The 2016 Softlink Australian and New Zealand school library survey

Findings from Softlink's 2016 Australian and New Zealand School Library Survey into school library budgets, staffing and literacy levels in Australian and New Zealand school libraries.

Oliver V5

Conducted by

Softlink

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Introduction

The Australian and New Zealand School Library Survey, conducted by Softlink on behalf of the school library sector, examines key trends and issues impacting school libraries. Points for analysis include annual school library budgets and staffing levels, as well as the use of digital devices and digital resources in school libraries.

The results help to advocate the role of school libraries and Teacher Librarians to education decision makers and are shared with school library advocacy groups, such as industry associations and networks, to support their role in representing school libraries.

2016 is the seventh year of the School Library Survey for Australian schools and the second for New Zealand schools.

Currency rates have not been adjusted. Australian and New Zealand dollars are represented as equal within their respective budget locations.

This report outlines the findings from the 2016 Softlink School Library Survey into Australian and New Zealand school library budgets, staffing levels and, for Australian schools, NAPLAN literacy results.

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"Thank you for continuing to do this survey - it's one of the few pieces of data about the impact of school libraries. We refer to it regularly in our advocacy work for the profession."

1.0 Purpose of the survey

School libraries are thriving centres of learning both in the physical library space and in the virtual classroom, and Teacher Librarians enrich school teaching and learning programs through their specialist role.

In 2010, the Australian Federal Government requested submissions to the 'Inquiry into school libraries and Teacher Librarians in Australian schools'. Softlink undertook a survey of Australian school libraries to provide data which enabled a unique and informed response to the Inquiry.

Since then, in an effort to highlight the issues facing school libraries, Softlink has continued to survey Australian schools annually and extended this to include New Zealand schools in 2015. Continuing the annual survey builds a critical reference point for understanding changes, impacts, and trends over time. The results provide a solid basis for advocacy for school libraries.

1.1 About Softlink

Established in 1983, Softlink is an Australian company with global influence, encompassing 108 countries, and more than 10,000 customers. Softlink's head office is based in Brisbane, Queensland, with international offices in Oxford (UK), Irvine (USA), and Auckland (NZ).

Softlink provides the leading knowledge, content and school library management solution, Oliver v5. Softlink products offer deep digital integration with eBooks and streamlined integration with virtual learning environments and school administration systems. Since 2011, Softlink has delivered eBooks and audiobooks through the world leading eBook platform, OverDrive, and is their official supplier in Australia and New Zealand.

Softlink has had a long partnership with the library and information industry and understands the challenges and opportunities the 21st Century learning and teaching environment presents for school libraries.

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At a glance

- **53% of schools reported no change in budget from 2015 to 2016.**

- **52% of respondents indicated that they felt that their school library was adequately funded.**

- **The majority of school libraries had no change to their staffing levels.**

- **66% of schools indicated they now provide access to the library from outside the school.**

- **33% of respondents reported that they have purchased eBooks in the last year and 50% reported that they intend to purchase eBooks within the next 12 months.**

2.0 Survey findings summary

Softlink's research continues to indicate a relationship between well-funded and well-staffed school libraries and student achievement. Since 2010, the annual School Library Survey results have revealed a positive correlation between higher NAPLAN literacy scores and two key library resourcing indicators – budgets and staffing levels.

School library budgets have largely stabilised with the majority of respondents indicating that there has been no change in budget from 2015 to 2016. While the majority of schools reported that their budget did not change, Intermediate, Secondary and K-12 schools reported the highest level of budget increases; Secondary schools also reported the highest level of budget decreases.

52% of respondents felt that their library was adequately funded which is the same response as 2015. Of the 48% of schools that would like to see an increase in funding, 57% would like an increase of less than 30%.

The majority of respondents indicated that there had been no change in staffing levels from 2015 to 2016. Government schools reported the highest percentage of staff increases; Independent schools reported the highest percentage of staff decreases.

85% of respondents believe that access to the school library from outside the school and outside of school hours is important. This is reflected in the steady increase in school library access, from 47% in 2013 to 66% in 2016.

There is continued growth in eBooks and eResources (subscription databases) with 51% and 50% of schools respectively indicating that they are now part of their collection. There is a strong intention by school libraries to continue to grow their eBook collection, with 33% of schools having purchased eBooks in the last year and 50% of respondents indicating that they would definitely or most probably purchase eBooks in the next 12 months.

The top three school library objectives in Australian and New Zealand schools are *Aligning curriculum with existing resources/practices*, *Developing information literacy programs* and *Refurbishing/updating the library or learning centre*.

The three most important services the library provides, as indicated by respondents, includes: *Recreational/leisure reading*, *Resource and collection management* and *Provision of learning centre and space*.

2.1 Allocation of school budgets in Australia and New Zealand

The 2016 school library budgets were reviewed by School Type and Education Provider and the findings have been reported in Figures 1 and 2.

Median school library budgets by school type

Budget trends for this year are similar to previous years' reports. Primary schools continue to receive less funding than Secondary and K-12 schools.

In schools with 600 students or more, even where school sizes are the same, Secondary schools receive more funding than Primary schools and K-12 schools report the largest budget.

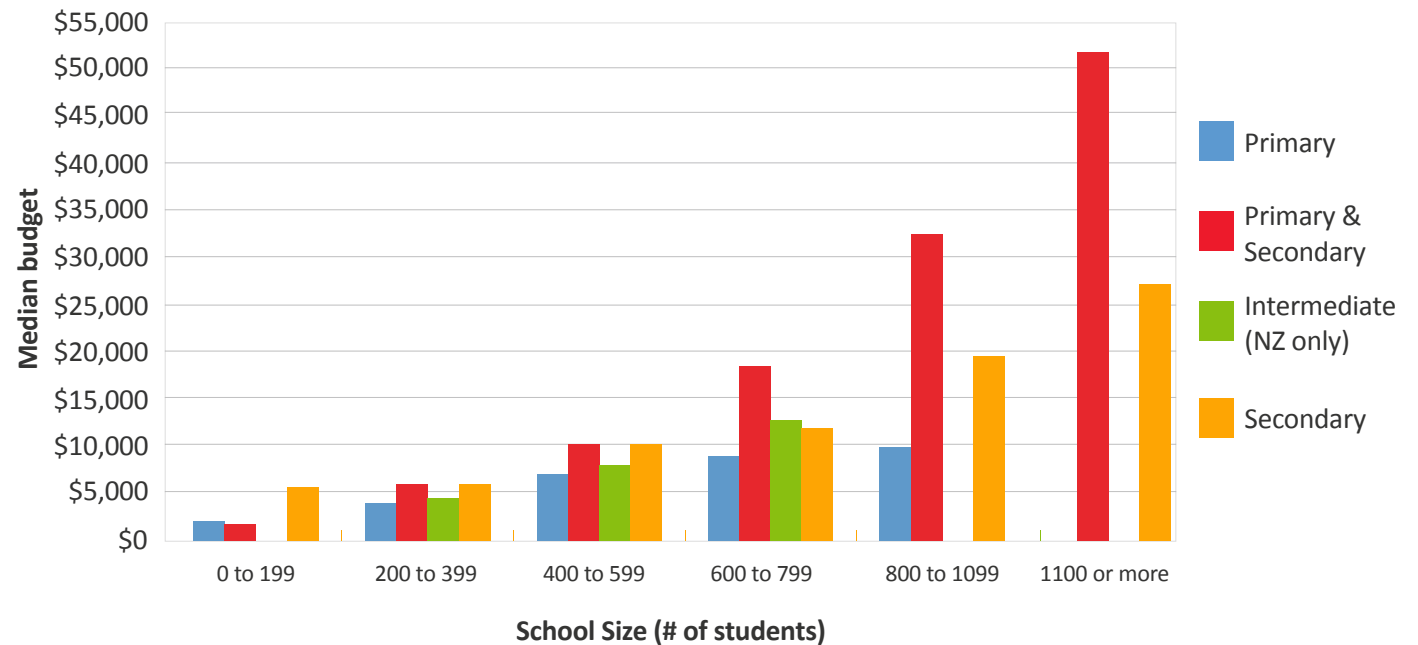### Median school library budgets by school type

Figure 1 : Median school library budgets by school type in 2016

Median school library budgets by education provider

Budget medians in 2016 varied depending on school sizes. Independent school libraries had higher annual budget medians than Government or Catholic schools in the 600+ categories, Catholic schools reported the highest budget in the 0 to 599 categories. Government school libraries reported receiving the lowest level of annual budget allocation.
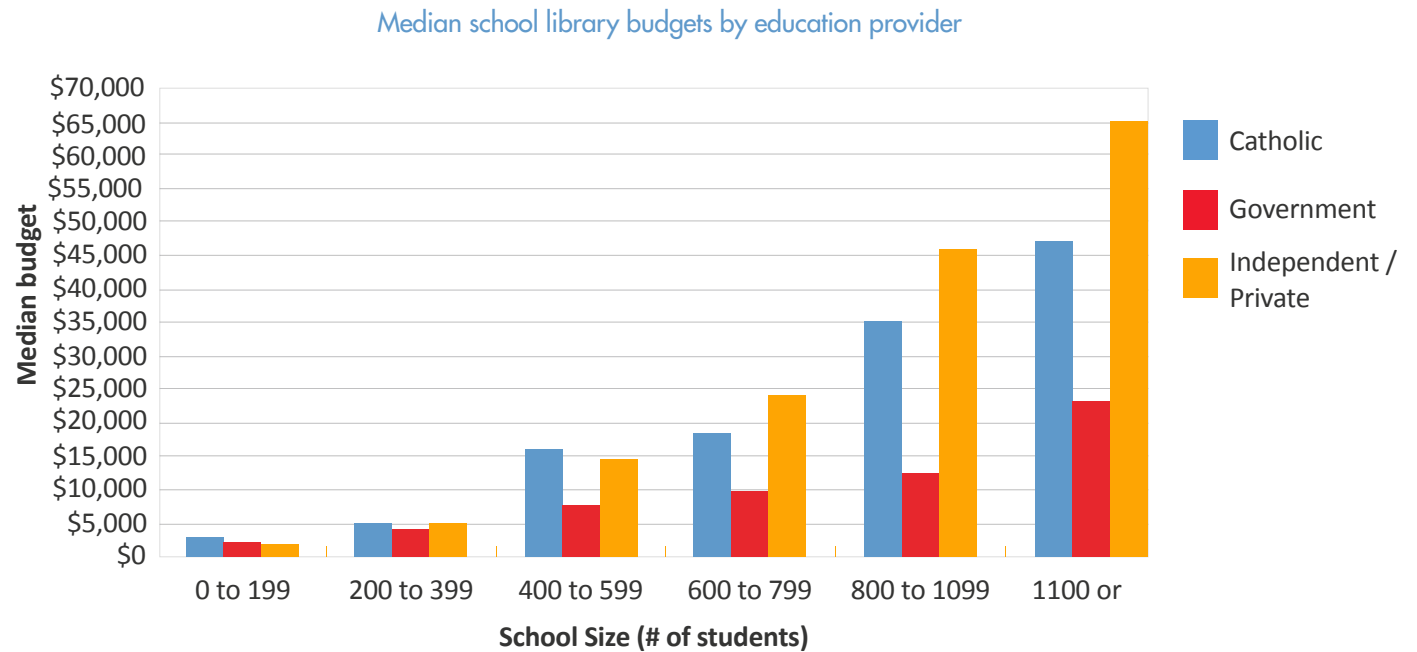

Median school library budgets by education provider

Figure 2 : Median school library budgets by education provider

"Softlink's research continues to indicate a relationship between well-funded and well-staffed school libraries and student achievement."

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Median school library budgets by location

Median budgets were also analysed by size and location and are provided in Figures 3 and 4 as a guide for schools. Note, results for very small sample sizes have not been included in the graph.

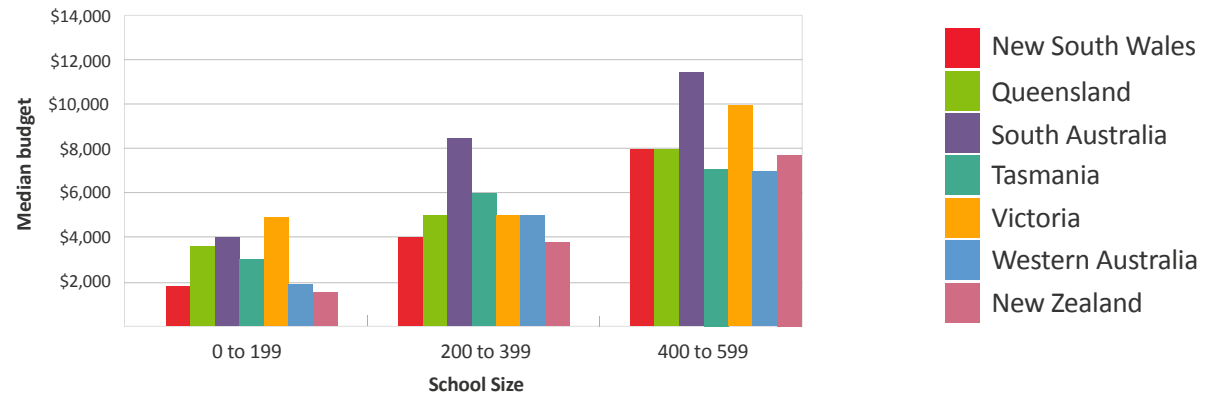## Median school library budgets by location 0 to 599 students

Figure 3 : Median school library budgets by location 0 to 599 students

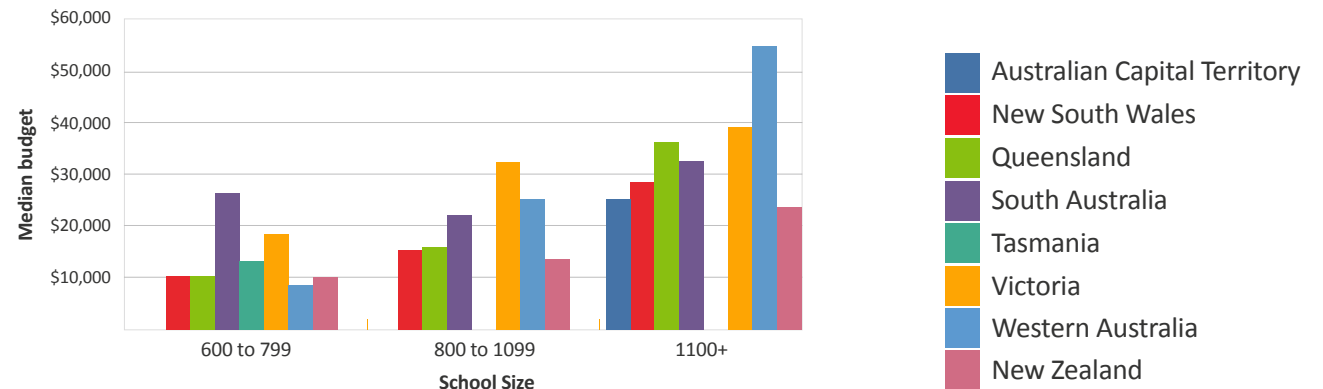## Median school library budgets by location 600+ students

Figure 4 : Median school library budgets by location 600+ students

2.2 Changes in library budgets

Changes in school library budgets by school type

This year 79% of school library budgets either remained unchanged or decreased. The highest number of respondents (53%) indicated that their budgets remained the same, while 26% stated their budget had decreased. Overall, 21% of all respondents indicated that their budgets had increased. The results in Figure 5 show the changes in school library budgets by school type.

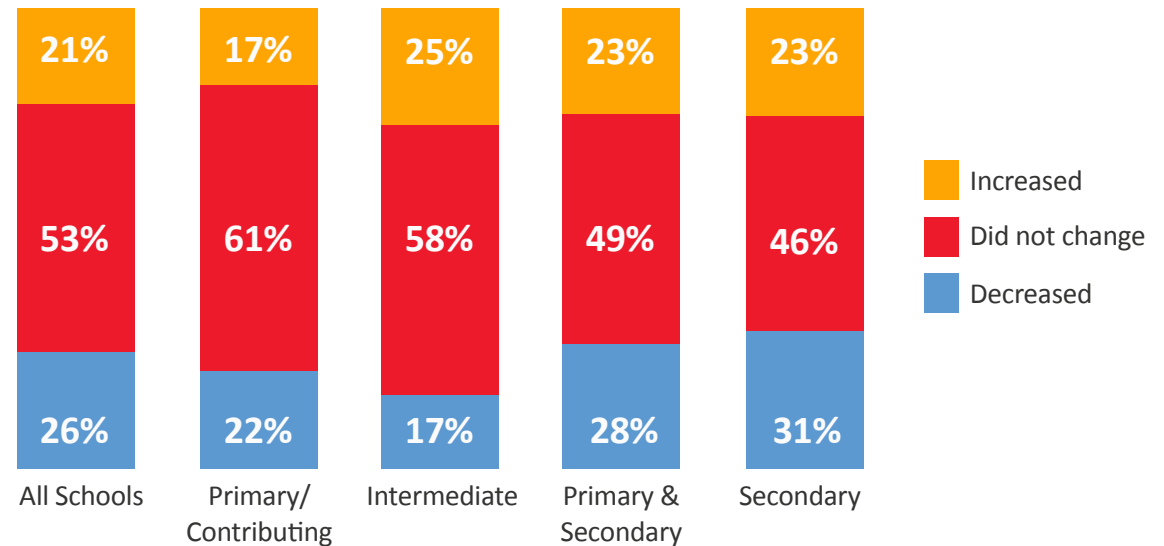Changes in school library budgets by school type

	All Schools	Primary/Contributing	Intermediate	Primary & Secondary	Secondary
Increased	21%	17%	25%	23%	23%
Did not change	53%	61%	58%	49%	46%
Decreased	26%	22%	17%	28%	31%

Figure 5 : Changes in school library budgets by school type 2016

"Our library is well utilised and our budget allows us to purchase great books that children love."

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Changes in school library budgets by education provider

Figure 6 highlights the results of changes to school library budgets by education provider.

Catholic school libraries reported a lower percentage of budget decreases in 2016, while Government and Independent schools reported the same percentage of budget decreases. Catholic and Independent schools reported a higher percentage of budget increases between 2015 and 2016. Additionally a higher percentage of Government school libraries indicated that their library budget did not change.

Changes in school library budgets by education provider

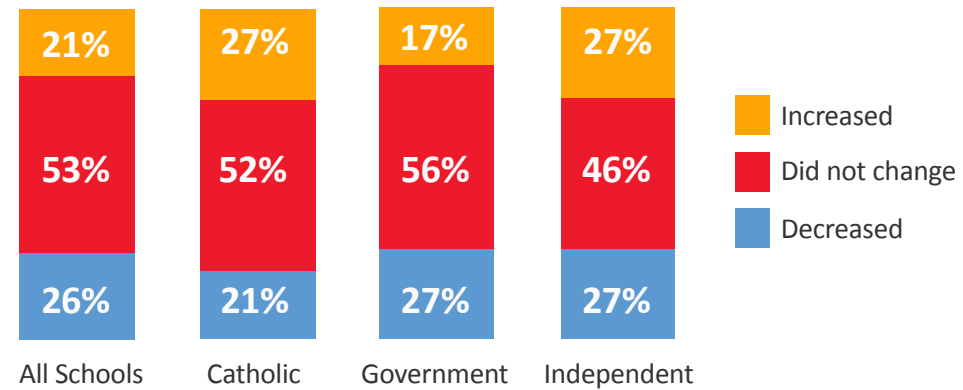|	Increased	Did not change	Decreased
All Schools	21%	53%	26%
Catholic	27%	52%	21%
Government	17%	56%	27%
Independent	27%	46%	27%

Figure 6: Changes in 2016 school library budgets by education provider

Additional analysis shows Government Secondary schools reported the highest level of decreases in funding at 33%, while Catholic K-12 schools reported the highest level of increases (38%).

In 2016, Catholic Primary schools and Secondary schools reported the lowest percentage of budget decreases and increases, 15% and 8% respectively, with a majority of Catholic Primary schools (78%) reporting no budget change.

In all three sectors, Secondary schools reported the highest level of budget decreases with Catholic schools at 25%, Government schools at 33% and Independent schools at 30%.

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2.3 Library budget comparison

School library budget comparison Australia and New Zealand

When comparing Australian and New Zealand library budget changes, respondents reported comparable decreases. Australian respondents reported more budget increases (27%), while New Zealand respondents reported the highest number of budgets that remained the same (60%). The majority of respondents in Australia and New Zealand reported that their budgets did not change.

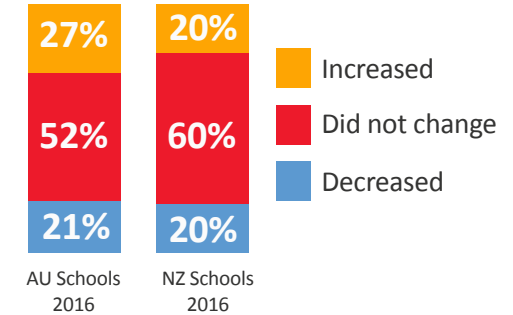School library budget comparison
Australia and New Zealand

Figure 7: School library budget comparison Australia and New Zealand

School library budget comparison 2015 - 2016

When comparing library budget changes from 2015 to 2016, the figures are very similar. Fewer schools reported budget increases than decreases, the majority of respondents reported that their library budget remains unchanged.

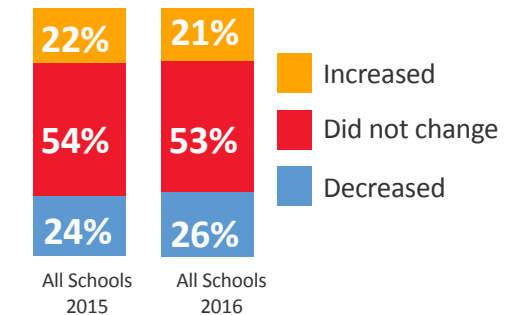School library budget comparison
2015 - 2016

Figure 8: School library budget comparison 2015 and 2016

"If I had more time, money, and support I could do a lot more with the library. However, I will continue to provide books that are of good quality and interest to those who are not readers with a limited budget."

Comparison of 2015 and 2016 school library budgets by education provider

When comparing library budget changes by education provider from 2015 to 2016, Catholic schools reported the biggest positive change in budget increases (9%), Government schools reported the highest negative change in increases (10%), independent school increases remained the same.

Government and independent schools reported the biggest change in budget decreases. Government schools saw decreases rise 6% from 2015 to 2016, while Independent schools saw decreases rise by 9%.

Figure 10 (page 15) shows the comparision of school library budgets in Australia and New Zealand by education provider. Note, the New Zealand Catholic school sample represents just under 5% of Catholic schools in New Zealand and makes up 6% of New Zealand survey responses.

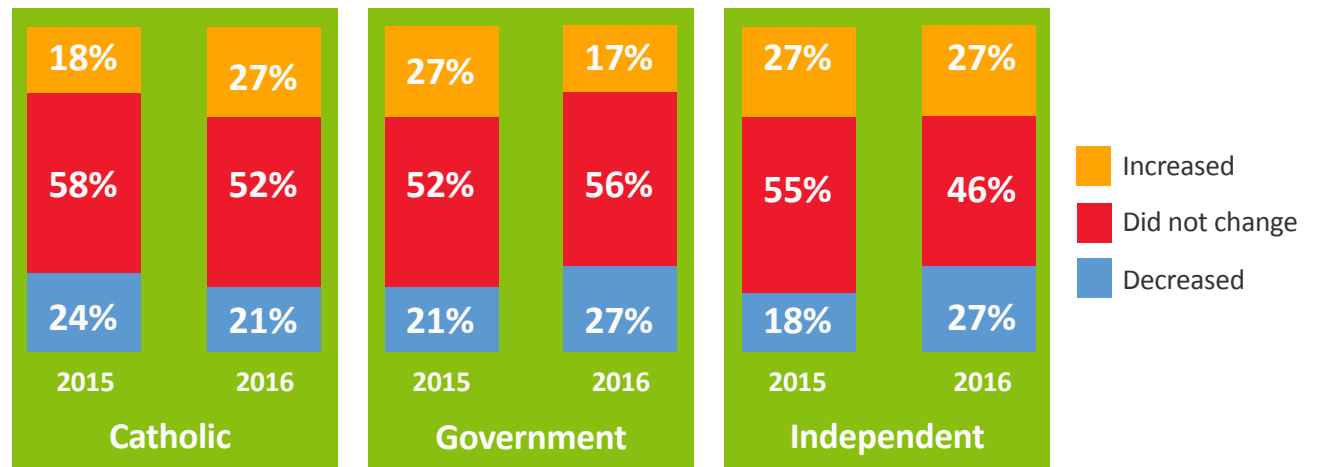## Comparison of 2015 and 2016 school library budgets by education provider

	Increased
	Did not change
	Decreased

Figure 9: Comparison of 2015 and 2016 school library budgets by education provider
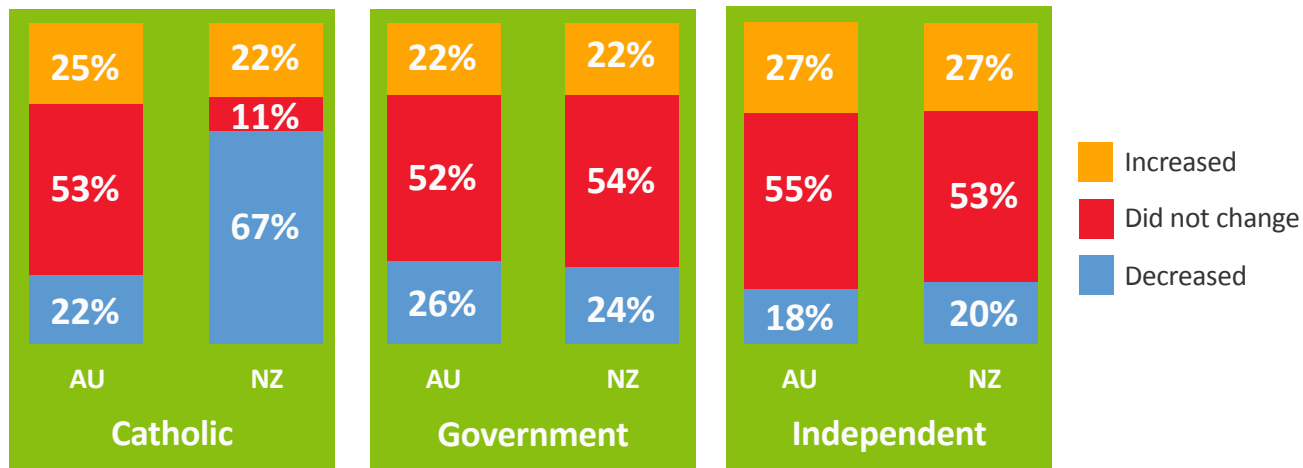
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Figure 10: Comparison of school library budgets by education provider, Australia and New Zealand

2.4 Australian school library budgets and reading literacy levels

This NAPLAN analysis only applies to Australian schools.

Table 1 shows the correlations between Australian school library budgets, according to the survey respondents, and NAPLAN Reading Literacy results obtained from the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and My Schools website for the period 2012-2016. The survey results indicate a positive correlation between library budgets and NAPLAN results. A positive correlation indicates a relationship between the two variables. With Australian school library funding and NAPLAN as the variables, a positive correlation means that as the value of the budget increases, the NAPLAN result increases; as one decreases the other decreases.

Calculated Correlation	Library Budgets				
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Year 3 Reading	0.32	0.14	0.29	0.32	0.38
Year 5 Reading	0.36	0.14	0.30	0.33	0.38
Year 7 Reading	0.38	0.27	0.33	0.43	0.41
Year 9 Reading	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.43	0.43

Table 1: Correlation of literacy results with Australian school library budgets during the past five years

"Keep up the good work of providing and publishing these surveys, they are useful evidence to argue specific cases."

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Figure 11 compares the NAPLAN Reading Literacy levels published on the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy and My School website, and the average annual library budget allocation to these schools.

The diagram shows an upward trend with schools that reported less library funding achieving lower than the national average reading literacy scores. It also highlights that as funding increases so do NAPLAN results, indicating that schools with libraries that receive higher funding achieve higher than the national average reading literacy scores.

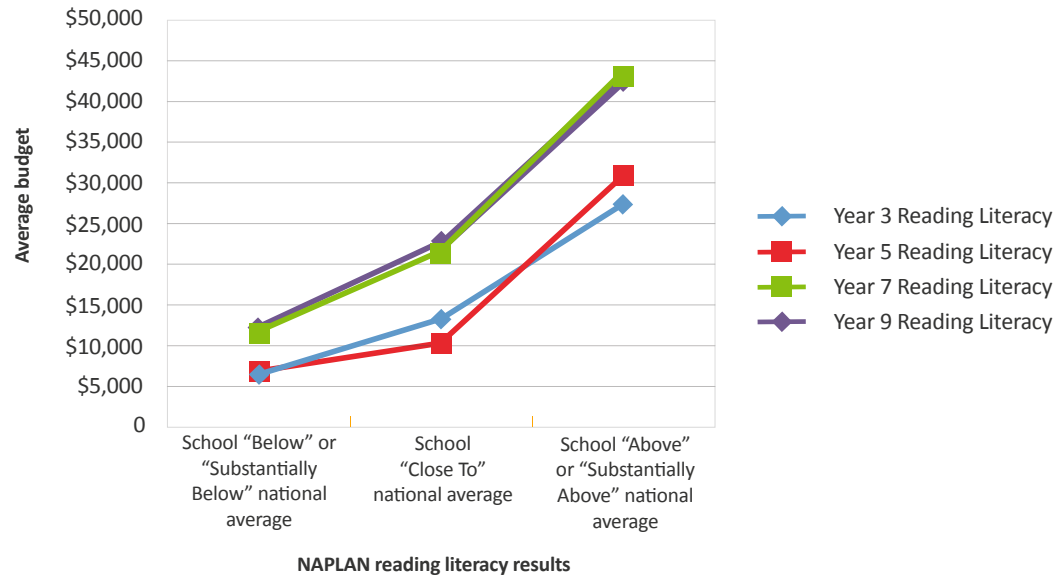Comparison of reading literacy results with average school library budget

Figure 11: **Comparison of reading literacy results for each year group with average school library budget, Australia 2016**

2.5 School library staffing levels

21% of schools reported a decrease in library staffing in 2016; 7% of school libraries experienced an increase in staffing levels. The Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staffing at the majority of school libraries remains unchanged with 72% of all schools surveyed stating that there had been no change in staffing during the past 12 months. This is a similar result to 2015 when reported staffing increases and decreases were 10% and 20% respectively.

Independent schools reported the highest percentage of staff decreases at 23%; Government schools reported the highest percentage of increases at 8%.

K-12 school libraries had the highest number of FTE staff with an average of 3.1 per school. The average for Secondary school libraries was 2.4. FTE staff for Primary school libraries was 1.3.

Australian schools reported the highest number of staffing increases and decreases, the majority of respondents from New Zealand reported that staffing did not change.

"I am fortunate to be in a literacy focussed school where books are valued teaching tools, and the importance of recreational reading is constantly promoted in class, as well as by me. The library is a valued resource."

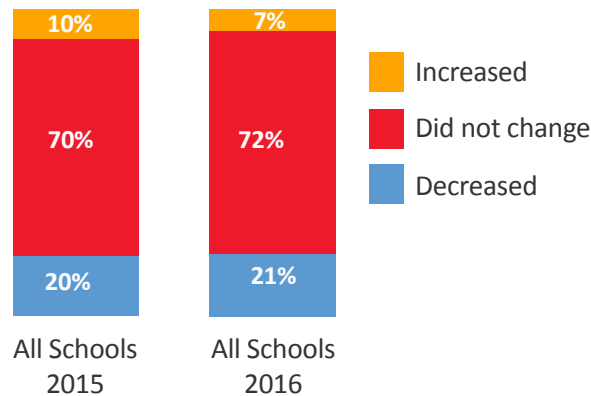### School Library Staffing Comparison 2015 -2016

	All Schools 2015	All Schools 2016
Increased	10%	7%
Did not change	70%	72%
Decreased	20%	21%

Figure 12: Comparison of 2015 and 2016 school library staffing changes

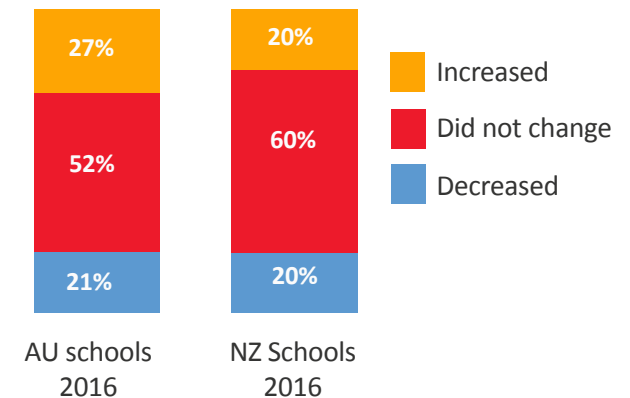### Comparison of school library staffing changes Australia and New Zealand

	AU schools 2016	NZ Schools 2016
Increased	27%	20%
Did not change	52%	60%
Decreased	21%	20%

Figure 13: Comparison of 2016 school library staffing changes Australia and New Zealand

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Staffing by school type

K-12 schools reported the highest number of FTE staff with an average of 3.1 per school.

Intermediate schools reported the fewest FTE staff at 1 per school.
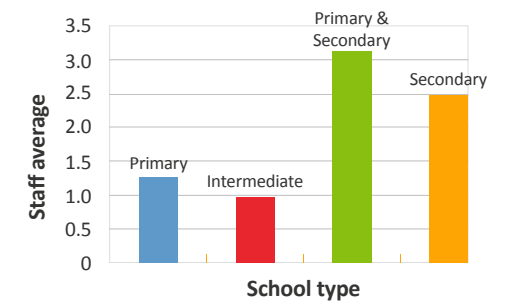

Average number of staff by school type

Figure 14: Average number of staff by school type

Staffing by school type and size

When applying school size and type, K-12 school libraries in the 1100 or more category reported the highest staff average at 5.2 per school. This is the same as 2015 results.

Intermediate schools reported the lowest staff numbers in 3 categories.
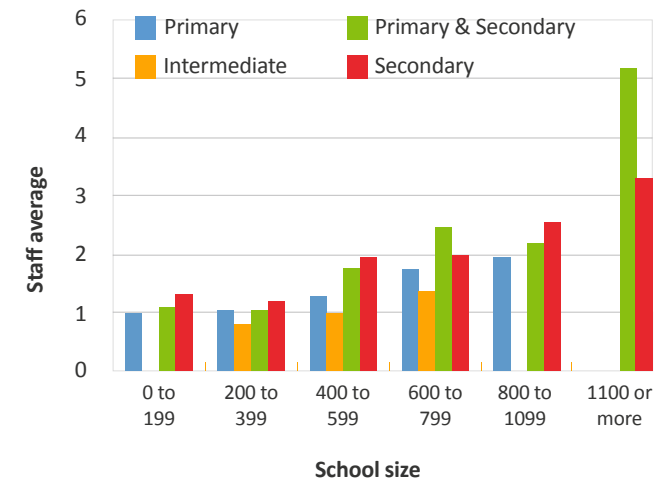

Average number of staff by school type & size

Figure 15: Average number of staff by school type & size

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Staffing by education provider and size

When applying school size and education provider type, Independent school libraries in the 1100 or more categories reported the highest FTE staff average at 5.5 per school.

For schools with 400 or more students, Government schools reported the lowest FTE staff average; Catholic schools reported the lowest staff average in schools with less than 400 students.
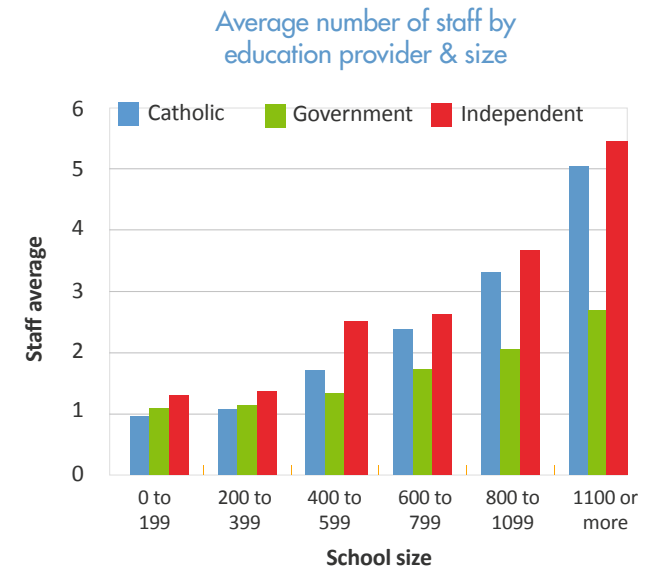
Average number of staff by education provider & size

Figure 16: Average number of staff by education provider & size

"Libraries are becoming increasingly flexible learning spaces and are very much able to evolve in response to the individual needs and student/staffing base of the school."

Relationship between school library staff and NAPLAN results.

Table 2 shows the correlations between Australian school library staffing, according to the survey respondents, and NAPLAN Reading Literacy results obtained from the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and My Schools website for the period 2012-2016.

Calculated Correlation	Library staffing				
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Year 3 Reading	0.33	0.24	0.23	0.26	0.34
Year 5 Reading	0.34	0.25	0.21	0.28	0.35
Year 7 Reading	0.38	0.25	0.22	0.41	0.34
Year 9 Reading	0.35	0.30	0.29	0.39	0.31

Table 2: Correlation of literacy results with number of school library staff in Australian school libraries

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Figure 17 below shows the correlation of literacy results with the number of reported school library staff in Australian school libraries.

The survey results identify a positive correlation between library staffing numbers and NAPLAN results.

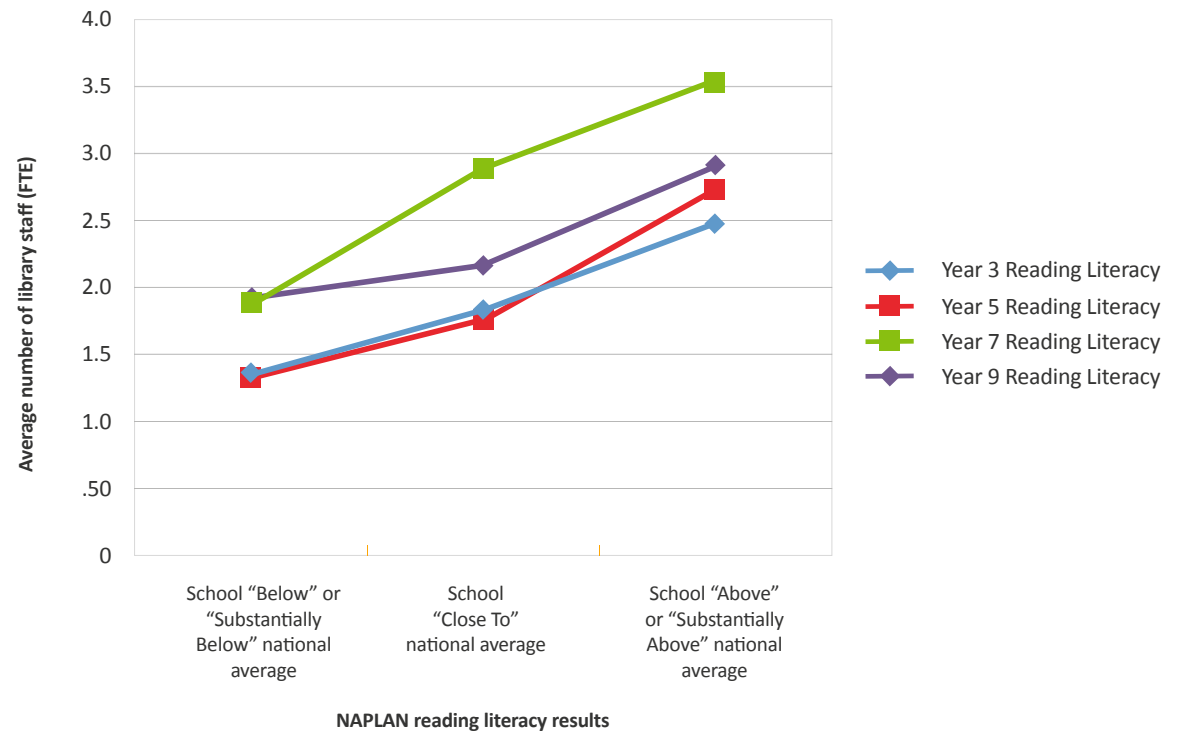Comparison of reading literacy results with average number of library staff

Figure 17: Comparison of reading literacy results for each year group with average number of school library staff Australia 2016

3.0 Industry trends and future directions

As part of the survey, respondents were asked to comment on trends and future impacts. The key findings for school library trends and future directions have been outlined below.

3.1 eResources

The survey found that a third of respondent schools have purchased eBooks in the past year (33%). This is a similar response to 2015 (35%).

In 2016, 51% of schools indicated that eBooks now make up part of their collection (53% Australia, 39% New Zealand).

50% of respondents indicated that eResources - subscription databases make up part of their collection.

This is a significant increase since 2013, when only 20% of respondents indicated that eBooks or eResources made up part of their collection.

It is noted that there is a strong intention by school libraries to continue to extend their collections and services with digital titles, with 51% of Australian and 46% of New Zealand respondents indicating they will "definitely" or "most probably" purchase eBooks within the next 12 months.

"I would like more time for collaboration and development of literacy resources for teachers and students."

3.2 Mobile device ownership and BYOT/BYOD strategy

The survey investigates the broader trend towards personal mobile device access.

This year, 64% of respondents (67% New Zealand, 63% Australia) said half or more of their student population have access to a personal mobile device (iPod, iPad, smart phone or other tablet) with 23% of schools having a 1:1 program, 23% of schools a BYOT/BYOD strategy and 18% a mix of the two.

This reflects a simlar response to last year, and indicates a continued trend towards personal mobile device usage in schools.

53% of schools (64% new Zealand, 51% Australia) allow personal digital device use at school, this is the similar to the 2015 results (54%) and includes 39% of schools that 'encourage the use of personal mobile devices at school from within and outside the classroom, while another 14% stated they 'encouraged use at school but only outside of classroom'. 51% of Australian respondents and 64% of New Zealand respondents said they allow personal digital device use at school.

3.3 Library resource access

In 2016, 82% of schools indicated that they provide some level of access to resources from outside the library. 66% now provide access from both outside and within the school, while 16% provide access outside the library from within the school only.

These figures have increased since 2015, most significant is the increase in access from both outside and inside the school, which was 58% in 2015 compared with 66% in 2016.

85% of librarians believe it is important to provide access to the school library (catalogue, electronic resources, eBooks etc.) from outside the school and outside school hours.

3.4 School library objectives and services

School library objectives

Library staff were asked what objectives they considered to be the most important. The top 3 objectives for Australian and New Zealand schools included:

1. **Aligning curriculum with existing resources/practices** with 91% of respondents indicating that this is important or very important to them

2. **Developing information literacy programs** with 88% of respondents indicating that this is important or very important to them

3. **Refurbishing/updating library or learning centre** with 76% of respondents indicating that this is important or very important to them.
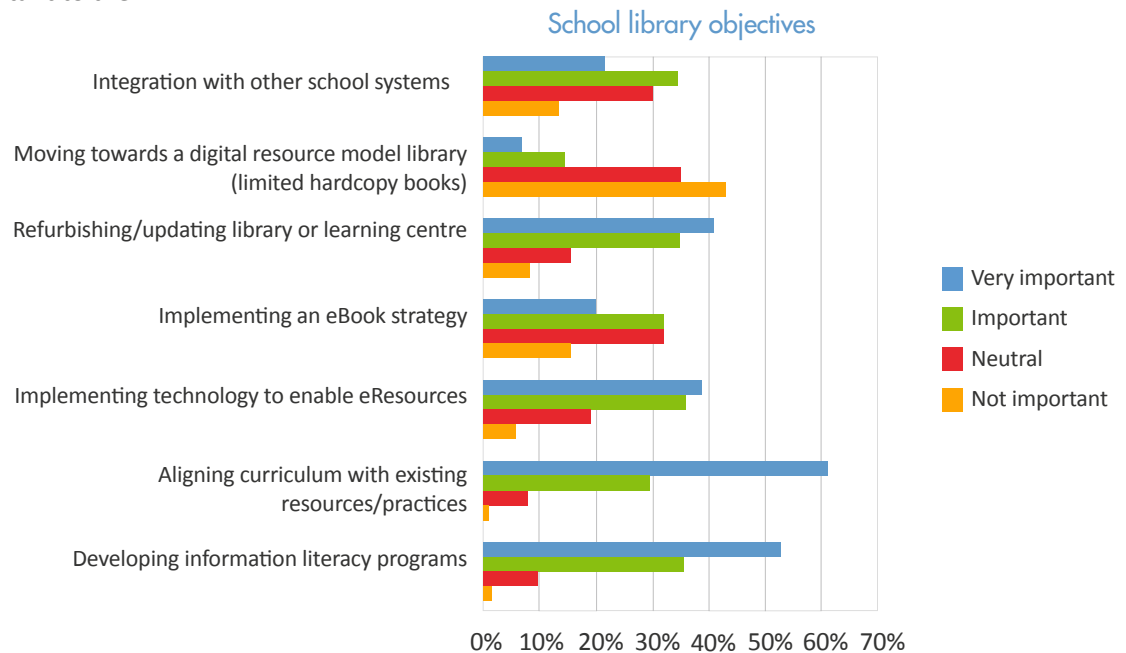
"I am looking forward to being able to integrate eBooks and audiobooks into our collection."

Figure 18: School library objectives

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Most important services that the library provides

The survey also analysed the most important services that libraries provides to students and the school. The most important services (from the 12 responses provided in Figure 19 below) included: Recreational/leisure reading, Resource and collection management, and Provision of learning centre and space.

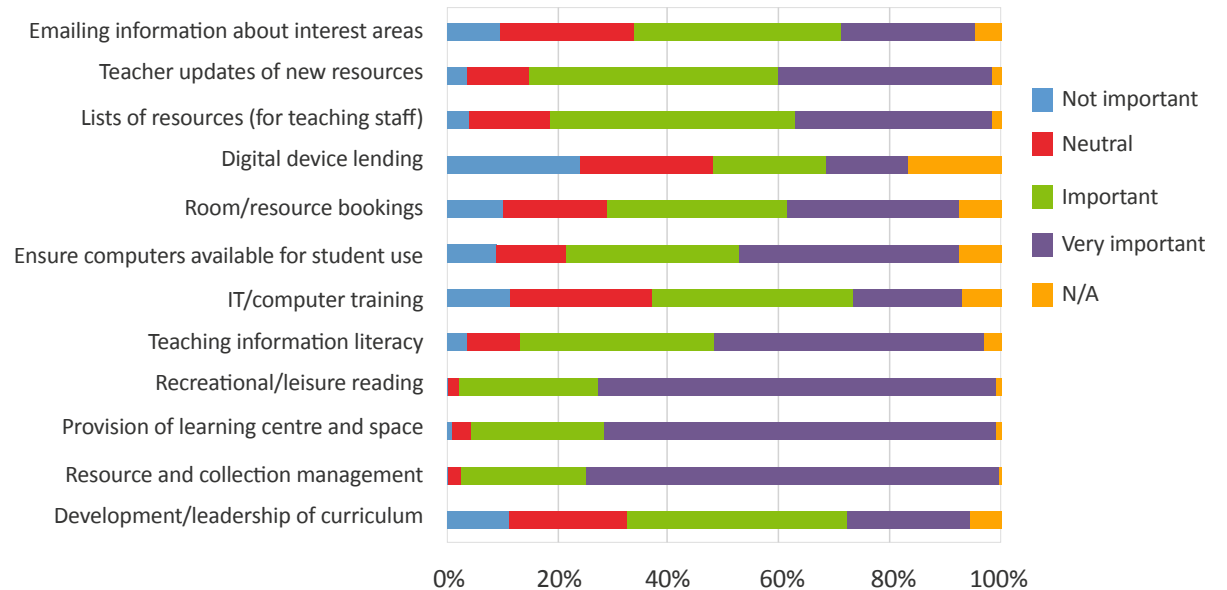### Most important services that the library provides

Figure 19: Most important services that the library provides

3.5 School library professionals

The 2016 Australian and New Zealand School Library Survey asked how school libraries were staffed.

FTE staff by role and school type

Figure 20 shows the percentage of Australian schools by type that have at least 1 full time equivalent (FTE) staff member in each of the roles listed. It was found that 40% of Primary schools, 79% of K-12 schools and 77% of Secondary schools have at least 1 FTE qualified Teacher Librarian or qualified Librarian.

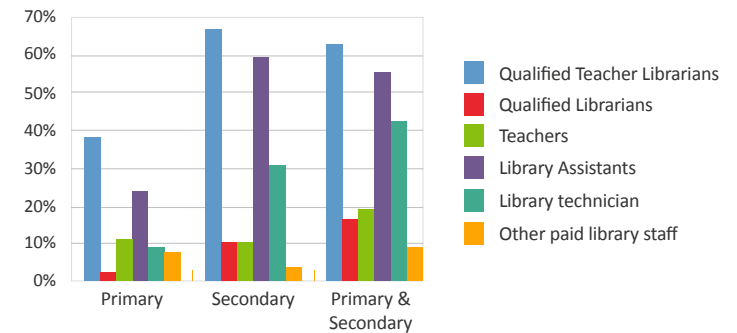### FTE staff by role and school type Australia

Figure 20: FTE staff by role and school type Australia

Figure 21 shows the percentage of New Zealand schools by type that have at least 1 full time equivalent (FTE) staff member in each of the roles listed. It was found that 26% of Primary schools, 62% of Intermediate schools, 52% of K-12 schools and 72% of Secondary schools have at least 1 FTE qualified Teacher Librarian or qualified Librarian.

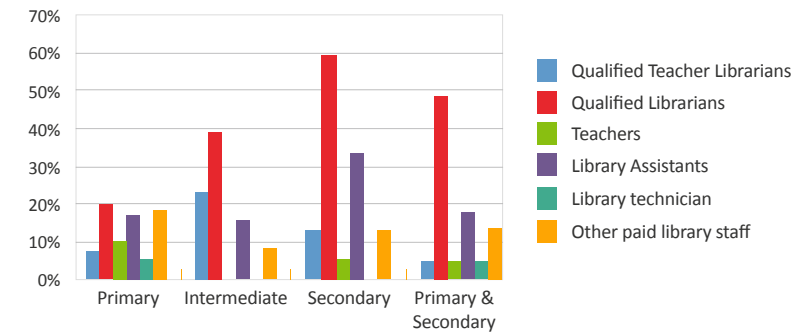### FTE staff by role and school type New Zealand

Figure 21: FTE staff by role and school type New Zealand

"Libraries need to be open places for students to come and enjoy all kind of books, eBooks, computers and much more. It must be a learning space where students like to spend time."

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FTE staff by role and education provider

Figure 22 shows the percentage of Australian schools by education provider that have at least 1 full time equivalent (FTE) staff member in each of the roles listed. It was found that 69% of Catholic schools, 52% of Government schools and 85% of Independent schools have at least 1 FTE qualified Teacher Librarian or qualified Librarian.

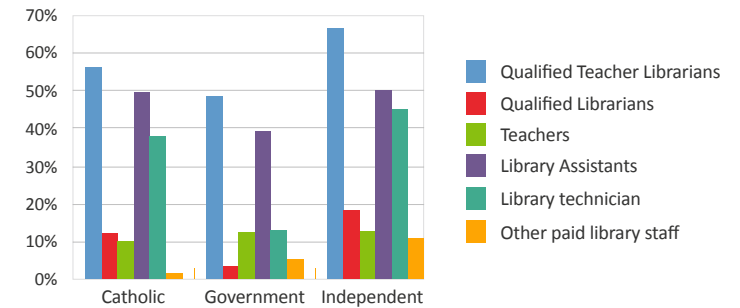### FTE staff by role and education provider Australia

Figure 22: FTE staff by role and education provider Australia

Figure 23 shows the percentage of New Zealand schools by education provider that have at least 1 full time equivalent (FTE) staff member in each of the roles listed. It was found that 29% of Catholic schools, 42% of Government schools and 75% of Independent schools have at least 1 FTE qualified Teacher Librarian or qualified Librarian.
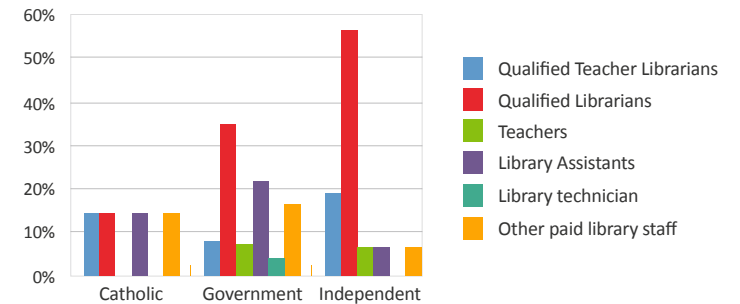
FTE staff by role and education provider New Zealand

Figure 23: FTE staff by role and education provider New Zealand

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4.0 Amount of weekly administration time for library staff

The 2016 Australian and New Zealand School Library Survey investigated the amount of weekly administration time allocated to the role. The majority of respondents (66%) indicated that they are allocated two or more hours for administration per week. This has increased from 64% in 2015.

11% of respondents indicated that they have no hours allocated for administration tasks, this has decreased from 15% in 2015.

Amount of weekly administration time for library staff

Legend:
- None
- Less than one hour
- One hour
- More than one hour, less than two hours
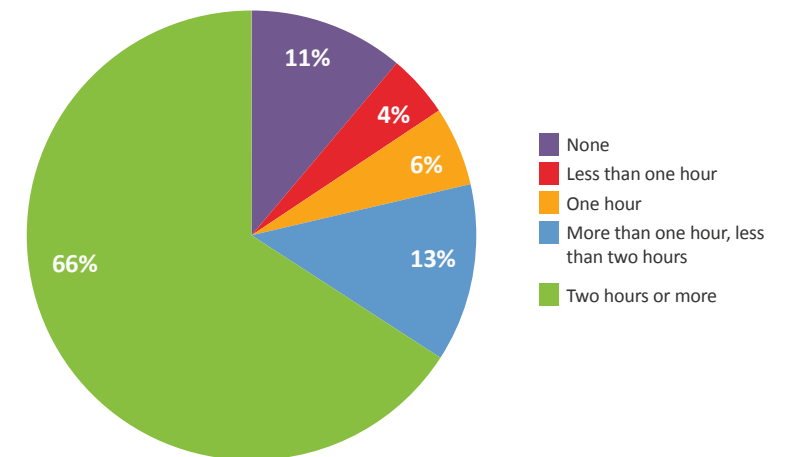- Two hours or more

Figure 24: Amount of weekly administration time for library staff

5.0 Role in supporting classroom teachers

Respondents were asked 'Which statement best describes your role in supporting classroom teachers?' Please see Table 3 below for responses.

Role statement	Percentage of respondents
Provide adhoc supervisions	37%
Provide regular release/non-contact time for teachers	25%
Plan and teach cooperatively with classroom teachers	38%

Table 3: Role in Supporting Classroom Teachers

"I am very fortunate to be well supported in my role in this school as my principal believes that teacher librarians are important to the whole school community."

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6.0 Feedback themes

Respondents were asked four open-ended questions about the library and their role. They were also asked to share innovative practices they had implemented in their library. We had a number of respondents share about innovations in their library, which you can read about in our whitepaper "School libraries share innovative ideas" available on our website.

Recurring themes include:

The library space
Reimaging the library space is a hot topic for respondants. Libraries are opening up and becoming places for collaboration and community more than ever before and librarians are looking at ways to make the library even more engaging for students.

Collaboration/co-teaching
Library staff would like more time and opportunites to work collaboratively with teachers and to be involved with curriculum planning.

Resource management
Respondents are looking at ways to change the way they organise their collection. There is a big move away from the traditional Dewey system and a move towards genrefication.

Technology
Making the most of available technology as well as providing digital literacy learning is a priority for respondents. eBook and eResource collections continue to grow, and anywhere, anytime, any device access to the library is considered very important.

7.0 The survey scope

The 2016 Softlink Australian and New Zealand School Library Survey was conducted online. Invitations were open to all Australian and New Zealand school libraries and consisted of 33 questions that covered the following topics:

- Your school library and school's objectives
- How school libraries are resourced – budgets and staffing
- The role of the library within the school community
- Library technology and catalogue trends
- Emerging issues
- Library industry support
- Viewpoints on opportunities and challenges for the next 12 months

8.0 Survey analysis methods

It was determined that the median budget was the most suitable figure of measure for comparing the school library budgets, instead of using the average mean. This was due to the large variance between the schools surveyed; some schools reported budgets which are much larger than other schools, which resulted in a higher mean. For example some Primary schools in the 0-199 student size category reported an annual budget of $200 and others of $18,950. For K-12 schools in the 1100+ student size category the annual budgets ranged from $10,000 to $250,000.

"School libraries are thriving centres of learning both in the physical library space and in the virtual classroom, and Teacher Librarians enrich school teaching and learning programs through their specialist role."

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9.0 Respondents

This year the survey received 1098 responses from 1035 schools. Table 4 below shows the breakdown of survey respondents by Education Provider and School Type.

Type of School	Education Provider			TOTAL
	Catholic	Government	Independent/Private	
Primary/Contributing	64	383	39	486
Primary & Secondary	24	82	130	236
Intermediate	1	15	0	16
Secondary	78	243	39	360
TOTAL	167	723	208	1098

Table 4 : 2016 Survey respondents by School Type and Education Provider

10.0 Conclusion

The 2016 findings continue to indicate a relationship between well-funded and well-staffed libraries and student achievement. The findings show, once again, a correlation between high NAPLAN literacy results and a well-resourced library.

Additionally, school library staff are reinvisioning the library and are looking for ways to increase engagement and library accessibilty and usuability, especially in the current digital environment.

The increase in online library access, eBook and eResource collections, and intention to further grow digital collections, indicates that many schools have transitioned to a more digital model to provide library services.

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