

# The 2019 Softlink Australia, New Zealand, and Asia-Pacific School Library Survey Report



Oliver<sup>v5</sup>

LearnPath

Findings from Softlink's 2019 Australia, New Zealand, and Asia Pacific School Library Survey into school library budgets, staffing, library services, and trends.

Conducted by  
**Softlink**

[softlinkint.com/edu](http://softlinkint.com/edu)

## Introduction

The Australia, New Zealand, and Asia Pacific 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.

2019 is the tenth year of the School Library Survey for Australian schools, and the fifth for New Zealand schools, and second for Asian schools.

Currency rates have not been adjusted. 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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“Thank you Softlink for organising these surveys each year - they are important in having data and other information over time about the changes happening in school libraries.”

All text quotes included in this report are drawn from three open-ended questions in the survey - “What exciting trends are emerging that could impact libraries in the near future?”, “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?”

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## 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 and Asia Pacific schools in 2018. 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.

"I would like to thank Softlink for undertaking surveys like this so there is a snapshot of what school libraries look like.

In Australia there seems not to be a lot of research into the state of school libraries and how staffing them with good qualified staff and funding them well can help support students and empower them to learn, question, and access information"

## 2.0 Survey findings summary

Key findings from the 2019 Survey include:

- 61% 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, 19% indicated it had increased and 25% indicated it had decreased.
- 64% of respondents indicated no change to their staffing levels from the previous year, 9% indicated it had increased, and 27% indicated a decrease.
- 52% of Australian respondents, 12% of New Zealand respondents, and 48% of Asia Pacific respondents indicated that they had a least 1 qualified Teacher Librarian employed in their library.
- 12% of Australian respondents, 34% of New Zealand respondents, and 44% of Asia Pacific respondents indicated that they had a least 1 qualified Librarian employed in their library.
- 60% of respondents indicated that they include a percentage of eBooks in their collection.
- 51% of respondents indicated that they include a percentage of 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 (excluding 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, Intermediate schools \$1,001- \$2500 and \$5,001-7,500, Secondary schools \$10,001 - \$20,000, and K-12 schools \$20,001 - \$50,000.

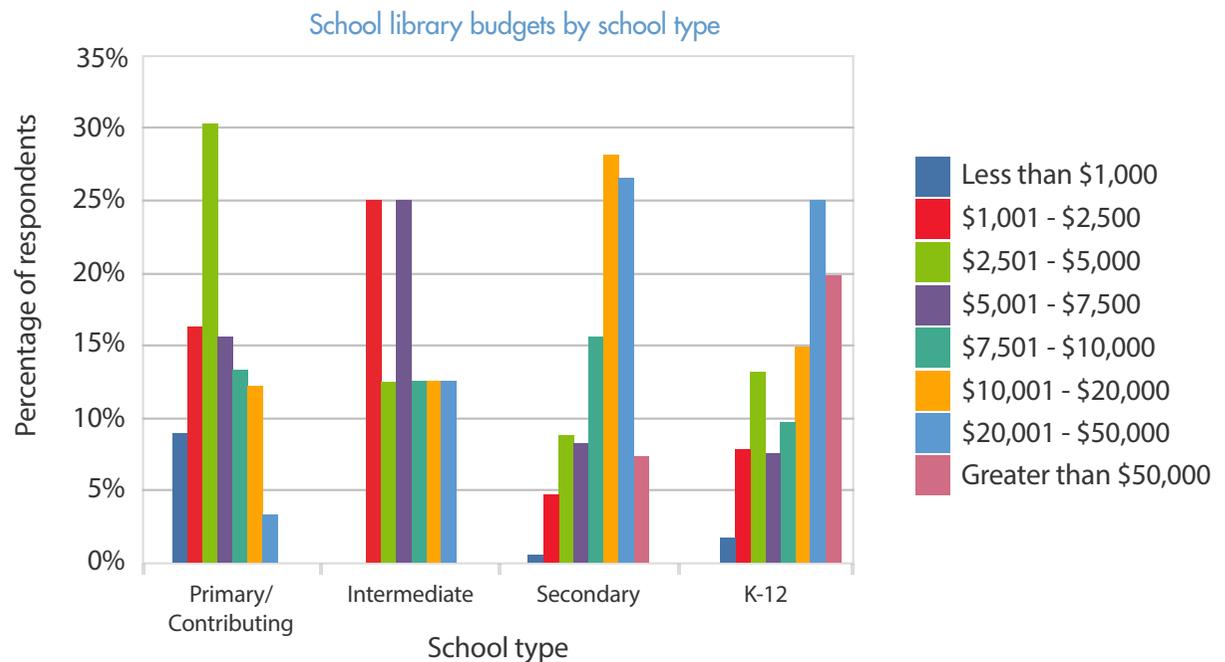


Figure 1 : School library budgets by school type 2019

“The TL role in a school is one of the most rewarding, challenging, and satisfying positions.

The library is the central hub of a school, it can be as dynamic and innovative as staffing and budget allows.”

### 3.2 School library budgets by education provider

The most common budget range for Catholic school respondents was \$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.

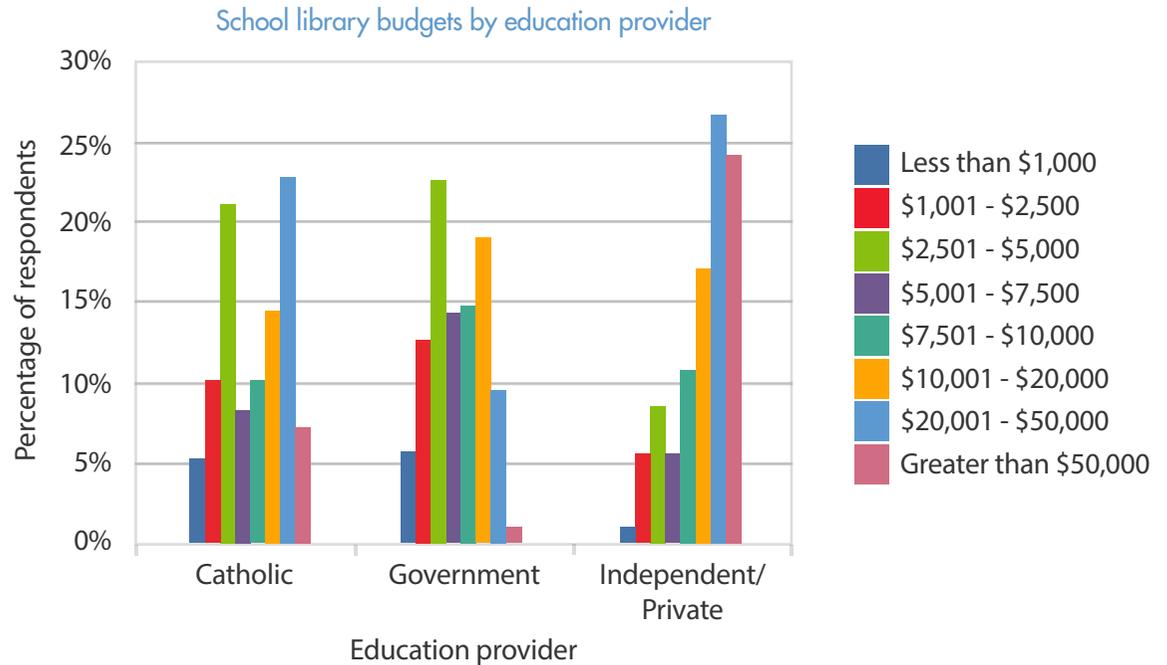


Figure 2 : School library budgets by education provider 2019

### 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.

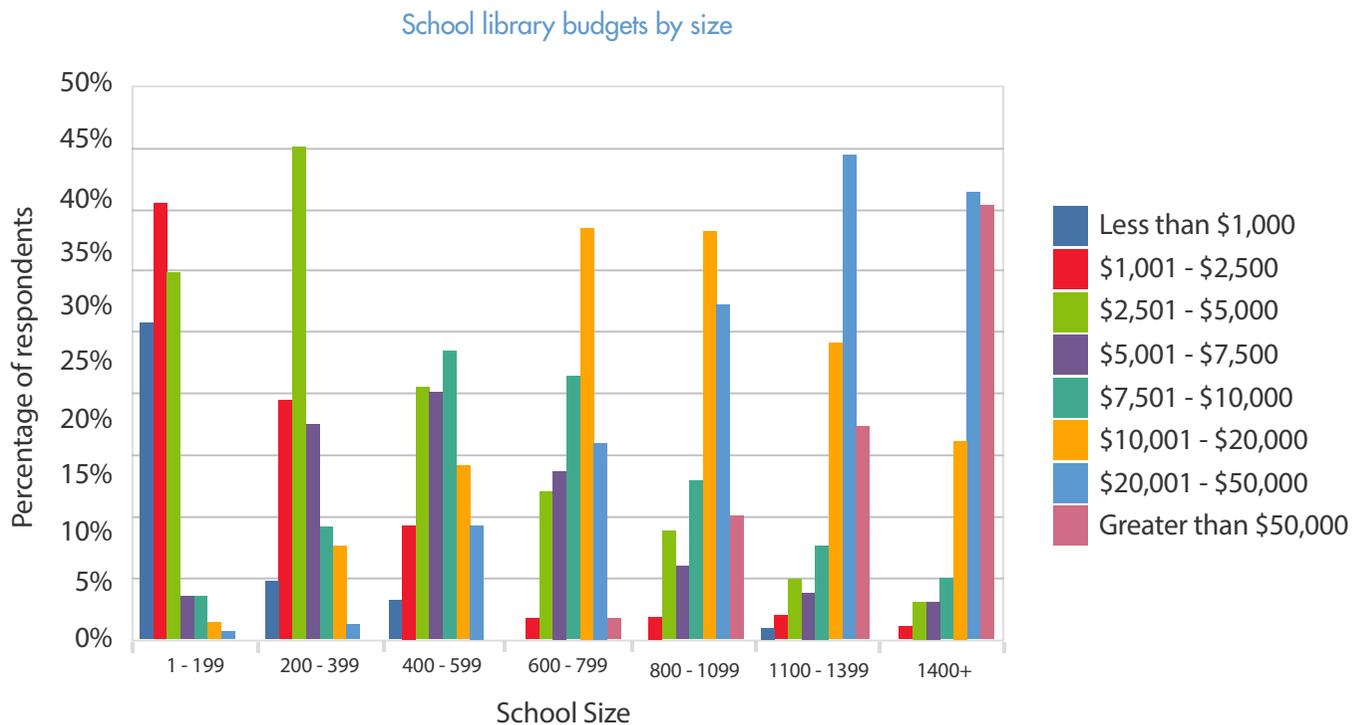


Figure 3 : School library budgets by size 2019

NOTE: the reported \$20,001-\$50,000 budgets in the 1-199 and 200-399 categories were for furniture and equipment upgrades and a new library

“Libraries need to remain as the intellectual, progressive and disruptive spaces of the world where equity is a priority.

Regardless of technological advances and the unknown nature of the future - more than ever, our young people need the critical literacy, reading and writing skills that are consistent with strong, thriving library spaces.”

### 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](#).

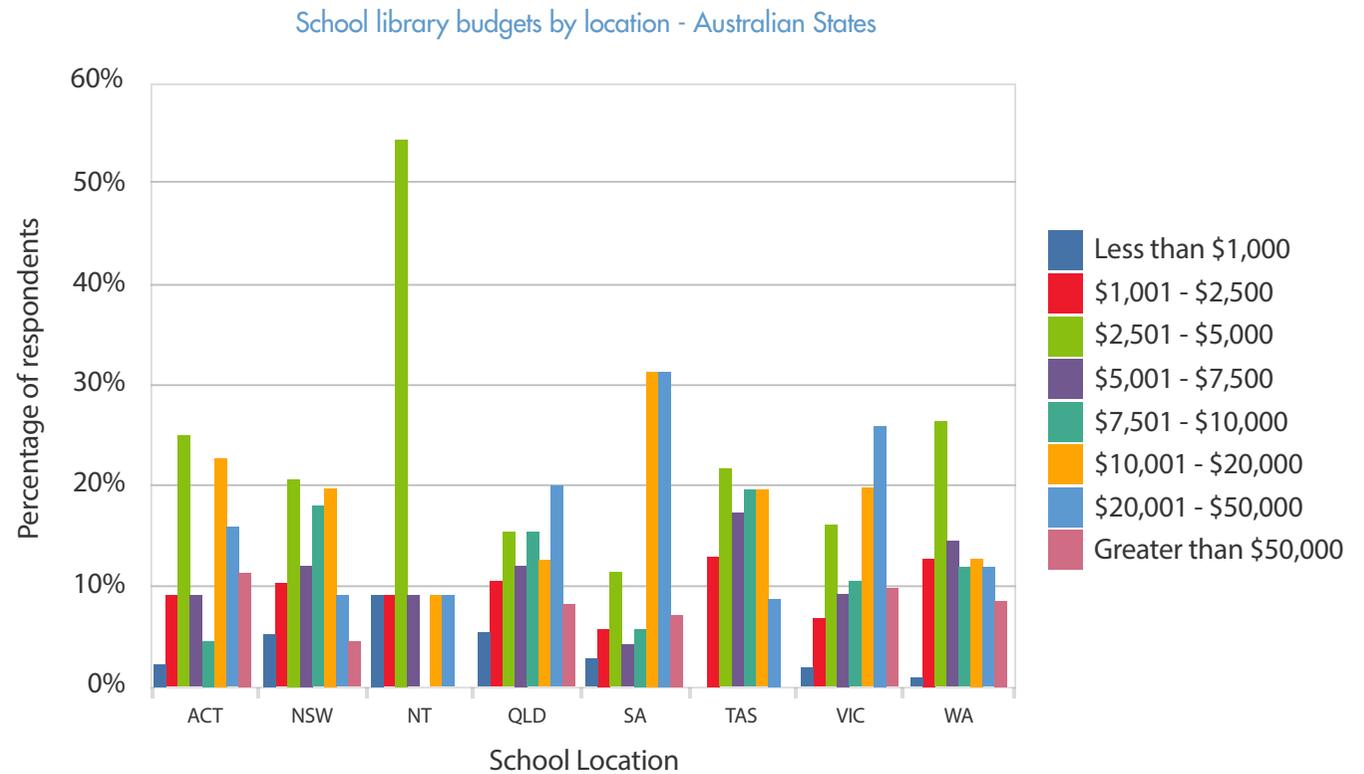


Figure 4: School library budgets by location - Australian States 2019

### School library budgets by location - New Zealand Regions

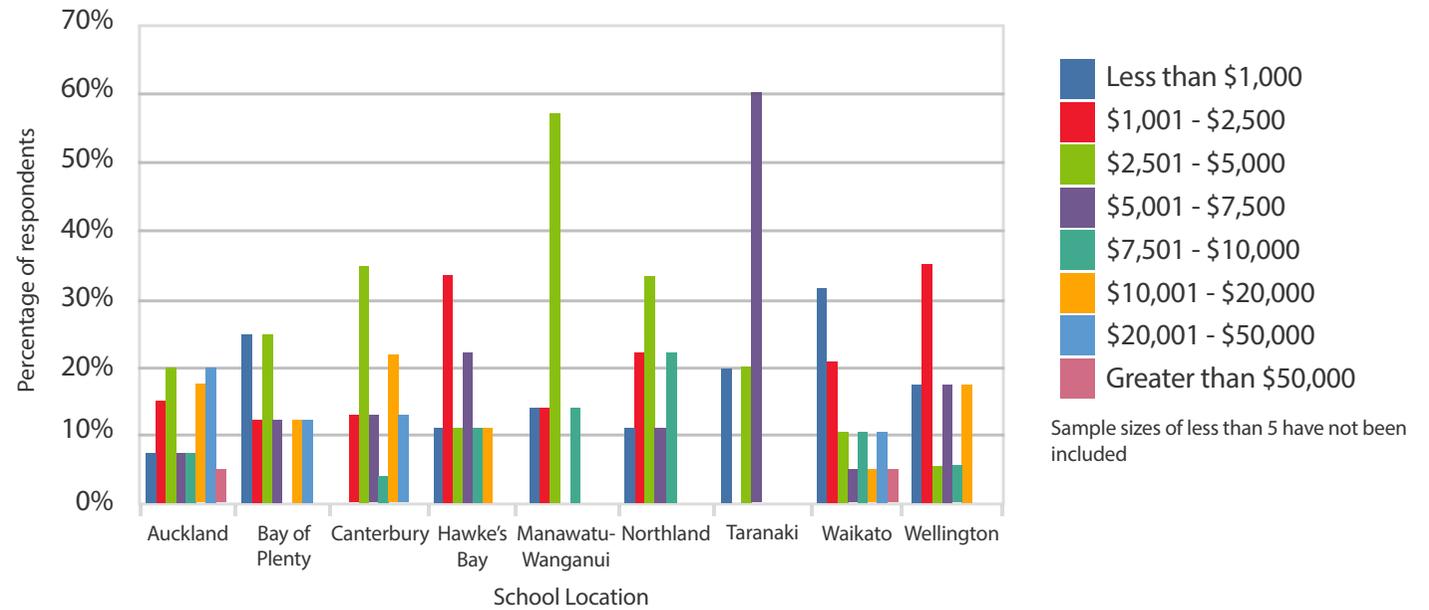


Figure 5: School library budgets by location - New Zealand Regions 2019

### School library budgets - Asia Pacific

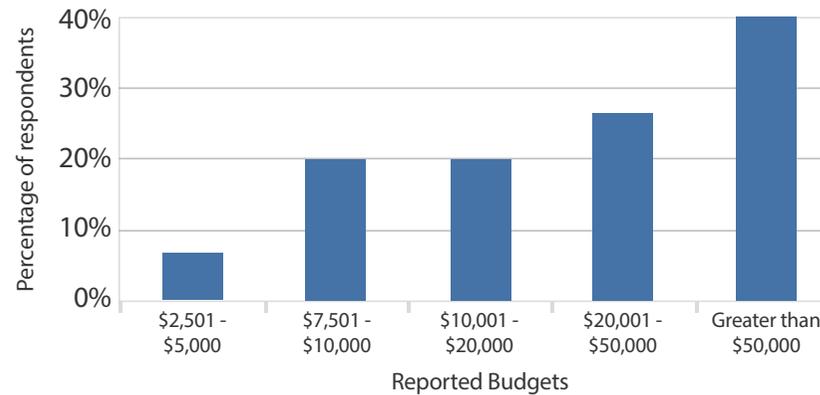


Figure 6: School library budgets by location - Asia Pacific 2019

### Participating Countries

- China
- Hong Kong
- India
- Japan
- Malaysia
- Papua New Guinea
- Singapore
- Solomon Islands
- Thailand

## 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 2018 and 2019.

Note: Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100

### 4.1 Changes in school library budgets by school type

Overall, 19% of schools reported budget increases, 56% of schools reported no change in budget, and 25% of schools reported budget decreases.

Figure 7 shows the reported changes in school library budgets by school type.

Changes in school library budgets by school type

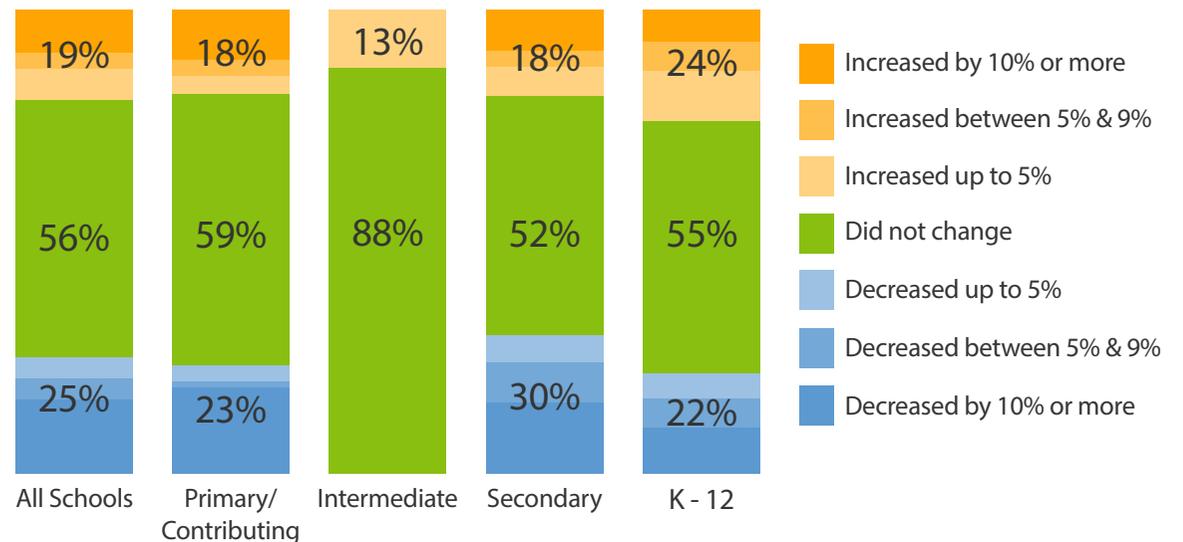


Figure 7: Changes in school library budgets by school type 2019

"I would like to thank Softlink for providing access to this survey and allowing library professionals to have a voice, as well as providing a valuable tool for advocacy. I very much look forward to reading the results of this survey next year."

## 4.2 Changes in school library budgets by education provider

Figure 8 shows the reported changes to school library budgets by education provider.

Changes in school library budgets by education provider

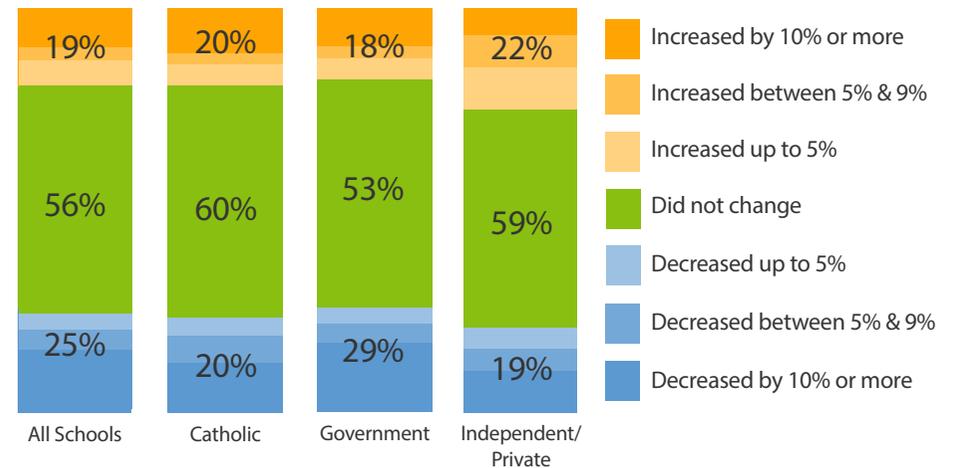


Figure 8: Changes in 2019 school library budgets by education provider

## 4.3 School library budget comparison 2018 - 2019

Figure 9 compares annual budget changes between the 2018 and 2019 survey responses.

When comparing library budget changes between 2018 and 2019, fewer schools reported budget decreases.

School library budget comparison 2017 - 2018

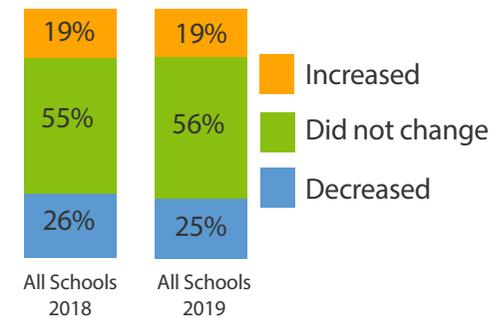


Figure 9: School library budget comparison 2018 and 2019

#### 4.4 Comparison school library budgets by education provider Australia, New Zealand, and Asia Pacific

Figure 10 shows the comparison of reported school library budget changes by location.

Asia Pacific schools reported the most budget increases while Australian schools reported the most budget decreases.

Comparison School library budget changes by location

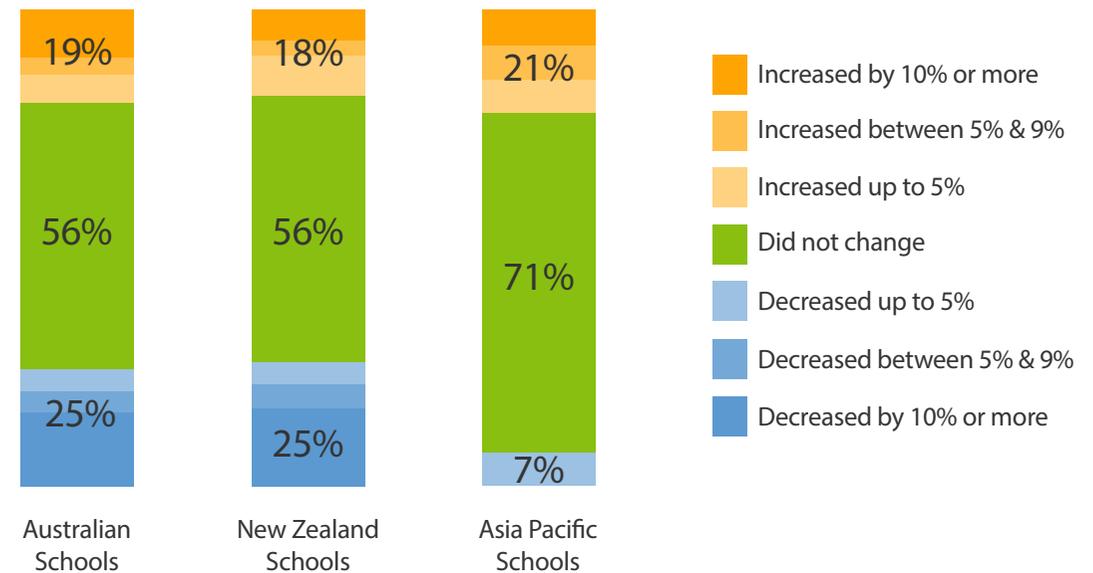


Figure 10: Comparison of school library budgets by location

"I greatly value that Softlink complete this survey each year. What a valuable piece of data for us!"

## 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 in the 1400+ category reported the highest number of FTE staff with an average of 4.7 per school.

Primary/Contributing schools in the 1-199 category reported the lowest number of FTE staff with an average of 0.5 per school.

Average number of staff by school type & size

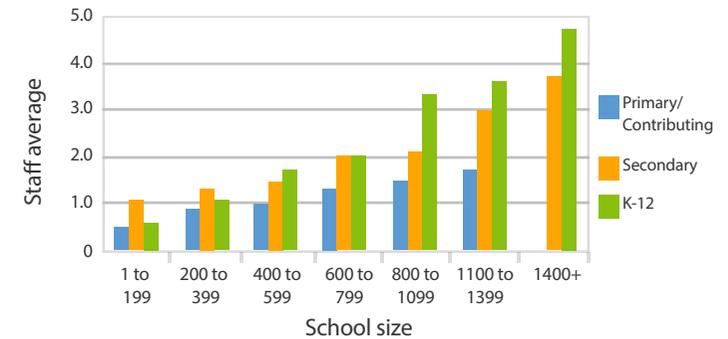


Figure 11: Average number of staff by school type and size

### 5.2 Staffing by education provider and size

When applying school size and education provider type, Catholic school libraries in the 1400+ category reported the highest FTE staff average of 5.5 per school.

Independent/Private schools in the 1 - 199 category reported the lowest FTE staff average of 0.4 per school.

Average number of staff by education provider & size

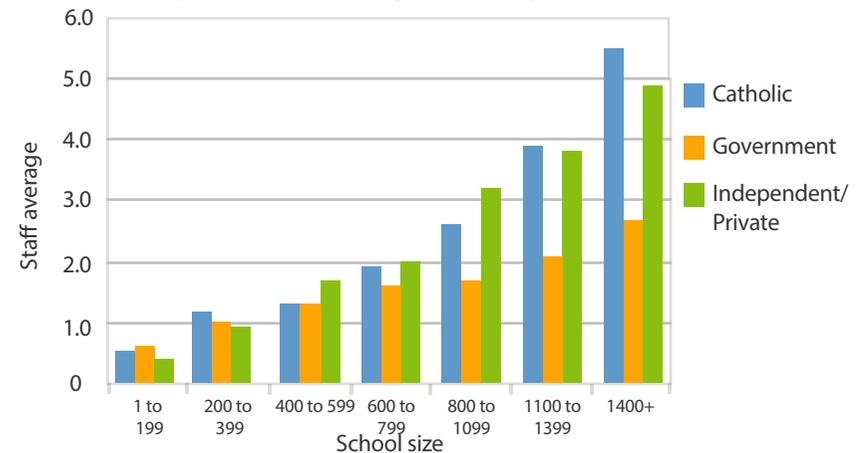


Figure 12: Average number of staff by education provider & size



### 5.3 FTE staff by role and school type

Figure 13 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.

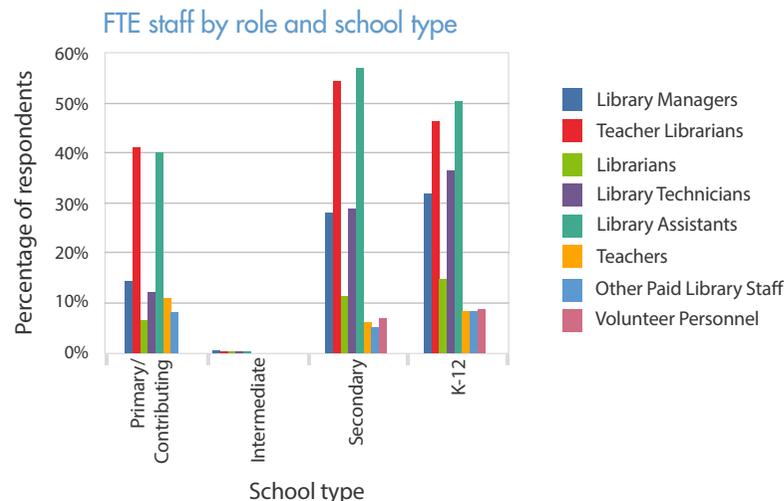


Figure 13: FTE staff by role and school type

### 5.4 FTE staff by role and education provider

Figure 14 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.

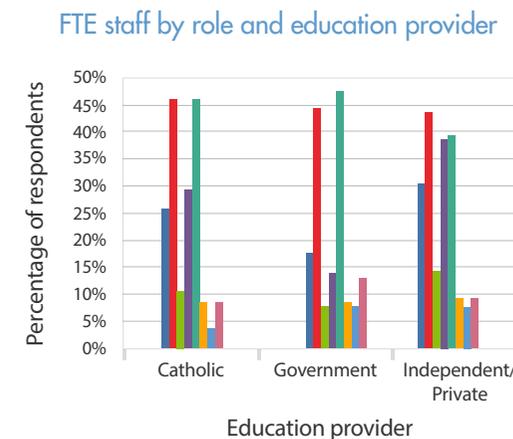


Figure 14: FTE staff by role and education provider

### 5.5 School library staffing - Qualified Teacher Librarians and Librarians

Figure 15 shows the percentage of schools with at least 1 Qualified Teacher Librarian or Qualified Librarian in Australia, New Zealand and Asia Pacific.

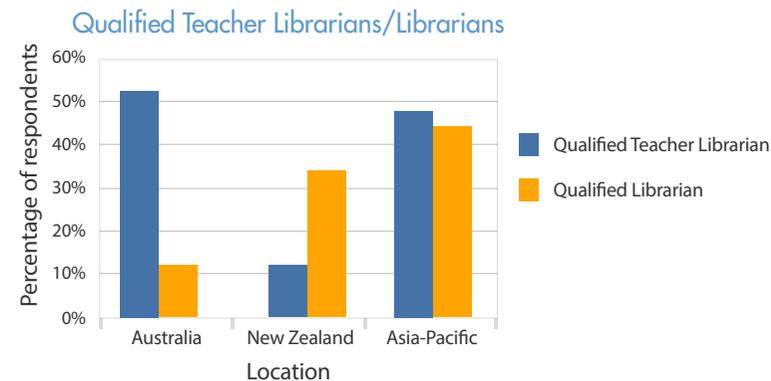


Figure 15: Qualified Teacher Librarians/Librarians

“Thank you for collecting and maintaining data that hopefully leads to ongoing support for libraries and library staff as valued facilities and educators.”

## 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 by location

Figure 16 shows reported changes to school library staffing separated in Australia, New Zealand, and Asia Pacific Schools.

School library staffing changes Australia, New Zealand, and Asia Pacific 2018

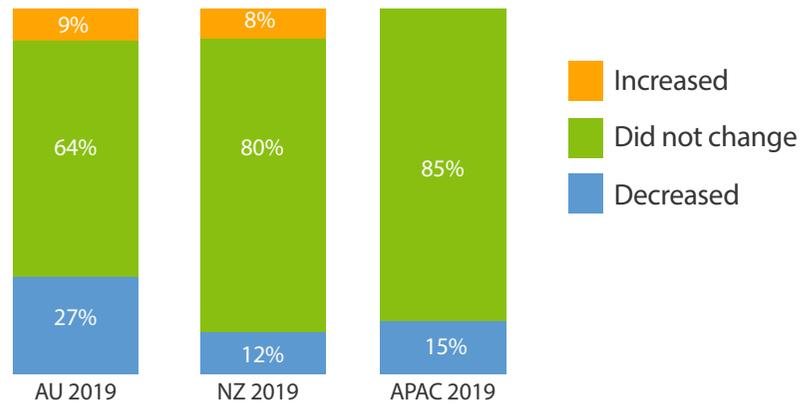


Figure 16: Comparison of 2019 school library staffing changes Australia, New Zealand, and Asia Pacific

### 6.2 Changes in school library staffing - all schools

Figure 17 shows reported changes to school library staffing between 2018 and 2019.

School library staffing changes comparison 2018 - 2019

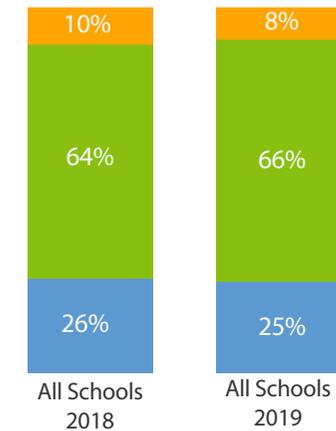


Figure 17: Comparison of 2018 and 2019 school library staffing changes

### 6.3 Do you think your library is adequately resourced?

Respondents were asked if they felt their school library was adequately resourced including staffing and budget.

61% of respondents said no, 39% said yes.

Do you think your library is adequately resourced?



Figure 18: Do you think your library is adequately resourced?

## 7.0 School library services

Respondents were asked to select 5 services/objectives that are the main services their library provides. They were also asked to select 5 services they would like to provide more of.

The top 3 services respondents currently provide included:

1. Promoting and supporting reading for pleasure (89%)
2. Developing and managing the schools resource collection (79%),
3. Providing an engaging and welcoming space for learning and leisure (77%)

The top 3 services respondents would like to provide more of included:

1. Developing or teaching information literacy programs or research skills programs (52%)
2. Providing student engagement and learning programs, for example study groups, code clubs (50%)
3. Curating relevant information and resources to support topic-based learning and curriculum (50%)

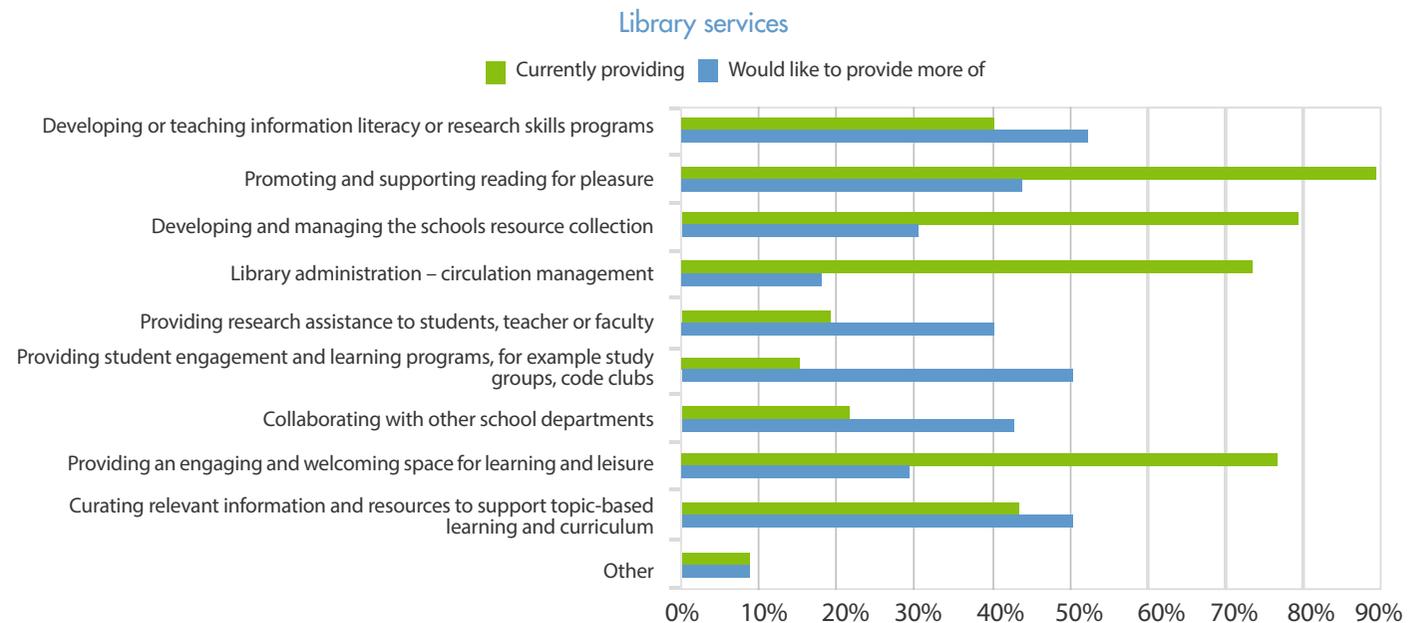


Figure 19: Library services 2019

“School libraries need to market themselves aggressively - more so now and in the future, than ever before. As schools get busier and faster paced we need to keep pushing ourselves into the picture so that it looks incomplete if we are not there.”

## 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 (63%)
2. Digitisation of resources (59%)
3. State/Federal government funding and policies (57%)

Impact of emerging trends on school libraries

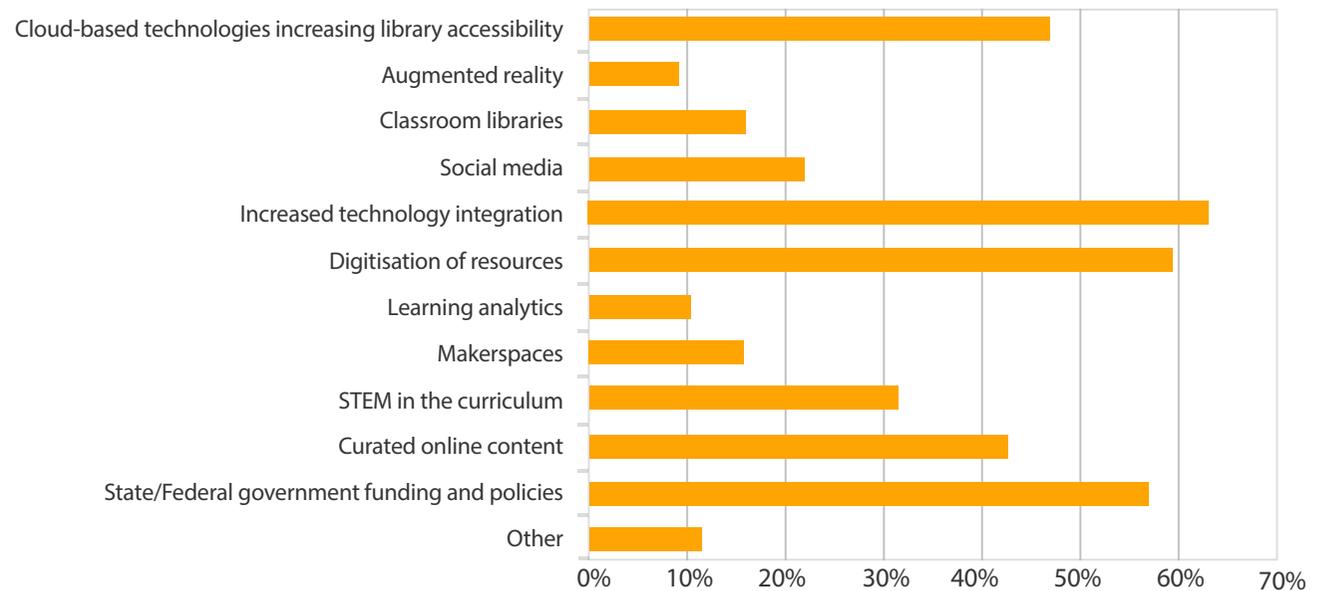


Figure 20: Impact of emerging trends on school libraries 2019

Open fields provided opportunity for respondents to include other emerging trends not listed. Responses included libraries becoming a student hub, lack of support from administration, student engagement with reading books, need for qualified Teacher Librarians, and a crowded curriculum.

## 9.0 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 21 and 22 show this percentage for all school types, figures 23 and 24 (on the following page) show the distribution by school type.

Percentage of collection made up of eBooks and other multimedia

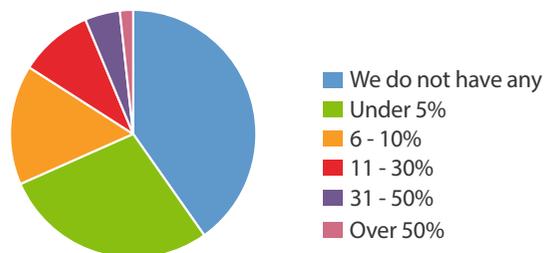


Figure 21. Percentage of collection made up of eBooks and other multimedia 2019

Percentage of collection made up of subscription databases

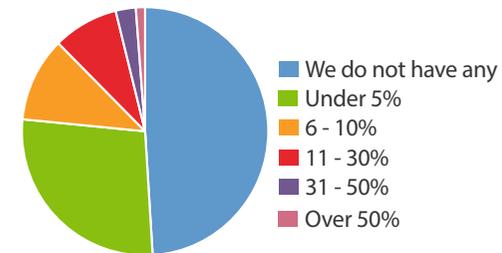


Figure 22. Percentage of collection made up of Subscription databases 2019

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

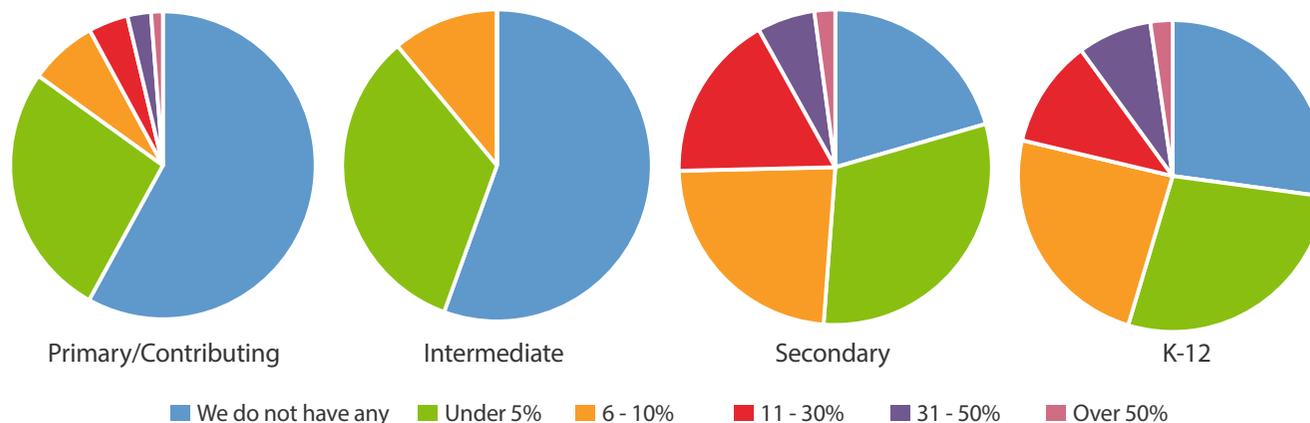


Figure 23: Percentage of collection made up of eBooks and other multimedia by school type

"We have to move alongside the digital world, offering dynamic, innovative tools that cater for and engage students in an ever evolving environment."

Percentage of collection made up of Subscription databases by school type

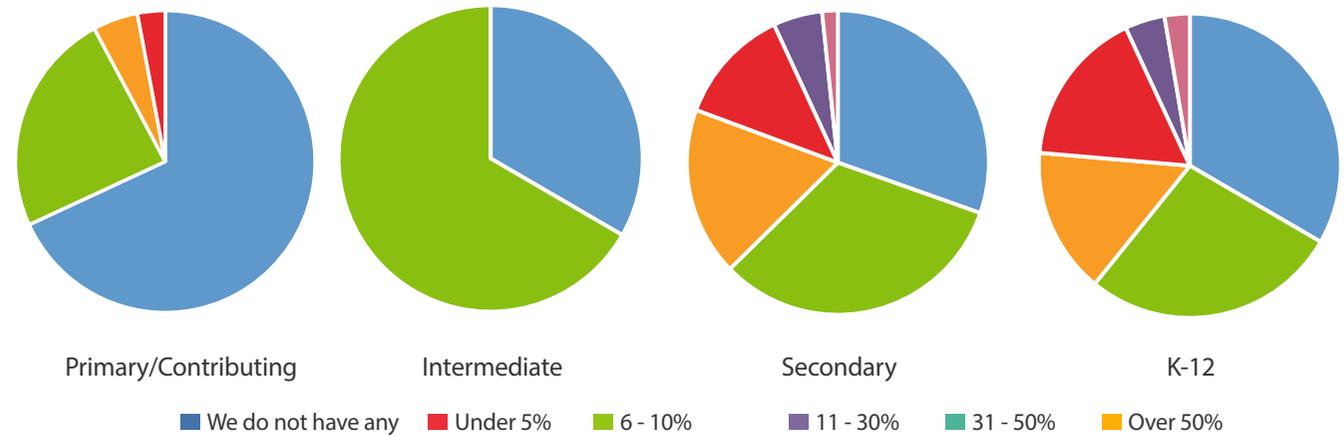


Figure 24: Percentage of collection made up of Subscription databases by school type

## 10.0 Feedback

Respondents were asked two open-ended questions about the library and their role. They were also asked to share what exciting trends are emerging that could impact libraries in the near future. We had a number of respondents share their thoughts which will be released in a whitepaper in 2019.

In response to the questions “What is the one thing you would change about your school library or role?” and “Do you have any other comments that you would like to add?” participants shared a number of things they would like more of and what they could achieve in their library, or how they could improve library services, if these things were available.

We have produced [this infographic](#) which shares what school library staff have to say about how they would like to improve their library, engage with students, and support educational outcomes at their school.

A summary of this feedback has been provided on page 21.



"Thank you for carrying out this survey again, the findings are invaluable to school library services across the region."

### What respondents would like more of

- Time
- Staff
- Space
- Budget
- Team teaching
- Online resources
- Technology
- Support
- Manned library hours

### What respondents would like to do if these things were available

- Promote reading for pleasure
- Provide dedicated library sessions
- Support research and assessments
- Deliver information literacy programs
- Promote the collection
- Create flexible learning spaces
- Deliver digital citizenship programs
- Implement makerspaces
- Connect students to reading
- Create a welcoming space
- Provide more activities
- Update the collection
- Host more events

### Sample of comments shared by respondents

"More time and money would allow me to offer a greater range of services to the school (like book clubs, one-on-one research assistance, and resource gathering) as well as allowing more time for me to learn about new technologies and resources." [SA](#)

I would like to be able to work more with classes/teachers to provide activities/help for research etc." [NT](#)

"I would like increased contact time with all year levels to engage and promote reading for pleasure." [QLD](#)

"I would love to be able to update my library's digital resources and its furnishings to provide a more welcoming environment for all, and a great hub for our school's learning environment." [NSW](#)

"I would like an increase in library assistant hours so I could do more work around reading for pleasure and working with classrooms." [NZ](#)

"I'd like a larger space to accommodate all activities/dynamics e.g. individual study, collaboration, teaching, and social." [TAS](#)

"I'd like more time to make creative displays to attract the students and more space to set it out better and to have more areas for the students to use." [QLD](#)

"I would love for the school to embrace e-resources and technology- it would really open up the possibilities in engaging students and ensuring students and teachers have the most up to date resources at all times." [WA](#)

"An increase budget would be amazing - so that our library is staffed and resourced in a way that can provide best practice for our staff and students." [TAS](#)

"I would like to be given more time to focus on the innovative use of technology throughout the curriculum." [ACT](#)

"I would love for our school to hire a teacher librarian who can work collaboratively with teachers to instruct students in research skills, information literacy and critical literacy." [NSW](#)

"I'd like more budget for better furniture to create awesome spaces." [NZ](#)

## 11.0 The survey scope

The 2019 Softlink Australia, New Zealand, and Asia Pacific School Library Survey was promoted and conducted online. Invitations were open to all school libraries in Australia, New Zealand, and Asia Pacific and consisted of 25 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 emerging trends that could impact school libraries

## 12.0 Respondents

This year the survey received 1576 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	152	553	36	741
Intermediate	0	13	3	16
Secondary	119	327	43	489
K-12	44	84	202	330
TOTAL	315	977	284	1576

Table 1: 2019 Survey respondents by school type and education provider

# Thank you

A special thank you to everyone who participated in and shared the 2019 Australia, New Zealand, and Asia Pacific School Library Survey.

Thank you to all of the School Library Associations and Softlink Partners listed on this blog post for assisting in the promotion of the Survey.

We also encourage you to help promote the value of school libraries to the community through campaigns such as Students Need School Libraries. To find out more, watch and share our video [www.softlinkint.com/resource-details/video-great-school-libraries/](http://www.softlinkint.com/resource-details/video-great-school-libraries/) or visit [www.studentsneedschoollibraries.org.au](http://www.studentsneedschoollibraries.org.au)

## 13.0 Conclusion

The 2019 Australia, New Zealand, and Asia Pacific School Library Survey provides insight into the school library industry and a basis for comparison with past and future surveys.

In 2019, 61% of respondents indicated that they do not believe their library is adequately resourced. This is similar to 2018 survey responses when 62% indicated the same.

In 2018, 19% of respondents indicated their school library budget had increased that year. This is the same as 2019 responses. There is a 1% difference in budget decreases, with 26% of respondents indicating a decrease in 2018, and 25% indicating a decrease in 2019.

There was a drop in the number of reported staffing increases between 2018 (10%) and 2019 (8%); reported staffing decreases also dropped from 26% (in 2018) to 25% (in 2019) with more overall stating their staffing remained the same.

Comments shared reveal that, although school library staff face challenges around budget, staffing, and recognition of skills, school library advocacy is growing and there is greater recognition within the school community and the larger community of the need for a well-resourced library with qualified staff. In response to "What's Trending" respondents shared:

"The gradual realisation by the general public that trained teacher librarians are essential in schools for the teaching and learning of digital literacy and general reading."

"Our profession collaborating across Australia to advocate for the importance of school libraries."

"The impact of nationwide campaigns such as Students Need School Libraries and the possibilities of more schools with well resourced libraries."

"I think there has been an increase in coverage of community libraries being community spaces. The coverage of this in the media means that principals and the executive are more aware of what libraries can provide, previously it would be the librarian trying to advocate this but coming from an external source it seems to have more weight."

Respondents also shared a shift towards libraries becoming learning or digital hubs of the school, and being used more as community spaces.

"There is a massive shift from libraries being a place to find books to so much more: meeting place, MakerSpace, digital hub, gaming space etc. - a shift from quiet space to creative space whilst offering an even greater range of resources."