

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



# Introduction

Schools are changing to meet the evolving needs of students in a digital world. Today's students need to be equipped with a range of literacies in order to meet the future demands of work and further study, so it is important that schools embrace and foster multi-literacies across the entire curriculum.

School libraries, which have traditionally been hubs for book-based learning in schools, are adapting and expanding the services, resources and the engagement they provide, to ensure they deliver relevant learning opportunities to digital natives.

This paper outlines several factors which educators have identified as essential to achieving best practice: a Whole-School Approach; optimal use of available resources; support for virtual learning; providing social, creative and collaborative spaces; and the promotion of information literacy.

Softlink has determined a number of important ways in which its library software can support schools in these focus areas. To help readers review their school library management system and better understand the advantages of Oliver v5, this paper also presents a selection of features within Oliver v5 that support the current and evolving needs of school libraries, contributing to improved educational outcomes.

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# A whole-school approach

Educators and education departments around the world are seeing positive educational outcomes as a result of applying a Whole-School Approach (WSA) to literacy and numeracy – one in which teachers, principals, librarians, parents and students themselves all have a role to play (Hill & Crevola 1999; CESE 2016; Ofsted 2013).

Schools that adopt a WSA strive to improve school-wide cohesion and collaboration, and the school library can be a driving force in the successful application of these core principles. Equipped with the appropriate skills, tools and resources, the library is well positioned to be the central hub in a WSA, expertly supporting each branch within the school.

Oliver v5 is a flexible tool, which links the curriculum to library resources and facilitates active involvement of the school community in literacy and numeracy programs.

The system empowers students to take ownership of their reading for schoolwork and leisure. Book recommendations tailored to the student, cover art in search results, interactive book reviews, and the ability to view digital media directly within Oliver v5, encourage students to explore books and other resources with a broader scope.

Teachers can collaborate with library staff to develop Oliver v5 reading lists that are designed to match curriculum and other WSA programs, while ensuring limited resources are shared across subject areas in the most efficient and equitable way. This collaborative pooling of resources saves time and ensures quality resources are always on hand when they are needed.

Reading lists can be updated 'on the fly' to maintain relevancy. Students and their parents can check these lists to find available resources, which have been assessed for their suitability in complementing or extending students' current course material. Oliver v5's visually appealing presentation of reading lists, with colourful cover art, recommendations based on interests, borrowing history and more, and the option to display results in carousel, list or tiled view format, further encourages students to explore resources and engage with the curriculum.

"The interface of Oliver v5 Build 8 has become second nature to our users very quickly. Both staff and students find navigating the updated interface very user-friendly. The students are becoming more frequent users of Oliver v5 with its appealing home page and search functions."

Melinda Egan, Head of Library,  
St Joseph's College - Gregory Terrace, Australia


# Making the most of precious resources

Research from across the world, including Softlink's annual Australian and New Zealand School Library Survey and UK School Library Survey, has shown that well-staffed and well-resourced school libraries can have a positive impact on student literacy (FAIR/ALIA 2016; Hughes 2013; Scholastic 2016; Lonsdale 2003).

However many schools with lower staff numbers and resource allocations have still been able to excel and deliver high impact programs within the school community, thereby boosting student achievement and school cohesion. In order to plan, develop and deliver such successful programs, schools need effective systems for managing their human and other resources.

For instance, school library software should enable school library staff to spend less time on administration, which consumes in excess of two hours every week in many cases (Softlink 2016), freeing up more time for them to apply their expert skills in ways that directly benefit students.

Oliver v5 has been developed to streamline common school library administration tasks, including cataloguing, circulation and stocktake. In fact, many tasks can be fully automated using Oliver v5, so that library staff can divert their focus to developing strategic programs.



"Oliver v5 generates notifications to alert students by email that a reserved item is waiting for them. Excited students have sometimes turned up minutes after the notification is sent!"

Colleen Shipley, Library Manager,  
Marlborough Girls' College,  
New Zealand

For instance, Oliver v5 can automatically issue email communications regarding reservation alerts and overdue loans. This eliminates the need to manually run reports and then contact students individually, a task that can be very time-consuming with low success rates.

Automatic alert notifications can also be set up for new resources of interest to specific users.

# Making the most of precious resources

Additionally, Oliver v5 can be used to track inventory or resources for other school departments, such as textbooks, musical equipment and even maintenance equipment. In this way, Oliver v5 can provide efficiencies across the entire school.

"With Oliver v5 we can provide the whole school community with efficient and effective access to resources, including integrated eResources."

Di Ruffles, Teacher Librarian,  
Melbourne Grammar School,  
Melbourne, Australia

"Our laboratory technician wants me to make catalogue entries for all his chemicals with a lab location, so we can attach a map and he can use the Oliver Search to locate them."

Trevanna Cooper, Teacher Librarian,  
Christian Brothers College,  
Fremantle, Australia

The analytic and reporting functionalities within Oliver v5 provide clear data on how resources are being used, so that principals and financial decision makers can better plan, assess and budget for resources based on the actual needs and preferences of the entire school community.

# Libraries as virtual spaces

For today's students, school-based learning is no longer confined to the classroom or to school hours.

According to the recent nbn™ Digital Parenting Report (2015), 75% of students are now learning online at home, and half of all students are accessing online tutorials and video resources as part of their research and homework.

Softlink's 2015 School Library Survey also found that two-thirds of students now have access to a personal mobile device, compared to just over two-fifths of students in 2014 (Softlink 2014).

This proliferation of mobile devices allows students to continue their study regardless of their physical location.

School libraries are adapting to these changing practices and preferences by extending digital services and resources, while maintaining their physical offerings.

Within the Oliver v5 library management system, the library's virtual and physical offerings are blended seamlessly. Virtual learning resources, including eBooks, videos, audio, educational websites and more, can be catalogued alongside physical resources and embedded directly within the system, so students can access them without leaving the safety of the library's virtual space.

The integration between Oliver v5 and Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) such as Moodle, LibGuides and Blackboard, allows the school library to actively participate in the delivery of modern e-learning programs and makes visible the school library's role in enhancing the curriculum.



# Libraries as virtual spaces

Without leaving the familiar work space of the VLE, students can access course reading lists, search the school library's Oliver v5 catalogue, click on links and manage their personal borrowing history.

Further, with Oliver v5 being web-based and available as a fully featured app, students, parents, teachers and library staff are no longer restricted by the device they use or by the physical space of the library, so opportunities for learning need never be limited.

"Oliver v5 is a future-focused library system and if you want that, and that is where your school is going, this is the system to choose."

Georgi de Stigter, Teacher Librarian,  
Hobsonville Point Schools,  
New Zealand

"Oliver is web based, which means students can interact with the library catalogue anywhere they access the net."

Robyn Markus-Sandgren,  
Library Manager, St Hilda's School,  
Gold Coast, Australia

# Libraries as social, creative and collaborative spaces

Modern school libraries offer more than just quiet spaces for books and reading. They are truly dynamic learning hubs. Because of their central role within the school, libraries are ideally positioned to support the development of skills such as communication, collaboration and critical thinking, all of which are essential skills for students to develop if they are to successfully meet the expectations of work and life in the 21st century (Schleicher 2015).

School library software can help libraries develop their potential as social, creative and collaborative spaces where students learn and thrive.



Oliver v5 functions as the school library's 'community notice board', a place where library staff can creatively promote community spirit within the school. For example, they might share announcements about upcoming events or clubs, or embed digital media such as videos and photos from school activities.

Students' creativity and connectedness is fostered through Oliver v5, which gives them the ability to create and share book reviews with peers, and to connect via shared interests. In this way, Oliver v5 encourages independent learning and extends the library's function as a social space for students, both during and beyond school hours.

*"Softlink needs to be congratulated for responding so well to the needs of today's libraries."*

Annie White, Retired Head of Information Services, Saint Stephen's College, Gold Coast, Australia



# Supporting information literacy

Educators understand that it is no longer enough to teach students traditional literacy skills. To prepare students for success in the digital era, there must be a focus on building information literacy.

Students with strong information literacy skills recognise when information is needed and are aware of how to locate, evaluate and apply that information.

77% of respondents in Softlink's 2015 School Library Survey indicated that developing a formal information literacy program was important or very important to them (Softlink 2015).

School library software that offers a fun, personalised student interface and incorporates access to a range of digital resources, enables students to take control of their own information literacy and to actively refine their skills across a range of literacy areas.

Oliver v5 has features which encourage students to become confident, independent learners. For instance, Oliver v5's predictive search function allows students to search for resources using a variety of related search terms, even if they are unsure of the spelling.

Using Orbit, the new junior and middle school interface for Oliver v5, even the youngest students, or students whose English language skills are limited, can search independently for the resources that interest them, thanks to the picture search capability.

"Oliver has inspired staff and students who were previously not using the library, to actually use the catalogue to find resources. Younger students are also finding Oliver easier to use than the previous LMS."

Robyn Markus-Sandgren,  
Library Manager,  
St Hilda's School,  
Gold Coast, Australia

"I've seen a vast improvement in the independence of students when using the library. Instead of relying on staff to locate books for them they use Oliver v5, searching by key words or topics. They are also discovering more with accurate search results and visibility of all resources available related to their search."

Sarah Lodge,  
Former Librarian,  
Feversham Academy,  
UK

# Conclusion

As the above discussion makes clear, school library software should be much more than just a tool for tracking your library resources.

Oliver v5 is innovative, adaptable school library software that can add real value to your school library, extending and enhancing the library's role in your school community and in the educational outcomes of your students.

Oliver v5 simplifies the implementation of a Whole-School Approach to literacy and numeracy, facilitates collaboration and the sharing of resources among teachers and subject areas, supports students to develop multi-literacy skills for the information age, integrates seamlessly with other software systems used within your school, and gives you the tools to develop your library into a vibrant, collaborative, creative space where students thrive and enjoy learning.

For more information on how Oliver v5 can benefit your school, [contact Softlink](#).



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