

The 2017 Softlink Australian and New Zealand School Library Survey Report



Findings from Softlink's 2017 Australian and New Zealand School Library Survey into school library budgets, staffing, library services, and trends.



Conducted by
Softlink

softlinkint.com/edu

"This survey is extremely important. Thank you!"

"Thank you for continuing this survey and helping build the data around school libraries."

"Thank you for your commitment to our school libraries and your continuing development of the Oliver library management system."

Introduction

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. Points for analysis include annual school library budgets and staffing levels, as well as the use of digital devices and digital resources in school libraries.

2017 is the eighth year of the School Library Survey for Australian schools and the third for New Zealand schools.

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

This report provides an analysis of the survey findings including library budgets, staffing levels, school library objectives, emerging trends, and eResource collections.

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All text quotes included in this report are drawn from two open-ended questions in the survey - *What is the one thing you would you change about your school library or your role?* and *Do you have any other comments you would like to add?*



“Our library is a place where the students come to read, discuss books with each other, and research.

We have cuddly toys to encourage them to sit and read quietly. We have a wish list where they can write down books that they would like to see in their library. We have a book fair each year.

At the end of the year we have a couple of distributors who come and display their books and the students choose which ones they would like to see.

I feel our library is very child friendly with their artwork and class story books being displayed for all to see and read.”

1.0 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 and opportunities school libraries are experiencing, Softlink has continued to survey Australian schools annually and extended this to include New Zealand and UK schools in 2015. Continuing the annual survey builds a critical reference point for understanding changes, impacts, and trends over time.

1.1 About Softlink

Established in 1983, Softlink is an Australian company with global influence including school library and education department customers across 60 countries.

Softlink works with school libraries and educators to provide solutions which engage students and support school library staff. Our flagship school library system, Oliver v5 is continually developed to meet the changing needs of libraries, educators, and students and our new information curating tool, LearnPath provides an easy to use platform to guide students, support the development of research skills and promote the value of school libraries and resources.

Softlink products offer deep digital integration with eBooks and streamlined integration with virtual learning environments and school administration systems.

We have had a long partnership with the library and information industry and understand the challenges and opportunities the 21st Century learning and teaching environment presents for school libraries.

2.0 Survey findings summary

Key findings from the 2017 Survey include:

- 62% of respondents feel their library is not adequately resourced including staffing and budget.
- 56% of respondents indicated that their library budget has not changed from the previous year, 21% indicated it had increased and 23% indicated it had decreased.
- 69% of respondents indicated no change to their staffing levels from the previous year, 9% indicated it had increased, and 22% indicated a decrease.
- 68% of schools indicated they now provide access to the library from outside the school; 89% of respondents agree or strongly agree that anywhere, anytime access to the library is important
- 66% of respondents indicated that they now include eBooks in their collection.
- 52% of respondents indicated that they now include eResources - subscription databases in their collection.



3.0 Allocation of school budgets

Respondents were asked to provide an indication of budget from a selection of annual budget ranges not including staff salaries.

Responses to this question have been analysed by school type, education provider, and school size.

3.1 School library budgets by school type

The most common budget range for Primary schools was \$2,501 - \$5,000, for Secondary schools \$10,001 - \$20,000, and K-12 schools \$20,001 - \$50,000.

For Intermediate school respondents, the most common ranges were \$5,001 - \$7,500, \$7,501 - \$10,000, and \$10,001 - \$20,000.

“The library has had a significant facelift this year which has resulted in an increase in student usage and positive opinion of the library.

The only major purchase was lounge/ottoman seating.

Shelving organisation, posters and displays have all been at minimal cost and very effective in providing a positive learning environment.”

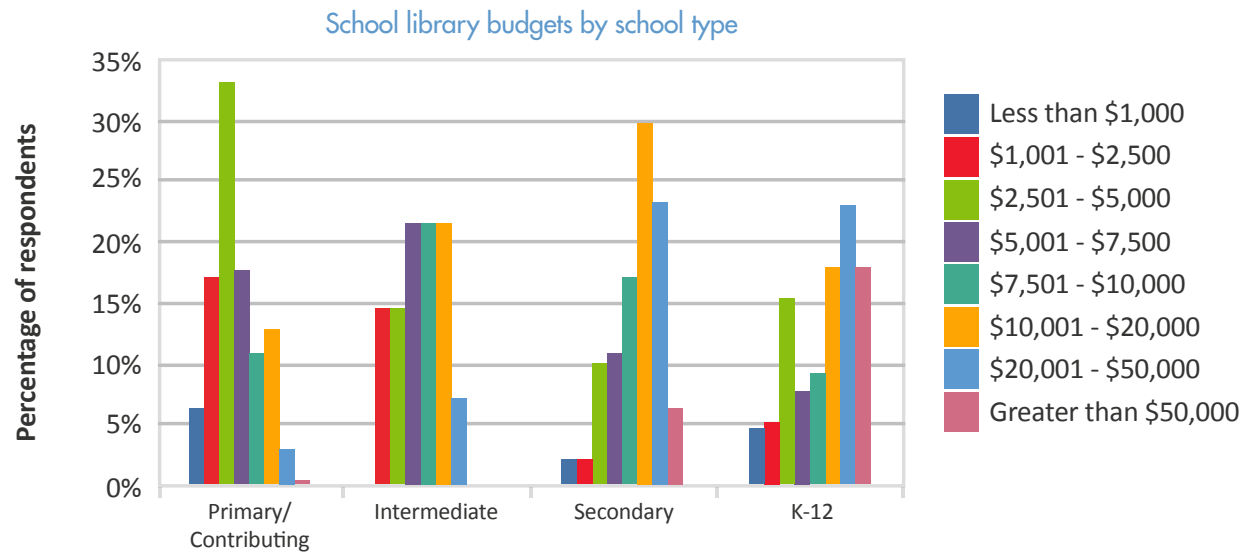


Figure 1 : School library budgets by school type 2017

3.2 School library budgets by education provider

The most common budget ranges for Catholic school respondents were \$10,001 - \$20,000 and \$20,001 - \$50,000.

For Government school respondents, the most common range was \$2,501 - \$5,000.

Independent/Private schools were most likely to fall in the \$20,001 - \$50,000 range.

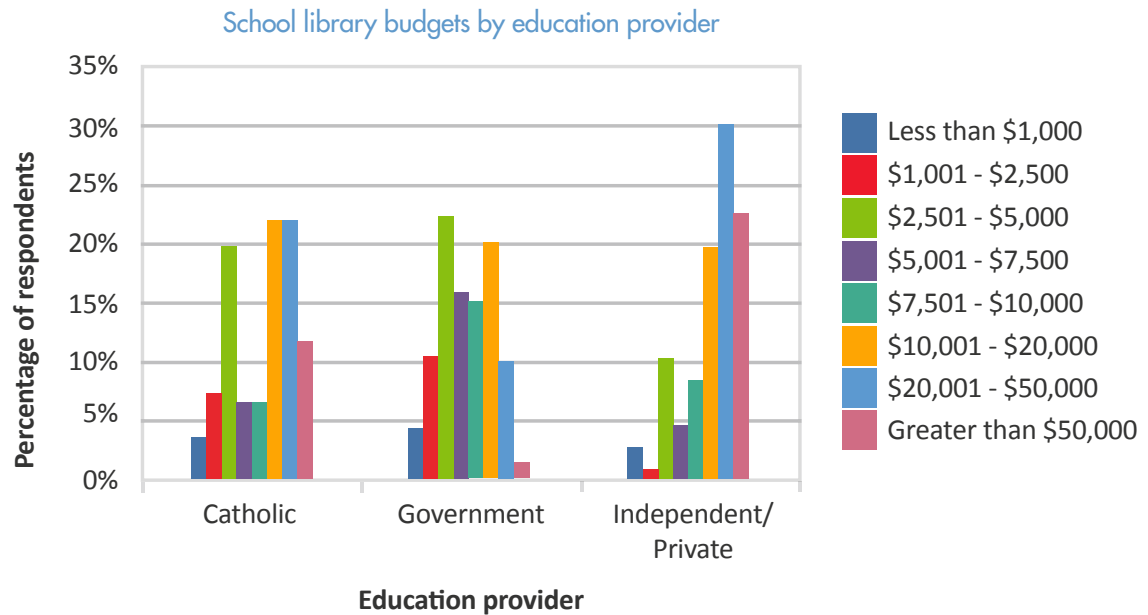


Figure 2 : School library budgets by education provider



3.3 School library budgets by size

Additional analysis was completed that shows school library budgets by school size. This is provided in figure 3 below.

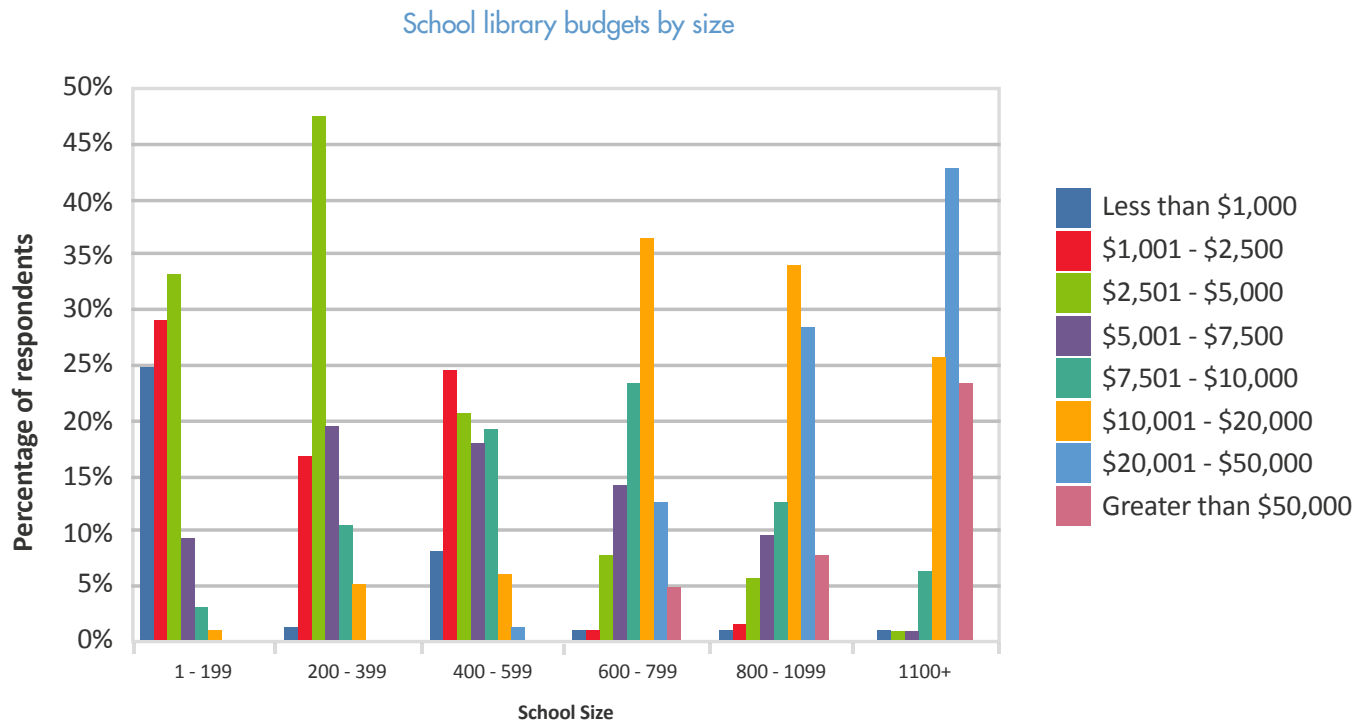


Figure 3 : School library budgets by size

“The school library is a wonderful learning environment and a safe haven for all students who find it difficult to interact with others - you see them grow into independent adults.

It is a great place to work and to see teachers and their students learning.”

3.4 School library budgets by location

School library budgets were also analysed by location. This is provided in figure 4 below.

For a breakdown of school library budgets by size and location, please see our participant summaries, available [here](#).

School library budgets by location

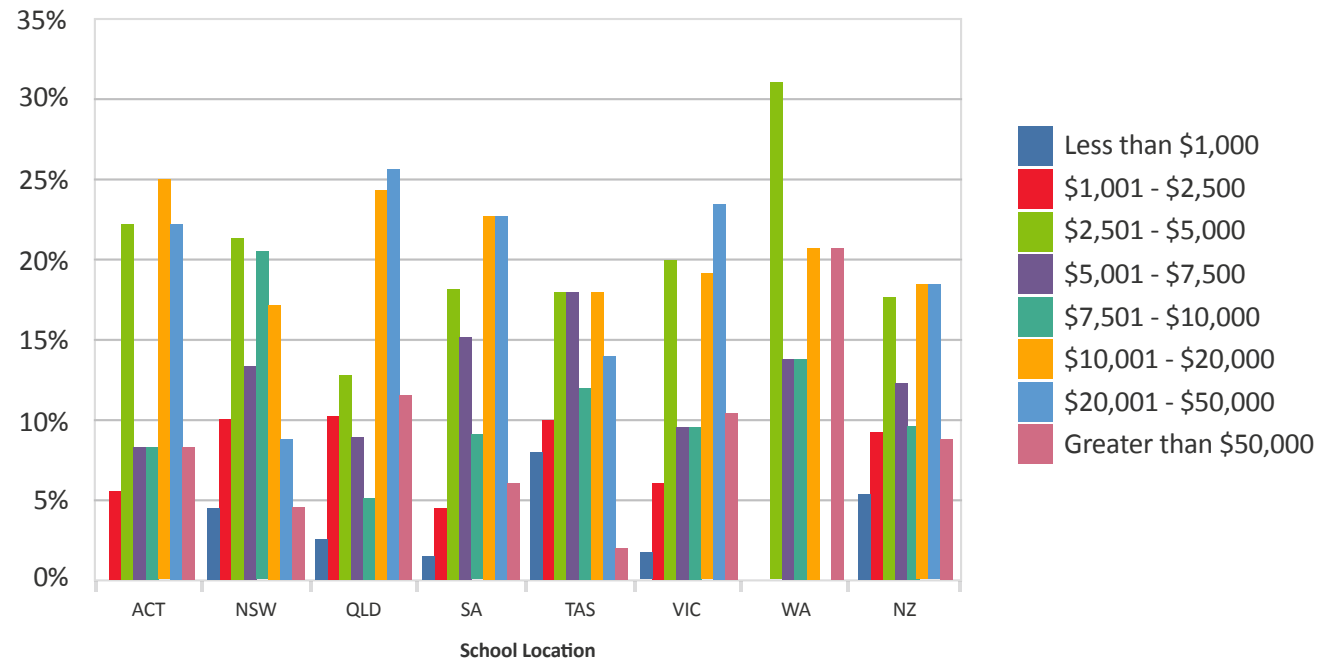


Figure 4: School library budgets by location

4.0 Changes in school library budgets

Respondents were asked to provide an indication of how their annual budget had changed from the previous year.

Responses to this question have been analysed by school type and education provider.

Additional analysis is also provided to compare overall reported budget changes in 2016 and 2017.

4.1 Changes in school library budgets by school type

Figure 5 shows the reported changes in school library budgets by school type.

"I would like increased funding to provide more adequate facilities, resources, and staffing to better service the school community."

Changes in school library budgets by school type

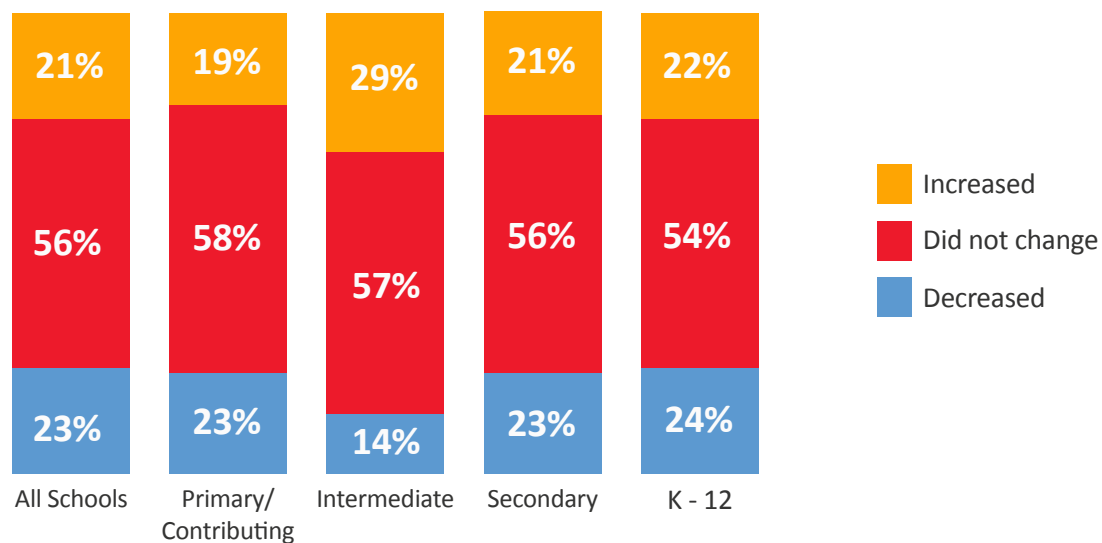


Figure 5: Changes in school library budgets by school type 2017

4.2 Changes in school library budgets by education provider

Figure 6 shows the reported changes to school library budgets by education provider.

Changes in school library budgets by education provider

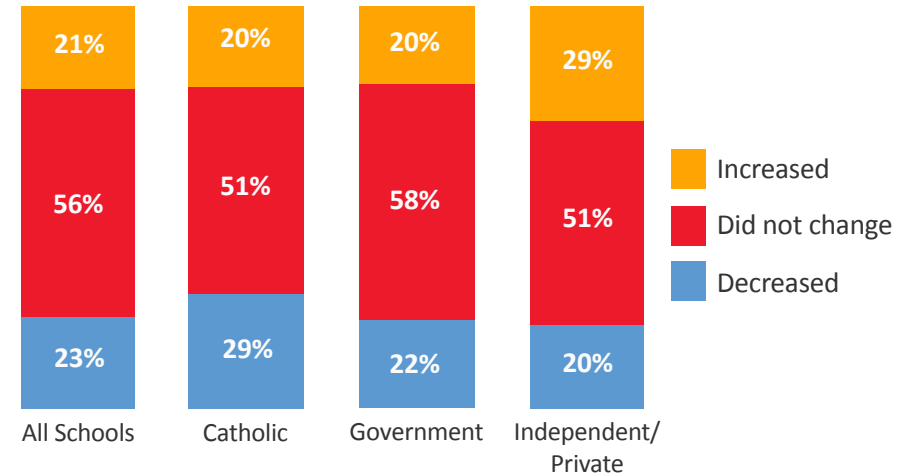


Figure 6: Changes in 2017 school library budgets by education provider

4.3 School library budget comparison 2016 - 2017

Figure 7 compares annual budget changes between the 2016 and 2017 survey responses.

When comparing library budget changes between 2016 and 2017, fewer schools reported budget decreases, while the same percentage of schools reported an increase.

School library budget comparison 2016 - 2017

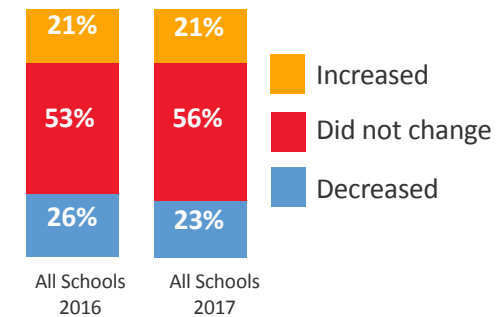


Figure 7: School library budget comparison 2016 and 2017

“A successful school library comes down to a number of things:

1. Resources - budget and staff
2. A supportive principal and executive
3. Teacher librarians who are willing to institute change if required and be dynamic - who get out there and sell their wares, change school culture, and be leaders in their field.”

4.4 Comparison school library budgets by education provider Australia and New Zealand

Figure 8 shows the comparison of reported school library budget changes by provider in Australia and New Zealand.

Australian Independent schools reported the most budget increases while New Zealand Catholic schools reported the most budget decreases.

Comparison School library budget changes by education provider Australia and New Zealand

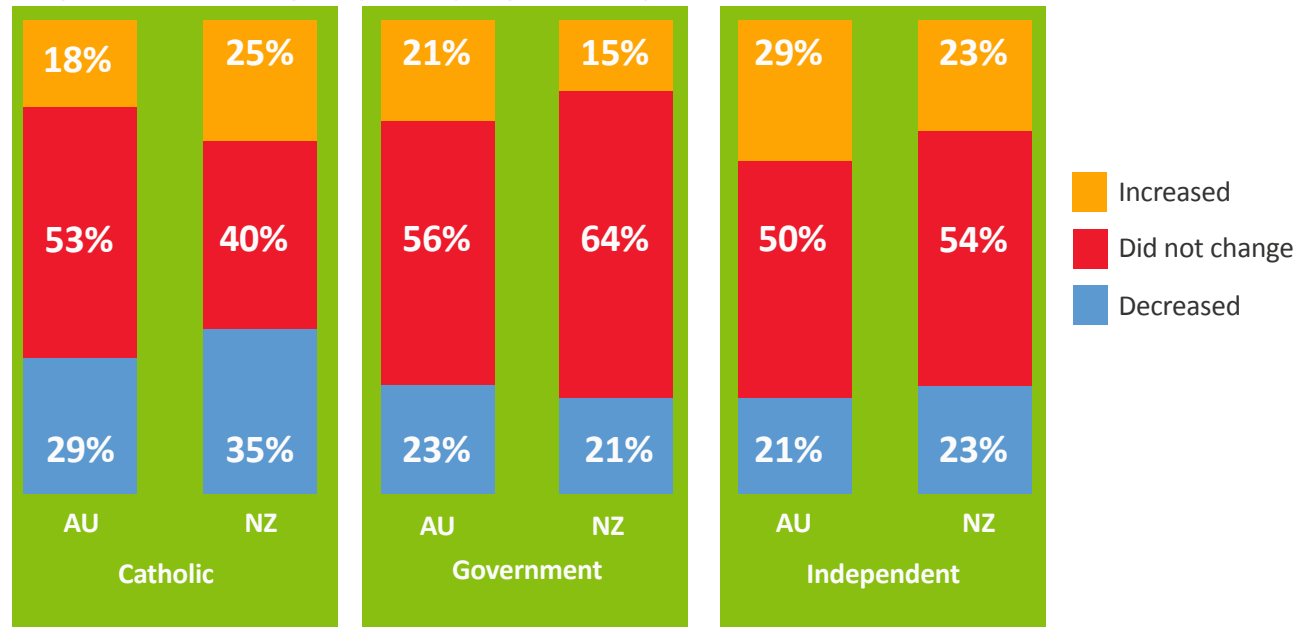


Figure 8: Comparison of school library budgets by education provider Australia and New Zealand

5.0 School library staffing

Respondents were asked to provide information about staffing, including Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staffing levels and library role type.

Responses to these questions have been analysed by school type, education provider, school size, and role type.

5.1 Staffing by school type

K-12 schools reported the highest number of FTE staff with an average of 2.8 per school.

Primary/Contributing and Intermediate schools reported the lowest number of FTE staff with an average of 1.2 per school.

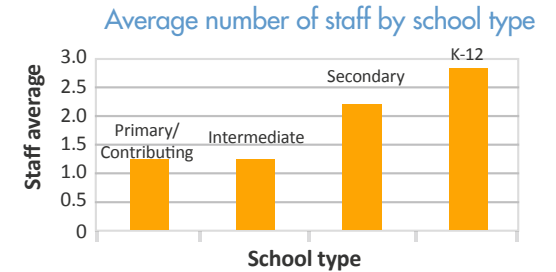


Figure 9: Average number of staff by school type

5.2 Staffing by education provider and size

When applying school size and education provider type, Independent/Private school libraries in the 1100+ category reported the highest FTE staff average of 6.1 per school.

Independent/Private schools in the 1 - 199 category reported the lowest FTE staff average of 0.5 per school.

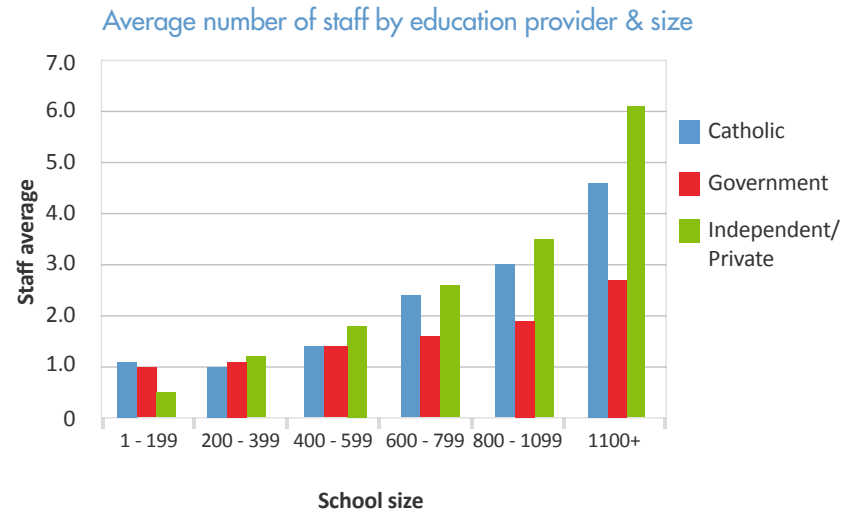


Figure 10: Average number of staff by education provider & size



“Libraries need well qualified staff who have passion and love for their profession.

They must be able to bond and relate with students of all academic levels.

Library staff must be approachable, happy, and great communicators. ”

5.3 FTE staff by role and school type

Figure 11 shows the breakdown of school library staffing by role and school type.

The percentage indicates the number of respondents in each category with at least one of these role types.

FTE staff by role and school type

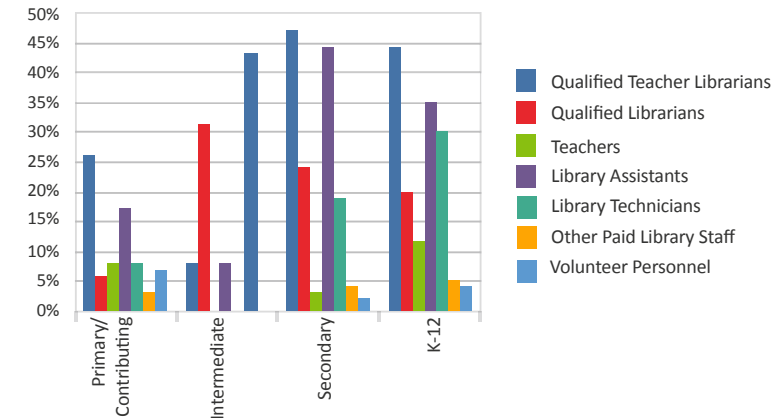


Figure 11: FTE staff by role and school type

5.4 FTE staff by role and education provider

Figure 12 shows the breakdown of school library staffing by role and education provider.

The percentage indicates the number of respondents in each category with at least one of these role types.

FTE staff by role and education provider

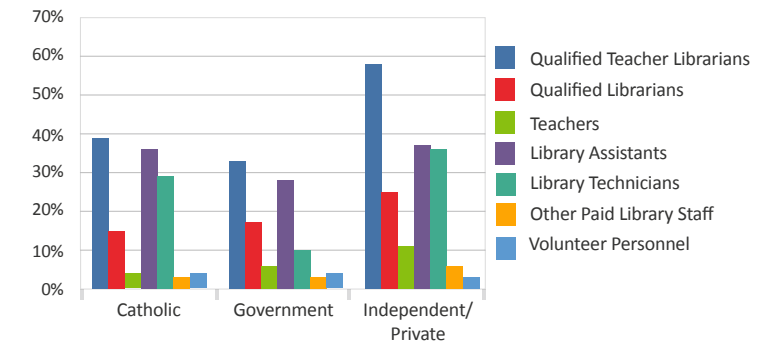


Figure 12: FTE staff by role and education provider

6.0 Changes in school library staffing

Respondents were asked to provide an indication of how their staffing had changed from the previous year.

Responses to this question are presented below.

6.1 Changes in school library staffing - Australia and New Zealand

Figure 13 shows reported changes to school library staffing separated for Australian and New Zealand Schools.

School library staffing changes Australia and New Zealand 2017

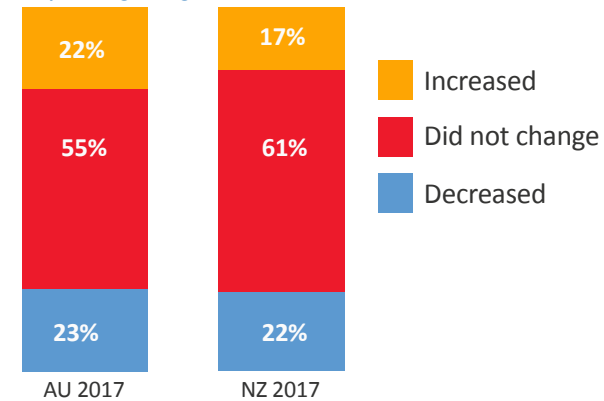


Figure 13: Comparison of 2017 school library staffing changes Australia and New Zealand

6.2 Changes in school library staffing - all schools

Figure 14 shows reported changes to school library staffing between 2016 and 2017.

When comparing reported changes in school library staffing between 2016 and 2017, more schools reported staffing decreases, and more schools reported staffing increases.

School library staffing changes comparison 2016 - 2017

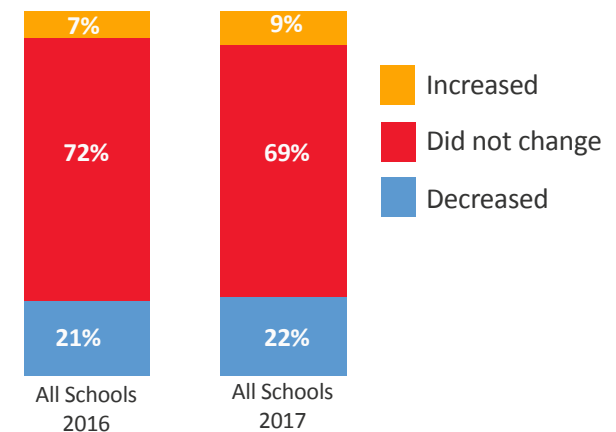


Figure 14: Comparison of 2016 and 2017 school library staffing changes



“Our library is the ‘lounge’ of the school - a place for students to connect, collaborate, journey, and learn.

I have found that as I foster this, the library has become a place of high usage and a central hub of the school community.”

7.0 School library services

Respondents were asked what they considered to be the most important services the library provided.

The top 3 services for Australian and New Zealand schools included:

1. **Providing an engaging & welcoming space for learning & leisure** with 63% of respondents indicating that this is an important or very important service,
2. **Developing & managing the schools resource collection** with 52% of respondents indicating that this is an important or very important service,
3. **Developing or teaching information literacy programs** with 46% of respondents indicating that this is an important or very important service.

Most important services that the library provides

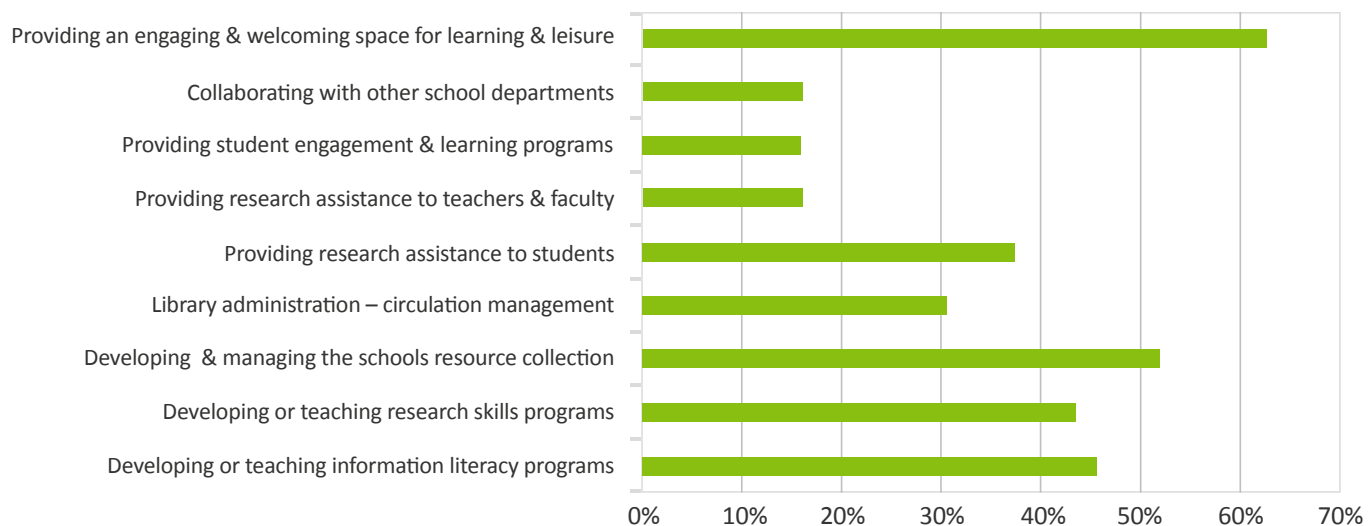


Figure 15: Most important services that the library provides

Open fields provided opportunity for respondents to include other services not listed. These have been shared on [this blog post](#) and include *developing a love of reading* as the most popular response.

8.0 Emerging trends

Respondents were asked to rate the following technologies or trends in relation to how they will impact school libraries in the future.

The top 3 emerging trends for Australian and New Zealand schools included:

1. **Increased technology integration** with 77% of respondents indicating that this would have a moderate to high impact.
2. **Cloud-based technologies increasing library accessibility** with 77% of respondents indicating that this would have a moderate to high impact.
3. **Digitisation of resources** with 65% of respondents indicating that this would have a moderate to high impact.

Impact of emerging trends on school libraries

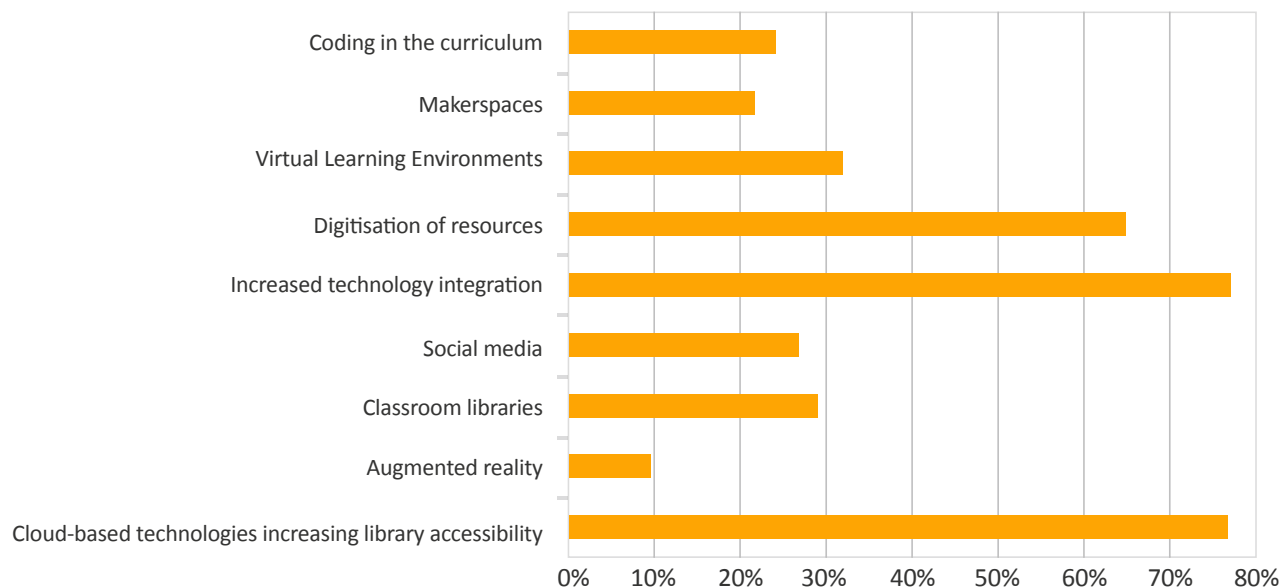


Figure 16: Impact of emerging trends on school libraries

Open fields provided opportunity for respondents to include other emerging trends not listed. Responses included Support for STEAM and STEM activities, faster and more reliable internet access in rural locations, blended classrooms, flipped classrooms, inquiry learning, flexible learning environments, library apps, and fake news.

9.0 Online access to the library

Respondents were asked what level of online access they provided to the library and if they thought online access to the library was important.

The graphs below show the level of online access to the library and whether respondents feel that anytime, anywhere access to the library is important.

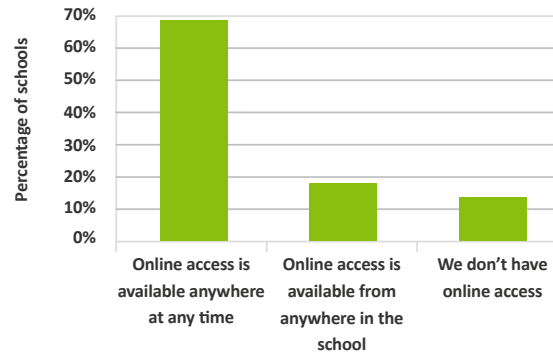


Figure 17. Level of online access

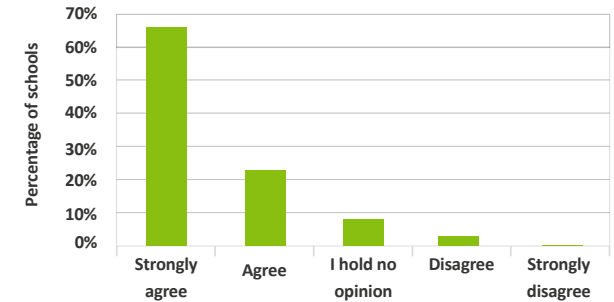


Figure 18. Do you think anywhere, anytime access to the library is important?

10.0 eResources

Respondents were asked what percentage of their collection was made up of eBooks and other multimedia and what percentage of their collection was made up Subscription databases. Figures 19 and 20 show this percentage for all school types, figures 21 and 22 on the following page show the distribution by school type.

Percentage of collection made up of eBooks and other multimedia

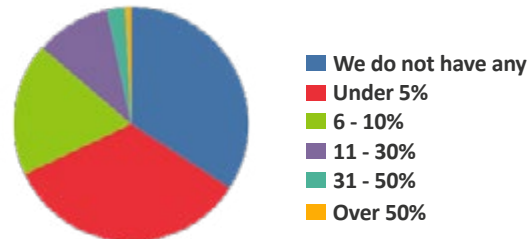


Figure 19. Percentage of collection made up of eBooks and other multimedia

Percentage of collection made up of Subscription databases

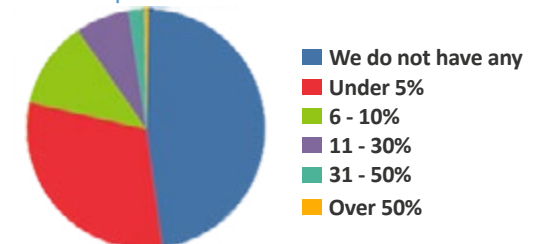


Figure 20. Percentage of collection made up of Subscription databases

"My role has evolved year by year.

I feel it is important that a teacher librarian ensures that they stay abreast of new technology and teaching and learning initiatives."

Percentage of collection made up of eBooks and other multimedia by school type

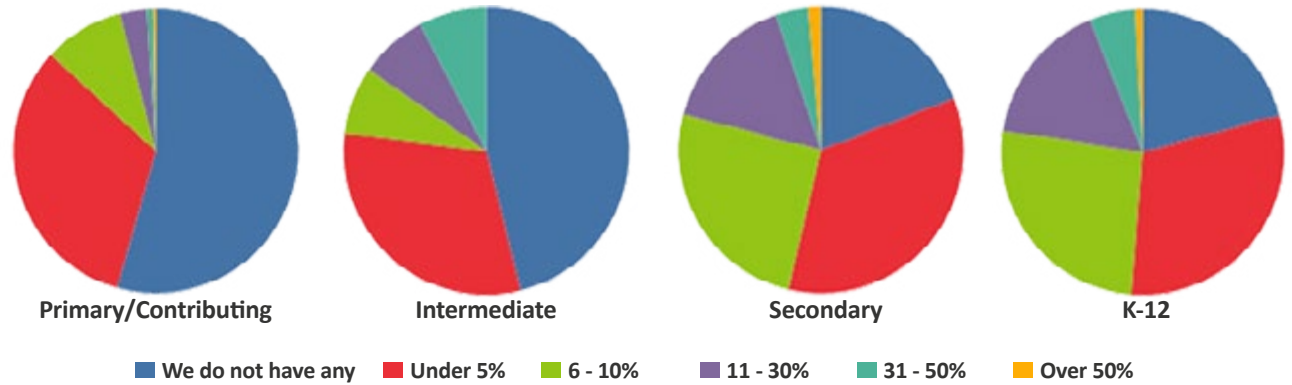


Figure 21: Percentage of collection made up of eBooks and other multimedia by school type

Percentage of collection made up of Subscription databases by school type

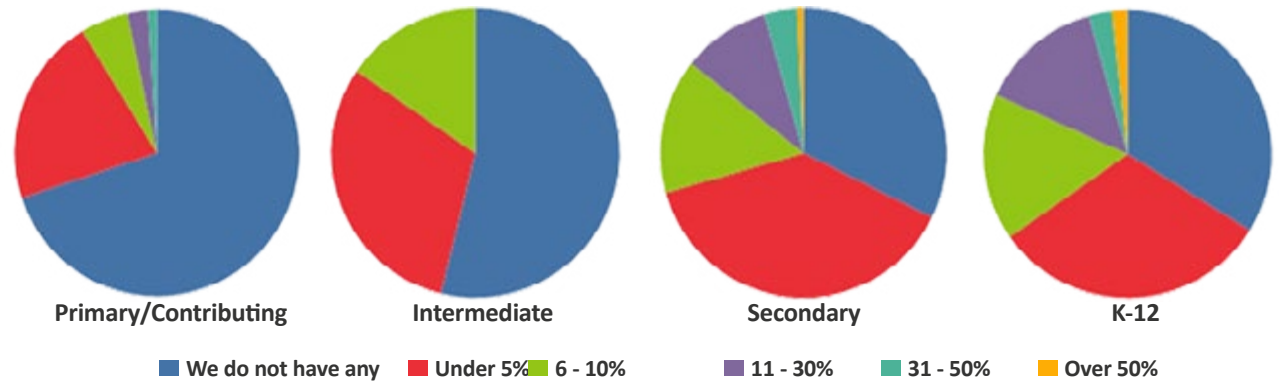


Figure 22: Percentage of collection made up of Subscription databases by school type



11.0 Feedback themes

Respondents were asked two open-ended questions about the library and their role. They were also asked to share ideas for collaboration between the library and the rest of the school. We had a number of respondents share these ideas, which you can read in our whitepaper [“School libraries share ideas for school-wide collaboration”](#) available on our website.

Recurring themes include:

The library space

Respondents indicated that they would like to upgrade shelving and furniture to modernise the library and to create more flexibility in the library space. They would like a bigger space for the library to enable them to expand the collection and give students dedicated reading and study spaces.

They also indicated that they would like to move the library to a more central location in the school to become a knowledge and learning hub.

Technology

Respondents indicated that they would like to provide 24/7 access to the library, to purchase eResources including eBooks and Subscription databases, and to improve or increase the technology available in the library.

Staffing

Respondents indicated that they would like more staffing to support them in performing administrative functions - including catalogue and resource management - and give them more time to engage with students, teach, and support curriculum objectives.

A number of respondents also shared that they would like a qualified teacher librarian, or an additional teacher librarian, in their school to teach information literacy and research.

A number of respondents also commented that they would like more Professional Development opportunities to better support the curriculum and teach/stay abreast of emerging technology.

Teacher engagement

Respondents commented that they would like more time to collaborate with teachers. They would like to see teachers more engaged with the library, more aware of the support and services the library provides, and better informed about the unique skill set teacher librarians offer.

They would like to see teachers bring students to the library more often, to increase reading for pleasure and to teach digital literacy and research skills.

“Teacher librarians must promote their skills in order to impact classrooms school-wide.

They must be proactive in order to influence positive changes.”

12.0 The survey scope

The 2017 Softlink Australian and New Zealand School Library Survey was promoted and conducted online. Invitations were open to all Australian and New Zealand school libraries and consisted of 27 questions that covered the following topics:

- School library resourcing
- School library services
- Emerging trends
- School library collection
- School library trends
- Viewpoints on opportunities, challenges and collaboration

13.0 Respondents

This year the survey received 957 responses. Table 1 below shows the breakdown of survey respondents by education provider and school type.

Type of School	Education Provider			TOTAL
	Catholic	Government	Independent/Private	
Primary/Contributing	62	313	14	389
Intermediate	0	17	0	17
Secondary	71	277	14	362
K-12	23	60	106	189
TOTAL	156	667	134	957

Table 1: 2017 Survey respondents by school type and education provider

14.0 Conclusion

The 2017 Australian and New Zealand 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 2016 and those that will be gathered in 2018, the identification of trends and changes is made 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 Australia and New Zealand 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.

Thank you

A special thank you to everyone who participated in and shared the 2017 Softlink Australian and New Zealand School Library Survey.

We would also like to thank all of the School Library Associations and Softlink Partners listed on [this blog post](#) for assisting in the promotion of the Survey.

"I think having a well-funded, well-resourced, and professionally staffed library is vital to the academic success of students.

Many studies have shown a link between recreational reading and higher achievement in standardised tests.

Also, students need to be taught information literacy skills and how to access and use information in its many forms. "