

School libraries and wellbeing

Vale Renate Beilharz,
1962–2026



Book Week at **St Paul's School, Queensland**

Study skills in action

Professional support
for library staff

The case for the **AI-free**
classroom

+ SCIS subscriber news,
New websites and apps,
The last word

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Traditional Custodians of the land on which
our head office stands, and pays our respects
to Elders past and present. We recognise
the Traditional Custodians of Country across
Australia and their continuing connection
and contribution to lands, waters,
communities and learning.



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Term 4 webinar

Stocktake and planning for the 2027 school year

Tuesday 27 October | Free | 2 pm AEDT

Prepare your library collection for the next school year. Learn practical
strategies for stocktaking, collection development policies, reporting, and
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share ideas and ask questions.

The session is presented by Ceinwen Jones, Editorial and Professional Learning
Lead at SCIS, a qualified teacher librarian and PhD researcher with extensive
experience in education, cataloguing and information management.

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The SCIS blog is a space for conversation, inspiration and
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EOI for contributor submissions

Are you working in, with or alongside a school library? Do you have insights, research or practical experiences you'd like to share with the school library community?

Connections magazine is seeking expressions of interest (EOIs) from contributors for upcoming issues. We welcome proposals from school library professionals, educators, researchers and advocates who are passionate about the role and impact of school libraries.

Why contribute?

Publishing in *Connections* is an opportunity to:

- share your expertise and practice with a professional audience
- contribute to the development of the school library field
- build your professional profile.

We encourage both experienced and first-time authors to submit – if you have a story, idea or insight to share, we'd love to hear from you.

What we're looking for

Issues of *Connections* are loosely based around themes, and we welcome proposals that address these themes – but are open to all submissions.

Themes for next year's issues of *Connections* will be:

Term 1: School library advocacy

Term 2: School libraries and teaching and learning partnerships

Term 3: School library futures / AI in education

Term 4: School libraries and student agency

Submitting an EOI

To express your interest, please use the form in this link to provide:

- your proposed title
- a brief abstract (150 to 250 words) outlining your article
- a short author biography (50 to 80 words)
- your contact details.

We are accepting EOIs until 31 October 2026.

We will contact you if we are able to include your writing in any of the issues for 2027.

Questions?

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Vale Renate Beilharz, 1962–2026

Renate's career trajectory was an inspiration to many of us who found school life challenging. From a high school student who struggled with English class, to becoming a communicator and influencer whose knowledge and wisdom has inspired many colleagues and library students, Renate was a beloved driving force in all her workplaces.



Renate's career took her from teacher librarian, to Educational Lending Rights coordinator, TAFE cataloguing educator, and finally to SCIS Catalogue Content Manager. She also contributed to the ALIA Community of Resource Description (ACORD) and founded the ALIA Schools Cataloguing Community of Practice (a forum for discussion of bibliographic metadata and information discoverability in school libraries).

At SCIS, as the Content Manager, Renate saw us through a transition of library management systems (from Voyager to Koha); trained countless new and experienced cataloguers in the art of being a 'SCIS cataloguer'; initiated the Schools' Consultative Group to involve schools in decision-making on SCIS Standards and Subject Headings; and spearheaded the campaigns to include AIATSIS codes for Australian First Nations' places and languages and Ngā Upoko Tukutuku Māori subject headings in SCIS records.

Respect in cataloguing, and reparative description, was a theme throughout Renate's time at SCIS. She researched and consulted intensively to ensure we had made our absolute best effort to ensure that SCIS Standards and the language used in our controlled vocabularies were as respectful and inclusive as possible – not only for First Nations peoples, but for all marginalised groups.

One of Renate's SCIS biographies reads: 'Renate loves cataloguing not only because it puts the world in order, but because it facilitates connections between people and quality resources that meet their information needs in a respectful and equitable manner.'

This is such an apt summary of what Renate stood for: order, community connection, respect and equity. As well as being a greatly respected and knowledgeable library professional who made an enormous contribution to content description in school libraries, Renate was also a loving mother, grandmother and elder in her faith community. She was a massive Lord of The Rings, Harry Potter and Lego and board game fan; and for us here at SCIS, the lynch pin of our strategic direction, professionalism and social activities. We will miss you always, Renate, as a colleague and as a friend.

– The SCIS team

When Renate visited the NSW Team in our new digs in Parramatta in August 2019, I was away on unforeseen family leave. To say I was disappointed is an understatement. The anticipation of a 'royal visit' from SCIS HQ garnered considerable excitement.

Imagine my delight when, a few weeks later, Renate emailed me with an offer to meet up in September when she and her husband, Tony, would be in Sydney. The catch: it would be a Saturday.

Never one to let a good opportunity go to waste, I indicated my keenness. Arrangements were made, and a date and time locked in.

My wife and I met Renate and Tony at the railway station of the village in which we reside in the Blue Mountains, west of Sydney.

We walked through the village to the pub for a delightful long lunch and good conversation, and followed this with some local sightseeing as Renate and Tony had not explored this part of the Blue Mountains before.

This informal meeting set the tone for the next seven years. Renate was more than just an interstate manager to whom I reported. Our conversations – email, phone, Zoom and very occasionally in person – always included time for more than just work-related issues.

A real connection had been established and nurtured in the garden of mutual respect and shared humanity.

At Renate's Celebration of Life service there were many references to her prowess as a communicator and her determination to make connections, to collaborate and consult, and to include rather than exclude.

I shall miss Renate's knowledge shared so generously, her passion for school librarianship, and her love of number-building in Dewey.

I am fortunate to have spent these past seven years in her orbit.

Vale, Renate.

– Mike Botham, NSW SCIS Team, July, 2026

Over the years I have participated in professional learning conducted by Renate, and most recently have had the pleasure of working more closely with her as part of the SCIS Schools Consultative Group.

The first of Renate's qualities that springs to mind was her willingness to listen and to think deeply about new possibilities. She was always willing to interrogate her own assumptions and processes, and find new ways of doing things that served the cataloguing community – and most importantly, our catalogue users. She will be missed.

– Nicole Parums, Library Technician, The Friends School.

Renate was an innovator, a collaborator and a mentor. As a fellow educator in cataloguing, she willingly shared her experience with me, whilst also encouraging me to explore and incorporate new technologies. We worked together on ACORD and ORDAC, where Renate offered intelligent feedback on proposals to the RDA Board, engaged in animated discussions on best practice and ensured school libraries were represented in conversations about cataloguing standards.

However, my fondest memory of Renate was when we connected at a conference and she suggested that we meet to discuss reparative description in school libraries. That conversation stayed with me because it reflected so much of who Renate was: thoughtful, generous with her time, and always willing to explore how cataloguing practice could become more inclusive, respectful and responsive to the communities we serve. She had a remarkable ability to turn a professional discussion into an opportunity for shared learning, encouragement and meaningful connection.

Renate's final contribution to the library community was the Schools Cataloguing Community of Practice. As the instigator of this group, she brought together school library staff from all roles, locations and levels of experience, creating a supportive environment where learning and connection were at the heart of its purpose.

– **Catherine Barnes, Course Coordinator: Information Management, Adelaide University**

This has shocked me, and I'm sure everyone Renate worked with is missing her terribly. While I did not know Renate well, she was so dedicated to helping school library staff with cataloguing. She even had me considering trying to work for SCIS in the future, such was her influence on me. I can't begin to imagine the hole that Renate has left in SCIS but more importantly in your hearts.

My sympathies.

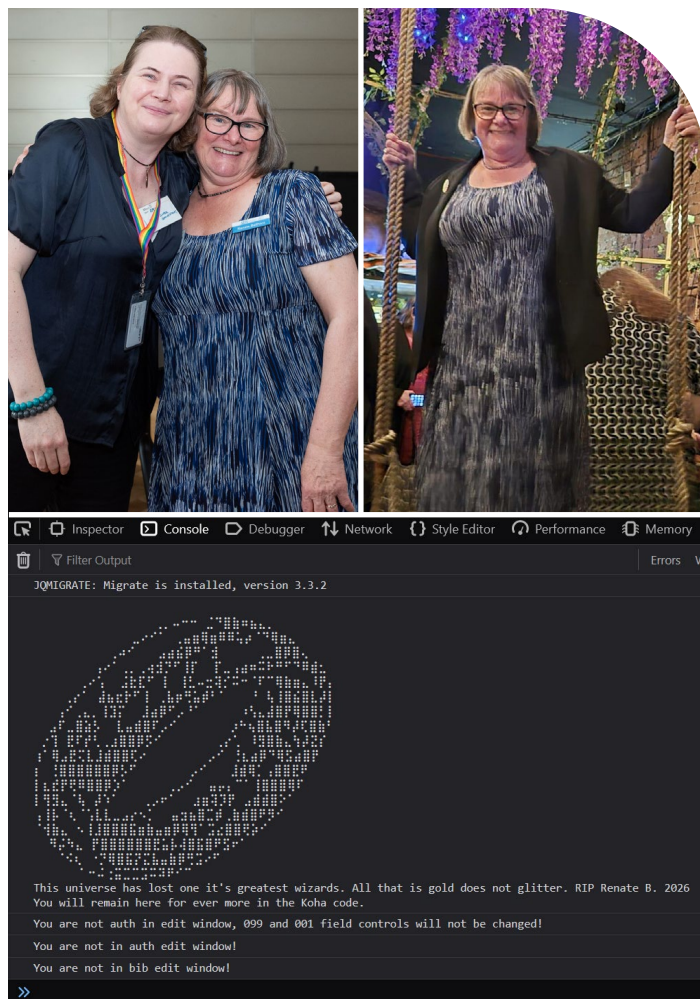
– **Bec Blight, member of the SCIS Schools Consultative Group**

Sending my heartfelt condolences to Renate's family, friends and the SCIS team. I had the great privilege of interviewing Renate for her role at SCIS, and within minutes I remember putting down my pen and thinking how incredibly lucky we'd be if she chose us! Vale Renate. You were an industry legend who inspired so many. Always kind, always generous, and you will always be missed.

– **Rachel Elliott, former GM, Digital Services**

I had the privilege of working with Renate at Education Services Australia. She was a consummate professional and a much-loved member of our team. Renate will be warmly remembered by all of us who had the pleasure of working alongside her across the school library community.

– **Caroline Hartley, former SCIS manager**



(Top left) Renate and Rachel Elliott. (Bottom) A Lord of the Rings tribute to Renate which is forever embedded in the SCIS Koha code.

So young to pass away, especially with her delight at being a grandma. I think of Renate with much affection and respect as both a courageous person and a wise colleague. I remember well our coffee/tea meet-n-chat at Coorparoo when she last visited Brisbane in her official capacity. Thoughts are with you all at SCIS and, of course, her family.

– **Frances Todd, SCIS cataloguer**

Today, I would like to remember Renate Beilharz AALIA with gratitude and respect.

I was fortunate to be one of Renate's students at Box Hill Institute. She was my cataloguing teacher, and her passion for bibliographic metadata, combined with her patience and generosity, left a lasting impression on me.

One memory that has stayed with me all these years is Renate saying with a warm smile, 'The more you catalogue, the more knowledge you'll gain.' She would often finish with her cheerful 'Okey dokey!' Those simple words and her enthusiasm made learning cataloguing both enjoyable and inspiring.

As my career has progressed, I have often reflected on the knowledge and professional values Renate shared in the



classroom. Cataloguing is sometimes seen as work that happens behind the scenes, but Renate helped us understand its true purpose: making knowledge discoverable, accessible and meaningful for everyone. That lesson has stayed with me throughout my career.

Reading ALIA's tribute reminds me that I was just one of the many librarians whose professional journeys were shaped by Renate. Her influence reached far beyond the classroom, benefiting libraries, library staff and library users. Her commitment to respectful resource description and her generosity in sharing knowledge have left an enduring legacy for our profession.

Thank you, Renate, for inspiring so many of us and for everything you gave to librarianship. Your impact will live on through the countless students and colleagues whose careers you helped shape.

Vale Renate Beilharz AALIA.

Your legacy will continue to inspire our profession.

– Ying Xian

I had the privilege of working with Renate at Education Services Australia. She was a consummate professional and a much-loved member of our team. Renate will be warmly remembered by all of us who had the pleasure of working alongside her across the school library community.

– Dale Cousens, NLNZ

It was such an honour and pleasure to have the opportunity to get to know Renate in recent years through our professional work and shared passion for school libraries. Renate's considered and meticulous contribution to the field is something to celebrate; initially Renate did this when delivering professional learning

on cataloguing at a tertiary level, and later, in her exemplary leadership of the specialist cataloguing team at SCIS.

At the time of SCIS' fortieth anniversary, I was awestruck by the preparation and thoroughness with which Renate led workshops with the assembled members of the SCIS cataloguing team. Her intention was to anticipate trends in cataloguing and identify steps to future proof the integrity of the data and the processes used in SCIS and from there, in school library systems in Australia and internationally.

At all times, Renate operated through a lens of compassion, showing great awareness of the social and cultural power and implications that the terms and attitudes reflected in SCIS metadata might have for library users. Renate leaves a very impressive legacy indeed.

Vale Renate Beilharz.

– Carmel Grimmatt, former Library Coordinator, DET NSW

With the passing of our north star into the next world, I wanted to share some moments I had with her.

One of my first memories from when I started at SCIS about 5 years ago is of an inviting, loudly laughing and kind soul in Renate, who looked out for me and made me feel part of the SCIS family, even though she had only known me for about 5 minutes. I can still hear her laughter now – unreserved, unfiltered, filling any room with joy.

In moments of work when we had differing views on a koha topic, Renate was passionate, determined and tenacious. I pity the fool who would seek to dampen the fire in Renate with a different perspective. However, she would hear me out, considering and taking on anything she thought made good sense. She taught me how to be a better team player.

Sometimes I can find navigating the social aspects of life quite

a challenge. Any time Renate noticed this, she was there like a mother goose to look out for me and get me through it, with a smile, a look or a quick catch up.

I am sure others have many other stories about the intelligent, gloriously hilarious and bright north star that Renate was. She lives on in our memories, our lessons learnt from her and in our hearts. The world is a little less bright now, and perhaps for a time it will be little dim. However, I imagine if Renate could be here to comfort us all, she would extend her mother goose wings and wrap us all up in warmth and care.

See you in the next life Renate.

– SCIS team member

We are deeply saddened by the passing of Renate Beilharz, a true rockstar of the school library world.

For so many of us, Renate was far more than an SCIS cataloguer. She was a trusted source of advice, support and encouragement – the person you could turn to for all things school library. Her knowledge, generosity and willingness to help made an enormous difference to school library staff across Australia.

Always a smiling face at an ASLA conference or presenting a webinar, Renate had an incredible ability to make complex things feel manageable, and she always shared her expertise with warmth, patience and genuine care. She understood the importance of school libraries and the people who make them happen. She listened when we argued genrefication vs Dewey and provided a wealth of extra knowledge to guide our decisions.

For many of us, Renate was a colleague, mentor, sounding board and, most importantly, a friend.

Her contribution to school libraries will continue to be felt in countless collections, catalogues, libraries and in all the people she supported along the way.

Our deepest condolences to Renate's family, friends and all those who had the privilege of knowing and working with her.

Truly one of a kind who memorably enjoyed stepping out on the dance floor to 'bust a few moves' at the 2025 ALSA Conference.

– Sonja Brownridge
On behalf of the Australian School Library Association

Renate Beilharz AALIA has been part of the library and information profession in Australia since she graduated as a teacher librarian from Melbourne College of Advanced Education in 1984. With a dedicated and down-to-earth approach to her work, Renate went on to become a highly respected educator at Box Hill Institute where she encouraged and supported her students every step of the way.

From 2018, Renate headed up the education team at the Schools Cataloguing Information Service (SCIS), where her wealth of professional knowledge benefited school libraries around the country.

As a professional member of the Australian Library and Information Association, Renate is remembered as a person of initiative and goodness who steered the sector in positive directions with warmth, humility, vision and intelligence. She was incredibly generous with her knowledge, and as a practitioner, a teacher and a sector leader.

Renate's passion for bibliographic metadata has made a big difference in this country.

Her work really mattered. The conversations Renate started about resource description meant that students and teachers are better able to discover and access resources. School library collections are more visible, useful, respectful and meaningful because of Renate. Her commitment to reparative description, which replaces outdated terms with respectful language and prioritises the voices of marginalised groups, was especially impactful.

In 2025, Renate had the vision to found the Schools Cataloguing Community of Practice. This initiative serves as a point of contact for school library staff to ask questions and share cataloguing expertise in a safe and welcoming forum. This seed of connection and learning that Renate planted and tended has left an enduring legacy that continues to grow and thrive.

People in cataloguing communities in all kinds of libraries across Australia, not just school libraries, but academic, public, health and special libraries, have been inspired and lifted by Renate's work. She will be greatly missed by her ALIA family.

*Live fully
Love generously
And be all you can be*

– ALIA (Australian Library and Information Association) statement

It's hard to know where to start when remembering Renate. Renate was a force of nature and the ultimate professional. Her expert knowledge and passion for all things school libraries and more specifically, cataloguing is unmatched. What she didn't know about cataloguing probably isn't worth knowing. Not that she ever allowed her unbelievably deep knowledge to be a thing to hold over those of us who didn't have that level insight. She would welcome and respect all points of view, considering them on their merits, rather than that the level of experience of whom suggested them.

Being in a professional learning session with Renate was to see her in her natural environment. She owned the room and gave of herself generously. Renate would engage with everyone in the session and ensure that everyone was comfortable and made the most of the opportunity. She had this lovely way of teasing out questions and getting to the bottom of what someone was really wanting to know.

Renate was the driving force behind respectful cataloguing and this reflects her own views and how she lived her life. Renate always had a kind word to say about people and would strive to understand other people's perspectives and point of view.

Renate would stand-up for what was right and just but not a showy-way or for personal gain.

I had the privilege of sharing the experience of walking the final section of the Walk for Truth with Renate, in 2025. We listened to the speakers and watched the Aboriginal dancers together, before we walked to the Victorian Parliament. It was such a wonderful experience to share with Renate. She understood the significance of truth telling and the importance of community.

When I think about Renate and the impact she had upon me, it's the hug and the heartfelt kind words when my own Mum died. It is the lovely kind note she wrote my daughter after she helped out in the office. It is the absolute joy she got from her grandkids and being their Oma. It's also those times when she laughed, uncontrollably. What started as a chuckle, then built and built, eventually taking over her entire body.

She was such a warm and caring friend and colleague while I feel empty to have had to say goodbye, I feel that I am better for having known Renate.

– Anthony Shaw, SCIS product manager

A true force of nature, Renate made a powerful impression from our first encounter. Never afraid to speak her mind, advocate for others, or admit when she didn't have the answer, Renate had a lovely balance of care, directness and genuine humility. On a personal note, I remember the big, beautiful hug she gave me as I returned to work after losing a parent - something I didn't know I needed. I looked forward to our annual Christmas biscuit exchange and the energy she radiated each day. Her contributions to SCIS and her impact on ESA as an organisation and to people individually cannot be measured. Renate will be fondly remembered and deeply missed. Her legacy and memory will remain a part of our history, forever.

– Corinna Maloney, General Manager, Digital Services, ESA

Renate, you were such an incredible colleague, mentor and friend. Your positivity always lit up the room every time you were in it, and you had the rarest quality of being able to make everyone around you feel safe, heard and cared for. I'll miss our chats, jokes, seeing your eyes light up with joy whenever questions came in during a webinar, and wearing funny outfits to conference dinners with you. You've left an indelible mark on me, and I'll always keep you in my heart. Dan.

– Daniel Czech, Marketing and Communications Advisor, Digital Services, ESA

Renate was so much more than a manager and colleague to me. From the very first moment I walked into ESA for my interview, I was touched by her warmth, kindness, and energy. She welcomed me with a beautiful smile and made me feel comfortable right away. I still remember the sparkle in her



Renate and the SCIS team

eyes, her warm smile, and her playful spirit; which always came through in her wonderful sense of humour and love of games and puzzles.

From the beginning, Renate took me under her wing. With incredible patience and generosity, she guided me through my training, sharing not only her deep knowledge and experience but also the rich legacy of SCIS. I always left our weekly meetings feeling inspired and excited to learn more. One of the things I loved about Renate was her curiosity—every question was an opportunity for her to explore, discover, and learn something new.

Renate brought so much light to the workplace. I will always remember her for her passion, knowledge, generosity, wonderful sense of humour, and, above all, the genuine care and compassion she showed to others. Whenever I was going through a difficult time, she would reach out with a kind and thoughtful message. Those small acts of kindness meant more to me than she probably ever knew.

I miss her deeply and will always be grateful for everything she taught me. The knowledge and skills she shared with me continue to be part of my work every day, and in that way, a little part of her continues to live on.

I would like to end with one of Renate's own beautiful expressions:

“With love and a virtual hug!”

– Azadeh Shamee, Cataloguing and Administration Officer, SCIS



SCIS: News for subscribers

This term, I thought it would be great to share the stories from the SCIS product team. I asked each of the team to write a brief biography about themselves, so you can get insights into the people who support your SCIS subscriptions. In no particular order, let me introduce you to the SCIS product team:



Adam Styles
Systems and Technical Administrator

Adam is a systems administrator and librarian who loves Linux, vintage programming languages, playing Dungeons & Dragons and listening to heavy metal music with his two cats. He grew up on 80s classic cartoons *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*, *Adventures of the Gummi Bears* and *Voltron*. Adam joined SCIS in 2021 and enjoys optimising data solutions to better serve end users.



Debbie Rao
Customer Service Agent

Debbie Rao has an extensive background in libraries, including stints at Darebin Libraries and RMIT University Library. For the past four years Debbie has worked as a Customer Service Officer at SCIS, helping to provide high-quality customer service and admin support. Debbie loves to delight the team with her weekly culinary explorations and experiences around Melbourne, as well as with her family’s amazing Italian recipes.



Emma Rodgers
Customer Service and Sales Team Lead (currently on maternity leave)

Originally from the UK, Emma began her career as a primary school teacher before moving into customer support within the digital education sector. She joined SCIS in early 2025, where her focus is on delivering exceptional support to educators and school staff. Emma loves spending time outdoors, enjoying beach walks and visiting new places around Australia.



Megan Costelloe
Customer Service and Sales Team Lead (maternity leave cover)

Megan recently joined the team, bringing seven years of experience across customer service, operations and account management. Most recently, she worked at a teaching agency as an account manager, supporting schools and educators across Victoria. Before joining SCIS, Megan spent six months travelling throughout Asia, visiting seven countries. She particularly enjoyed immersing herself into different cultures, experiencing how others live, exploring beautiful landscapes and trying new food along the way. Megan lives on Bunurong Country with her partner and their two cheeky senior cats.



Azadeh Shamee
Cataloguing and Administration Officer

Azadeh has had more than 15 years’ experience within the education industry across a wide range of roles; a teacher overseas, teacher’s assistant, student engagement officer and now Cataloguing and Administration Officer. For the past 18 months, Azadeh has been working as part of SCIS Cataloguer and Customer Service teams. She lives on Wurundjeri land with her partner, her almost 2-year-old naughty, cute cat, Tilleh, and her two ouds. Azadeh plays the oud, a Middle Eastern string instrument.



Madhu Vasa
Customer Service Agent

Madu has around 18 years of experience in administration, project coordination and customer service across higher education, utilities, local government and the education sector. She has been with SCIS for the past six years, supporting customers with enquiries, subscriptions, account management and general queries. Known for her friendly and practical approach, Madhu enjoys helping schools and library staff get the best value from SCIS. Madhu lives on Wadawurrung

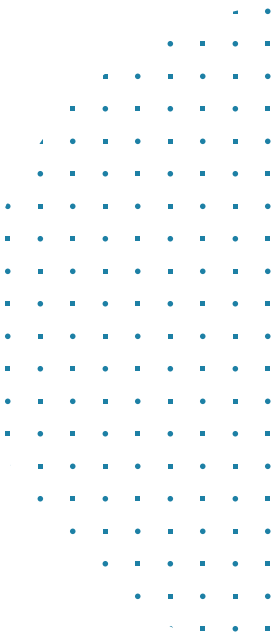
and Bunurong Country. Outside of work, she is a proud mother of two and an avid classical music enthusiast.



Anthony Shaw
SCIS Product Manager

Anthony has had more than 25 years’ experience within the book industry across a wide range of roles; working in bookselling, buying, publishing and supporting libraries. For the past four years Anthony has been the SCIS Product Manager, with responsibility for the SCIS platforms and managing key stakeholder relationships. He lives on Woiwurrung country with his wife, 14-year-old daughter and still slightly crazy 5-year-old border collie, Rudy. When not working Anthony loves to read, listen to music, walk the dog and coach or support his daughter’s ever-increasing sporting pursuits.

We hope that you have learnt a little more about the team who support your SCIS subscriptions and keep the system wheels turning. From the entire SCIS team have a wonderful Term 4 and enjoy reading issue 139 of *Connections*.





School library spotlight: Book Week at St Paul's School, Queensland

At St Paul's School Junior Library, Book Week is not just about costumes and a parade. We spoke with Janelle Hamling about how she and her team use Book Week to foster reading, belonging and lifelong learning throughout the whole school community.

Term 3 at St Paul's School is called 'Book Week Term'. The school's celebration of books and literacy continues beyond the traditional parade and beyond the library itself. It's a celebration of community and connection through story, and a compelling and powerful illustration of how a library can function as the wellbeing centre of a school.

Connection, inclusion and belonging are nurtured in the library, with benefits that reach across the entire school community. Each year, Janelle Hamling and her team work on events to tie in with the CBCA Book Week theme. For this year's theme, 'Symphony of Stories', a book parade was first on the agenda, followed by music and activities, participation from students, parents and staff, and of course, plenty of motivational chocolate for the hardworking library staff.

Connection

Students attend library lessons once a week, but the library is also a space open to parents and community members. It is often busy before and after school, with children and their adults spending time together.

Janelle says, 'We have a huge turn-up of parents and students in the morning that come in, and they read together and they play games and they build things ... For parents, it's a time for them to switch off phones and to just be with their child.'



The library is also a place where parents are encouraged to connect with each other. 'It's a lovely place for parents to meet other parents and that very much happens. Particularly if they're new parents, I always say to them, come and spend some time in the library in the morning and get to know some other parents.'

Connection happens all through the year in the library, but Book Week provides a focus to promote it.

For 'Symphony of Stories', the parade featured performances from both the junior choir and senior (high school) singers, along with a retelling of Pamela Allen's *Bertie and the Bear*. Staff performed the parts of Bertie and the bear, and senior school students played the instrumentalists who were chasing the bear. The parade was followed by a community singalong, where parents, staff and students sang a round called 'The instrument song'. Students of different ages were then paired together to participate in activities around the shortlisted books.

Parents participated in different aspects of the celebration and all the staff in the Junior School, including leadership, teachers and support staff, dressed up. Not only do all the staff wear costumes, but they coordinate a theme! This year their costumes were inspired by the shortlisted book *The thing about Christmas*. Some teachers were dressed as reindeer, and others wore terrible Christmas jumpers or a more traditional Claus-themed outfit.

This level of buy-in from all parts of the school community illustrates community connection at its peak.

Inclusion

There are no rules about costumes at St Paul's Book Week celebration. Instead, careful preparation and planning ensure imagination is given a chance to flourish, and store-bought costumes and superhero outfits are minimal. Parents are given a 'heads up' about the theme before the June school holidays. Students are also given time in class to think about their favourite book and how their costume might be constructed. Reducing the last minute pressure over costumes increases opportunities for inclusion. So does expanding the ideas around which stories your costume may come from.

Janelle explains, 'I say to them, if you want to write a story, and dress up as your character in the story that you've written – that's awesome. And we would be happy to put your book in the library too, because it's valuable ... we do have quite a few student-written books in the library with the reference sticker on, which the kids are very proud of.'



Photos courtesy of St Paul's School



Students can even make the costume at school. Each year, Janelle reads a favourite book to students before Book Week. *There's no such book* is about a girl and her mother brainstorming Book Week costume ideas and needing to come up with a story that goes with the costume because there is no such book – yet! After Janelle reads this book, the students make masks. If they wish, they can write the story that goes with their mask and use the mask as their Book Week costume.

Janelle observes, 'Sometimes [wearing the mask they made in class to the parade] is even more special because it actually means that they've transferred what they've done in library to something else.'

Small changes like these, in the way students are taught to think about story and expression, ensure diversity is embraced and inclusion is expanded.

“When people feel connected, included and valued in a space, a sense of belonging can develop. From that foundation, knowledge synthesis and a lifelong love of learning can blossom.”

Belonging

A school library often represents a place in the school that's neutral. It's a space that's not home, work or the classroom. Janelle has fostered just such a 'third space' for students, parents and the community. It's a safe place where both quiet and, at times, boisterous activities can occur. It's also a social place where students and parents can meet and interact.

Janelle says the huge turnout of parents in the morning, reading and playing together, contributes to overall school belonging. She notes, 'I think they get the sense that this is a welcoming

place ... it's that third space ... it's affirming for us to be that safe, special place for [students] and their parents.' Providing a welcoming space in the school that's inclusive and accessible to the whole community is a powerful foundation for creating genuine belonging for everyone.

Synthesis

If the school community were a symphony orchestra, St Paul's Junior School Library would be the music score. It's the place where all the parts for the different instruments – the learning strands – come together.

The library team liaise with the teaching team to link the library with curriculum. During Book Week, they create thematic opportunities, linking curriculum strongly with reading, literature and the library. This year, the library team worked closely with the music faculty to develop activities for 'Symphony of Stories'. In other years, connections with other curriculum areas have been forged. Likewise, community members are encouraged to share their knowledge and experiences, as when a First Nations staff member contributed an Acknowledgement of Country at the Book Week parade, which she tied back to storytelling and traditional knowledge.

Janelle and her team in the library work extremely hard to provide space, time and resources for learners to connect what is learnt in the classroom with their own world view and the perspectives of others. When people feel connected, included and valued in a space, a sense of belonging can develop. From that foundation, knowledge synthesis and a lifelong love of learning can blossom. A symphony of stories, indeed.

Janelle Hamling is the Junior School Teacher Librarian at St Paul's School, Queensland.



Study skills in action: how the school library builds independent learners

Students with strategies for studying are learning more than just how to prepare for a test: they're learning to have agency and be resilient and proactive. Natasha Georgiou explains how her school library approaches developing study skills.

At Kennedy Baptist College, the Research and Study Centre, known as the RASC, is a teaching and learning hub where research, study skills, academic integrity, digital literacy and student wellbeing intersect. Our aim is to help students become confident, independent learners who know not only what to study, but how to study effectively.

The RASC delivers a structured research and study skills program from Year 7 to Year 12. Students are taught how to organise their learning, take and transform notes, summarise information, plan revision, use active recall, prepare for assessments, research effectively and act with academic integrity. This support continues across the secondary years. Year 9 students receive exam preparation sessions; Year 10 students delve further into strategies on how to avoid plagiarism; Years 11 and 12 are supported with exam preparation, study planning and senior school strategies; and Year 11 students complete academic integrity modules covering collusion, paraphrasing, plagiarism scenarios and citations. The RASC also provides individual study skills sessions when requested by teachers, parents, heads of year, counsellors or students themselves.

While the program extends across the whole school, this article focuses on the foundation years: Years 7 and 8. Students in these years are adjusting to new routines, managing multiple subjects and teachers and forming habits that will shape their later learning.

Building the foundation in Year 7

Our study skills program begins in Year 7 with SMARTS: Sevens' Mature Approach to Reasoning Techniques and Study. SMARTS introduces students to core habits and strategies they will return to throughout secondary school, including organisation, note-taking, summarising, growth mindset, study planning, timers, repetition, flashcards, memory tools, test preparation and mind maps.

The purpose of SMARTS is not to turn Year 7 students into expert learners immediately. Rather, it gives them a shared vocabulary and a practical toolkit. Students learn that organisation is a skill, not a personality trait, that study is different from homework, and that effective revision requires more than rereading or highlighting.

This foundation matters because study skills need to be revisited. Students rarely adopt a strategy permanently after just one lesson. In Year 7, we reinforce SMARTS through a practical Earth and Space Science test preparation workshop. Students use

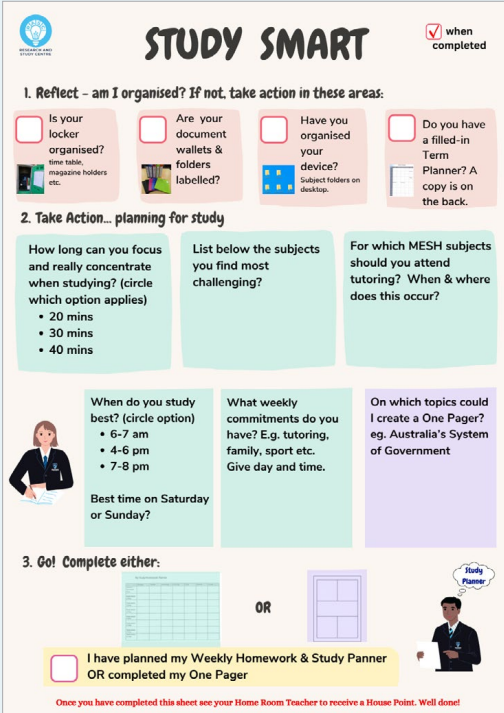
active study strategies such as flashcards, summarising notes and lotus diagrams. We also introduce effective group study, discussing how to work productively with others rather than simply sitting together and becoming distracted. Students practise asking questions, testing recall, explaining concepts aloud and sharing strategies. Practical applications, such as using mini Oreos to represent the phases of the moon, make learning memorable. This gives students a concrete opportunity to apply study strategies to real curriculum content.

Year 8 Study Smart: revisiting, refining and applying

In Year 8, we revisit and extend these ideas through our Study Smart session. Delivered through Homeroom during Pastoral Care Time, the session reaches the whole cohort in a consistent, practical way. Its structure is simple and transferable: Reflect, Take Action and Go To.

The opening hook is deliberately relatable: students imagine it is 9.47 pm and they suddenly remember they have a test the next day, but their notes are missing and their motivation is gone. The aim is to help them 'study smart – not harder, not longer ... just smarter'. Teacher librarians visit every Homeroom, answer questions and reinforce active participation. Students take Cornell notes during the instructional video, and treats are provided for students who produce acceptable notes, reinforcing that note-taking is an active study strategy.





STUDY SMART ✓ when completed

1. Reflect - am I organised? If not, take action in these areas:

☐ Is your locker organised? (time table, magazine holders etc.)

☐ Are your document wallets & folders labelled?

☐ Have you organised your device? (Subject folders on desktop)

☐ Do you have a filled-in Term Planner? A copy is on the back.

2. Take Action... planning for study

How long can you focus and really concentrate when studying? (circle which option applies)

List below the subjects you find most challenging?

For which MESH subjects should you attend tutoring? When & where does this occur?

When do you study best? (circle option)

What weekly commitments do you have? E.g. tutoring, family, sport etc. Give day and time.

On which topics could I create a One Pager? eg. Australia's System of Government

3. Go! Complete either:

☐ I have planned my Weekly Homework & Study Planner

OR

☐ I have completed my One Pager

Once you have completed this sheet see your Home Room Teacher to receive a House Point. Well done!

Key Words	Details
Plan	Have a study planner/diary, plan your study accordingly What is your smartzone? (morning or evening?) Have a calendar in your room to organise extracurricular activity, work, study time and assessment days
Focus	Sit up front pay attention and stay positive! Engage in class activities and discussions
Grit	Optimism = feeling you can change things Pessimism = giving up "One more try, I can do it!" "I'm so bad at this, I'm giving up"
Mindset	Fixed mindset: I'm not a MESH person I'm just not good at it. Growth mindset: I find MESH hard but I'm going to try my best anyways! <u>FAIL → First Attempt In Learning</u>
Best Study Strategies	Self testing - use flashcards + repetition Study distribution - Quizlet / Study apps <u>Handwrite your study</u> - Regularly revise
Distractions	Music, Notifications, Phone Use white noise
Energy	Get 8-10 hours of sleep every night
Summary	
Plan and organise your study times in to your schedule and have a positive mindset when approaching your studies.	

(Left) Yr 8 Study Smart Student Checklist; (right) Cornell notetaking example

In the Reflect stage, students consider their organisation. Is their study zone at home working well? Are devices, noise or shared spaces affecting concentration? Are folders, document wallets, device files and lockers labelled and organised? The worksheet turns reflection into action by prompting students to update their term planner, organise subject folders or tidy their locker.

In Take Action, students focus on planning. They revisit the idea that their diary is a 'power tool' because it contains term planners for deadlines and weekly planners for homework and study. They clarify that homework is set by a teacher and has a due date, while study includes reviewing notes, writing summaries, practising, memorising and preparing for assessments.

Students then plan realistically. The worksheet asks when they study best, what commitments they already have, which subjects they find challenging, which MESH subjects they may need tutoring for, and how long they can genuinely focus. The model weekly planner breaks homework and study into manageable blocks, mostly around 30 minutes, with short brain breaks.

In Go To, students match study strategies to learning needs. Facts, terms and keywords suit flashcards and Cornell notes. Processes, events and topic overviews suit mind maps, lotus diagrams, one-pagers and summaries. Information in a specific order can be supported by mnemonics such as acronyms, acrostics, rhymes and songs. For focus and procrastination, students are reminded to set a purpose and then use a timer.

The session also introduces retrieval practice through a simple brain dump: students write or draw everything they can remember about a topic without using notes, then check what they missed. Another key strategy is the one-pager, where students present key information on a single page using words, images, colour, symbols, mnemonics and graphic organisers. The process is modelled: choose a topic, select key points,

choose or design a graphic organiser, create the page, then enhance it with extra information in the border.

At the end of the session, students complete the Study Smart handout and then choose a practical task: either completing a weekly homework and study planner or creating a one-pager. Students who successfully complete the handout are awarded a House point, adding motivation and accountability. Most importantly, students are not simply told about study strategies; they use one before the session ends.

The library as a study skills partner

The success of this program relies on collaboration. The RASC works with teachers, pastoral care staff, Heads of Year, parents and students to ensure that research and study skills are not isolated from classroom learning. What makes the library well placed to lead this work is its whole-school reach. Teacher librarians can notice patterns, respond flexibly and provide continuity.

Ultimately, study skills are part of learning how to learn. When school libraries teach these skills explicitly and repeatedly, they help students build confidence, independence and resilience. Effective study is not magic. It is a set of strategies that can be learnt, practised and improved.



Natasha Georgiou
Head of Research and Study
Kennedy Baptist College, WA

Head of Research and Study at Kennedy Baptist College, Perth. Over 20 years of experience in school libraries across educational sectors. Currently President of the WA School Library Association (WASLA).



New websites and apps

Download the entire collection of records for these digital resources, plus a few more, which you can upload directly into your library management system. Select 'Connections Term 4 2026' and click on the Download button.

Diversity in children's books

Type: podcast	SCIS ID: 5572109
Audience: parents, school staff	
URL: betterreading.com.au/podcast/dont-miss-our-6-part-podcast-series-a-conversation-about-diversity-in-childrens-books	
This is a six-part series for parents, teachers and writers, produced by Better Reading aided by a Copyright Agency Cultural Fund grant. Six Australian guests speak about the importance of diversity in children's books and their experiences of the publishing scene.	

State Library of Victoria: bibliotherapy podcasts for kids

Type: podcast	SCIS ID: 5572091
Audience: students	
URL: slv.vic.gov.au/bibliotherapy-kids	
These audio bibliotherapy sessions introduce children to the healing and nurturing power of literature. Using texts as an invitation to reflect on our own self-concept and perspective, practising bibliotherapist Susan McLaine hosts two episodes, one for 7- to 9-year-olds and one for 10- to 12-year-olds.	

For the love of libraries

Type: podcast	SCIS ID: 5572102
Audience: school staff	
URL: shows.acast.com/for-the-love-of-libraries-an-alia-schools-podcast/episodes/understanding-australian-readers-with-anna-burkey	
This ALIA schools podcast for school library staff covers a range of topics suitable for everyone from newcomers to experienced library staff and even school leadership. The podcast shares stories, resources and practical tips on school library issues, from staffing to reading and advocacy.	

Bibliotherapy Australia

Type: website	SCIS ID: 5572079
Audience: school staff	
URL: bibliotherapyaustralia.com/home	
Dr Susan McLaine is the founder of Bibliotherapy Australia and the developer of Heart-Centred Bibliotherapy, which focuses on how stories are offered and how reflective reading experiences are held by the reader. This website offers resources such as reading lists and the podcast 'Story Aloud' which is a calm and meditative collection of stories written and read by Dr McLaine.	

Orygen

Type: website	SCIS ID: 1832866
Audience: school staff	
URL: orygen.org.au	
The Orygen organisation researches, advocates and educates on youth mental health. The website includes research and also has some excellent resources, including reading, PDF fact sheets and toolkits about topics relating to youth mental health.	

Student Wellbeing Hub

Type: website	SCIS ID: 1785402
Audience: school staff, students, parents	
URL: studentwellbeinghub.edu.au	
Informed by the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework, the Student Wellbeing Hub provides information and resources for students, teachers and parents to assist them to create and maintain a safe and welcoming school environment. It is guided by the National Safe Schools Framework, with resources aligned to the Australian Curriculum. The Student Wellbeing Hub has been developed by Education Services Australia for the Australian Government Department of Education and Training.	



The Educational Lending Right (ELR) school library survey is upon us!



Shall I compare thee to a royalty?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
High royalties we cannot always see,
But lending rights we all can celebrate.

– Charlotte Barkla

The heart of the ELR program is to support our Australian creators, who work tirelessly to produce quality, engaging content for young people.

The 2026–27 Educational Lending Right (ELR) school library survey is currently taking place across schools all over Australia. If your school receives an invite to participate, please follow the instructions and complete the survey. It is a simple, safe, easy process that only takes 5 to 10 minutes. Once we receive the book count data, our team will process and collate it to provide Office for the Arts with calculations of how many specific Australian book titles are on the shelf across school libraries. Authors and publishers are then compensated for the free use of their work in schools.

Why should schools support ELR?

Authors should be properly remunerated for their work and intellectual property – it's important that school libraries continue to purchase Australian books and support Australian writers so that students can see themselves and their stories reflected in what they have available to read at school. This in turn means that authors will continue to be able to produce quality literature for our Australian market.



– Jacqueline Harvey

What did the school library space mean to you as a child?

The school library was the only place I was truly happy at all of the schools I attended. My libraries had librarians. They were the sort that read books rather than worried about cataloguing. They knew kids like me, and they talked to us as readers rather than as representatives of age groups. Some of the most wonderful moments and discussions of my school life were with librarians ... libraries were warm, safe, comfortable places, where you could open books which were doors into other worlds.



– Isabelle Carmody

Why is it important that children read, especially in a digital age?

Reading gives us empathy for others, cultivates our imagination and offers us new ways of thinking about the world. These are not gifts to be squandered lightly in the digital age, where content is prized over creativity. We need the kindness, imagination and discernment of today's children to lead us into the future – and children reading will give us all of that and more.

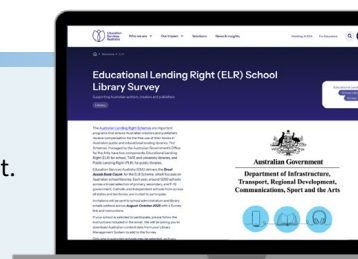


– Karen Comer

The ELR survey comes together due to generous industry collaboration, and we thank all our authors, creators, publishers, library vendors, literary organisations, Government bodies (including Office for the Arts) and of course school library staff for their participation and support.

Stay tuned for the term one edition of *Connections* next year, where we will share some of the survey findings. Please send any feedback on the ELR Survey to elr@esa.edu.au

Samantha Bound | Author and Engagement Coordinator | Digital Services | Education Services Australia (ESA)





You're not alone: professional support for school library staff

Jessica Finden shares resources and ideas for support and connection for teacher librarians, especially those working solo.

Working in a school library can be incredibly rewarding, but it can also feel isolating – particularly when you are running the library on your own. Many library staff manage everything from collection development and cataloguing to reader advisory, displays and events, often with limited time and support. For those new to the role, or for staff without formal library qualifications, the learning curve can feel especially steep. It is easy to wonder where to start or who to ask. The reassuring reality is that school library staff are not alone. There is a wide range of professional support available – much of it accessible, practical and not always directly tied to classroom teaching.

Some of the most helpful starting points are organisations and websites that focus on children's and young adult literature. These following resources support collection development, reader advisory, and staying up to date with new releases:

- [Children's Book Council of Australia](#) – award lists, notable books, author information and reading promotion resources
- [Your Kid's Next Read](#) – curated recommendations and themed reading lists
- [Kids' Book Review](#) – reviews and new release highlights
- Publisher newsletters and education catalogues – teacher notes, curated lists and information about upcoming releases.

Alongside these formal resources, social media has become an increasingly valuable source of informal professional learning. Many school libraries and teacher librarians share ideas that can be adapted for different contexts. Social media can provide:

- display and signage inspiration
- reading promotion ideas
- program and event examples
- collection development suggestions
- technology tips and tools
- connections with other school libraries.

While online resources are helpful, connecting with other library staff can provide deeper and more personalised support. Local school library networks offer opportunities to meet colleagues working in similar contexts and share practical advice. These networks often provide opportunities to:

- share programming and display ideas
- discuss collection development
- troubleshoot systems and processes
- ask questions in a supportive environment
- exchange policies and documentation
- connect with staff in similar contexts.

Another valuable connection is your local book shop or public library. Book store and public library staff are experienced in reader advisory, programming and collection development, and many are eager to collaborate with school libraries. Partnerships with book shops or public libraries may include:

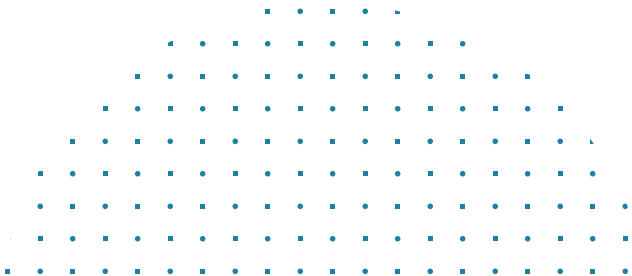
- class visits and membership drives
- shared reading promotions
- author events and visits
- reader advisory support
- recommendations for emerging titles
- support for reluctant or diverse readers
- community literacy initiatives.

Online communities extend these professional connections even further. Groups such as [OZTL_net](#) and [Queensland Teacher Librarians Listserv \(QLDTL\)](#) allow library professionals to seek advice, share resources and learn from colleagues across the country. These networks are particularly valuable for those new to the role, offering access to experienced practitioners and a supportive space to ask questions. They can also lead to informal mentoring relationships, where more experienced staff provide guidance and reassurance.

Professional reading provides another accessible pathway for building knowledge and confidence. Publications such as:

- [SCIS Connections](#) – practical articles and school library case studies
- [School Library Association of Victoria Synergy](#) – professional reflection and examples from school libraries
- [Australian Library and Information Association \(ALIA\)](#) – broader library sector insights and professional resources.

These publications highlight innovative programs, collection development strategies and emerging trends, allowing library staff to learn from colleagues in a variety of contexts.



Library management system providers and library vendors can also be an important source of support, particularly for those working independently. Many offer training materials, webinars, help documentation and customer support to assist with cataloguing, reporting and collection management. Vendors may also provide curated lists, standing order options and collection development advice. While these services are often used for practical tasks, they can also support professional growth and confidence, particularly when navigating unfamiliar systems.

Professional development events offer opportunities to take this learning even further. Conferences such as the National Education Summit, including the Capacity Building School Libraries conference, provide targeted sessions designed specifically for school library staff. State-based conferences, such as those hosted by the Queensland School Library Association, also create opportunities to hear from practitioners, explore new ideas and connect with others working in similar roles. These events combine practical workshops with valuable networking opportunities, helping attendees return to their libraries with both inspiration and practical strategies.

For those looking to further develop their knowledge, undertaking formal study in teacher librarianship, information management or library studies can be another meaningful pathway. Further study builds confidence, deepens professional

understanding and creates opportunities to connect with others who are also developing their skills. These shared learning experiences often lead to lasting professional relationships that continue to provide support well beyond the course itself.

Working in a school library does not mean working in isolation. Whether through literature-focused organisations, review platforms, publishers, public library partnerships, professional networks, publications, conferences, vendors or further study, there are many ways to connect and grow. These opportunities offer more than ideas – they provide encouragement, shared expertise and reassurance. No matter your experience level, qualifications or context, there is a strong and supportive professional community ready to help.



Jessica Finden
Teacher Librarian
Carmel College, QLD

Invest in your School Library with ALIA

Did you know that the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) has a low-cost institutional membership for libraries with 4 or fewer staff?



For just \$500 a year, school library staff can access:

- free member exclusive resources
- free professional learning events
- discounted rates for conferences
- discounted rates for library training
- a national network of library and information professionals
- regional and special interest groups

This is the perfect value add for solo or small library staff to stay professionally connected, develop skills and knowledge to stay informed and innovative, to be equipped with the necessary tools, resources and support needed for effective practice.



Australian Library and
Information Association



The case for the AI-free classroom

In this piece, adapted from her [original substack post](#), Lily Abadal advocates for protecting AI-free spaces

The two most common arguments I hear about integrating AI into the classroom go something like this:

1. Not teaching students how to use AI may leave them at a disadvantage in the future job market. Companies are expecting their entry-level employees to know how to leverage it. As a result, we have a responsibility to teach it.
2. AI is not going anywhere. Students are already using it. We can't teach as though they aren't.

It might be the case that AI proficiency is needed in the future of work. It might also be the case that our students will use both agentic and generative AI daily. In this essay I'll grant both of these points. Even so, I will argue that some classrooms should remain free of AI integration.

In fact, the two arguments above make it all the more important to preserve some AI-free spaces. Schools should intentionally protect places where students can practise organic thought – free from the constant influence of the technologies that increasingly mediate the rest of their lives. In what follows I'll make a case for why – a case that has absolutely nothing to do with cheating.

1. We should mitigate AI co-dependency

Knowing how to use a tool is different from using it for everything. It can be the case that a student needs to learn proficiency with a tool to perform certain tasks. This does not mean the tool must be integrated into all, most, or even a majority of their academic work.

Advocates who push for that are not pushing for deeper learning. They are pushing – often unintentionally – for systematic AI co-dependency.

This entails fostering an environment where students become so wedded to AI tools (either through intentional integration

or simple negligence) that they immediately reach for their phones to think through something with Claude or ChatGPT.

Sadly, this is already the case for many of our students.

- Discussion questions in small groups? Students are feeding it into their favourite LLM before even attempting to read the questions themselves.
- Problem with a friend? Run it by AI.
- Difficult email? Run it by AI.
- Social media caption? Run it by AI.

These are the little tasks that make up our lives. If we give all of this away, we slowly give away our capacity for judgment because we are no longer capable of sitting with the discomfort that comes with a small roadblock or a moment of unclarity.

The wisdom needed to make good decisions requires practice: reasoning through situations, exercising moral imagination, and discerning how principles apply in concrete circumstances. If students outsource the early stages of reasoning to AI, they never build the mental muscles required for judgment.

“The classroom should be the place where questions come alive because students have the space to pursue them.”

None of these capacities can develop if we continually outsource opportunities to brainstorm, to wrestle with the unique context a situation calls for, or to discern how a principle ought to be applied. AI will be called upon for all of it if we aren't careful about enforcing some limits.

We owe it to our students to let them know:

- You can think through hard things.
- You can form your own thoughts.
- You don't need an immediate answer.
- You don't need a polished answer. The only thing you need is your answer.

How do we give that message weight? How do we back it up? We give them the space to do it. We don't simply tell students to think for themselves and then send them home where their agency is effectively thwarted – to an environment where everything nudges them to outsource that thinking.

In other words, our classrooms should be spaces that help students resist the co-dependency that big tech desperately hopes they develop.



2. Classrooms should be retreats for slowness

Think about the conditions that allowed for your deepest insights.

Did they include a TV blasting? A frantic dash before some deadline? The latest tweet from an influencer? The blatant sycophancy of your favourite chatbot?

No? I'm shocked.

When we have the time and the space to question, reflect and stop – just to stop and listen – these are the conditions under which our souls come alive with curiosity and intrigue.

Learning has an ecology. Certain environments nurture attention, curiosity and intellectual courage. Others erode them. If students should be afforded one place where they can stop, question and reflect, it should be the classroom. We should give them intentionally crafted time for stopping and thinking.

“They [AI tutors] offer the allure of intellectual progress without the discomfort that genuine inquiry often requires.”

The classroom should be the place where questions come alive because students have the space to pursue them. Where they spend afternoons in conversation teasing out ideas. Where they stop the clicking and scrolling and beeping, listen to words spoken by other humans, and respond with words of their own.

Why does this require resisting the integration of AI into every learning activity?

Because AI encourages the exact opposite moral tempo. It is the natural extension of our convenience culture: learning is not valued as a search for truth but as a process judged by outputs. It must be measured. It must be quantified. It must produce – preferably immediately. LLMs, for example, promise faster production. AI tutors promise frictionless learning and efficient measurement of each learner's precise needs so their learning gaps can be closed ever more quickly. They offer the allure of intellectual progress without the discomfort that genuine inquiry often requires.

And the lack of friction is precisely what modern people have come to equate with the good life.

It is not. And why are we even rushing?

3. We should teach and model critical engagement with AI

Critical thinking means asking good questions. Demanding compelling reasons. Challenging weak evidence. Exercising sound judgment.

Teachers modelling critical engagement with AI are asking:

- Does AI support actually deepen learning?
- Are students strong enough to resist outsourcing their thinking outside the classroom?

- Is it wise to integrate AI into every cognitive task when the creators of these tools have powerful incentives to maximise dependency?

Like all questions worth asking these deserve rigorous debate. But debate requires spaces where the technology itself is not already taken for granted – spaces where it is not merely accepted as normative.

AI-free classrooms keep these questions alive in real, tangible ways. They model something increasingly rare in a technological culture: the willingness to pause, to question and to critically examine the tools that promise to solve our problems.



Case closed

An AI-free classroom is not a rejection of technology.

Though AI may shape the future of work, it does not merit our total surrender. We should remain committed to forming human beings who are capable of thinking without it. Moreover, we want to form people who can question the designs that are sold as necessary, the motives that are sold as genuine, and the structures that are sold as inevitable and beyond our control. They are not always necessary, not always genuine, and most certainly not inevitable.

AI-free classrooms help our students step back and have the courage to do something about their answers.

Images from wisdominthemachineage.substack.com.



Lily M Abadal

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Dr Lily Abadal specialises in ethics, moral psychology and philosophy of education. Her research and work sit at the intersection of AI ethics and character formation. You can read more of her work at wisdominthemachineage.substack.com

The Last Word

This regular column brings you school library news, research, and resources to add to your professional reading list.

Read the whole lot.



- ☒ Devour the latest Connections
- ☐ Coffee
- ☐ Further reading – The Last Word

The Story Dogs reading program

Story dogs. 2026

I ♥ BOOKS

Dr Margaret Merga on how school libraries can support student wellbeing

Merga, M. 2020



The IB guide to an 'ideal' school library

International Baccalaureate. 2018

Charlotte Webber explores practices in school libraries in Scotland

Webber, C. et al. 2025

Lyric Grimes on trauma informed care and library spaces

Grimes, L. 2025

Danielle Raffaele's Australian perspective on wellbeing in school libraries

Raffaele, D. 2021



School libraries and wellbeing reading from SLA UK

SLA UK 2024

A student's perspective on school libraries as third spaces

Baksh, S. 2025

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