

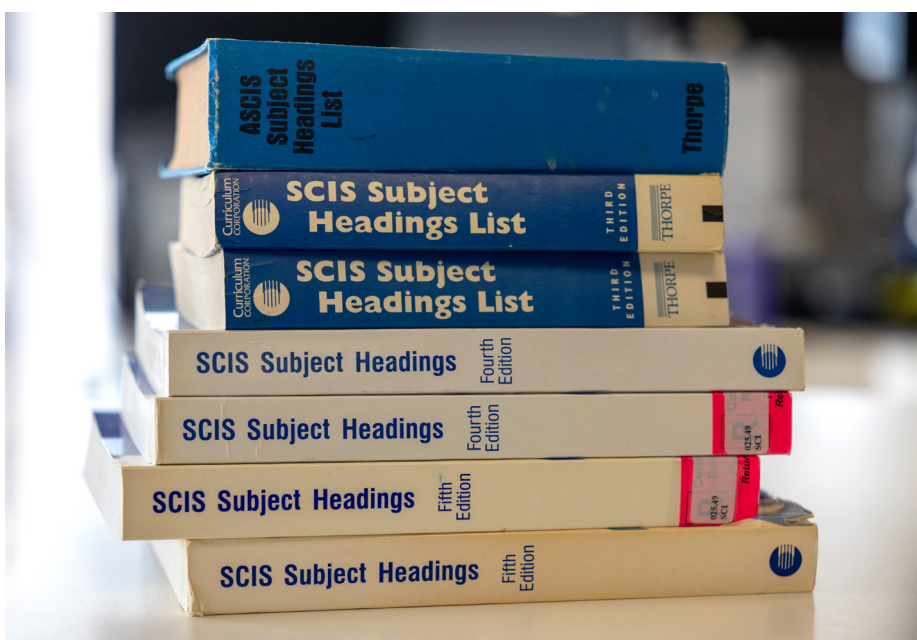
# CONNECTIONS

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AVAILABLE ON SCISDATA.COM/CONNECTIONS

## Charting a course for inclusive cataloguing



**During National Reconciliation Week 2025,** Australians were asked to reflect on how the past shapes the future under the theme Bridging Now to Next. It was a call to step forward together, drawing on lessons learnt to continue the work of reconciliation.

It was a positive call that many across the country embraced. Yet, as the week drew to a close, it was clear that the work of reconciliation was far from complete. Reconciliation requires an ongoing commitment to moving forward together, even when the path seems steep and progress uneven.

For the SCIS team, addressing injustice and striving for an inclusive future is a commitment we make within and beyond Australia's borders. Our catalogue records are downloaded and used by school libraries around the world, which makes it essential

that our actions reflect respect for diverse cultures, viewpoints and histories worldwide.

### **The power of words on the path to inclusion**

In the ongoing journey of respect and inclusivity, the role of language cannot be understated. Patrick Rothfuss (2007) writes, 'As names have power, words have power. Words can light fires in the minds of men. Words can wring tears from the hardest hearts.' In the realm of school libraries, words do more than convey information. They define, they label, they categorise. They can either affirm or diminish, include or exclude.

Every entry in a library catalogue serves a dual purpose. It both describes resources and identifies related people,

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### Connections

A quarterly magazine by SCIS  
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## Missed our most recent webinars? Catch up whenever you like



Stay up to date with our latest product training webinars. Our webinar recordings are available anytime, so you can watch at your own pace and revisit key topics whenever you need.

## Free Professional Learning Webinars – Term 3 2025

### Discovering new ways SCIS can support your library

Tuesday 29 July | 2 pm AEST



This webinar explores some of the lesser-known features of the SCIS website that can help school library staff work more efficiently and with greater confidence. Topics include downloading records, using advanced search functions, creating and sharing lists, browsing subject headings, and accessing SCIS professional learning resources.

### Ready, settings, go! Optimise your SCIS account setup

Tuesday 12 August | 2 pm AEST



This practical session guides SCIS subscribers through the key account settings in SCIS Data, helping ensure you're making the most of your subscription. Topics include how to access and update account details, manage communication preferences, and understand how to use features like saved lists, download requests and cataloguing requests.

Participants are encouraged to follow along using their own SCIS Data account. Contact [help@scisdata.com](mailto:help@scisdata.com) if you need assistance accessing your login.

## Find out more and register now

[www.scisdata.com/free-scis-webinars](http://www.scisdata.com/free-scis-webinars) | [help@scisdata.com](mailto:help@scisdata.com)

groups and languages. In these acts of naming and describing lies the kind of power Rothfuss evokes, the ability to ignite understanding or extinguish it, to honour or to overlook.

“At SCIS, we recognise the power of words and are re-examining our data to foster cultural respect through its language.”

### Turning words into actions

At SCIS, we recognise the power of words and are re-examining our data to foster cultural respect through its language. The first stages of this have been shaped by our parent company, ESA's, [Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan \(RAP\)](#). This involves aligning our cataloguing practices and language use with the principles of reconciliation and cultural respect within Australia by enhancing SCIS data through respectful, culturally appropriate subject headings, descriptive cataloguing, and data presentation.

We view this work as an ongoing practice rather than a finite project. It's a commitment to always examine our records, our subject headings, and all our practices through the lens of inclusion and cultural sensitivity. This practice is guided by a set of core objectives:

- Cataloguing an inclusive range of materials.
- Managing standards and data to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Indigenous peoples internationally, and all equity-deserving groups are represented accurately and respectfully.
- Supporting schools as they review their own collections, offering guidance on how to identify and address language that may perpetuate harm or exclusion.

- Engaging in ongoing review and consultation, seeking input from representatives of equity-deserving groups on how SCIS can strengthen its practices and where further change is needed.

Our reconciliation work is about small, deliberate steps. Each step is a choice to use language with care and to honour the histories and identities behind every record.

### Actions underway

The work of cultivating respect through language is already well underway. Our process involves identifying where language can be more inclusive, where records can be more accurate, and where terminology can better reflect contemporary understandings.

It began with building relationships with First Nations peoples and publishers and seeking guidance on how to respectfully represent diverse voices within catalogue records. From there, we turned our attention to our Subject Headings List (SCISSHL), where terminology has been updated to remove outdated or offensive language:

- 'Discovery and exploration' has been changed to 'Exploration', a shift that moves away from colonial framing.
- Terms like 'Asperger's syndrome', 'Cretinism' and 'Dwarfism' have been removed, replaced by more current and inclusive language.
- 'Brothers and sisters' is now simply 'Siblings'.
- 'Aboriginal peoples – Dreaming' has been separated into 'Dreaming (Religion)' and 'Dreamtime stories' to provide greater clarity and respect.

Beyond individual subject headings, the key change SCIS has made is to align our terminology to conform with [AustLang](#) standards, the national database of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and peoples, ensuring accurate and respectful representation of these.

Alongside this, we've revised our cataloguing standards to allow for inclusion of both Indigenous and common place names in the Place of publication element. Now, records can include names such as Naarm Melbourne or Gadigal Country Sydney, which recognise both the traditional and commonly used names for places.

We've also been using articles in our publications, *Connections* school library journal and the SCIS Blog, to guide library staff in creating more inclusive and culturally respectful collections. These articles include

practical advice on supporting minority groups and neurodiverse students and explore how library practices can shape collections that reflect diverse voices and promote inclusivity. See the end of the article for a selection of resources.

### Actions ahead

The next phase of SCIS's work centres on the inclusion of [Ngā upoko tukutuku/Māori Subject Headings](#) in SCIS records.

In response to requests from New Zealand school library staff, SCIS surveyed library staff in 2024 to explore how Māori subject headings could enrich catalogue records and support more inclusive collections, particularly in bilingual and immersion settings. With more schools in New Zealand incorporating [Te Reo Māori into their curricula](#), survey responses indicated that Māori headings were seen as vital to reflecting the cultural context of students and promoting greater inclusion.

Respondents noted how the inclusion of Māori subject headings could:

- honour Tiriti o Waitangi, the founding document of New Zealand that guides the relationship between Māori and the government, promoting partnership, participation and protection
- give students more opportunities to encounter and engage with Te Reo Māori in everyday library use
- help Māori students feel recognised, included and seen in library spaces
- provide a search tool that reflects the cultural context of students in full immersion programs, where instruction is delivered entirely in Te Reo Māori
- create stronger connections between knowledge and culture, help to bridge gaps and support learning through a Te Ao Māori lens, a worldview that encompasses Māori perspectives, values, and connections to land, ancestors and community.

As a result, SCIS is now working on a project to incorporate Ngā upoko tukutuku/Māori Subject Headings into SCIS records for resources that are by or about Māori.

### Actions emerging

As SCIS continues to evolve, so too does our commitment to fostering inclusion and respect in cataloguing practices. While progress has been made, the work is ongoing, and the next steps are focused on refining and expanding our approach to cultural representation across SCIS records.



- SCIS is investigating how non-Roman scripts can be incorporated into our records, allowing for greater inclusivity for languages with writing systems beyond the Latin alphabet.
- SCIS is also considering the introduction of warning notes for content that may be sensitive to specific groups. This would help users navigate collections with greater awareness and respect for cultural contexts, particularly when resources relate to marginalised communities.
- We are also reviewing headings that represent different cultural groups within countries to avoid overgeneralisation

or colonial framing and better reflect modern, nuanced understandings of identity and cultural diversity.

### Actions you can influence

A link is being added to records in SCIS data, enabling SCIS customers to immediately flag concerns with a record, including potential harmful and disrespectful cataloguing practices as well as errors or enhancements. As we move forward, customer feedback will play a vital role in refining and expanding our practices to better serve the needs of diverse communities globally. We'd love to hear from you on how we can continue enhancing SCIS data to cultivate respect and bridge the now

to the next. Email [help@scisdata.com](mailto:help@scisdata.com) with your feedback or suggestions for a more inclusive cataloguing approach.



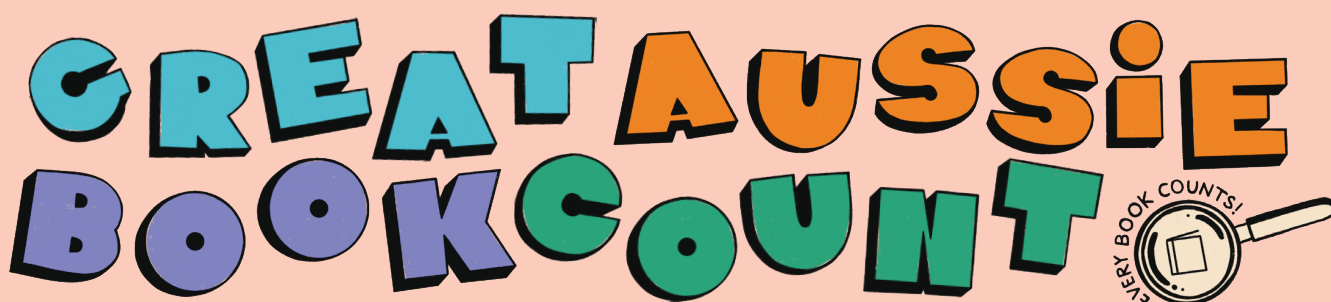
See online article for reference list of further reading on this topic.

### References

Rothfuss, P. (2007). *The name of the wind*. New York: DAW Books.

**The Schools Catalogue Information Service (SCIS)**

## Get ready to count ...



Well, not exactly time to count, but it is almost time for the **2025 Educational Lending Right (ELR) School Library Survey**.

Each year, the Australian Government's Office for the Arts collects up-to-date library book count data to ensure Australian creators and publishers receive compensation for the free use of their books in school libraries. Education Services Australia (ESA) assists the government by collecting this data from Australian schools.

“...the more you support authors the more access you give to young people to have your books, especially those who otherwise can't afford them.”

– Alice Pung, Author

Remember that ELR is simply a great Aussie book count, showing how many specific Aussie book titles you have in your library.

If your school library is selected to participate, you'll receive an email from [ELR@esa.edu.au](mailto:ELR@esa.edu.au). Invitations are sent to both the library and general school email addresses. Your invitation will include a supporting letter from the Australian Government's Office for the Arts, details of the permission provided by your governing jurisdiction, and important details on how to complete the survey.

It should only take you 5 to 10 minutes to complete the survey, as most of the process is automated by your library management system. It's a quick and simple process that makes such a big difference to Australian book creators.

Further information about the ELR School Library Survey can be found on the [ESA website](https://www.esa.gov.au). Details on how the survey

“ PLR (Public Lending Right) and ELR are vitally important, so it's important that school library staff participate in the ELR survey so that authors and publishers can get what they deserve. ”

– Gabrielle Wang, Author,  
2022–2023 Australian Children's Laureate

supports book creators are available from the [Australian Lending Right Schemes](https://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/special/ELR/) website.

The count begins in September. Help us support Australian book creators so they can continue to do what they do best – make great books!

# SCIS is more

## Wominjeka, kia ora or welcome to Connections, issue 134, in whatever language you relate to.

I can't speak for everyone but personally Term 2 passed by in a blur of speeding light and sound, and then just like that, we are into Term 3 and on the home straight for 2025. Term 2 has been extremely busy for us as we attended five conferences, completed the 2025 SCIS customer survey and started the SCIS Data discovery project.

### SCIS on the road in Term 2

Over the past couple of months, the SCIS bus\* has travelled far and wide across Australia, as well as venturing to the UK, engaging with our customers.

Our travels started in Canberra for the **Teacher Librarian Professional Learning Community** conference, in mid-May. The conference theme was Capitalising on non-fiction in a digital age. SCIS's Cataloguing Team Lead, Ceinwen Jones, represented SCIS and presented our [non-fiction digital collections](#).

Did you know that SCIS cataloguers curate collections of digital resources that can be downloaded from [scisdata.com/collections](#)? If you would like to learn more you can read our [Connections article in issue 129](#) or watch our free webinar recording: [Free digital collection in SCIS](#).

The SCIS team then took the relatively short drive down the Princes Hwy from Melbourne to the GMHBA Stadium in Geelong for the biennial **Australian School Library Association (ASLA)** conference. For Australian rules fans, particularly those who barrack for the (small) cats (that is, not the Tigers), having a conference at a Geelong stadium was a bonus.

The beautiful and informative Welcome to Country by Wadawurrung man Ashleigh Skinner set the scene for the sharing knowledge, culture and ideas. The conference theme was Energise/Empower/Explore, which was exemplified by Geelong Grammar School Principal Rebecca Cody. Her inspirational opening keynote was an authentic and honest account of her values and her journey to her current role.

Sometimes when the bar is set so high at the beginning of an event, it can be hard for those following to live up to the standard set but this wasn't the case. Every session and presentation was engaging and interesting.

The conference also saw the 2025 library professionals award winners named, and congratulations must go to Claire Elliott, School Library Professional of the Year; Marianne Grasso, Library Advocate; and Diana Brien, Early Career Teacher Librarian, all of whom exemplify all the wonderful qualities required to inspire learners and school communities.

Directly following ASLA, SCIS headed to the leafy north-west of Sydney to the **Australian Christian school library network** conference at the Mary MacKillop Spirituality Ministry Centre. SCIS hadn't previously attended this conference but it proved to be another wonderful opportunity to connect about all things school library and SCIS.

SCIS's Program Director (Product, Data and Insights) Colin McNeil attended the **School Library Association (UK)** weekend course in Northampton in England. The theme of the conference was Breaking Barriers: Freedom to Learn.

The conference was a fantastic opportunity to meet with some of our 1000+ customers in the UK and learn more about how we can better support them, and cataloguing needs specific to the UK. Thanks to AccessIt for welcoming SCIS to share their stand and highlight what SCIS offers our joint subscribers.

The final conference we attended in Term 2 was the **School Library Association of South Australia**. I didn't think that the opening of the ASLA conference could be outdone but Minister for Education, Training and Skills of South Australia, Blair Boyer, managed this. He recognised the essential work that school library staff do supporting better outcomes for students. He also expressed the connection between digital literate students and the fight against mis- and dis-information, and how well-trained school library staff are essential for addressing this. It will be interesting to see if he and the department are open to funding training for school library staff and ensuring that school libraries in South Australian government schools have trained library staff.

As well as a wonderful opening address the conference included engaging presentations and workshops, lively discussion and many opportunities to engage with school library staff engage with school

library staff, many of whom have come to libraries from very different backgrounds.

SCIS looks forward to discussing how our services deliver efficiencies which free up time for library staff for student-facing activities, provide access to additional digital contents and support better student outcomes, with school library staff at conferences in Term 3.

### SCIS 2025 customer survey

Thank you to the 1,101 SCIS customers who completed the 2025 SCIS customer survey. We appreciate you taking the time to share your feedback on what SCIS does well and how we can further support school libraries to deliver better outcomes for students and school colleagues in the future.

One quick top-line statistic from the survey, SCIS's net promoter score\*\* has risen from 63.1 in 2024 to 65.3 in 2025. This tells us that you appreciate the improvements that we're making to SCIS, although we won't be resting on our laurels.

In the Term 4 edition of *Connections*, we'll provide more insights from the feedback we received in the survey and how we'll be using this as part of our discovery process.

### SCIS discovery process

Towards the end of Term 2, we started an exciting project which will see major improvements to how SCIS delivers our services and how users interact with SCIS. data.com. Some of our discovery process will be based on what you have told us through our last two customer surveys but we will also be engaging with customers throughout.

We thank all customers and partners for their input into this process. It will be extremely exciting to see the results of this work and sharing this with you in the future.

We look forward to working with you in Term 3 and catching up at even more conferences. Thank you for being part of the SCIS community, and we hope you enjoy this issue of *Connections*.



**Anthony Shaw**  
Product Manager, SCIS

\* There is no SCIS bus.

\*\* Net promoter score is a measure of how likely a respondent is likely to recommend your service to a colleague or peer.

# PUTTING THE ALIA CODE OF ETHICS INTO PRACTICE IN SCHOOL LIBRARIES

SCIS has long supported ALIA and its work. With the release of the new ALIA Code of Ethics, ALIA Schools has created a template to help school library staff apply the code in their own settings. This article looks at how the template can support daily decisions, advocacy and reflection.

**Have you ever actively sought out resources** to support a specific student's interest or identity? Or discussed copyright issues with a colleague? Do you champion reading for enjoyment? Perhaps you've taken action to ensure that student and staff information is protected on your library management system or created a feedback survey for your school library. These are examples of behaviours that occur every day in school libraries around Australia, yet they are all part of something much bigger. As people who work in libraries, we are part of a huge global library family, all united by the ethics and values that form the basis of the trust granted by the communities we serve. Since 2012, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) has had the [Code of Ethics for Librarians and Other Information Workers](#), which provides a reference for professional conduct. In 2024, the Australian Library and Information Service (ALIA) used to IFLA code as a basis for development of its [ALIA Code of Ethics for the Australian Library and Information Services Workforce](#). The ALIA code has been developed for the Australian context, including language and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priorities and responsibilities

that are specific to Australia and its communities.

One of ALIA's many wonderful special interest groups, [ALIA Schools](#), has recently undergone a restructure to include project working groups. Through this initiative they have created an amazing tool so school library staff can customise action examples in the ALIA Code of Ethics for their school library. The [Template for school libraries](#) is a document designed to bring school libraries into the spotlight and support school library staff in feeling connected to the wider library and information workforce.

## Use the template to guide professional conduct and policy

At a time where responsibilities can be uncertain, having a Code of Ethics can help you to articulate to others the principles that sit at the centre of your professional practice and identity. It gives you the words to talk about your role, to advocate for yourself, and clarify what you as a qualified information professional bring to the library role.

The Code of Ethics is a tool for professional growth and reflection. Reading through the action examples that ALIA

## Ethical decisions get made in the school library every minute of every day

### Students

How you respond to students; curriculum decisions.



### Collections

The choices you make and actions you undertake in creating, describing, storing and providing access to collections.



### Colleagues

How you work with teachers, staff and leadership; professional learning.



### The information world

Your proactive engagement with the way information is created, disseminated and consumed.



### Community

How you engage with your school community and wider networks.



### Governing body

How you work with and represent the ethos of your school.

Schools has provided in the document, you can evaluate what you are already doing well and where there might be areas for improvement. Where might you need to seek additional training? Perhaps the action examples might spark new ideas for programs and services for you!

Where a Code of Ethics is most important, though, is when it comes to day-to-day decision-making. It's a guiding star when it comes to our professional conduct and forming library policies as it helps to answer the question, 'What should I do in this circumstance?'

### Clear articulation of the educational role of school libraries

Decision-making is all around us in the school library and one of the great things about engaging with the ALIA Schools Code of Ethics template is that it elevates us professionally by reminding us of the core tenets of our profession. Strong and respectful relationships are our bedrock in challenging times and awareness of the code has the potential to shift culture by informing how we respond to students and interact with colleagues; what we choose to prioritise in the library curriculum; and how we engage with the school community.

The ethical decisions we make around collections, cataloguing and access are our professional bread and butter, so integral to the Code of Ethics are the actions undertaken in creating, describing, storing and providing access to resources. Having this work made visible in the action examples of the template promotes the need for qualified staff in libraries.

The school library plays a vital role in helping its community make decisions about how they interact with the overloaded and increasingly complex information world. Having a school-branded Code of Ethics is a key advocacy tool to highlight the educational role of the school library.

### Over to you

Now it's over to you as school library staff to engage with the ALIA Schools template and create action examples for your library. ALIA Schools has provided a list of hints and tips on the first page of the document, including starting with what you or your team or school library network are already doing well.

By engaging with the document, the hope is that you will recognise and connect with a foundation for strengthening your professional identity, for nurturing your library identity and, through your active practice, feel a sense of connection to the ethics of the library workforce more broadly. And best of all, your school community will benefit from access to a school library where ethical professional conduct and practice are upheld.

Read the ALIA Code of Ethics



Jacqui Lucas

Professional Learning Teacher Librarian  
Australian Library and Information Association

FEATURE

## 'SELFIE' AUTHOR INTERVIEW: ALLAYNE L WEBSTER

Allayne L Webster's book explores the complexities of teen relationships in the age of social media. SCIS interviewed the author ahead of the approaching ban on social platforms for teens under the age of 16.

### What inspired you to write *Selfie* and how did you develop Tully Sinclair's character?

*Selfie* was inspired by my own misgivings with social media. Authors must have an online presence to promote our work and not all of us are comfortable, confident performers. Many of us suffer from imposter syndrome. We, too, are susceptible to making negative comparisons when viewing other's highlights reels. Writing *Selfie* was cathartic because I was able to work through those issues via story. I thought, if I'm struggling with this, how on earth are teenagers dealing with it? (Spoiler: I still struggle with it!) I thought back to 'teenage me' and knew I would've been a nightmare on socials – I would've overshared, been performative, and I definitely would've succumbed to diet culture, and done things I regretted.

In *Selfie*, Tully is an anxious overthinker (not a far stretch for me) and her actions and reactions are intensified by Dene's unpredictable behaviour. Tully desperately wants to please Dene, and meanwhile Dene is trying to please her 'Mumager' (as they call them in the trade) who is profiting from Dene's online following. As the story progresses, Tully must learn to dig deeper, to think harder about what's **really** going on. She comes to realise that most of it is smoke and mirrors, and that Dene's life isn't as glamorous as she makes it out to be.



The cover of '*Selfie*'.



### How does *Selfie* explore the impact of social media on teenage identity and self-esteem?

Tully is a follower of Dene's Insta account before she meets her in real life, so she already knows a lot about her, and when she speaks of Dene's product endorsement deals and her number of followers, it's clear Tully idolises Dene. But not long after meeting Dene, Tully starts to register that what happens online doesn't necessarily marry to real life. She becomes confused and starts asking questions. When Dene and Tully's relationship becomes strained, Tully becomes withdrawn and depressed, and she reverts to creating artwork and posting it online. Suddenly Tully's the one receiving attention, and she starts to gain even more insight into what life must be like for Dene. Meanwhile, Dene is watching Tully and is coming to terms with how she's been commodified. Ultimately? There are no villains. There are only misunderstandings and assumptions generated by social media.

### What do you hope young readers take away from Tully's experience with influencer culture?

To ask questions. To think critically. To not just see the glossy product, but to look beyond it and consider what might be going on behind the scenes. Also: the money might be tempting, but are you selling your soul?

### How did you approach portraying the fine line between authentic friendship and online validation in the novel?

Ironically, I didn't do it by showing the highlights reel. I did it by depicting every screw up, every misunderstanding, all the anxiousness and overthinking, every painful attempt at genuine connection. The messiness is where the truth lies. The relationship between Dene and Tully is fraught with contradictions. As the story progresses, both girls begin to look beyond surface level, instinctually searching for a deeper meaning and connection.

### What are your thoughts on Australia's upcoming social media ban for those under 16?

For those who've lost loved ones to suicide as a result of online bullying, I can readily see how cut and dried the argument is: ban social media. Simple. But for those who crave connection, and particularly those who feel marginalised or who feel as though they've found their tribe in an online world, or even for those who live in remote communities, cutting those links could be equally detrimental – and the statistics associated with doing that are hard to measure.

The government is attempting to wrangle an unregulated space and be seen to be trying **something**. How that will work in practice is anyone's guess. When I learned of the ban, my immediate thought was: if I was a teenager and I was told 'no you can't', that would make it even more attractive and I'd likely find ways around it. I imagine this generation will too. Sending social media underground (which is where it will be forced to go) might have ramifications we didn't see coming.

### How do you think this ban might affect the way young people navigate friendships and self-image?

To answer that, you only need to look at what did we do before social media. We found our icons in magazines, film, literature and music. I think teens will revert to those spaces. When you're growing up and figuring out who you are, it's natural to look

beyond yourself and question who your tribe is or who you identify with. Many a teen movie depicts social groups: sporty kids, theatre kids, jocks, nerds etc, and I think post-social media, that's where friendships and self-image will continue to take shape. Identity issues were always there. The amount of time we spend thinking about them is what's changed, amplified by social media. Hopefully switching off will dial back the intensity. Kids can come home from school, clock off, and not have their home life invaded by external pressures.

### What role do you believe books like *Selfie* can play in helping teens critically assess their social media habits?

Our most powerful ally is education. *Selfie* provides a platform to get the conversation started. I write these stories with the hope that readers will point to my work and say, 'There! That's me! I feel like that!' or 'I've experienced that!' Sometimes it's easier to discuss fictional characters because we can distance ourselves and not need to admit our own failings. Novels combat embarrassment – a powerful, limiting emotion. Remove the shame, you've changed the game.

### What's next for you as a writer? Are you working on any new projects that address similar themes?

My next YA novel *Maisy Hayes is not for sale* comes out in September 2025 and it's for the same readership as *Selfie*: tweens and up. In some ways, *Maisy* does explore similar themes to *Selfie*, in that the story is focused on social comparison, but this time financial hardship, the haves and the have-nots. Maisy's family is doing it tough. There's never enough money to pay the bills and she's used to going without. Maisy dreams of a better life. And then one day her absent father offers her exactly that. Maisy is suddenly thrust into a world where money is no object. But she soon learns that it comes with problems too. She starts to question what true wealth actually is.

*Maisy* is about shame: wearing it and shirking it. And about not letting others write your story.

Allayne plays guitar, sings and, sometimes, she illustrates. (Visit [Instagram](#).)

Allayne is a multiple arts grant recipient and a former [South Australian Premier's Reading Challenge Ambassador](#).

She's served on literary boards, and her novels have been listed for various awards. *Paper planes* (Scholastic) was a 2016 [CBCA](#)

Notable book, shortlisted for the Adelaide Festival Awards for Literature, and is included in the [Australian Heritage Literary Project Untapped Collection](#).

*Selfie* – YA novel – 2023 (Text Publishing) was shortlisted for the 2024 Ethel Turner Prize – New South Wales Premier's Prize for Literature and the 2023 Children's Peace Literature Award – APS, Australian Psychological Society.

In 2024, Allayne was shortlisted for the Max Fatchen Fellowship, 2024 South Australian Literary Awards, and was the winner of an Arts SA grant. Her latest YA novel, *Maisy Hayes is not for sale*, will be released in September 2025.





# NEW WEBSITES AND APPS

## SUBJECTTOCLIMATE – CLIMATE EDUCATION HUB

**Link:** [SubjectToClimate](#)

**Year levels:** K–12

**SCIS number:** 5534675

**SCIS subject headings:** *Climate change – Study and teaching; Climate change – Problems, exercises, etc; Sustainable development – Study and teaching; Sustainable development – problems, exercises, etc; Environmental education; Environment – Problems, exercises, etc.*

**ScOT subject headings:** *Climate change; Sustainable development; Conservation (Environment); Teaching methods; Problem sets.*

**Description:** SubjectToClimate offers lesson plans, teacher resources and professional development courses to help teachers integrate climate science and climate action across K–12 subjects. It includes credible, engaging materials from partners around the world. An excellent source for up-to-date materials on contemporary climate issues.

## ‘DECODING THE UNIVERSE’ – NATIONAL SCIENCE WEEK 2025 RESOURCES

**Link:** [ASTA Science Week 2025](#)

**Year levels:** Adaptable across all year levels

**SCIS number:** 5534690

**SCIS subject headings:** *National Science Week; Science – Problems, exercises, etc.; Nature study – Problems, exercises, etc.; Solar system – Problems, exercises, etc.; DNA – Problems, exercises, etc.; Quantum theory.*

**ScOT subject headings:** *Science; Natural heritage; Solar system; DNA; Fundamental forces; Problem sets.*

**Description:** This resource pack from the Australian Science Teachers Association (ASTA) includes STEM activities for all year levels, a printable student journal and a colourful poster. The activities explore a wide variety of topics, from DNA codes and animal communication to weather patterns and astronomy. The resources include hyperlinks and multimedia, to cater to different engagement styles.

## REEF GUARDIAN SCHOOLS 2025 ECO CHALLENGE

**Link:** [Reef Guardian Schools](#)

**Year levels:** 4–12

**SCIS number:** 5535527

**SCIS subject headings:** *Coral reef ecology; Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.*

**ScOT subject headings:** *Coral reefs; Marine protected areas.*

**Description:** The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority free resources help students from Years 4 to 12 explore reef science, sustainability and conservation. Included is information on how to register for the 2025 Eco Challenge, which invites students to complete eight challenges focused on reef health.

## WONDERLAB AR – SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP (UK)

**Link:** [App Store \(iOS\)](#) | [Google Play \(Android\)](#)

**Year levels:** 2–8

**SCIS number:** 5535537

**SCIS subject headings:** *Apps; Science – Computer-assisted instruction.*

**ScOT subject headings:** *Mobile apps; Science; Computer assisted teaching.*

**Description:** The Wonderlab AR app from the UK’s Science Museum Group uses augmented reality to draw out science hidden in everyday life. Through challenges based on engaging with the world around them, students collect virtual ‘powers’ linked to real scientific concepts. The app runs on most AR capable devices.

## NASA SNAP IT! – AN ECLIPSE PHOTO ADVENTURE

**Link:** [Snap It! Game](#)

**Year levels:** 2 and above

**SCIS number:** 5535594

**SCIS subject headings:** *Eclipses – Computer-assisted instruction; Educational games.*

**ScOT subject headings:** *Solar eclipses; Computer assisted teaching; Educational games.*

**Description:** *Snap It!* is an engaging web-based game that teaches students from age 7 about solar eclipses in a fun, hands-on way. An alien ‘traveller’ guides players to snap photos of the sun and create postcards while exploring the movement and alignment of the sun, moon and earth.

## JOURNEYS OF HOPE – HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR STORIES (ABC AND MELBOURNE HOLOCAUST MUSEUM)

**Link:** [Journeys of Hope – ABC Education](#)

**Year levels:** 9–10

**SCIS number:** 5535612

**SCIS subject headings:** *Bassat, Nina; Gaspar, Peter; Graham, Eve; Dunbrowin, Andre; German, Charles; Holocaust, Jewish, 1939–1945 – Personal accounts; Refugees – Anecdotes; Jews in Australia – Anecdotes; Australia – Immigration and emigration – Anecdotes.*

**ScOT subject headings:** *Genocide; Migration; Refugees; Jewish peoples; Anecdotes; Personal narratives.*

**Description:** ABC Education and the Melbourne Holocaust Museum present quietly powerful video portraits of Holocaust survivors who arrived in Australia as children. The short videos share personal reflections on survival in Europe, the voyage to Australia and the first steps into an unfamiliar world. Each concludes with a message of hope for today’s young people.

## NZ OMBUDSMAN CIVICS EDUCATION RESOURCES

**Link:** [Fairness for Students – Ombudsman NZ](#)

**Year levels:** 1–10

**SCIS number:** 5535639

**SCIS subject headings:** *New Zealand, Ombudsman; Te Reo Māori text; Fairness – Study and teaching; Social justice – Social justice – Study and teaching; Conduct of life – Study and teaching; Citizenship – Study and teaching.*

**ScOT subject headings:** *Fair play; Social justice; Codes of conduct; Civic responsibility; Teaching methods.*

**Description:** *Keeping things fair* and *Tuia kia ōrite* explore the rights and responsibilities of a democracy. Younger students learn about the concept of fairness through stories. Older students engage with more complex ideas, including the right to a fair process and the importance of accountability in public institutions. These engaging resources use real examples, case studies and interactive activities.

## TOHU WHENUA EDUCATION HUB (NZ)

**Link:** [Tohu Whenua for Educators](#)

**Year levels:** 4–10

**SCIS number:** 5535660

**SCIS subject headings:** *Māori – History – Study and teaching; Māori – Social conditions – Study and teaching; Classroom activities; New Zealand – History – Study and teaching; New Zealand – Social conditions – Study and teaching; New Zealand Historic buildings, sites, etc. – Study and teaching.*

**ScOT subject headings:** *New Zealand history – Māori history – Historic places – Culture – Lesson plans – Classroom activities.*

**Description:** *Tohu Whenua* (‘Landmarks’) highlights Aotearoa New Zealand’s defining national stories with important historic places and links these to learning experiences. The website includes visitor guides and background material for significant locations, with suggestions for field trips or virtual tours.

# SCIS INTERVIEWS ASLA SCHOOL LIBRARY PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNER, CLAIRE ELLIOTT

SCIS has proudly sponsored ASLA's School Library Professional of the Year Award for many years, and we were thrilled to see Claire Elliott receive the award at the 2025 ASLA national conference.

Claire sat down for an interview with SCIS, where she reflected on her professional journey, the importance of collaboration and the evolving role of school libraries.

## What does being named ASLA's School Library Professional of the Year mean to you personally and professionally?

I don't know that I really separate the personal and professional, because they're very much enmeshed for me. I really enjoy my job. I enjoy literature, reading and connecting readers to books. That might be family members and friends, or it might be in a work context. Either way, I love it.

I dedicate a lot of my time to library outside of work, because really I enjoy finding out/learning about trends in literature and reading. I've also always been studying. Ever since I graduated from university, apart from a short gap of maybe three or four years, I've continued to study for the past 10 to 15 years.

To me, the award is an acknowledgement that all my hard work hasn't been wasted. It's all those things that I get joy from and find rewarding being recognised. I never did anything for the extrinsic rewards. I'm very self-motivated, and it's always been about the intrinsic value of learning for me. But every now and then, it's really nice to receive an acknowledgement for what you've been doing for the last 15 years or so.

## One of your achievements cited in the awards speech was that you led the revitalisation of Barker College's wide-reading program. How did you go about aligning it more closely with the curriculum and student interests?

My boss Kat, the Director of Library Services, and I both started at Barker College at the same time, about two and a half years ago. We made a promise to ourselves that we'd spend our first year just observing before we decided to change anything. In reality, that lasted barely six months.

During this initial period, we gathered feedback from English teachers, particularly the Head of English and others who were involved with our wide-reading program. What came through was that the program wasn't necessarily consistent across classes. With two year groups with 16 classes each, the English teachers and department were looking for a more cohesive experience for students. So we focused on ensuring greater consistency in what was being delivered.

For example, we introduced the idea of having consistent genres. Year 7, for instance, would focus on a specific genre, like historical fiction, and every student in that year level would engage with that genre in some form. At the same time, we made sure that teacher librarians still had room to bring in their own flavour, books they were passionate about or familiar with. So while the learning outcomes and genre focus were the same, the delivery could vary slightly based on the librarian's individual style.

We also looked at creating a more consistent workflow. What we'd found was that each teacher librarian was essentially doing the same lesson, but were creating their own materials, slides, research, everything. It was a lot of duplicated effort. So instead, we moved to a model where one person would take responsibility for developing a shared lesson, and others could just deliver it. Of course, they could still tweak it to suit their own preferences, but the core lesson was already there.

Around the same time, the NSW English curriculum changed. It placed a stronger emphasis on fostering a love of reading and exposing students to a variety of genres, as well as encouraging discussions about books. We took that on board and built those elements into our program.

“We made a promise to ourselves that we'd spend our first year just observing before we decided to change anything. In reality, that lasted barely six months.”

Another key piece of feedback we received from English teachers was that there wasn't much accountability for students. They weren't producing any work as part of the program. Initially, that was intentional. We wanted students to just engage with reading and have dedicated time for it. But teachers asked for some kind of light-touch accountability. So we introduced a book response task.

At first, this was twice a year, once per semester. Students would produce a response to a book and then share it in small groups. This proved a bit too much for our reluctant or non-readers. We've since pared it back to once a year. The requirement now is just that they engage with one text from start to finish, whether that's a novel, graphic novel, rapid read, or even a picture book. It's about lifting the level of engagement without making it overwhelming.

We also surveyed the English teachers at the end of the year, and the feedback we received helped us reshape the program.

From there, we reworked the program, mapped out what needed to be done, and divided it up amongst the team. Different teacher librarians took responsibility for developing different lessons. The aim was to make sure that what we were doing held students accountable, was consistent, made time for independent reading, while also being time-efficient for staff as well.

“When I returned to Australia after working overseas, I joined ASLA thinking it would be a good networking opportunity, but it ended up being so much more.”



Claire Elliott (centre), with SCIS Catalogue Content Manager Renate Beilharz (left) and ASLA president Martha Itzcovitz (right).

**The subject-specific LibGuides you introduced were also praised during the award speeches. What role do they play in supporting teaching and learning at your school?**

The subject-specific LibGuides were something Kat and I really spearheaded together. We realised that, while the library had a strong digital presence in terms of databases, there wasn't actually a clear online landing page for the library itself. After our first year of running research skills sessions, which are separate

from the wide-reading program, we wanted a way to track and tailor the resources we were recommending to students, particularly by subject area.

Teacher librarians have subject liaison roles for each subject area, so we created a dedicated LibGuide page. For example, PDHPE is one of my areas. I included links to relevant databases at the top, then supplemented those with freely available resources, such as websites, data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and others like sports science sources. We also collaborated with subject teachers to include podcasts they recommended, specific books they found useful, and anything else that supports student research in that area.

It's still a work in progress, but we're building momentum. We've also introduced an online booking system. Teachers can contact us to schedule in-class research sessions, and we use those sessions to direct students to the relevant LibGuide. On top of that, students can now book one-on-one sessions with a teacher librarian through an Outlook booking page. This allows them to get tailored research support or referencing help, whether it's checking their Chicago style or fine-tuning APA citations.

**What do you think is most important to pass on to those entering the profession?**

I think it's important to come into the profession with an open mind. What you think a library is might not reflect what it actually is, or what it will become. Libraries are no longer just quiet spaces or repositories of books. They're dynamic, evolving environments, and you need to be adaptable.

One of the best things you can do is visit other libraries. Seeing different spaces and how they operate helps you break out of set ways of thinking and brings fresh ideas back to your own practice. An openness to change and learning from others is essential.

**You've contributed at both local and national levels of professional organisations. Why is that kind of engagement important to you?**

When I returned to Australia after working overseas, I joined ASLA thinking it would be a good networking opportunity, but it ended up being so much more. Being involved meant planning conferences, working with experienced professionals, and staying on top of trends in the field. It pushed me to think ahead about where libraries are going and what we need to offer to support that. It's been incredibly valuable for my professional and personal growth.

**Finally, if you could change one thing about how school libraries are understood or supported in education, what would it be?**

I'd like to see a stronger connection made between having a qualified teacher librarian and the impact that can have on student literacy. Libraries aren't just about books, they're about expertise, resources, and supporting both students and teachers to foster a genuine love of reading. When schools don't have library support, it's often assumed teachers can do it all, but not every teacher reads for pleasure or knows how to bring literature into the classroom. A well-staffed library can make all the difference.



# SCHOOL LIBRARY SPOTLIGHT: TE KURA TUARUA O NGĀRUAWĀHIA (NGĀRUAWĀHIA HIGH SCHOOL)

SCIS speaks to Gemma Helleur about her holistic approach to library services, promoting life literacy in a culturally rich community, and contributing to national information literacy resources in New Zealand.

## What is your role in your school library and what do you do on a day-to-day basis?

I'm often introduced as the 'holistic librarian'. That's actually how our school nurse once described me to a visiting health professional, which felt like quite a privilege coming from someone in the health space. But I think it really sums up my role well.

It is a very holistic role. I do a real mixture of library work and pastoral care, and I'm deeply involved in events across the school. I help build the library as both a learning space and a social space. It is incredibly diverse, and I have to be really flexible in my approach.

I come from a traditional library background, but I also have a qualification in rehabilitation studies, which brings in more of a social work and youth-focused aspect to the role, particularly in how I support students' wellbeing.



Gemma Helleur dressed as a pirate in her library.

“My approach is shaped by my own experience of having dyslexia. I have had to develop a broader understanding of what literacy is and how it can take many forms.”

Day to day, I open the library in the morning and run our breakfast club. I work in a predominantly Māori community where cultural identity is very strong. The Kīngitanga movement [a unifying movement for Māori tribes in New Zealand, particularly in the central North Island] is based here, so the Māori Queen resides nearby. That cultural context shapes the lives of our students and the way I deliver library services.

After breakfast club, we launch into a full day. The library is used constantly for learning. There is a scheduled class in here every period, and it is particularly busy before school and at lunchtime. My day really does not stop.

## What are the most rewarding aspects of working in a school library?

The most rewarding part of working in a school library is seeing the students succeed and being there to support them through their failures too, especially during those fundamental years. That sense of being

a steady presence for them is incredibly meaningful.

On a more personal note, I also really enjoy buying books. That part of my job involves researching new titles, thinking carefully about my collection, and being resourceful because my budget is quite limited. I find the collection management side really rewarding, tailoring it to suit my community and my students.

It is a privilege to be able to build a collection that opens up imaginations and gives students opportunities to explore. Being part of that journey, helping shape the stories and ideas they engage with, is something very special.

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

There are definitely challenges, especially in the teenage years. I work in an Indigenous community where many of my students experience intergenerational poverty and a range of social issues, which can impact



their engagement with reading and literacy. Teenagers already have a natural drift away from books, and today there is so much competing for their attention: gaming, social media, all kinds of entertainment. Picking up a book has to compete with all of that.

Another challenge is low literacy. My students are great browsers and they are always looking at the books, but many are still quite reluctant to take them home. There is a strong sense of books being special or treasured objects, but borrowing rates are low. So one of my biggest challenges is getting books into homes, because we know that matters. If a young person has not had that exposure and scaffolding in their early years, it is hard to make up for it later on.

I also take a broad approach to literacy. I think of it as life literacy. Yes, I want to foster a love of books and reading, but I am also focused on essential life skills like applied literacy. For example, if a student can read and follow a recipe, that is life literacy. My approach is shaped by my own experience of having dyslexia. I have had to develop a broader understanding of what literacy is and how it can take many forms.

My students know I have dyslexia, and I talk openly about it. Reading and writing do not come naturally to everyone. Some people are slow readers, or face other challenges when it comes to grasping literacy. Part of my role is breaking down those barriers and bringing in different approaches to help students engage with stories, books and language in ways that are meaningful to them.

Working in an Indigenous community also influences that perspective. There is a strong culture of oral storytelling, and I see that as an important part of literacy too, sharing and capturing stories, not just reading and writing them.

**You've been involved in developing a new information literacy resource with the Services to Schools team at the National Library. Could you tell us a bit more about what that resource is, and what the National Library has identified as exemplary about your school's approach to information literacy?**

Information literacy is one of my passions. I see it as part of life literacy, giving young people the tools to navigate a world that is saturated with information and to question what they are presented with.



A book display and a morning tea at Te Kura Tuarua o Ngāruawāhia.

I believe I was the first school librarian to adopt a Māori-informed information evaluation framework that was originally developed for tertiary students. It came from an academic setting for universities, and as far as I know, it is the only framework of its kind. When I first read about it, it made complete sense to me. I could see how it connected culturally to my students and how it could offer a more appropriate way of teaching information literacy.

I got in touch with the academics who developed the framework and have been giving them feedback for a number of years now on how I have simplified it to introduce the concepts to my students. I begin introducing the ideas in the junior years of high school, and by the time students reach the senior years and begin research and inquiry, we work through a simplified version of the full framework.

Working in that Māori kaupapa [Māori principles and values] space has been both challenging and rewarding. I am New Zealand European, not Māori, so it has

pushed me to think beyond the traditional approaches I learned in library school. But being in the community I serve, and using culturally informed frameworks, has helped me grow professionally.

The National Library approached me to contribute to their new information literacy resource, and my role has been to share how I use a school-wide framework to support information literacy, not just for students but for teachers as well. Teachers can often feel just as lost when it comes to navigating information, so everyone needs to be on board and understand the importance of it.

Librarians are the ones with the tools to help people navigate this information landscape. My students often feel overwhelmed by how much is out there, so I try to break it down and give them some basic tools, whether they are processing a story from a family member or health advice from a doctor. It always comes back to that broader idea of life literacy.

# CURATING MANGA WITH CARE: GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIES

**As manga's popularity grows among students, school libraries are looking for guidance on building collections that are age-appropriate, inclusive and engaging. This article shares insights from Alistair Maxwell of Zombster, a Queensland-based manga and anime supplier that works closely with schools to curate thoughtful collections.**

**As manga continues to cement its place** in the reading lives of Australian students, school libraries are increasingly faced with the task of building thoughtful, engaging collections that serve the needs of their communities. For many library staff, especially those unfamiliar with Japanese publishing or visual storytelling, this task can feel quite complex. Curating manga isn't as straightforward as selecting novels or other library staples. Manga comes from a publishing tradition with its own rhythms, assumptions and cultural codes, many of which don't map neatly onto the frameworks Australian schools usually rely on when selecting reading material. Library staff are often left unsure about what's appropriate, and where to begin when developing a collection.

Alistair Maxwell, co-owner of Zombster, a Queensland-based manga and anime retailer, has been working with schools on this exact challenge for over a decade. Since 2010, Zombster has supplied schools across the east coast and beyond with manga collections tailored to their students' interests and shaped by a keen awareness of what works in a school library collection and what does not.

Alistair's experience working with library staff and students has informed his view that successful school manga collections are rarely one-size-fits-all. 'The choices we make are different for every school,' he says. 'There are popular series that work almost anywhere, but beyond that, each school has its own culture. What students are drawn to can shift completely from one library to the next.'

In a generous and wide-ranging conversation with SCIS, Alistair shares insights on tailoring collections to school communities, navigating manga's unique publishing system, assessing age-appropriateness, building a collection from the ground up, and the emerging trends shaping what students are reading.

## **A different language, a different lens**

When selecting manga, library staff need to be aware that it comes from a publishing system and cultural context that is quite different to other materials they might curate.

Most manga is first published chapter by chapter in weekly Japanese magazines, such as *Shōnen Jump*, aimed at teen boys, or *Shōjo Beat*, aimed at teen girls. The naming conventions of these magazines serve as informal guides to their intended age groups, but these labels can quickly become confusing. For example, the term *seinen* (another type of manga magazine) literally translates as 'youth', yet in manga publishing, it typically refers to magazines aimed at adults, covering readers roughly from 18 to 40 years old.

This means librarians can't rely solely on magazine titles to judge audience suitability; they must apply an additional layer of cultural interpretation to accurately understand a manga's intended readership.

Alistair says understanding this system is one of the most useful ways librarians can quickly assess the appropriateness of manga. 'Check the magazine a series was published in. If it's meant for adults, you already have your answer and it's unlikely to be suitable for a school collection.'

However, even titles from youth-focused magazines can present unexpected challenges. Cultural differences, especially around visual storytelling, mean scenes considered normal or harmless in Japan can feel uncomfortable to Australian readers. One example Alistair highlights is the use of bath scenes. 'In Japan, bathing is culturally normal, often portrayed as a reflective, non-sexualised moment,' he explains. 'It's a visual cue that a character is processing something emotionally. But in Australia, we're not used to seeing characters bathe in stories, and that can make it feel more suggestive than it actually is.'

Scenes like bathhouse moments reveal a broader issue. There is often a cultural gap that makes selecting manga more complex than simply checking age-appropriateness. Without an understanding of the norms that shape these stories, library staff are left to make nuanced decisions without the full picture.

'Another challenge is that manga is also visual, which changes how readers interpret what they see,' Alistair explains. 'Something that might pass as a throwaway line in a novel becomes more loaded when it's a drawing. Even with cultural context you might understand a scene isn't meant to be inappropriate, but still question its place in your library.'

This layering of cultural differences, distinct publishing structures, and the visual nature of the medium often leaves library staff in a grey area when it comes to selection, one they need help navigating. The question is often where to find that help, and there are several places to start. Staff can draw on the knowledge of colleagues, undertake additional research, or seek support from suppliers like Alistair to approach their manga curation with greater confidence.

## **Some helpful tips on selecting manga for your school**

Whether your library is introducing manga for the first time or building on an existing collection, Alistair's advice is to focus on variety and balance, and develop a working knowledge of how the medium is structured.

### **A few volumes of many beats many volumes of one**

'Don't go all in on one series,' he says. 'If you buy 72 volumes





Manga display in a library.

of *Naruto*, you are catering to a narrow group of readers. It's better to get three to five volumes of several different series. That way, more students will find something they connect with, and you can expand from there.'

#### **You can judge this book by its cover (sort of)**

In manga, the cover art is almost always created by the same artist who illustrates the story itself, and unlike Western publishing, where covers are often outsourced or stylised separately, manga covers tend to reflect the actual content and tone of what's inside. 'You can usually judge the tone of the book by the cover,' Alistair explains. 'If the art looks intense or dramatic, there's a good chance the story is too. If it's bright, soft or comedic, that's probably the vibe.' While not foolproof, paying close attention to manga cover art can be more revealing than it often is with Western books. The visual cues are intentional, and in many cases, offer a clear glimpse into the tone, themes and intended audience of the story inside.

#### **Recognisable worlds make reliable reads for younger readers**

For readers in primary school, manga based on well-known video game franchises can be a great entry point. Alistair recommends starting with titles like *Pokémon*, *Animal Crossing*, *Kirby*, *Splatoon*, and *The Legend of Zelda*. These series are age-appropriate, visually engaging and recognisable to many students.

'They are safe, they are fun, and they draw kids in straight away,' Alistair says. 'That initial recognition really helps with engagement.'

Familiar characters and worlds can help hesitant readers feel more confident picking up a manga publication. These stories are usually written with younger audiences in mind, and tend to steer clear of the grey areas that sometimes make manga selection challenging. For primary libraries just starting out with

manga, Alistair points out that they offer a strong foundation for a collection with built-in appeal.

#### **Think bingeable, not just borrowable**

Manga is designed to be devoured quickly. Its visual style and pacing mean students often read a whole volume in one sitting. 'A student will finish a volume in one night,' Alistair says. 'If they enjoy it, they will be back within days looking for more.'

This makes manga a powerful way to keep students coming back to the library. However, it also means staff need to plan ahead. A few volumes might catch a student's attention, but with the pace those volumes are read, it creates quick demand for follow-up series, or their interest can fade. To make the most of manga's appeal, build collections that can sustain a reader's momentum by planning out additional series to explore, or follow-up titles for those you acquire (where budget allows, of course).

#### **How suppliers like Zombster can help you**

Zombster takes a practical, student-focused approach to supporting schools with their manga collections. In southeast Queensland, Alistair often visits schools in person with a curated selection of titles, based on the school's existing collection, what has been popular with their students in the past, and trends he is seeing in other schools.

To make sure students have a say, he runs informal voting sessions, usually during lunch. Students use sticky notes to indicate which series they would most like to see added to their library. 'It gives students a sense of ownership,' Alistair explains. 'They are not just passive recipients of books. They are actively choosing what goes on their shelves.'

This process helps schools curate collections that reflect the reading preferences of the school community. These preferences can vary widely and do not always follow predictable patterns. 'One school might lean towards action, another towards romantic comedies,' Alistair says. 'It often just comes down to what one enthusiastic reader has introduced to their friends.'

If there is no local supplier who can offer this kind of support, you can run your own version of this voting process in your library.

### From manga to manhwa: A new graphic novel trend in schools

Japanese manga continues its enormous popularity in school library collections, but a new trend is starting to reshape what students are reading – Korean manhwa. This genre has grown rapidly in popularity, especially with the release of *Solo leveling*, a South Korean web novel that has been adapted into a full-colour graphic novel series.

*Solo leveling* is a good example of some key differences between manhwa and manga. Unlike manga, which is traditionally black and white and read right to left, manhwa is typically full colour and reads left to right, following the same flow as in most Western comics. This makes it more immediately accessible to students who are new to the format. The artwork also tends to be digitally illustrated and glossier in appearance, which many students find appealing.

'There's usually less sexual content in manhwa too,' Alistair says. 'For a lot of schools, that's a win. It broadens the reading options without some of the trickier content considerations that can come with manga.'

The challenge, however, is price. 'A single volume of *Solo leveling* might cost between \$35 and \$40,' Alistair explains. 'Compare that to \$15 for a typical manga volume and it's a big jump, especially when you are trying to stretch a school budget.'

Even if manhwa remains a stretch for some school budgets, its popularity highlights shifting tastes among students that seem to be prompting some changes across the wider manga landscape. 'The good news is that we are starting to see less problematic content in newer Japanese series,' Alistair says. 'What passed without comment 20 years ago would not be published today. That's a positive trend. It's getting easier to find great stories without those hesitation moments.'

### Get in touch with Zombster

For libraries looking to start or grow their manga collections, Zombster offers support, curated selections and friendly advice, whether you're in south-east Queensland or further afield.

To get in touch, visit [shop.zombster.com.au](https://shop.zombster.com.au) or email [education@zombster.com.au](mailto:education@zombster.com.au).

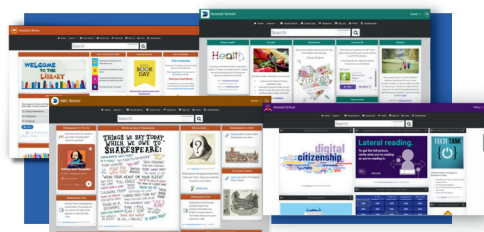
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