

University of Mary Washington

Increasing OER
Use and Lowering
Student Costs



UNIVERSITY OF
MARY WASHINGTON

where great minds get to work

In their efforts to promote Open Education Resources, University of Mary Washington libraries adopted the Leganto course-resource list solution. Leganto is key to encouraging OER use and lowering the financial burden on students.

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Rosemary Arneson, University of Mary Washington



About University of Mary Washington

A premier, selective, public institution, University of Mary Washington is “where great minds get to work.” The institution offers rigorous academics in small, highly interactive classes taught by innovative and accessible master teachers. It attracts students from 34 states and 38 foreign countries, serving 4,400 undergraduate and 300 graduate students. To support their diverse academic interests, the libraries’ collections consist of 500,000 volumes including 100,000 electronic book titles, and 230 bibliographic databases.

A Focus on Student Affordability

Like many universities, Mary Washington University is striving to deliver a top-quality education to students who face increasing financial pressures. As Rosemary Arneson, University Librarian, explains, “Over the last ten years or so, our student demographics have changed. They have become much more diverse, and we are getting more students who are first in the family to go to college. They have less support from family, and more financial obligations than students in the past. A lot of things are more challenging for them, including getting all the textbooks that they need.”

At the same time, university libraries throughout the state of Virginia were promoting open educational resources, or OER. “Our consortium, VIVA, the Virtual Library of Virginia, was doing quite a lot with OER,” Arneson states. “They started some initiatives, including access to the Open Textbook Library and various other ways to help faculty find the materials that are available as OER. Meanwhile, I was working with our Center of Teaching to raise faculty awareness of OER. Everything was coming together. We started talking not just about Open Educational Resources, but affordability of resources. We had already invested quite a bit in our collections, particularly in electronic collections. How could we better-use that investment, help students access the materials they need, and save them some money in doing that?”

Connecting to the Collections

“That led us to think about, well, what’s out there that could help us make the connection?” she continues. “We had Ex Libris Alma and Primo, so when we were looking for a solution on the electronic reserves side, Leganto became the logical next step.”

As Arneson explains, the intent was to start small, but the project took off on its own. “We started with a pilot, a small group of faculty,” she recalls. “But other faculty were finding Leganto. We put a link in our Canvas learning management system that said ‘Library Reading List.’ Faculty clicked on it, tried it out and liked it. Within five minutes they were creating their own lists. Our small group grew very quickly, making Leganto a very successful product for us.”

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Increasing Use of OER

Leganto has come to play a part in a growing trend toward the use of OER. Arneson reports, “The use of the OER here on campus has grown steadily over the last several years. We’ve been doing workshops to show faculty how they can find things. There are some statewide initiatives as well. Virginia, like many states, adopted legislation that encourages faculty to adopt and use open resources as part of a statewide effort to make college education more affordable. Without Leganto, we would be doing a whole lot more manual work to support our OER initiative.

“The big thing that Leganto does is make it easy for faculty to link to the library’s existing resources. We know we have a good collection. We’ve worked hard to build it. But faculty get confused about how to put library materials into Canvas in an effective way. For instance, how they should be using permalinks instead of just copying a link that shows up in their individual browser. Or, let’s say they know they are using a book that is one of the ebooks that we own and have access to, but they only want the students to read chapter three. Leganto makes it easy for them to make the connection between Canvas and the materials that they want them to read. I think of Leganto as being the bridge between the library and Canvas. It truly facilitates those kinds of connections.”

the goal of interprofessional education. “I purposefully include articles that are from different professional perspectives, even if they’re about the same topic,” she shares. “People realize that they come from different perspectives, written by multiple people.”

Moreover, the dedicated folders save her the time of creating an exhaustive list for each request. “I highlight a few articles that I know will get the point across and create a bibliography. I send that and tell the person that there’s a shared folder in RefWorks that they can look at for more information.”

Popular with Faculty and Students

Arneson has asked for feedback about Leganto, and the results among both faculty and students have been positive. “Students love it. Faculty are happy,” she declares. “Faculty say that students don’t have an excuse not to read, and by using Leganto they make education more equitable for students who can’t afford a physical textbook. The students say it makes finding readings easy, and they enjoy the convenience of Leganto. It’s nice not to have to buy a lot of textbooks. It saves them money and time.”

And the impact on learning? “Anytime you’re getting the students to actually read the course materials, they are going to be more engaged with the class. The cost of materials is a huge barrier for many students, and we have taken it away for them. If we make it easier for them to get the materials they need, they are more likely to read them, and they are more likely to be successful in the class.”

Supporting Strategic Goals

“Our overarching goal in terms of the university’s strategic plan is that we enhance student success through high impact learning experiences,” states Arneson. “Whenever I speak about the library’s support of the university’s strategic vision, I talk about how we are working with faculty to enhance student success. That means enhancing the partnership among the library, the faculty member, and the student.

“The faculty see us as working to make things better for them and for their students. They appreciate the effort, it strengthens our relationship. The message from the library is ‘Yes, we’re here. We care about what’s going on. We care about what you’re doing with your students in the classroom. We want to help you any way that we can.’ They like it when they get that message. They see us as key partners in providing services to students. We all want student success, and together, we’re going to get there. That’s what Leganto can do.”

About Ex Libris

Ex Libris, a ProQuest company, 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](#).

