

# A Resource Sharing Round Table

How Macquarie University is  
streamlining interlibrary loan  
with Ex Libris Alma



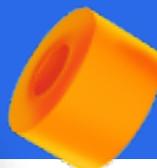
**MACQUARIE**  
University  
SYDNEY · AUSTRALIA





# Round Table

In January 2018, Ex Libris hosted a round table with representatives from Macquarie University to discuss their experience with Alma's resource sharing capabilities, as well as the future of interlibrary loan.



Macquarie University, a public research university in Sydney, Australia, is ranked among the top two percent of universities in the world and, with a five-star QS rating, is renowned for producing graduates that are among the most sought-after professionals in the world. The institution has about 40,000 students, drawn from more than 100 countries, and 2,000 staff members.

## The University Library

The Macquarie University Library has a collection of over 1.2 million physical items, as well as about 794,000 ebooks and other electronic titles. Over 90% of the library's budget is spent on electronic resources, with approximately 20 million instances of access to these items annually.

Macquarie University Library was the first in Australia to implement an Automated Storage and Retrieval System (ASRS). The Library has recorded over 17 million searches a year through its digital search tools and over 2 million physical visits. Direct enquiries of library staff total nearly 60,000, including both face-to-face and virtual interactions.

The Library migrated to Alma in December 2014 and subsequently implemented Alma resource sharing in August 2016.

## MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

### TONY L. H. WAI

Discovery Services and  
Systems Librarian

### ANNETTE SCHRYVER

Manager, Discovery  
Services and Systems

### JIM KELLY

Manager, Collection  
and Content  
Development

### MATTHEW PINSON

Collection and  
Discovery Services  
Librarian

## EX LIBRIS

### MOSHE SHECHTER

Senior Product Manager



**ALMA RESOURCE SHARING:**

# The Impact



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**Jim and I hatched a plan to implement resource sharing in Alma when we could. We got there - and we're very happy that we did.”**

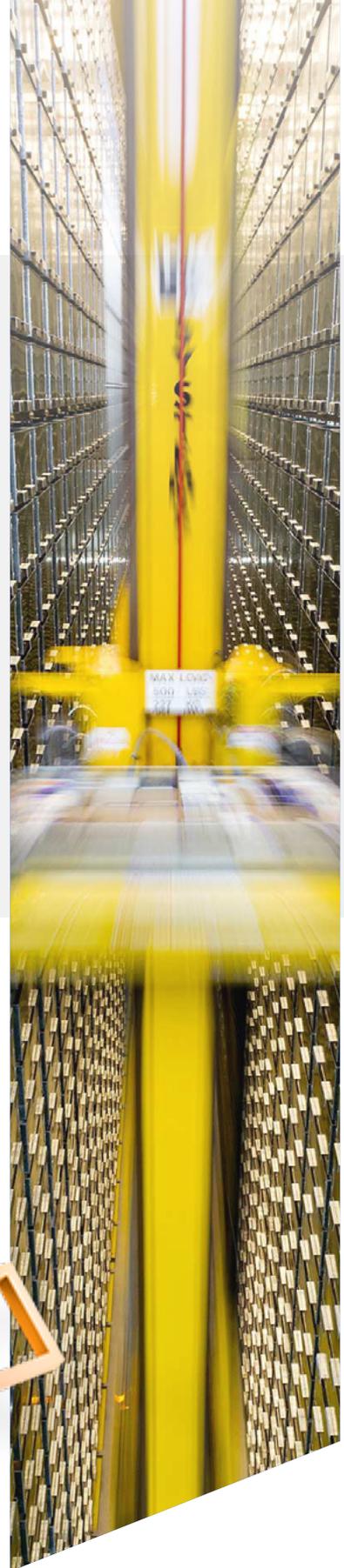
**ANNETTE SCHRYVER**

Manager, Discovery Services and Systems  
for Macquarie University Library

## **Question: What is the typical resource sharing request profile at your institution?**

Jim Kelly explained, “Macquarie University Library has historically always been a net borrower of resources. Throughout our previous involvement in the EAGUL consortia (VDX) and even with ALMA resource sharing, we have always received far more physical resources than digital copies.

“However, since late 2017, that has changed, with the Library now receiving more digital copies than physical loans.”



## Question: Can you give us an overview of resource sharing with Alma at Macquarie University?

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Annette said the first obvious benefit of using Alma resource sharing is that “it is not costing us anything,” because the solution is in-house and fully integrated. No third-party system is needed.

“We don’t have to go to an outside system,” Jim said, “It can be handled all within Alma and pushed straight through to a library in Australia or New Zealand.”

Similarly, Alma resource sharing is inherently integrated with the library’s circulation system, requests through Primo, and other workflows that the library has been using for some time. As Jim noted, it is a major advantage when a library patron can use Primo to independently and seamlessly file a request to obtain a resource not currently in the library collection.

Tony L. H. Wai contrasted the current situation with the previous need to manually create a record for third-party resources in Alma, which the library had been using for internal management. With Alma resource sharing, he noted, records are created automatically and the “fulfillment module offers a much more streamlined process.”

Jim added, “Probably one of Alma’s greatest strengths is that if we need to buy a resource – moving into the acquisitions workflow – it’s quite easy to do.” The library can easily take the request and initiate an acquisition, making it accessible digitally or physically for the requesting client. “Compared to how we used to have to do all that, this has been a major improvement,” he said.

Tony noted an important Alma contribution to the business side of library activities: making request information transparent and easily accessible. Not every staff member had access to VDX and, as a result, some important details about requests, such as fees, process status, partner details, and more were not readily available. Since the implementation of Alma resource sharing, however, this information is viewable via the request’s audit log within Alma. This enables client-facing staff members to investigate and troubleshoot queries related to client requests.

## **Question: How else has your transition to Alma resource sharing affected cost-effectiveness?**

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Before the Alma-based process was in place, Tony noted, each interlibrary lending request might need to pass through the hands of three or four people for processing, looking for the resource, picking the item from the shelf, digitizing it, and more. Now, Alma is taking over several steps in that process. "In terms of staff time to handle lending requests," Tony commented, "Alma resource sharing has already created significant savings, which is itself a cost reduction."

## **Question: All those efficiencies must have really changed staffing requirements, right?**

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Jim: "Alma is effectively allowing one person to do a lot of work that previously took two or three. But in practice the work is done by a range of people who are not dedicated full-time to solely handling resource sharing. That's been the big change - in that staff can do other work and not be monotasked anymore."

This contrasts to previous years, the Macquarie team noted, when resource sharing required a full-time, fully dedicated team of people.

Jim backed up Tony's observation with some hard numbers. An internal Macquarie study two years ago, he noted, showed that it took 15 minutes to have a book ready to send out to a distance student or to another library. Now, it can take just a couple of minutes. "The efficiencies have been very pronounced and noticeable," Jim said.



This has changed over the past five years, becoming even more noticeable with the introduction of Alma. Now, for interlibrary borrowing, members of the Macquarie University Library staff easily handle the process in Alma alongside their other everyday tasks. On the lending side, staff are assigned two-hour shifts to ensure consistent service. With the Alma solution in place, this diffusion of labor is more than sufficient to handle all resource sharing requests and supplies, with no loss in efficiency.

## Question: Are the workflows at Macquarie the same for global interlibrary loan activity?

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Annette: “We have all the Australian and New Zealand (Te Puna) partner records loaded in Alma, so we can send requests to any of them seamlessly.”



# FEEDBACK AND ANALYSIS



## **Question: How has the response been among your patrons to the current process of placing an interlibrary request?**

Tony explained that library users currently have two convenient ways they can make an interlibrary request. In Primo, the search feature has an option to include items not currently in the Macquarie University library collection. Any resource not found in the collection appears with a link to place a formal request for an interlibrary loan. Alternatively, if the student or researcher already knows the item is not available locally, then they can use the link on the Primo homepage to directly access an Alma resource sharing form.

According to Annette, end-users are especially happy with the ability to fill out and submit requests through a single, integrated form in the latest Primo user interface.

Matt said that Macquarie has had an enthusiastic uptake of the service among library patrons: “The requests are pouring in and they seem to be going where they need to go.”

## **Question: How are you using Alma analytics in connection with resource sharing?**

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Jim replied with an observation: “The fact that the statistical analysis can be done within Alma is so much better than what we had previously, having to use an external tool.”

Tony explained that, currently, Macquarie has been primarily using Alma analytics to measure internal performance metrics and data, such as total requests, request turnaround time, and how many borrowing and lending requests are processed. Alma has allowed the library team to drill down into the data and discover, for example, which libraries respond fastest to Macquarie requests, how many collection items are lent out each year, how requested material is typically shipped to and from each institution, etc. These kinds of statistics “are valuable for our day-to-day work,” Tony added.

The next thing Macquarie would like to do is to understand each requester’s profile by their university affiliation and look into statistics to identify request trends. Thanks to Alma analytics, this data is readily available when the time comes.

Tony also noted that Alma analytics is used for the Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) annual reporting.

## **Question: How do your current resource sharing workflows compare with those of other libraries?**

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Annette: “There are a lot of Australia and New Zealand libraries looking at using Alma resource sharing, so it’s been a bit of a one-way street really. We’ve been happy to help

them, with a number of people visiting us, conference calls, all sorts of things. We’ve become the go-to Alma library for resource sharing in Australia at the moment.”

# MIGRATION AND ADAPTATION



## **Question: How was the migration process from VDX to Alma resource sharing?**

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“Fairly smooth,” Annette commented, noting that the staff were already using Alma and understood the functionality available in interlibrary loan systems. However, the resource sharing features “revolutionized” home delivery requests and management.

Jim noted that staff spoke with personnel at other libraries that had migrated to a new interlibrary loan system and applied certain lessons learned from their experiences.

Macquarie University library provided their community of patrons continued access to their previous requests in the VDX system ahead of a staged process of migrating. During the transition, the library suspended all lending requests and connectivity with LADD, while beginning to process borrowing requests submitted via Primo. Migration ran very well, with no time lag, because of ran

very well, because of the preparatory work undertaken to migrate Macquarie from VDX. This also meant that the team was able to move from planning to testing in a relatively short time.

Ultimately, there was no negative feedback regarding the transition period. According to Jim, “It went very well thanks to a team ready to make it happen across the library.”

Tony mentioned that there was a clear migration plan and timeline, with its distinct milestones – from when to clean up the old system, change-over to Alma request forms, test the system with LADD, go live, make the portal available to clients to update requests, and the like.

Jim agreed. The transition was well planned out, “making nothing impossible to achieve.”

## **Question: Were our out-of-the-box resource sharing request forms sufficient or did you customize them?**

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“We made a lot of changes,” Annette remarked.

Everybody else on the Macquarie team laughed in agreement. They were pleased with the option to tailor the Alma forms to best suit the libraries they were working with, as well as to make it as easy as possible

for their specific clientele to fill in the right information in the right places.

As an example, Tony noted that they had to decide how to handle book chapter requests – through the book title or as an article. “It was a matter of adjusting the form in a way that would be most clear for our clients,” he said.

# WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

## **Question: How do you envision (or wish) resource sharing to develop in the next five years?**

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Annette said that, on one hand, there has been a noticeable trend of decreasing resource sharing requests. On the other hand, she also sees indications that the future may see “more direct Alma-to-Alma interlibrary resource sharing.”

Jim: “There will be a need to further increase the global connectedness of other resource sharing systems and ALMA resource sharing to meet the ongoing needs of clients, allowing them any time and anywhere to discover and independently obtain the resources they require.” That’s why Jim hopes to see expanded connections with other consortia, to facilitate even more seamless digital access to yet more resources.

“Over the next two to three years,” Tony commented, “there will be an increased move away from print towards digital scanned copies.” However, he notes, this will require improved mechanisms for things like file transfers, copyright management, multiple identical requests, capturing parts of digitized resources such as a single book chapter, and more.

Jim added that he would like to see resource sharing become more automated, requiring even less manual processing. Most especially, such automation would be a boon to transparency regarding the sharing request – he likens it to Amazon’s order tracking emails – informing the user of progress at each step along the way until the requested asset is delivered.

## Question: What are some challenges to greater automation in resource sharing?

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“One challenge is setting up automation of digital requests in the Australian environment,” Jim replied. “The lack of uniformity around serial holding statements, means that staff have to manually deal with these requests.”

Matt and Tony both acknowledged that, while automation capabilities are there, the library is still unable to leverage them to the fullest. Matt explained, “When testing the auto-locate feature against Libraries Australia holdings, we are observing a very low success rate of

returning a matching record. This may be due to poor data entry by the requester or an inconsistent format entry in relation to the record in Libraries Australia database. As a result, our resource sharing staff need to review the locate-failed requests and resend to libraries.”

Tony added, “To improve this, it will be a combined effort of business workflow reviewing and improving the system’s ability to cross check Libraries Australia holdings.”

# CONCLUDING THOUGHTS?

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Speaking on behalf of the entire Macquarie University library team, Annette said: “It’s nice to feel that we are listened to.”

## About Ex Libris Alma

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Alma is a secure, scalable end-to-end library software system (ILS) for managing the acquisition, sharing, cataloguing, and use of all kinds of resources, including physical and electronic books and periodicals, and other digital resources (such as audio, image, and video files). Alma supports the entire workflow — selection, acquisition, metadata management, digitization, and fulfillment — for the full spectrum of library materials, regardless of format or location.

### Resource Sharing with Alma

Resource sharing in Alma includes all forms of inventory sharing among academic and research institutions, maximizing access to physically dispersed resources. Alma supports mediated (library to library) and non-mediated (library to third-party patron) resource sharing, as well as via external systems such as WorldCat Navigator, ILLiad, Relais D2D, LADD, and more. Transactions between the resource sharing partners, being based on standards, is not affected by whether the participating parties share systems.

