

5 Most Important Opportunities For School Libraries

According to Australian School Library Staff



Introduction

Softlink conducted the fifth annual Australian School Library Survey in September 2014, and received a record 1,380 responses.

As part of the 2014 Softlink Australian School Library Survey, respondents were asked to comment on 'What exciting trends are emerging that could impact the library in the near future'.

A number of common themes appeared and are presented in this whitepaper.

School libraries are evolving as technology and educational delivery methods change. School library staff continue to identify opportunities to improve their library service and better engage with 21st century staff and learners.

Interestingly, some of these opportunities reflect challenges identified in The Top 7 Challenges for School Libraries, which was also developed using feedback from the 2014 Softlink Australian School Library Survey. While school libraries are very cognisant of the challenges they face with changing technologies and practices, they can also identify with the opportunities available to them.

The final report from the 2014 Softlink Australian School Library Survey is available through the Softlink website.

The 5 Most Important Opportunities for School Libraries

| | | | |
|----------------------|---|--|----------|
| Opportunity 1 | - | The digital resources shift | 3 |
| Opportunity 2 | - | The technology curve | 4 |
| Opportunity 3 | - | The growth of personal portable digital devices | 5 |
| Opportunity 4 | - | The evolution of the physical space | 6 |
| Opportunity 5 | - | The curriculum and learning connection | 7 |

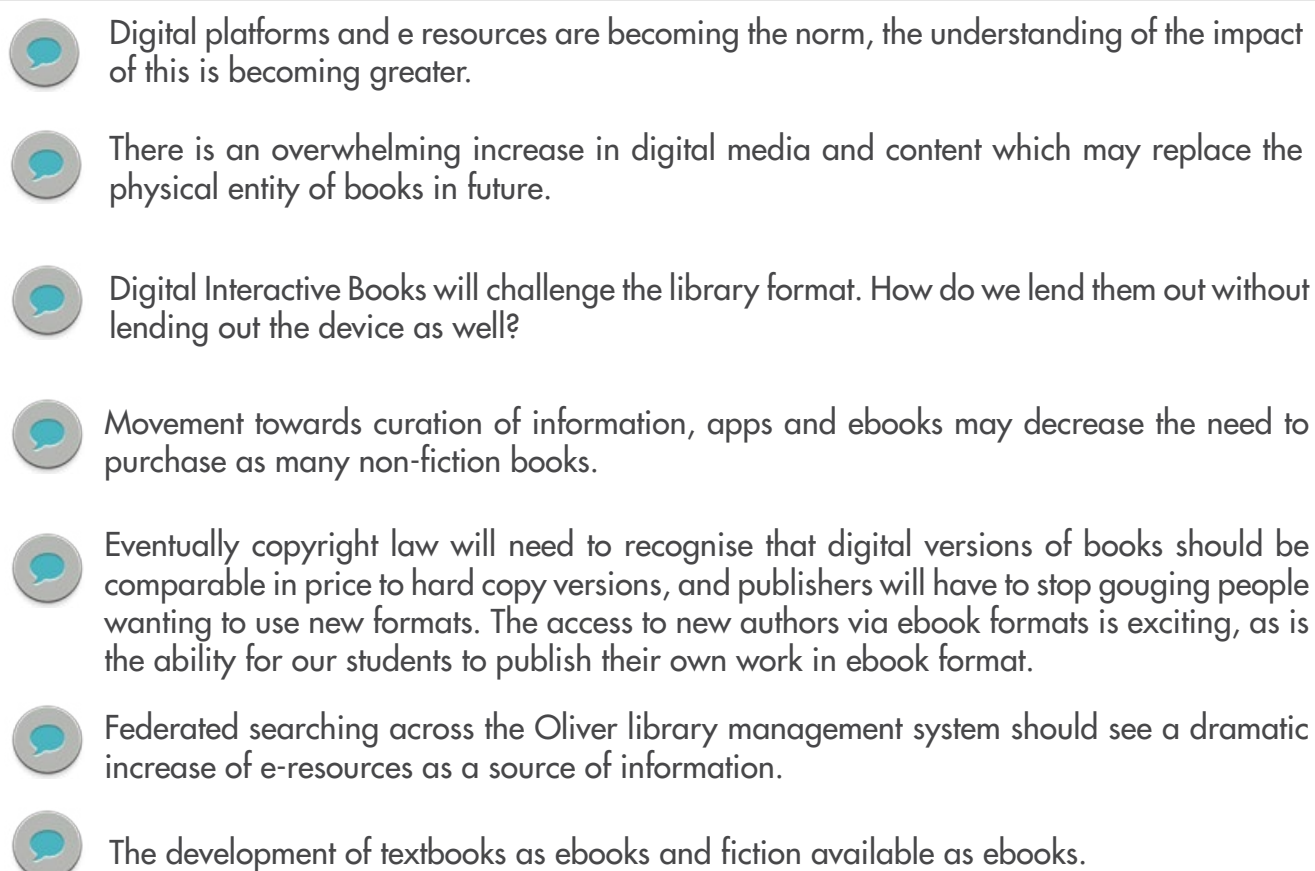


Opportunity 1 - The digital resources shift

The highest number of respondents said that they saw eResources as the greatest transformative opportunity for school libraries.

While respondents highlight issues that need to be addressed before the full benefits can be realised, digital resources, digital media, digital content, eResources or eBooks were the most common responses relating to trends which will have an impact on the future of school libraries.

The 2014 Softlink Australian School Library Survey reported that there has been a steady increase in the uptake of eBooks and other eResources and 55% of respondents indicated they will 'definitely' or 'most probably' purchase

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- 1 Digital platforms and e resources are becoming the norm, the understanding of the impact of this is becoming greater.
 - 2 There is an overwhelming increase in digital media and content which may replace the physical entity of books in future.
 - 3 Digital Interactive Books will challenge the library format. How do we lend them out without lending out the device as well?
 - 4 Movement towards curation of information, apps and ebooks may decrease the need to purchase as many non-fiction books.
 - 5 Eventually copyright law will need to recognise that digital versions of books should be comparable in price to hard copy versions, and publishers will have to stop gouging people wanting to use new formats. The access to new authors via ebook formats is exciting, as is the ability for our students to publish their own work in ebook format.
 - 6 Federated searching across the Oliver library management system should see a dramatic increase of e-resources as a source of information.
 - 7 The development of textbooks as ebooks and fiction available as ebooks.

Opportunity 2 - The technology curve

Generally utilising advances in technology to improve library services was another common response. Feedback ranged from broad comments advocating effective and creative use of new technologies to more specific topics such as virtual – or 24/7 online access to school libraries, social media tie in and use of educational apps.

The 2014 Soflink Australian School Library Survey reported that 76% of schools provide some level of access to resources from outside the library with 49% providing access from both outside and within the school and 27% providing access outside the library, from within the school only.

Social media statistics from the 2014 Survey report indicate that social media access is limited within schools with only 15% of respondents allowing students to access social media via school internet or computers.

As our research and searching for information becomes more and more web based, Internet-based library programs allow 24 hour access for the whole school community.



Embrace technology in clever, creative ways. It's a challenge, but an exciting one.



Social media tied into curriculum means an immediate sharing of ideas.

Faster networks mean higher levels of technology are able to be offered. Also, students work is produced in a technological form.

Apps for educational purposes make learning fun - it seems like games but students are actually learning!



Technology is opening a world wide database and communication network for students.



It exciting to see the connection with other learners via digital means and the virtual library to support learning.

Opportunity 3 - The growth of personal portable digital devices

A number of respondents made comments relating to portable digital devices and the potential they offer to schools. In the 2014 Australian School Library Survey, 43% of respondents said that half or more of their student population owned a personal mobile device. The number of schools with a BYOD/BYOT strategy was 27%. This was an increase of 8% from the previous year.

Comments made in the survey indicated that the increased uptake of BYOD and 1:1 policies is viewed by many as an opportunity for school libraries to offer an engaging, comprehensive mobile library experience.

School policy making groups MUST come to grips with BYOD and allow students to use the devices with which students are comfortable, and which will do the job required.



Our school provides each student with an iPad, which allows them to carry the library with them wherever they go in a more easily accessible way than with a laptop. The one device becomes an eReader, word processor, and internet browser (and, in some cases, games console). This leads towards a more digital-centred approach to resources as physical resources reside only in one place in the school, whereas digital resources are available everywhere and at all times.

The use of ipads and tablets to access information and learning activities is going to be very interesting.



BYOD impacts on the ability of students to access digital information sources. It means greater opportunities for libraries to provide access and students to use digital resources.

Opportunity 4 - The evolution of the physical space

Re-purposing the physical library space also featured prominently in responses. While 'Managing a library that wasn't built for the 21st century' was the number one challenge represented in The Top 7 Challenges for School Libraries whitepaper – with responses also drawn from the 2014 Softlink Australian School Library Survey – school library staff also recognise the opportunities presented by a shift in the way the physical library space is used and presented.

When asked what objectives they considered to be important for the school library, 68% of respondents in the 2014 Softlink Australian School Library Survey indicated that refurbishing/Updating the library or learning centre was important or very important.

As a trend or opportunity that impacts the library, comments described innovative ways of achieving this goal in a budget-friendly manner, such as getting students and parents involved in running activities and creating assets that can be used by everyone.

Any new idea or trend I hear of, I introduce to the library. It can start from a comment made by a student to spark off a display, a chess match, a knitting club and then a display of library items is included. Also I ask parents to help with craft sessions.

Flexible spaces allow for groups to come together for a wide variety of activities including social, professional, creative and recreational.

Our Library is becoming a Wellbeing Centre. Lots of activities to engage children who were "at a loose end" before. Many "problem" children now are responsible for running an activity or helping with equipment they are talented with.

The Library is becoming a makerspace, rather than a repository of information
- a centre for doing
- creating, publishing, performing, exploring.

The library is becoming more of a holistic centre - we place strong emphasis on special events as well as integrating more and more research skills with faculty based units.

Opportunity 5 - The curriculum and learning connection

Many respondents consider the libraries relationship to school educational programs and position as a major learning environment for students as the major factor to impact school libraries in the future. The ability to explore guided enquiry, flipped classrooms and other resource based technologies featured prominently in the responses related to the library and learning practices.

Respondents also felt that the development of information and creative thinking skills are a responsibility of the library and offer potential for increased library use and engagement with educational practices and learning outcomes.



The library is seen as a centre of learning where we provide a supportive learning environment where we work cooperatively in learning design, delivery and evaluation.

Primary School Libraries can greatly benefit from collaborative planning and teaching.

In remote areas, the provision of on-line classrooms (S.I.D.E.) is likely to see significant growth.

Focus on critical and creative thinking skills. Hopefully a burgeoning advocacy movement will see an increase in demand for qualified Teacher Librarians.

As the contemporary learning technologies within the classroom become more advanced, the school library will have to keep up with modern day thinking.

A different attitude to education that is engaging students a lot more and therefore including a lot more of information skills.

How can Softlink help facilitate these five important opportunities in your school?

Making it simple to access quality digital resources

Oliver v5 offers deep digital integration with eResources for direct borrow and download within the public Search interface as well as advanced Federated Search, making it easier for users to find and download curriculum-enriching resources. Oliver v5 can also be used to catalogue online collated resources such as Pinterest boards.

Softlink is the authorised distributor for [OverDrive](#), offering more than 300,000 eBooks, narrated eBooks, audio books, music and video across a range of K-12 subjects. Oliver v5 is fully integrated with OverDrive for easy borrowing and download of resources.

Enabling a 24/7, technology-rich library service

Oliver v5 is fully browser-based, which enables 24/7 access from inside or outside the school, broadening learning outcomes and simultaneously reducing internal IT costs and time associated with networking and installation.

YouTube videos can be embedded directly onto the Oliver v5 Home page, students can share book reviews and access optional integrated tools such as ClickView.

Oliver v5 also integrates with social media sites using OAuth Single Sign-On functionality which means students and staff can switch seamlessly between the two and use their social media login details to access the library catalogue.

Delivering mobile access to library services

Oliver v5 can be accessed from any Internet-enabled device including laptops, smart phones and tablets. Softlink's mobile app, available from Google Play and iTunes, allows students to connect with your library services with a clear and intuitive interface.

Assisting with management of non-traditional physical assets

Oliver v5 supports school libraries in their promotion and management of non-traditional assets. Creative assets such as 3D printers, arduino kits and board games can be catalogued and reservations for physical spaces can be managed directly through Oliver v5. Animated carousels on the Oliver v5 home page can also be used to promote their availability to the school community.

Supporting collaboration and modern learning environments

Oliver v5 gives school libraries the tools they need to support modern pedagogical practices. Integration options allow school libraries to connect to virtual learning environments such as Scootle, Moodle, KnowledgeNET and SharePoint. Further collaboration with teaching staff is facilitated by Oliver v5's reading lists for curriculum planning.

