

University of St. Thomas

Cutting Course Resource
Costs While Improving
Teaching & Learning



By adopting Leganto, the University of St. Thomas Libraries found a way to lower student spending on course readings and save on unused licensed content. They also discovered they could better-serve faculty and align with institutional objectives.

“One of the faculty members told us, ‘This is so awesome, I can barely stand it. What a great service you provide.’”

Greg Argo, University of St. Thomas



About the University of St. Thomas

Minnesota’s largest private university, the University of St. Thomas serves approximately 10,000 students, drawing from all 50 U.S. states and more than 60 countries. It maintains metropolitan campuses in St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Rome; the library system is equally widespread, with four separate branches. The largest branch, the O’Shaughnessy-Frey Library Center, has room for 450,000 volumes and seats more than 1,250 readers.

Opportunity to Better-Serve the University

Like many university libraries, the University of St. Thomas Libraries felt that their collections were underused and could play a more central role in the delivery of course materials. Greg Argo, Associate Director for Access & Digital Services, explains, “Resources we had already purchased or licensed were being paid for again by students through course packs or other methods. We were sure we could provide many more library resources to faculty and students by becoming more integrated with course development and delivery.”

His own investigation confirmed the problem — and the opportunity. “I went to look for course packs to do a comparison,” he recalls. “Most were shrink-wrapped, so there was no way to know what was contained inside. This meant students didn’t have the option to locate any of those materials in the library even if they wanted to. Eventually I got access to a course pack — which retailed for over \$90 — and investigated how many of the readings the University Libraries could provide. Around 73% were available electronically via library subscriptions, 20% were freely available online and, for the remaining 7%, we could digitize a chapter or an article under fair use. We could reduce that \$90 student cost to zero.”

One-Stop-Shop for the Faculty

The problem was long-known, but the library didn’t have the means to create a solution. Then, Argo learned about Leganto. Since the library was already a user of Ex Libris Alma® and Primo®, he reached out to Ex Libris representatives for a demo. Argo could immediately see the benefit to the faculty members, as he relates: “We could offer them a one-stop-shop. They had been using different methods to furnish course materials: ordering textbooks through the campus bookstores, going through the copyright clearance center to create a physical course pack, using library links in our learning management system, or using our course reserve service, among other methods.”

Now, with Leganto, “We offer instructors everything that they could do before, but through one central service. That is key. It is one stop for them, while we draw their course readings from the library’s holdings and check links to ensure they work the way they’re supposed to. One of the faculty members told us, ‘I know how busy you are, but I feel like you’re giving me this very helpful special attention.’”

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Greg Argo, University of St. Thomas

Cost Savings with Leganto

As to cost-savings, Leganto delivers a double benefit, according to Argo. "By using content already licensed by the library when available, Leganto allows avoidance of 'all-or-nothing' choices imposed by course packs or textbooks where only certain chapters are assigned but students need to pay for the whole thing to get access. For content not in library holdings but which we license through Leganto for short-term use, there is only a charge if a student actually downloads it. Using Leganto's metrics we can see students don't always read everything which is assigned. This provides another avenue to avoid unnecessary costs, and delivers additional savings to students and the university."

Tighter Collaboration with Faculty

"I've found that faculty partnerships are unique," asserts Argo. "Each and every one takes its own shape. The library has to be adaptable to the needs and preferences of our faculty members." And Leganto enables that. In some cases, the partnership involves four or five library staff, while in others, the instructor simply creates the resource lists and sends them to the library. Leganto also makes it easy to add a librarian as a collaborator to a list during the development phase, where they can drop suggested readings into the list for the instructor to consider and use as they see fit. "So a big benefit we see in Leganto is the flexibility that it offers," details Argo. "Flexibility in how the lists are structured, the types of content you can add, and how you add it. Flexibility in how the links are presented and accessed."

Thanks to Leganto, the library is now reaching more faculty members through new partnerships with other academic services. Argo gives an example: "Leganto connects the library with the instructional designers who help faculty develop their courses and publish their course content in the Canvas Learning Management System. These are new connections to designers and instructors that we have never had before."

Michael Wilder, instructional designer at the university's St Thomas e-Learning & Research (STELAR) Center agrees. "The partnerships made possible through Leganto have strengthened our collaborative approach with faculty. I truly believe our Library is one of the best sources for instructional materials. What we can now offer faculty through Leganto, in terms of ease of integration with our LMS, collaboration with the library

liaisons, and resource tracking, is light years beyond traditional look-up systems. When Greg was looking for individuals for the pilot project, my response was, 'How about I just recommend using Leganto to every faculty member I consult with?' From an instructional design perspective, adopting Leganto is a win-win situation all around."

Closer Alignment with the University

"We have a vision for how the library can help the university, and Leganto has facilitated our ability to provide that help," Argo states. "Every course that uses Leganto aligns us much better with the university. It positions the libraries closer to courses, curriculum, faculty, and student learning." He ticks off the ways Leganto has impacted various users and the benefits it delivers:

Instructional designers. "They're pleased that we're able to pitch in and assist them; when we do our piece, it's much appreciated. They see the value Leganto offers, have welcomed it into their work in Canvas, and are excited to see how it develops as our implementation matures."

Students. "Students have said that they love the organizational structure that is presented in Leganto, with sections that follow and match what they see in the syllabus. It's easy for them to find the articles because they're centrally located. Some have even said that it makes them more likely to use library resources!"



Subject liaison librarians. "Our liaisons recognize it as another compelling avenue for outreach and partnership with faculty. With Leganto, they can show up at the instructor's door bearing a gift that is obviously valuable, easy to use, and relatively painless to adopt."

Library access services staff. "For our staff, they often find the Leganto interface is preferable to the Alma interface for creating citations, checking links, editing citations and so on. It saves them a lot of time making changes."

And in the bigger picture? Leganto supports the Vision 2020 strategic plan at St. Thomas. One of the key elements is to embrace digital transformation and use technology in a cross functional and collaborative way.

"Leganto helps us operate at a university level, contributing toward the university's goals," Argo declares. "Universities are interested in retention, student learning, and assessment of outcomes. Leganto offers metrics and data that show how we are contributing to these processes, and can suggest ways to improve student engagement with course materials. It provides a foothold, and allows us to demonstrate our contribution to the overall goals of the university."



About Ex Libris

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