

Alma: a Different Type of ILS

Mike Rogers

University of Tennessee

Invited Speaker – PTPL 2017, Baltimore, MD

My first piece of library conference swag (1995)



It continues to serve its purpose today!

About me:

- Worked at UT Library for 25 years
- Cataloging, Serials/Acq
- Desktop Support
- ILS Management
- Currently manage the Enterprise Systems team (Alma & Primo)
- Active cave explorer & mapper

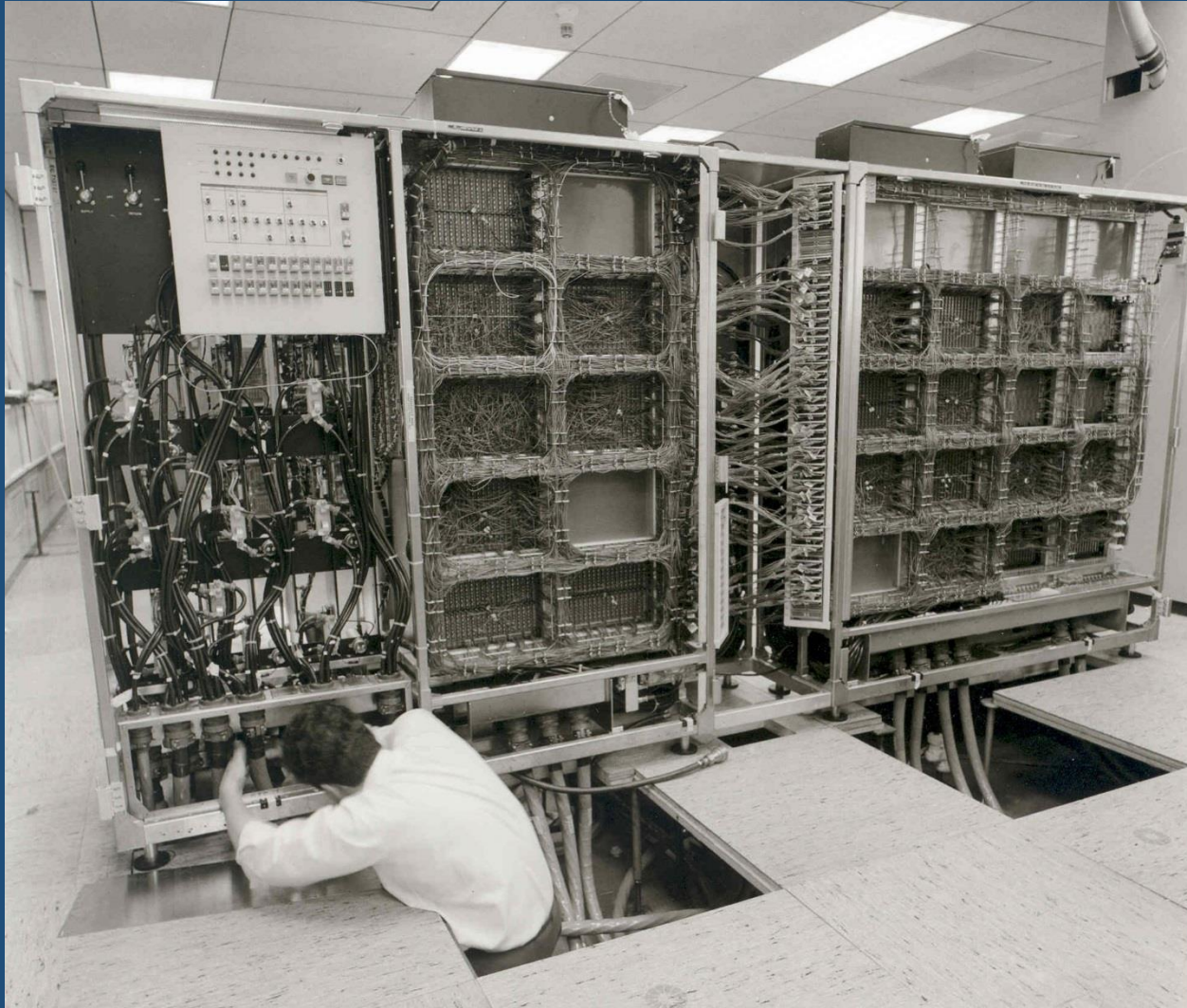



For today:

- Problems with traditional ILS systems
- Historical overview of library systems at UT Library
- UT's experience moving to Alma
- Advantages & disadvantages of Alma
- Is Alma an ILS for the long-term?



Problems with Traditional ILS Systems

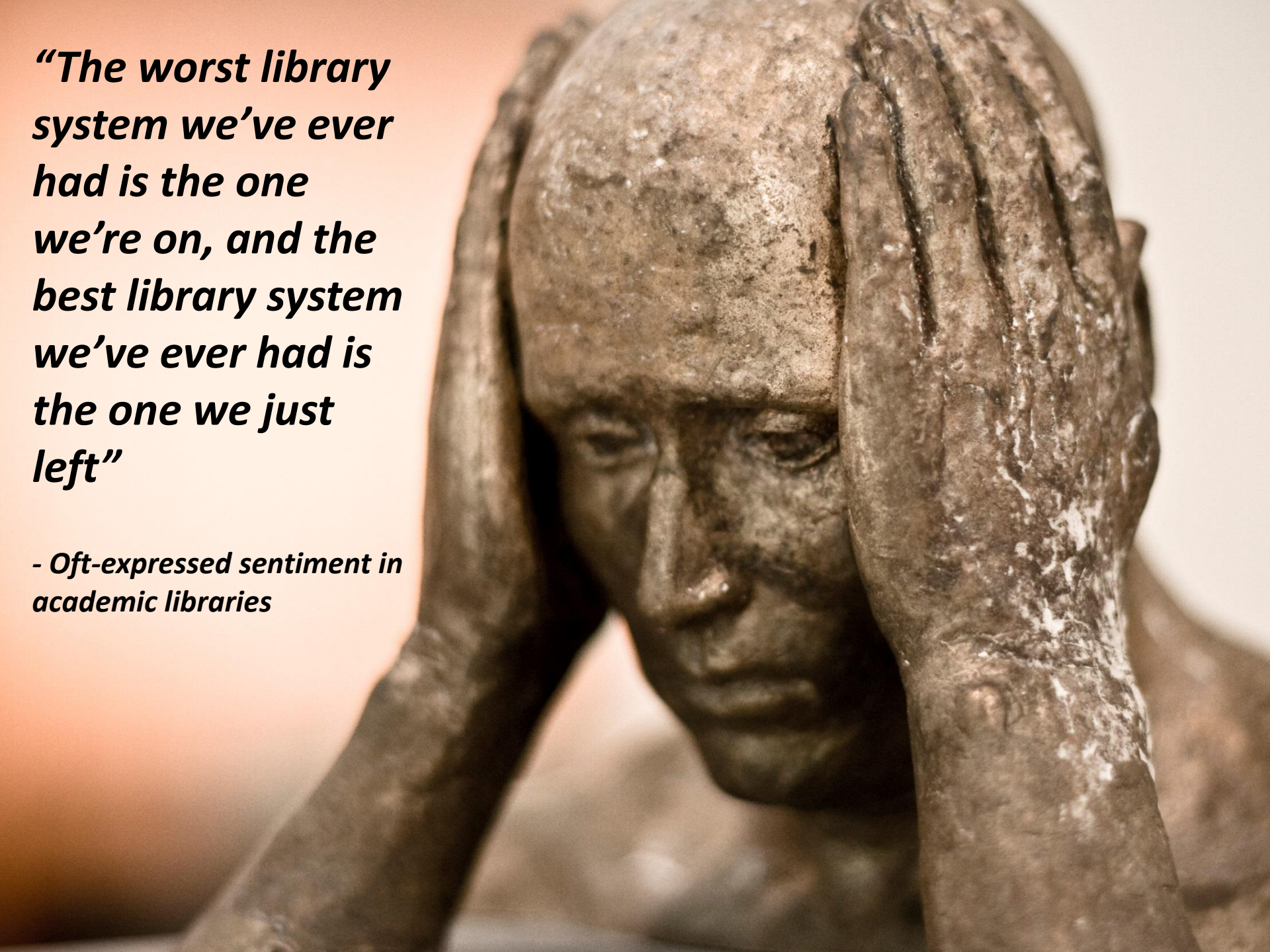



A dramatic, high-contrast photograph of a stormy sky. Dark, heavy, and textured clouds fill the upper two-thirds of the frame. Patches of lighter, greyish-white clouds are visible where light breaks through. The bottom third of the image shows the dark, silhouetted tops of trees against the lower edge of the clouds. The overall mood is ominous and intense.

Problem #1: Perception


“The worst library system we’ve ever had is the one we’re on, and the best library system we’ve ever had is the one we just left”

- Oft-expressed sentiment in academic libraries



A dramatic, high-contrast photograph of a stormy sky. Dark, heavy clouds fill the upper two-thirds of the frame, with some lighter patches where light breaks through. The bottom third of the image shows the dark silhouettes of trees against the lower edge of the clouds. The overall mood is ominous and intense.

Problem #2: System silos & lack of
integration with other systems

- 
- A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of several large, cylindrical industrial storage tanks. The tanks are made of metal with visible horizontal rivets or seams. They are set against a bright blue sky filled with scattered white clouds. A thin, dark wire or cable runs diagonally across the upper right portion of the frame. The perspective creates a sense of height and scale.
- ILS
 - Electronic Resources
 - Digital Collections
 - Campus Enterprise Systems
 - Student Information System
 - Financial System

A dramatic, high-contrast photograph of a stormy sky. Dark, heavy clouds fill the upper two-thirds of the frame, with some lighter patches where light breaks through. The bottom third of the image shows the dark silhouettes of trees against the lower edge of the clouds. The overall mood is ominous and intense.

Problem #3: Fewer staff (esp. in
Technical Services areas)

Increased reliance on getting “more with less”



A dramatic, low-key photograph of a stormy sky. Dark, heavy, and textured clouds fill the upper two-thirds of the frame. Patches of lighter, greyish-white clouds are visible where light breaks through. The bottom third of the image shows the dark, silhouetted tops of trees against the lower edge of the clouds. The overall mood is ominous and intense.

Problem #4: Frequent switching of systems

- Many libraries switch systems every 6-8 years
- Creates tremendous amount of migration work
- Pre- and post migration data clean-up
- Sense that “we will never get caught up”



Other Problems with Traditional ILS Systems

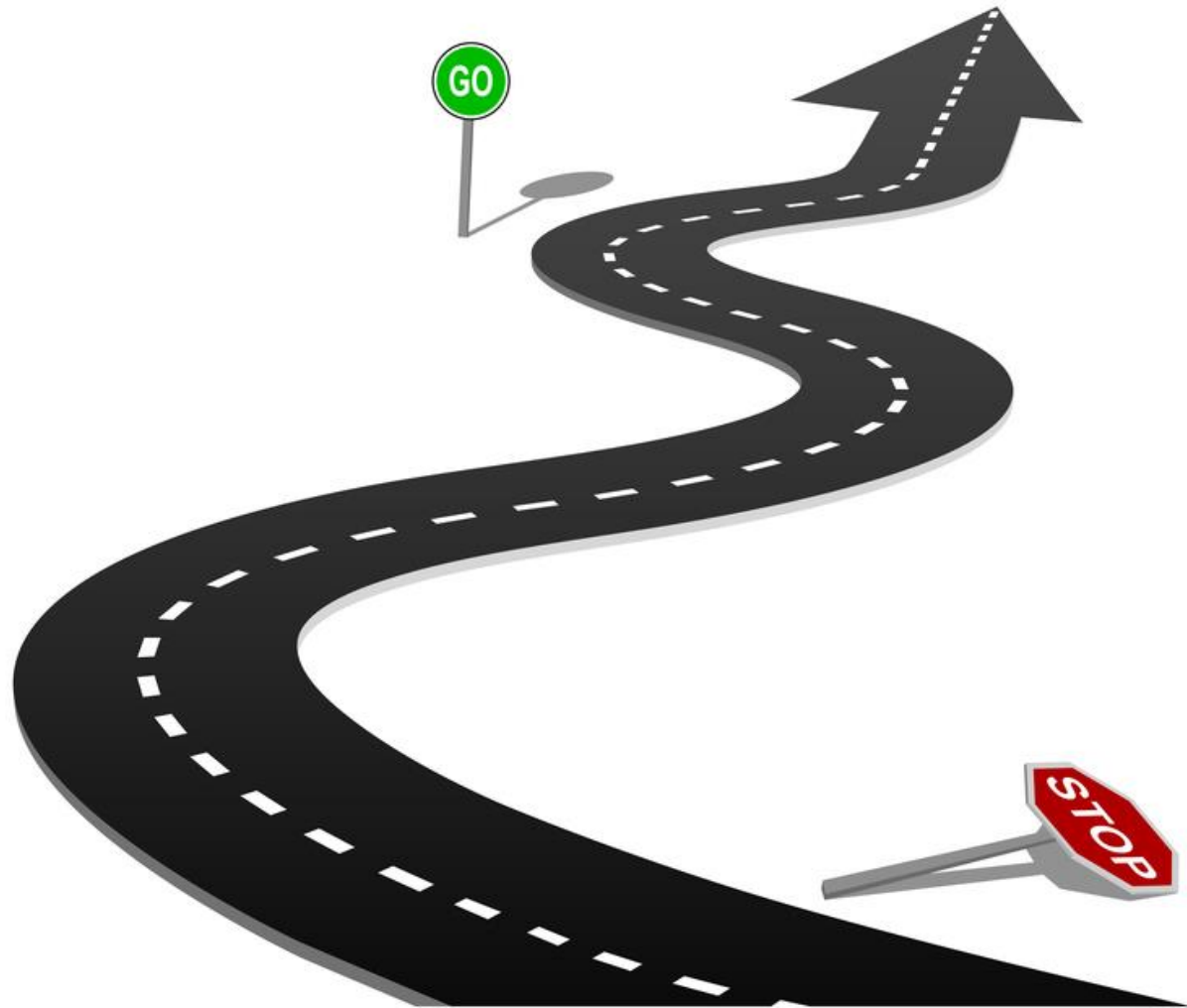
- Non-hosted systems require site expertise in hardware/server/security management
- GUI-based client updates can be inefficient and intrusive

“Big picture” problem #1:

Systems have not kept up with rapid change



“Big picture” problem #2: Early adoption vs. behind the curve?



Library Systems at UT



History of Library Systems at UT

- **Geac 8000** (Circulation)
 - 1983 – 1997
- **Geac 9000** (Cataloging, Serials & Acquisitions)
 - 1985 – 1997
- **Horizon** (Cataloging, Serials & Circulation)
 - 1997 – 2003
- **Geac 9000** (Acquisitions)
 - 1997 - 1999
- **Geac Advance** (Acquisitions)
 - 1999 – 2003
- **Aleph** (Cataloging, Serials, Circulation, & Acquisitions)
 - 2003 – 2014
 - First integrated ILS
 - Separate e-resource management (SFX)

Why switch to Alma?

- Using Aleph since 2003; general sense we were ready for a new system
- New library dean in 2012 (Steve Smith)
- Administrative push in 2013 to cease server hosting and move to the cloud
- Desire to make workflows more efficient

UT's Experience Moving to Alma



All the migrations I've worked on have been a whirlwind ...



... but this one seemed especially like a maelstorm.

Three migrations in one:

- Existing ILS (Aleph) to Alma
- E-resources system (SFX) to Alma
- Discovery system (Primo)
 - Must implement Primo if not already using it
 - If already using Primo, must re-implement* from scratch

** We learned this nugget about 4 months into the Alma migration*

UT's Experience Moving to Alma

- Six month migration timeline
- Worked closely with ExLibris migration team
- We were considered an “early adopter” of Alma, so ExLibris was testing some things out on us, which made for a challenging migration
- Did not receive Alma configuration training until the *end* of the migration

Don't forget your data ...

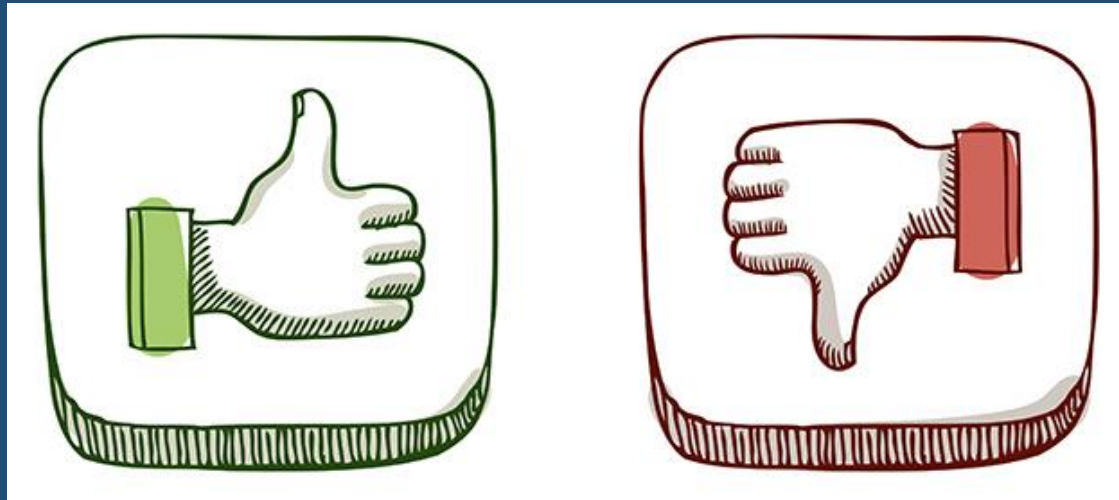


Although it feels like a sprint, implementing Alma should be treated like a *marathon*

Know that the road is long, but there is a end



Advantages & Disadvantages of Alma



Advantages

- System uptime is incredible
 - Apart from occasional scheduled overnight maintenance, we've experienced only two instances of unexpected downtime lasting longer than 1 hour (80 mins, 6 hours)
 - [https://knowledge.exlibrisgroup.com/Alma/Product Materials/Uptime Reports/North America](https://knowledge.exlibrisgroup.com/Alma/Product_Materials/Uptime_Reports/North_America)
- Accessible in many places
 - Browser-based access (Chrome, Firefox, Safari, Edge)
 - Tablet-capable
 - Android and iPhone apps for limited functionality (Scan In Items, Pick From Shelf)
- Alma as a system seems more integrated
 - Move away from a modular-type system
 - Integrated workflows

Advantages (*cont.*)

- Normalization rules for cataloging updates and record loading are powerful and accessible to staff
- Integrated Analytics with Oracle BI
 - Provides a means of locally distributing system reporting on a much broader scale
 - Enables institutions to share reports
- Excellent record loading functionality
 - Powerful and flexible loading templates
 - Scheduling
 - Good match profiling
- Tight integration between ILS and discovery (Alma – Primo)

Advantages (*cont.*)

- Powerful system tools for data cleanup and processing
 - Sets
 - Publishing profiles
 - System jobs
- Better leveraging of community-driven system aspects
 - Initial migration allowed for a seamless transition of e-journals to the Community Zone
 - Facilitation of certain E-resource workflows in CZ
 - Access to community records for Cataloging



All titles ▾

Keywords ▾



Advanced ▾

Welcome, Rogers, Michael | Friday, October 20, 2017



Recent Pages

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Analytics

> Manage Patron Servi...
Fulfillment

> Publishing Profiles
Resources

> Import
Acquisitions

Sandbox(es)



sandbox01-na.alma.exlibrisgroup.com
of your institution (07/05/2017)

More info >

Primo Dashboard

LAST PUBLISHING JOB DETAILS

Starting Time	10/19/2017 10:16: PM, EDT
Status	Completed Successfully
Type	Incremental

Publishing Jobs List >

Scheduled Jobs Status

10/20

10/19

10/18

10/17

10/16



Acquisition



Administration



Data services



Fulfillment



Import



Publishing



Repository



Users



Scheduled Jobs
Completed
Successfully

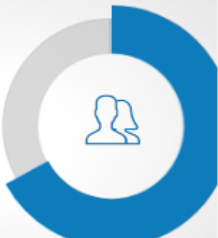
New UI Usage

Active Users ?

67%

120 users are using
the new UI.

59 users are using the
old UI.



Tasks

65 Other Requests >

2871 Order Lines >

72 Invoices >

3 Items >

58 Electronic Resources >

Location

Folders

My Folders

Shared Folders

Alma

Community

Reports

Consortia

Ex Libris Development

Institutions

Regional User Groups

Shared Reports

Support

Leganto

University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Subject Area Contents

Dashboards

Prompts

Reports

Accreditation Reports

Acquisitions

ACR

Administration

ARL Stats

Assessment

Book Feeds

Tasks

ARL Stats

Expand

RSS

Rename

Create Shortcut

Type

Sort

Alma_ARL_Loan Counts for FY2014/15 | Last Modified 4/25/2017 12:57:52 PM | Owner 3753276540002311_2311_D
Revised Mike's analysis to exclude in-house loans and reserves (Louis, 4/25/2017)
[Open](#) | [Edit](#) | [More](#)

ARL Stats - Loan Counts for Preston, FY2014/15 | Last Modified 7/31/2016 3:47:49 AM | Owner 1763216990002311_2311_D
This report finds the loan counts for Preston for FY2014/15. Note that the counts only include loans between 12/18/2014 and 06/30/2015 since we came up on Alma on December 18, 2014. Requested by Martha Earl. (Mike, 2015/10/19)
[Open](#) | [Edit](#) | [More](#)

ARL Stats - Memberships spent | Last Modified 8/8/2017 1:52:12 PM | Owner 1763216990002311_2311_D
This report finds all the memberships that were spent for a given fiscal year. This amount is subtracted from the total spent against 463120 and is usually provided in question 7b (Ongoing library materials expenditures). Requested by Regina Mays. (Mike, 2015/10/21)
[Open](#) | [Edit](#) | [More](#)

ARL Stats - Unlabeled Memberships | Last Modified 9/8/2017 12:23:30 PM | Owner 3753276540002311_2311_D
Retrieves spending on titles which per Mike Rogers should be counted as Memberships but are not titled as such. (Louis, 9/8/2017)
[Open](#) | [Edit](#) | [More](#)

ARL Stats question 1 - All Titles | Last Modified 7/31/2016 3:47:49 AM | Owner 1763216990002311_2311_D
This analyses finds a distinct title count for all titles in Alma. The three figures represent Microfilm, Electronic, and Physical titles, and should be added together to obtain a total count. (Mike, 2015/10/20)
[Open](#) | [Edit](#) | [More](#)

ARL Stats question 1 - Preston Title Count | Last Modified 7/31/2016 3:47:49 AM | Owner 1763216990002311_2311_D
This analyses finds a distinct title count for the titles in the Preston Medical Library. The total from this analyses should be subtracted from the "All Titles" query to obtain the figure for UT Library. (Mike, 2015/10/20)
[Open](#) | [Edit](#) | [More](#)

ARL Stats question 2 - Preston Volume Count (physical & e-books) | Last Modified 7/31/2016 3:47:49 AM | Owner 1763216990002311_2311_D
This report finds a volume count for Preston Medical Library as of June 30, 2015. By ARL definition, the count includes physical volumes and e-books, but not e-series. In the future, modify the Creation Date value for whatever end date is needed. Requested by Martha Earl. (Mike, 2015/10/19)
[Open](#) | [Edit](#) | [More](#)

Preview

Disadvantages

- It is a **LOT** of work to migrate
 - Much work even beyond 6 month migration period
- No more direct access to back-end database
- Onus on customer to configure third-party integrations
 - SAP
 - Banner
 - Patron loading

Disadvantages

- Subscription-based pricing model
 - More useful to a wider audience than the traditional functional areas
 - More faculty/staff using Alma = more \$\$\$
 - Sites should carefully consider # of users accessing system and monitor via Analytics
- Data migration issues can inhibit successful use of system
- Staff find it difficult to understand the philosophy behind Alma workflows (especially Acquisitions and ordering workflow)

Alma Monthly
Release Updates

ExLibris Ideas
Exchange

<http://ideas.exlibrisgroup.com>

ExLibris system
alerts (e-mail)

Knowledge Center
<https://knowledge.exlibrisgroup.com>

Alma & Primo
enhancement process

Alma-I listserv

Challenge keeping up with...
Communication

Primo-I listserv

ExLibris System Status page
<http://status.exlibrisgroup.com>

Developer Network
<https://developers.exlibrisgroup.com>

Primo Quarterly
Release Updates

ExLibris maintenance
alerts (e-mail)

SalesForce
<https://exlibrisgroup.my.salesforce.com>

Trivia Time!

Question: In 1924, PTPL officially met on its own for the first time. In what city and state did this meeting take place?

Answer: Richmond, VA



<https://www.potomactechlibrarians.org/moments>

Alma: an ILS for the long term?



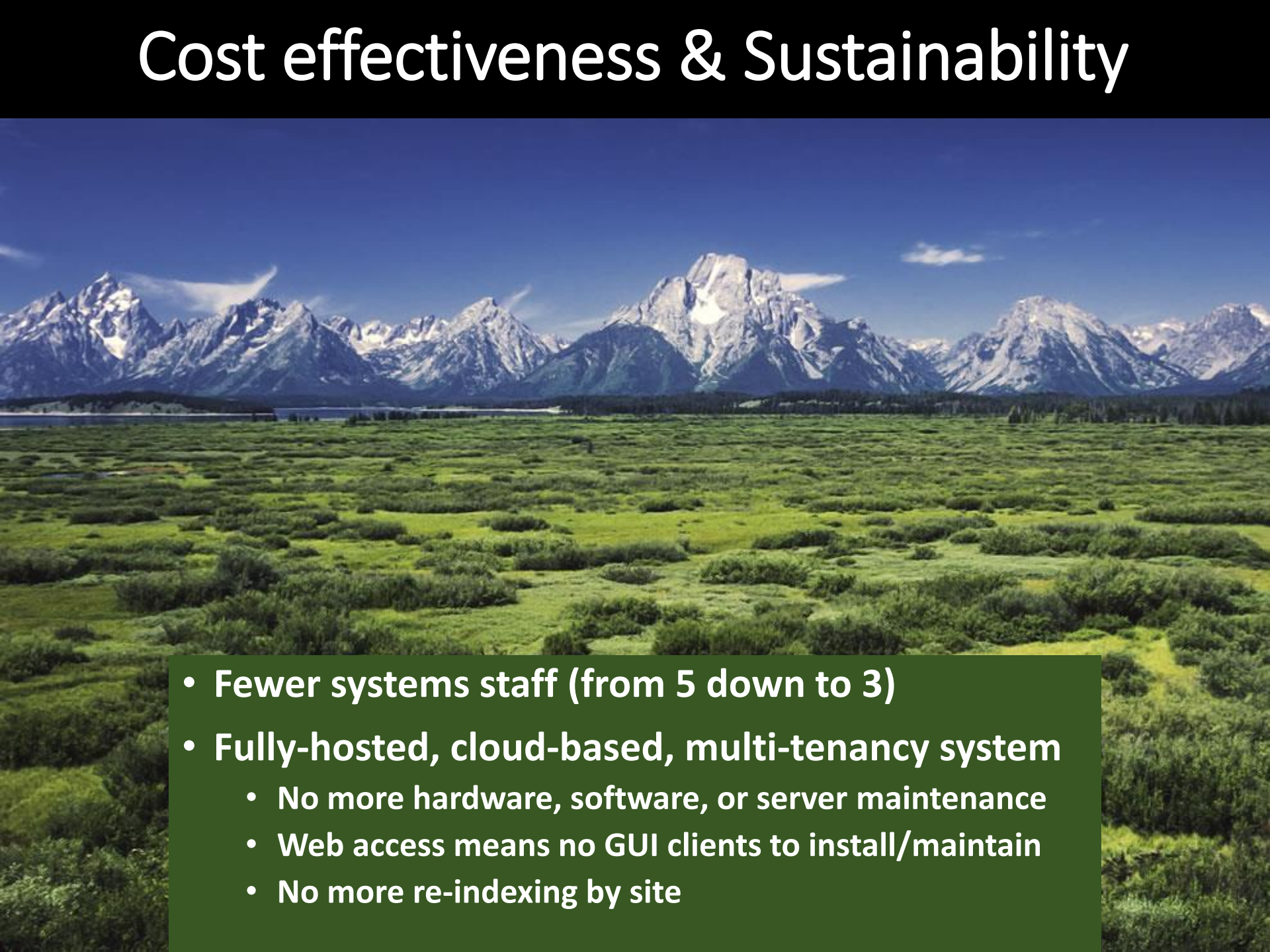
Ingredients for a long-term ILS

1. Cost-effective
2. Sustainable architecture
3. Able to keep pace with rapidly changing times
4. Must fulfill a library's work needs
5. Ease of use for staff/faculty



How does Alma measure up?

Cost effectiveness & Sustainability

- 
- Fewer systems staff (from 5 down to 3)
 - Fully-hosted, cloud-based, multi-tenancy system
 - No more hardware, software, or server maintenance
 - Web access means no GUI clients to install/maintain
 - No more re-indexing by site

Timeliness

Monthly updates to sandbox and production



Fulfilling UT Library's work needs

- No “show stoppers”
- All work we previously did is possible in Alma



Unfortunately ease of use for staff and faculty still an issue in certain cases



Good news!

Customer/Vendor Collaboration



Alma UX Project

- Project sponsored by ExLibris to improve “user experience” of Alma
- Nine participating institutions:
 - Getty Research Institute
 - Northwestern University
 - University of Tennessee
 - University of Wisconsin
 - KU Leuven
 - Monash University
 - State Library of Queensland
 - University of Mannheim
 - University of Oslo

Goals of UX Project

- Gather feedback from Alma customers on how the system is used
- Improve Alma usability & satisfaction through a re-design of the user interface (UI)
- Better integrate UX processes into Alma development cycle



Old UI

Libraries

Alma

Tasks Analytics Currently at: Hodges Library - Library Ex...

New UI Preview

Help Rogers, Michael

Welcome Rogers, Michael

Add Widget

Tasks

Reading List- Unassigned - Complete (326)

Reading List- Unassigned - Processing (26)

Reading lists - unassigned (352)

Electronic resources - activation - unassigned (33)

Electronic resources - activation - passed due date - unassigned (19)

Invoices - approval - without assignment (66)

Invoices - review - without assignment (19)

Items - digitization (11)

Order Lines - review - unassigned (188)

Orders - review (1)

Order Lines - waiting for renewal (2679)

Order Lines in evaluation - draft (1)

Order Lines in evaluation - requested (1)

Requests - All - pickup from shelf (14)

Notifications

Link: Alma Wiki Guides for Librarians

Link: Alma Training Video Library

Link: ACR Documentation

Link: Cataloging Documentation

Primo Dashboard

Last Publishing Job Details

Starting Time10/16/2017 10:04: AM, EDT

StatusCompleted Successfully

TypeIncremental

Publishing Jobs List

Fund Balances

Open in a new window

Fund Ledger Code	Allocated Balance	Encumbrance Balance	Expenditure Balance	Ava Bal
APPR(FRENCH)	\$7,500.00	\$0.00	\$2,366.77	
APPR(JUVN)	\$7,000.00	\$0.00	\$263.20	
APPR(MUSICCD)	\$250.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
APPR(OSCAT)	\$40,000.00	\$22,048.32	\$7,860.74	
APPR(RECBKDVD)	\$600.00	\$457.60	\$41.60	
APPR(SCORES)	\$4,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,942.48	
APPR(US)	\$700,000.00	\$4,815.91	\$102,564.51	
CONTIN(RECUR)				
DILS(ASTM)	\$3,558.13	\$0.01	\$0.00	
DILS(EFTS)	\$2,967.60	\$0.00	\$580.80	
EGENA(ALT)	-\$81,595.13	\$0.00	-\$81,595.13	
EGENA(EBSCO)	\$81,595.13	\$0.00	\$0.00	
EGENA(FEE)	\$1,250,000.00	\$1,250,000.01	\$0.00	

Search IRIS Vendor Code

Open in a new window

Vendor Code	Vendor Name	ERP Code
	None	
00200313	Vendor for Sales Force Case	
01EDITIONS	01 EDITIONS	
024414	American Phytopathological Society	
1-WORLD	1-WORLD GLOBES & MAPS	1098755
13WNET	13 WNET	1121755
20FOUR	20 FOUR 7 PRODUCTIONS	
3BOX	JUAN VALENTIN ROMERO GIMÉNEZ	3003305
3DSTEREO	3Dstereo.com, Inc.	
4BARREST	4BARREST.COM LTD	
50EGGS	50 EGGS , LLC	1088308
84CHARING	84 CHARING CROSS, INC.	
A&EHOMEVID	A&E HOME VIDEO	1050253

Scheduled Jobs Status

Name	10/16	10/15	10/14	10/13	10/12
Acquisition	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Administration	-	-	-	-	-
Data services	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fulfillment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Import	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Publishing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Repository	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Users	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Count of Users by Group

Open in a new window

User Group	COUNT(User Id)
API	1,442
API	1
Carrel	617
Courtesy/Donor	504
Faculty	7,458
Faculty Study	394
General Public	562
Graduate	14,965
In-Transit	8
Interlibrary Services	26
Library Department	127
Medical Library	3,100
Proxy	95
Special Undergraduate	310
Staff	22,208
Undergraduate	56,000

New UI

Libraries

Alma



Acquisitions

Resources

Fulfillment

Admin

Analytics



Users ▾

All ▾



Welcome, Rogers, Michael | Monday, October 16, 2017



Recent Pages

> Design Analytics
Analytics

> Manage Patron Se...
Fulfillment

> Publishing Profiles
Resources

> Import
Acquisitions

> Manage Electronic...
Resources

Sandbox(es) ▾



sandbox01-na.alma.exlibrisgroup.com
of your institution (07/05/2017)

[More info >](#)

Primo Dashboard ▾

LAST PUBLISHING JOB DETAILS

Starting Time 10/16/2017 10:04: AM, EDT
Status Completed Successfully
Type Incremental

[Publishing Jobs List >](#)

Scheduled Jobs Status ▾

10/16

10/15

10/14

10/13

10/12



Acquisition



Administration



Data services



Fulfillment



Import



Publishing



Repository



Users



Scheduled Jobs
Completed
Successfully

New UI Usage ▾

Active Users ?

66.9%

● 119 users are using
the new UI.

● 59 users are using the
old UI.



Tasks ▾

14 Other Requests >

2867 Order Lines >

84 Invoices >

11 Items >

52 Electronic Resources >

2 Trials >

352 Reading Lists >

Notifications ▾



Link:
Alma Wiki Guides for Librarians

07/14/2016



Old UI Search Results

Libraries

Alma

Tasks

Analytics

Currently at: Hodges Library - Library Ex...

New UI Preview

Help

Rogers, Michael

All Titles

Find

All titles

where

Keywords

contains

caves

Go

Advanced search

Saved queries

Institution

Community

Limit results to:

Inventory

Collection

Electronic title

Digital title

Physical title

Material Type

Book (596)

Computer file (1)

Journal (24)

More (3) ▾

Language

Chinese (4)

Dutch (1)

English (725)

More (13) ▾

Publication Year

1680 - 1985 (187)

1986 - 2001 (188)

2002 - 2009 (160)

More (2) ▾

Resource Type

2D non-projectable graphic - Physical (1)

Audio musical - Physical (4)

Book - Electronic (150)

More (13) ▾

Sort by

Rank

Secondary Sort by

Rank

1

2

3


»

Go

1 - 20 of 758 Records

Tools


1



Caves / by George Laycock ; illustrated by DeVere Burt.
Book (Book - Physical) By Laycock, George. (New York : Four Winds Press c1976.)
ISBN: 0590073923 :
Subject: Caves--Juvenile literature. Language: English Record number: (TU)000039841UTK01
Availability: Physical version at **ST: STOR; 910.02L383c** (1 copy, 1 available)

[Edit Record](#) | [Order](#) | [Request](#) | [Document Delivery](#) | [Add to reading list](#) | [Holdings](#) | [Items](#) | [Add to collection](#) | [Linked Data](#) | [Reminders](#) | [More info](#)


2



Caves / by Stephen Kramer : photographs by Kenrick L. Day.
Book (Book - Physical) By Kramer, Stephen P. (Minneapolis : Carolrhoda Books c1995.)
ISBN: 0876144474 :
Series: Nature in action (Minneapolis, Minn.)
Subject: Caves--Juvenile literature. Language: English Record number: (TU)001021151UTK01
Availability: Physical version at **H: JUV; 551.447K73c** (1 copy, 1 available)
Physical version at **H: ABYSS; 551.447K73c** (1 copy, 0 available)

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3



Exploring caves [graphic] / U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey.
Visual material (2D non-projectable graphic - Physical) By Geological Survey (U.S.). (Reston, Va. : The Survey 2000)
ISBN: 0607941782
Subject: Caves--United States--Posters. Caves--Study and teaching. Language: English Medium Type: [graphic] / Record number: (TU)001342423UTK01
Availability: Physical version at **ST: MAP; I 19.79:C 31/POST.** (1 copy, 1 available)

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4



Texas caves / Blair Pittman : foreword by Francis Edward Abernethy.
Book (Book - Physical) By Pittman, Blair, (College Station : Texas A&M University Press c1999.)
Edition: 1st ed.
ISBN: 0890968497 (cloth) and others
Series: The Louise Lindsey Merrick natural environment series ; no. 31
Subject: Caves--Texas. Language: English Record number: (TU)001210268UTK01
Availability: Physical version at **H: STACK; GB605.T5 P57 1999** (1 copy, 1 available)

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5



Encyclopedia of Caves.
Book (Book - Electronic) text; computer; online resource By White, William B. (San Diego : Elsevier Science, 2012)
Edition: 2nd ed.
ISBN: 9780123838339 and others
Subject: Speleology--Encyclopedias. Electronic books. Language: English Record number: (MiAaPQ)EBC832450
Availability: Electronic version at ProQuest Ebook Central: Academic Complete: Full Text

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6



Caves, cliffs & canyons / editor, Robert Burnham ; series editor, John Gattuso.
Book (Book - Physical) By Burnham, Robert. (Singapore : APA Publications GmbH & Co Verlag KG c2000.)
ISBN: 1563319292 (pbk. : cover) :
Series: Insight guides.
Subject: National parks and reserves--United States--Guidebooks. Geology--North United States--Guidebooks. Caves--United States--Guidebooks. and others Language: English
Record number: (TU)001322594UTK01
Availability: Physical version at **H: STACK; QE77 .C39 2000** (1 copy, 1 available)

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New UI Search Results

Libraries

Alma



Acquisitions

Resources

Fulfillment

Admin

Analytics



All titles ▾

Keywords ▾

caves



Advanced ▾

All Titles (1 - 20 of 758) caves ✎

Save Query

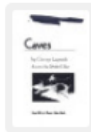
🏠 Institution

👤 Community

Expand ▾



1



Caves / by George Laycock ; illustrated by DeVeré Burt.

Book {Book - Physical} By Laycock, George.
(New York : Four Winds Press c1976.)

Subject: Caves--Juvenile literature.

Language: English

ISBN: 0590073923 :

Record number:
(TU)000039841UTK01



Physical (1)

Electronic

Digital

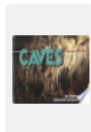
[Other details](#)

Edit Record

Holdings



2



Caves / by Stephen Kramer ; photographs by Kenrick L. Day.

Book {Book - Physical} By Kramer, Stephen P.
(Minneapolis : Carolrhoda Books c1995.)

Subject: Caves--Juvenile literature.

Series: Nature in action (Minneapolis, Minn.)

Language: English

ISBN: 0876144474 :

Record number:
(TU)001021151UTK01



Physical (2)

Electronic

Digital

[Other details](#)

Edit Record

Holdings



📦 Orders: 1

Requests: 1

3



Exploring caves [graphic] / U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey.

Visual material {2D non-projectable graphic - Physical} By Geological Survey (U.S.). (Reston, Va. : The Survey 2000)

Subject: Caves--United States--Posters. Caves--Study and teaching.

Medium Type: [graphic] /

Language: English

ISBN: 0607941782

Record number:
(TU)001342423UTK01



Physical (1)

Electronic

Digital

[Other details](#)

Edit Record

Holdings



4



Texas caves / Blair Pittman ; foreword by Francis Edward Abernethy.

Book {Book - Physical} By Pittman, Blair,
(College Station : Texas A&M University Press c1999.)

Subject: Caves--Texas.

Language: English

ISBN: 0890968497 (cloth)
and others

Record number:

Edit Record

Holdings



Makeup of Project

- Monthly WebEx calls with ExLibris and other participating institutions
- Periodic assignments
 - Synchronous “user studies” with ExLibris working on a specific task
 - Asynchronous “user surveys” related to Alma functionality and/or workflows
- Focus right now on usability, not functionality



In summary ...

- Alma has great potential as a system for the “long term”
- Best aspects of Alma are:
 - Sustainable architecture
 - Able to keep pace with rapidly changing times
 - Usefulness across the entire library spectrum (not just Tech Services & Circulation)
- Areas still needing work
 - Ease of use for staff (more work with Alma UX project)
 - Better communication from ExLibris on philosophy behind Alma workflows

Thank you for your attention!
Any questions?

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