reshaping Students' Digital Experience at the University of East London



UEL's libraries manage their digital assets using Ex Libris Alma, including professional materials used by specific schools, dissertations, and learning materials in alternative accessible formats.

*“It’s all about demand – what the students want and when they want it, and the ability to just go to one place to find everything.”*

*Victoria Voice, Electronic Services Librarian at the University of East London*



### About UEL

The University of East London (UEL) is a public university in the Borough of Newham in London, England. UEL, which gained university status in 1992, traces its roots back to 1892. Since the opening of University Square Stratford in September 2013, UEL has had three campuses in two areas of London: Stratford and Docklands. As of October 2015, UEL served more than 15,800 students from 120 countries.

### About UEL’s libraries

The University of East London has two libraries, one in the Docklands and one in Stratford. These libraries serve an important role in UEL’s mission, ensuring a vibrant research community through the use of learning services and of the extensive collections the libraries offer. It is no surprise that UEL’s libraries are both highly respected in the university community and well supported by the university itself. The libraries manage to fulfill their mission with very small, focused teams of library staff.

The library budget at UEL is approximately 50% electronic and 50% physical, with a high priority given to patron-driven acquisitions.

### Challenges

- UEL’s libraries must meet the expectations of UEL students, who demand a modern digital learning experience.
- UEL’s libraries support the CLA decision to create the CLA Digital Content Store (DCS), where institutions of higher education deposit readings that lecturers have put in their virtual learning environments (VLEs), and must have systems that support ongoing access to the DCS.

### Impact

Alma has improved UEL students’ digital experience and increased UEL libraries’ operational efficiency by allowing them to easily simplify their processes and manage them through a unified solution.

“UEL as a whole has chosen to take the digital path. Managing digital assets in Alma allows us to use similar workflows to manage our digital objects. Alma has really improved in managing digital objects”

Victoria Voice, Electronic Services Librarian at the University of East London

### Feedback on the New System

Other schools within the university are now requesting to use the library’s digital processes to support their own teaching and learning needs.

Students are embracing the seamless access to the library’s digital collections and increasingly accessing these collections with mobile devices.

*“Digital representation is a fantastic feature.”*

## UEL Libraries’ Main Challenges

UEL’s libraries have two main challenges. The first comes from UEL students, who expect to gain a tremendous amount of value from the university. The libraries have a critical role in meeting these student expectations. Moreover, UEL students are digitally-savvy members of Generation Y who demand a fully digital learning experience.

The second challenge is the result of institutional changes. Like many libraries in the UK, UEL requires that any system has tight integration with the CLA’s Digital Content Store, thereby enabling swift delivery of copyright-cleared materials to students, efficiently and with minimal extra work where institutions of higher education deposit readings that lecturers put on VLEs. This requires systems that enable continual interaction with the DCS from a process and technology perspective.

## UEL and Ex Libris

UEL selected Ex Libris Alma (which went live in August 2012) and Primo (which went live in 2009) to manage and deliver library content.

## Reshaping the Digital Experience

UEL’s libraries have selected Alma to manage their various digital assets. This includes:

- **Podiatry school** – Digitizing and managing a large collection of podiatry slides via Alma and giving end users access via Primo.
- **Demand-Driven Acquisition (DDA) journal articles** – Purchasing separate journal articles, which can be added to Alma and accessed by students via Primo.
- **Third-year dissertations**, which are published digitally upon completion.
- **Alternative formats** – Students with disabilities can now request an alternative format asset via Primo. The library manages the full cycle of this request via Alma from the point of request until the user receives final access to the digital file requested.

## Why did UEL Choose Alma to Manage Digital Assets?

- **Access rights** – UEL sought ways to manage access rights so only specific groups of students would receive access to digital assets. Alma delivered this through streamlined management and Primo provided a superior user permission-based experience.
- **Operational efficiency** – Once a digital request issued by a student is confirmed, the next request for the same file is processed almost automatically.
- **Flexible cloud storage** options.
- **Easy digital workflows** in the same library platform so that print, electronic, and digital assets are all managed in Alma instead of in separate, siloed systems.
- **End-user experience** – Alma’s strong backbone enables UEL to enhance the discovery experience via Primo.
- **Strong support from Ex Libris** – Issues or new processes that UEL wished to introduce were handled quickly and professionally.
- **Advanced and automated metadata creation** for digital objects.
- **Enabling of different types of copyright notices** for different digital assets.

## UEL’s Digital Plan for the Future

UEL is planning to leverage its digital assets even further, by:

- Expanding the library’s digital dissertations process to other schools.
- Supporting the entire university’s move to the Digital Content Store.
- Expanding UEL digital collections considerably.



## About Ex Libris

Ex Libris, a ProQuest company, is a leading global provider of cloud-based solutions for higher education. Offering SaaS solutions for the management and discovery of the full spectrum of library and scholarly materials, as well as mobile campus solutions driving student engagement and success, Ex Libris serves thousands of customers in 90 countries.

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