Charles University - Transforming Library Services with Alma and Primo

Charles University, a leading university in the Czech Republic, faced significant challenges with their library systems.

The libraries were using disparate and incompatible systems, causing inefficiencies for both staff and users. By implementing Alma and Primo, they created a custom-tailored system that met the unique needs of each library, improving both efficiency and user experience.

ExLibris®
Part of **Clarivate**

"The number of registered users since the launch of Alma and Primo has increased by almost 20,000 – it's great!"

Jaroslav Sivák, Chief System Librarian

About the Charles University libraries

Charles University is the largest and oldest university in the Czech Republic and one of the leading institutions in scientific research. Its library structure is complex. Each of the university's 17 faculties is served by one or more libraries that support multiple constituencies: students, teachers, academic and other staff, participants in lifelong-learning programmes, and the public. The Central Library unifies and provides methodological support to the individual libraries and is home to the management team for Alma and Primo.

Charles University

Overcoming complexity with a unified system

With four university institutes, several other workplaces, locations in three university cities, and over 900 study programmes, the structure of Charles University is very complex. To serve the institution, the structure of the libraries is correspondingly complex and providing services through multiple, disparate systems had become a challenge. Library staff had to perform tasks in multiple, incompatible systems, and students, teachers and researchers had to visit multiple catalogues with different interfaces to find the resources they needed. By turning to Alma from Ex Libris, the libraries implemented a unified system for managing all of the physical and electronic library collections.

Alma serves as the backbone information system that supports all library services at the University. For library staff, the most significant advantage is the modernisation and streamlining of processes. For users, the most significant benefit is a uniform search interface through Ex Libris Primo for all types of learning resources at the University. A further significant advantage of the two systems is their close interconnection. Any update in Alma is communicated to Primo very quickly so that all users have up-to-date information on availability.

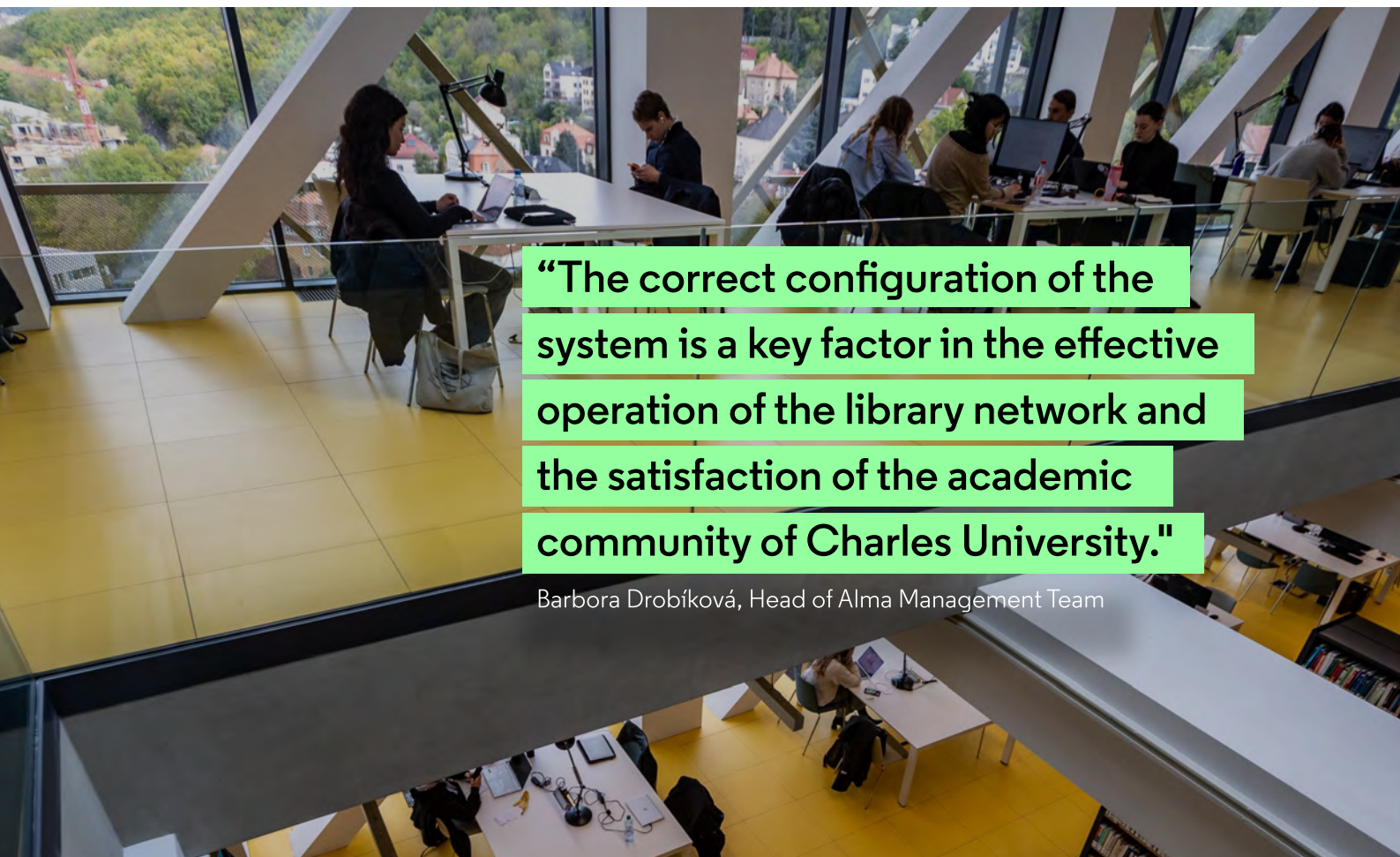## Configurability and flexibility for specific requirements

The diverse needs of individual fields of study and various user groups have a considerable impact on the day-to-day work in the libraries.

To the library staff, it is apparent that Alma and Primo are perfectly suited to managing the robust and varied library collections, making work easier for librarians at all levels.

Cooperation across individual libraries has significantly improved and everything is coordinated centrally, from unified loan rules to a common approach to developing services for students with special needs.

Alma plays a crucial role thanks to its properties for simplifying processes. These can be applied across all libraries or, where it is not possible to unify the needs of different libraries, within a single library by allowing variability.

Thanks to this flexibility, users always get precisely what is required in a given situation.

"The correct configuration of the system is a key factor in the effective operation of the library network and the satisfaction of the academic community of Charles University."

Barbora Drobíková, Head of Alma Management Team

> **"We do not have to combine data from different systems, and the flexibility of the analytical tools allows us to create a wide range of tables and graphs that exactly fit what a large institution requires."**
>
> Denis Škopan, leading analyst of the Alma and Primo management team

Advanced reporting and analytical tools

Library staff finds that the advanced reporting and visualisation tools in Alma and Primo are indispensable, allowing them to prepare all the necessary documents quickly and easily for individual libraries and University management. The tools allow them to monitor various indicators in detail, combine them any way they see fit, and use the insights to improve the quality of library services. The regular sending of reports is also invaluable, especially in cases where the libraries need to monitor loans, fees, and other aspects of their services on a regular basis. They also frequently use the Alma reporting to check titles before acquiring them to prevent duplicate purchases.

A modern automated and connected library platform

According to the staff, the great advantage of Alma and Primo over traditional library systems is the application of modern technologies that ensure maximum work efficiency. Reliable services for all users are crucial for a large library network, such as at Charles University, and a wide range of manual operations have been replaced by reliable automatic processes that are constantly improving. They include manually and automatically triggered processes that allow librarians to process a large number of updates at once, normalisation and indication rules for editing and filtering bibliographic records, and auto

holdings that automatically update available electronic resources on specific platforms.

They also greatly appreciate the work that Ex Libris does in the field of linked open data and the use of artificial intelligence for tasks such as the enrichment of bibliographic records. Since several leading experts in the field in the Czech Republic work at the University, the library pays close attention to emerging technologies and these functionalities are essential for further development and cooperation at the international level. Similarly, the ability to connect to third-party systems, whether via an API or harvesting content to Primo using the OAI-PMH protocol, allows the libraries to deliver an even more comprehensive range of services to users.

Working in community to raise the standard for users

Since Alma and Primo are used at many prestigious universities around the world, the staff counts on Ex Libris to always follow the latest standards of library science and trends in academic librarianship. This is reflected in regular updates and addition of useful new functions to both systems, frequently emphasising automation.

Also, there is regular and lively communication within the community

of user institutions, with members sharing their knowledge and experience and informing each other about solutions. The staff finds the user community to be an irreplaceable assistant in their day-to-day work with the systems.

They also appreciate that they can submit suggestions for improvements and vote on the suggestions of other institutions and help determine the direction Alma and Primo are heading. For the Charles University libraries, user satisfaction is essential, and they actively work with Alma and Primo support to make the user experience as friendly as possible.

"When access to some electronic resources was expanded, the new titles were searchable in Primo even before we received the information from the supplier. It was a great feeling to know that Alma would support us in every situation."

Lucie Panchártek Suchá,
Head of E-resources Department
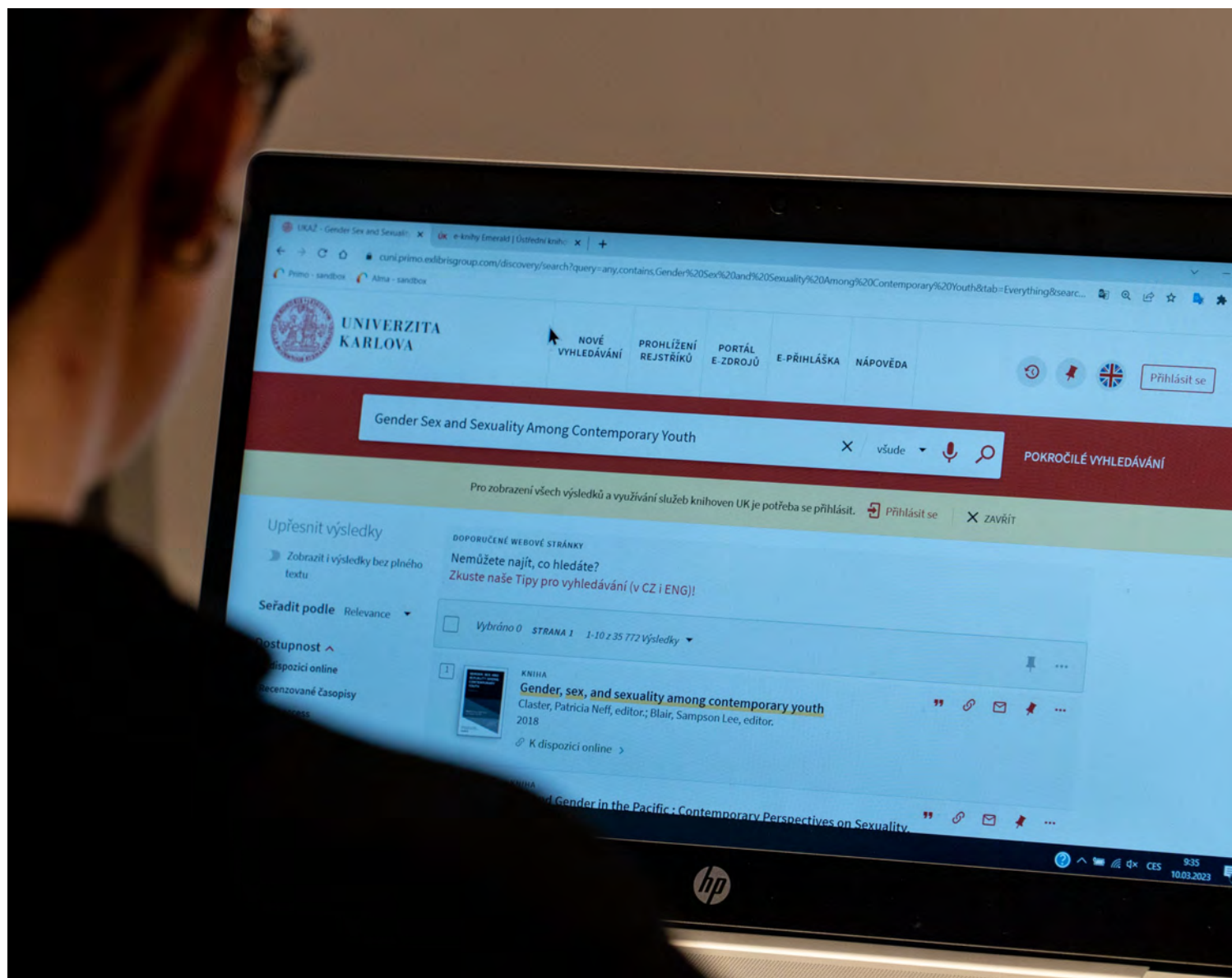
About Ex Libris, part of Clarivate

Ex Libris, part of Clarivate, is a leading global provider of cloud-based solutions that enable institutions and their users to create, manage, and share knowledge. In close collaboration with its customers and the broader community, Ex Libris develops solutions that increase library productivity, maximize the impact of research activities, enhance teaching and learning, and drive student mobile engagement. Ex Libris serves over 7,500 customers in 90 countries. For more information, see our website and join us on LinkedIn, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter.

ExLibris®
Part of **Clarivate**