

2015 Australian and New Zealand School Library Survey



Findings from *Softlink's 2015 Australian and New Zealand School Library Survey* into school library budgets, staffing and literacy levels in Australian and New Zealand school libraries.

Conducted by:

Softlink



Executive Summary

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. Key analysis includes 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 as well as through industry associations and networks.

The 2015 School Library Survey represents the sixth year of the survey for Australian schools and the first for New Zealand schools.

Note: The inclusion of New Zealand schools means that the collaborative 2015 Australian and New Zealand results are being compared with 2014 Australian only results.

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

This report outlines the findings from the *2015 Softlink School Library Survey* into Australian and New Zealand school library budgets, qualified staffing levels and, for Australian schools, NAPLAN literacy results.

Principle findings from the 2015 Softlink Australian and New Zealand School Library Survey include:

- There was a positive correlation between annual Australian school library budgets and NAPLAN Reading Literacy results.
- There was a positive correlation between the number of school librarians employed in Australian school libraries and NAPLAN Reading Literacy results.
- Overall, fewer schools reported a budget decrease 2014/2015 compared to the percentage of schools that reported a budget decrease between 2013/2014.
- Catholic schools had the highest percentage of budget decreases in the 2014/2015 comparison.
- Overall, 52% of respondents indicated that they felt that their school library was adequately funded, 48% of respondents felt that the opposite was true. This statistic reflects a similar split to the 2014 survey.
- The majority of school libraries had no change to their staffing levels.
- There was a significant increase in the number of schools that indicated their student population have access to a personal mobile device at school, with 64% indicating that half or more of their student population have a personal mobile device, as compared to 43% in 2014.
- There was a more significant increase in the take up of eBooks in Australian schools between 2014 (30%) and 2015 (34%) than between 2013 (28%) and 2014 (30%). 38% of New Zealand respondent schools have purchased eBooks in the past year.

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1.0 Introduction

Softlink is a global supplier of leading knowledge, content and library management solutions to schools, academic, public, legal and special libraries.

More than 50% of Australian school libraries use a Softlink knowledge, content and library management solution.

Since 2010, Softlink has undertaken the Australian School Library Survey to identify industry issues and trends as well as to advocate the information industry's development. In 2015, the Survey was extended to include New Zealand schools.

Softlink is proud to support school libraries and Teacher Librarians across Australia and New Zealand with current information regarding funding, staffing, evolving roles, delivery of digital resources and visions for the future.

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 is a proud supporter of Australian and New Zealand School Libraries. 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 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 across Australia.

1.2 The 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 has now extended this to include New Zealand schools. 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.

1.2.1 Survey Scope

The *2015 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 31 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

1.2.2 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 \$500 and others of \$25,000. For K-12 schools in the 1100+ student size category the annual budgets ranged from \$5,000 to \$370,000.

1.2.3 Respondents

This year the survey received 1099 responses from 994 schools. Table 1 below shows the breakdown of survey respondents by Education Provider and School Type.

Table 1: 2015 Survey respondents by School Type and Education Provider

	Education Provider			
Type of School	Catholic	Government	Independent	TOTAL
Primary	82	295	30	407
Primary & Secondary	25	60	128	213
Secondary	76	272	26	374
TOTAL	183	627	184	994

2.0 Survey Findings Summary

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

Principle findings from the 2015 Australian and New Zealand School Library Survey include:

- There was a positive correlation between annual Australian school library budgets and NAPLAN Reading Literacy results.
- There was a positive correlation between the number of school librarians employed in Australian school libraries and NAPLAN Reading Literacy results.
- Overall, fewer schools reported a budget decrease in 2014/2015 compared to the percentage of schools that reported a budget decrease between 2013/2014.
- Catholic schools had the highest percentage of budget decreases in the 2014/2015 comparison.
- Overall, 52% of respondents indicated that they felt that their school library was adequately funded, 48% of respondents felt that the opposite was true. This statistic reflects a similar split to the 2014 survey.
- The majority of school libraries had no change to their staffing levels.
- There was a significant increase in the number of schools that indicated their student population have access to a personal mobile device at school, with 64% indicating that half or more of their student population have a personal mobile device, as compared to 43% in 2014.
- There was a more significant increase in the take up of eBooks in Australian schools between 2014 (30%) and 2015 (34%) than between 2013 (28%) and 2014 (30%). 38% of New Zealand respondent schools have purchased eBooks in the past year.

2.1 Allocation of School Budgets in Australia and New Zealand

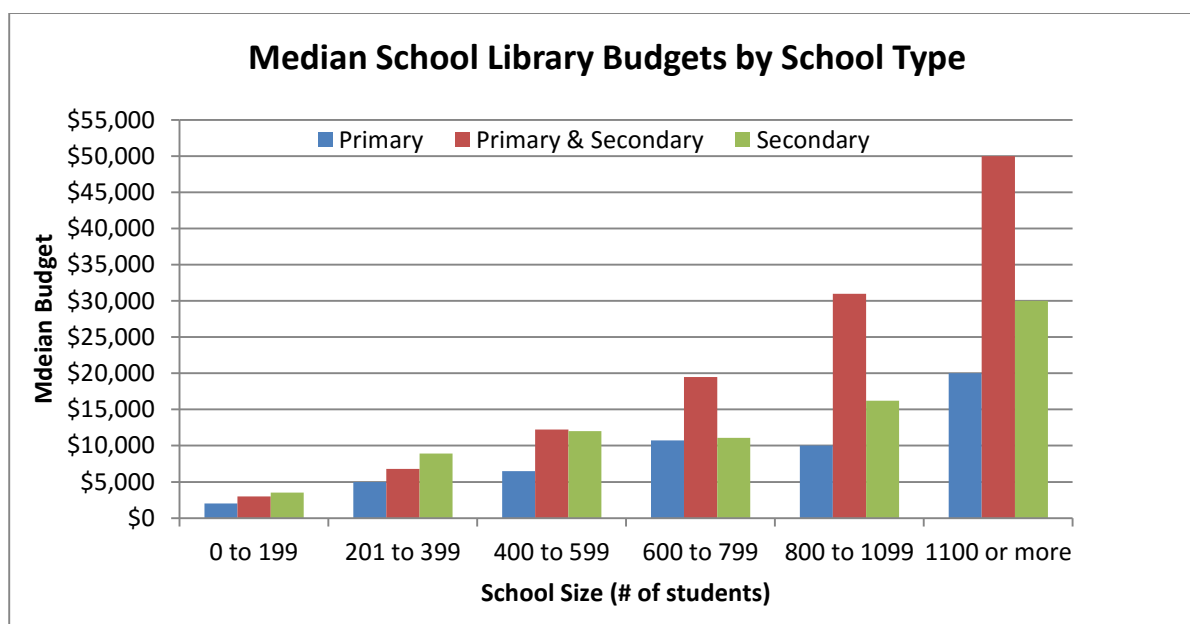
The 2015 school library budgets were reviewed by School Type and Education Provider and the findings have been reported in Figure 1 and 2 on page 7.

Median School Library Budgets by School Type

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

Even where student numbers are the same, Primary schools receive significantly less funding than Secondary schools. K-12 schools report the highest budgets for schools with 600 or more students.

Figure 1: Median School Library Budget by School Type in 2015

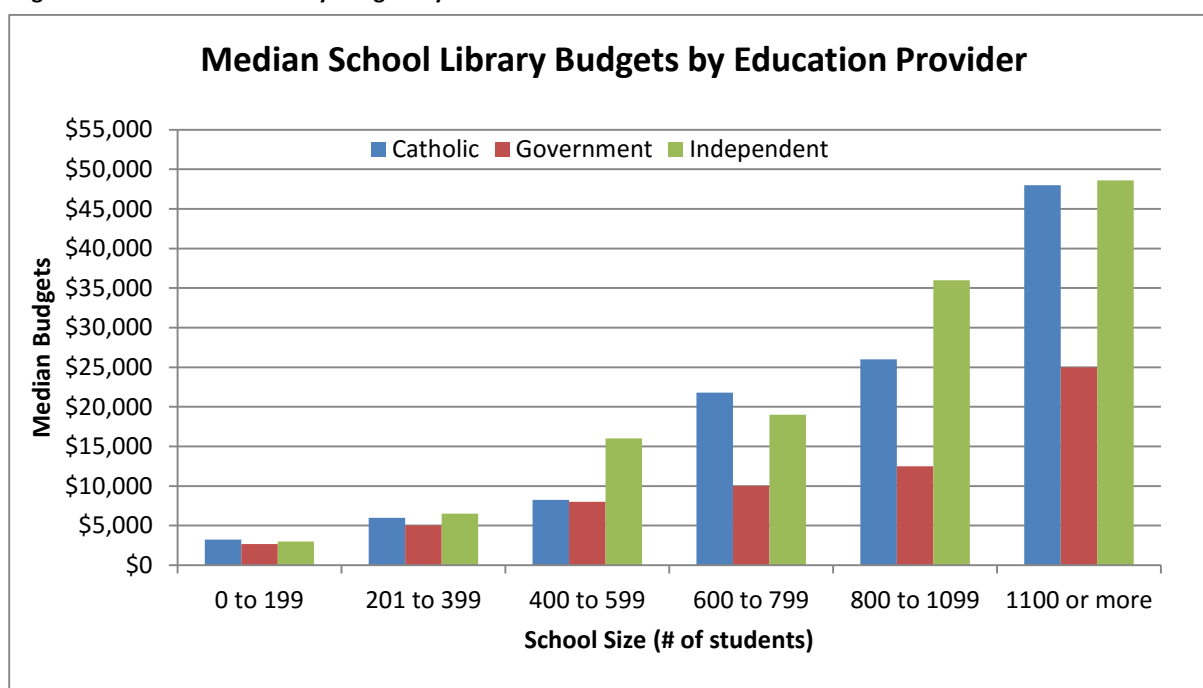


Median School Library Budgets by Education Provider

In 2015, budget medians varied depending on school sizes. Independent school libraries had higher annual budget medians than Government or Catholic schools in the up to 599 students' categories and in the 800 to 1099 students' category. Catholic schools reported the highest budget medians in the 600 – 799 students category.

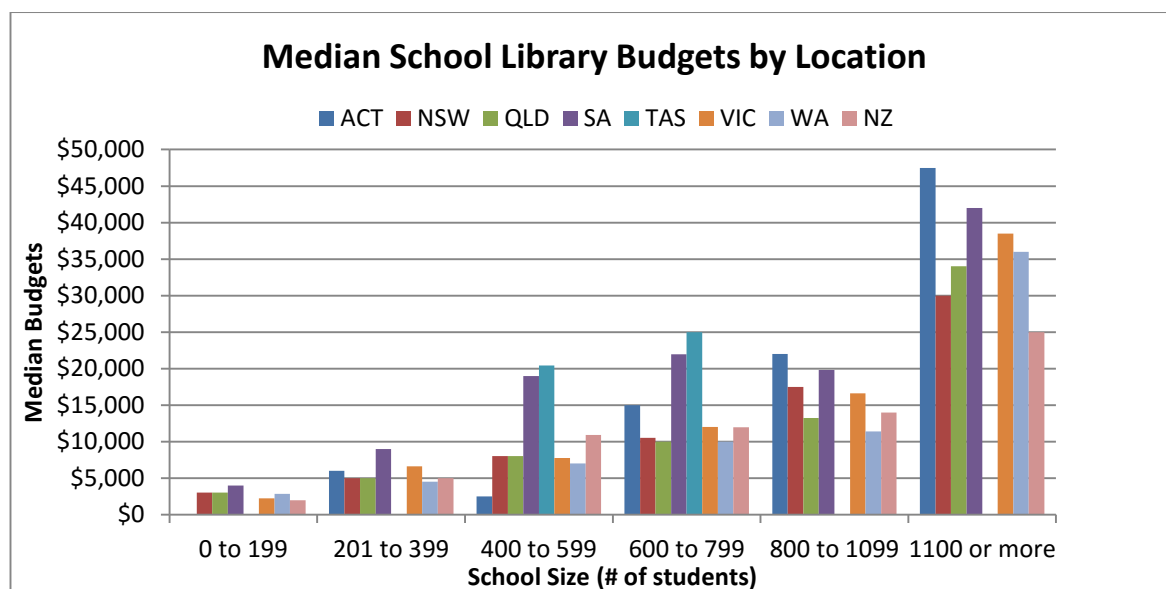
Government school libraries continue to receive the lowest level of annual budget allocation.

Figure 2: Median School Library Budgets by Education Provider in 2015



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

Figure 3: Median School Library Budgets by Location 2015

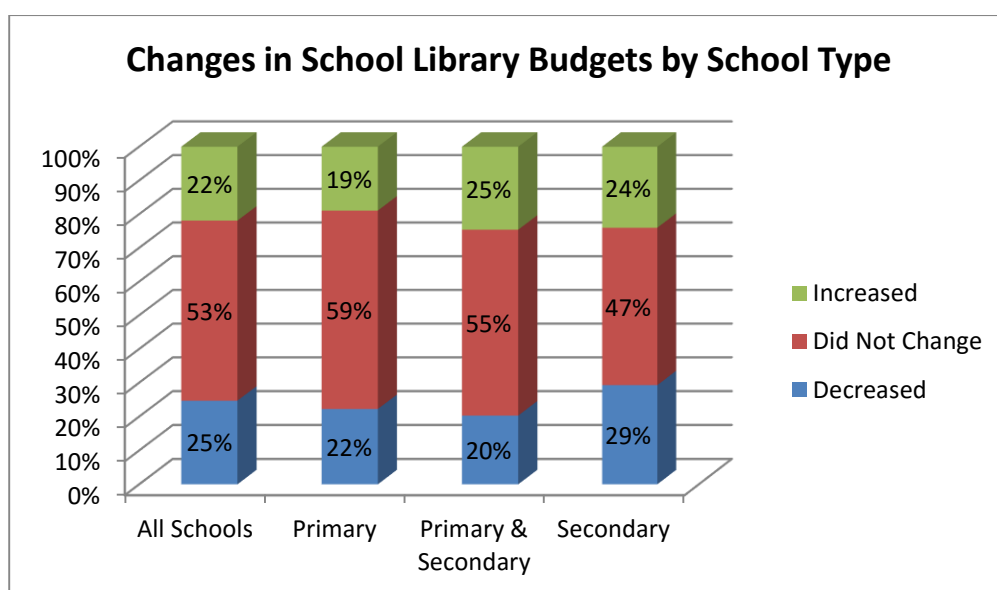


2.2 Change in Library Budgets

Changes in School Library Budgets by School Type

This year 78% of school library budgets either remained unchanged or decreased. The highest number of respondents (53%) indicated that their budgets remained the same, while 25% stated their budget had decreased. Overall, 22% of all respondents indicated that their budgets had increased. The results in Figure 4 show the changes in school library budgets by School Type.

Figure 4: Changes in School Library Budgets by Type

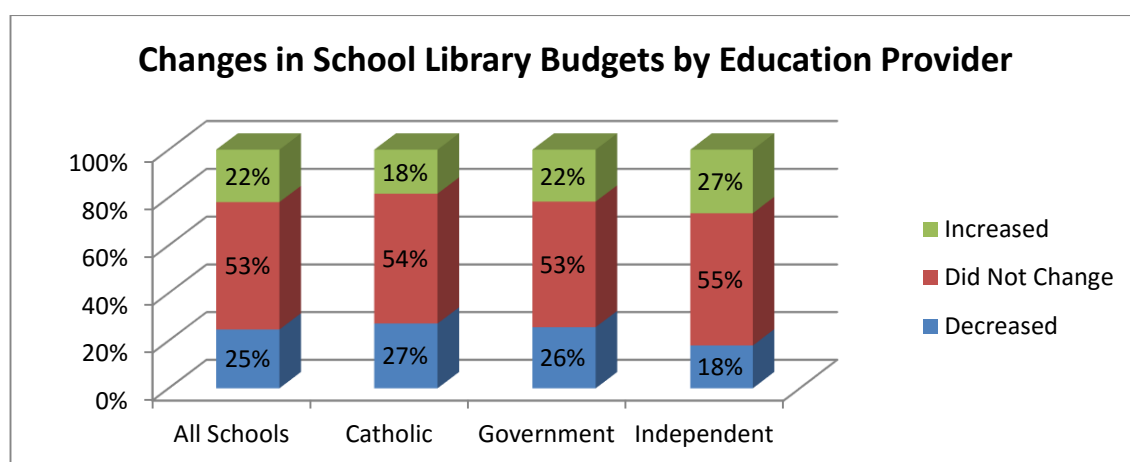


Changes in School Library Budgets by Education Provider

Figure 5 shows the results of changes to school library budgets by Education Provider.

Independent and Government school libraries each reported a lower percentage of budget decreases and a higher percentage of budget increases between 2014 and 2015. Additionally more Independent and Government school libraries indicated that their library budget did not change in 2015 than in the 2014 analysis. Catholic schools reported the highest percentage of budget decreases and the lowest percentage of budget increases.

Figure 5: Changes in School Library Budgets by Education Provider 2015



Catholic Secondary and K-12 Schools reported the highest level of decreases, with a decrease of 33% for Secondary and 31% for K-12.

Government Secondary and K-12 schools reported a decrease of 29% and 20% respectively. This is significantly lower than the reported 38% decreases for both Government Secondary and K-12 schools in 2014.

Independent K-12 school libraries reported the lowest decrease and highest increase, with a decrease of 15% and an increase of 31%.

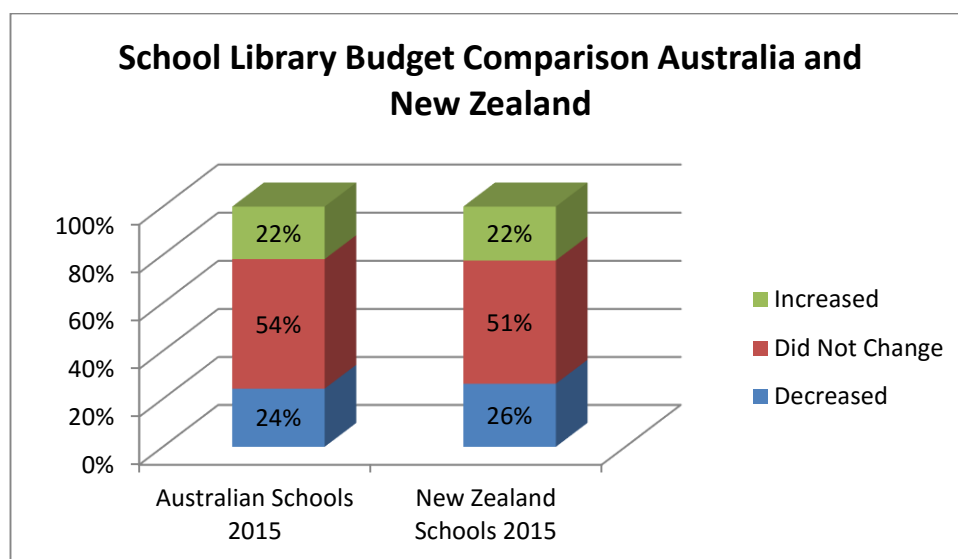
Overall, Secondary schools in all three sectors reported the highest budget decreases with Catholic schools at 33% and both Government and Independent schools at 29%.

2.3 Comparison Library Budgets

When comparing Australian and New Zealand budget changes, respondents reported comparable increases in Australia and New Zealand. The percentages of school libraries that had their budgets decreased or that remained the same were similar, with New Zealand receiving slightly more budget cuts than Australia.

Please see Figure 6 below for a comparison of budget changes in Australia and New Zealand

Figure 6: Comparison of reported budgets in Australian and New Zealand school libraries

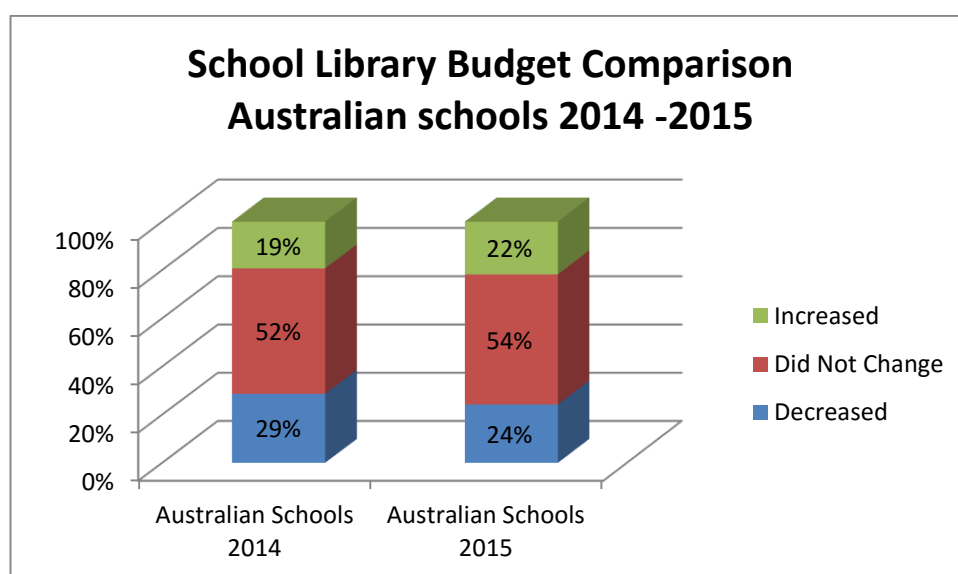


When comparing 2014 and 2015 reported budget figures for Australia, fewer school libraries received a budget decrease in 2015, with more school library budgets remaining the same. The percentage of reported budget increases was higher in 2015 than 2014.

As this is the first year that New Zealand schools have participated in the survey, data is not available for a comparison between 2014 and 2015.

Please see Figure 7 for a comparison of budget changes in 2014 and 2015 across all Australian school libraries.

Figure 7: Comparison of 2014 and 2015 reported budgets across Australian school libraries



The results above indicate that, overall, school library budgets have continued to stabilise in 2014/2015.

In the 2013/2014 comparison the number of reported budget increases stayed the same, the number of reported budgets that did not change rose by 4% and the number of budgets that decreased dropped by 4% in the time frame. In 2013, the number of schools reporting budget decreases was 33%.

Please see Figure 8 below for a comparison of budget changes in 2014 and 2015 across all Australian school libraries. Figure 9 shows the reported changes in budget by education provider for Australian and New Zealand school libraries in 2015. Note, the New Zealand Catholic school sample represents just under 5% of Catholic schools in New Zealand, and make up 6% of New Zealand survey responses.

Figure 8: Comparison of 2014 and 2015 Reported Changes in Australian School Library Budgets by Education Provider

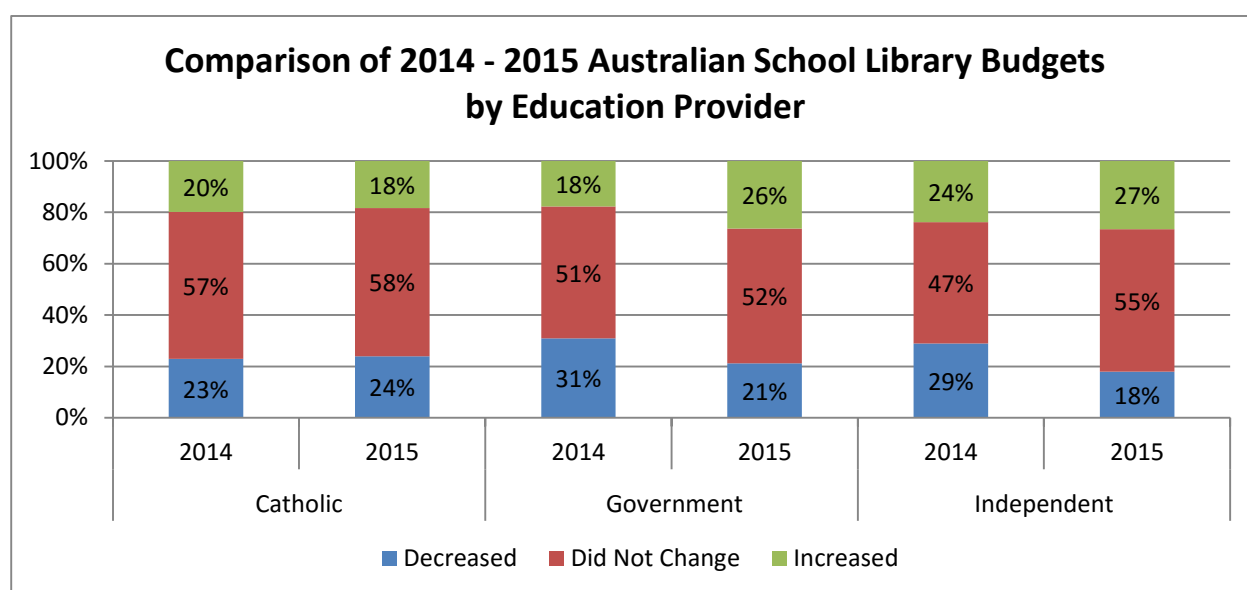
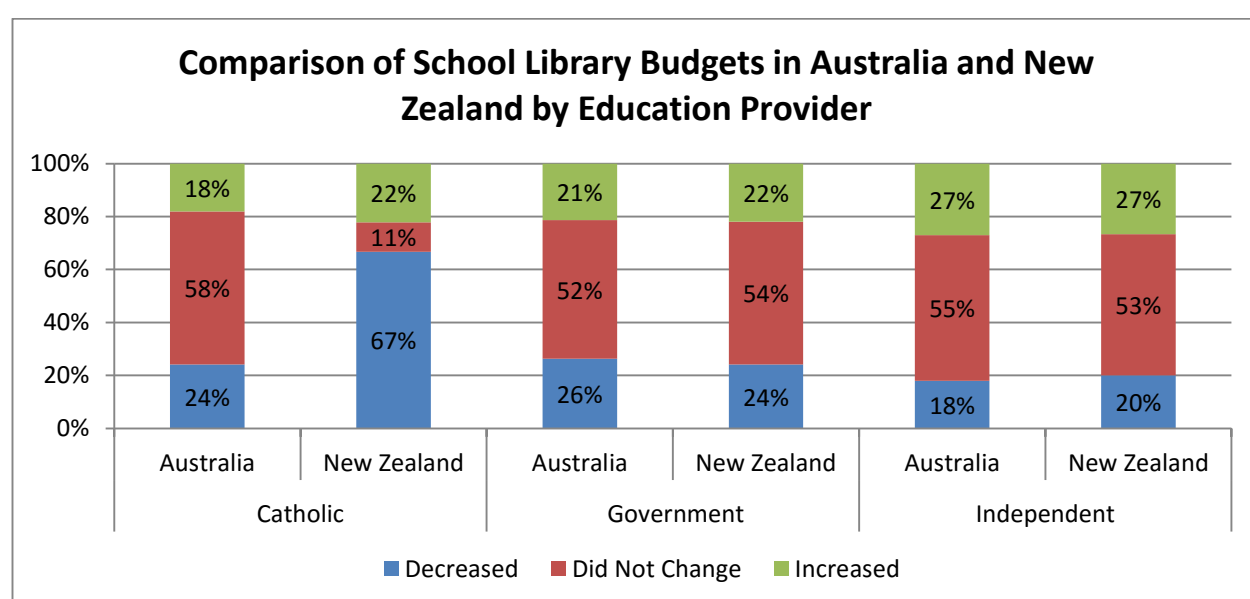


Figure 9: Comparison of Reported Changes in Australian and New Zealand School Library Budgets by Education Provider



2.4 Australian School Library Budgets and Reading Literacy Levels

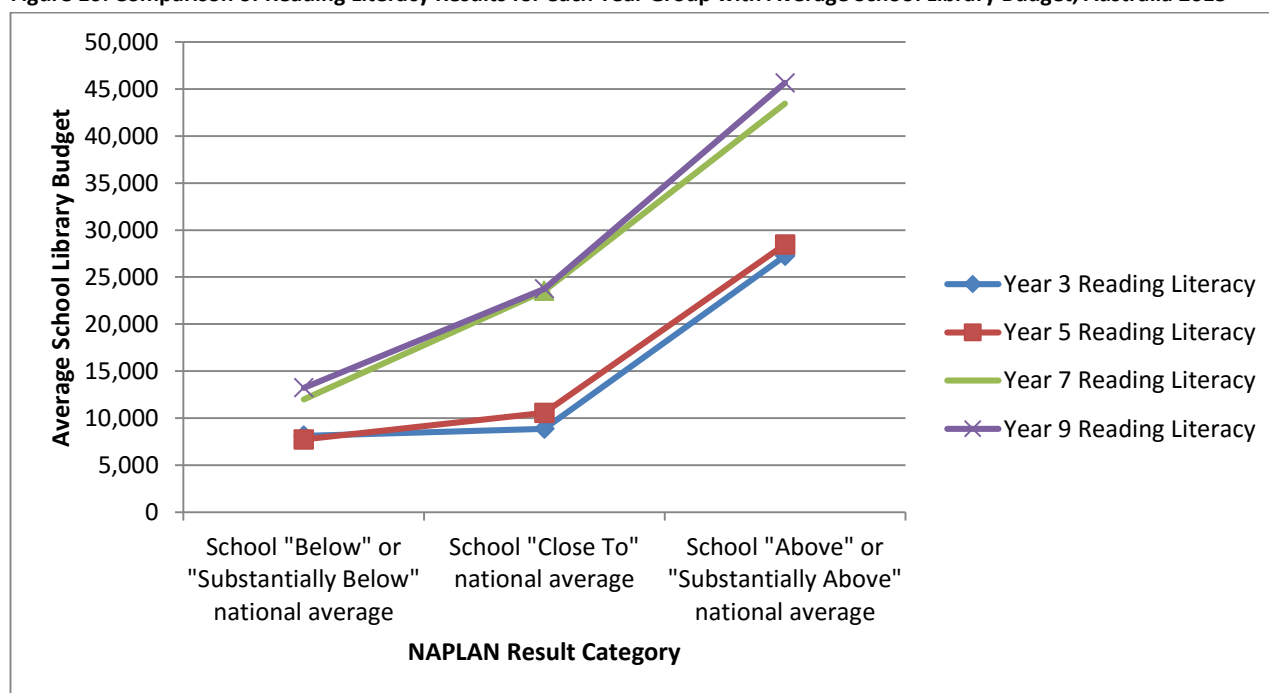
This NAPLAN analysis only applies to Australian schools.

Survey results again showed a correlation between school library budgets and literacy levels.

Figure 10 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 with lower 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.

Figure 10: Comparison of Reading Literacy Results for each Year Group with Average School Library Budget, Australia 2015



Relationship between School Library Budgets and NAPLAN Results

Table 2 (page 13) 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 2010-2015.

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; and as one decreases the other decreases.

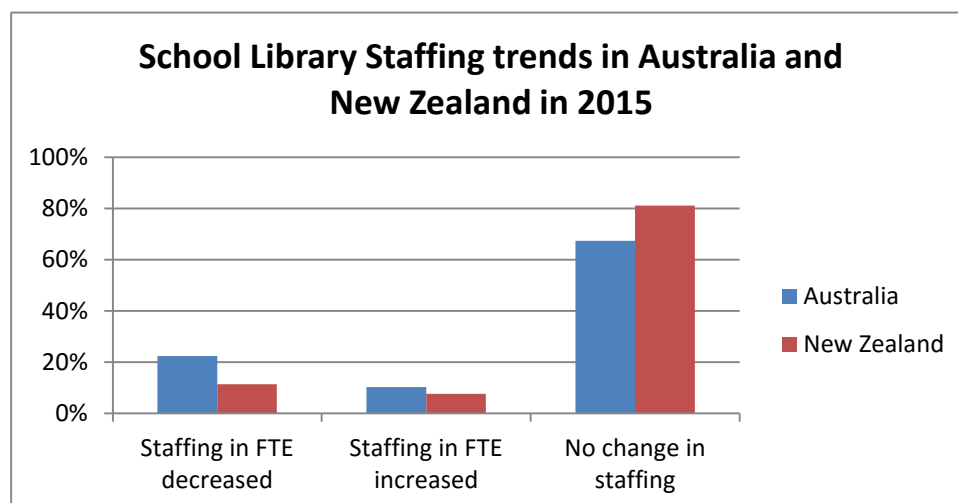
Table 2: Correlation of Literacy Results with Australian School Library Budgets During the Past Five Years

Calculated Correlation	Library Budgets					
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Year 3 Reading	0.26	0.27	0.32	0.14	0.29	0.32
Year 5 Reading	0.30	0.26	0.36	0.14	0.30	0.33
Year 7 Reading	0.30	0.36	0.38	0.27	0.33	0.43
Year 9 Reading	0.34	0.37	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.43

2.5 School Library Staffing Levels

22% of Australian schools and 11% of New Zealand schools reported a decrease in library staffing in 2015. 10% of Australian school libraries and 8% of New Zealand school libraries experienced an increase in staffing levels. The Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staffing at the majority of school libraries remains unchanged with 67% of Australian schools and 81% of New Zealand schools surveyed stating that there had been no change in staff during the past 12 months (please see Figure 11).

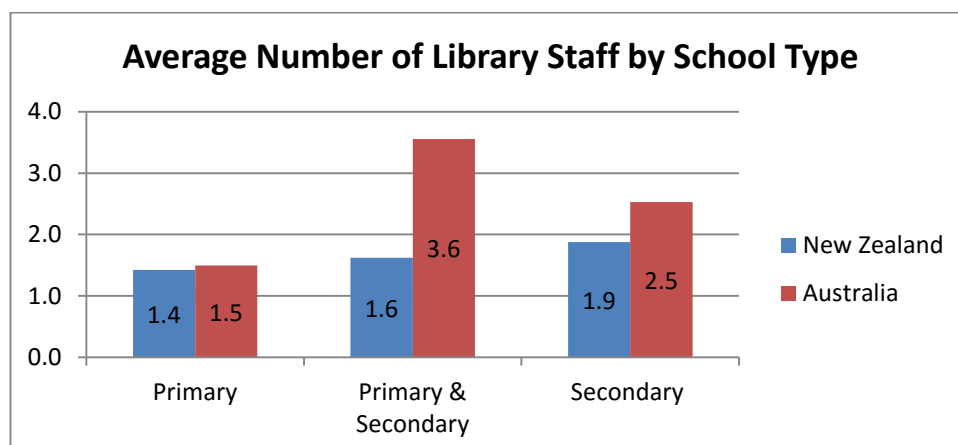
Figure 11: School Library Staffing Trends in Australian and New Zealand School Libraries 2015



Staffing by School Type

K-12 school libraries in Australia had the highest number of FTE staff with an average of 3.4 per school. In New Zealand, the average for Secondary school libraries was the highest at 2.5.

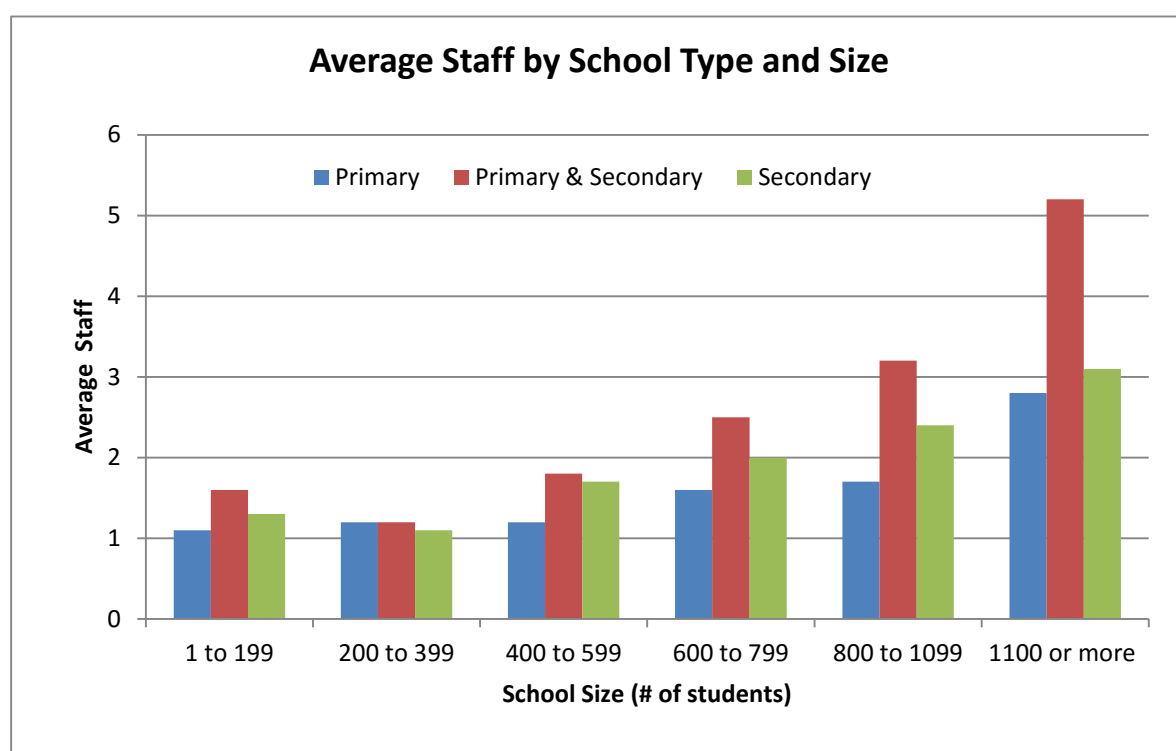
Figure 12: Average Number of Library Staff in Australian and New Zealand School Libraries by School Type 2015



Average Staff by School Type and Size

When applying School Size and Type, K-12 school libraries in the 1100+ students' category had the highest FTE staff average at 5.2 per school. Please see Figure 13 below for average staff by School Type and Size.

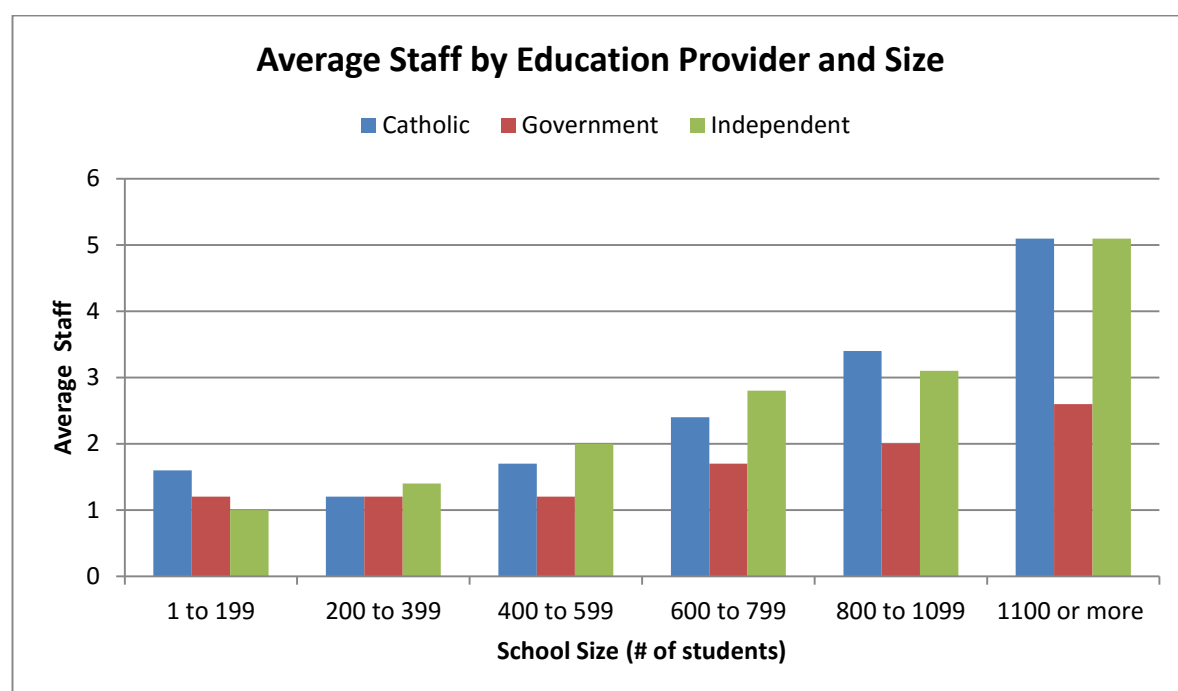
Figure 13: Average Staff by School Type and Size 2015



Average Staff by Education Provider and Size

When applying School Size and Education Provider type, Catholic and Independent school libraries in the 1100+ students' category had the highest FTE staff average at 5.1 per school. Please see Figure 14 below for average staff by education provider and size.

Figure 14: Average Staff by Education Provider and Size 2015



Relationship between School Library Staff and NAPLAN Results

This NAPLAN analysis only applies to Australian responses.

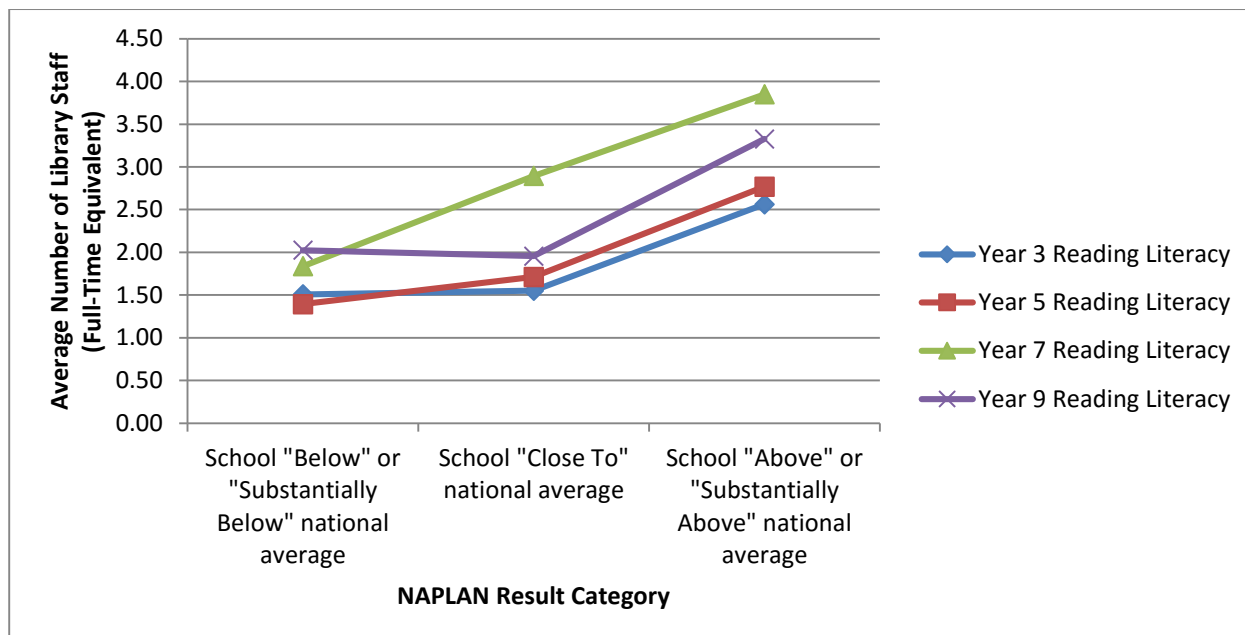
Table 3 below shows the correlations between Australian school library staff according to the survey respondents and NAPLAN literacy results obtained from the *National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy* and the *My Schools website*.

Table 3: Correlation of Literacy Results with the Number of School Library Staff in Australian School Libraries 2015

Calculated Correlation	No. of School Library Staff Employed					
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Year 3 Reading	0.22	0.21	0.33	0.24	0.23	0.26
Year 5 Reading	0.24	0.23	0.34	0.25	0.21	0.28
Year 7 Reading	0.31	0.28	0.38	0.25	0.22	0.41
Year 9 Reading	0.34	0.38	0.35	0.30	0.29	0.39

Figure 15 below graphs the correlation of literacy results with the number of school library staff in Australian school libraries.

Figure 15: Comparison of Reading Literacy Results for each Year Group with Average Number of School Library Staff



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

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 eBooks

The survey found that more than a third of respondent schools have purchased eBooks in the past year (34% in Australia and 38% in New Zealand). This is a consistent increase in Australia from the 2014 response (30%), which was slightly higher than the 2013 (28%) result. This indicates a steady increase in the take up of eBooks.

In 2015, 38% of Australian and 37% New Zealand respondent schools indicated that eBooks or eResources now make up 5% or more of their collection. This is higher than last year when only 22% of Australian respondents indicated that eBooks or eResources made up more than 5% 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 56% of Australian and 59% of New Zealand respondent Teacher Librarians indicating they will "definitely" or "most probably" purchase eBooks within the next 12 months.

This is higher than 2014, when 55% indicated they would "definitely" or "most probably" purchase eBooks within the next 12 months.

Figures 16 and 17 below show the school library intentions to purchase eBooks in the next 12 months for Australia and New Zealand.

Figure 16: Australian School library eBook intentions

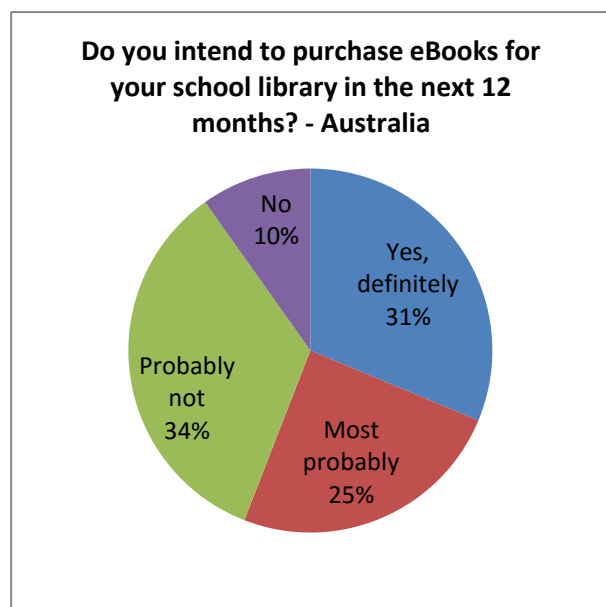


Figure 17: New Zealand School library eBook intentions



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 said half or more of their student population have access to a personal mobile device (iPod, iPad, smart phone or other tablet) with 24% of schools having a 1:1 program, 25% of schools a BYOT/BYOD strategy and 15% a mix of the two.

This is a significant increase from the 2014 response (43%) and 2013 response (44%) and indicates that the trend towards personal mobile device usage in schools is maturing more rapidly.

The percentage of respondent schools that indicated they provide digital devices to students reduced from 58% in 2013 to 44% in 2014 to 39% in 2015. This corresponded to a higher percentage of respondent schools that encourage BYOD use both inside and outside the classroom (from 14% in 2013 to 24% in 2014 to 54% in 2015).

This year 40% of respondents indicated that they have a BYOT/BYOD strategy. This reflected a substantial increase of schools who have implemented a BYOT/BYOD strategy from 2014, when the result to the same question was 27%.

54% of schools allow personal digital device use at school (up from 37% in 2014). This includes 42% of schools that 'encourage the use of personal mobile devices at school from within and outside the classroom' (up from 24% in 2014), while another 12% stated they 'encouraged use at school but only outside of classroom'.

3.3 Library Resource Access

In 2015, 80% of schools indicated that they provide some level of access to resources from outside the library. 58% now provide access from both outside and within the school, while 22% provide access outside the library from within the school only. These figures show an increase from 76% of schools who provided access to resources outside the library in 2014. The greatest increase was in schools who provide access from both outside and within the school (up 9% from 49% in 2014). The number of schools who provided access outside the library from within the school only reduced from 27% in 2014. This indicates that the trend toward providing access to resources outside of the library is to provide comprehensive access from both within and outside the school.

87% of librarians believe it is important to provide access to the school library (catalogue, electronic resources, e-books etc.) from outside the school and outside school hours. This has increased from 78% in 2014.

3.4 School Library Objectives and Services

Library staff were asked what objectives they considered to be the most important.

Aligning Australian Curriculum (ACARA) with existing resources/practices continues to be a priority for Australian schools, with 89% of respondents indicating that this was important or very important to them.

The top three objectives for Australian and New Zealand schools included:

1. *Implementing technology to enable eResource access to digital/mobile devices* with 79% of respondents indicating this was important or very important to them
2. *Developing a formal information literacy program* with 77% of respondents indicating this was important or very important to them
3. *Refurbishing/updating the library or learning centre* with 73% of respondents indicating this was important or very important.

While 59% of respondents indicated that *implementing an eBook strategy* was important or very important to them, 82% of respondents indicated that moving towards a digital resource model library (limited hardcopy books) was either not important to them or they were neutral about it. This supports the finding that, at this stage, eBooks are considered by respondents as an essential addition to a school's physical collection, not a replacement of the physical collection.

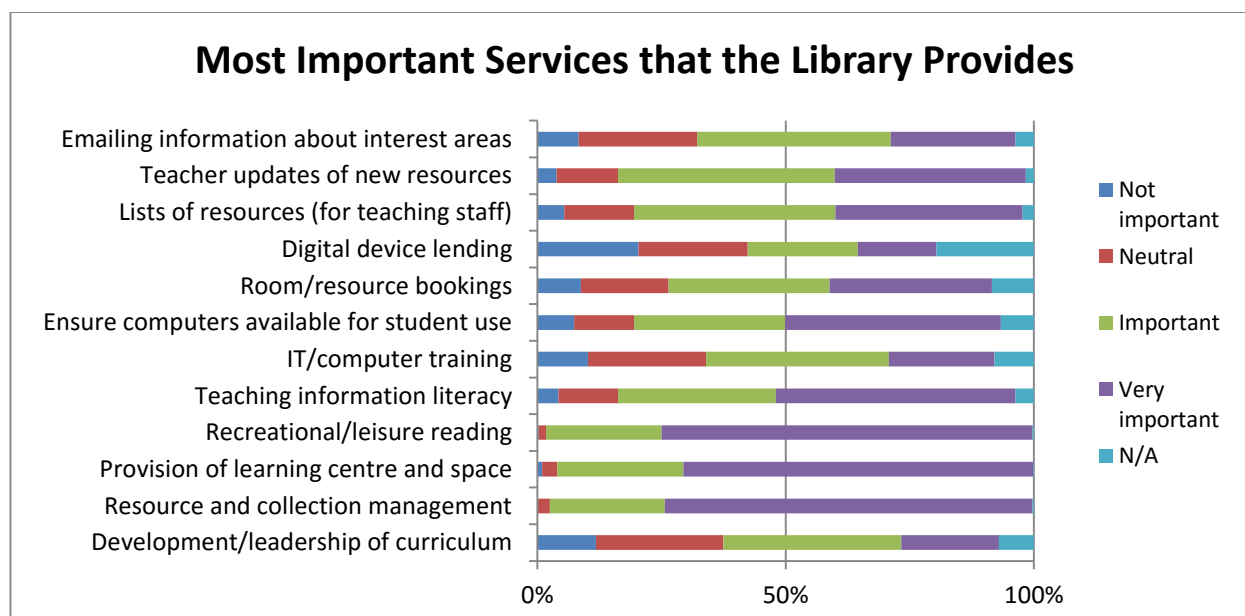
See Table 4 below for the complete responses.

Table 4: 2015 School Library Objectives

Objectives	Not important	Neutral	Important	Very important
Developing a formal information literacy program	4%	19%	32%	45%
Aligning Australian Curriculum (ACARA) with existing resources/practices *	2%	9%	34%	55%
Implementing technology to enable eResource access to digital/mobile device	5%	16%	37%	42%
Implementing technology to enable BYOD or BYOT	16%	24%	28%	32%
Implementing an eBook strategy	13%	28%	33%	26%
Refurbishing/updating the library or learning centre	11%	17%	33%	40%
Upgrading the school library management system	26%	20%	22%	32%
Moving towards a digital resource model library (limited hardcopy books)	47%	35%	12%	6%
Integration with other school systems	19%	32%	31%	17%

* This applies to Australian schools only

The survey also analysed the most important services that libraries provided to students and the school. The most important services (from the 12 responses provided in Figure 18 below) included: Recreational/leisure reading; Provision of learning centre and space; and Resource and collection management.

Figure 18: Most Important Services that the Library Provides


3.5 School Library Professionals

The 2015 Australian and New Zealand School Library Survey asked how school libraries were staffed.

Figure 19 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 32% of primary schools, 81% of K-12 schools and 74% of Secondary schools have at least 1 FTE qualified Teacher Librarian or qualified Librarian.

Figure 19: Full Time Staff by Role and School Type Australia

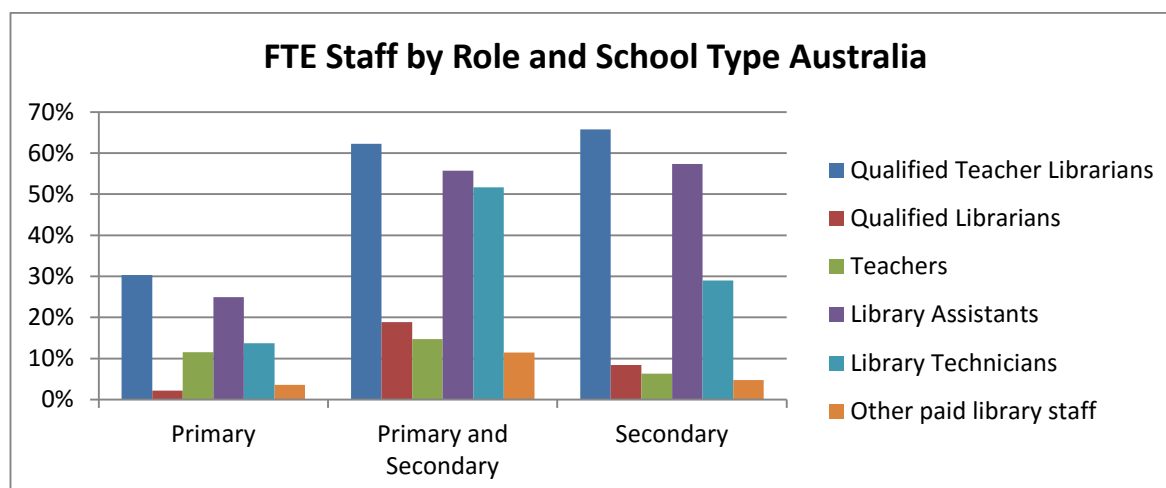


Figure 20 shows the percentage of New Zealand schools by type that have at least 1 full time equivalent (FTE) staff member in each of the roles listed. It was found that 37% of primary schools, 84% of K-12 schools and 83% of Secondary schools have at least 1 FTE qualified Teacher Librarian or qualified Librarian.

Figure 20: Full Time Staff by Role and School Type New Zealand

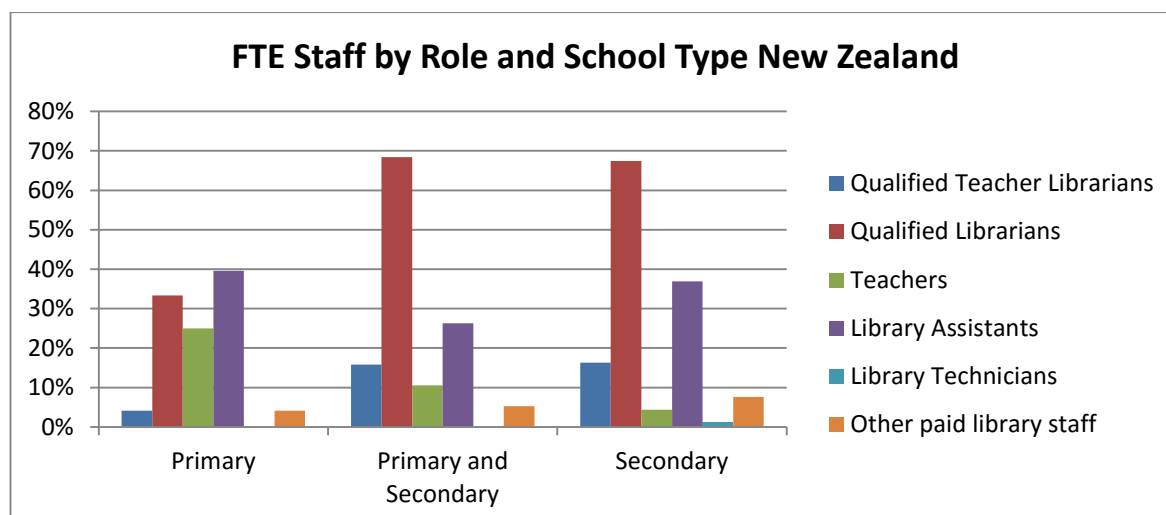


Figure 21 and 22 show the percentage of schools by Education Provider in Australia and New Zealand respectively, that have at least 1 FTE staff member in each of the roles listed.

Figure 21: Full Time Staff by Role and Education Provider Australia

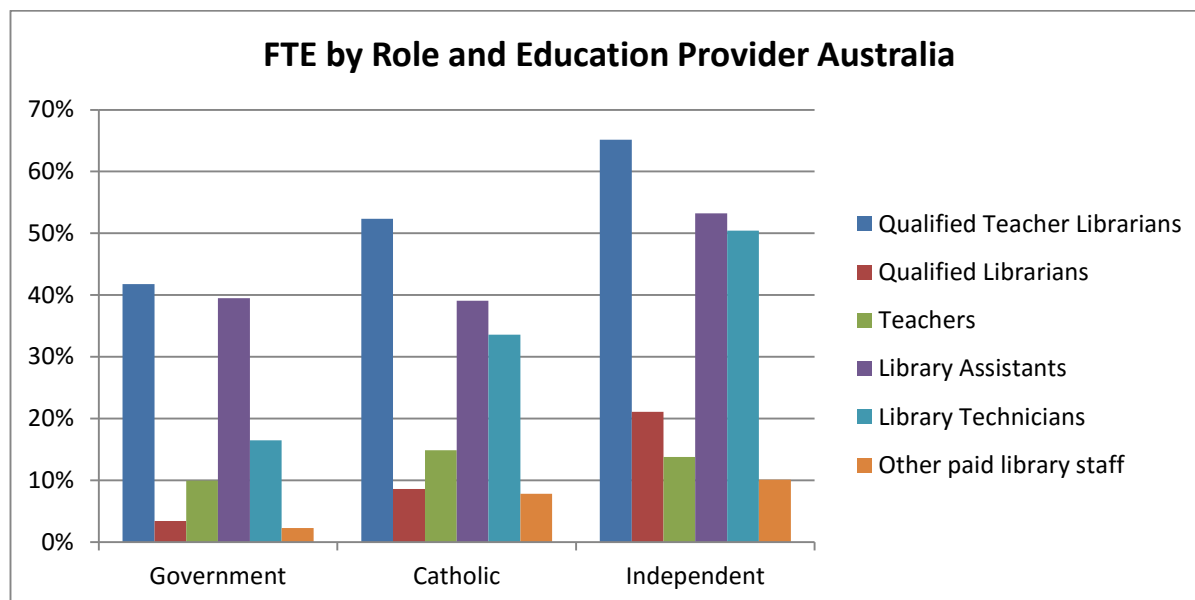
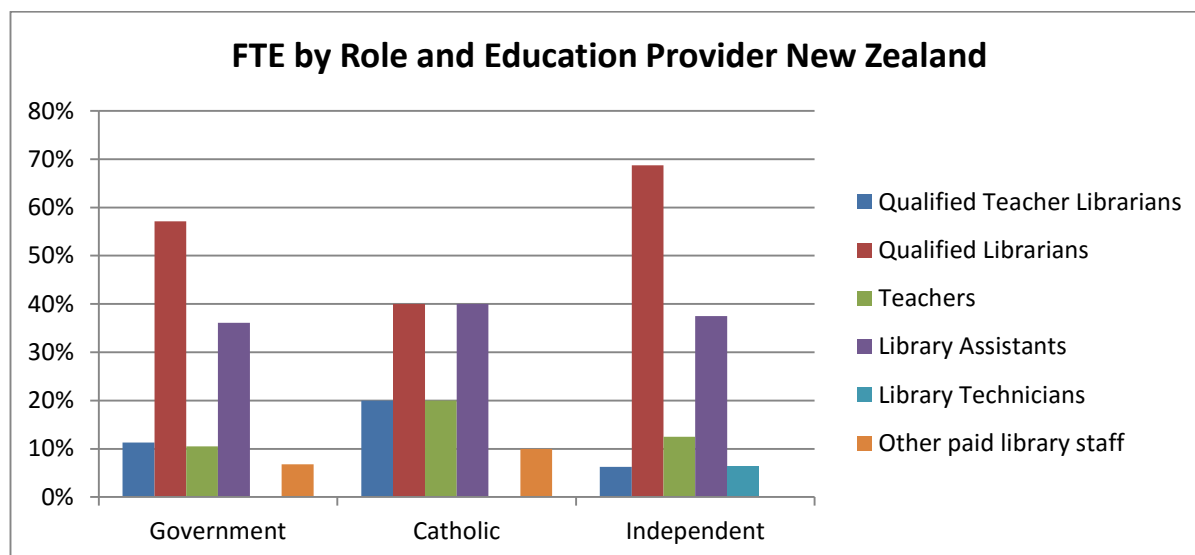


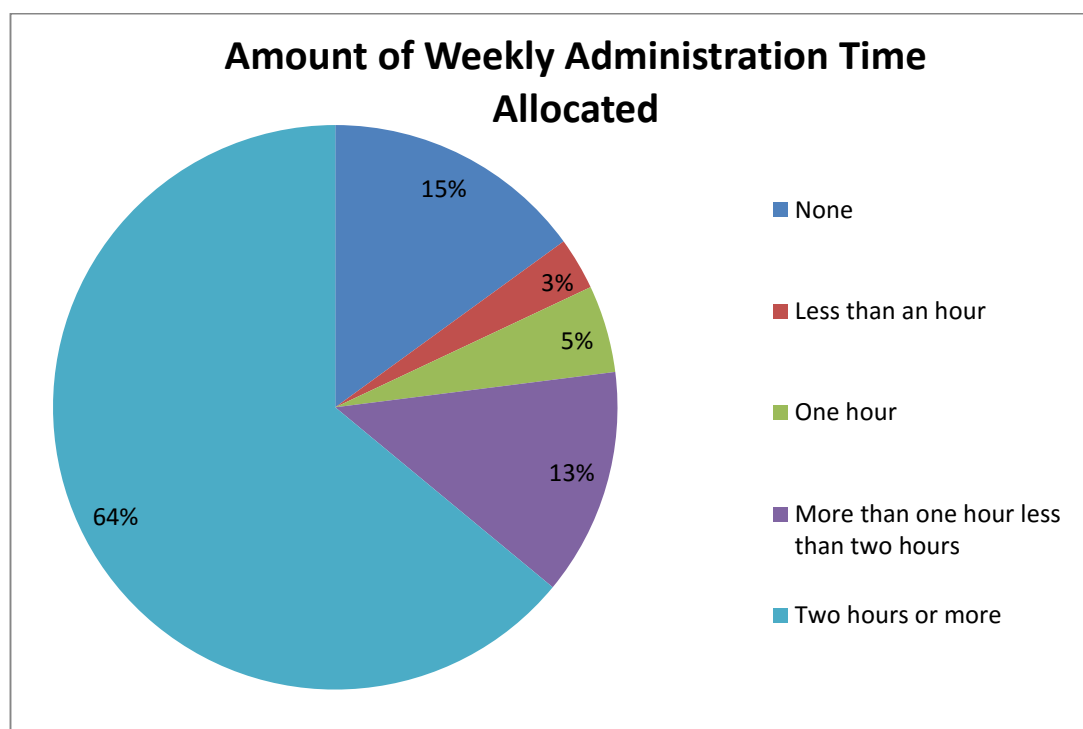
Figure 21: Full Time Staff by Role and Education Provider New Zealand



4.0 Amount of Weekly Administration Time for Library Staff

The majority of School Library Staff (64%) indicated their role is allocated two hours or more for administration time every week. Please see Figure 22.

Figure 22: 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 5 below for responses.

Table 5: Role in Supporting Classroom Teachers

Role Statement	Percentage of Library Staff Respondents
Provide adhoc supervisions	42%
Provide regular release/non-contact time for Teachers	21%
Plan and teach cooperatively with classroom Teachers	37%

6.0 Feedback Themes

Respondents were asked “*What exciting trends are emerging that could impact the library in the near future?*” Recurring themes appeared and have been presented in the whitepaper “What’s Trending #SchoolLibraries available in [Resources](#) on the Softlink website.

In summary, the top themes included:

- Technology – use of technology in school libraries, how technology has changed library services, additional training, ongoing access to new technologies and the ability to integrate more technology in their service delivery.
- Collaboration – with teaching staff to support curriculum and provide high quality teaching and learning programs.
- The library space – the evolution of the library space and its use as a school community hub. Looking at ways to create more flexible and engaging learning spaces for students, staff and class groups.
- Digital resources – respondents are excited about the range of digital resources available and being able to grow their digital collections. While conscious of the balance between print resources and a need to better understand the range of digital resources available, library staff are eager to expand the reach of their library beyond its physical walls.

Similar to 2014 responses, comments referenced funding, physical library space and staffing resources as challenges to implementing these exciting opportunities. However many respondents were finding innovative ways to overcome these challenges and identify the evolution of their school library as mandatory rather than optional. Softlink will publish further findings from comment based questions in throughout 2016.

7.0 Conclusion

The 2015 report findings continue to support a positive relationship between budget, staffing and student achievement. The findings indicate that literacy levels are higher for those schools that support and invest in their school libraries, staffing and resources.

In today’s digital world, whether a school is part of a large education consortia or a small independent, initiatives for the discovery and delivery of learning resources will require investment to support 21st century eLearning.