Work smarter, not harder: Improve your relationships with faculty and instructors through smooth management of course materials

Dennis J Smith
Good Afternoon, My name is Dennis Smith with the University of Miami and I’m here to share the our experience with Leganto and one of our programs to build relationship with faculty while finding ways to make course reserves more accessible to students.
To start, let me tell you a little about who the University of Miami is. We are a private university in Coral Gables, Florida, which is a city connected to Miami University. We have just over 17K students and are an ARL Library.

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I do want to start by recognizing that the efforts I’m talking about today took a lot of work and I wanted to share with the team that works with me to make things happen. Richard Morales who handles the course reserves program and John Sandoval who oversees this area for me.
To give you some background, UM moved to the Alma system back in May 2016. At that time, we were still using another system that handled reserves and connected to our course management system. When Ex Libris approached us about this new product, I wanted to make sure it would help move our reserves program forward. After several discussions, I was convinced that Leganto was the reserve system we needed. Although I will talk about many aspects of Leganto, I wanted this system mainly because it provided a single workflow for physical and electronic reserves that would also enhance the access by ensuring reserves were discoverable in both our catalog and in our course management systems. We decided to move reserves to Leganto later that year and went full Leganto in May 2017.
I wanted to share with you thoughts that led us to think about new ways to promote reserves and access to textbooks. One of the things that we discovered or really just reaffirmed is that Leganto gave us an opportunity to expand our service model for course reserves. Our service model up to this point was not very proactive. We basically waited for instructors to contact us, either dropping off forms, using the online forms or emailing us to let us know about course reserves. The only real outreach was a campus wide email reminding faculty about course reserves.

For the pilot we contacted over 30 of our heaviest reserves users including print and online reserves. Although we found many of them interested in using Leganto, we had a very low adoption rate. I chalk this up to our service model as we were asking instructors to do something new. One of the faculty that did use the new system had some great feedback. “I have found the new Reserves system to be remarkably efficient and, once I got the hang of it, relatively easy to use.”
Around the same time that all this was going on, we were approached by a graduate student who wanted to discuss textbook affordability. He met with Dean and myself and shared a program that his undergraduate university had done in this area. I was very familiar with this program as I’m the one who had managed the reserves portion of that program at that university. This along with our pilot experience led us to create a program call the “Textbook Accessibility Program”. Today I want to share one aspect of this program that has really helped to make an impact for our students.
This program began with working with the bookstore to get a current list of all required textbooks and reading for the semester. Using this list, we were able to build a set in Alma in order to do a repository comparison to identify all matching books in our collection. We then build reading lists for each of these classes and ensured that they were set up in Leganto and connected to our course management system, blackboard.

The most important step in this process was then to contact each of the instructors for that course directly. Let them know we about the reading list and encourage them to add additional readings or contact us with other needs. For me, the primary reason for doing this was to start building relationship with instructors to encourage reading lists.

One important additional component of this program was to review the bookstore list for other opportunities to grow reserves. I’ll share a little more on this in a minutes.
So now let me share some of the challenges that we had. Challenges are where we learn the most. During our first run, the bookstore was very cooperative and we were able to use that list to do a test run in Fall 2016. But then there was a switch in leadership at the bookstore and they were reluctant to give us the list. We are still working through this with them, but until we can work this out, we used other methods to build our list such as scraping the website, reviewing syllabuses, but these can be time consuming. Our hope is we can find resolution with the bookstore. Alternatively, we can also look to have a more refined focus such as targeting certain areas such as general requirement classes etc.

The other challenge is that any list by the bookstore often includes exclusive editions and textbook bundles with unique ISBNs. So this is what I mention before. After we ran these lists through Alma, my reserves person would review the list manually. Often he will see titles that we have the old editions and he would make decisions on additional purchases for this program.
So now I’d like to share where I see that this initiative was successful. As part of this project, we “cleaned” the reserve shelves in order to focus on the textbooks that were actually needed. Using Leganto and Alma allowed us to make the available materials discoverable in both the course reading lists and in our course reserves catalog thus increasing the discoverability for students. We also saw increased usage of reserves and these textbooks. But one of the most important successes was building new relationships which allowed us to have other discussions about textbook accessibility and Course Reading Lists.
So I want to share a couple of examples of successes that came from this initiative. (add more about building relationships and continuing)

The first one was a reading list we created for a class for the textbook we had in the collection. Upon receiving our email about adding this to the course, the professor contacted Richard and wanted to provide his personal DVD that he had for the class to reserves. So during the discussion, Richard identified that we already owned the DVD in the library and we could easily just add it to reading lists. But he went a step further and found that that particular DVD was available to us through our streaming service and he added to the reading list so that students could access it remotely whenever they needed.

Another response to our reading list, was a professor in nursing who contacted us to say that she had several “desk” copies that she was not using for classes but would give them to us. These copies were actually in used by several classes and we were able to add them to our personal reserves collection and created additional reading lists for those classes.

The key to this is that we are building better proactive relationships with faculty to provide opportunities for reading lists and course materials.
These numbers are a result of all of our efforts including the Bookstore Initiative but as you can see, they are making a positive impact. This is all physical checkouts but we have increase 17% in our first run and 8% in our next semester.

I will say that our Leganto statistics are also looking great, but unfortunately, we don’t have numbers from our old system to see the impact there.
Results

- Stronger Engagement
- More Conversations
- More Reading Lists for Students

For me the real results are that we are engaging with faculty, talking to them more and growing the number of reading lists giving students access to more materials.
So I do see us continuing to develop reading lists from the bookstore lists but we are also looking at other ways to grow our service.
Thank you.

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