

2014 Australian School Library Survey



Findings from *Softlink's 2014 Australian School Library Survey* into school library budgets, staffing and literacy levels in Australian school libraries.

Conducted by:

Softlink



Executive Summary

Softlink is a leading provider of knowledge, content and library management solutions (including eBooks) for schools, academic, public and special libraries, and knowledge centres in Australia and around the world.

More than 50% of Australian school libraries use Softlink's knowledge, content and library management solutions.

In 2014, Softlink conducted the fifth annual Australian School Library Survey. This report outlines the findings from the *2014 Australian School Library Survey* into Australian school library budgets, qualified staffing levels and NAPLAN literacy results.

Principal findings from the 2014 Softlink Australian School Library Survey include:

- There was a positive correlation between annual school library budgets and NAPLAN Reading Literacy results.
- There was a positive correlation between the number of school librarians employed in school libraries and NAPLAN Reading Literacy results.
- Overall, fewer schools reported a budget decrease in 2013/2014 compared to the significant percentage of schools that reported a budget decrease between 2012/2013.
- Government Secondary and Government K – 12 schools had the highest percentage of budget decreases in the 2013/2014 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.
- The majority of school libraries had no change to their staffing levels.
- For school libraries that did change their staffing level, the more common trend was a decrease in staffing levels.
- There was an increase in the take up of eBooks in schools.

Relevance to previous reports

The outcomes from the 2014 survey demonstrate the correlation between school library budgets and literacy levels. The link between funding and literacy is an issue facing schools and their libraries worldwide.

There have been numerous reports and studies undertaken that highlight the pivotal role libraries and Teacher Librarians play in 21st century education.

Research such as the 2008 "School Libraries Work" report on school libraries in the United States and the 2013 "School libraries, Teacher Librarians and their contribution to student literacy in Gold Coast schools" report demonstrate a positive impact between literacy and student achievement and library resourcing.

A 2010 study in the United Kingdom undertaken by the National Literacy Trust also found a strong relationship between reading attainment and school library use. The study, titled *Young People's*

Reading and Writing: An in-depth study focusing on enjoyment, behaviour, attitudes and attainment, can be found on the National Literacy Trust's web site.

Softlink's research continues to indicate a relationship between well-funded and staffed school libraries and student achievement. These results have been consistent throughout the life of the Australian School Library Survey – 2010-2014.

It is disappointing then, that the Softlink Australian School Library Survey results also indicate that overall median school library budgets are unchanged or lower in 2014 than they were in 2011.

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.

The report findings support a 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 and resources.

Investment in school libraries is integral to the delivery of a world-class Australian curriculum and quality educational outcomes.

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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. Softlink is proud to support school libraries and Teacher Librarians across Australia 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), Seattle (USA), and Auckland (NZ).

Softlink is a proud supporter of Australian School Libraries. Softlink provides the leading knowledge, content and school library management solutions, Oliver v5 and Scout.

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, Softlink has continued to survey Australian schools annually in an effort to highlight the issues facing Australia's school libraries. 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 *2014 Australian School Library Survey* by Softlink was conducted online. Invitations were open to all Australian school libraries and consisted of 33 questions that covered the following topics:

- Your school library and school's objectives
- How school libraries are resourced – budgets and staffing
- The role of the library within the school community
- Library technology and catalogue trends
- Emerging issues
- Library industry support

- Viewpoints on opportunities and challenges for the next 12 months

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 \$17,000. For K-12 schools in the 1100+ student size category the annual budgets ranged from \$5,000 to \$200,000.

1.2.3 Respondents

This year the survey received 1380 responses from 1267 Australian schools. Table 1 below shows the breakdown of survey respondents by Education Provider and School Type.

Table 1: 2014 Survey respondents by school type and education provider

Type of School	Education Provider			TOTAL
	Catholic	Government	Independent	
Primary	149	440	37	626
Primary & Secondary	28	65	176	269
Secondary	101	247	24	372
TOTAL	278	752	237	1267

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.

Principal findings from the 2014 Australian School Library Survey include:

- There was a positive correlation between annual school library budgets and NAPLAN Reading Literacy results.
- There was a positive correlation between the number of school librarians employed in school libraries and NAPLAN Reading Literacy results.
- Overall, fewer schools reported a budget decrease in 2013/2014 compared to the significant percentage of schools that reported a budget decrease between 2012/2013.
- Government Secondary and Government K – 12 schools had the highest percentage of budget decreases in the 2013/2014 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.
- The majority of school libraries had no change to their staffing levels.
- For school libraries that did change their staffing level, the more common trend was a decrease in staffing levels.
- There was a slight increase in the take up of eBooks in schools.

2.1 Allocation of School Budgets in Australia

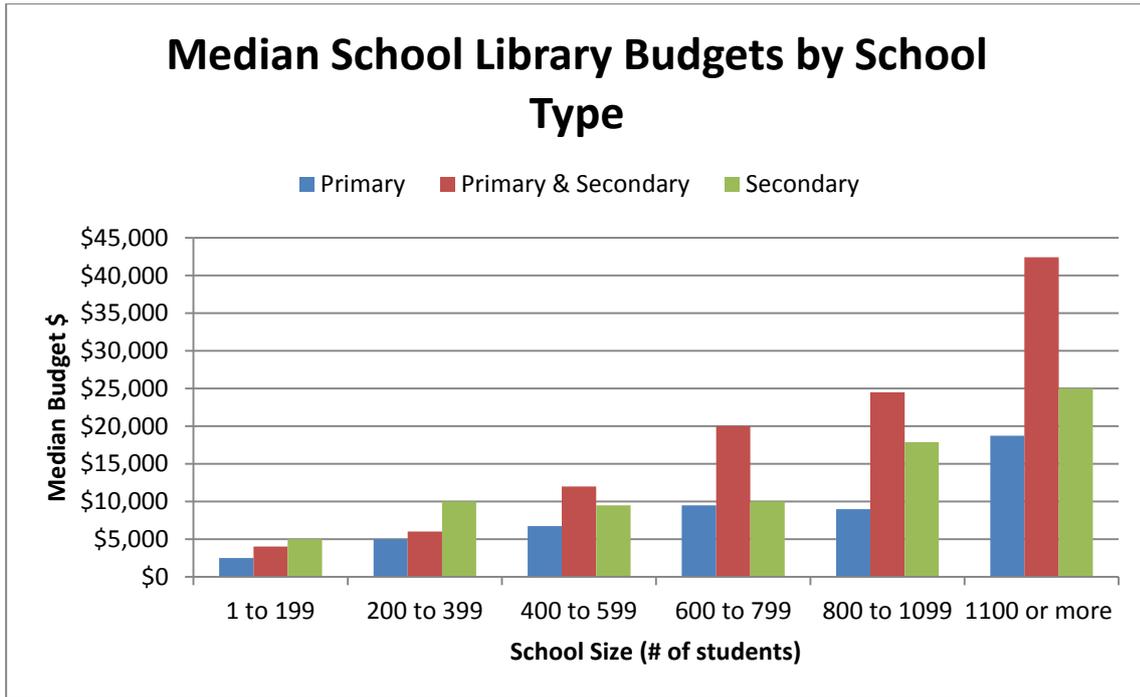
The 2014 school library budgets were reviewed by School Type and Education Provider and the findings have been reported in Figure 1 and 2 on page 8.

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 400 or more students.

Figure 1: Median School Library Budget by School Type in Australia 2014

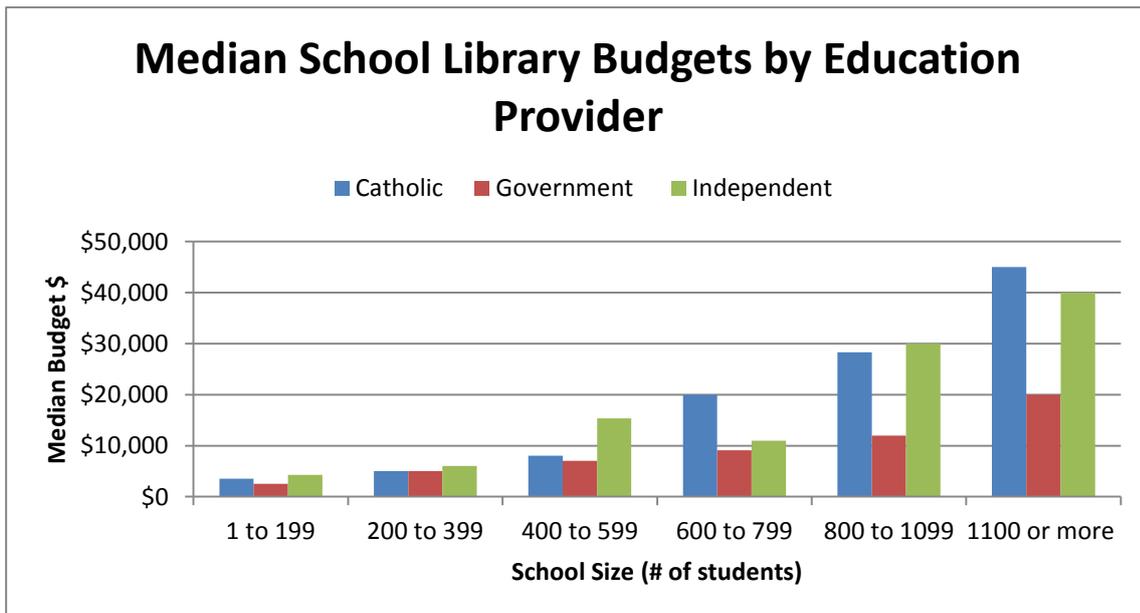


Median School Library Budgets by Education Provider

In 2014 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 and 1100 or more students categories.

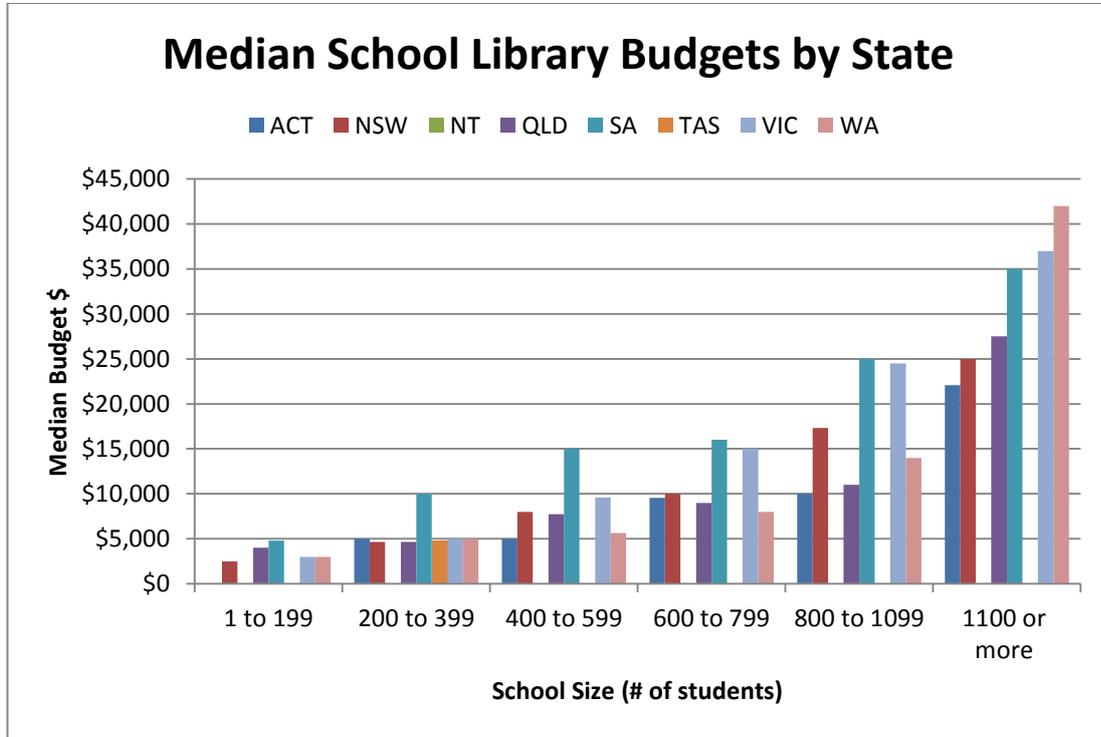
Government school libraries continue to receive the lowest amount of annual budget allocation.

Figure 2: Median School Library Budgets by Education Provider in Australia 2014



Median budgets were also analysed by size and state and are provided in Figure 3 as a guide for schools. Note, results for sample sizes of 4 responses or less have not been included in the graph.

Figure 3: Median School Library Budgets by State 2014



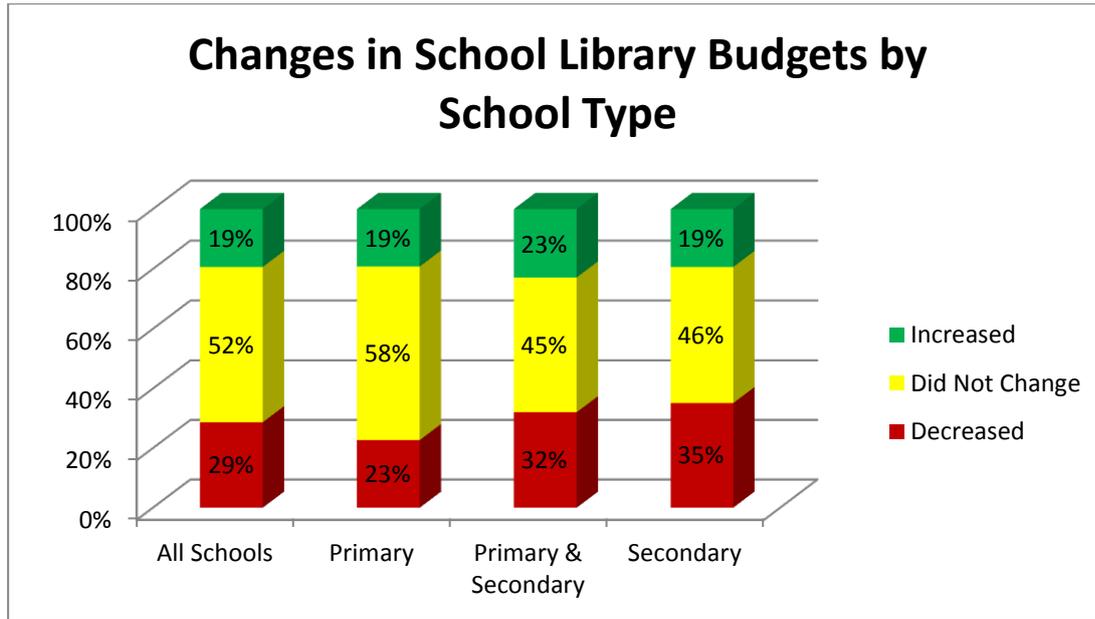
2.2 Change in Library Budgets

Changes in School Library Budgets by School Type

This year 81% of all schools indicated their 2014 budget either declined or remained the same as in 2013. The results in Figure 4 (page 10) show the breakdown for School Type for the question “How has the budget in 2014 differed from the previous year”.

The highest number of respondents (52%) indicated that their budgets remained the same, while 29% stated their budget had decreased. Overall, 19% of all respondents indicated that their budgets had increased. The results in Figure 4 (page 10) show the changes in school library budgets for school type.

Figure 4: Changes in School Library Budgets by Type

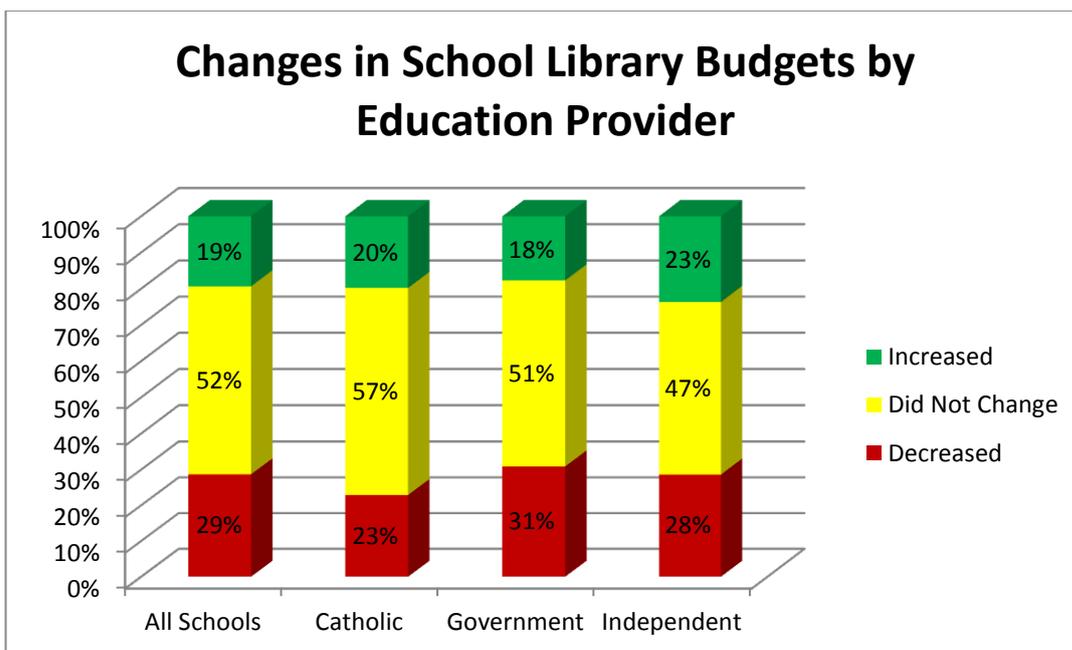


Changes in School Library Budgets by Education Provider

Figure 5 below shows the breakdown for changes in school library budgets by Education Provider reported in 2014. Government school libraries reported decreases of 31% which was only slightly higher than Independent school libraries at 28%. Catholic schools reported budget decreases of 23%.

Independent schools recorded the highest number of budget increases across education providers at 23%. Overall, 19% of schools reported receiving an increase in budgets during the past 12 months.

Figure 5: Changes in School Library Budgets by Education Provider 2014

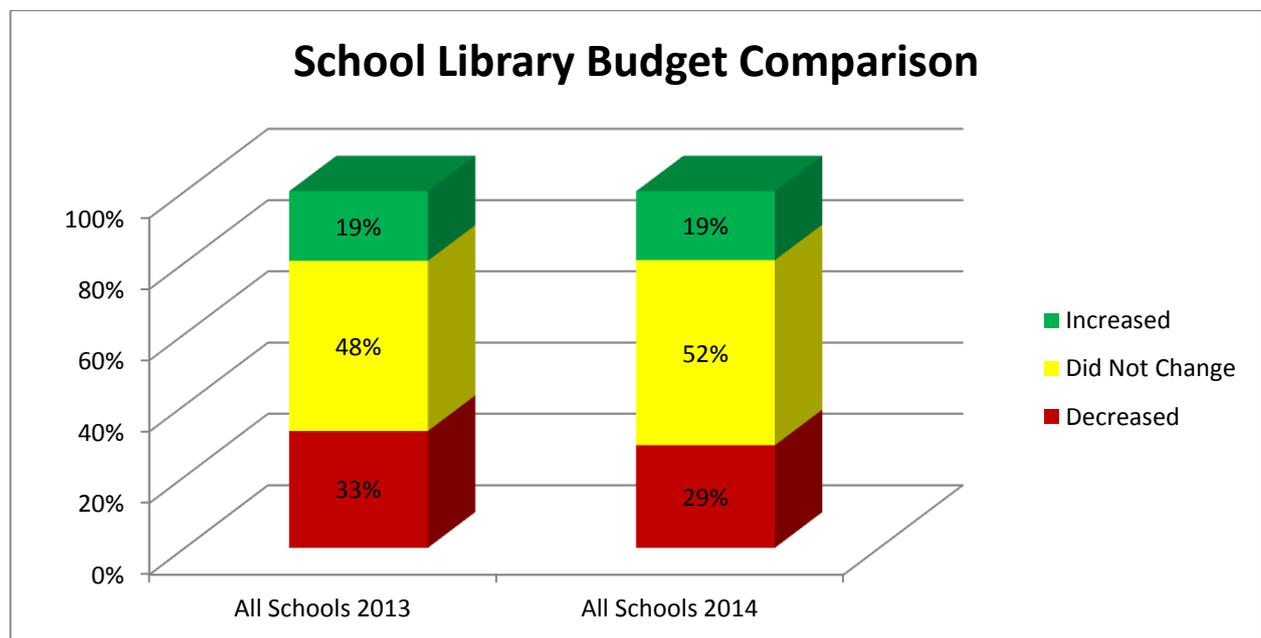


2.3 Comparison Library Budgets 2013 and 2014

When comparing 2013 and 2014 reported budget figures, fewer school libraries received a budget decrease in 2014, with more school library budgets remaining the same. The percentage of reported budget increases was identical in 2013 and 2014.

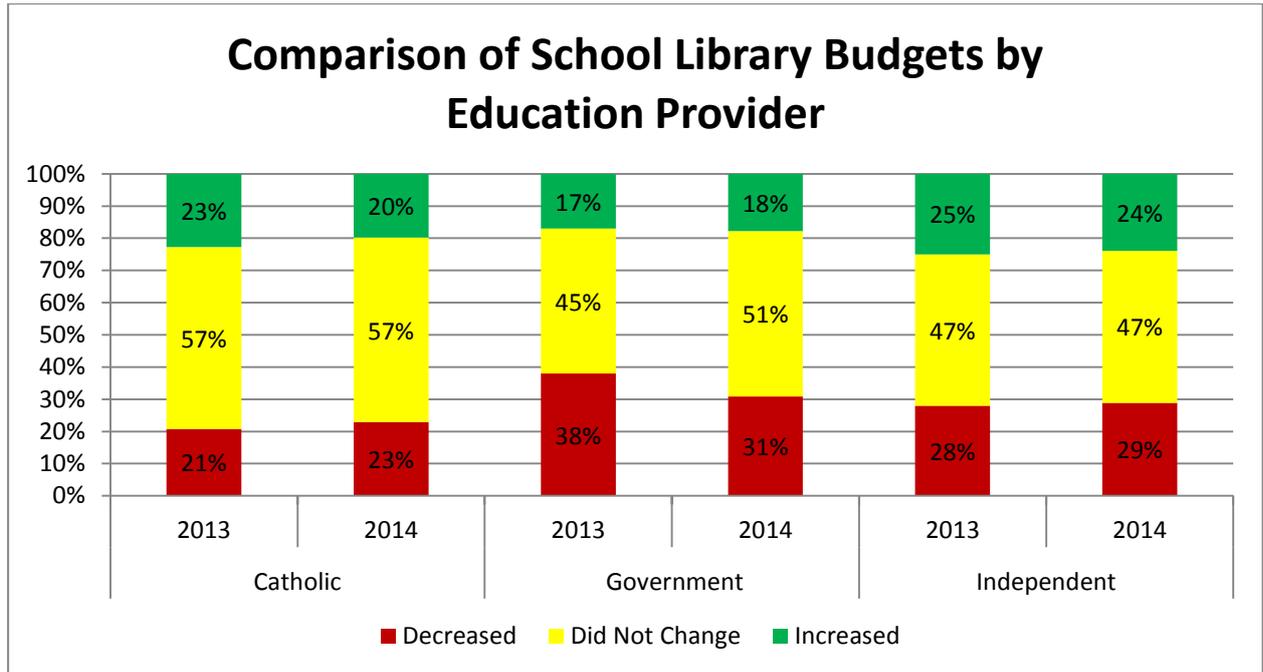
Please see Figures 6 below and 7 (page 12) for a comparison of budget changes across all school libraries and by school type.

Figure 6: Comparison of 2013 and 2014 reported budgets across all school libraries



The results above indicate that, overall, school library budgets have stabilised slightly in 2013/2014. In the 2012/2013 comparison the number of reported budget increases dropped by 7%, the number of reported budgets that did not change dropped by 4% and the number of budgets that decreased rose by 11% in the time frame. These budget losses do not appear to have been reversed in the 2013/2014 year comparison but there has been some stabilisation.

Figure 7: Comparison 2013-2014 of Reported Changes in School Library Budgets by Education Provider



While Catholic and Independent school libraries reported a lower percentage of overall budget decreases than Government school libraries, the 2013/2014 comparison indicates that more Catholic and Independent schools had their budgets decreased from the previous year, whereas less Government schools indicated a decrease from the year before. This means that the percentage of schools who reported a budget decrease is more consistent across the three education provider types than it was the year before.

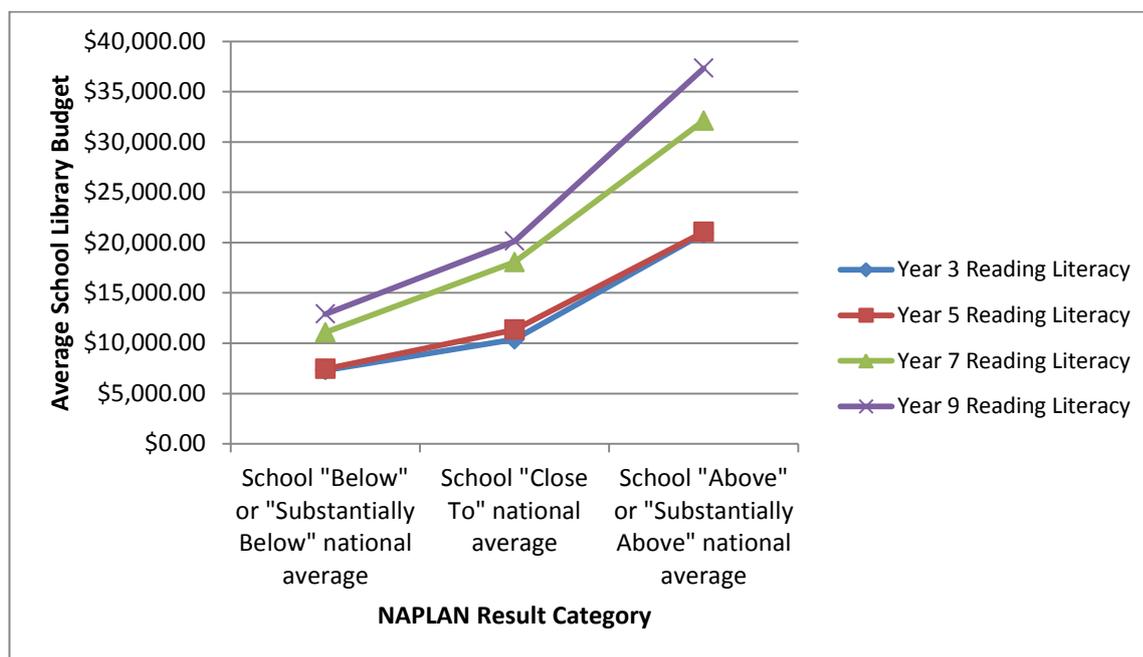
2.4 Australian School Library Budgets and Reading Literacy Levels

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

Figure 8 on the next page 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 8: Comparison of Reading Literacy Results for each Year Group with Average School Library Budget, Australia 2014



Relationship between School Library Budgets and NAPLAN Results

Table 2 below 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 2010-2014.

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.

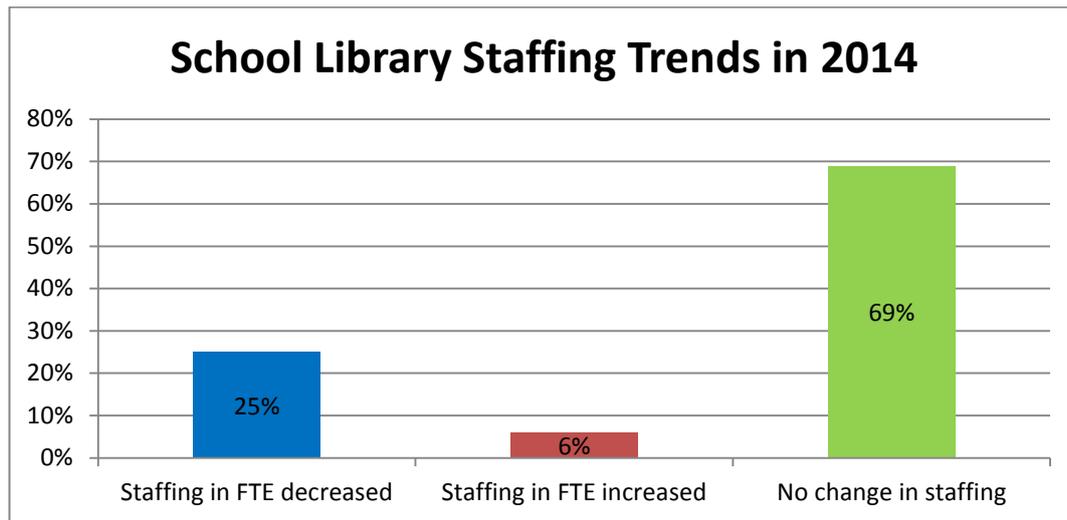
Table 2: Correlation of Literacy Results with Australian School Library Budgets During the Past Five Years

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

2.5 School Library Staffing Levels

A total of 25% of schools reported a decrease in library staffing in 2014. Only 6% of school libraries experienced an increase in staffing levels. The Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staffing at the majority of school libraries remains unchanged with 69% of all schools surveyed stating that there had been no change in staff during the past 12 months. (Please see Figure 9 below.)

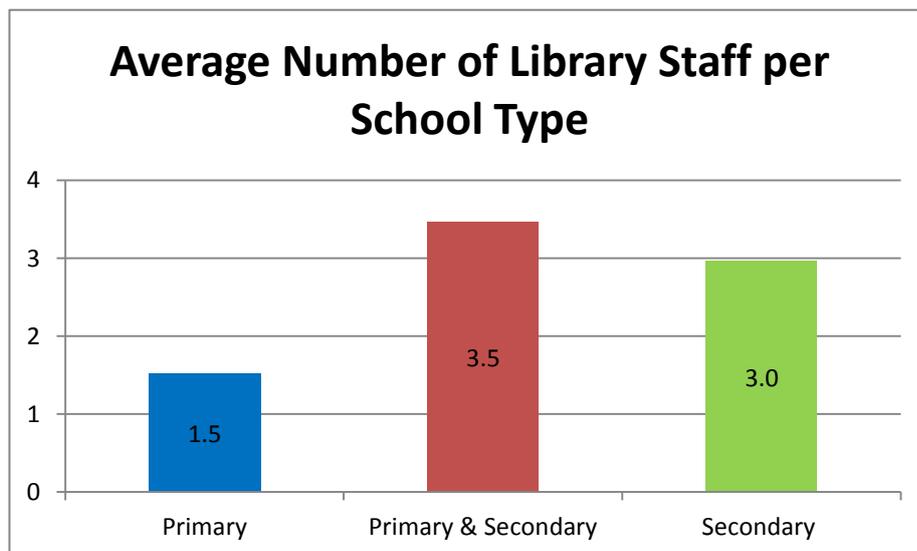
Figure 9: School Library Staffing Trends in Australian School Libraries 2014



Staffing by School Type

K-12 school libraries had the highest number of FTE staff with an average of 3.5 per school. The average for Secondary school libraries was 3.0. Average FTE staff for Primary school libraries was 1.5.

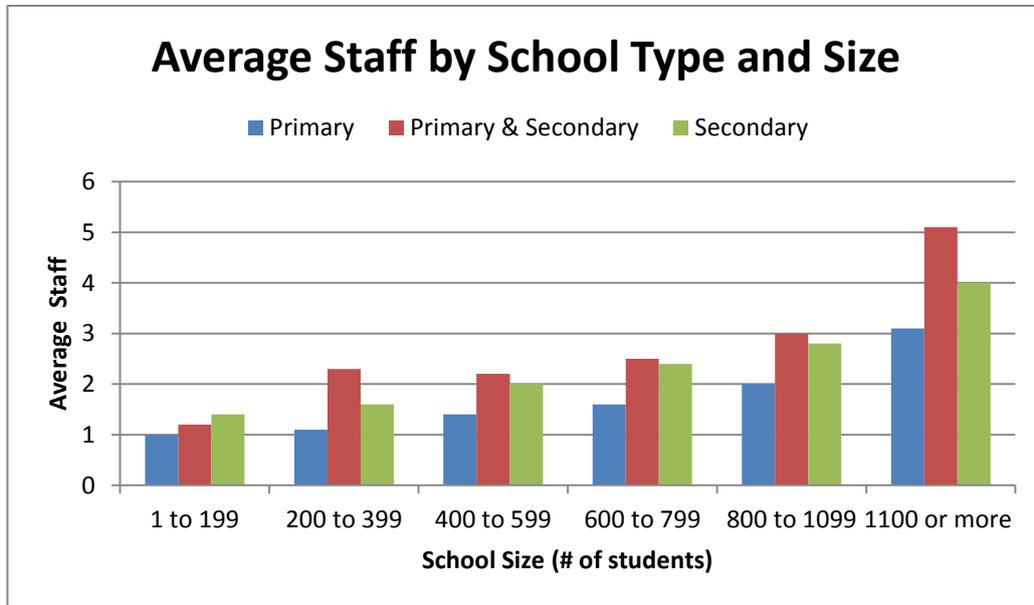
Figure 10: Average Number of Library Staff in Australian School Libraries by School Type 2014



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 5.1 per school. Please see Figure 11 below for average staff by school type and size.

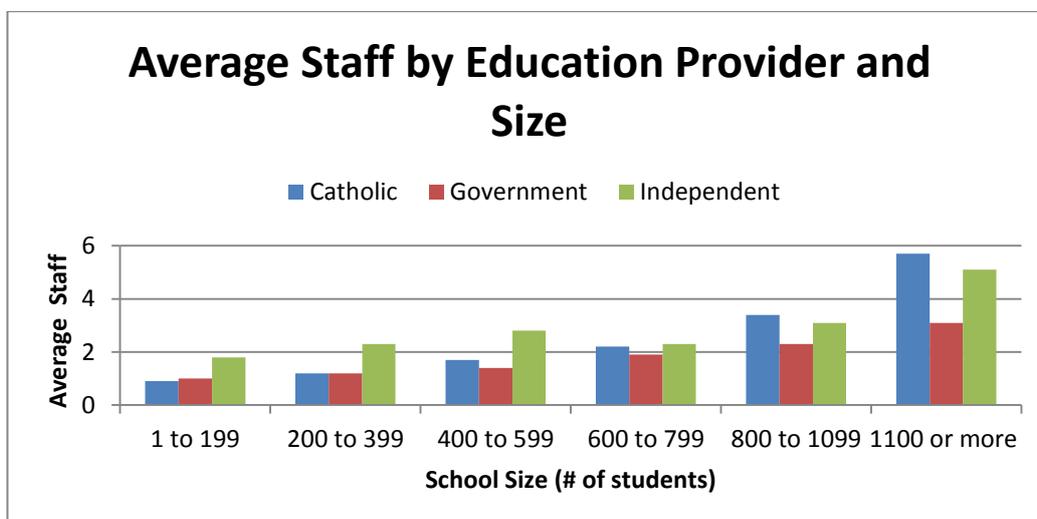
Figure 11: Average Staff by School Type and Size 2014



Average Staff by Education Provider and Size

When applying school size and education provider type, Catholic school libraries in the 1100+ students' category had the highest FTE staff average at 5.7 per school. Please see Figure 12 below for average staff by education provider and size.

Figure 12: Average Staff by Education Provider and Size 2014



Relationship between Qualified School Library Staff and NAPLAN Results

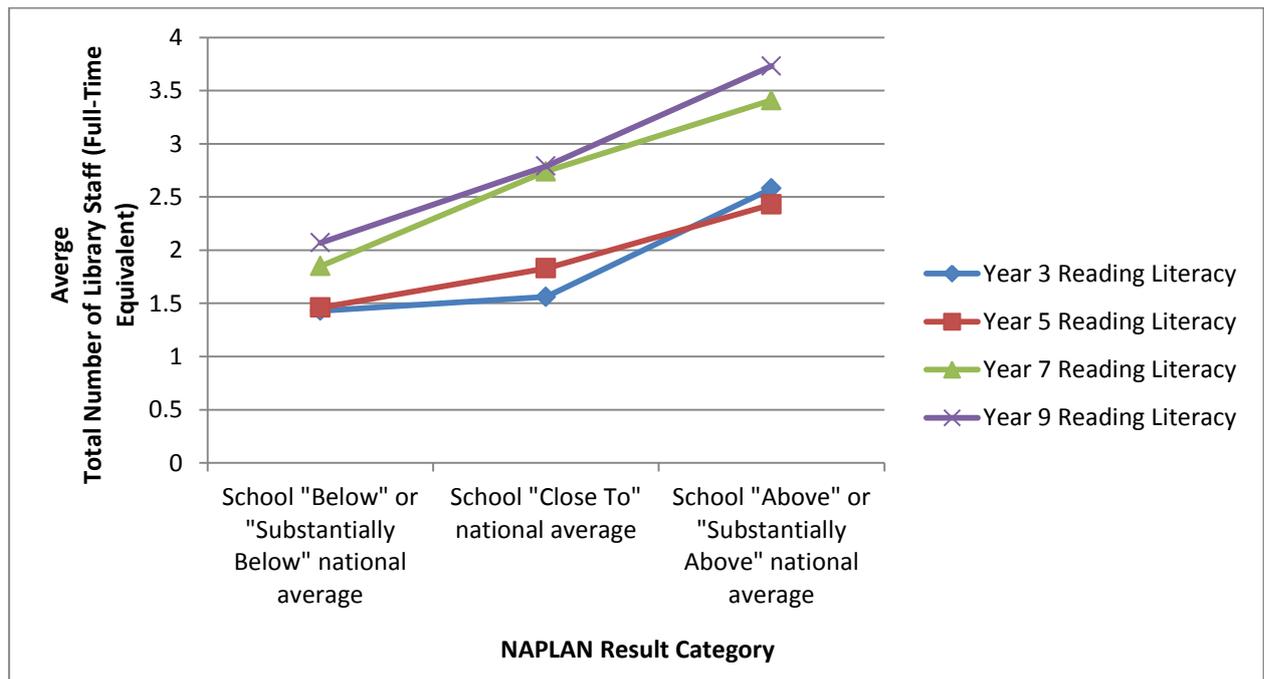
Table 3 below shows the correlations between Australian school library staff according to the survey respondents and NAPLAN literacy results obtained from the *National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy* and the *My Schools website*.

Table 3: Correlation of Literacy Results with the Number of School Library Staff in Australian School Libraries 2013

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

Figure 13 below graphs the correlation of literacy results with the number of school library staff in Australian school libraries.

Figure 13: 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

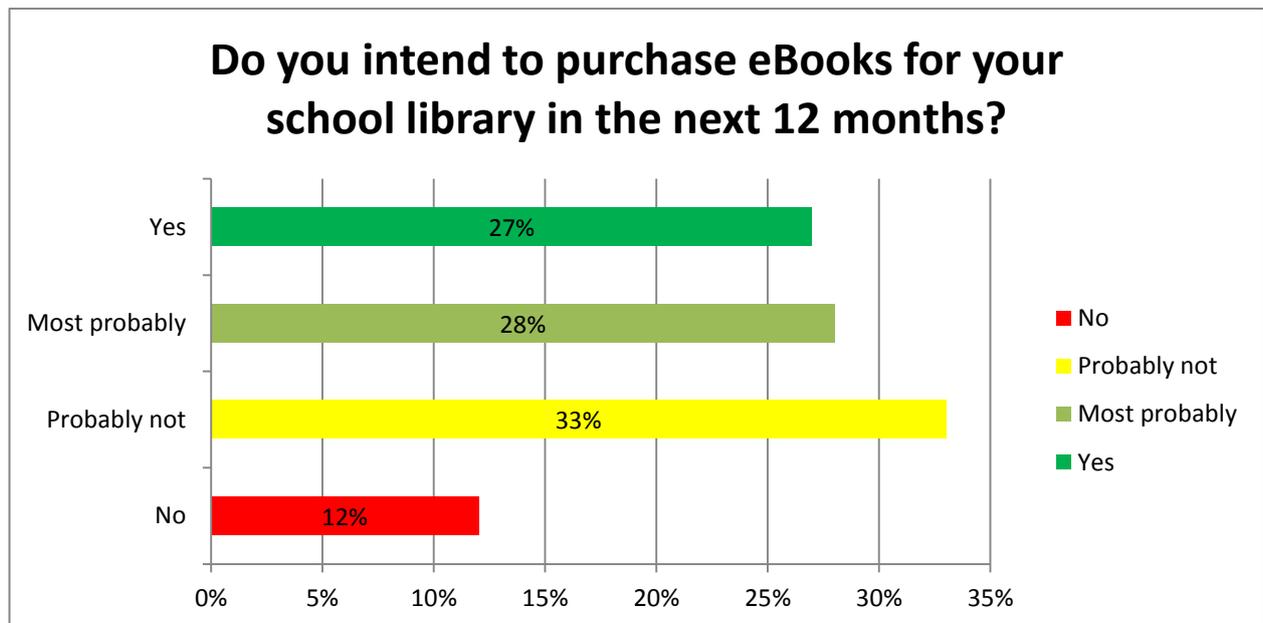
The survey found that 30% of respondents purchased eBooks in the past year. This is higher than last year’s result (28%), which was in turn higher than the 2012 (25.5%) result. This indicates a steady increase in the take up of eBooks.

In 2014, 22% of respondents indicated that eBooks or eResources now make up 5% or more of their collection. This is higher than last year when 20% of respondents indicated that eBooks or eResources now make up 5% or more of their collection.

There is an intention by school libraries to continue to extend their collections and services with digital titles, with 55% of respondents indicating they will “definitely” or “most probably” purchase eBooks within the next 12 months. This is the same figure as 2013, when 55% indicated they would “definitely” or “most probably” purchase eBooks within the next 12 months.

The total percentage of respondents, who indicate they have eBooks/eResources in their collection, is only 33.5%. While there is a steady increase in the take up of eBooks and eResources, these findings indicate that the intention of Australian school library staff to include eBooks and eResources in their collection and use new technology is different, or higher than the actuality.

Figure 14: School Library Intention to Purchase eBooks in next 12 months



3.2 Mobile Device Ownership and BYOT/BYOD Strategy

The survey investigated personal mobile device ownership and use in schools.

This year, 43% of respondents said half or more of their student population owned a personal mobile device (iPod, iPad, smart phone or other tablet) a similar figure to 2013 (44%).

The percentage of respondent schools that indicated they provide digital devices to students reduced from 58% in 2013 to 44% in 2014. 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). In 2014, 13% reported that they encourage BYOD use at school but only outside the classroom and 19% indicated that personal device usage was not encouraged at their schools'.

This year 27% 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 2013, when the result to the same question was 19%.

3.3 Library Resource and 24/7 Access

In 2014, 76% of schools indicated that they provide some level of access to resources from outside the library. A total of 49% provide access from both outside and within the school, while 27% provide access outside the library from within the school only, and 24% provide access in the library only. These are similar figures to 2013 when 47% indicated they provide access from outside and within the school and 29% said they provide access outside the library from within the school only.

A large majority of library staff (78%) believe it is important to provide access to the school library (catalogue, electronic resources, eBooks etc.) from outside the school and outside school hours. These findings indicate that there is a gulf between the service that school library staff would like to provide and the service they are able to provide.

3.4 Student Access to Social Media through School Internet or Computers

2014 was the second year that the question "Do your students have access to social media through school internet/computers?" was posed to respondents. This year, 15% of respondents indicated that they allow student access to Social Media through School Internet/Computers, this is an increase of 1% from 2013 when 14% of respondents indicated yes to this question.

This indicates that the provision of access to social media through school owned resources is not common practice in Australia and that this has remained consistent through 2013 and 2014.

3.5 School Library Objectives

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

The top three objectives included:

1. *Aligning Australian Curriculum (ACARA) with existing resources/practices* with 93% of respondents indicating that this was important or very important to them;
2. *Developing a formal information literacy program* with 81% of respondents indicating this was important or very important to them;
3. *Implementing technology to enable eResource access to digital/mobile devices* with 76% of respondents indicating this was important or very important to them.

Refurbishing/updating library or learning centre was also strongly represented with 68% of respondents indicating this was important or very important.

While 57% of respondents indicated that *implementing an eBook strategy* was important or very important to them, 78% 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: 2014 School Library Objectives

Objectives	Not important	Neutral	Important	Very important
Developing a formal information literacy program	3%	16%	36%	45%
Aligning Australian Curriculum (ACARA) with existing resources/practices	1%	6%	30%	63%
Implementing technology to enable eResource access to digital/mobile device	6%	18%	35%	41%
Implementing technology to enable BYOD or BYOT	17%	31%	27%	25%
Implementing an eBook strategy	14%	29%	32%	25%
Refurbishing/updating library or learning centre	16%	16%	31%	37%
Upgrading the school library management system	23%	23%	24%	30%
Moving towards a digital resource model library (limited hardcopy books)	43%	35%	15%	7%
Integration with other school systems	21%	35%	28%	16%

3.6 School Library Professionals

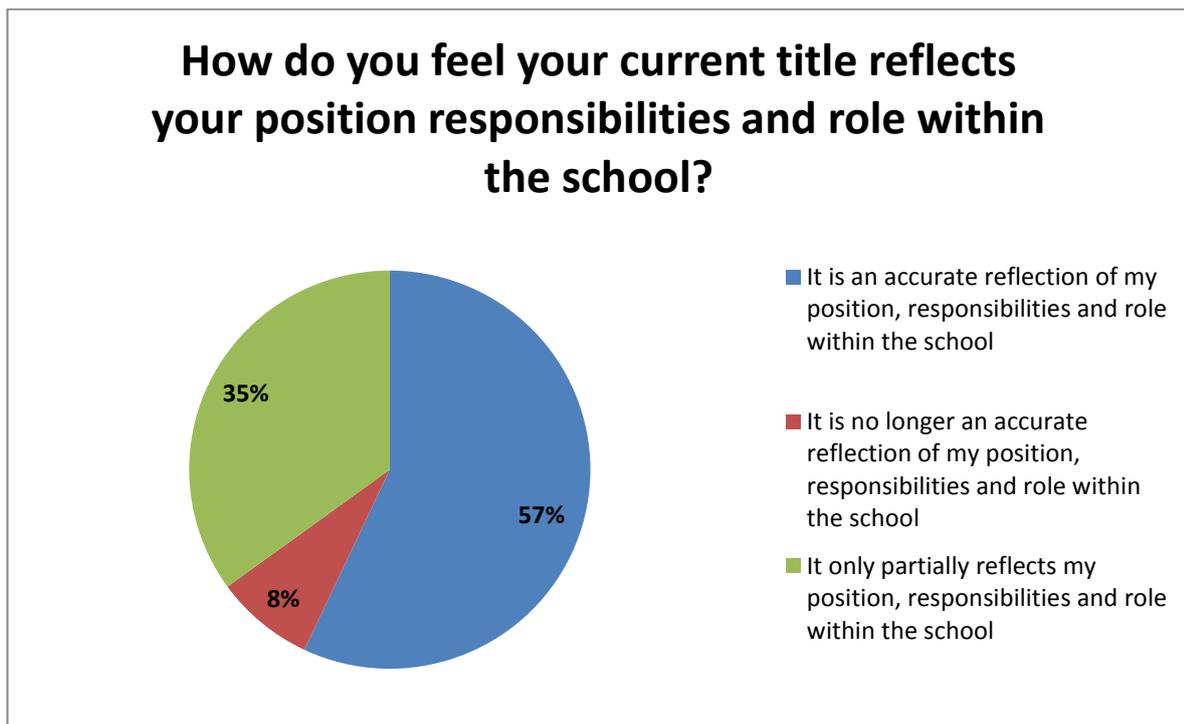
In response to the question “Does your school support professional development attendance?” a total of 71% respondents stated that their school encouraged professional development and training for library staff during school hours. Another 23% encouraged Professional Development outside of school hours. Only 6% of school librarians reported their schools did not encourage Professional Development.

In 2014 the survey asked two new questions relating to library staff titles.

To the first question, ‘Has your title changed in the last five years?’, 77% of respondents said that their title had not changed and 23% of respondents reported that their title had changed.

The second question related to how library staff titles reflect position responsibilities in school libraries. See Figure 15 below for responses to this question.

Figure 15: How do you feel your current title reflects your position responsibilities and role within the school?



An analysis of position titles of 2014 survey respondents is included below.

2014 Survey Respondents Position Titles

- 48% indicated that their title was, or included Teacher Librarian.
- 6% indicated that their title was, or included Librarian.
- 17% had a library management or leadership title.
- 20% had a library support role.
- The remaining 9% included teaching, management, eLearning and administration titles.

Of the 48% that include the title Teacher Librarian, 8% identified with a dual role, with the most common dual titles being ICT Coordinator, Assistant Principal, eLearning Coordinator or Library Manager.

Of the 6% that include the title Librarian, 17% identified with a dual role, with the most common dual titles being curriculum related or Assistant Principal.

The 17% of library management or leadership roles included a large variety of titles and roles such as Director of Library Services, Head of Information Services, Head of Library and Information Services, Resource Centre Manager and Library Manager.

The 20% of respondents that indicated a library support title were predominantly Library Technician's, Library Officer's, Library Assistant's and Library Aide's.

4.0 Challenges and Opportunities

Open responses relating to the greatest opportunities and challenges facing school libraries during 2013/2014 can be summarised into the following points:

- Funding – maintaining a well-resourced school library to enhance teaching and learning outcomes and the National Curriculum. This includes impacts on time available for library management versus teaching requirements and suitability of physical library space.
- Technology – greater use of eBooks, mobile and other library technology to match learner requirements. Finding a balance between online delivery and the continued importance of the physical collection.
- Space for creativity and innovation – developing the library as a central hub for creativity and innovation, including 3D printing and MakerSpace. Using the library as a centre for learning, innovation, social activity and events.
- Value of Teacher Librarians – Teacher Librarians being seen as valuable and being recognised for their skills, expertise and value to student achievement.

- Collaboration – with teaching staff to support the curriculum and provide high quality teaching and learning programs.
- Engaging students and the whole school community – encouraging greater use of the library so that the school is getting optimum value from their library resources.

5.0 Conclusion

Continued investment in school libraries is integral to delivering the Australian Curriculum as a world-class curriculum.

The 2014 report findings support that there is a 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 programs and resource the National Curriculum.