



talisaspire

# How the University of Alberta is improving student experience

Implementation of a new reading list system to improve the user and staff experience

# Replacing an outdated system

“Our library reserves system was outdated and pieced together. It was lacking an intuitive interface and discovery options. Ideally, a new reserves system would enable us to bring all the pieces together in a cohesive experience for users and library staff.” CJ de Jong, Head, Access Services, University of Alberta Library.

The University of Alberta Library Team put together a Reserves Management System Working Group, assigned to determining how to replace the system. “It consisted of not much more than an awkward form for faculty to complete, and a back-end that wasn’t very intuitive to use.” It was built in-house, but its outdated framework meant that they couldn’t improve the system to fulfill their growing needs.

“Previously, it was a struggle for students to identify their course materials in our existing discovery system, so we wanted something that made it easy to identify their course materials. High on the list was also integration with eClass, our course management system built on the Moodle platform.”

“Interfaces needed to be intuitive and assist in the workflow. The system needed to be transparent, so that it would be easy to check on progress for various staff groups.”

## Criteria for a new system

**Reserves Management System Working Group put together a list to help them narrow down their search:**

- Personalized discoverability (e.g. finding Course Materials by student ID number)
- Potential for integration with eClass (Moodle)
- Improved interfaces for both users and library staff
- Ability to track progress on requests by faculty
- A robust back-end allowing various staff groups to clearly see where materials are within the process.
- Auto-search allowing for automatic population of bibliographic information



“The aim was to reduce the requirement for re-keying information from one system into another.”



# Choosing Talis Aspire

“A faculty member pointed us in the direction of Talis Aspire. This system looked the part, was used at many institutions (although not in North America at the time), and seemed like a great candidate for what we were looking for.”

As well as ticking all the other criteria boxes, the University of Alberta (UAL) liked that Talis Aspire is a cloud-based system. For them, this meant less reliance on the IT department, nothing to install on users computers and no upgrades to manage. They wanted a product that could scale and adapt with them.

Another benefit that helped UAL select Talis Aspire is that it is Integrated Library System (ILS) agnostic. This means Talis Aspire is extremely flexible. We integrate seamlessly with a wide range of ILSs, but we are not tied to any particular system.

“Considering the options, our criteria, and additional points for consideration, the only system that would meet all criteria was Talis Aspire.”



## The University of Alberta's adoption experience

The University of Alberta was Talis's first customer in Canada. Although we have worked in many new regions before, we wanted to work closely with UAL to ensure a smooth process. We worked carefully to ensure any regional nuances could be managed and adapted, to make the system work best for them.

“Before we knew it, we were sitting down face to face with Paul Dibble from Talis, whilst he was doing a tour of Canadian universities. As the first Canadian customer, Talis asked if we would be a development partner. We

recognize the value of building a relationship as a development partner, as we have done this before and it's always been a valuable experience.:

“Being an ocean away, we did have concerns about receiving timely support; however, Talis staff work various schedules, have clients in Australia and New Zealand, so they are quite experienced with managing time zones and providing timely assistance to their customers.”

“We all speak English, but accents and some phrases or wording used in the system or by the Talis staff, at first, sounded foreign to our ears. However, they have been very proactive in ensuring that we still ‘speak the same language’.”

# University of Alberta's Talis Aspire journey

**2019**  
December

UAL signed contract to become Talis Aspire user and development partner, with a goal to implement in April 2020.



**2020**  
March

Head of Services at Talis, Laura Unwin, goes to Canada to provide in-person training. COVID-19 starts to take global effect.

"With the arrival of the coronavirus in Canada, borders started to close and then the University moved all teaching online, and required that all staff would work from home. All of the changes and new challenges were big distractions from being able to continue implementation of Talis Aspire. It was probably the worst time to try and roll out a new service, so it was okay to let our initial time frame go."



**2020**  
July

Faculty start using Talis Aspire reading lists following a soft-launch. The library team are ready to support, answer questions and adapt their approach based on feedback.



**2020**  
August

Promotion of Talis Aspire to all faculty staff, including an event with over 400 attendees.

**2020**  
June

Staff return to campus, some library services are reinstated - UAL Library Team re-focus their attention on launching the Talis Aspire Reading List Service. Prepared information packs, and tutorial videos for faculty staff.

**2020**  
January

UAL establish an implementation team, provide set up information to Talis and start the process to authenticate patrons within Talis Aspire.



# The implementation

Once the University of Alberta had decided how they were going to use Talis Aspire, and which roles library staff and faculty staff would be required to do, they were ready to launch.

“We’ve opted for faculty to own the lists. We’re a large institution, and aware that our library staff may not be able to keep up with demand. We also want to make the most of Talis Aspire as a pedagogical tool that can be fully integrated in the online course environment. So we felt it’s best when the faculty member takes advantage of developing a well-thought out reading list and embedding it in the online course environment.”

“We like that the creation and management of reading lists Talis Aspire can be done by faculty staff or library staff - or both.”



## By September, UAL had:

- Fully replaced the old reading list service
- Trained library staff and librarians on the Talis Aspire system
- Seen uptake from faculty of the Talis Aspire system.
- Successfully integrated Talis Aspire with our Course Management System (Moodle)
- Gathered lots of feedback!

## Today, UAL has:



# Positive Feedback

## What the library think...

"Talis Aspire allows us to collaborate with the professors in a way that our other service could not provide. We are able to better understand what articles/books they're seeking because of them using the bookmarklet tool, rather than sometimes being left to wonder what item they're truly wanting due to lack of information they've given and the constant emailing back/forth."

Heather Burnash, Course Materials Team

## What the faculty said...

"The new Reading List Service Talis Aspire makes it so much easier for me to keep all of the required materials organized and clear for the students. It enables me to organize the links to all of the videos and readings, seamlessly allowing students direct access to the materials. They can even check off which materials they have accessed as they go."

Dr. Heather M. Brown

## Student feedback has been positive...

"My reading list has enabled me to find all my class readings easily in one place, reducing the amount of time I spent finding required readings."

L. Vander Hoek - Rural Sociology

"I like the reading list because it allowed me to check off readings as I completed them, and has enabled me to find articles easily and stay organized."

J. Alba - Rural Sociology



Find out more about Talis Aspire

Visit: [talis.com/talis-aspire](https://talis.com/talis-aspire)

Book a demo: [talis.com/talk-to-us](https://talis.com/talk-to-us)

# About the University of Alberta

The University of Alberta is one of Canada's top universities and among the world's leading public research-intensive universities, with a reputation for excellence across the humanities, sciences, creative arts, business, engineering, and health sciences.

The University of Alberta has over 39,000 students, with over 7,000 of those being international students representing 151 countries. The university has 3,620 academic staff. The University of Alberta Library is one of the largest research library systems in North America. The library system ranks first in Canada in terms of the number of volumes per student, with print and electronic collections exceeding 5.4 million titles.



## About Talis

Addressing the evolving priorities of their strategic goals around Teaching & Learning, and learning analytics, global universities & colleges serving over 1 million students, deliver an improved experience and outcomes, through the integration of Talis Aspire into their Learning Management and Library Management Systems.

Separately, Talis Elevate, a universal content player, supports collaboration, engagement and insights into resource usage.

