# Brandeis University

## Placing the Library at the Center of University Research

The Brandeis University library is filling a critical gap for the university with Esploro by giving the R1 institution instant visibility to its wide scope of research activities, while putting the library at the center of conversations about research.

## The Need: A Comprehensive View of Research

The breadth and depth of its research activities make Brandeis University an R1 research institution and among the elite in the U.S. Obtaining a true picture of its output, however, was elusive. While the university had an institutional repository, "It was very unrepresentative of scholarship at Brandeis," states Mark Paris, who serves as the associate university librarian for scholarly resources and discovery. "In my view, the repository was just another preprint server. If researchers are going to deposit a preprint, they go to their disciplinary repositories." He asks, "Why would a biologist deposit a paper with us when they could put it in bioRxiv?"

As a result, Paris reports, "Our repository had been in place for a decade, and it didn't scratch the surface in terms of having a record of scholarship at Brandeis. It held about 12,000 items and 10,000 were special collections. Only about 2,000 were institutional outputs and ETDs. For an R1 university, that's nothing. I looked at publications tied to NIH grants. That one funding source alone lists more publications tied to Brandeis than are in our entire ten-year repository."

Moreover, the old repository, with its limitations, was also expensive to maintain. "It was open source, so the software was free, but we paid for that in other ways," explains Paris. "With only three systems people on staff, we couldn't continue to maintain the infrastructure, and customize it to do the things we need to do."

### About Brandeis University

While describing itself as a "medium-sized private research university", there is nothing medium-sized about Brandeis University's prodigious research output, both in size and scope. Just one of 131 R1 universities in the U.S., Brandeis is also one of 65 members of the Association of American Universities, an organization of elite research institutions in North America.

## A Built-for-Purpose Research Solution

The search for a solution led the library to adopt Ex Libris Esploro, a research information management solution with a research repository at its core.

Using smart harvesting, Esploro searches the Ex Libris central discovery index as well as disciplinary and national repositories, to capture the output of Brandeis scholars. It populates each item record with metadata and makes all the information discoverable and reportable. "We're using Esploro's smart harvesting to automatically capture the institutional outputs," states Paris.

In addition to serving as a research repository, the Esploro research portal showcases institutional research work and automatically generates rich researcher profiles to share and promote Brandeis expertise. Research analytics provide benchmarks and metrics across researchers, departments, and institutions.

> *"Esploro is really important for us. It gives us the ability to provide meaningful services to the community in a sustainable way."*
>
> Mark Paris, Brandeis University

## Redefining Scholarly Communications

"Scholarly communications, in my view, is about promoting research and engaging with researchers in understanding the impact of their research," shares Paris. "Along those lines, I want to see scholarly communications become more expansive. We've lived in an era where library budgets have contracted for years and years. In my view, the only way we're ever going to reverse that is to become more expansive in the way that we see the world, and scholarly communications in particular. We're opening up new avenues of service to the university that I think are critical in turning the narrative around about the way libraries support academic institutions.

"Esploro helps us do that. It gives us the chance to greatly expand our definition of scholarly communications."

## Supporting Smarter Collection Decisions

Paris explains another way Esploro helps the library support the university's research effort. "Having visibility into the full scope of research outputs with Esploro allows us to make smarter collection decisions," he explains. "We can tailor collections and make sure that they are meeting teaching and research needs across the university. Having that data source available on the collection side is huge for us."

## Saving Time for Researchers and Faculty

Esploro's ability to automatically generate researcher profiles comes at an opportune time, according to Paris. "The infrastructure behind our old homegrown faculty profiling system is going away. The research and institutional research offices have key roles in the profiling and faculty activity reporting system, and conversations with them are starting to happen: How we can leverage this new library system that has automatic capture to make the activity reporting less painful for our faculty?' Asking them to take on those tasks is asking a lot. We're able to provide an out-of-the-box solution that makes the whole process smoother, takes the burden off the researchers so they can focus on what they do, and keeps various campus stakeholders informed. Everybody wins."

## Deeper Engagement with the Campus

"At Brandeis, anywhere where there's a need for a comprehensive understanding of research, Esploro puts the library at the heart of those conversations," states Paris. "It's helping the library get more collaborative with other groups. It's drawn the library and the research office closer. Our communications team is also very interested in smart harvesting because they would love an analytic report that regularly and automatically updates them about the latest research outputs. So the analytics is the other key piece where I see Esploro setting us up for success."

## A Key Partner in Research

Paris concludes, "Esploro fills an enormous gap in our scholarly communications infrastructure and builds the Brandeis identity as a research institution. That's the powerful piece of it. My goal with Esploro is to have the library be seen and understood as a key partner in research.

"This is all exciting and Esploro is great for us. It's great for any kind of institution that struggles with their scholarly communications infrastructure and their repository infrastructure. I sat in on one presentation where an institution was talking about how they built out a digital asset management system, a repository that has preservation built into it, and tied all those systems together. They were able to do it because they had seven developers on their staff. Not every institution has that. Esploro is really important for us. It gives us the ability to provide meaningful services to the community in a sustainable way."