

Southern University of Science and Technology

Alma Provides a World-
Class Solution



SUSTech

Southern University of Science and Technology

A Chinese university library turned to Ex Libris as part of a strategy to become an international-level institution, with unified resource management, integrations, and multidimensional analytics.

ExLibris
a ProQuest Company

“The more we learn about Alma, the more we realize what a powerful platform it is.”

Celine Qiu, Manager of Library Systems



About the Southern University of Science and Technology

The Southern University of Science and Technology (“SUSTech”) is a public research university in Shenzhen, Guangdong, China. Established in 2010 by the provincial government, the university is located in the rapidly growing tech center of Shenzhen. SUSTech has been recognized as an international institution of science and technology research, ranking the 8th in China in the 2020 THE University Rankings, and the first in China and 47th in the world in 2020 THE best Young Universities for the impact of its research. The university has 6,417 students and 1,033 faculty members at its eight constituent colleges and schools (College of Science, College of Engineering, College of Business, School of Medicine, School of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, School of Life Sciences, School of Design and School of Humanities and Social Sciences).

The SUSTech library supports the university’s learning, teaching and research, with a focus on resources for science and technology programs and a developing collection in the arts, social sciences and humanities. By the end of December 2019, the library’s print collection included more than 245,141 books, 101 newspapers and magazines, 557,232 electronic books, and 84,469 electronic journals, with more than 80% of its current collection budget spent on electronic resources. The library has a permanent staff of 28 people and 8 other contract-based personnel.

A Strategy of World-Class Transformation

The SUSTech library was using a client-server based system for library management that was dependent on an on-premises server. This made ongoing maintenance, updating and modifications very cumbersome, as well as requiring changes to be made on each individual client computer used by librarians. The systems in use were also unable to meet the library’s need for analytics and third-party integrations.

Similarly, the library managed electronic resources manually on Excel, making it inefficient and time-consuming. As the number of electronic resources increased rapidly, the inefficiencies and errors inherent in this approach became more pronounced.

In addition, in line with SUSTech’s institutional strategy of developing into a world-class university, all library patron-facing systems needed be updated to include features that are standard in global academic libraries. This includes the ability to support both Chinese and English users and resources, as well as a more unified approach to the management of physical, electronic and digital resources.

As a relatively small organization, SUSTech library is operating under the staff constraints typical of libraries of its size. Though small, the library is required to provide the same services as its larger counterparts. One solution adopted by SUSTech was to find and implement advanced software and hardware, with an eye to optimizing available budgets and manpower. In order to support more sophisticated technologies, the library staff are committed to continuously improving their skills accordingly.

A Fresh Start for a Young Library

The SUSTech library began searching for a new resource management system in September 2016. The timing was fortunate in two respects: the library was relatively new, which meant the migration process was expected to be less complex than larger, more veteran institutions; and the library staff is made up of young and very proactive people, who are flexible and capable of adapting to a new, more international system.

SUSTech selected Ex Libris in 2017 as its library services platform and discovery system provider in light of the company’s status as a worldwide leader in the library software market, with many of the world’s top universities among its clientele.

The cloud-based solutions, sharing philosophy, and agile monthly releases were among the key aspects of what Ex Libris had to offer that fit well with SUSTech's intention to adopt the highest international standards and a more outward-facing approach.

Alma went live on 1 February 2018, following a smooth implementation process that involved close collaboration with the Ex Libris team in data migration, cleaning, integrity, and accuracy. For the library, the biggest challenge came afterward, as the team is learning to configure its workflows, as well as exploring and improving how it manages electronic resources in order to realize the benefits of the system.

An Exceptional Solution

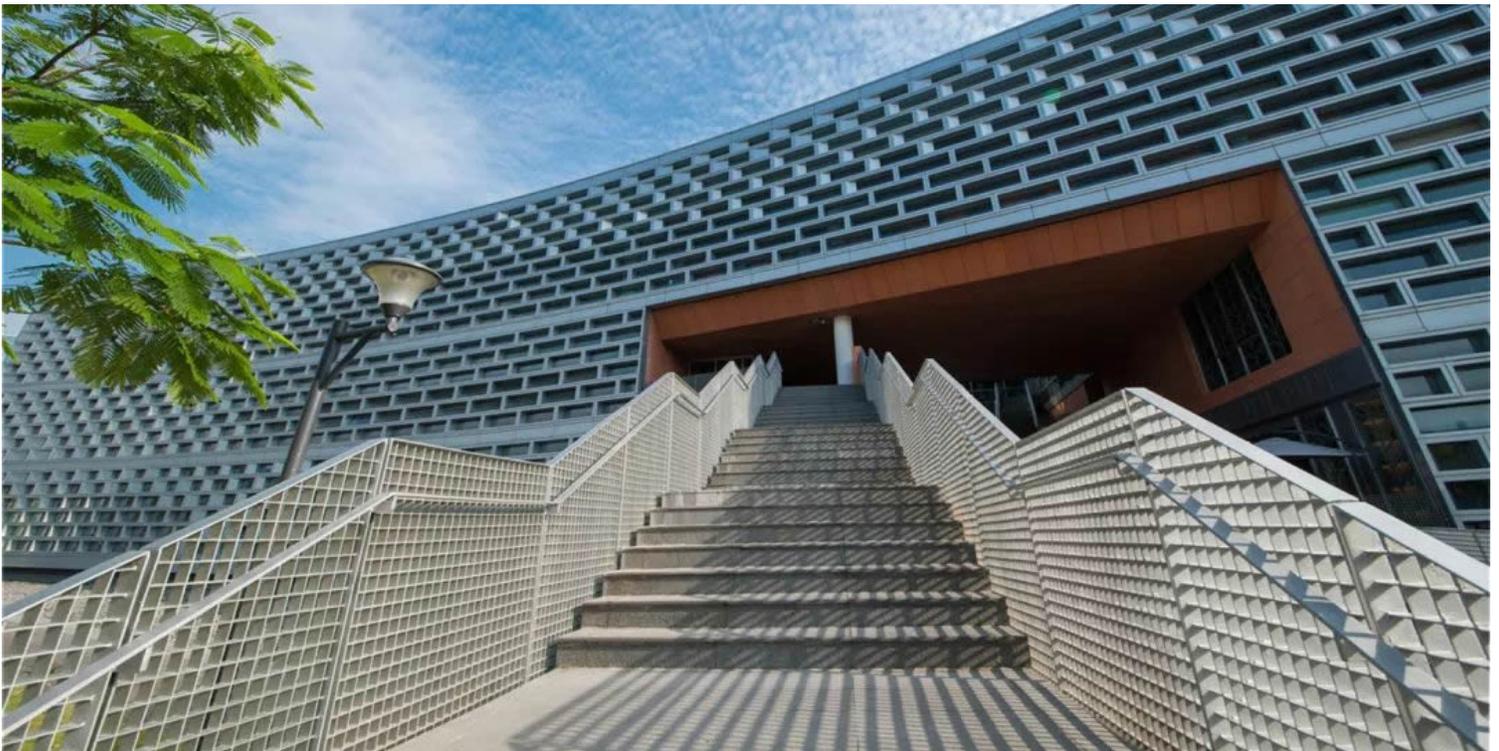
With the deployment of Alma and Primo, SUSTech has seen many positive benefits and addressed the challenges the library had been facing with its previous management system.

- Meeting the need for a new generation library services platform, Alma provides all-round, centralized management of physical, electronic, and digital resources.
- Primo is helping SUSTech providing students and faculty a simple, unified, one-stop-shop portal for resources discovery.

- Low maintenance effort and cost, as Alma and Primo are cloud-based SaaS solutions with no need for on-premises servers. Upgrades, modifications and the like are made automatically and without a need for local intervention, which contributes to a lower total cost of operations for the Ex Libris solutions.
- Multidimensional Alma analytics gives senior personnel insights into resource use and other library activity, which provides statistical evidence to guide collection development and patron services decisions.
- Leveraging open standards and protocols, Alma APIs facilitate integration with other SUSTech systems and equipment. This provides the library with greater administrative convenience, as well as allowing librarians to manage library hardware facilities through Alma, turning Alma into a central hub for the library.

All in all, SUSTech sees its experience with Alma and Primo as a win-win collaboration with Ex Libris. Celine Qiu, Manager of Library Systems, stated that she would surely recommend Alma to her colleagues, as it is a powerful system.

“As we came to understand it better, we have gained even more from Alma,” she said, adding that Ex Libris will continue improving its products and services to provide the library with ever better solutions.



About Ex Libris

Ex Libris, a ProQuest company, 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](#).