WHAT'S TRENDING

#SchoolLibraries
2019-2020

online databases · COVID-19 eBooks STEM curation learning hub graphic novels advocacy community digital literacy virtual libraries online learning fake news connection audio books students need school libraries school shutdowns technology makerspaces digital integration access great school libraries

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Contents

Softlink is proud to support school libraries through the annual school library surveys conducted in the APAC and EMEA regions. The surveys provide findings on school library funding, staffing, evolving roles, delivery of digital resources, and visions for the future.

Introduction

In 2016 we published the feature document What's Trending #SchoolLibraries, based on responses to the 2015 Softlink Australia and New Zealand School Library Survey.

In the 2019, we decided to revisit this question, including current trends from Australia, New Zealand, Asia Pacific, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, and posed a specific question in the global surveys around this theme.

We thought this document would not be complete without the highest trending topic in 2020, COVID-19 and school shutdowns, so we ran an additional 3 question survey in May 2020. A sample of responses has been included at the end of this feature.

This feature highlights the voice of real school librarians, collated into common themes identified from written responses.

Softlink is proud to collate the global comments within this feature document. Additional feature documents, with comments drawn from Softlink's global surveys, are available through the Resources page on the Softlink web site.

While there were a number of themes presented, the increase in school library advocacy and recognition of the role of the library and library staff featured highly in the responses.

We encourage you to continue to help promote the value of school libraries to the community through campaigns such as Students Need School Libraries and Great School Libraries.

To find out more, watch our video at www.softlinkint.com/resource-details/video-great-school-libraries/ or visit

www.studentsneedschoollibraries.org.au
www.greatschoollibraries.org.uk

1. #Advocacy #Recognition

Respondents shared about the rise in school library advocacy, and the contribution the Students Need School Libraries Campaign, the Great School Libraries Campaign, authors, public libraries, and school library staff themselves are making to promote the library.

They also shared that there is a growing awareness of the difference a well-resourced and well-staffed library can make to educational outcomes.

'There is a growing realisation by the general public that trained teacher librarians are essential in schools for the teaching and learning of digital literacy and reading.' Australia
#TeacherLibrarians #DigitalLiteracy #TeachingReaders

'The impact of nationwide campaigns such as Students Need School Libraries and the possibility that these campaigns can lead to more schools with well-resourced libraries.' Australia
#StudentsNeedSchoolLibraries

'Libraries are being proactive about promoting what we do.'
New Zealand
#SchoolLibraryAdvocacy

'Campaigns for advocating for teacher librarians and school libraries.' Australia
#StudentsNeedSchoolLibraries #GreatSchoolLibraries

'The Students Need School Libraries movement!' Australia
#StudentsNeedSchoolLibraries

'Authors and campaigners promoting libraries.' United Kingdom
#GreatSchoolLibraries

'Australia-wide collaboration to strongly advocate for our role.'
Australia
#StudentsNeedSchoolLibraries

'The Students Need School Libraries campaign is very exciting. I think it provides us with a common language to use when promoting the school library and the importance of our role.' Australia
#StudentsNeedSchoolLibraries

'I am hopeful that the Great School Library campaign will continue to be recognised.' United Kingdom
#GreatSchoolLibraries

'There is an increased awareness of how amazing libraries are, thanks to the amazing work public libraries are doing to build up their libraries as a community hub of learning, fun, and books'. Australia
#PublicLibraries #IloveMyLibrary

'I think there has been an increase in coverage of community libraries being community spaces.

The coverage of this in the media means that principals and the executive are more aware of what libraries can provide.

Previously it would be the librarian trying to advocate this.' Australia
#ImportanceOfTheLibrary

'There is a greater understanding of the awesome things qualified library staff can offer!' Australia
#TeacherLibrarians #DigitalLiteracy #TeachingReaders

'Acknowledgement that literacy is improved by having well-staffed and well-resourced libraries.' Australia
#StudentsNeedSchoolLibraries

'An awareness that literacy and research skills are linked to schools having a welcoming and well-resourced library, with a qualified teacher librarian."
Australia
#TeacherLibrarians #Literacy #ResearchSkills

2. #TheVirtualLibrary

Respondents shared about the rise in digital resources and integrating these into the digital collection. They shared that with the rise in technology and increased accessibility to the school library through cloud-based systems, they are finding new ways to meet the needs of students that live in an online world, and build a virtual library space alongside the physical library space. Curated guides to support research also featured in the comments.

'The importance of the "virtual" library - being able to access library resources from anywhere and at anytime.

Students today expect information at their fingertips and if the school library wants to stay relevant, they need to provide that.'

Australia

#VirtualLibrary #Access

'I love the idea of integrating digital resources into our database and combining these with our physical resources.

It's also exciting to see how we can integrate technology into the way the Resource Centre operates on a day-to-day basis.' Australia
#Integration #DigitalResources

'eBooks, since one can access them anywhere they are.'
Tanzania
#eBooks #Access

'The cloud has made a big difference in the abililty to access resources and learning tools.

Integration of resources with learning platforms will continue to increase as schools need to streamline how they supply a multitude of different platforms to staff and students.' Australia
#VirtualLibrary #OnlineResources #Integration

'Quicker, more accessible-directly-from-your-computer, curated collections.' Australia
#CuratedResources #Access

'Taking the library out of the physical space and into the world of the students.' Australia
#VirtualLibrary

'Further developments in cloud-based LMS's to allow access anywhere, anytime, and on any device.' New Zealand
#CloudBasedLibrary #Access

'Technology and access to both reading materials and research sources online.' United Kingdom
#VirtualLibrary #OnlineResources

'Digitalised resources such as magazines and newspapers.'
Germany
#eResources

'Ongoing digital integration, but it needs to be quality - this is where effective curation is needed.' Australia
#ContentCuration #DigitalIntegration

'Being able to provide many more options for students with the introduction of online resources and programs.' Australia
#OnlineResources

'There is a huge growth in eBooks and associated technology.'
Thailand
#eBooks

'Online library guides to help with research.' Australia
#OnlineResearchGuides #ContentCuration

'I believe that the future for librarians is that we are now needed to help access information across many areas and not just through books.'
Australia
#VirtualLibrary

'With access to online databases, research can happen easily and more regularly, without physically being in the library.' Australia
#eResources #OnlineDatabases #VirtualLibrary

'I think there will be a greater emphasis on digital resources and technologies.' New Zealand
#DigitalResources

'Online resources are becoming broader in their scope and flexibility.'
Australia
#OnlineResources

'There has been a growth in students using the library more to access information on their device and less use of traditional 'hard' resources - becoming more of a study hub and less searching for resources.' Australia
#VirtualLibrary #OnlineResources

'An increase of the use of online and other electronic resources.'
The Netherlands
#OnlineResources

'There is a growth in 24/7 access to curated online resources presented in a growing number of formats.'
Australia
#CuratedResources

'The ability to link digital resources and strengthen the News Page options for staff and students - LearnPath.' Australia
#CuratedResources #DigitalResources

'More digital resources and use of social media; using skype and whatever else emerges to link with libraries/authors etc.'
United Kingdom
#DigitalResources #LinkingAuthors&Students

'Ongoing digital integration, but it needs to be quality information - this is where effective curation is needed.'
Australia
#CuratedResources #Integration

'Digitisation of resources making them more accessible and also freeing up shelf space so we can focus on physical resources that children want to engage with.'
Australia
#DigitalResources #Access

'Access to better quality information through online databases.'
New Zealand
#OnlineResources

'An increase in online resources making libraries accessible 24/7.'
Australia
#OnlineResources #Access

'The digitisation and cataloguing of historical records which will improve student access to local historical information.' New Zealand
#DigitisationOfResources #Access

'We are looking into the use of eBooks and audio books in our school - that is exciting.

Another trend is the ways in which we are, and can, integrate technology.' Australia
#eBooks #AudioBooks #Integration

'Online resources are becoming broader in their scope and flexibility.'
Australia
#OnlineResources

'There is so much scope for the library to be a digital platform for a whole range of resources and initiatives. A problem I see increasingly is various departments investing in platforms, all of which have different passwords etc, which can be very confusing for the students.

There is scope for librarians to assist in integrating and supporting these platforms, and also in talking to developers to ensure points of access are consistent.

There is also so much scope for librarians to collaborate on digital content. Providers seem to be aware of the potential for this, but schools tend to lack the experience to understand what their libraries can offer them.' United Kingdom
#LibraryAsDigitalLeader #OnlineResources

Children and staff want to be able to access the library not only from the library itself, but from the classroom and home.

This would make it easier for research through websites available and updated in Oliver news, and also to create book reviews after reading books that they have put on hold from the classroom or home.'
Australia
#MeetingPlace #Makerspace #Access

3. #SchoolHub #CommunitySpace

Respondents shared how libraries are moving away from the traditional model and becoming a community hub, for both the school community, and the broader community.

As the "hub of the school", libraries are no longer seen as just quiet spaces for study, but vibrant, flexible, collaborative spaces that facilitate group learning and study, cross-facility learning, community events, and social connection.

'I love that libraries are trending towards being the hub of a community - whether this is school based or otherwise.' Australia
#CommunityHub #SchoolHub

'The library is becoming more than just a place where books can be found to read and excite your learning. It is a meeting place for everyone to express themselves through story places and Makerspaces.' Australia
#MeetingPlace #Makerspace #Access

'I am interested in new libraries that are being built in the centre of a school campus alowing them to be meeting/communities spaces.

This is in contrast to past designs that seem to be discrete, single-purpose spaces designed for quiet study.'
Australia
#CommunitySpace #MeetingSpace

'School libraries are changing to become the learning hubs of the school, providing flexible spaces and room for varied use.' Australia
#LearningHub

'The school library being a civic or community centre of the school.'
South Africa
#CommunityCentre

'Libraries are opening their doors and including the whole community, not just students and teachers.'
Australia
#CommunitySpace

'Libraries are being used as a Learning Commons in the school.'
Australia
#LearningCommons

'School libraries are being used as an events space - for workshops, author talks, hosting PD, after hours events etc.' Australia
#Events

'Multi-functional use of the library space. Libraries are no longer seen merely as places with books, but places that offer a range of activities, and a range of resources.' Australia
#CommunitySpace

'Libraries becoming a stimulating and popular community space.'
Australia
#CommunitySpace

'Libraries are becoming collaborative spaces for the whole school community and not just a quiet place to read and research alone.'
Australia
#CollaborativeSpace

'Libraries are becoming a one-stop-shop: a community hub that provides resources, companionship, and internet.' New Zealand
#CommunityHub #InformationHub

'Libraries are becoming community spaces - providing guided learning and bringing people together through book discussion opportunities.' New Zealand
#CommunitySpace

'The library is the refuge for so many who are able to find their kind - a safe place to be, and a soft place to fall. This is one of the most important roles of the libraries.' Australia
#Refuge #RoleOfTheLibrary

'With the increase in cross-faculty learning, libraries are becoming a truly collaborative space.' Australia
#CollaborativeSpace

'The increasing recognition of libraries as a community hub (almost like a return to brand?)'

Australia

#CommunityHub

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4. #FakeNews #DigitalLiteracy

Resondents shared that with the rise in fake news and the increase in digital learning, there has been a greater need to teach information, digital, and critical literacies. They also shared the increasing role of school library staff to teach these skills.

'The rise of fake news and the anger in society, together with a fear of being 'led', presents a huge opportunity for libraries.'
United Kingdom
#FakeNews

'Library officers are supporting student and teachers by curating online information and physical resources.

It is also an important part of their role to teach the best way to research and judge the legitimacy of online resources.' Australia
#ResourceCuration #InformationLiteracy

'Innovative approaches to teaching information literacy.' Singapore
#InformationLiteracy

'Students requiring information literacy skills - and other soft skills - to make it in the world beyond school means that information literacy programs in schools are becoming compulsory.' Australia
#InformationLiteracy

'The rise in fake news has meant that the library role has been recognised as a source to teach critical information skills and how to find quality information.'
The Netherlands
#FakeNews #CriticalLiteracy

'The importance of teaching critical literacy skills which are required for cutting through fake news, altered photographs etc.' Austalia
#CriticalLiteracy #FakeNews

'The increase in online learning spaces has required students to engage with ethical digital practices at a younger age.' Australia
#DigitalLiteracy #OnlineLearning

'Teacher librarians are at the forefront of teaching digital/information literacy and digital technologies.'
Australia
#DigitalLiteracy #InformationLiteracy

'Improving digital literacy in digital natives.' United Kingdom
#DigitalLiteracy #DigitalNatives

'There has been an increase of BYOD in the primary years.

This means that younger students are accessing the web more regularly for their learning.

The impact of this is that teacher librarians are needed to teach information literacy skills.

Another impact is the ongoing up-skilling that teacher librarians undertake in the use of various technologies and the integration of these devices and platforms into the teaching space.' Australia
#CommunityHub

'Digital Literacy as part of the New Zealand Curriculum.' New Zealand
#DigitalLiteracy

'Society is starting to understand that information literacy is crucial in the era of greater online information provision and fake news.'
Australia
#FakeNews #InformationLiteracy

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5. #InteractiveLearningExperiences

Respondents shared that school libraries are becoming a space for more interactive, hands-on learning spaces with the introduction of Makerspaces, STEM, STEAM, VR and AR. They also shared that this has led to more critical and creative thinking, as well as collaborative teaching and learning.

'There is a massive shift from the library being a place to find books to so much more.

Libraries are becoming a meeting place, Makerspace, digital hub, gaming space etc.

There is a shift from quiet space to creative space while offering an even greater range of resources.' Australia
#Makerspace #InteractiveSpace #DigitalHub

'Libraries are becoming hands on learning, collaborative teaching spaces.' New Zealand
#HandsOnLearning #CollaborativeSpace

'The creation of different spaces in the library to explore a broader range of learning.

These might include Makerspaces, digital media hubs, or a place for quiet reading.' Australia
#Makerspace

'Libraries are becoming multi-learning spaces incorporating areas such as STEM and Makerspace zones.' Australia
#Makerspace #STEM

'I love having Makerspace areas in our library! It's great to see students going from research to creation in the one space.' New Zealand
#Makerspace

'The school library is becoming a flexible learning space that embodies critical and creative thinking, in a welcoming and comfortable environment.' Australia
#FlexibleLearningSpace

'I am passionate about STEM so the idea of a Makerspace is something that is very interesting.

Libraries need to be more vibrant and interactive to attract children.' Australia
#Makerspace #STEM #InteractiveLearningSpace

'STEM focus is a growing area in which libraries can play a role.' Australia
#STEM

'More involvement by the teacher librarian as a digital and STEM facilitator.' Australia
#STEM

'There is definitely an increase in STEAM in both curriculum and Makerspace projects.

Libraries will need to adapt to provide appropriate stimulus to ride the STEAM train...(lil joke there).' Australia
#STEAM #Makerspace

'The inclusion of Makerspaces in the library.' Australia
#Makerspace

'Incorporating STEM into library classes.' Australia
#STEM

'Makerspace/coding is popular here and Minecraft is a hit with all the year groups.

Having time, funding and space to allow advancement in technologies to enhance these areas and digital literacy pursuits beyond the page would be wonderful.' New Zealand
#Makerspace #Coding

'There is more emphasis on discovery or project-based learning requiring a wider range of resources.' Australia
#ProjectBasedLearning

'The increased use of eBooks and audio books is making otherwise disengaged students enjoy reading. That is flowing on to students then trying, and enjoying, reading print books.'

Australia

#ReadingEngagement #eBooks #AudioBooks

6. #EngagingReaders #SupportingReaders

Respondents shared that access, and access to a greater variety of books (e.g. Graphic Novels), books that are more diverse (representing all people), and a greater variety of resources to support special needs/struggling readers, has lea to greater student engagement in reading or success with teaching reading.

'An increase of accessibility to digital materials (including eBooks, audiobooks, and databases) in conjunction with ongoing increase in student access to 1:1 devices (particularly in terms of BYOD) has the potential to offer opportunities to all teachers to improve literacy. This is because students will always have access at point-of-need to digital books.

In our school, there was a goal to have 15 minutes of reading at the start of the last period of every day, (after the long lunch break) but due to lack of commitment by the students to bringing a book, this has not been terribly successful. With the implementation of a BYOD program alongside the integration of eBooks and audio books, this is no longer a roadblock.' Australia
#eBooks #AudioBooks

'Graphic Novels are really engaging our weaker readers to be excited about their reading.' Australia
#GraphicNovels #EngagingReaders

'I think the fact there are more Graphic Novel type books around has improved the reading relationship, especially for boys.

More boys are reading now as the books are different and exciting.'
Australia
#ReadingEngagement #GraphicNovels

'The breadth of children's literature reflecting all people, not just from one place, one gender or one race.

The growth in diversity in books is fantastic!' China
#DiversityInBooks

'More use of eBooks and better use of audio books and other resources to help those with SEN e.g. using AI in reading assessment.'
United Kingdom
#eBooks #ReadingSupport

'There is increased attention on promoting reading, and reading for pleasure, as a whole school initiative.'
United Kingdom
#ReadingForPleasure #EngagingReaders

'Increased quality resources for learners with special needs eg books for dyslexic readers.' New Zealand
#DyslexicReaders #ReadingSupport

'A more socially and ethnically diverse range of authors who are responding imaginatively to the issues and concerns of life at this time!' United Kingdom
#DiversityInBooks

'Graphic Novels are becoming increasingly popular.

This has helped students who struggle with reading to progress.'
Australia
#GraphicNovels #StrugglingReaders

'The move towards being more flexible when teaching children to learn to read is bringing more children towards the love of reading.

Students are being encouraged to read by choice of genre or interest rather than be forced to read certain books.' Australia
#ReadingEngagement #Genre

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7. #COVID-19

A lot has changed since survey results were first received, with schools moving to an online teaching mode. This paper would not be complete without exploring the highest trending topic for school libraries in 2020:

"What impact has COVID-19 and school shutdowns had on the school library?"

To this end, we released a short, 3 question survey in the APAC and EMEA regions asking about impacts, challenges, and innovative solutions or tips to address these challenges. A selection of responses are shared on the following pages.

7.1. How has COVID-19 impacted your school library?

'We have implemented a "Click and Collect " system for our novels. If families are in town they can collect them, if they are not leaving their house we are mailing the book to them. The issue will be the enormous volume of returns at the end of remote learning.' APAC

'Our library is currently closed but I can work from home. I am using this time to really explore the LMS and getting on with catologuing the reading scheme books!' EMEA

'We are supporting online learning and continuing primary library lessons online through video recordings, Zoom classes, and downloadable lesson resources.
 Our staff are contactable during the day and we continue to respond to requests for assistance with our online resources, including databases, ClickView, etc.' APAC

'School is closed, apart from a small number of students and skeleton teaching and admin staff.

The library staff are working from home planning future lessons and displays, creating and adding resources to the school VLE, and reading JF/YA books!' EMEA

'We're not worrying about getting overdue books back and had a cull of old books to send home with students for them to keep.' APAC

'There has been an increased demand for assistance with locating and accessing online reference materials and eBooks.' APAC

'We have used this opportunity to refurbish the physical space.

I have also expanded our online offering.' APAC

'Our library is closed - more books were loaned out to cover the lockdown period.

The situation has made me rethink how the library will be used on return to work.

The librarian is working from home and has also had to rethink the role and how we encourage reading remotely.' EMEA

'Students learning from home has meant a shift to online borrowing from our eBook/audio book collection, and a quick shift into building that collection which historically had not been anywhere near as popular as the physical collection.

With students due to return to school, now it is about how to restart library lessons and borrowing in a safe way.' APAC

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'We have no students in our library at the moment, which makes it a dull and boring place! The students are the life of our library.

I am being challenged to think of new and interesting ways to maintain connections and engagement with the library and its collection.

The time I would normally spend with students is now being spent on research, ideas-generation, and learning.'

APAC

'Where do I start?

As the numbers of students dwindled away, it became evident that I needed to get more books into their hands. Increasing our loan limit made me feel like Willy Wonka opening the doors to his chocolate factory! The kids eyes popped at the thought and they walked out with arms full of books that they would have plenty of time to read.

It was also a chance for me to encourage students to read some challenging books, some classic literature, and to promote the how-to books to keep them entertained.

We are now dealing with the fallout of bulk overdues but I regret nothing!

The day we closed our doors was the hardest to bear. We put Where's Wally posters, book related jokes, and messages in the windows for the remaining kids to still have a connection to the library.

Cleaning books has been time consuming but cathartic.' APAC

'The school is closed apart from key workers children.

I have been able to access the LMS at home so have been able to do some work.' EMEA

'Our school library was used right up until the point that schools were forced to close in March. After that, we were forced to adapt to the climate.

This included providing book boxes that students and parents could access without the need for human interaction - the boxes were left in main reception for students/parents to look through and help themselves to.' EMEA

'I am in WA and initially I closed my high school library for issuing and borrowing a week before the school holidays. I allowed students to borrow as many items as they liked to ensure they were catered for with their reading if schooling was remote.

Due to low numbers of COVID-19, WA schools opened after the holidays and I am carrying on with my classes and borrowing as if nothing has happened.

I ask students to use hand sanitiser when they come into the library and cap the numbers, but it is not possible to stop the borrowing without causing students to be disadvantaged as public libraries are closed.

I worry about my situation but the show must go on!' APAC

'The school has been closed since the middle of March and we have been delivering lessons and support through Google Classroom.

This has involved a huge effort from teaching staff and myself to upskill to use this tool to its full potential.' EMEA

'This has had a positive impact on our library - it has become the HUB for those students who are remote learning at school because their parents are essential workers.

There has also been a call for availability of online resources to cater for all students.' APAC

'The library is closed so no loans in or out.

On a positive note, because the library is easy to close off, I can isolate, so I have been able to rearrange the shelving layout, shift books around, put new titles on, and stock edit with no interruptions, I wipe down surfaces regularly.

The room is increasingly being used by key worker children when they participate in Microsoft teams classes and tutor discussions.' EMEA

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'More students and staff have used the library through the College Library VLE than at any other time over the course of the past 6 years. Brilliant!'

EMEA

'The school is closed, therefore the library is officially closed. However the library is being used as the student hub for those students still in school during this time.

Staff are on a rota system and have emailed me when students have wished to take out books, all of which I can sort out remotely, thanks to the Oliver system.

The library is housed in its own building at the school and is a light, open, airy space.

It is far more welcoming than a classroom, and has its own facilities, therefore it was seen as the ideal place to look after the small number of students attending throughout the lockdown.' EMEA

'As the school has been closed, I have taken the time to re-organise and weed my entire collection.

The library could be of more use to those teachers working at school to provide distance learning, and via the internet for those teachers who were working from home.

Not so much with books, but as a central research point for sites and web addresses to assist in distance learning and such.' EMEA

'For the most part, the changes to education brought on by the pandemic have meant several opportunities for us to showcase our skills in digital spaces. We have also been able to showcase the breadth of our collections, which were already well on the way to being well fleshed out in the digital sphere.

The library techs have had some time seconded to a College-wide parent contact program (well outside their comfort zone but acquitted very well), and devised and implemented a new digital library space on the College learning management system, to support student engagement and wellbeing.

The TLs have created and delivered several videos for teachers to use in their digital spaces (picture book readings and resource access informative videos, for the most part), and have taken up multiple collaborative opportunities that have arisen. APAC

'COVID-19 has impacted our school library in a massive way. We created "Library - How to" Guides, using links to explain How to borrow e-books, How to use Clickview, How to use the School's databases, How to search the Library Catalogue, and What resources are available free for the COVID-19 duration.' APAC

'Our school has moved to remote teaching, with no staff on-site. This meant that we needed to provide library services remotely.

Luckily for us, we have remote access to our Oliver v5 library catalog and we also have LearnPath to enable us to create visually appealing subject guides to assist students with their learning. They can access these through our library 'News' page.

We also managed to get access to Overdrive ebooks (with the assistance of Softlink) so our school community has access to eBooks and audio books whilst the physical library is closed.

LearnPath has been a fantastic resource during this time and I have spent most of my time working remotely creating LearnPath guides for teachers to share with their students.

I have also created an extensive 'Online Resources' LearnPath guide where I have collated all the fantastic free online resources that are available at this time. Everything from free manga and webcomics, to virtual tours and live cams, digital escape rooms and digital volunteering opportunities. APAC

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'Producing the same lessons in four different formats:
- live in the classroom,
- online via Google Classroom,
- totally on paper,
- and paper/USB version.'
APAC

7.2. What challenges did your library face in going remote/into lockdown?

'The school closure was abrupt so there was no time to organise for books to be issued or returned - therefore hundreds of books are now overdue and many pupils will not have access to books during the lockdown as the public libraries have also been closed.' EMEA

'The biggest challenge for me has been staying positive and thinking ahead despite being limited in the scope of the work I can do remotely.' APAC

'Not working with classes and being very isolated from a usually busy hub.' APAC

'With no online resources, students have not been able to use the library since lockdown.' EMEA

'Upskilling students and teachers in the location and use of online resources has been a challenge.

Organising the circulation and virus safety returns of physical books has also been a problem.' APAC

'The hardest part is knowing that you have a whole library of resources sitting there waiting to be loved again.' APAC

'Trying to work out how to support staff and students safely.' APAC

'Being visible! The teachers are the direct contacts with families so I had to rely on them to pass on the information I was providing. The alternative was to communicate through the school admin who directly email notices and newsletters to all families.

Either way, I had no direct link. I developed a website that provides comprehensive resources for all ages, curriculum links to support the class learning, a collection of library related activities that were borne from the global lockdown (Eg: authors/ celebrities reading, illustrator drawing workshops), and a personal blog that kept me in touch with the students at home.

In the final week of term 1 when all teachers were preparing for the home/school teaching combination for their one class, I needed to prepare and provide resources for multiple classes.

It was a great relief to be notified of the copyright permissions being granted part way through the process of reading and recording.' APAC

'Maintaining a connection with students.' APAC

'We were pretty well prepared - with electronic resources and ebooks - it was a bit of a scramble to make sure everyone had accounts and login info.

The speed of lockdown just left everyone a bit bamboozled for a time!' EMEA

'The main challenges were meeting as much of the demand for open-ended loans of books and Chromebooks as possible and getting an eBook lending service up and running.

The library already had an extensive suite of online resources, which have really come into their own since the start of the UK lockdown.' EMEA

'The main challenges faced were:
- How to continue running the library remotely
- What library work could be done remotely
- How to continue to promote and enable reading.' EMEA

'Trying to find the best way to share links to learning resources with staff and students.' APAC

'The biggest challenge of remote learning is the inability to interact with students, one on one. Library staff are not just present to assist with research and resource recommendations. There is another important component - verbal interaction and banter with students. Giving students the opportunity to share their interests, thoughts and individual stories. Remote learning is the invisible barrier that hinders finding out more about a person. It makes it less effective in gearing information and resources to students on an individual basis. One size certainly does not fit all.'

APAC

'Initially there was a definite sense that SLT were looking to creative thinkers for innovative solutions. The situation presented a number of problems, but also a number of opportunities. The main challenges faced were:

- Ensuring people are safe when we can't 'see' them.
- Any behavioural or reward systems schools might have had in place are rendered meaningless very suddenly.
- The most vulnerable students are at a disadvantage - while some students have access to tech, others are essentially working on mobile phones.
- It is hard to tell how many students are accessing any learning.
- We were suddenly in a position of having to find efficient ways to communicate individually with high volumes of people. This is very high maintenance.' EMEA

'Getting all resources onto Google classroom.' APAC

'The gradual dwindling of physical students present, and a surge in demand for lockdown issues, whilst staff had their own health concerns.' EMEA

'Finding time to be a librarian when the demand has been focused on IT support rather than information literacy or reading.

Getting students to check their email.' APAC

'Maintaining a community of readers without library lessons or scheduled time to run remote lessons.' APAC

'Managing students 'lost' passwords and other login detail to various online platforms.' APAC

'Encouraging students to keep on reading and doing Accelerated Reader quizzes.

Getting to grips with technology I haven't had much to do with before.

But the biggest challenge has been keeping reluctant readers reading.' EMEA

'One minute we were open the next minute we were closed with little to no warning.

I was brand new in the post having only started in February. I have no access to the LMS so work has focussed around providing access to online resources, creating reading lists and resource guides, online fun activities, support for different classes and digital support in general to teachers.' EMEA

'For our secondary school library, one big challenge is that sustained, regular reading doesn't seem to be happening.

We have, and promote, eBook and audio book platforms. It would seem that many parents and students don't always give prominence to regular reading time, and without this, students can't build up reading capacity, volume or stamina.

This is a problem which predates the current pandemic, as Australian research tends to show that parents focus on the early primary school years for reading. Now our students are doing online learning, which requires a lot of reading, and they don't always have the reading stamina to cope.' APAC

'Not having a teaching role, my learning curve has been steep to learn Google classroom, attend Zoom meetings, participate in Teams etc.

The inconsistency of info. re what library services will look like when partial and full attendance is resumed is a cause for concern.' APAC

'The biggest frustration is not having our catalogue available online for parents/children to access from anywhere.' APAC

7.3. What tips/innovative solutions would you like to share with others facing these challenges?

'Take Long Service Leave until it's all over.'
APAC

'With the increase in workload and responsibility, keeping a firm grasp on what is essential and what is additional to the service at this time, and communicating that effectively to SLT is key to staying sane.

It helps to keep reminding yourself that you work within a large organisation and you do not need to take everything on yourself.' EMEA

'Choose one or two reliable sources to gather information from.

Facebook groups for librarians have been supportive and fantastic. I have learned much, and gathered much - seek advice and resources from there.' APAC

'Always keep on top of new innovations - you never know when they will become your primary and normal method of working!' EMEA

'Promote easy-to-use curriculum-related online resources and a central LMS to organise the resources and online lessons.' APAC

'Stay positive, get enough sleep, and don't stay on the computer until late at night.' APAC

'Keep calm, think carefully, and keep the library moving forward little by little.

Don't overload or overstress yourself.

Renew books remotely.

Signpost students to eBooks and audio books they can access for free, as well as websites which recommend books to read.' EMEA

'Always engage with students who take the trouble to contact you!

Deliver every message across a range of media platforms using a variety of ICT tools (e.g. both video and documents).' APAC

'Follow the school protocol about contact with students and staff as both are overwhelmed with information and trying to get to grips with teaching and learning online.

Subscribe to an eBook provider.' EMEA

'Don't stress about overdues.

Make sure your Head Teacher, SLT and HODs remember you and the resources you are able to make available to the students.' EMEA

'You can't do everything you used to.

Pick a couple of things you think are the most important e.g. Student Book Club, access to physical books, and find creative ways to make them happen.

Reach out to others in the community as often as you can - even if they don't want your services they appreciate you ask them.

Accept that screen fatigue will impact reading.' APAC

'When setting up digital platforms, assume that remote access will be needed and have it built in.' APAC

'My advice would be to borrow a decent school laptop before lockdown.

Owning an old PC without a camera, microphone or speakers greatly limits the opportunity to join online meetings.

An old PC which crashes when more than one process running also makes it impossible to access school drives etc.' EMEA

Softlink

'Create a library website to share with teachers and students and advocate for the library in newsletters & social media if possible.' APAC

'Add information to the library's management system homepage and direct students to this page for their information, and to enhance the library's presence.

Continue to offer reading challenges, (book/audio book/author, etc.) via your school's learning platforms.

Contribute to virtual assemblies if possible.' EMEA

'Think creatively! You have a budget for books that's possibly going to waste at the moment, so think about ways you can use it to help your students, such as: investing in video or audio equipment to create resources for teachers and students; buying extra copies of popular ebooks; prizes for online reading or writing competitions; booking an online author workshop... the list is endless!' APAC

'My school has not had a trained librarian for a long time and as such, despite the best efforts of those who worked in that space, the teaching resources were neglected. Promote the need for a trained librarian in EVERY SCHOOL. All children deserve it!.' APAC

'We have kept in touch with the student librarians who have created home book displays, posters, taken part in competitions, and written articles about 'being a student librarian in lockdown'.

Many of these have been shared via Twitter and hopefully this is helping the pupils remain involved and connected with the library.' EMEA

'Being part of the Teacher Online Instructional Support group was very useful.

School Library Associations have been great for curated lists of accessible resources.

Vendors have been good about providing additional access to services.

Make the time to spend on examining new resources.' APAC

'We have set up a library blog and are sending out weekly bulletins to students with reading suggestions on our D.E.A.R. mornings.

We have also continued to run our bookclub via a chat forum on Teams and Zoom.' EMEA

'I post funny book jokes or memes on the library page for my students to enjoy. And they send me some too, which I add so that everyone gets a laugh. APAC

'Be patient.

Set up a web platform that you can share with all the online resources available.' APAC

'Using Microsoft Teams has been a good way to keep contact with students.' EMEA

'Make sure you have access to the school library program from anywhere - easy with Oliver.

Stay in contact with staff using whatever tool works best for you and your team - Google meets, Messenger, Whatsapp etc.' APAC

'I have found working from home a great opportunity to research websites, make resources for the library, complete online courses and attend webinars, keep in touch with other librarians via Twitter and library forums, and to look at how I can improve the facilities of our library when we return.' EMEA

'We created reading lists for staff and curated quality online sources of information that were permanent (ie not just free access during COVID - so that if they incorporated it into their teaching practice if would always be available) by curriculum subject.

This has proved very popular.' APAC

Softlink

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'Keep it simple,
keep it relevant and
don't take things too seriously.'

APAC

'The 'Students Need School Libraries' website offers some great ideas for how to make library resources more accessible to the school community remotely.

My Year 6 Readers Cup team are also enjoying an Iso Challenge with quiz questions every week on our Microsoft Teams page, provided by Kids Lit Quiz, now that Readers Cup has been cancelled.' APAC

'Keep being innovative.

Plug into professional bodies and OZTLNET for ideas and support.

Continue to collaborate with staff as they develop their units of work.

In a workplace that is constantly changing... be the source of positivity and support.

Maintain staff relationships and a good sense of humour.' APAC

We have found our instagram a good way to grab students attention and promote things to them.

Students are overwhelmed at the moment - image based messages with only a little text cuts through more effectively.' APAC

'Our cluster of teacher/librarians have joined together online with lessons and ideas. This has been a fantastic innovation.' APAC

'We created book boxes (as mentioned above) with a wide selection of resources for students and parents to be able to access and borrow without the need of human interaction. I refresh these on the days that I do go into school.

We have also launched the OverDrive Secondary ebook platform to enable students access to a wide selection of eBooks.

I have made much more use of the library Twitter account to promote reading in as many ways as possible.' EMEA

'Use this time to research and catalogue wonderful websites and create online info packs. All staff can be involved with this.

Explore online resources now as many wonderful sites are offering free trials. This is a perfect time to trial them.

Use this time to draw up your Library Purpose Statement.' APAC

'I have used this opportunity to further promote Oliver functionality such as Reviewing, Reading Lists, and Baskets'. EMEA

'Use other outlets to communicate! Social media, Google classroom, the school newletter, for example.' APAC

'With the Department's Connect program I have been sending photos of the displays in the Library (yes, I am still putting them up) and sharing any new books that I have read and recommend. I am also using it to keep in touch with the students and the community, which has been great.

Of course, if you are able to, get your LMS hosted and in the cloud!' APAC

'Setting up a library Google classroom has been extremely useful - I share the code with students regularly to remind them.

I use the school's main website to highlight information and point students to the Google classroom for more detail.

I am also taking advantage of many offers of free access to online services, and also author online events including literary festivals.' EMEA

'Be strong, safe and good to yourselves when you arrive back at school.

Breathe and take things slow as you are coming out of your bubble as it can be daunting.' APAC
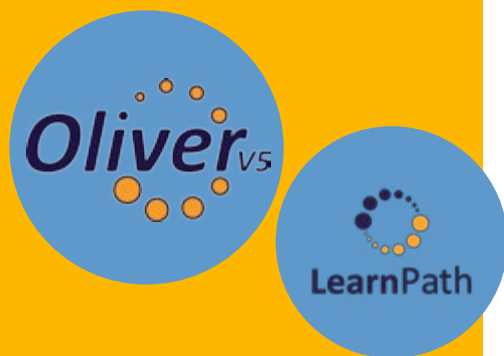
Softlink solutions

Softlink has been providing school library software for over 30 years, offering solutions to meet the ongoing needs of schools globally.

Users of Oliver v5 benefit from regular new feature updates, which are developed in direct response to feedback and insights gained from our active user community.

LearnPath users can create, publish, and share rich learning guides and content. They also have access to over 300 ready-made guides produced by teacher librarians.

Contact us

Would you like to find out more about how Softlink and Oliver v5 can support your school library? Visit our website softlinkint.com or contact us via email communications@softlinkint.com.

#FurtherReading

We have a number of reports and whitepapers available on our website (softlinkint.com/edu/resources) including:

The 2019 Softlink APAC School Library Survey

The 2019 Softlink EMEA School Library Survey

7 Challenges for School Libraries - Revisited

School Libraries Share: Ideas for promoting the library

School Libraries Share: Our wish list for the future

School Libraries Share: Innovative ideas

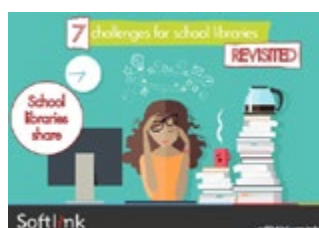How can the right school library software deliver educational outcomes for your school?

The Ongoing Importance of School Libraries

True Federated Search: Helping School librarians rise to the information literacy challenge

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School Libraries Share: Ideas for school-wide collaboration

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