



Hebrew University: Exploring the Full Potential of Alma Digital

Innovative integrations and advanced workflows with Alma Digital are making teaching more interesting and research more robust at the Jerusalem university.

[About Hebrew University of Jerusalem](#)

Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Hebrew University), established in 1918, is Israel's premier university and its leading research institution. The university is ranked internationally among the 100 leading universities in the world, with 7 faculties, 14 schools, and more than 100 research centers in 6 campuses. The student body consists of 23,500 students, while researchers at the university number over 1000.

The Library Authority, with 8 libraries in 4 campuses, is an organizational unit for optimizing resources, budgets and technologies. The Library Authority coordinates efforts among the various Hebrew University Libraries to preserve and expand print, electronic and digital collections in accordance with the needs of researchers, faculty and students, to assist patrons in finding the material they need, to make physical study spaces accessible to all members of the university community, and to coordinate acquisition and assimilation of advanced technologies to advance the university's research, teaching, learning and management goals.

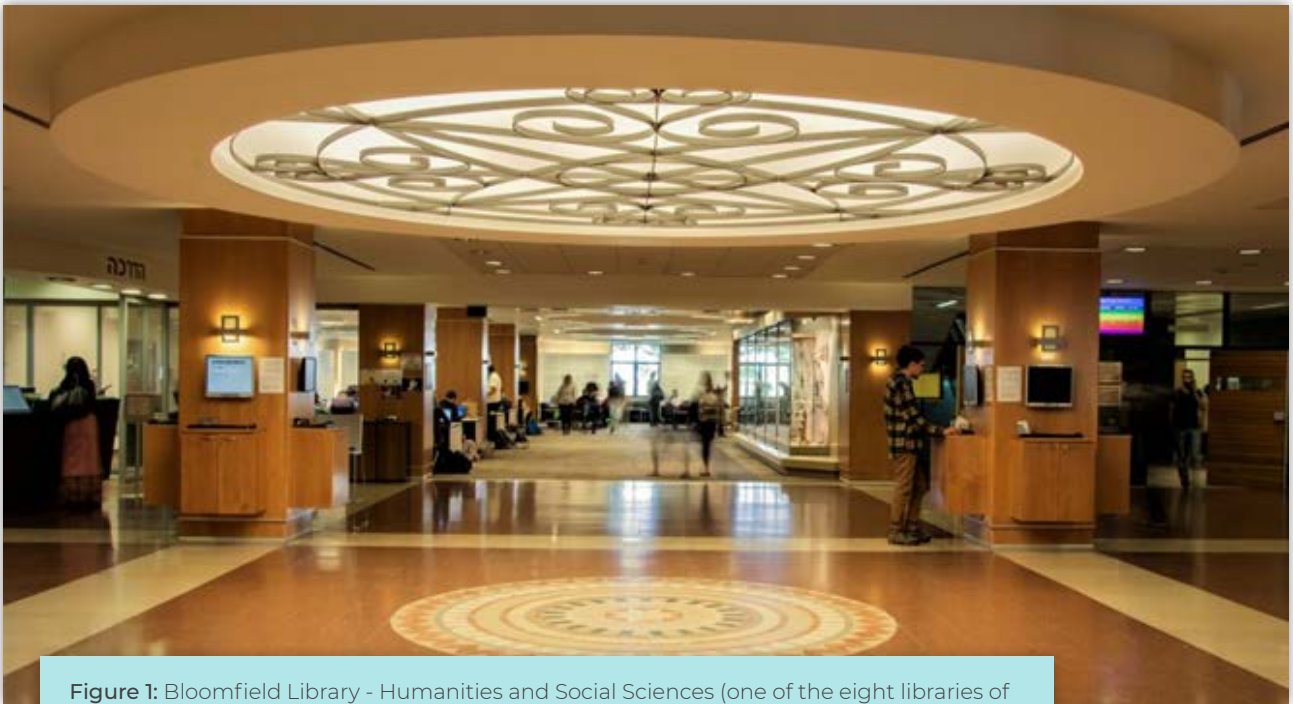


Figure 1: Bloomfield Library - Humanities and Social Sciences (one of the eight libraries of the Library Authority)

The Alma platform has proven to be an excellent library system, smoothly integrating with other university systems and offering good service to the end user." - Dalia Mendelsson, Chief Information Systems Librarian.

Enhancing the Picture at the University

Aleph, the integrated library system from Ex Libris, was first developed at Hebrew University. Naturally, it has been the solution in use by the university libraries for several decades.

As Ex Libris developed additional library management solutions, the Hebrew University Library Authority was often among the early adopters. This included migrating from Aleph to Ex Libris Alma library services platform, implemented in combination with Ex Libris Primo discovery and delivery solution, for an integrated, end-to-end system.

As technology has advanced, digital assets have become an increasingly common and valuable component of university collections. Some Hebrew University departments have their own digital asset databases, separate from those of the library. They were managed with different systems and in different locations, including localized servers and software environments.

The Library Authority sought to integrate those collections within the University Catalog and facilitate cross-searches, including within the various specialized collections. With such an approach, a more complete, centralized picture of all the institution's research and learning resources would emerge.

Getting the Most Out of Alma

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem is using Alma as a comprehensive platform for out-of-the-box integration with an Ex Libris suite of cloud-based discovery, research, and student engagement higher education solutions. Alma is unified by design, with centralized, seamless end-to-end workflows and a common interface for acquisitions, management and fulfillment of print, electronic and digital resources, as well as comprehensive analytics.

Beyond optimal management of current resources, the Library Authority is taking full advantage of Alma's potential to open avenues for new processes and broader developments. In response to a suggestion by the University's Authority for Computation, Communication and Information, the Library Authority agreed to bring all digital resources at the university under one roof, managed by the Library Authority through Alma Digital. The integration provides a sturdy infrastructure for enhancing the end user's digital experience across the teaching, learning and research landscape.

Alma Digital was the ideal solution for that purpose, as many of the features requested by the managers of the various university digital collections were possible only due to capabilities integral to the Alma platform. Digital assets are stored and managed in the Amazon cloud, with no onboarding or installation, and with centralized access rights management. The digital platform workflow is also easy to understand and navigate. Moreover, recognizing that digital technology evolves relatively rapidly, the monthly Alma release ensures that the library's changing digital needs will always be met.

"Our vision is that Alma Digital will play a valuable role in teaching, learning and research as an interactive platform," according to Dalia Mendelsson, Chief Information Systems Librarian for Hebrew University. "Each collection is a hidden treasure that Alma Digital helps us uncover and share."

Collaboration on migrating, storing and managing databases previously managed separately by Hebrew University's IT team led to other university departments turning to the Library Authority with similar digital initiatives. In undertaking such projects, the Library Authority carefully considers how an end user would be able to most effectively find needed information in its archives and collections.

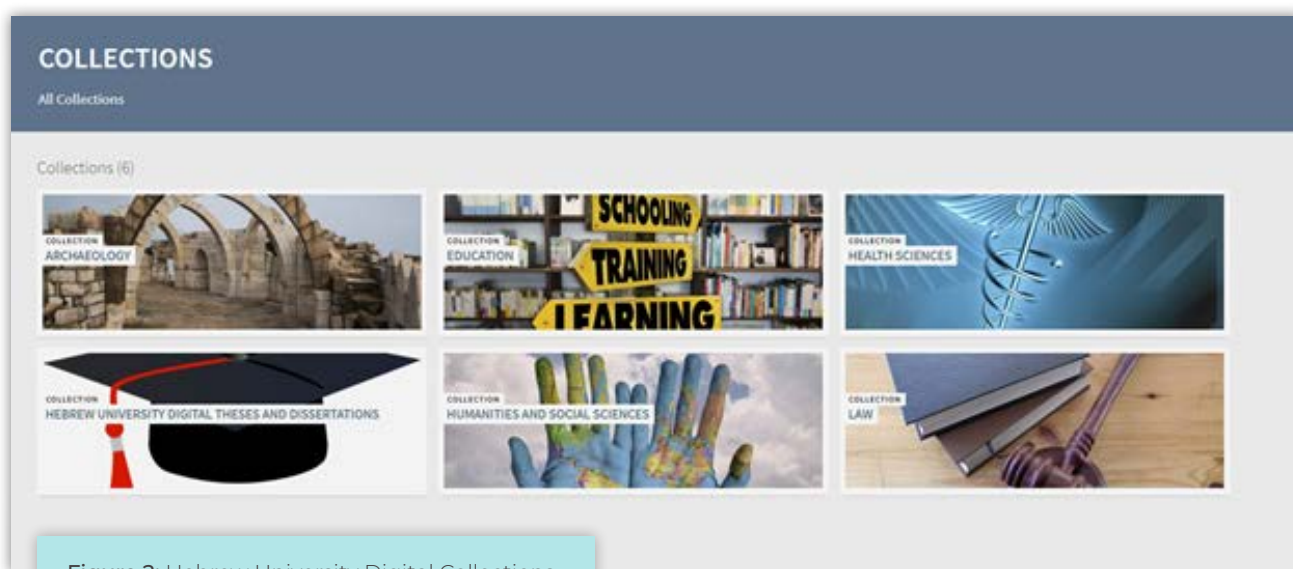


Figure 2: Hebrew University Digital Collections

Easy upload

With Alma Digital, the Library Authority migrated around 30,000 doctoral dissertations and master's theses previously held in the university's servers to the Ex Libris Amazon cloud. The process involved the innovative approach of loading digital objects to match existent bibliographic records in Alma. This was accomplished using an Excel-based file, which ensures the migrated documents are highly organized, broken down by field and other relevant parameters. This strategy, along with maintaining access rights for Hebrew University users only, significantly streamlined the bulk migration.

The Library Authority provided the Authority for Research Students at Hebrew University a new, easy-to-use workflow for direct deposit of dissertations and theses within Alma. This replaced the cumbersome hard copy and disk-on-key processes of the past; now, the PhD theses are loaded directly to Alma via the deposit functionality and the cataloger then uses a built-in template for fast and easy incorporation in the relevant collection. This methodology proved to be very effective, eliminating a backlog of almost 200 uncatalogued theses in less than two weeks. In the wake of this success, the Social Sciences and Business Faculties adopted the same method for loading MA theses in Alma.

In addition, Ex Libris, ProQuest and Hebrew University are investigating the options for a joint project to streamline the workflow of loading electronic dissertations and theses with public access rights to ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, increasing their exposure. This repository is the largest of its kind, accessed by thousands of organizations and containing content from universities in nearly 100 countries.

Media links and migrations

Among the many digital formats the Library Authority has been bringing into Alma are video clips and films from various sources. Two of these archives are indicative of the diverse types of resources that are being centralized.

- The Faculty of Medicine: Collections of instructional and informational films used in the multimedia center of the medical school have been migrated into the Health Sciences collection within Alma Digital. They include both original teaching productions and clips from mass media sources.

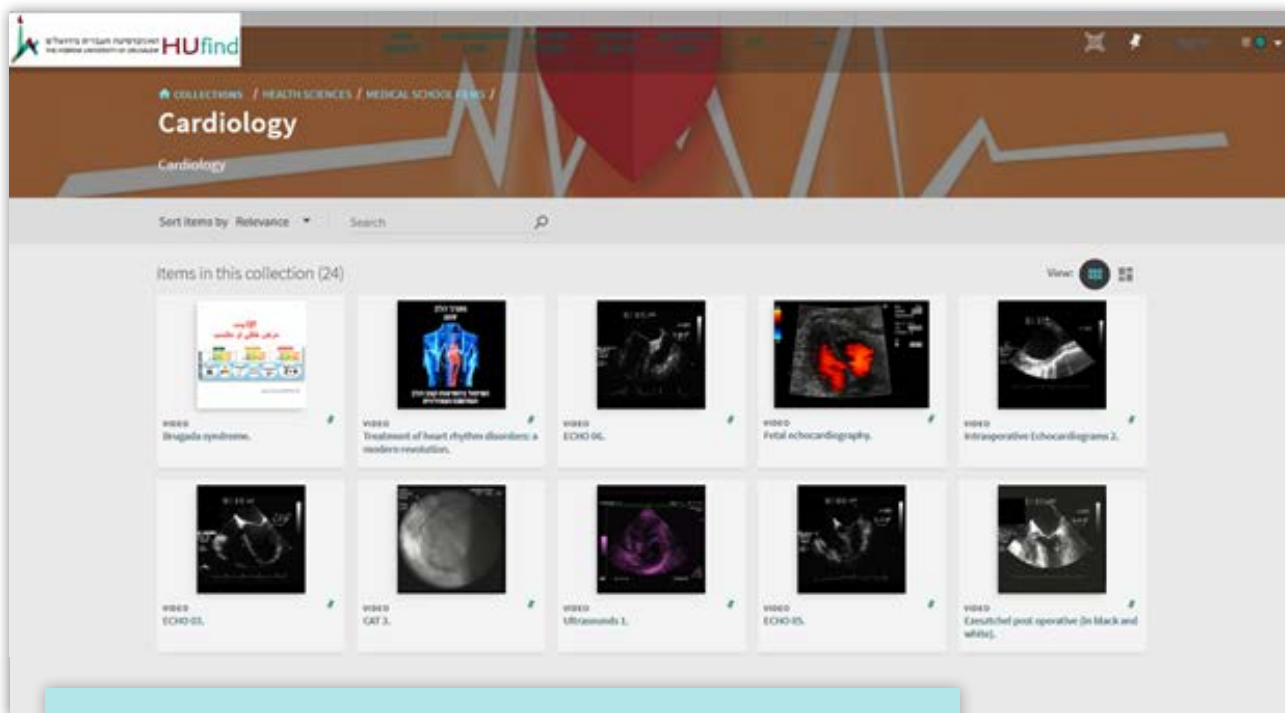


Figure 3: Digital Collections, Health Sciences - Medical School Films - Cardiology

- The Library Authority migrated The Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive from Aleph to Alma. This archive is the largest collection of Jewish documentary films in the world, with thousands of titles from different periods of history. By migrating to Alma, the Spielberg Archive includes easy access to documentaries embedded from the Hebrew University YouTube channel and valuable metadata that has been catalogued over the years. This functionality offers an excellent user experience.

Innovative integrations

Alma has become the backbone of the Hebrew University library network, in part thanks to its open infrastructure and rich APIs enabling direct integration with institutional tools and systems. The Library Authority has leveraged this capability in several unique and innovative ways:

- Geospatial mapping: Archived map photos and locational information in the Maps Library and the Center for Computational Geography at Mount Scopus have been linked to a geospatial search and view feature using Alma Digital APIs. This integration initiative for geospatial mapping was found to be an important feature for the Institute of Archaeology (for maps of archaeological sites) and for other departments likely to reach out as well.
- Interactive 3D models: The Institute of Archaeology has an Excavations Report Collection, which includes publicly available reports filed on every excavation conducted in Israel (including those required before infrastructure projects throughout the country). The Library Authority used Alma to catalog, index and save one of the Excavation reports, which can be several volumes long, in PDF format. 3D images of artifacts and Sketchup 3D models from the site are directly accessible from within the relevant PDF report. Moreover, the images include keywords that are indexed for easy searching and centralized information on various kinds of artifacts, creating virtual collections for ease of teaching, learning and research.

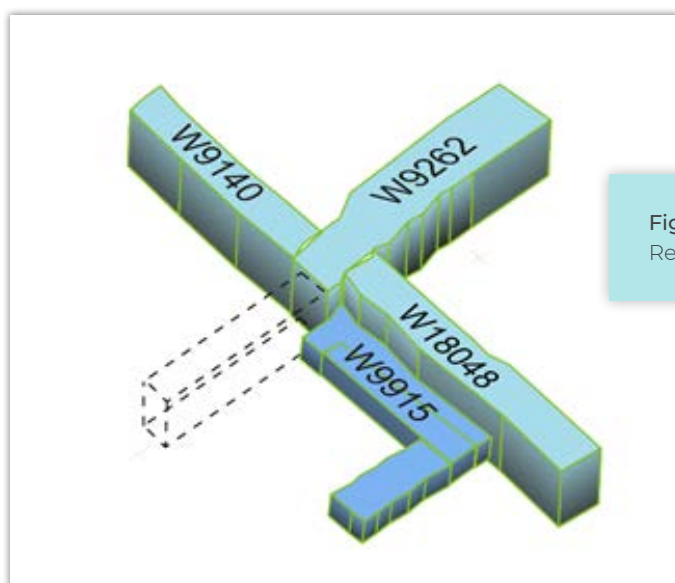


Figure 4 Archaeology: Excavation Report - 3D model

As Dalia put it, “Including 3D artifacts and 3D models brings this report to a different level of user experience.”

Currently, the Library Authority at Hebrew University has a terabyte of data in its digital collection, consisting of about 40,000 objects in a wide variety of formats. And more is yet to come, as a recent seminar held by the Library Authority on digital collections generated great interest across the university’s various departments.

'A More Collaborative Way to Operate'

The Library Authority works closely with other units throughout the university via the Alma Digital platform.

"Thank you, Ex Libris," Dalia commented, "for developing an excellent platform that offers good options for integration to work with other units throughout the university. It's a more institutionally collaborative way of operating."

The Library Authority has noted several significant optimizations in their management processes stemming from the centralized, cloud-based Alma platform:

- Unified user access.
- Unified management of access rights, delineated by user, by IP, or by authority level.
- Unified maintenance, with savings on costs previously incurred due to a multiplicity of systems, servers and databases.
- Unified presentation to the end user, including metadata alongside each object and flexible presentation options.
- Unified workflows for all collections.

The Library Authority continues to find ways to enhance the learning, teaching and research landscape with Alma-driven centralized management of print, digital and electronic resources. The result has been more streamlined services, time saved, and excellent integration within the university ecosystem.





About Ex Libris

Ex Libris, a ProQuest company, is a leading global provider of cloud-based solutions for higher education. Offering SaaS solutions for the management and discovery of the full spectrum of library and scholarly materials, as well as mobile campus solutions driving student engagement and success, Ex Libris serves thousands of customers in 90 countries. Visit www.exlibrisgroup.com