Best Practices for Ex Libris Case Management

Approved by MLG: August 2019
Last edited: August 2019

Context:

The Alliance enjoys a productive relationship with Ex Libris Support that pre-dates our implementation, which began in late 2012. This relationship includes its share of tense situations and difficult conversations, but it remains positive and collegial overall. It is our most valuable asset in affecting positive change in our shared ILS and discovery systems.

To maintain this relationship, it is important for Alliance members and central staff to have reasonable and consistent expectations when engaging with Ex Libris Support to resolve specific problems. This document outlines best practices for such engagement, and provides both member staff and central staff with information about the tools available for sending information and feedback to Ex Libris Support.

Checklist/Cheat Sheet for Member Staff: (detailed version here)

File a case if:

- ❏ A problem in Alma or Primo is directly impacting your institution.
- ❏ You are experiencing an Alma or Primo “down” event.
- ❏ You have a question about Alma or Primo functionality that is not addressed in Ex Libris’s documentation and you have been unsuccessful in getting an answer from the collective wisdom of the Alliance email lists, ALMA-L, and PRIMO-L.
- ❏ An issue is raised on an Alliance list that impacts your institution and you want to be updated by Ex Libris directly concerning progress on the issue. *Remember to refer specifically to the other Alliance institutions and their case numbers in your case!*

Information to add to your case description:

- ❏ Describe the issue as clearly as possible.
- ❏ Provide a step-by-step explanation of how you encountered the problem. Include a video or screenshot if possible.
- ❏ If more than one person can replicate the issue, indicate who else has encountered it.
- ❏ Provide a statement of the impact the problem has on your work.
- ❏ If you have done any troubleshooting, provide information on what you’ve tried and what the results were.
- ❏ If you have an idea of what might fix the issue, include it as a possible solution.
- ❏ If the problem is related to other cases, include those case numbers.

- ❏ Fill out the Category and Subcategory fields.

Working your case:

- ❏ Be courteous and professional.
- ❏ Focus on how you can help the analyst and/or other Ex Libris staff understand the problem more clearly.
- ❏ Ask the analyst to call you or set up a screen-sharing session if you feel that the case comments aren't getting your needs/issues across clearly.
- ❏ Ask the analyst NOT to make changes until you've had a chance to review their implications for your staff and users.
- ❏ Use "in-case feedback" when:
    - ❏ You are given a solution geared toward a standalone institution instead of a consortium member,
    - ❏ You note that different Alliance members have received differing answers to the same issue, or
    - ❏ You aren't happy with the way your case is being handled by the analyst
- ❏ Use escalation when:
    - ❏ You realize that an issue's priority is greater than you originally thought.
    - ❏ You experience a long delay in responses to your case and receive no response to a comment requesting an update.
- ❏ If you are leaving your position:
    - ❏ Before your departure, work with other staff at your institution to determine who should take over your cases. For each case:
        - ❏ Add the new primary contact's email address to the "additional contacts" section.
        - ❏ Add your institution's Salesforce case administrator (if you have one) to the "additional contacts" section.
        - ❏ Add a comment to the case asking for a change in the primary case contact. Include the new contact's email address in this comment.

Let the Alliance Program Manager know via email if:

- ❏ You feel that the issue is critical, impacts multiple institutions, and/or is time-sensitive when you open the case.
- ❏ You reported a "System/Component down" event.
- ❏ You have any questions about whether a change suggested (in your case) for your environment will impact other Alliance users
- ❏ You request case escalation. (When escalating a case, please add the PM's email address to the case contacts list.)
- ❏ A high-priority issue goes without significant progress for over a month.

- ❑ You are unable to get an update after submitting a comment, in-case feedback, and an escalation request.

Finishing out the case:

- ❑ Fill out the post-case feedback survey to compliment the analyst for a job well done, or to provide constructive feedback for improved case handling.

Guidelines for member staff: (Checklist version here)

When to file a case:

When a problem in Alma or Primo is directly impacting your institution, you should file a Salesforce case immediately. Also consider filing a case if you have a question about Alma or Primo functionality that is not addressed in Ex Libris's documentation.

- This is especially true if you have been unsuccessful in getting an answer from the collective wisdom of the Alliance email lists, ALMA-L, and PRIMO-L.
- If you feel that the issue is critical and time-sensitive, notify the respective program manager(s) directly via email.
- If you are experiencing an Alma or Primo system down event, you should open a "System/Component Down" priority case. You should also notify the program manager of the affected area via email.

If you are able to research the problem to see if it's impacting others, share a brief summary of the problem and your case number on the Alliance list for that functional area. If you find that others are experiencing the same issue, you can both update the case with that information, and share it out to the list.

- Always include a case number in your communication with lists and with Ex Libris.

If an issue is raised on an Alliance list that impacts your institution and other institutions have shared case numbers, you are welcome to (but not required to) open a case of your own.

- Once three or four libraries raise an issue, and if any of them indicate that it may be impacting other Alliance libraries, Ex Libris is aware the problem is widespread and will move resources to address it.
- Additional libraries don't necessarily speed resolution of the issue, but do more clearly indicate scope of impact.
- Some useful guidelines are:

- To receive direct updates from Ex Libris concerning progress on the issue, submit a case referring specifically to the other Alliance institution(s) and include their case number(s) in your case.
- If you feel like the issue is critical and time-sensitive, but Alliance central staff have not yet responded on the list, let the program manager(s) in the affected area(s) know directly.

What to include in your case description

When you file a case, the best way to get a timely and appropriate response to the problem is to include as much specific information as possible. Clearly state the impact on your institution's staff and/or users. You should:

- Describe the issue as clearly as possible.
- Provide a step-by-step explanation of how you encountered the problem. Include a video or screenshot, if possible.
- If more than one person can replicate the issue, indicate who has encountered it.
- Give a statement of the impact the problem has on your work.
- If you have done any troubleshooting, provide information on what you've tried and what the results were.
- If you have an idea of what might fix the issue, include it as a possible solution.
- If the problem is related to other cases, include those case numbers.
- Fill out the Category and Subcategory fields on the case submission page as completely as possible - this helps get your case to the appropriate analyst right away, and can speed up response time.
- Be professional and courteous.
- Avoid blaming ExLibris or insulting the software. Instead, focus on asking for improved functionality and fixes to the issues.

Communication with Support Analysts:

Support Analysts deal with hundreds of cases on a daily basis. Sometimes they may forget or misunderstand the nuances of your case. Please keep in mind that they're human and genuinely trying to help resolve the issues you report. Sometimes delays are not the analyst's fault, but are caused by the need to communicate with other departments (e.g., Development, Business Analysis, Product Management) regarding your issue.

- Stay positive and professional in your case comments.
- Focus on helping the analyst and/or other Ex Libris staff understand the problem more clearly.
- If you want to talk to the analyst in real time, add a comment to ask for a phone call or a conference call/screen-sharing session. Analysts are usually very happy to have this opportunity, because they realize that an real-time conversation can cover more ground and provide more clarity than a long string of case comments.

If an analyst suggests a configuration change for your Alma or Primo environment, ask that they ***not*** make any changes until you've had an opportunity to review its implications for your staff and users. You also have the right to insist that ***you*** will make the change on your own timeline and report back on its results.

- If you have questions about whether a change suggested for your environment will impact other Alliance users, please contact the Program Manager for the affected area by email.
- When communicating about a case, cite your case number and provide a brief summary of your concern(s).

For cases where you are provided a solution intended for a standalone institution rather than a consortial environment:

- Note when different Alliance members receive differing responses to the same issue or when you aren't satisfied with how your case is being handled by the analyst.
    - Use the "In-case feedback" feature to report the problem. (Note that In-case feedback can currently only be used once per case.)
    - This will allow Support management to track the frequency of this kind of problem and address it before the case closes.
- **Pro tip**: In-case feedback does *not* impact an analyst's performance review. Rather it's a tool to help management track problems and help analysts get any communication issues resolved before the case closes.
    - Post-case feedback surveys ***do*** impact analysts' reviews; the goal is to correct issues before it's too late to avoid a negative survey response.

If you experience a long delay in response to your case, you are encouraged to ask for updates directly in the case comment thread. If no response is received, request escalation via the appropriate escalation email address.

- Note that escalating a case does *not* "get someone in trouble"!
- Escalation is another tool for getting the case on the right track before it closes.
- Escalating a case before it closes helps avoid negative feedback on a survey when the case concludes.

To provide continuity for active cases, if you will be leaving your position you should work with your colleagues to determine the appropriate person to take over each of your cases. Once you've identified the appropriate person to take over a case, add their email address to the "additional contacts" section, along with the email address of your institution's Salesforce case administrator (if you have one). Then add a comment to the case asking for it to be transferred to the new primary contact - providing their email address in the comment.

It’s important to provide accurate feedback on case handling to help analysts improve. Whether you’d like to compliment the analyst for a job well done or provide constructive feedback for improved case handling, please take the time to fill out the post-case feedback survey that is sent via email once the case closes.

Asking for Alliance staff assistance:

Sometimes it may be necessary to ask Alliance central staff for assistance with a case. This usually happens when:

- You believe the problem reported is critical and impacts multiple institutions.
- You are reporting a System/Component down issue.
- A high-priority issue goes without significant progress for over a month, or
- You are unable to get an update after submitting a comment, in-case feedback, and an escalation request.

If you have not previously escalated the case, begin that process by:

1. Asking the Support Analyst assigned to the case to escalate according to Ex Libris’s escalation instructions.
2. Adding the appropriate Alliance Program Manager's email address to your case. If you are unsure of which PM to add, add program-coordination@orbiscascade.org (under construction) to the case.

If you still don’t receive a response from Support, contact the program manager of the affected area with the case number and a brief explanation of the need for additional intervention.

- The program manager will review your case and contact you directly if more information is needed.

Program managers work together to prioritize cases as needed and get them addressed by Ex Libris Support managers.

- This typically happens in the monthly Alliance/Ex Libris Support call. (These calls are held on the first Wednesday of each month.)
- If your case is discussed in the call, the program manager will contact you with an update after the call.
- Ex Libris Support will also update the case comment thread with new information.

Even after you contact Alliance staff for help with a case, it is still *your* case and you are the person best qualified to provide additional information to Support. Continue to add comments that provide additional information, examples, impact statements, etc. Be aware that Alliance staff may also comment on your case during this time and you should feel free to engage with the Program Manager via case comments or direct email, as you prefer.

Guidelines for central staff:

Opening an Alliance-level case:

Sometimes Alliance central staff will submit a case on behalf of the consortium or an institution.

- If multiple Alliance libraries have separately reported an issue but not all of them have reported it as either "high priority" or "system component down," central staff may submit a separate case to indicate the severity of the issue.
- Handling of Alliance-level cases is specified in the Salesforce case submission protocol.

Central staff can also add information to the first reported case, indicating a more widespread issue and referencing other submitted cases as necessary.

- Note that these can be initial escalation steps taken by central staff, who may also contact other Ex Libris support resources to increase attention and/or shorten resolution times when issues are critical and time-sensitive.

Any time an Alliance-wide case is opened or a case of record is established for the Alliance, the Program Manager in the affected area should contact the affected communities to communicate the most current information on the case, including the case number. *As the case progresses, subsequent community updates are strongly recommended!*

Assisting member staff with institution-specific cases:

When you receive a request for assistance from member staff, you should:

- Review the case in Salesforce to get a sense of its context, impact, and severity.
- Check to make sure the case owner has made use of comments, in-case feedback, and case escalation as outlined above.
- Contact the case owner with any questions you have about the specifics of the case or about their “ask”.

If the case impact is severe and widespread, reach out directly to Ex Libris Support managers to ask for their assistance in getting the case resolved.

- Provide a summary of the case activity to date and an impact statement to help them grasp the scope of the problem.

- At your discretion, you can either copy the case owner on this message to keep them in the loop or contact them separately to let them know what steps you've taken on their case:
    - **Alon Botvinik**, Tier 2 Support Manager, Ex Libris North America (alon.botvinik@exlibrisgroup.com)
    - **Brian Noone**, Senior Manager, Technical Support, Ex Libris North America (brian.noone@exlibrisgroup.com)
    - **Matt Baker**, Senior Director of North America Support, Ex Libris (matt.baker@exlibrisgroup.com)

If the case impact is not severe or is limited in scope, add the case to the agenda for the next Alliance/Ex Libris Support call (scheduled for the first Wednesday of each month).

- If less than a week remains before the call is to be held, contact the support meeting coordinator directly to discuss adding the case to the call.
- If many cases are on the agenda, it may be necessary to work with the other Program Managers to prioritize them and ensure that the most critical cases are addressed first.
- During the call, be sure to request that Support adds any updates that come out of the meeting to the case comment thread.
- After the call, contact the case owner directly to provide any updates on their case that came out of the meeting.