



## **WHELF Shared LMS Benefits Case Study: University of Wales Trinity Saint David**

*This case study is one of three completed by the Wales Higher Education Libraries Forum (WHELF) as a complementary qualitative study to the Jisc sponsored benefits report produced by Cambridge Econometrics.*

### **Summary**

This case study has identified several benefits from the WHELF LMS project.

A key theme is that the main benefits had come from collaborating with colleagues in WHELF, with secondary benefits coming from improvements in the software.

The key benefits identified by the University include:

- Improved tender process – better specification and evaluation and reduced burden of work – through sharing the work across WHELF institutions
- A smooth and seamless implementation process enabled by working with and learning from colleagues across WHELF
- Ongoing learning opportunities through engaging with specialists across WHELF, providing a richer and more thorough delivery of training and services
- Provision of a more unified and consistent service as a result of migrating from multiple legacy systems to a single system
- Provision of a more resilient service with a reduction on local IT demands as a result of moving to a cloud-hosted solution
- Increased potential to expand LMS services through extra functionality not supported in legacy systems
- Improved integration with other University business systems

### **Background**

The University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) was formed in 2010 through the merger of the University of Wales Lampeter and Trinity University College Carmarthen and the subsequent merger with Swansea Metropolitan University in 2013.

The University's main campuses are situated in and around Swansea as well as in the rural towns of Lampeter and Carmarthen in South West Wales. The University has approximately 8,000 FTE students.

UWTSD Library and Learning Resources has seven campus libraries in Carmarthen, Lampeter, Swansea and London, which include a collection of over 500,000 printed volumes and provide access to approximately 20,000 electronic books and 50,000 electronic journals.

Prior to the implementation of Alma and Primo as part of WHELF, the University was using several legacy systems: SirsiDynix Horizon library management system and OCLC WorldCat local resource discovery system at Carmarthen and Lampeter and Capita Alto library management system and Serials Solutions Summon for resource discovery at Swansea.

### **Benefits from being part of a consortium**

#### ***Maximising the buying power of a small institution to procure a high-end system***

Procuring a library management system as part of a consortium enabled the University to select and implement a high-end system that would have been unaffordable without the supplier discount offered to WHELF.

This system improved the functional capacity of the library service. For example, under the University's legacy systems resource sharing requests were handled manually due to limitations with the functionality available. Post implementation of the new system, monitoring of both incoming and outgoing inter-library loans is carried out through Alma, reducing reliance on external spreadsheets.

Sharing a system across WHELF also opens up opportunities to develop resource sharing across higher education in Wales.

The library service also highlighted the improved functionality around managing electronic resources, e.g. Community Zone metadata and dedicated workflows for online content, but staff felt that this was yet to be used to its full potential due to limitations in staffing capacity to explore this new functionality with the primary focus following migration being on ensuring business continuity.

#### ***Reducing risk through sharing knowledge at implementation***

Staff at several University campuses highlighted the smoothness of the Alma and Primo implementation, with students reporting that they had noticed no disruption to services and a seamless transition to the new system.

This was a result, in part, of the phased WHELF migration process, with UWTSD in the second cohort and able to benefit from the experience of the first group of institutions. For example, UWTSD had two migration data load tests prior to go live, learning from the implementation experience of the University of South Wales, which had also migrated from two systems and had reported problems with a single data load test.

The go live day experience was also improved through being part of a wider network of colleagues. For example, the project manager from Swansea University, an early adopter, was on site throughout the launch day to help resolve any queries.

#### ***Gaining from a dedicated consortium resource***

An additional advantage noted during the senior staff focus group was the provision of a dedicated, independent WHELF programme manager to support the project,

who was able to liaise with the supplier to resolve contractual issues and act impartially to further the interests of the consortium on an equitable basis.

UWTSD also benefitted from the shared procurement process, which was handled for WHELP by Cardiff University, allowing the institutional project to be driven by the library service and saving staff time and expense for other professional services, such as Finance and Information Technology and Systems.

### ***Developing more comprehensive requirements specification***

As a recently merged institution with limited staff resources, carrying out an independent tender process would have been difficult and onerous. Consequently, sharing work on the tender specification and evaluation exercise was of particular benefit to the University. Through collaborating with colleagues from larger institutions, the University directly benefitted from the experience of colleagues with specialist knowledge to create a more detailed specification and conduct a more thorough and effective evaluation of the shortlisted solutions to ensure that the chosen system met the needs of the service.

One example highlighted by staff is the greater electronic resources management and analytics knowledge at other institutions which assisted the consortium, and therefore UWTSD, in the selection of a product tailored towards future library requirements.

### ***Better training and staff development***

The collaboration provided an opportunity for additional training that would have not been available to UWTSD as part of a standalone implementation process. For example, UWTSD was invited to attend training for Swansea University staff during cohort 1, and therefore gained advanced knowledge of key stages and targets prior to the commencement of the University's own implementation. The University was also able to benefit from sharing supplier facilitated workshops with Cardiff Metropolitan University as part of the training programme, with the answers to many queries raised by Cardiff Metropolitan University of direct relevance to UWTSD.

Some colleagues noted, however, that less time may have been dedicated to each individual institution as a result of the shared implementation, and there was a feeling of some training sessions being "rushed" with perhaps not enough time being allowed to handle queries from each individual library. Staff also felt that more in-person training would have been valuable, and that the geographically dispersed nature of UWTSD campuses was a barrier to greater participation in both Ex Libris and WHELP training events.

### ***Sharing expertise and knowledge***

In addition to the formal Ex Libris training, UWTSD was able to participate in informal WHELP 'Mini-Meets' to discuss progress, issues and share experience. These 'mini-meets' involved on-site meetings with institutions which had already implemented.

These meetings were of particular value prior to and during the start of the

implementation process. For example, knowledge gained from Swansea University about the acquisitions process within Alma assisted UWTSD staff in setting up the process more effectively, and feedback from the University of South Wales about their data migration experience allowed potential errors in the transfer of fines to be avoided.

The sharing of knowledge with WHELF colleagues and Ex Libris through Basecamp, and within WHELF through Microsoft Yammer, was also found to be of value for the project itself and has enabled staff to develop new relationships across WHELF and to collaborate more effectively.

On a wider scale, it was felt that the nature and ethos of the WHELF LMS project as a whole has helped to pull library staff together across Wales, building networks and enabling the sharing of expertise. Strong foundations for sharing and collaboration have already been in place in Welsh HE libraries and these were seen as crucial for the success of the project.

### ***Enhanced profile for the Library service***

The project was also seen as being beneficial in highlighting the changing role of the Library within the University, and the expertise among Library staff as information professionals. Working on the project alongside internal support services in collaboration with WHELF and Ex Libris has helped to raise the profile of the Library, particularly with other professional support units who have gained a better understanding of the current Library and Learning Resources service being provided.

### **Higher quality service from the use of a next generation LMS**

#### ***Improved integration with other key university business systems***

Following the implementation, Library staff reported a reduction in the number of problems associated with incorrect student accounts as a result of improved integration with the University's Student Records Systems (SRS), notably increased frequency of updates and more comprehensive error reporting.

At present UWTSD is still running multiple SRSs following merger and so has not been able to take advantage of the real-time update functionality; it is hoped that further improvements can be made with this integration once the University moves to a single SRS in August 2017.

#### ***Flexibility of web and browser-based systems***

Access to the full LMS through a browser with no additional software installation or network requirements was perceived to be an immediate benefit. At the time of the focus groups in December 2016, staff had already made use of the Alma LMS on an iPad, and this was felt to allow greater flexibility in several areas. Subject Librarians were keen to use the web-based interface to provide services outside the Library building, assisting with the University's 'Mobile Librarian' programme. Library staff involved in Collection Management have used Alma on portable devices when deselection and transferring stock, reducing reliance on printed reports and allowing

for better real-time data. It was also felt this could potentially lead to a reduction in the amount of paper used by the Library and therefore assist with meeting sustainability targets.

Improvements in the reliability of the system were noted following the move to a cloud-hosted service, particularly in relation to email notices, which had previously been a point of issue following changes to the University email server and firewall across campuses.

### ***Better access***

An unexpected benefit observed by staff following implementation has been in providing a continuity of experience for postgraduate students enrolling at UWTSU following undergraduate study at another WHELF institution; for example, a group of PGCE students enrolling during Autumn 2016 were pleased to discover the Library's catalogue and discovery services used Primo, which they were familiar with during their undergraduate programme at Aberystwyth University. As commented by one Subject Librarian, "they were smiling and happy, totally at home with the system".

### **Improved integration between printed collections and electronic resources**

Although better print and electronic content integration was identified as a potential benefit, Library staff felt such improvements had not yet been realised. This may be due to the duplication of data migrated from the separate legacy systems, and poor standardisation resulting from different pre-merger processes. It was felt that better integration could be achieved following further data cleansing work, the introduction of cross-campus standards after restructuring and through the WHELF LMS cataloguing project, and when staff have had time to gain familiarity with Alma's ERM functionality.

### ***Better analytics driving better services***

The ease of access to Analytics and ability to add reports to Alma dashboards for staff has been valuable and allowed the Library to introduce more efficient workflows for collection management. In particular, dashboards have been created to help identify stock for withdrawal, trace lost items, and monitor staff actions taken to resolve student fines queries, helping to ensure a more consistent and customer focussed service; previously many of these reports had to be generated manually by technical staff through the use of SQL scripting. The Analytics package offered through Alma and Primo was mentioned at all the staff focus groups and was seen by staff as one of the main improvements of the software over previous provision.

The improved metrics offered by the Analytics package were also seen as being valuable for providing evidence to staff when refreshing stock, supporting the decision-making process by providing easily accessible and comprehensive usage statistics for individual titles and specific ranges of the collection. The ability to benchmark collections against other Welsh libraries was also seen as a potential future benefit following further collaboration, as was the potential for improving value for money through smarter resource procurement using better and more meaningful usage data and Alma's trials functionality.

Improvements in analytical collection data were seen as being of potential valuable for the forthcoming move from two existing libraries to the University's new SA1 campus in Swansea in 2017/18.

## **Annex**

Further background information on UWTSD and the case study is provided here, including:

- Project delivery
- Counterfactual scenario, which describes what the University would have done had it not pursued a consortial approach as part of WHELFF
- Methodology for the case study

### ***Project delivery***

As a comparatively small institution spread across a wide geographical area, UWTSD were attracted to a consortium procurement model, which provided an opportunity to work together with other Welsh higher education libraries. The consortium approach was felt to be particularly valuable in enabling the University to benefit from the greater expertise at other, larger institutional libraries and the National Library of Wales, and in saving time and effort during the procurement process through collaborating on a tender specification and evaluation exercise.

In addition, it was felt that the already close links among WHELFF partners would allow UWTSD to benefit from future collaborative working following the implementation process through the sharing of expertise, and allow for future joint projects to provide greater access to library resources.

The implementation plan was delivered in three phases. UWTSD was included in the second cohort and commenced migration work with Ex Libris in August 2015.

Owing to the complexity of the migration, with multiple legacy systems being migrated into a single instance of Alma, a lengthened timeline and additional second test data load were included in the project plan.

UWTSD went live with Alma and Primo to schedule on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2016.

A Project Group was formed to oversee the implementation consisting of senior members of Library and Learning Resources staff along with technical support from the University's Information Technology and Systems department, and an external consultant previously employed as a systems manager at Swansea Metropolitan University to handle the Capita Alto data migration.

Following commencement of the project, smaller informal groups of Library and Learning Resources staff were convened to review training exercises within specific functional areas and develop a detailed knowledge of the new systems prior to launch.

Library and Learning Resources also collaborated with the University's Student Experience department in marketing the changes to the academic community and keeping key stakeholders informed to ensure a smooth transition during the migration period. This was particularly important given the project schedule to complete migration during term time rather than in vacation.

The University has also received guidance from the WHELF Programme Manager, based at Cardiff University, providing a strategic oversight of the project, and contributed to meetings with the wider WHELF LMS Project Group to share feedback on experiences across the whole consortium.

### ***Counterfactual***

As UWTSD was already committed to the WHELF Shared LMS project prior to the 2013 merger, and involved in the precursor discussions to the project as far back as the Carmarthen and Lampeter merger in 2010/11, it is difficult to accurately predict a counterfactual scenario.

However, it is clear that it would not have been viable for the University to continue running multiple legacy systems indefinitely, and it is likely that a single library management system and discovery solution would have been adopted following the Swansea Metropolitan merger into UWTSD in 2013/14. As the University chose to move to Horizon, one of its two existing systems, following the Carmarthen and Lampeter merger, it is likely that a similar decision would have been taken following the UWTSD and Swansea Metropolitan University merger rather than conduct a full procurement exercise for a new product.

Given that Horizon was no longer being actively developed by SirsiDynix, it is reasonable to assume that Capita Alto would have been chosen as the preferred solution, and this forms the basis of the counterfactual scenario for the purposes of the benefits evaluation, including the report produced by Cambridge Econometrics.

### ***Case Study Methodology***

Qualitative feedback was gathered through three focus groups with Library and Learning Resources staff held at the University's main campuses: Swansea, Carmarthen and Lampeter. Volunteers for the focus groups were recruited to represent a variety of roles within the service; Library Assistants with a primary responsibility for serving Library customers with day-to-day enquiries, Acquisitions staff, Collections Librarians responsible for cataloguing and metadata, and Subject Librarians with a responsibility for academic engagement.

To build on the feedback from these focus groups, an additional, fourth focus group was subsequently held with the Executive Head of service and senior Library and Learning Resources staff.

It was originally intended to survey the Library user base as part of this study, however due to time constraints this was not possible. In addition, as highlighted by staff during the focus groups, it was felt that most users had not noticed a great deal of change in the months following implementation; the primary goal was to ensure 'business as usual' at an institutional level and for the service to continue to run smoothly before introducing new services in conjunction with WHELF partners through future projects. It was therefore felt that an additional study to focus on end user benefits would be more valuable in the longer term as and when additional services become available. The focus on gathering feedback from Library and Learning Resources staff mirrors the approach taken by Cardiff University.