



Delivering on the expectations of digital-native users

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, adapts to the rising demand for digital.

Digital-native users want library resources in digital form. Vendors who furnish those resources are expecting the library to share content responsibly. Using a digital delivery platform, University of Tennessee Libraries are making both groups happy - and enjoying streamlined workflows as a bonus.

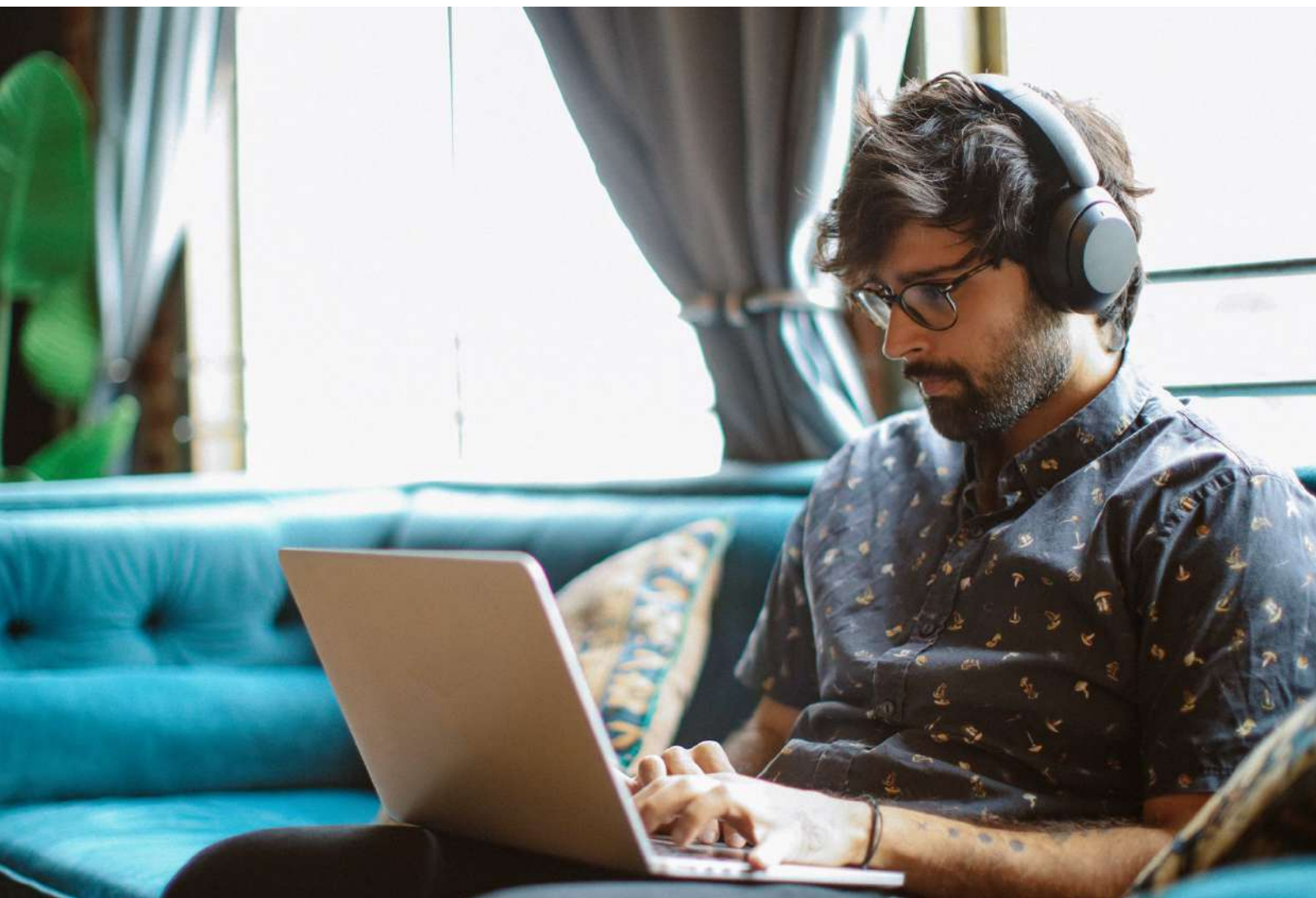
“Our vision is to enable patrons to navigate whatever resource they need on a single server.”

“The newer generation of musicians wants to use digital.”

The post-COVID effect: more demand for digital

Like all academic libraries, University of Tennessee Libraries emphasized the use of digitized content during the COVID-19 pandemic. Now that the students are back on campus, there's a realization that there's no turning back. "People like using online content a lot more now in our post-COVID world than they did before," states Elyssa Gould, Department Head of Acquisitions & Continuing Resources. There is more interest in using newer types of media such as streaming video, and the library is also fielding requests for unique types of items. That is partly due to the proactive way the library staff interacts with the teaching

departments. The subject librarians reach out and get to know the departments around campus to become familiar with and understand what the faculty, graduates and undergraduates need for their research, teaching and learning. As Gould explains, "We don't care exactly what the material is, we want to get what's needed for research, teaching, & learning, and we're willing to think more creatively and flexibly about what's in the collection." In some cases, the vendor does not offer a platform for accessing the content and that became a problem, particularly during the pandemic. "We had to deny some requests because we didn't have a server to hold the items and a way to control the access. We don't like to say no," proclaims Gould.



Juggling user needs with vendor requirements around access control

The search for a solution led the library to Alma Digital from Ex Libris, a part of Clarivate. Alma Digital provides a content-delivery platform that also allows flexibility to control access, which alleviates vendor concerns. “Depending on what the contract is with the vendor, we can make the resource downloadable or not, or limit access to library users only,” states Gould. The library pursues a level of permission appropriate for the needs of the users accessing each type of resource.

Streaming video:

Video vendors typically don’t want users to be able to download the file, and “Most of those are view-only,” reports Gould. “That’s fine as long as

the contract allows unlimited simultaneous views. We want a whole class to be able to watch a video at the same time.”

PDFs and eBooks:

When it comes to these types of resources, Gould states, “We prefer that people be able to download and interact with them — they might want to annotate it, for example. If a resource is set up to be downloadable, we put the copyright statement right on the front of the resource. Essentially, you can download it, but it’s just for you to use. We try to educate people while giving them the freedom to download.”

Data sets:

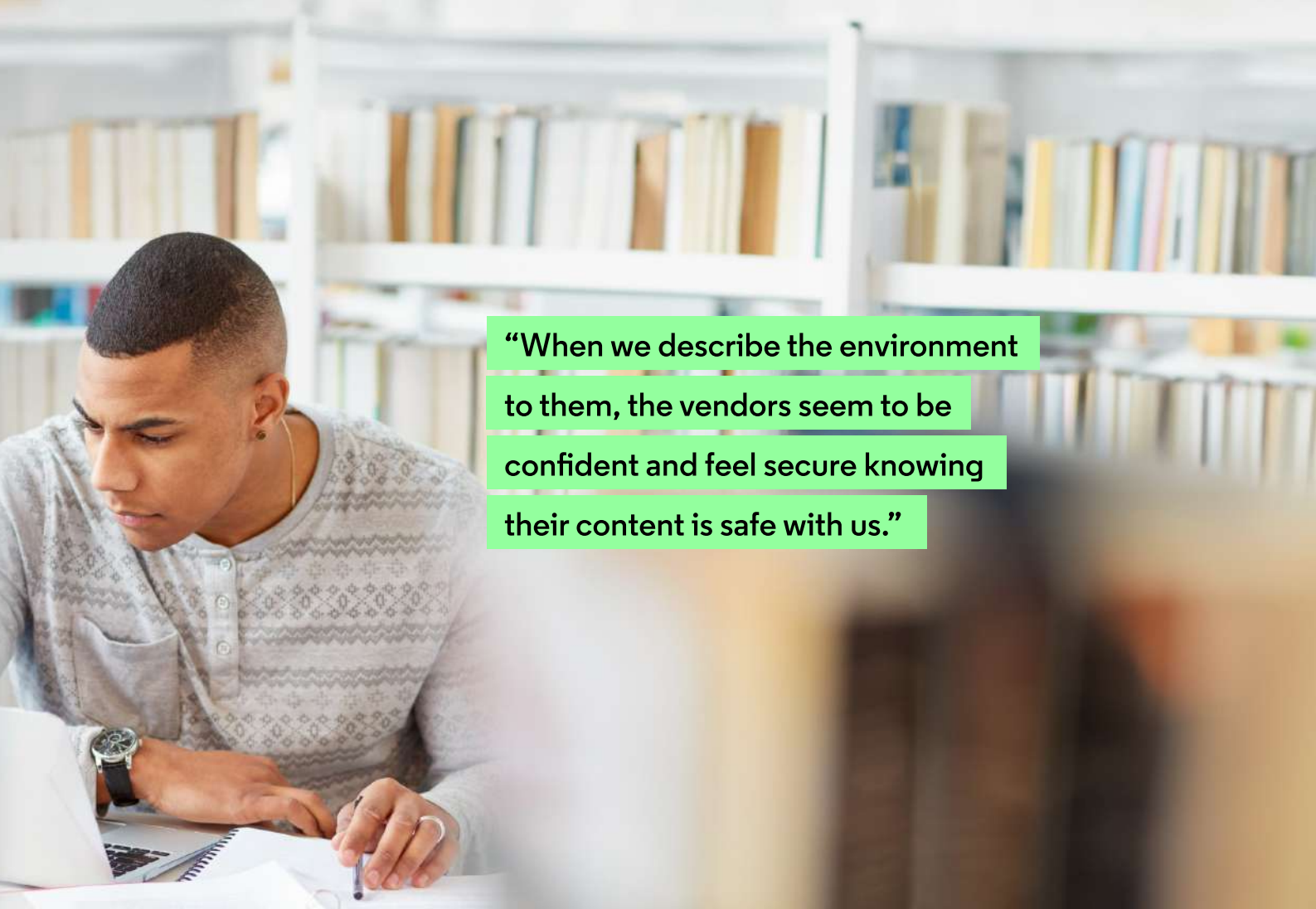
Data sets are often delivered in Excel files, requested by a researcher for a specific purpose. “A researcher would want to look at it and manipulate it in some way,” presumes Gould, “to sort it

and filter it and apply who knows what else to it. To do their work, they need access that allows them to interact with that data.”

All in all, the content providers are comfortable with the controls in place over the use of their offerings. As Gould relates, “When we describe the environment to them, the vendors seem to be confident and feel secure knowing their content is safe with us.”

That the library is also using Alma and Primo provides another advantage, from an end-user perspective — the convenience of one discovery layer for everything. “Print books, eBooks, journals, streaming video,” details Gould. “Another thing we care about is accessibility. Patrons with low vision can use keyboard navigation to move around the screen.”





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Simplifying a multi-step process involving several departments

For delivering videos, the library relied on a streaming server that was maintained by another department, creating a multi-step workflow, as Gould describes: “There were at least four people involved, myself doing the contract work, an ordering specialist to buy the content, streaming services librarian who made sure the file was in the correct format and ready for the server. Then, the person maintaining the server would actually do the work.”

Moreover, the streaming services librarian is in an entirely separate department, and the person working with the server is part of a team that maintains about 60 different servers that handle various functions within the library.

“Both the streaming services librarian and the server team have a lot of other obligations and many other things to do with their time,” Gould points out.

“Now, we’re able to have a staff member in my department upload the content and make sure that it’s available to the users, and we can keep the workflow in one department for quick communications.

“We’re still using the streaming server, but we’re trying to migrate away from it,” continues Gould. “The server has some outdated technology that’s just not worth updating, so it is precarious and kind of fails sometimes. The server team supports us using Alma Digital so they can save the time they spend working with something that’s decaying on their end.”

What students want: Screen music, not sheet music

Always attuned to what their constituency wants, the next project is providing digital access to music scores. “We know anecdotally that our music students really prefer to play from a device like an iPad, and newer composers are only creating their music in digital form rather than a physical printed score,” Gould shares. “It’s still in the very early stages, but we’re preparing for it. The newer generation of musicians wants to use digital.”

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