

BRITISH LIBRARY

The British Library is the national library of the United Kingdom and one of the world's greatest research libraries. It provides information services to the academic, business, research and scientific communities and offers unparalleled access to the world's largest and most comprehensive research collection. The Library's collection has developed over 250 years and exceeds 150 million separate items representing every age of written civilization.

The British Library Opens the World for Discovery with Primo

The British Library houses well over 150 million items in over 400 languages, with another three million items added each year. A repository for books, journals, and newspapers, the library is also home to maps, music scores, patents, sound recordings, and stamps. With approximately 400,000 people visiting the library each year and six million searches carried out annually in the online catalogue, discovery and delivery are vitally important to the British Library.

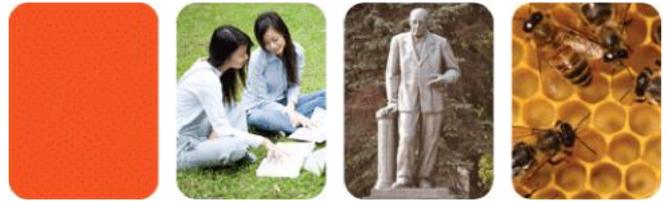
The world's knowledge in a single search

"We reached a point where we needed to gather our many catalogue listings into one virtual location. In addition, we wanted our online catalogue to display our electronic and digital collections alongside the physical collection. Ex Libris Primo[®] was clearly the right solution. It has enabled us to achieve all of these goals," explained Mandy Stewart, resource discovery projects manager at the British Library. "Given our vast quantity of resources in all formats, we were eager to improve discovery for our patrons by showing them the breadth of our collection and, at the same time, enabling them to find individual items."

A long-standing customer of Ex Libris, the British Library has been running the Aleph[®] integrated library system, the SFX[®] context-sensitive link server, and the DigiTool[®] digital asset management system for a number of years. In February 2008, the library selected Primo as its discovery and delivery system. The user-friendly interface and adherence to Web 2.0 concepts were just some of the aspects of Primo that led to its adoption by the British Library. Other features that drew the library to Primo, relates Ms Stewart, were the scalability of the solution; its sophisticated relevance ranking and faceted browsing, which enable users to identify resources much faster; and the single search screen from which users can access resources housed in multiple locations.

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CASE STUDY



Ms Stewart also praised the implementation process for being both on time and on budget: “The responsive, iterative style of project management that Ex Libris employs was perfectly suited to our work processes at the British Library.”

Millions of items; relevant results in seconds

“In January 2012, after Primo had become firmly established as the primary search interface, we closed our OPAC. Our users have adjusted to the new search interface and are now fully satisfied with the level of service that Primo offers them,” observed Ms Stewart. “We have customized the Primo relevance ranking to ensure that content from numerous sources and collections blends appropriately, giving them better coverage in search results. We believe that this customization has improved the user experience dramatically.”

When asked about her favourite features of Primo, Ms Stewart singled out the simple, intuitive user interface; faceted browsing; and the large, helpful user community hailing from more than 1,900 institutions—a community that volunteers a wealth of guidance and tips.

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