

Academic Case Study



Understanding & Serving User Demand: UAH's Strategic Implementation Of Article Galaxy Scholar



Photos by Michael Mercier, UAH Photographer.



Background

The University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) is the smallest institution in the University of Alabama System, with independent budgets from its sister universities. As a research-focused institution, UAH faces the challenge of maintaining robust access to academic resources that align with the diverse needs of its users. The university's electronic resources budget has remained consistent over the years, requiring strategic decisions about resource allocation to address the expanding universe of scholarly content.

"Implementing Article Galaxy Scholar has been a game-changer for our library. We were caught in that impossible situation many academic libraries face—rising subscription costs, flat budgets, and researchers who need access to an ever-expanding universe of content. AGS gave us an alternative path beyond the traditional access, enabling us to offer a much more diverse collection of resources than we could have otherwise. It's about building a more responsive, user-centered approach to scholarly resources."



Laura Slavin,
Electronic Resources Librarian at
The University of Alabama in Huntsville

Challenge

UAH needed to provide its students, faculty, and staff with comprehensive access to academic journals while optimizing their resource allocation strategy. As a university committed to fiscal responsibility, UAH carefully manages its budget to ensure the most effective use of resources. The electronic resources budget had remained consistent for years, while the breadth of published research continued to expand annually, creating a challenging situation for collection development.

The library faced complex decisions about adjusting its journal holdings and resource allocation strategy while still needing to ensure continued access to essential research materials. Additionally, the existing system for accessing non-subscribed content was cumbersome, requiring users to navigate through multiple steps. The library team also struggled to balance immediate access needs with the workload placed on the interlibrary loan department, which was becoming increasingly strained.

The university urgently needed to find a solution that would provide access to journals based on actual user demand and research needs rather than attempting to predict future usage through traditional subscription models.

Solution

UAH implemented Article Galaxy Scholar (AGS) from Research Solutions as their document delivery solution. The implementation evolved through several phases:

Initial Implementation:

The initial phase began with a careful selection of 20 journals configured with a five-use threshold before switching to interlibrary loan services. Access was intentionally limited to faculty members only as the library tested the system's effectiveness. To support faculty adoption, the library created a comprehensive LibGuide that detailed the five-step process required to access content through the AGS platform.

Expanded Implementation:

Building on initial success, the library extended AGS access to all students, faculty, and staff in January 2024. After analyzing usage patterns and user needs, the library realigned its collection development approach and added over 400 journals from a preferred publisher to the AGS service—while maintaining the five-purchase threshold before routing requests to interlibrary loan. To simplify the user experience, the library made a significant change to their Primo discovery interface by removing the non-full text toggle, now displaying all results regardless of access status. This approach, though unconventional among Primo libraries, aimed to make the AGS option more visible while attempting to boost full-text content to the top of results lists. With technological advancements in Primo and AGS, UAH might reimplement the toggle in the future.

Results

The implementation of Article Galaxy Scholar delivered significant benefits in understanding user needs and providing responsive access to critical research materials. **UAH implemented 445 journals** with the impact on resource allocation being significant. **UAH was able to save money** and reconsider the allocation of other assets and purchase new content. **AGS allowed UAH to provide research content to their users at an affordable price and with nearly instantaneous delivery for most requests.**

The expanded implementation also revealed important user behavior patterns. Users now see both subscribed content and non-subscribed content in search results, sometimes with records of varying quality appearing at the top of results lists.

User Engagement & Access Patterns:

- While the number of unique users began small, **the library has observed consistent growth in AGS adoption across campus**, with the service now available to all students, faculty, and staff.
- Usage is widely distributed across academic units rather than concentrated in specific departments, **indicating broad applicability across disciplines.**
- Targeted outreach efforts, such as specialized training for the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering following the addition of a prominent aerospace publisher, have proven effective in **increasing adoption rates.**

Future Plans

UAH is continuing to refine its implementation of Article Galaxy Scholar. The library team is focused on enhancing electronic resources by finding the optimal balance between collection development, AGS usage and demand data, and interlibrary loan services to create a truly user-centered approach to scholarly resource access.

About The University of Alabama in Huntsville

The University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) is a public research university founded in 1969. As part of the University of Alabama System, UAH is known for its strong programs in engineering, science, and technology, reflecting the city's deep connections to NASA and the aerospace industry. The M. Louis Salmon Library serves as the university's main library resource center, supporting the research and educational needs of approximately 10,000 students and faculty members. Despite being the smallest institution in the UA system, UAH maintains a strong research profile and continues to seek innovative solutions to provide comprehensive scholarly resources to its academic community.



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