

WHY UNIVERSITIES CHOOSE BDS

ACADEMIC LIBRARIES USING BDS METADATA

Universities libraries of all types and specialisms are benefitting from using BDS metadata via BDS's **Academic Library Licence**. The BDS service enables libraries to **streamline workflows** and **free up expert staff** to focus on discoverability of special collections and DEI initiatives.

BDS designed the new service to meet the expressed aim of **Plan M**, produced by Jisc in consultation with end-users of library metadata.

BDS went to talk with two early adopters of BDS's new service to find out how a year of using BDS metadata has worked for them.

"We're primarily STEM so it's a specialist library. We don't have all the arts and humanities and social sciences collections that you might find elsewhere." – Andrew Knight.

Imperial College London focuses on the disciplines of science, engineering, medicine and business and is home to 17,000 students and 8,000 staff from more than 125 countries. It awards over 6,700 degrees every year and members of the College have included 14 Nobel laureates. It has one central library and six smaller libraries at other campuses with 180,000 print stock items, 140,000 e-journals, 300,000 ebooks and 6000 online databases.

**Imperial College
London**

ual: university
of the arts
london

Some 20,000 students at University of the Arts London study at six colleges: Camberwell College of Arts, Central Saint Martins, Chelsea College of Arts, London College of Communication, London College of Fashion, Wimbledon College of Arts, and four institutes. Academic staff, students and visitors can use any of the six college libraries which hold 500,000 books, 25,000 ebooks, 55,000 serial titles, and 160 databases, alongside archives and special collections. The university relies heavily on printed material due to the nature of the subjects studied.

"You'll often find students sitting on the floor surrounded by books looking for inspiration for their creative practice. And that's lovely to see." – Karen Carden.

ALL
ACADEMIC LIBRARY LICENCE

**FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BDS METADATA
FOR ACADEMIC LIBRARIES**
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THE ART OF DISCOVERY

AN INTERVIEW WITH KAREN CARDEN
RESOURCES & SYSTEMS MANAGER, LIBRARY SERVICES, UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS LONDON

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Six colleges form University of the Arts

Can you tell us something about your collection and the metadata you use?

For me, a library is all about discovery. How you discover what is in your collection has got to be intuitive and good. Everything's about discovery for libraries, everything we do.

Our colleges share a catalogue. We have a centralised team that manages this whole area, which reports to me, but we don't classify everything exactly the same because each college has a slightly different focus. Most of our books are in a very narrow range of 700s in the Dewey Decimal Classification scheme. And so, it's better for them to adopt slightly different classification, which is why we provide classification to suppliers rather than asking them to provide classification for us, so that the browsability is better on the shelves for our students. But we are buying in all that metadata. Now, it's mostly done centrally using BDS as our metadata supplier.

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If you're buying in records from lots of different places, inconsistency will creep in. And if it's all about discovery, which it definitely is, then consistency is right at the centre of that.

Looking at the critique of the metadata environment prior to the current initiatives directed towards improving the situation, were you getting a variable set of records?

We were big Dawson customers before Dawson folded and we would buy catalogue records from them and they were of decent enough quality. But being a specialist art and design institution, we can't buy all our books from one single supplier. We buy our books from multiple suppliers including from individuals. We buy strange and wonderful things like zines*. We have large zine collections in some of our colleges. We buy a lot of special things. We're often the first people to catalogue something. We buy a lot of things like exhibition catalogues. So, we are off-piste quite a lot. Obviously, the bulk of our material is brought from main, consortia framework suppliers. Previously, we would purchase records from our suppliers and they were good enough. But the more relationships you have with suppliers of content, the more variability creeps into the quality of the metadata you're purchasing.

The main reason why Siu-Ying Yip our acquisitions and metadata librarian was interested in using BDS metadata through the Academic Library Licence was to try and bring as much as possible of that under one supply source, so that we only have to do one set of customisations and we know the quality and reliability of that source.

The real pain point for most librarians is that ebook records have been poor up until now and particularly variable across suppliers. So, to have a source of good quality, customisable records from BDS is a really big thing.

Did you have a wish list when you decided to become an early adopter using BDS metadata in your library?

Yes. The release of cataloguing resources for more specialist material, a reduction in the number of places we have to go to for metadata, and a reduction in conversations with suppliers, obtaining consistent, good quality metadata which will reduce the amount of editing and batch updating we do and, where customisations are required, only having to have that conversation once rather than multiple times with variable results. Finally, we hope to achieve efficiencies and integration with our LMS. We employ an Open-Source library management system, so we take a different path from many other libraries, so that is still work in progress.

The BDS philosophy is to supply the bulk of a library's requirements, and thus free up institutions to do the rest for themselves. Is that working?

That was one of our original aims.

*A zine is a small-circulation self-published work of original or appropriated texts and images, usually reproduced via a copy machine. Zines are the product of either a single person or of a very small group and are popularly photocopied into physical prints for circulation.

Has it freed up time?

Yes. It's only just happening. The pandemic didn't help. But if you're an early adopter you expect implementation and adaptation to take time. One of the biggest aims for me, as a manager, was to free up expert cataloguers to catalogue special collections. Delivery of the bulk of our metadata that is consistent and being integrated readily means they can devote more time to these collections.

I think it's a little bit early to say definitively that it's going to free them up permanently to do this expert work but I think it will. That's certainly the plan. I'm really looking forward to that because that's what they should be doing in an age of specialisms.

Do you think cataloguers were worried about the idea of something coming in that saves time and resources, or do you think they're welcoming it?

I think they're welcoming it, certainly within our institution, because we have all this other stuff that they should now have time to pay attention to.

Have you realised any other benefits from using BDS metadata?

There are so many elements involved in this process. There's our library management system. There's BDS's metadata. There's ProQuest as well. And it's about all those people talking to each other in a meaningful way, which has progressed very successfully. I think most of the issues have been around communication and most have been solved.

It's certainly not costing us much more, if at all. Previously we would be paying for records as received, now we pay a yearly fee and the payback will be in the consistency of the records and the reduction in the number of places we have to go to get stuff. If you can get back to the original record, as you do with BDS, then you've got a sound record.

However, the main benefit for us, I would say, is related to workflow. Our previous problems resulted from dealing with multiple players. It may be different for other libraries but for us, it's about smoothing out those workflows and BDS is enabling us to do that. We're receiving records ahead of publication that we know are accurate and consistent and that slot into our workflow.

I remember Siu-Ying drew up an ideal workflow long before BDS offered its Academic Library Licence. With the help of Ray Delahunty and supported by Paul Mellinger, colleagues did all the very hard work of making the integrations between BDS, PTFS (Koha) and ProQuest happen. We believe her dream is becoming reality.



A STREAMLINED APPROACH

AN INTERVIEW WITH ANDREW KNIGHT, ACQUISITIONS AND CONTENT SERVICES MANAGER
& JENNIFER MAY, METADATA SERVICES CO-ORDINATOR AT IMPERIAL COLLEGE LONDON



The Queen's Tower at Imperial College London

Central Library to check every single record. And Post-Covid we now get books sent directly to campuses who do not have cataloguing staff, so having a single source for metadata that we can trust, such as we now have with BDS, is even more important.

It's difficult and time-consuming to check something after the fact. What you want is high-quality metadata in place before you get the material – the quality assurance is at the beginning of the process so you know the records you are ingesting are not going to be problematic, and won't need checking or editing.

Would you say that working with BDS is transforming your workflow?

It's certainly helped move some activities into our pre-existing workflow. Streamlining the metadata workflow was the central feature of what we wanted to do by working with BDS: to improve quality and achieve consistency, to broaden coverage and streamline via automation. BDS records are of consistently high quality, so we do not need to check or amend them; and they supply 90% of our metadata, so we easily have the capacity to catalogue any remaining titles in-house. And if that 90% figure increases over time, this could help the whole sector, not just Imperial.

Introducing BDS at this stage was helpful because we were looking for minimum intervention by our team. So it's great that the material which is coming directly to the library has metadata associated with it which is already quality assured. It is imperative for us, really, with the scale of our operation in Central Library and across our campuses.

You referred to the whole sector. Do you see single source metadata provision as the way forward?

We've been talking about this for years and years, about how pretty much all institutions want the same thing. The whole idea of metadata is to have a single point of information. It makes no sense to have 200 different versions of a record which are all slightly different and of variable quality. So, until a kind of sector-wide communal effort emerges where we get together and we try to standardise together, having someone with a good reputation who has been doing it for years seems an obvious solution.

Being a world-famous research institution, how does your library keep up to date with the latest developments in STEM subjects?

We have a very targeted collections policy for both researchers and undergraduates, and we are lucky to be reasonably well-funded. Our spend is something like 96 to 97% electronic, primarily because of the big science journals we subscribe to. We have six campus libraries, five of which are also used by NHS staff who are heavy users of printed material, probably because they have limited access to resources which are authenticated for College students. So we try and cater for everyone but that's something we're looking at in the future, namely, how to get our NHS users better integrated with our collection.

The impact on metadata is that a lot of our electronic resources are now bundled up in packages and the metadata is not always that great. I think, certainly pre-BDS, a lot of people in this sector would say that ebook records were patchy at best, because they were coming from different sources and there wasn't much in the way of standardisation.

At Imperial College we're very standardised. I think other, more traditional universities often have bespoke classifications and specifications for things like their Law library, their English library, or their Drama library, which can make things complicated. Whereas at Imperial we've tried over the years to standardise our collections as much as possible. We get everything shelf-ready with one standard classification, and the book records are uniform.

Before working with BDS, how did you find the quality of the metadata you were using?

Unpredictable. We got most of our metadata shelf-ready from suppliers so we would generally assume it was okay. We knew it wasn't absolutely perfect, but we didn't have the capacity at

So far, has it been worth the investment?

Yes. It is costing roughly the same per record as before, but the records are better and the quality is guaranteed. BDS is the industry standard, just like you have in every other industry. And from a user point of view, it always comes down to the same thing: is it easy to find? If we haven't achieved discoverability, it's pointless buying the resource, especially with online material. And we're making life more difficult for users to find something if we have non-standard metadata.

We have to think about that all the time. So, even if we did have to spend a bit more money doing it, it'd be worth the investment. Because if we've got 100,000 books in a catalogue and users can't find half of them, it's money and effort completely wasted.

Of course, there are things we will buy that might never be used, just because that's the nature of libraries. But our job as an acquisitions team is to make sure that we give them as good a chance as possible. A key part of that, especially with the electronic material and especially now all catalogues are online, is its visibility. How good is its record? How discoverable is it? If you do a keyword search, will you get the right results?

This is key to us and it's one of the main reasons we wanted to tackle it with BDS.

Were there many teething troubles getting BDS metadata and delivery into your workflow?

We normally have to do a bit of engineering with a new product, to figure it out: you know: "it's designed to do this and we want it to do that." That process helps you see where it already works and where there's probably going to be a couple of things that need tweaking. That is completely normal for any kind of library systems modification.

And I suppose we're reasonably lucky here at Imperial that we have the resources to do that, and we like working with people and developing things. And although I've said we're generally very standardised but we do sometimes have some slightly odd things that we do in terms of workflow. So, it's about squaring all of that, getting it to work, putting the time and the effort into doing it.

But we are now at a stage where we are happy with the product, and it is working for us in the ways we'd hoped.

Finally, have there been any unexpected benefits from working with BDS?

One of the successful things that came out of this project was our working relationship with BDS, particularly with Heather (Sherman). We spoke to her a lot. BDS has been really responsive to our requests for things that we'd like. That has been really helpful. But there's not really been anything unexpected because we've been able to tailor the product to some degree. We spent a lot of time talking. We would ask for something and if it didn't work, we'd go back to BDS via Heather, and she was really good with the development team interpreting what we were asking.

It sounds like a good working relationship.

We're in it for the long-haul.



MORE TOP UNIVERSITIES CHOOSE BDS

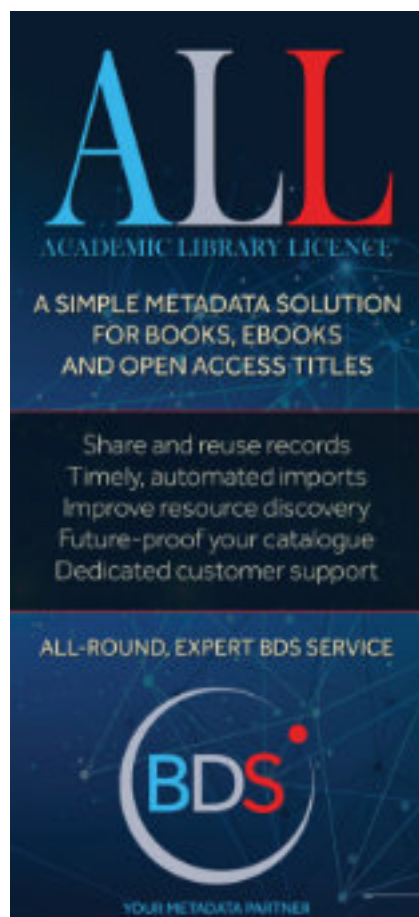


Two more top universities have chosen BDS metadata to improve user experience and streamline workflows in their libraries.

The University of Sheffield, ranked number one in the world for library and information studies, and Aberystwyth University, voted top in England and Wales for student satisfaction, signed up to the BDS Academic Library Licence this Autumn.

"In signing up to BDS' ALL we feel we are making an important step towards standardising our metadata workflows resulting in benefits that we can share with colleagues via other collaborative projects," says Jonathan Davies, Resource Discovery Team Leader at Aberystwyth. "BDS responded to librarians' initial concerns about limits to resharing as well as to hopes about 'shelf-ready' metadata workflows and now we are excited to give the licence a try!"

The adoption of metadata services from BDS by such prestigious institutions, including the University of Sheffield, a member of the Russell Group and RLUK, represents a ringing endorsement and follows other notable early adopters such as Imperial College London, University of the Arts London, Sheffield Hallam University, the University of Liverpool and The Times and Sunday Times University of the Year 2023, the University of Bath.



"We are now seeing a number of benefits," says Chris Banks, Director of Library Service at Imperial College London. "These include value for money compared with our previous supplier, an integration with our shelf-ready service – something not available via our previous supplier, a better end user experience as shelf-ready stock can now be sent directly to the relevant campus library without first having to come to our Central Library for checking and onward distribution, and high-quality records."

Gaining Momentum

"Momentum is growing for the BDS ALL as universities are realising the benefits of adopting a service that meets the objectives of Plan M," says Heather Sherman, Director of Academic Library Operations at BDS. "I am also delighted that our new customers are finding BDS's responsiveness and renowned customer service to their benefit as they integrate BDS metadata into their workflows."

Consistently applied standards and a single source record are at the heart of the BDS Academic Library Licence which also allows the sharing of records and intervention-free integration into a library's LMS. Such streamlining enables cataloguers to concentrate on special collections and customisation which in turn improves end-user experience in the library environment.

Metadata as a Library Asset

"As a small but dedicated team, we at Aberystwyth University have a vested interest in seeing Plan M – a new metadata marketplace – come to fruition," adds Jonathan Davies. "We need to release our skilled metadata and acquisitions librarians from daily checks of metadata of varying standards and spend more time on thinking about our bibliographic metadata as a library asset that allows us to raise the profile of both our collections and our institutional brand."

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BDS METADATA FOR ACADEMIC LIBRARIES
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