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Shelly Hypes,  
Resource Development  
and Access Librarian,  
Atkins Library

## Case Study, University of North Carolina at Charlotte

# Implementing a Mobile Library App in 30 Days

### Library Mobile at UNC Charlotte

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNC Charlotte) is an R2 public research university and the fastest growing institution in the UNC system. The J. Murrey Atkins Library supports more than 30,000 students across 24 doctoral, 65 master's, and 77 bachelor's degree programs.

Shelly Hypes, Resource Development and Access Librarian at Atkins Library, leads special projects related to Ex Libris products. Hypes' colleague, Curtis Kularski, Head of Software Development, ensures the technical side of special projects goes smoothly.



### Why Library Mobile, Why Now?

Hypes and Kularski recognized the library's website did not fully meet the needs of UNC Charlotte students. Library users needed an easier way to access library services on the go or in class.

The Ex Libris Library Mobile App makes essential library services readily available on students' mobile phones and integrates with Ex Libris' Alma Library Management System, making it an appealing mobile option.

The app also addressed the challenge of communicating with students. Library staff had not yet implemented text messaging via Alma, and the push notifications and alerts within the app served the same function by enabling communication via mobile phone rather than email.

### A Refreshing Implementation Experience

Hypes approached app implementation with an ambitious timeline, yet the team exceeded it – going live 30 days after the project kicked off.

She remarked, “...it was refreshing that the project was as quick as it was and that we were able to go live as fast as we did. One of the reasons we were able to do that was because our project team was so decisive.”

Three elements led to the implementation team's success:

1. Establishing a clear understanding of the project's outcomes
2. Building a team of subject matter experts directly connected to the project's goals
3. Support from library and campus leaders



**“ It was just all very, very easy, very obvious how to do integrations.”**

Curtis Kularski,  
Head of Software  
Development,  
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## Integrating with Ease

Library Mobile easily integrates with library systems which Kularski credits as a key to the app's successful launch. Kularski worked at the library as a UNC Charlotte student. Having the perspective of both a student and library IT professional, he compares library systems to an iceberg. Students only see a sliver of the library's services and not the "...many different systems that go into making everything work behind that service."

Despite working with so many systems Kularski emphasized, "... [Library Mobile] really made it pretty simple for us to find those integration points where we could pull things in and attach things to the app to make it easy for students to access."

He continued, "It just fits in very smoothly and every possible need that I could think of as we're implementing, there was some way to meet that need while we were building out without having to constantly go to [Ex Libris] and go, "hey, we need this feature or how do we do this?" It was just all very, very easy, very obvious how to do integrations."

## Collaboration as Promotion

To launch Library Mobile to UNC Charlotte students, the team started a social media campaign featuring a QR code for app downloads. The marketing plan includes a collaboration with UNC Charlotte's student newspaper, The Niner Times, which will run an article about the app. To reach more students, instruction librarians will incorporate a slide with the QR code into their class presentations. In the fall, staff will use the app as the main conversation starter during tabling events.

Benefiting both students and the library, Kularski and Hypes are partnering with a graduate class for in-depth usability testing targeting different groups of students. In this class, the students receive real-world experience while the library gathers feedback and promotes Library Mobile directly to students.

Quick Polls are a favorite app feature for gathering additional feedback and incorporating more personalization. Options for multiple choice and open response questions, as well as displaying poll results, have enabled Hypes to use Quick Polls as a promotional tool. She looks forward to using Quick Polls for the next *Love Letters to the Library* campaign held every February.

## Simplified Administration

As new ideas, feedback, and data about app usage come in, the team contributes to a brainstorming document. The library is working on a way-finding system which Hypes would like incorporated into the app. Considering the options, Library Mobile is readily available, in a student's hand when they need help navigating the library's physical space.

The implementation team consisted of seven library staff, but Hypes and Kularski can manage app administration and maintenance alone. Hypes noted, "...it's easy to navigate the app manager. You can make changes quickly. It's something that I can do without having to treat the configuration as a special project, because it's so easy to navigate...it also doesn't require many people to manage. It's quite amazing and lovely."



## About J. Murrey Atkins Library

As the intellectual heart of the University of North Carolina (UNC) Charlotte and the greater Charlotte community, J. Murrey Atkins Library advances community by connecting people with expertise, information, services, technologies, spaces, and experiences. The library offers over 3.8 million volumes, including 1.2 million e-books, over 650 databases, and approximately 222,000 journals, the vast majority of which are available electronically. Atkins Library is the largest academic library in the southern Piedmont and is a member of the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries. For more information about J. Murrey Atkins Library, visit <https://library.charlotte.edu>.



## About Ex Libris

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