

2016 UK School Library Survey



Conducted by Softlink Europe Ltd.
Providers of Alice, Scout & Oliver to schools across the UK



Executive Summary

The UK 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 to education decision makers as well as through industry associations and networks.

The 2016 School Library Survey represents the second year of the survey for UK schools. Softlink will continue to conduct the survey on an annual basis to identify industry issues and trends, and to advocate for the development of information services in education.

Principle findings from the 2016 survey include:

- 57% of schools feel their library is not adequately funded – a 3% increase from 2015.
- 32% of schools indicated they have a school library budget of £5,000 or more – a 4% decrease from 2015.
- 58% of schools indicated their library budget has not changed from the previous year – a 6% increase from 2015.
- 84% of schools indicated they have had no change in staffing levels from the previous year – a 16% increase from 2015.
- 35% of UK school library staff work term time only.
- Budgets, support from management, and physical space are significant challenges for many school libraries across the UK. These challenges align with the top priorities for school libraries, raising the profile of their school library, increasing engagement, looking at implementing eBooks and use of online resources.

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1.0 Introduction

The Softlink UK School Library Survey was first launched in 2015. A similar survey has been conducted by Softlink Australia since 2010. The first Softlink Australia survey was launched in response to the 2010 Australian Federal Governments request for submissions to the 'Inquiry into school libraries and Teacher Librarians in Australian schools'.

Softlink has continued to conduct the survey annually, extending the scope to include UK and New Zealand schools in 2015. Continuing the annual survey builds a critical reference point for understanding regional and global changes, impacts and trends over time. The results provide a solid basis for advocacy for school libraries.

This report provides an analysis of the survey findings including budget, staffing levels, school library objectives, future trends and challenges libraries are facing.

1.1 About Softlink

Established in 1983, Softlink have over 10,000 customers across 108 nations. The head office is located in Brisbane, Australia with regional offices in Oxford, UK and Auckland, New Zealand. The UK office provides and supports library management systems to customers across the UK, Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Softlink are proud supporters of school libraries and have provided library systems to schools in the UK for more than 20 years. Softlink products offer deep digital integration with eBooks and streamlined integration with virtual learning environments and school administration systems – delivering a 21st century teaching and learning experience.

1.2 The Purpose of the Survey

School libraries are central to a student's learning experience and their preparation for further education. School librarians, teacher librarians and volunteers play very important roles in a school library.

The annual survey provides a reference point for understanding changes, impacts, challenges and trends in school libraries over time. The results will provide a solid advocacy base for school libraries.

1.2.1 Survey Scope

The 2016 school library survey by Softlink was conducted online and open to all UK schools. It was supported by The School Library Association (SLA), Renaissance Learning, CRB Cunninghams, JCS Online Resources and Bibliographic Data Services (BDS).

The survey consists of 34 questions covering the following topics:

- Your school library objectives
- Your school library resources – budgets & staffing
- The role of the library in the school and local community
- Challenges facing UK school libraries
- Emerging trends in UK school libraries

1.2.2 Respondents

558 responses were received in 2016, with the largest amount of responses from Academies.

Figure 1: 2016 survey respondent's breakdown by type of school.

Type of School						
Academy	State	Independent	Free	SEN	CTC	Total
229	183	123	10	2	11	558

2.0 Survey Findings Summary

Key findings from the 2016 UK School Library Survey include:

- 57% of schools feel their library is not adequately funded – a 3% increase from 2015.
- 32% of schools indicated they have a school library budget of £5,000 or more – a 4% decrease from 2015.
- 58% of schools indicated their library budget has not changed from the previous year – a 6% increase from 2015.
- 84% of schools indicated they have had no change in staffing levels from the previous year – a 16% increase from 2015.
- 35% of UK school library staff work term time only.
- Budgets, support from management, and physical space are significant challenges for many school libraries across the UK. These challenges align with the top priorities for school libraries, raising the profile of their school library, increasing engagement, looking at implementing eBooks and use of online resources.

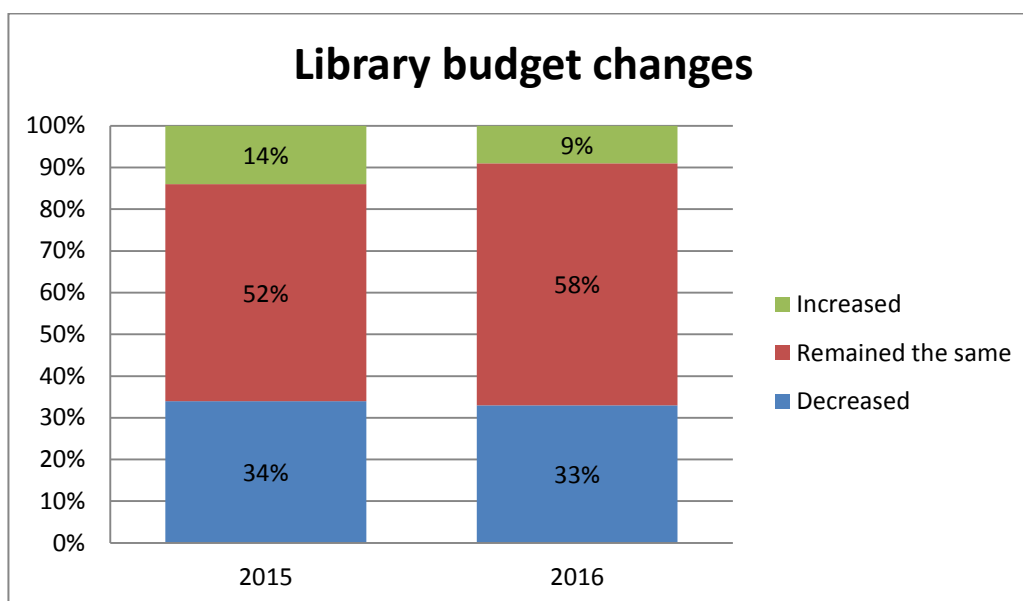
2.1 UK School Library Budgets

58% of schools indicated their library budget did not increase from the previous year, this is a 6% increase from the 2015 survey findings.

A concerning 33% of schools indicated their library budget decreased while only 9% indicated an increase from the previous year.

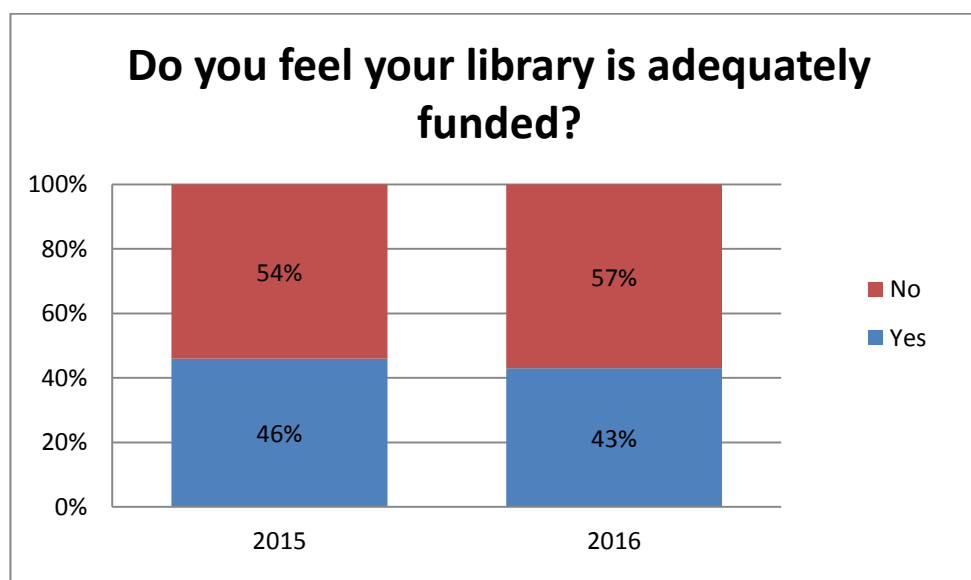
Figure 2 shows the 2015 and 2016 changes in school library budgets.

Figure 2: Changes in school library budgets, 2015 and 2016 comparison



Most respondents believe that their school libraries require more funding to deliver their services effectively. 57% of schools feel their library is not adequately funded – this represents a 3% increase from the 2015.

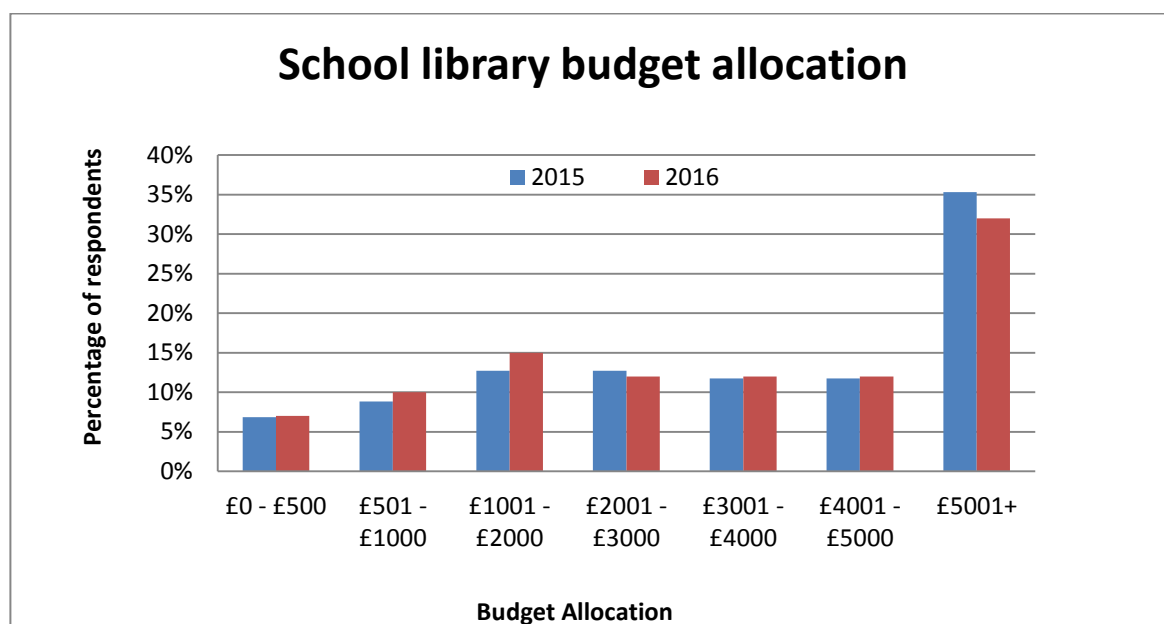
Figure 3: 2016 response to school library funding adequacy



32% of schools indicated they receive more than £5,000 per year for their library budget. This is a 4% decrease from the 2015 survey. Independent schools receive more budget than any other type of school.

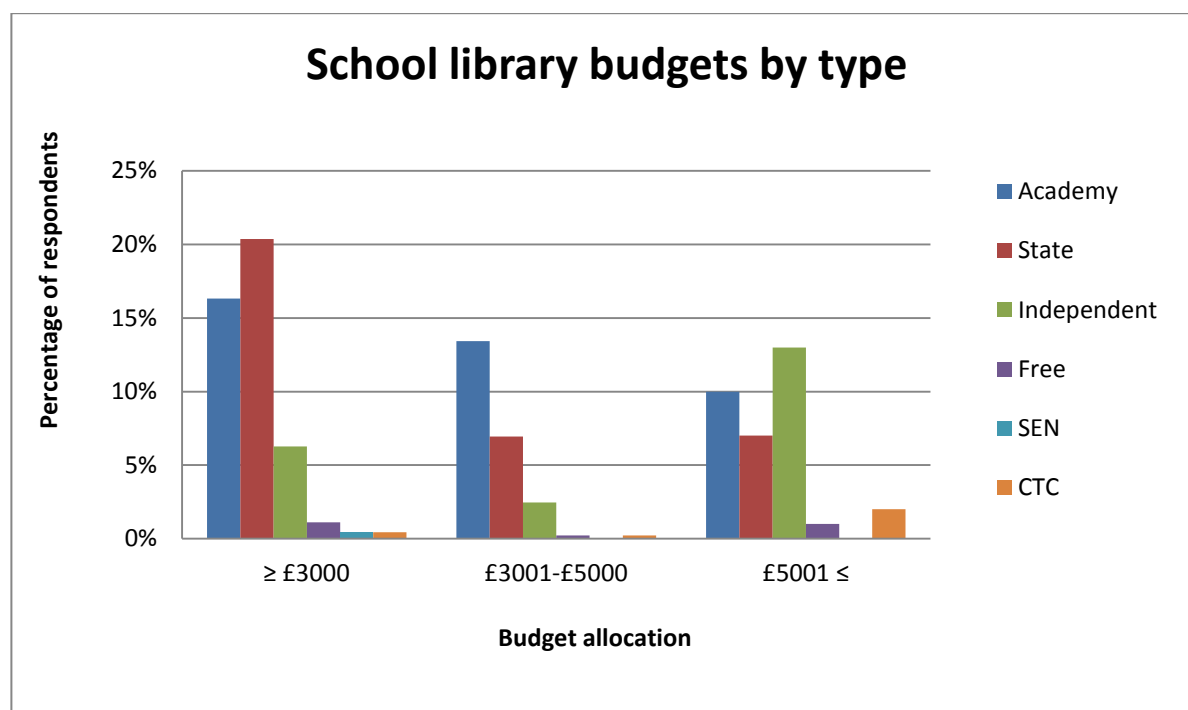
Figure 4 shows 2016 responses by annual budget amount.

Figure 4: 2016 school library budget allocation



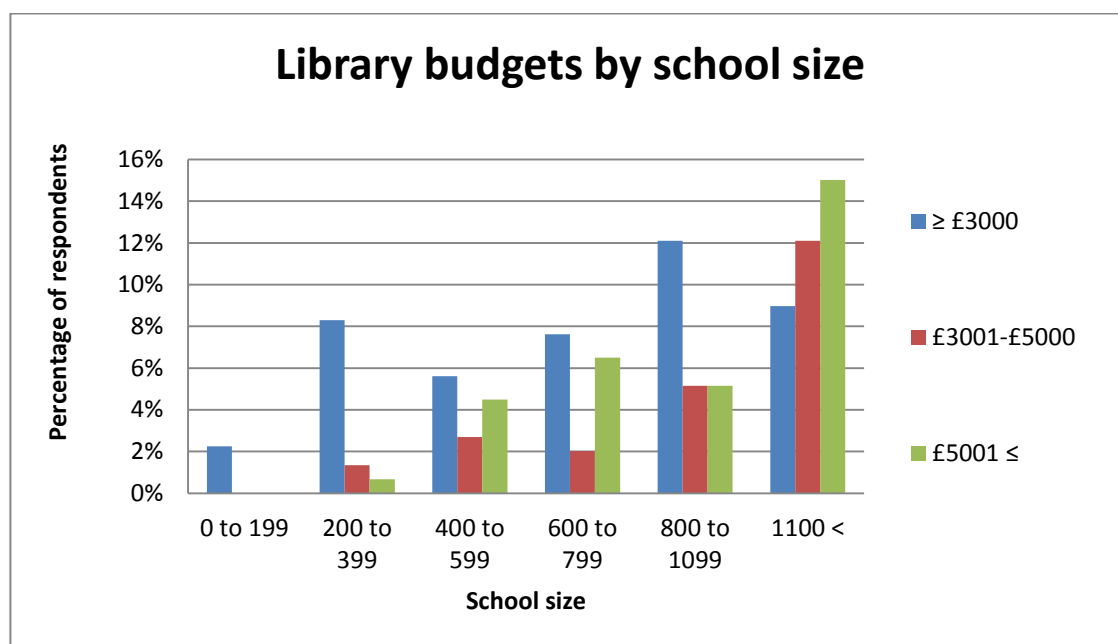
44% of schools indicated they receive £3,000 or less per year for their library budget. The highest number of respondents in this category came from state and academy schools, as seen in figure 5.

Figure 5: 2016 school library budgets by type



Additional analysis was completed which shows school library budgets by school size. This is provided in Figure 6 below.

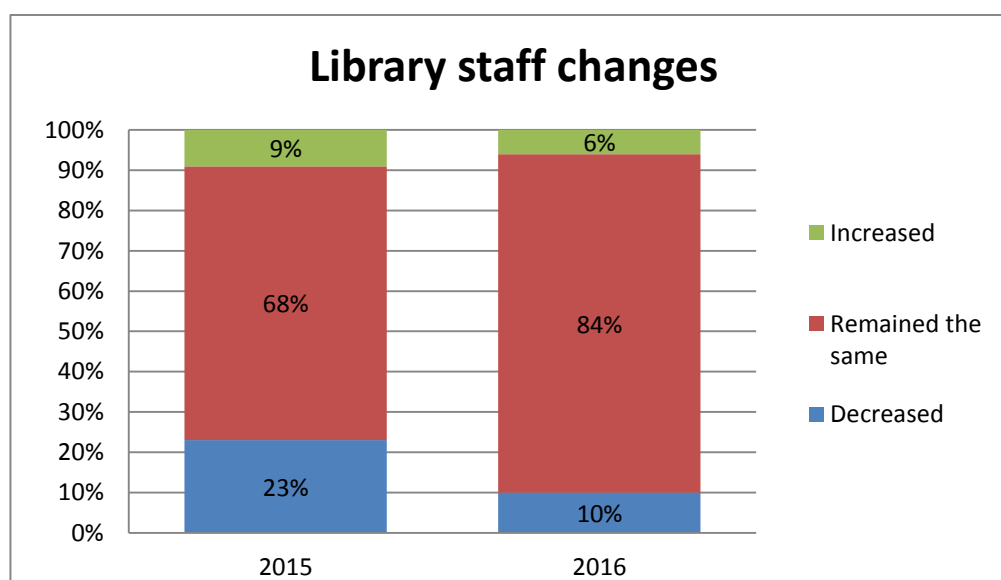
Figure 6: 2016 school library budgets by school size



2.2 UK School Library Staff

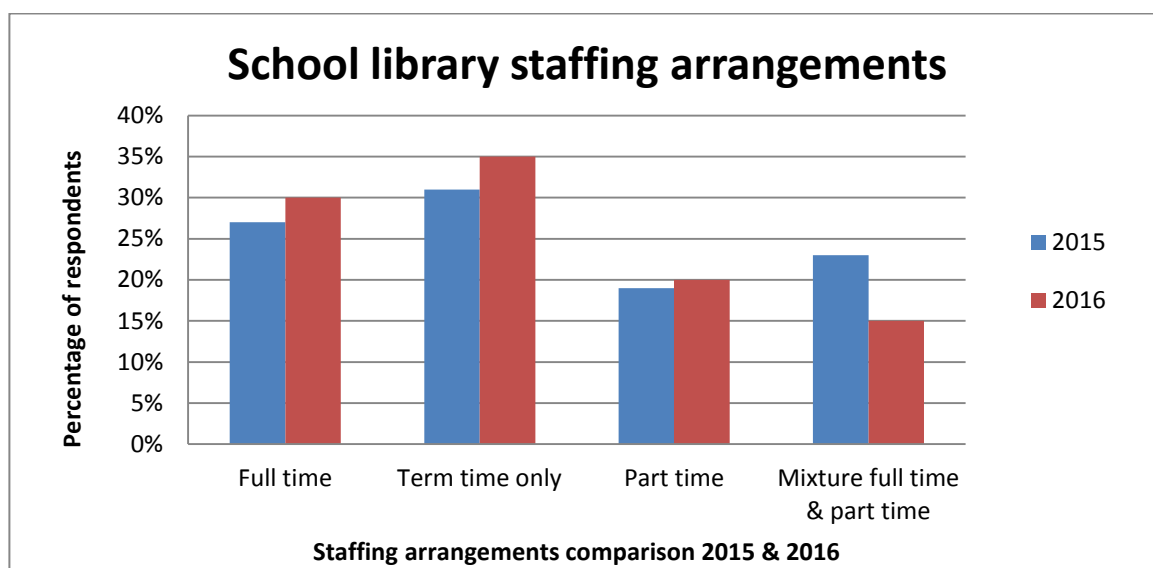
84% of schools reported that the number of staff working in their school library has not changed from previous year. 10% indicated a decrease with the remaining 6% reporting an increase in staffing levels.

Figure 7: 2016 school library staff changes



30% of respondents indicated their library staff work full time, 20% part time, 35% term time only and 15% indicated a mixture of full time and part time. Figure 8 shows the school library staffing arrangements comparison between 2015 and 2016.

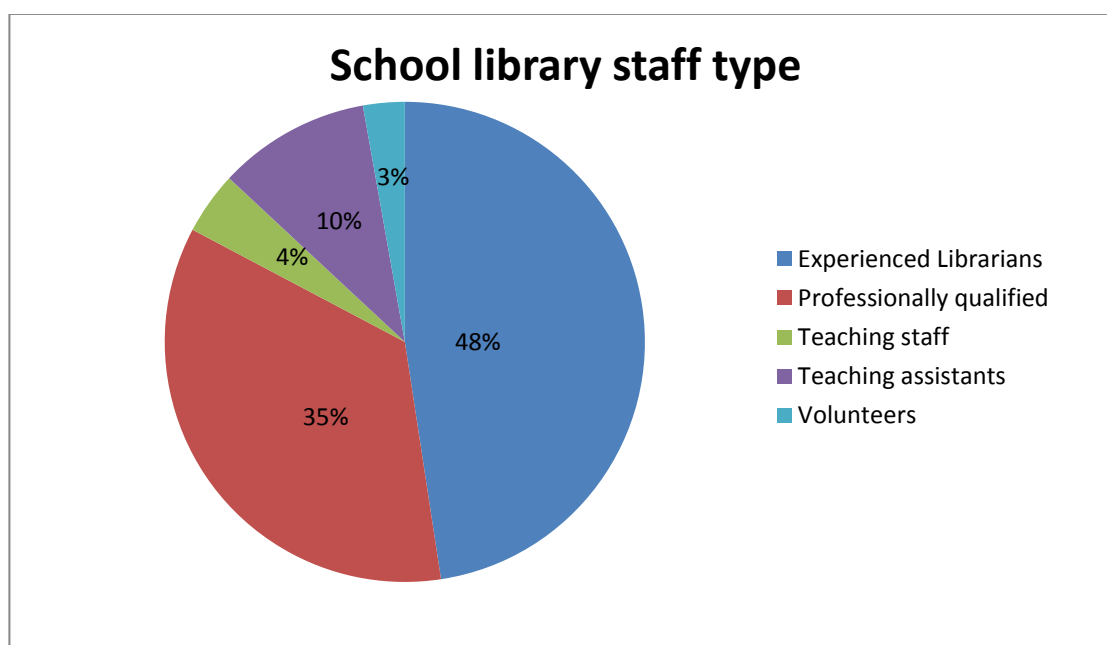
Figure 8: 2016 school library staffing arrangements



Respondents indicated that their library staff represent a mixture of Professionally Qualified Librarians, Teaching Staff, Teaching Assistants and Volunteers.

As shown in Figure 9 below, 14% of school library staff have additional teaching or support responsibilities, 3% are volunteers, 48% are experienced librarians and 35% are professionally qualified.

Figure 9: 2016 school library staff type



In addition, 65% of school library staff confirmed they deliver lessons to students in the library, providing support for the development of information, literacy and research skills.

3.0 UK School Library Objectives

The most important objectives identified by respondents included:

1. **Raising the profile of the school library.**
80% of 2016 respondents felt this was very or most important to them.
2. **Encouraging teaching staff to use the library and / or learning resources for lessons**
77% of 2016 respondents felt this was very or most important to them.
3. **Improving students information literacy skills.**
74% of 2016 respondents felt this was very or most important to them.

In addition, respondents provided open responses to what they believe are the most important services their library delivers to their school and local community. The most common response themes, included:

- Providing a safe, welcoming, comfortable and flexible environment for students to carry out research and study.
- Access to resources and support for identifying and using them.
- Providing a leisure space, or space for reading for pleasure.
- Supporting the school curriculum.
- Enhancing literacy across the school.
- Developing independent learning skills for university preparation.

4.0 UK School Library Challenges

Respondents were asked to rate their challenges in particular areas. The 7 main challenges identified were:

1. **Engaging students in the library** – 72% of schools indicated this is challenging or very challenging and 9% find it most challenging. Academy schools and state secondary schools identified engaging students as their biggest challenge.
2. **Integrating the library with the school curriculum** – 68% of schools indicated this is challenging or very challenging with 10% finding it most challenging.
3. **Teaching staff engagement with the library** – 67% of respondents indicated this is challenging or very challenging for their school with 16% finding it most challenging.
4. **Time limitations for daily duties** – 66% of respondents indicated this is challenging or very challenging for their school with 12% finding it most challenging.
5. **Library budget reductions** – 59% of respondents indicated this is challenging or very challenging for their school with 14% finding it most challenging.
6. **Promoting awareness of digital resources** – 58% of respondents indicated this is challenging or very challenging for their school with 9% finding it most challenging.
7. **Library staff reductions** – 33% of respondents indicated this is challenging or very challenging for their school with 11% finding it most challenging.

In an open comment sections, respondents shared some additional challenges they are facing with the most common themes including:

- Budget constraints, as this has a knock on effect to the resources and services we can provide.
- Limited space for the library – in some instances the library is spread across different rooms.
- Lack of involvement and support from senior management.
- Rising costs of online subscriptions and databases.
- Reduction in the use of physical books by students with increasing reliance on online resources.
- Remaining in line with the latest technology and trends.
- A lack of teachers scheduling library lessons for students as part of their timetable.

5.0 Future Trends in UK School Libraries

Schools were asked to share any future trends they see emerging in school libraries. There were a number of common themes surrounding digital technology and online resources.

- There is a growing requirement for the library to be included in OFSTED inspections and reports, to highlight the value the library provides and to be part of the curriculum.
- The growing use of cloud based Library Management Systems with the ability to use digital technology to access the library 24/7.
- The flexibility to access learning resources from different devices, with the increasing use of tablet devices in schools.
- eBooks and online resources. A concern highlighted was making the right choice of an eBook provider and the need for this to be cost effective.
- Supporting students to develop research and independent study skills to prepare them for further and higher education with a growing requirement for students to begin university with research skills in place.

6.0 Conclusion

The 2016 UK School Library Survey provides an informative insight into the school library industry and a basis for comparing with past and future surveys. By comparing the survey results with those gathered in 2015 and those that will be gathered in 2017, the identification of trends and changes is becoming possible.

Continued investment in school libraries is vital for the development of literacy and improved educational outcomes. Librarians and library staff play an important role in student academic development. It is clear there is a growing requirement for digital and online resources and that school-wide access and integration is important for engaging students in learning.

The survey identifies that school librarians and library staff in the UK face a number of challenges, including insufficient funding and resourcing which hinders their ability to provide services to engage and encourage student interaction. This is a significant issue as students prepare for university or further study.

It is important that the library is seen as a welcoming place to study and engage in research. This is one of the key objectives librarians are aiming to achieve. Many schools experience a lack of interaction from teaching staff. The services a school library delivers supports teaching and learning in many ways and it is vital teaching staff recognise this.

Thank you to everyone that took part in the 2016 UK School Library Survey.

From all the staff at Softlink.

A special thanks to The School Library Association, Renaissance Learning, BDS, JCS and CRB Cunninghams who have been strong supporters of the UK School Library Survey 2016.



For more information on the UK School Library Survey or if you would like to discuss how Softlink can help school libraries overcome their challenges, contact us on 01993 883 401 or alternatively e-mail marketing@softlink.co.uk.

