



# Enhancing the gateway to your learning resources

**As the world changes shape and becomes more complex, do we meet the growing expectations of users in the way we manage our higher education resource lists?**



**Chris Clarke,**  
Senior Programme  
Manager, Talis.

As the world changes shape and becomes more complex,

we ask ourselves the question: In light of emerging social networks and new technologies, do we meet the growing expectations of users in the way we manage our higher education resource lists? Our experiences with our resource management tool, Talis List, showed us we didn't. Surprised? How could the first (and leading) specialised resource list management system, used by a third of universities in the UK not be meeting our standards?

As expectations, technologies and experiences have changed, the problems Talis List solved upon its launch are very different to the ones we face today. New problems, and more importantly new opportunities, have emerged and Talis are working to solve them.

## The previous challenge

Before the introduction of resource list management tools, lecturers would provide printed reading lists direct to students, who would arrive at the library doors and be surprised the resource was either not stocked or that not enough copies were available. To tackle the problem of getting the right stock at the right time, libraries gathered lists and acquired stock

before the start of term. In addition, the first generation of tools made these lists available to the student online and linked directly to the library catalogue, or increasingly with the move to e-resources, the actual resource itself.

## The challenge today

Today, as well as continuing to deliver on previous challenges, the library is tasked with meeting the goals of strategic agendas aimed at improving the student experience of university services - in part to tackle student retention. This is in addition to pressures for increasing the value realised from expensive learning resources, and against a backdrop of cost saving efficiencies in the areas of stock management and staff time.

For the instructor, the compilation of the list within the resource list management tool often does not fit into established workflows. It is not unusual for the task of inputting or maintaining lists to be devolved to library staff, which can prove a burden at critical points in the academic

calendar. The challenge here is to incorporate the tool into those workflows, critically by making lists as easy to compile as possible, as well as providing direct value to the instructor, over and above what can be realised by authoring lists 'off-line'.

Some of this value can be found by enhancing engagement between instructor and student. For example, increasing both quantitative and qualitative feedback on both the learning process and the effectiveness of resources from students could keep instructors coming back and revisiting their lists much more frequently.

In addition, recommendation systems driven by the activities of peers in other institutions encourage instructors to take control of the maintenance of their resource lists.

Finally, the student yearns for quick, timely, personalised guidance and context from their resource list which is currently not available. They expect to be able to rip, mix and burn resources between their many courses, adding their own notes and annotations as they go. They expect access to signposted resources to be seamless or even in-line with the list itself.

In essence, we believe the resource list can become far more than a simple list of static resources. To meet user expectations, it must be a dynamic, living document which is rich in both form and content, available in many



forms. The resource list can act as a trigger to engagement and collaboration between lecturers, students and the library – our solution should ensure these opportunities are taken.

### Talis Aspire

For the last 18 months, in collaboration with 15 UK universities, Talis have been working on Talis Aspire, the next generation replacement for Talis List. Undertaking detailed interviews and group work with libraries, students and academic staff has equipped Talis with a new perspective on today's resource list challenges.

The new product, due for launch for the beginning of the academic year 2009/10, aims to radically overhaul the resource list experience from the student perspective, adding personalisation, clearer access to resources and opportunities for feedback. The system also aims to increase instructor involvement in the administration side of the system, reducing the burden on library staff, whilst fostering collaboration between teaching staff and their students.

As well as working alongside all existing major Virtual Learning Environments, the system also works with the existing University authentication solution to provide seamless single sign-on for access, content creation and administrative purposes. In many cases, the system can integrate with the student records systems to automatically present the student with the correct resource lists according to their enrolled modules.

### Beyond linking

Integrating not only with the library catalogue to provide live availability updates for physical items, the system

also uses OpenURL linking, ensuring compatibility with most leading link resolver solutions, improving direct access to e-resources.

However, in addition to resource linking, Talis is working with publishers of e-resources to provide selected content in-line for instant access from the resource list itself, just as users experience video on sites such as YouTube™, with no download or link to an external site required.

### Adoption at the University of Plymouth

University of Plymouth are the first customer to implement the solution, integrating with their Ex Libris library management system, SFX link resolver, Shibboleth authentication system and student registry. Initially rolled out as a development pilot with 1000 students at the start of the 2008 autumn term, all the University's lists have now been made available with the new system for the start of 2009.

Fiona Greig, E-Resources Development Manager at the University of Plymouth commented "Working with Talis on Talis Aspire has been a real pleasure. Talis are really committed to making the resource list experience the best it can possibly be for all the stakeholders. Even in this very early stage we have already had very positive feedback on what has been developed so far. Talis have also taken the time to visit Plymouth and engage directly with students, academics and library staff, not just getting feedback but also enthusing everyone they have met. We are already very pleased with what we've seen so far and excited about where Talis Aspire is going."

Talis are in the process of introducing two more institutions into the programme, with more to follow through the early part of 2009, with a full launch available to all customers for the beginning of academic year 2009/10.

### FIND OUT MORE

Visit: [www.talis.com/aspire](http://www.talis.com/aspire), where you can register for one of the upcoming Talis Aspire days and subscribe to the monthly newsletter, Talis News for Learning Technology.

