How the University of Surrey installed LibKey Nomad

ACROSS THE WHOLE UNIVERSITY

and improved access for users

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Intro

The University of Surrey is located southwest of London in the city of Guildford. It serves over 15,000 students in both undergraduate and graduate programs.

The library is a core part of the education and research mission of the university, and in order to provide better access to library resources for their patrons the library staff worked with the IT department to centrally install the LibKey Nomad browser extension on university computers.

Hannah Wise, who is the library's Content Coordinator (Access & Innovation), and Sally Hoadley, the Content Access Lead, work with many patrons and staff at the library, and speak here about what they have observed with the adoption of LibKey Nomad.

Sally and Hannah were both "pretty eager" to roll out LibKey to solve access problems patrons frequently ran into. Sally observed, "We used to get so many access queries. 'I can't get into this,' 'How do I sign into that?'".

The library adopted EZproxy sometime earlier which improved the access situation. And with the introduction of LibKey it got even better, "The two of them working together just made a massive difference," Hannah said. "We just don't really get access questions anymore. It's really gone down since LibKey and EZproxy."

Sally added, "Access queries are barely anything now, so for us it's been brilliant."

Reading List

Academic Staff at the University of Surrey use a reading list system which has evolved over time to note what materials students should get and read—a list of core materials and recommended reading. When the system first started, "We learned about it when students would come up and ask for things, and we'd say, 'Can I see that bit of paper?'" Hannah said.

The library would buy the things on those reading lists, so they were available to students, and it helped lecturers know which materials the library had on hand.

Now the reading list system has all the reading materials listed in one place and students can access those directly from the list without having to hunt for them. "LibKey helped fit in with the reading list. It was easier for us to link. It made it so that materials were not just isolated titles on a list, and could be accessed more easily," Sally said.

And LibKey's ability to identify and provide access to Open Access resources is helping with the recent goal of featuring more Open Access items in the reading lists. "It's going to be even more significant, because the library senior management team have decided they want to push to have reading lists contain more Open Access content on them," Sally said.

"We're paying lots of money for these big read and publish deals and we also want to promote the research the University is doing."

Site wide install of LibKey Nomad

"We learned from Third Iron that our IT department could do a site-wide deployment of LibKey so that it was on all the computers," Hannah said. "We just thought this would be a good idea. Trying to tell students to download things on their own machines was never going to be as successful as if it's already there. With advertising you're just not going to get as many people using it."

With a site-wide installation of LibKey the library staff could focus on a different message. "We could send a message out that was more like 'You'll notice this, and here's how it works,' rather than 'You should use this.' They were probably going to use it out of curiosity anyway with it already installed," Hannah said.

The library team asked the IT team to do the site-wide installation of LibKey. "It was done over a summer period when the students weren't around. When the new batch of students showed up in September, it was all ready and set up," Sally said.

Reaction

"We got a lot of really positive feedback from people saying, 'Oh, it's just appeared and it's really good, and I'm using it already,'" Hannah said. "People find that LibKey is very, very user friendly."

"I have just come from a Politics Board of Studies where the UG students wanted to formally thank the library for setting up LibKey Nomad, and express how useful they found it. It's great that the taught students are finding it useful as well as our researchers!"

"I'm not sure what's happened but I like it! Downloading research papers has suddenly become much easier!"

"I thought you might want to hear about the wonderful (and unprompted!) feedback I was given today from a professor who researches and publishes in nutrition.

The professor uses PubMed a lot, asked me to tell you how pleased she and her colleagues are with the LibKey Nomad links from PubMed to our collections – she was really thrilled as it makes getting to papers so much quicker!"

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Hannah Wise

Content Coordinator (Access & Innovation)

Why does all of this matter?

"Our job as librarians is to get people to the information. That's it. That's the bottom line. Anything that gets in the way of that, gets in the way of research and progress and innovation.

"An academic who's trying to get ahold of something and can't work out if we've got access or not, might put a request into library loan. The thought process they were having is cut and has been delayed. And then they often find out we had access all along, which is a delay for no reason.

"There are some disciplines that are more comfortable using online technology to get access to things, and we'd see the same cohorts come in again and again, just getting really frustrated. You see them getting annoyed and angry and that takes some of the pleasure out of doing what they want to do, because they want to come in, they want to research, they want to learn, and they want to progress.

"If they can't do that, not because they don't understand the subject, but because they can't get to the content, they feel extra cheated. It's our job to make sure that we accurately represent what we've paid for."

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"But our main job is to not be noticed. If we get people to the information without them having to think about it and they don't even really know we've been doing stuff behind the scenes, that's when we've succeeded. It's great when they notice, but also it's great when they don't, because then they're just getting what they want."

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Hannah Wise
Content Coordinator (Access & Innovation)

Usage

Sally added that they make budget decisions based on usage. "Many UK institutions are in a position where they're having to cut things or they're having budget cuts, and that's one of the main things we look at. What's being used, how much we're spending. If it's not being used and there's no justification, then yes, that will be cut as our budgets get squeezed, or we put the money into something that they think will be used."

She said, "If things aren't linking properly and people can't discover them, then the items don't have the usage, and we're going to look at them saying, 'Are we going to cut this resource because not enough people are using it?' It all ties together." The ability to discover and access content affects usage, and artificially low usage caused by a difficult access process affects budgets and what the library can justify carrying—so providing seamless, easy access has a direct effect on tough budget and acquisition decisions.

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Hannah Wise
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