

A case study in  
next-generation  
research management,  
user engagement and  
positive change

# Boehringer Ingelheim

Modern businesses grow and succeed in today's corporate climate for myriad different reasons. Some are known for their products, others for their services, and still others for strong brand loyalty. However, those organizations that truly stand out from the pack as industry leaders all share one common factor: They embrace innovation.

Innovation is not limited to the development or change of particular product offerings or services but also can take the form of evolving internal processes within a company's daily operations. Outdated internal tools, technologies, and workflows can hinder an organization's productivity at the most basic level - fueling staff frustration, extending project timelines and leading to additional operational costs overall.

As a leading global pharmaceutical company, innovation is second nature to Boehringer Ingelheim (BI). Innovation isn't just about drug design but is in everything BI does, from process optimization to improving the tools used every day.

This culture is reflected in all of its teams, including the Scientific Information Center (SIC). The core task of the SIC is to provide global access to external information and knowledge from thousands of renowned journals and publishers via enterprise subscriptions and document delivery services.



In this case study, Dr. Karlheinz Spenny and his team at the SIC share in their own words what triggered their internal innovation campaign moving from their legacy literature management solution to ReadCube and their experiences along the way.

## > Re-evaluating the Status Quo

Across Boehringer Ingelheim, we had a variety of different software products and solutions in place. Some sites within the company even built their own custom solutions based on open-source software. We had always wanted to harmonize our internal product landscape, but none of the solutions we were using fulfilled all the requirements of our users.

Most of our well-established products had been used for more than 10 years by different groups. They were installed on desktops and across R&D sites with no real connectivity across the community of users. They also needed to be maintained and adapted by our IT department, requiring significant resources to stay embedded in our ever-changing IT environment and systems landscape. This added complexity and invisible costs to maintain the status quo. It also was apparent that we were outgrowing the functionality that those systems offered.

The SIC is always looking to innovate in the ways that it fulfils its mission and that means ensuring that we have the most innovative tools for the BI team. One of the key responsibilities central to our function as BI's "Corporate Library" is our strong focus on providing scientific information to BI's Discovery Research Organization. Therefore, we are continuously scouting for innovative solutions and new products. We wanted a state-of-the-art solution that would minimize the need for internal IT support and maintenance efforts and we wanted a solution to be fit-for-the-future.

Cloud-based systems seemed to provide promising features such as central, secure, and integrated storage, seamless and easy access across our global organization, and most importantly, would allow colleagues to collaborate and share documents in various user-controlled libraries. We also needed a solution flexible enough to accommodate our future growth and evolving user needs.



Our users had high expectations for this new platform - seeking something new and exciting. There was much on the line for the SIC team, but we had complete confidence that ReadCube would deliver.

## > Managing Change Through the Transition to ReadCube

While change is both inevitable and necessary for businesses to adapt and thrive, it can lead to anxiety and productivity disruptions if not appropriately managed. We thought carefully about how best to tackle this challenge, starting from how we included the community in reaching the decision. As BI is firmly enmeshed in a culture of innovation, our approach was based on that ideology. In 2018, we launched an "innovation project" within R&D to update how BI scientists manage their personal scientific literature collections and storage systems. We compiled a comprehensive survey and held multiple interview sessions to collect user requirements. This exercise led us to a long list of ~50 different requirements ("should or must have") – and a long wish list from our scientists for our future literature management solution. These ranged from more extensive collaboration features and cross-platform support to advanced search capabilities and support for various data types.

Our users had high expectations for this new platform – seeking something new and exciting. There was much on the line for the SIC team, but we had complete confidence that ReadCube would deliver. In addition to ReadCube checking off the lengthy wish list (plus a variety of other features and functions they had not even thought of), we knew our users would enjoy a seamless migration of their legacy collections of articles from existing systems and personal computers to the new platform. And because we had deliberately sought their input throughout the process, we were able to mitigate much of the anxiety normally associated with process change.

## > The Rollout & Reactions

As we wanted to provide our users with the best harmonized experience, we chose to complete our transition to MS Office 365 ahead of the ReadCube roll-out. This choice gave several advantages: everyone would be on the same platform, decreasing support challenges; everyone would have access to ReadCube's newest features, and incompatibilities with legacy versions of Word would be minimized. With that in place, the ReadCube Implementation team led the way with an uncomplicated set-up process that took days, not weeks, to configure.



The adoption of ReadCube was remarkable...Even “conservative users”, who typically show more resistance to change than our younger “digital natives”, were converts.

The screenshot displays the ReadCube interface. On the left is a navigation sidebar with sections like 'DISCOVER', 'MY LIBRARY', and 'SHARED LIBRARIES'. The main area shows a list of papers with columns for Title, Authors, Year, Journal, and Date Added. The selected paper is 'Elephant shark genome provides unique insights into gnathostome evolution' by Synnaye Venkatesh et al., published in Nature in 2014. Below the list is a preview of the article. On the right, there is a 'CITATIONS' section showing 481 citations and 16.03 mentions, along with a line graph showing the growth of citations from 2014 to 2021. Below the graph are snippets of text from other articles mentioning the paper.

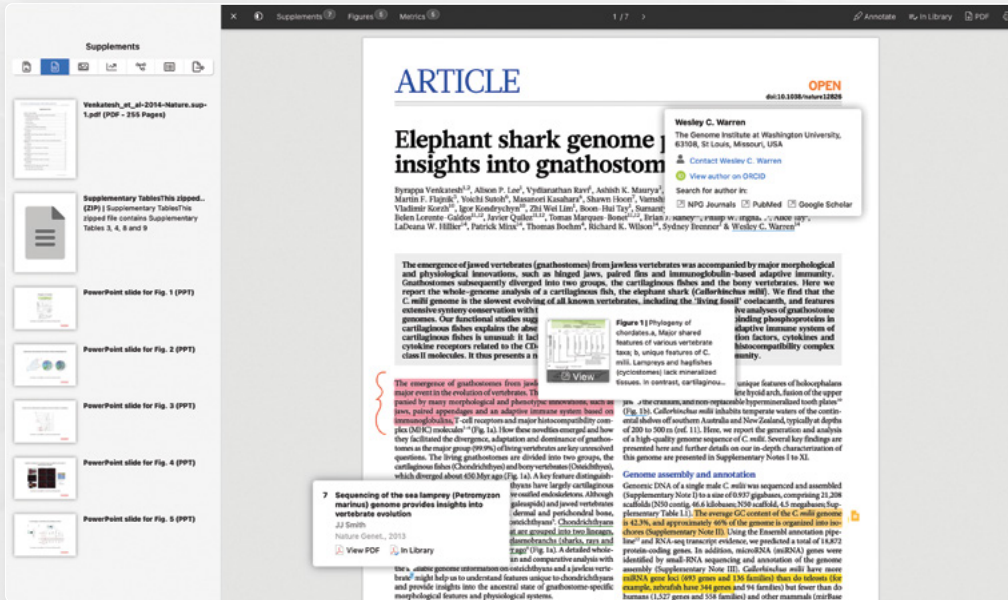
Customizable library layout with private and shared collections

Our whole onboarding process took place in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. While it could have been perceived as a less than ideal time to make a big change within the organization, for us, it all but drove us to accelerate roll-out plans. With over 40,000 BI employees transitioning to remote working, the need was never greater to have a flexible tool in place to enable convenient access to literature no matter where our team was working.

The adoption of ReadCube was remarkable. We began with an awareness campaign led by our SIC team, and leveraged the intuitiveness of the platform, expert-led training sessions, and a wealth of video & support materials provided by the ReadCube team to guide our users through this transformation process. Even “conservative users”, who typically show more resistance to change than our younger “digital natives”, were converts.

As we expected, the reaction to ReadCube has been overwhelmingly positive. Some of the features that really stood out to our users include:

- Easy transition of existing literature collections into the ReadCube platform
- Seamless integration with literature search venues like PubMed and Google Scholar or aggregator sites like Scopus and Ovid
- Collaborative libraries to help our teams work more efficiently
- Immediate access to full text via the browser extensions
- Auto-fetching of supplemental material for journal articles that are kept connected and linked together
- Article recommendations – a personalized discovery feature they never had before
- Easy authentication via single sign on (SSO)
- Perfect sync functionality between web, desktop, and mobile devices



The entire experience has been overwhelmingly positive - a true "success story" for us here at the SIC and for our knowledge workers in the different Business Units across the company.

## > Reflections on the Overall Transition Process

While the "cost of changing" can be a concern for organizations looking at new processes/solutions, the benefits of switching to ReadCube have far outweighed the cost of making the change. The entire experience has been overwhelmingly positive - a true "success story" for us here at the SIC and for our knowledge workers in the different business units across the company.

## > Commitment to Product Innovation

We've been truly surprised by the agility of the ReadCube team and the pace of feature roll-outs. It's nothing less than exceptional. In addition to monthly feature releases, they are incredibly receptive to our features requests - incorporating these ideas into their roadmap in a relatively short time. We have rarely seen such responsiveness from a supplier and we are confident that the company will continue to invest in enhancing the ReadCube platform. This is a perfect vendor partnership for us as the SIC team, and the broader BI community have no lack of ideas! We're particularly excited about the upcoming release bringing semantic technologies across our library content and collections.

We believe that choosing ReadCube as the default system for literature management is an investment into the future. We are delighted to finally have a high-performance, sustainable literature management solution in place that will continue to evolve alongside future innovations in digital technologies. What we have achieved within just 7 months after the roll-out of ReadCube can only be considered a jump to the next level of literature management for our research scientists and has positioned BI as front-runners within our industry.

— Dr. Karlheinz Spenny & SIC team



Learn more about ReadCube's literature management solutions for research-driven organizations at [readcube.com](https://readcube.com)

## About ReadCube

ReadCube is a leader in scalable literature management solutions enhancing research driven teams by transforming the way scholarly literature is accessed, organized, and shared.

Information overload and outdated workflows can impede progress and grind innovation to a halt. ReadCube's adaptive literature management solutions have helped thousands of organizations get back to the breakthrough work that matters most.

With a focus on efficiency, security, collaboration and interoperability, ReadCube is the literature management solution that scales from biotech startup to global pharmaceutical company – making it possible to stay focused on tomorrow's breakthroughs and world-changing discoveries.

Learn more at [readcube.com](https://readcube.com)

## Part of **DIGITAL** SCIENCE

Digital Science is a technology company working to make research more efficient. We invest in, nurture and support innovative businesses and technologies that make all parts of the research process more open and effective. Our portfolio includes admired brands including Altmetric, Dimensions, Figshare, ReadCube, Symplectic, IFI CLAIMS Patent Services, Overleaf, Ripeta, Writefull, OntoChem, Scismic and metaphacts. We believe that together, we can help researchers make a difference.

Visit [digital-science.com](https://digital-science.com) and follow [@digitalsci](https://twitter.com/digitalsci) on X or on [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/digital-science)