Robert Gordon University

Streamlining Workflows Through Deeper System Integration

ROBERT GORDON UNIVERSITY ABERDEEN
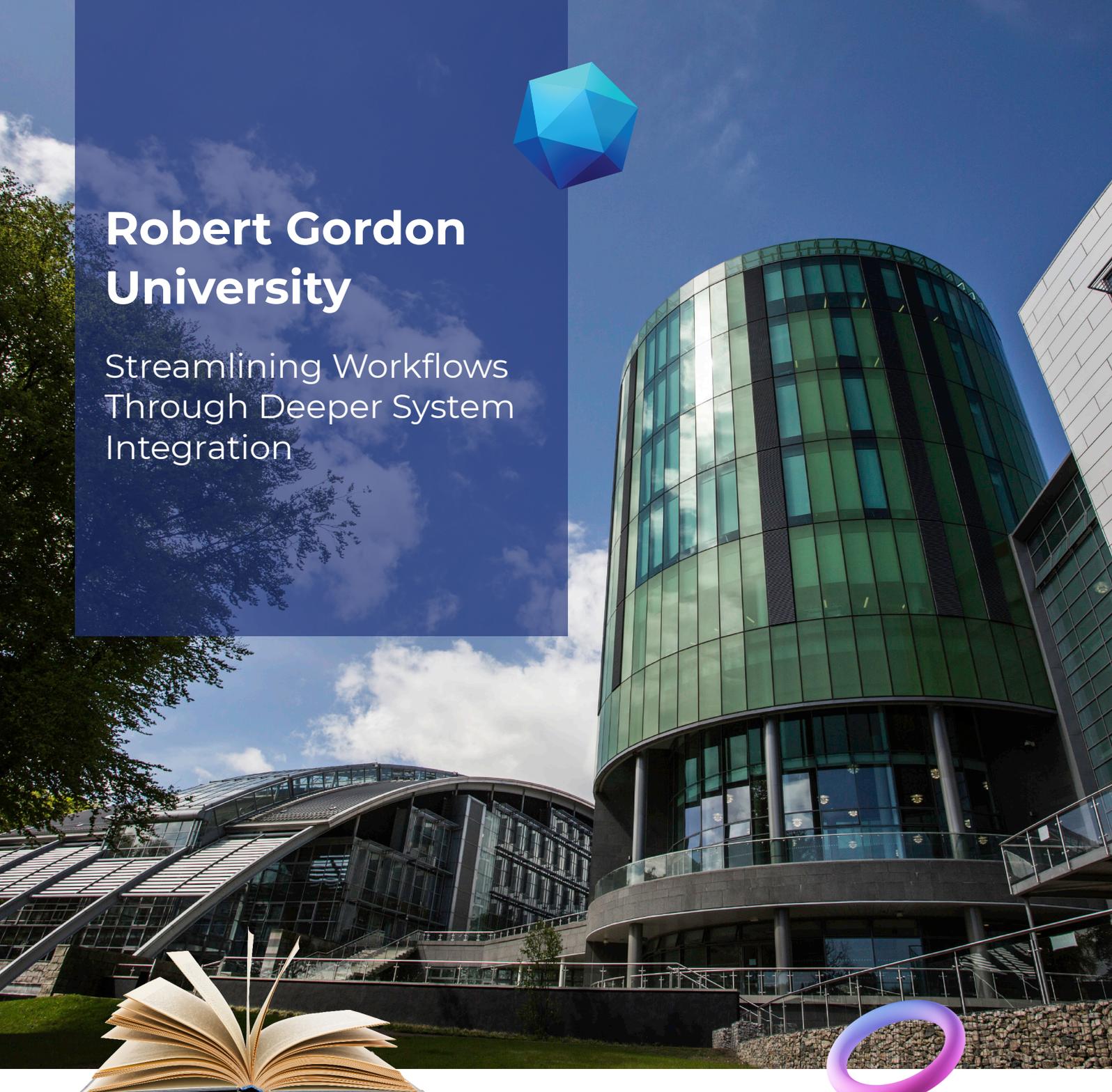
Although they had an established reading list solution, the Robert Gordon University library switched to Leganto. Tighter integration with Ex Libris Alma and Primo will drive new efficiencies and give staff more time for serving students and academics.

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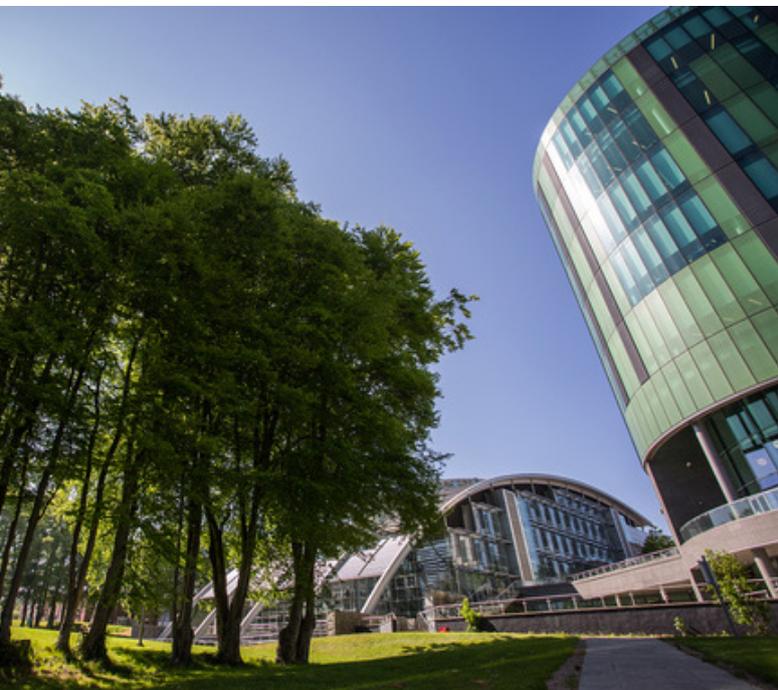
About Robert Gordon University

Robert Gordon University (RGU) is a dynamic, modern institution with an international reputation for providing high-quality education from the undergraduate through doctoral levels. The university has been awarded a Gold rating in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), placing RGU in the top 20% of the best universities in the UK for the quality of undergraduate teaching and learning.

Decision to Switch Systems

Gordon University library had a reading list solution -a commercial product from a widely known vendor - for a number of years. "It was one of the major ways that students accessed resources and was central to their learning. It was always well-used," according to Resource Services Librarian Victoria Farmer. So why switch?

In response to feedback from surveys, the library had decided to make a comprehensive change in their library management and discovery systems. They were guided by the work done by a specialist procurement service that works within Scotland. "The service had developed a framework agreement for library management systems, and made it available to universities across Scotland," explains Farmer. "It included an evaluation, and ranked the top systems. We determined that their criteria met our criteria, so we joined the agreement and went with the top-ranked supplier, which was Ex Libris. We made the decision to change to Alma and Primo. A number of other universities have done the same."

Need for Streamlined Workflows

"We saw that Leganto was also available as a product and started to investigate it," she continues. "We found that it would give our end users an experience equivalent to the existing system, along with a very fresh, modern-looking interface. Meanwhile, we could see many potential benefits for the library staff with the behind-the-scenes integration."

The integration would be a big advantage for the library, as she recounts: "We support a large number of lists — over 1,000 modules. In order to maintain our reading list service and hopefully continue to expand and improve it, our teams within the library knew that that we needed time savings and to have the most efficient workflows possible. We were able to add Leganto to the vendor agreement. The integration with Alma and Primo was too good an opportunity to pass up."

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New Tool for Automated Migration

Alma and Primo had gone live in May 2018. That left the summer for tackling the task of migrating the course lists in time for the new academic year. According to Systems Librarian Richard Milne, "It was critical for us to migrate everything from the previous reading list service. We had told the academic staff that all the courses that had reading lists would be available from the start."

To speed the process, Ex Libris developed a migration tool. The library collaborated by providing the data from the former system and verifying the results. Milne declares, "Being able to work with Ex Libris as development partners for the tool streamlined the migration path for us."

The integration with Alma also came into play for achieving a full migration. After the tool did its work, as Farmer summarises, "All of the citation data was loaded up onto Alma. It was all linked to courses. Things like notes and tags were brought across and we found it was all extremely accurate. We didn't find any missing data. Most of the work we did over the summer was in fixing links to the resources within Alma. That was usually because we had more than one copy of the item within the system, or there was some bit of data missing from the original record."

Behind-the-Scenes Benefits

"We're quite a small, compact team," states Farmer, "and the integration with Alma and Primo is going to help us. The more we can integrate and streamline our workflows, the better it's going to be for us and will hopefully allow us to do other things. The integration is going to help us with acquisitions. It's going to help us with managing requests and digitisation. It will allow us to place orders for books and immediately add them to lists and update them automatically, rather than us having to do it manually."

Adds Milne, "We've also made use of the course loader in Alma. We loaded the course information from our student record system into Alma so we have the information about the number of students taking a course. That lets us much more easily see the demand for resources. We've also been able to integrate effectively with the CLA digital content store to report our digitisations, which is a requirement for every U.K. university. Because of the streamlined back-office processes, we're able to reinvest staff time in more front-facing, student-focused activities."

Measuring the Impact on Learning

Farmer and Milne are looking to use the information from the Leganto analytics to understand student engagement with the course resource lists and share that insight with the academic staff. As Milne explains, "We can use it to demonstrate that student engagement with the library results in higher achievement. We can also tie it to better success rates and higher scores in our student satisfaction surveys."

As Farmer concludes, "Even when we're doing well, how can we do better? We want to encourage better student engagement with the library for learning and teaching, and then demonstrate it. We know we have an impact on learning. We need to be able to show it."

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