CONNECTIONS

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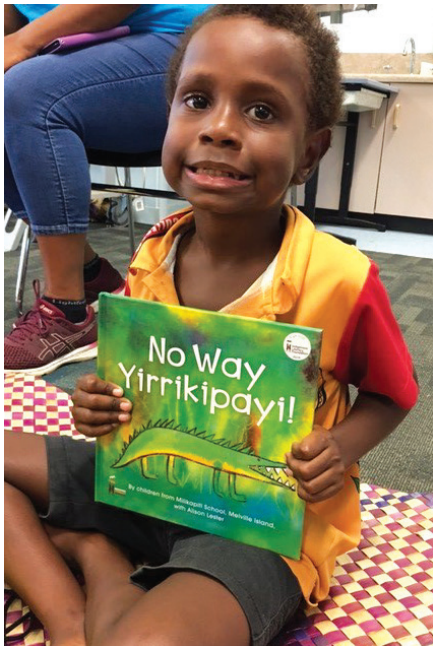

Improving literacy levels in remote Indigenous communities

> "We are all about exciting, engaging, and connecting kids to the wonderful magic of books. We're about opening a door — for young minds and imaginations — to a world without limits."
>
> – Karen Williams, Executive Director of the Indigenous Literacy Foundation

The Indigenous Literacy Foundation (ILF) is an Australian organisation that works to reduce low literacy rates among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by supplying libraries of culturally appropriate books to remote Indigenous communities.

Many early literacy academics and researchers argue that cultivating a love of reading is the key to developing reading and language skills. The ILF engages with close to 300 remote communities across Australia to close the literacy gap by developing a true love of reading.

Karen Williams, the Executive Director of the ILF, explains that there are many cultural and logistical reasons for low literacy rates. She says that few people understand that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children go to school knowing three to four languages, but not English, and that they may have had little exposure to books. There are often few books in homes and none in that community's first language. In terms of logistics, internet is not available in many remote communities, so communication is not instant or regular. The tyranny of distance can also mean that boxes of books may take up to a month to arrive.

Williams says that the ILF addresses these issues 'through our fabulous program that gifts books and literacy resources to communities, and the many diverse organisations within communities, including playgroups, health care centres, NGOs, schools, and libraries'.

ILF has gifted over 350,000 books to date. The communities themselves decide where and how those resources are best used. Williams describes one community using the resources to create a new library.

As well as supplying books, the ILF helps children and other community members to create stories in their own languages, and that reflect their own lives and world views. ILF ambassador Alison Lester explains: 'Kids need to see themselves in the stories they are reading'. Williams adds: 'Communities told us that the kids were simply excited to see and read books that reflected their lives and their world view. Imagine not having any

IN THIS ISSUE

Improving literacy levels in remote Indigenous communities 1
SCIS is more 3
Digital fluency vs. digital literacy 4
Supporting Australian book creators 5
Outsourcing: time for a new look? 6
Making connections online 7
School library spotlight: Academy of Mary Immaculate 8
(Re)Designing the library through school community participation 10
Cataloguing standards: what you see is what you get 12
The writing (and revising) of *The innovative school librarian* 14
Website & app reviews 15

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Understanding Subject Headings in SCIS
16 October 2019

An overview of SCIS Subject Headings (SCISSH) and Schools Online Thesaurus (ScOT) in SCIS records. Useful for school library staff who are not trained in cataloguing or who would like a refresher on subject headings, this webinar will help you understand the role controlled vocabularies play in effective information retrieval.

Understanding MARC records
21 October 2019

An overview of the basic structure of Machine Readable Cataloguing (MARC21), the coding that underpins all SCIS records. Useful for school library staff who have knowledge of cataloguing standards, and would like to be able to identify MARC tags, indicators and sub-fields, and understand how MARC impacts search display and functionalities in their library management systems.

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books that reflect who you are, what you like, or the world around you?'

Over its lifetime, the ILF has helped to create and publish over 90 books in 18 languages. The books include simple picture books and board books in languages such as Pitjantjatjara (Central Australia), Kriol (Katherine region), and Ngaanyatjarra (Western Australia).

Recently, the ILF took ambassador and illustrator Ann James and librarian Ann Haddon to Nhulunbuy to work with the local school to write and illustrate a book in Yolngu Matha language. A group of young students from the school read and launched their book at Garma Festival of Traditional Culture at Yirrkala in August. *I saw we saw* is a lively insight into Nhulunbuy life and culture that includes an illustrative map to the many sights and sounds you might see or hear in Nhulunbuy — from *baru* (crocodile) to *depina* (caterpillar).

Another bestselling book published by the ILF is *No way Yirrikipayi!*, written by a group of Tiwi students from Milikapiti School on Melville Island. *No way Yirrikipayi!* is about a hungry crocodile who goes hunting for dinner without luck.

This year is the International Year of Indigenous Languages, and the work of the ILF shows how libraries across Australia can contribute to closing the literacy gap by including books with local Indigenous languages and worldviews. This year, the ILF is continuing its contribution by focusing on the work it does in its publishing program in remote communities. On Indigenous Literacy Day, more than 20,000 students swapped a book to help raise funds.

For more information and to learn more about the Indigenous literacy gap please go to: ilf.org.au

Image credits

Images supplied by Karen Williams

Karen Williams
Executive Director
Indigenous Literacy Foundation

SCIS is more

2019 is racing along — welcome to Issue 111 of *Connections*!

SCIS Data as a selection tool

Many of you are now using either Z39.50 or the SCIS API to import records from SCIS Data into your library management systems. This seamless and efficient workflow has many benefits for users.

SCIS also provides an OPAC search via the web, and we have added some additional services to the SCIS Data site that make it a useful tool to aid in sourcing and selecting resources for your library.

Featured categories

The Featured categories on the SCIS Data search page provide a quick and easy way to source resources and records for websites, apps, e-books and digital videos. Click the category you want to search to see a list of records for that type of resource. From there, you can filter your search by date, learning area, subject, genre, audience, and country of publication to find the resources to match your needs.

Additional metadata

SCIS Data includes information about learning areas, which can be used to refine searches or to find similar resources. This is an additional feature to enhance searching on SCIS Data, and is not part of the record that you download. Additional data can also be used to filter searches by material type.

Enriched content

SCIS Data includes additional information via our subscription to Syndetics. Where the information is available, the record consists of summaries and annotations, author notes, authoritative reviews, and series information. Through our subscription to LibraryThing for Libraries, we can also provide community-generated content including recommendations, tags, and links to other editions and similar items. This additional information can be used to help with searching and selection of records, but is not included in the downloaded record.

SCIS API

In 2018, SCIS released its API, providing an alternative to Z39.50 for searching and downloading records from SCIS. Many library system vendors are now using this to integrate with SCIS. The SCIS API provides several advantages over Z39.50, including:

- alternative download formats
- implementation of customer preferences — the SCIS website allows you to select your preference for abridged or full Dewey numbers, and whether you want ScOT curriculum-based headings included. These preferences are recognised when records are downloaded via the API, but are not part of the Z39.50 protocol
- conversion between 10- and 13-digit ISBNs.

You can read more about the SCIS API in a recent blog post (scis.edublogs.org/2019/07/11/life-beyond-marc-and-z3950) by Rachel Elliott.

Conferences and professional learning

Look out for us at upcoming conferences in Term 4. SCIS will be at ALIA's National Library and Information Technicians' Symposium in Melbourne on 13–15 November, and at the SLAV November Conference on 29 November.

Keep an eye on our Professional learning page (scisdata.com/professional-learning) for details of upcoming webinars, where you can register online. Registered participants will be sent a link to view the recording online, so if you cannot attend at the scheduled time, you can still access the webinar.

Caroline Ramsden
SCIS Manager
Education Services Australia

DIGITAL FLUENCY VS. DIGITAL LITERACY

Clint Lalonde, educational technologist and advocate for open education practices in higher education, explores the critical differences between digital fluency and digital literacy.

Recently I've been doing a bit of research on digital literacy/digital fluency, to find out whether our post-secondary institutions are currently offering any programs and initiatives that will help instructors to use digital tools effectively.

Many organisations have identified a lack of digital literacy among post-secondary educators as a barrier to the adoption of educational technology. In 2014, the NMC Horizon Report (bit.ly/2l2zZF0) noted this:

> *Faculty training still does not acknowledge the fact that digital media literacy continues its rise in importance as a key skill in every discipline and profession. Despite the widespread agreement on the importance of digital media literacy, training in the supporting skills and techniques is rare in teacher education and non-existent in the preparation of faculty.*

This view was reiterated in the 2018 Horizon Report, showing that the issue of digital literacy is an ongoing and significant issue in educator training. Reports from both JISC (2018) and Educause (2017) also highlight a lack of digital literacy as a significant issue for higher education. The JISC report in particular, highlights the damage to student learning that can be done when faculty members lack digital competency:

> *The report also shines a light on the digital competencies of staff, with many students reporting frustration when lecturers struggle to use digital systems correctly, saying it wastes time and restricts access to digital resources.*

To help address this gap, organisations have begun devoting resources to increasing the digital literacy of faculty and instructors. Initiatives such as eCampus Ontario's Extend program, the University of Brighton Digital Literacies Framework, and the Irish Education Digital Skills in Higher Education initiative are examples of initiatives aimed at increasing the digital fluency of faculty and staff in higher education.

A tweet from Jeremy Dean confirmed what I have been seeing in my research. There is a subtle but important shift in the way we are talking about digital literacy.

This is a good shift in language, as being digitally literate and being digitally fluent are different things. Digital fluency is a much more holistic term than digital literacy. While many definitions of digital literacy focus on the development of basic digital skills and competencies, digital fluency goes further. It focuses on the metacognitive skills required to transfer those digital skills from one technology to another, and to make sound, nuanced decisions about technology use.

I see the difference between literacy and fluency as a continuum. Literacy is a pause on the way to fluency, although an important one, because you cannot become fluent until you become literate. But literacy shouldn't be the end-game for those of us who support technology-enabled teaching and learning practice. We should be shooting for fluency.

Here is Jennifer Sparrow, Senior Director of Teaching and Learning at Penn State University, on the difference between digital literacy and digital fluency:

> *How is digital fluency different from digital literacy? In learning a foreign language, a literate person can read, speak, and listen for understanding in the new language. A fluent person can create something in the language: a story, a poem, a play, or a conversation. Similarly, digital literacy is an understanding of how to use the tools; digital fluency is the ability to create something new with those tools.*

Using this example, I consider that author Anthony Burgess reached the highest level of fluency. He twisted and modified English (and Russian) to create a subculture dialect (called Nadsat) for his novel *A clockwork orange*. Such evolved fluency helps me to see the differences between literacy and fluency.

There are other ways to be digitally fluent, such as being able to move nimbly and confidently from one technology to another. A digitally **literate** instructor may be able to set up and configure tools within the confines of their learning management system, and even understand when to use those tools to achieve a specific outcome, yet struggle when confronted with a different set of tools or different platforms that don't work the same way. By contrast, a digitally **fluent** instructor moves confidently and quickly from tool to tool, with an understanding of how and why the technologies may be different. A digitally fluent instructor compares, contrasts, and analyses differences in technologies, understands how those differences might impact their pedagogy, and adjusts accordingly. To me, this ability to adjust is one of the main traits distinguishing the digitally fluent instructor from the digitally literate one.

Finally, the digitally fluent instructor continually focuses on their pedagogical use of the technology. Overarching all their digital skills is the ability to contextualise their use of a specific piece of technology within their own teaching and learning practice. Why are you using it? What are the benefits? What are the drawbacks? Can you anticipate where and how your students may struggle with the technology? How are you hoping this technology will help your students learn? An instructor who asks these kinds of questions is well on the pathway to achieving digital fluency.

Clint Lalonde
Manager of Education Technology at BCcampus, Associate Faculty in the School of Education and Technology at Royal Roads University.

A version of this article was previously published here: edtechfactotum.com/digital-fluency-vs-digital-literacy

Supporting Australian book creators

Australian book creators, including Jeannie Baker, lose income through the free multiple use of their work in Australian public and educational lending libraries. That is why the two Australian Lending Right Schemes (ELR and PLR) are so important to all of them. The Educational Lending Right (ELR) scheme oversees the lending rights for school, TAFE and university libraries. I was lucky enough to correspond with Jeannie Baker recently to find out what ELR means for her and her book creation process.

Assistance from the lending right schemes gives Australian authors a greater chance to focus on creating their works, which are enjoyed by children and adults alike. I remember being in primary school and having Jeannie Baker's *Where the Forest Meets the Sea* read to me by the school librarian. At the time, I was struck by the pictures in the book. I remember the librarian explaining how the collages would have been made, thinking about the great dedication and passion it would take to be able to create a whole book's worth of such beautiful and intricate images.

In Jeannie's correspondence with me, she described her creative process, writing about how painstakingly slow it is because there is no fast way of achieving the results she strives for. For her, 'the process is rather like a puzzle: trying to work out how the different bits of the puzzle best fit together – with some pieces being very hard to find'.

It takes Jeannie about four years of consistent work to create a picture book. In her words:

> *I strive to find worthwhile projects that will communicate to various age groups through different layers of meaning, so that a young child may look at the book and find a simple pleasure in it, and then some years later pick it up again and find layers of meaning that they had not previously understood.*

Jeannie's source of inspiration comes in many forms. It can be as simple as the idea of telling a story in the captured view of a window, or as complex as immersion in a different culture and interaction with the locals of a different country.

Libraries played a significant role in developing Jeannie's love for books and directing her to a path of book creation. As a young child, Jeannie well remembers 'the sense of comfort and excitement of listening to her mother's voice reading a story from a library book before falling asleep'. Her father worked hard to make ends meet. They did not have the money to spare on buying books, so both public and school libraries were important to her development. In Jeannie's words:

> *Books sparked my imagination, stimulated my curiosity and helped me make sense of the world. Books widened my horizons, enabling me to experience other 'worlds' and possibilities I would otherwise have had no understanding of.*

Books and stories are wonderful mediums that feed the imagination. The books we read can inspire us to create our own stories. It was like this for Jeannie, for me, and I am sure for many others. So, having access to books is a very important part of a child's development – and libraries, especially school libraries, play an essential role in providing that access.

From being a reader inspired, comforted and entertained by books from her school library to someone who creates her own books now found in school libraries, in Jeannie we see the full circle made possible by the nurturing environment of school libraries.

When Jeannie sees her own titles on library bookshelves, she feels heart-warmed and comforted to see that others value her work, for it is not an easy road to go from reading books to creating books. Like Jeannie, many creators spend a significant amount of time on each creation. So how can school libraries such as yours further support our Australian book creators? Well, each year a sample selection of schools in Australia are invited to participate in the ELR school library survey. It is very simple to complete. All you have to do is click a few buttons.

So please keep an eye out for the invitation in your school's email inbox or post and follow its easy instructions. With your participation, we will be able to collect the data we need to produce reports for the Department of Communications and the Arts, which can then calculate the payments for ELR 2019–20.

Let's work together and support ELR to make a difference and help our book creators, including Jeannie Baker, to continue doing what they do best.

Image credits

Images supplied by Jeannie Baker

ELR — Encouraging the growth and development of Australian writing and publishing.

Ruilin Shi
(with thanks to Jeannie Baker)
ELR Project Coordinator
Education Services Australia

OUTSOURCING: TIME FOR A NEW LOOK?

Sarah Menzies from Wheelers Books explores the benefits that specialist library suppliers offer to school libraries.

Outsourcing – the contracting out of some functions to an outside supplier – was once hotly debated in library literature. More recently it has become widely accepted that some or all public libraries' cataloguing and physical processing will be outsourced, although the same cannot be said of school libraries.

Although school libraries in Australia and New Zealand use the services of SCIS for cataloguing, they have been slow to take up services offered by specialist library suppliers. Reasons given are that budgets of school libraries are too small, and that their collections must be tailored to the individual school communities in which they operate. This may have led to an expectation that benefits from the use of specialist suppliers will not be on the same scale as those achieved by public libraries.

Why reconsider specialist library suppliers?

The specialist library supply market has matured to the point that many of the time and cost benefits may now apply at least equally to public and school libraries.

Financial and time constraints

Any survey of school libraries literature highlights the challenges of an environment characterised by significant financial and time constraints.

- The 2018 Softlink Australia, New Zealand, and Asia-Pacific School Library Survey Report found that '62 per cent of respondents felt their library was not adequately resourced in terms of either staffing or budget'.
- Recent literature in Australia portrays a crisis, with many libraries starved of funding. An Australian Council for Educational Research report shows the large decline in the number of teacher librarians in primary schools.
- SLANZA's 2018 survey of New Zealand school libraries revealed that one-third had budgets cut in the previous year. It raised concern at the low average hours per week worked by library staff in both primary and intermediate schools.

A constant juggling of priorities

School librarians regularly report the extraordinary range of tasks they juggle, and the pull between their specialist teaching and library responsibilities. Surveys reveal that school librarians would like to be able to provide more student engagement and learning programs, develop research skills, and curate information and resources to support learning and the curriculum.

Benefits found by public libraries

The main reasons given by public libraries for outsourcing have focused on some or all of these things:

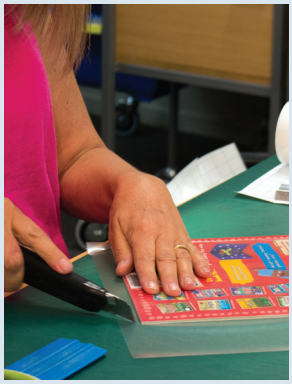
- achieving cost savings
- acquiring expertise that regular staff do not have
- taking advantage of specialised equipment not cost-effective to own
- being able to concentrate on core activities.

Having materials arriving catalogued and processed is widely reported to result in more streamlined workflows, a reduction in the turnaround time of new stock and a sharper focus on more outward-looking tasks. These tasks include supporting literacy and developing readers' advisory programs, and user-outreach activities.

Benefits specific to school librarians

In the current environment, school librarians would benefit from the following things.

1. **Efficient and cost-effective delivery**
   A good partnership with a quality specialist library supplier has the potential to support the delivery of highly useful service at no additional cost or loss of control over the collection. Some suppliers may be able to offer shelf-ready services at a lower cost than a school library could accomplish on its own.
2. **Relevant expertise**
   The best library suppliers employ specialist children's and former school librarians to support their school library customers. In Australia and New Zealand, some also work with SCIS cataloguers to guarantee the fast and accurate provision of records for every title ordered.
3. **Some useful extra services**
   A few suppliers – Wheelers included – offer value-added services, such as curated pre-publication lists for different age ranges; compiling awards lists and relevant subject lists; managing back-orders for libraries; and providing budget updates and reports tailored to their individual library's needs.



Too small, too niche for outsourcing?

If a library is small, there is still an argument for outsourcing. Access to specialist partnerships can free the school librarian from back-room tasks and manual processes. The crucial teacher librarian position can then be a more vital part of the school community, and more responsive to its particular needs.

References

For a full list of references mentioned in this article, please see the online version of this article: scisdata.com/connections.

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Wheelers Books

Wheelers Books is one of Australasia's largest online suppliers of new books and eBooks to schools, offering over 20.2 million titles sourced from all over the world. wheelersbooks.com.au

MAKING CONNECTIONS ONLINE

Clare Forrest, Library Manager at Raroa Normal Intermediate in Wellington, writes about the active, passionate SLANZA community.

SLANZA (School Library Association of New Zealand Aotearoa) has, for several years, facilitated an online school librarian discussion group in a Google+ Community. It has been a positive and private place to share ideas, debate issues and show off the amazing things school librarians can achieve. With each topic, spread out over a couple of weeks, we provide some reading material and pose a series of questions. Here are some of the many topics we have explored together as a community.

Virtual library tours

A popular topic was a call to show off our libraries by taking people on virtual library tours. There's something about 'visiting' other libraries that is very satisfying, probably because we don't often get the chance to do it for real. It satisfies our need to experience our colleagues' joy in what they do — not to mention giving us an opportunity to steal some of their ideas!

Advocacy toolkit

School librarians in Aotearoa, even those well qualified and experienced, are often not remunerated well. We ran a discussion to collaborate and compile a database of skills, roles and responsibilities that could be used as an advocacy toolkit for our positions within our school communities, and to assist the NZEI union to address a claim for pay equity for all support staff.

Self-censorship and the school library

School librarians hold varying views on censorship in libraries. There had been some passionate discussion on the schoollib listserv already, so it seemed pertinent to expand on this on our SLANZA platform.

We looked at questions like: Who are the people making decisions about what goes in our school libraries? Who and what are they thinking about when they make these decisions? Are these decisions able to be reviewed and challenged? We also explored what Ranganathan's Five laws of library science (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_laws_of_library_science) mean to us. This discussion certainly challenged many of us to look at our practices and biases.

Things we don't need to do

One of the great joys of working in a school library is that no two days are ever the same. But its challenging nature, and the passion we have for doing it to the best of our abilities, means we are busy people!

Inspired by Steph Ellis's workshop at the 2017 SLANZA Conference, we had a discussion around the things we do, don't do, need to do, want to do, have always done, and are maybe not sure why we do.

Here is the list of things that Steph Ellis chose no longer to do in her school library: books at the front of shelf; accession book; vertical file; shelve books (student librarians do this); mend books (students don't like books in bad condition); genre stickers; display rules; buy non-fiction for curriculum (tends to be for recreational reading); write inside new books; stamp new books with school name on bar code; chase overdues (can create a negative relationship with the library); cover ISBNs; put call numbers on fiction (secondary school student librarians didn't notice); use security; or give orientation lessons.

Fun ideas in the library

We often ask our fellow librarians to share some of the cool things they have had success with, such as displays, games, book weeks and events.

One librarian played the 'book in a jar' game. This involved putting items — which acted as 'clues' — into a series of glass jars to help students and staff guess book titles (making sure they were all to be found in the library!) It was just as much fun thinking of the clues as it was for others to guess them and win prizes. The game was also adapted into other versions, such as 'bento boxes', 'photo collages' and 'shredded book jars'.

'What men read' display: Kelston Boys High School

'For this display, I asked our male teachers to email me a photo or selfie from the preceding school holidays. Of course, I had to get some in and take their photo with the last book they read from our library.'
– Karen Leahy, Library Manager

It's always interesting to see what inspires our colleagues, and it's always useful to be able to adapt what others are doing to our own situations. Especially in primary schools, many school librarians in New Zealand work on their own, and the opportunity that SLANZA provides for us to network and reinforce that we are on the right track is invaluable.

Image credits

Images supplied by Clare Forrest

Clare Forrest
Library Manager
Raroa Normal Intermediate, Wellington, New Zealand

SCHOOL LIBRARY SPOTLIGHT:
ACADEMY OF MARY IMMACULATE

SCIS speaks to Anne Chowne, Learning Leader at McAuley Resource Centre, Academy of Mary Immaculate in Fitzroy, about what is happening in her school library.

What is your job title, and what does your role entail?

I am a qualified teacher librarian with over 30 years' experience, employed at a years 7–12 Catholic girls' secondary school in inner-city Melbourne. My role is to implement the library's strategic plan, update policy and procedures, oversee the day-to-day management of the library, promote reading, collaborate with teachers to source resources for their curriculum, and provide a warm and friendly space. On any day, I could be helping students find relevant resources, listening to their oral presentations, helping them with their bibliographies, finding them a book to read, running a book club, or in a class helping with research.

What is the most rewarding aspect of working in the school library, and why?

It is hard to pinpoint one thing. It is about making connections with students over a book, finding information, helping them with their work, or just having a chat. It is a challenging job because you are always looking for new ideas to promote books, getting information out to the students, learning about new tools and resources, and seeking out new ways to teach.

What do you see as the most important part of the library's role in the school community?

The library is central to the school community. It is not only a place for research, study or reading, but a gathering space. We host many events and activities for some of our school groups, such as Justice, LOTE and Maths Help, as well as various clubs, such as Book Club, Chess Club and Knitting Club.

During school hours, the library is open to all students, and lunch-time and recess see many students gather to chat and play games.

Academy of Mary Immaculate students enjoying the school library.

Are there any current issues or challenges facing your library? How are you working to overcome these?

Students need to know how to search for information effectively, ensuring it is relevant and understandable.

Teachers often rely on Google, but I'm not sure it helps the students find authentic, reliable sites, nor do they learn how to achieve better results by, for example, using keyword searches or shortcuts.

Over the past four years, I have worked in partnership with the Education Team at the State Library of Victoria (SLV) to run research workshops for our years 7, 9 and VCE students. SLV has so many resources, databases, images and newspapers that the students can access for free.

How do you promote literacy and reading in your school? Are there any challenges in doing so?

When I took up the position in 2016, a library review had just taken place. One of the key areas of concern was the drop in reading and borrowing by students, and 'Wide Reading' classes for years 7 and 8 students had disappeared. We have since worked hard to build the fiction collection, weeding out old stuff, and putting some of it into genres.

After lots of effort and building relationships with the English teachers, Wide Reading has been reinstated. It is so important to give students the time to develop the skill of reading for pleasure.

The highlight of all this effort is the RAGE Book Club, which has grown to nearly 40

> “Our library is buzzing with students at recess and lunchtime.”

members. The students are all very keen to talk about the books they are reading, and lots of feisty discussion takes place. We take the club members to the SLV and the Melbourne Writers Festival, and we end each term with a book lunch.

How do you encourage students to make use of the library?

Our library is buzzing with students at recess and lunchtime. Board games and cards are a real hit. As well as hosting various clubs, we provide lunch-time activities such as jigsaws, book-making, art and craft, author talks, and competitions. If students want a quiet space to read, they venture into the fiction library across the hall.

What is your favourite thing about SCIS?

The best thing about SCIS is not having to do original cataloguing or use microfiche to find the records (now I'm showing my age!), and we can download records instantly. It saves time and helps to build consistent library catalogues. The SCIS cataloguers are so efficient at cataloguing any new resources we send in. I also look forward to reading *Connections*; I always find something I can use or reflect on.

What would you like to see SCIS do more of?

We have ClickView, and I would like to see SCIS have input into the subject headings/ScOT terms they use. Please keep producing *Connections* and tapping into the wonderful things that are happening out there in school libraries.

Image credits

Images supplied by Anne Chowne

Anne Chowne
Learning Leader at McAuley Resource Centre
Academy of Mary Immaculate

Educational Lending Right

'Please, for the sake of every children's book author you admire, and for every child who needs inspiration: join the ELR surveys if you are given the chance so that we can keep on writing.'

— Jackie French

If your school has been invited to participate in the Educational Lending Right School Library Survey, please spare five minutes to support the Australian writing and publishing industry.

For any enquiries, please contact **elr@esa.edu.au**.

Australian Government
Department of Communications and the Arts

Education Services Australia

(RE)DESIGNING THE LIBRARY THROUGH SCHOOL COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Hilary Hughes of Queensland University of Technology (QUT) on how to enable students and other key stakeholders to have a voice in designing their school library.

Designing a school library presents exciting and sometimes daunting challenges. It can bring the whole school community together in a shared creative purpose. However, as one experienced teacher librarian commented: 'It's not enough to have a pretty building or space, it has to work as well' (Bland, Hughes & Willis, 2013). Before determining what the library will look like, it is crucial to identify who we are designing it for, and why. A participatory design approach, as outlined in this article, can assist in generating evidence-based responses to these questions.

With the view that school libraries are essential social learning spaces, I share suggestions for enabling all interested stakeholders to have a voice in designing their school library. I use the term 'library' in a broad sense, recognising that each school community is different and that individual expectations of a library vary.

To illustrate participatory designing in practical contexts, I include references to some school-based case studies. These highlight how participatory principles apply to both new building and renovation projects, irrespective of size or budget. So, for example, a participatory approach underpinned the creation of a new junior secondary precinct (Nastrom-Smith & Hughes, 2019) and a sensory garden for prep students (Kucks & Hughes, 2019). The latter example shows that significant design outcomes can be achieved with a limited budget and a little creativity.

Who to involve in school library designing

Participatory library design involves people with a range of professional and everyday experience to ensure that the finished design will meet users' needs. While architects and builders provide the necessary professional expertise, insiders contribute real-life perspectives to inform the design. Although many architects are aware of current educational trends, teacher librarians, teachers and students are the experts in using school libraries for teaching and learning.

Drawing on their experience as information professional educators, teacher librarians can make a significant contribution to the leadership and implementation of participatory design. In addition to providing specialist knowledge about libraries and their evolving roles, library staff are attuned to the interests of different stakeholders across the school community. They are often experienced in coordinating events, leading creative activities, and gathering and presenting evidence.

It is also vital to include students in school library design projects, as young people often contribute insights and creative ideas that adults miss (Andrews & Willis, 2019; Bland, Hughes & Willis, 2013; Burke & Grosvenor, 2015; Woolner & Clark, 2014). Other key participants are: school leaders and finance officers; parents and carers who visit the library with their children; library volunteers; members of the Parents and Friends associations and school committees who meet in the library; chaplains; out-of-school hours care-workers and community groups who use the library through their programs; and maintenance and cleaning staff who tend the library.

How to foster participatory designing

The key to productive participatory designing is early and ongoing involvement. This can happen in various ways, depending on the context and availability of participants. Ideally, the design process begins before architects become involved – to ensure that the wishes and needs of the school community guide the design. Once detailed planning is underway, opportunities decrease for community members to influence the built outcome.

It may be necessary first to demonstrate the need and to secure funding for a new or renovated library, justified by current evidence related to school libraries in general (Godfree & Neilson, 2018) and your context. Once the project has been approved, the participatory design process can begin by inviting the input of the whole school community. 'Blue skies' thinking may be encouraged in various ways, including:

- student projects – eg imagine an ideal school library and represent it in words, drawings, video or 3D modelling
- blog posts or interviews with a range of school community members – eg to share insights about what *'library' means to me*
- survey or digital suggestion box – to gather evidence about the school community's expectations, wishes and needs for the new or renovated library
- visits to other local libraries (school, public or university) – to gain design ideas, and critically evaluate positive and negative aspects
- conversations and research – to learn from others' library and learning space design experience.

Ideas and evidence gathered through these awareness-raising initiatives can provide a basis for practical participatory design activities such as:

- one or more charrettes (collaborative design workshops)
- a library design forum with school community members, architects and designers.

Charrettes are useful for community-wide participatory design as they are based on the idea that anyone can be a designer. A charrette is generally low-tech, and participants require no specialist design knowledge, although an experienced facilitator is important to guide the process (Hughes, 2017). A school library charrette could involve students from differing year levels and/or teachers, parents and other stakeholders, to explore a wide range of perspectives.

The suggested library design forum could be a charrette

follow-up or stand-alone event. It would allow school community members and professional designers to share information, evaluate ideas and gain advice from each other about what is needed and what is achievable in the new or renovated library.

Once the design and construction project are underway, there are continuing opportunities for school community engagement. These might include:

- a competition to consider the theme or name for the new library
- an online poll to guide selection of colours and furnishings
- regular project updates – via school newsletter, display of photos and plans, reports at assembly, a library design blog
- guided observation/inquiry of construction progress – students might document the building work, or discuss the project with architects and tradespeople.

What makes for productive participatory designing?

Some points to consider throughout the participatory design process, especially when engaging in discussion across the school and professional designer stakeholder groups, are as follows:

- inclusive design – how to create a library that welcomes social and cultural diversity and is accessible for all
- a library can be much more than a physical space or a collection – what else can it offer? (eg a social hub, inquiry and innovation space, media studio, games zone, perhaps a coffee shop)
- spaces for varied activities – social, leisure, educational (eg reading, meeting, making, performing)
- support for wellbeing – teacher librarians as guides, access to tutoring and counselling, space for relaxation, a quiet retreat
- setting priorities – how to be creatively resourceful within budget
- a flexible future focus – how to design for sustainability; integrating evolving technology and pedagogy
- connectivity – forging personal and digital networks across and beyond the school
- indoor/outdoor flow – integrating the natural and built environment (eg indoor garden, library patio, library pop-ups around school)
- managing expectations – how to encourage design creativity without over-promising on what can be realised; minimising disappointment, especially among younger students. Completion of the library calls for community-wide celebration! Post-occupancy evaluation (POE) – ideally with a participatory approach – is also important to ensure that the library continues to meet changing social and educational needs. A POE can be conducted in differing ways to check the functionality of the construction and fittings, and the quality of the user experience (for an example see Wheeler & Malekzadeh, 2015). In addition, the design innovations will probably require a review of library policy and procedures. Purposeful professional development could assist library staff and teachers to explore and use new library spaces to their full potential.

Why undertake participatory library designing?

A participatory approach to designing the school library is highly appropriate for several reasons. In particular, this approach furthers the library's potential to be the school's most inclusive and out-reaching community space by:

- responding to the diverse views, wishes and needs of school community members
- promoting a sense of ownership and sense of belonging among library users by signalling that their views are valued and addressed
- ensuring that the new or refurbished library is cost effective and fit for its intended multiple purposes
- highlighting the changing yet vital roles of school libraries and teacher librarians in contemporary education.

From an educational perspective, a participatory designing process supports the development of spatial awareness, literacy and numeracy. For students, it offers rich opportunities for inquiry and problem-solving, with particular applicability to Design and Technologies projects. Interaction with architects and professional designers, and observation of different building industry trades in an authentic context, might inform students' career decision-making. For professionals, participatory projects offer opportunities to learn from and with each other. For example, teachers might develop understanding of design language and technical drawings, while architects might extend their knowledge of contemporary learning approaches and libraries.

While extensive benefits can arise from engaging in participatory designing, it is important to also acknowledge that generally a school's budget is tight and the project timeline is short. Compromises will most probably need to be made between participants' imagined ideal library and the final product. Therefore, a participatory designing process can play a valuable role in generating evidence to inform critical decision-making that best reflects the school community's needs and aspirations for a new or renovated library.

References

For a full list of references please see the online version of this article: scisdata.com/connections

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CATALOGUING STANDARDS: WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU GET

SCIS Cataloguing Officer Natasha Campbell writes about working with publishers and school library staff to create high quality, consistent catalogue records.

It's rare to have a day when we don't receive a small parcel or large box of books delivered to one of the six Schools Catalogue Information Service (SCIS) cataloguing depots. SCIS cataloguers add approximately 4,500 catalogue records to the database each month, keeping it relevant and current. The resources catalogued come from a range of sources including publishers, booksellers and school libraries.

These hot-off-the-press titles are our best means of creating a quality record that is accurate and compliant with international cataloguing standards. This is important, considering each record is likely to be downloaded by more than 10,000 school subscribers across the world.

SCIS is fortunate and grateful for the support that we receive from our publishing partners. We see it as a 'win-win' relationship, offering benefits to both the publisher and SCIS. Having the item in hand ensures early search and discovery of new-release titles, whose records can then be seamlessly downloaded by schools upon receipt. Our focus is on cataloguing new-release, curriculum-related and educational resources, as well as resources for recreational reading and literacy programs suitable for use in school libraries.

The number and regularity of supply of new titles varies from publisher to publisher. Generally, for larger publishers, small parcels or boxes are sent for cataloguing most weeks, with deliveries from smaller publishers sent two to five times a year. SCIS also catalogues titles from publishers wishing to have their titles registered for inclusion in the Educational Lending Right (ELR) scheme. The only cost to the provider is postage.

SCIS is interested in supporting those publishers and distributors that provide review copies for cataloguing purposes. This year, SCIS has been working with publishers to promote their books through the 'Bag of books' competition, run through our Facebook (facebook.com/scisdata) and Twitter (twitter.com/scisdata) accounts. Each month, schools have the opportunity to win a large box of books from a different publisher, by answering a fun question. SCIS staff have enjoyed following the lively responses and conversations prompted by the competition questions. In August, schools had the chance to win a lovely selection of books from Oxford University Press Australia (facebook.com/oupanz) by letting us know which author they would love to visit their library. New-release titles are also given out at conferences as prizes and to attendees at our professional learning workshops (scisdata.com/professional-learning).

While SCIS offers customers an excellent hit rate, we are always working to improve this. We actively approach new publishers shown by our statistics to be in high demand by SCIS customers, or publishers that are recommended by schools through feedback from conferences, demonstrations, surveys and emails. If you have purchased a title from a publisher not in SCIS Data that is suitable for school libraries, get in touch with the publisher and ask them to contact us at SCIS directly and we'll follow up with them for you.

Of course, we could not offer such an extensive database of catalogue records without the vital contribution of schools that regularly send resources to their SCIS depot. If you have a pile of newly purchased titles that are not in SCIS Data, please do not hesitate to send them to SCIS to catalogue. Not only will they be catalogued to our high standards, and therefore keep your database consistent, but you will also be helping other schools by making the record available. Oh, and saving yourself a lot of time!

While the majority of books sent to SCIS come directly from publishers, books from schools always take priority, with all titles catalogued in order of receipt. Cataloguers understand that schools need to have books returned for use as quickly as possible and work hard to ensure this.

For schools that cannot send the physical item for cataloguing, submitting a request online is another option. Ideally suited to schools in remote areas or places too far away from a SCIS depot, online cataloguing requests can be submitted for all items except posters, charts, DVDs, CDs, kits and sets.

Thank you to all those schools who regularly send material to SCIS for cataloguing. Thank you also to those publishers and libraries suppliers who generously supply advance titles to SCIS. We couldn't do it without you!

Natasha Campbell
Cataloguing Officer
Schools Catalogue Information Service (SCIS)

Where do I send items to be catalogued?
help.scisdata.com/hc/en-us/articles/115011886848-Where-do-I-send-items-to-be-catalogued

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THE WRITING (AND REVISING) OF *THE INNOVATIVE SCHOOL LIBRARIAN*

UK librarian Elizabeth Bentley recounts the process of writing *The innovative school librarian* and explores the benefits of collaboration.

I was one of a group of school librarians, initially composed of students on the MAEd course at Canterbury Christ Church, tutored by Sharon Markless, and later joined by Sarah Pavey. We continued to meet regularly with Sharon to discuss research and other issues related to school librarianship. Sharon Markless has been one of the most distinguished contributors to thinking on information literacy and school library evaluation since the beginning of the 1990s. While she was no longer teaching in the area, she wanted to remain in contact with practitioners, and so the group was born. One of our aims was to carry out action research within our schools, and different members of the group did publish papers based on their work in their schools.

After Sarah joined us, she was approached by Facet Press, the publishing arm of CILIP (cilip.org.uk), to consider writing a book. Rather than go it alone, she suggested that we should collaborate. The idea was for Sharon to guide and edit, but for the school librarians to do the actual research and writing. Collaboration was the aim, which I think comes naturally to librarians. We decided on a structure, built around the keywords of isolation, inspiration, integration and innovation, and divided the chapters amongst us, with two librarians working on each chapter. We spent a weekend at Sarah's holiday house in Normandy, making detailed plans for what we would do. Unfortunately, after this stage, my partner Anne Felton had to drop out for personal reasons. I continued to work on my chapters on my own, albeit with increased input from Sharon. We also swapped chapters for redrafting.

The first section of *The innovative school librarian* concentrated on the school librarian, with a significant chapter on what professionalism consists of, and how it may exist in different forms. This is a discussion that perhaps is not sufficiently explored and has universal application for school librarians everywhere. The rest of the section looked at how others may perceive us and how we might bridge the gap between others' perceptions and our own.

The second section looked at the need to define our specific school communities and how we positively work within them.

The third section explored the role of inspiration within our work, how we might become more integral to the work of the school, and how we might innovate within our practice.

An important element of the book was to incorporate vignettes of school librarian experience, based on either our own or those of members of the School Librarians' Network (groups.io/g/SLN). This is an email list I started as a way of exploring the impact it might have on the working experience of school librarians in the UK, based on the model of the US LM_Net, in the light of the relative isolation most of us suffer. These vignettes aimed to shed practical light on what was otherwise a theoretical book, rather a practical handbook.

Having started in the summer of 2007, we completed what we imagined was close to a final version the following summer. We arranged to meet as a group at Sue Shaper's house to make the last edit. We naively imagined this would take no more than a day or two. It soon became apparent that it would take many more. All autumn, every weekend, we sat around a single computer and analysed every phrase and word to thrash out exactly how we wanted it to read. David Streatfield was kind enough to do the indexing and the book was finally delivered to Facet for copyediting. Published in May 2009, we threw a little party in London to launch it. Somewhat to our dismay, the published version still contained typos and layout problems, which was a lesson learned about how difficult it is to achieve the perfectly written book, in spite of all our efforts.

The book was well received, both in the UK and overseas, but it did not take very long for us to realise that in time the book would need revision and expansion. The role of information technology has grown and needed to be dealt with within the broader context of school library practice. Perhaps more importantly, we had not previously highlighted the need for evidence of the impact of our activities, particularly where we were introducing innovative ideas and practices. This needs to start from previously published evidence of such activities, whether to enable us to convince our managers of their potential for improvement, or to ensure that we are not misdirecting our precious time. Evidence of impact also needs to start with an evaluation of the current situation, so that we can later see what changes have taken place as a result of the new activity.

All this requires the commitment of time and energy, particularly challenging when times are difficult. Risk-taking is paradoxically easier when we feel secure. However, a professional attitude to our role demands that we take the need to innovate seriously. We hoped in writing *The innovative school librarian* to help more school librarians to take the risk of innovating.

The innovative school librarian was edited by Sharon Markless with Elizabeth Bentley, Sarah Pavey, Sue Shaper, Sally Todd and Carol Webb.

Elizabeth Bentley
BA MCLIP
Librarian

WEBSITE + APP REVIEWS

15 BEST SCHOOL WEBSITE DESIGNS

webalive.com.au/school-websites

Schools wishing to develop a new website or enhance their current website would benefit from analysing the examples portrayed here. Each sample outlines the outstanding design and technology features used to create an informative and appealing website.

SCIS no. 1934946

ALIEN ASSIGNMENT

apps.apple.com/au/app/alien-assignment/id531359578

Students assist a family in space to repair their stranded spacecraft by taking photos of everyday Earth-bound objects. Although this app has been around for a while, it offers a different interaction from many apps by requiring students to use higher-level critical thinking to consider options.

SCIS no. 1737197

ANDY GRIFFITHS

andygriffiths.com.au

The website of the phenomenally successful children's author Andy Griffiths features current and forthcoming events, a bibliography, tweets, links to videos, FAQs, and biographical data. It also includes material relating to Terry Denton and Jill Griffiths.

SCIS no. 1934964

AR MAKR

apps.apple.com/au/app/ar-makr/id1434081130

AR Makr is a great place for teachers and students to delve into augmented reality. The app's toolbox allows students to sketch, scan and snap objects and then change them from a 2D object to a 3D object on the screen. The object or character can then be placed in a real-world environment screen to create a photo or video story.

SCIS no. 1934989

CHESS KID: LEARN & PLAY CHESS WITH OTHER KIDS

chesskid.com

For students about to embark on learning to play chess, or for those who have already progressed, this website offers players different levels to play against the computer or online players worldwide. Content covers lessons, videos, puzzles, organising tournaments and chess-club management hints.

SCIS no. 1928428

DROPS: LANGUAGE LEARNING

apps.apple.com/au/app/drops-language-learning/id939540371

Offering strategic vocabulary selections, this language app encourages users to spend just five minutes a day memorising the illustrated, practical words in the language of their choice from the 23 on offer. Relevant audio and advanced statistics are also a feature.

SCIS no. 1935004

GREEN SCREEN BY DO INK

apps.apple.com/au/app/green-screen-by-do-ink/id730091131?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D4

As the title implies, Green Screen provides a 'green screen' for backgrounds when combining several images or live footage into one video or photo. These images can be resized, rotated, removed or sequenced during the editing process. Links are available to a blog and tutorials.

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KHAN ACADEMY KIDS

apps.apple.com/au/app/khan-academy-kids/id1378467217

The highly regarded Khan Academy has teamed up with experts at the Stanford Graduate School of Education and created a free, fun app for young primary students. Content features reading, mathematics, language and problem-solving, and it offers a personalised learning experience.

SCIS no. 1935049

LIBRARIES READY TO CODE

ala.org/tools/readytocode/#get-started-now

An initiative of the American Library Association, The Ready to Code Collection provides librarians with resources and strategies to build a library's capacity to develop 'coding and computational thinking activities that are grounded in research, aligned with library core values, and support broadening participation'.

SCIS no. 1935103

PUBLIC SILO TRAIL

publicsilotrail.com

Recognised internationally, this website profiles the stunning public artwork on silos in WA. Students and teachers of visual art can explore the concept of inclusive mural art in country towns and the impact this artwork has on the township – such as the cultural tourism that flows from it.

SCIS no. 1935121

TINKERCAD: FROM MIND TO DESIGN IN MINUTES

tinkercad.com

This site has built on its reputation for easily grasped software tools and instructions to design and make 3D objects. Additionally, students can now undertake to design printed 3D circuits and a variety of elementary code blocks. Features also include a blog, gallery, teacher webinars and online help.

SCIS no. 1916454

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE PLASTIC WE THROW OUT?

nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2018/06/the-journey-of-plastic-around-the-globe

An informative and authoritative offering from the *National Geographic* provides pertinent material relating to the global problem of the effects plastic bags have on the marine environment. Mismanaged municipal plastic waste is transported by rivers and oceans and has created devastating issues for marine life and the marine environment. You will need to sign up, but the content is free.

SCIS no. 1935133

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The websites and apps selected for review are often of a professional nature and should be initially viewed by teachers and library staff to determine suitability for students. The links, content and address of these sites are subject to change.

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