

# What can we learn from our neighbours? From Digital Literacy to Independent Learning



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**In November 2018 UK based global provider of e-resources, JCS Online Resources (JCS), hosted their inaugural conference in Birmingham — 'From Digital Literacy to Independent Learning: challenges and opportunities for teachers and librarians'.**

The conference brought together experts in the field of digital literacy, librarians, school and college leaders, and providers of authoritative sources to share their knowledge and good practice in supporting librarians and teachers to face the challenges and opportunities of an increasingly complex and digitised world.

I felt honoured to attend, delivering a presentation, titled 'What can we learn from our neighbours? School librarian collaboration — an Australian perspective', for which I interviewed Australian library staff and used data collected from the Softlink School Library Surveys.

This article presents an overview of the conference program and highlights.

I hope you find learning from our UK neighbours as useful as I did.

## JCS 2018: From Digital Literacy to Independent Learning

In the lead-up to their 2018 conference, JCS described how educators and librarians have a crucial role to play in guiding and supporting their students to think critically about digital technologies and the opportunities and risks they present.

JCS Director, Joyce Martin, described the gap between students' fluency in the use of technology and their ability to use digital tools to further their own learning.

She said:

*Students may spend most of their waking hours 'connected', but the majority of this time is spent socialising and consuming entertainment. They don't necessarily know the best way to use technology for educational purposes, [to] identify*



*authoritative information or recognise fake news from real. They lack what has become called 'digital literacy'.*

This was the topic discussed, and rigorously 'tackled' at the conference, by over 25 presenters in a series of keynotes, lightning talks and workshops.

## Keynote presentations

The first three keynote presentations defined, explored and contextualised 'literacy' in a multitude of flavours as well as considering its current and future significance.

Dr Jane Secker, Senior Lecturer in Educational Development — City, University of London, presented 'Developing digital and information literacies: teaching for lifelong learning.' Jane's presentation explored 'information literacy' within a context, or framework, of academic literacies, new literacies, media literacy and digital literacy.

She shared what she has learnt both from studying information and from teaching information literacy, and discussed the need to embed digital and information literacies in curriculum with schools.

Dr Graham Gardner, Librarian, Abingdon School presented 'Creating a culture of critical literacy: three essential mindsets for school librarians.' Inspired by Carol Dweck's (2008), *Mindset: the new psychology of success*, Graham provided a refreshing and persuasive take on how school librarians can play a leading role in creating a culture of critical information literacy.

He showed how by reframing and redirecting their thinking in terms of the three key mindsets — teacher, marketer, and technologist — school librarians could improve collaboration with educators and play a greater role in helping students learn to navigate digital information realms.

Hazel Rothera, Academic Development Team Leader, Oxford Brookes University presented 'Can't you just give us two sides of A4? Stepping up library use from school to higher education'.

In her presentation, Hazel explored the school library's role in preparing students for higher education. She reflected on how students need support with the idea that it is possible to learn to be an academic reader (and then thinker and writer), but they need to put the work in to achieve that.

## Lightning talks and workshops

The conference also featured two streams of lightning talks with six speakers in each, exploring the concepts of digital literacy and independent learning and sharing their own stories and examples.

I was lucky enough to attend the presentation by Terri McCargar, Librarian at Latymer Upper School in London, on 'Collaboration with teachers and specialist libraries'. Her example of collaboration — in which she worked with the school's art history teacher to develop a supportive but independent learning framework to assist students through their *Art History Personal Investigations* — was a truly inspiring example of project-based collaboration.

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As part of their project, students had to demonstrate first-hand information, research skills, contextual consideration, and interpretation of the textual material used. Further collaboration and student support included a very popular site visit to the National Art Library in London.

Other presentations in the Lightning talk streams included:

- Importance of research and referencing skills using online databases.
- The Library and the EPQ (Extended Project Qualification) enabling students to become 'digitally savvy' in a real-world context.

- Exploring the information-seeking behaviour of secondary school students.
- Developing an online offer for pre-university entry information and digital literacy.
- Listen – Collaborate – Observe – Repeat: how to implement a safe BYOD culture.
- The library in the digital world.
- Embedding digital literacy skills in Year 9.
- How effective are our students' digital searching skills?
- Tackling plagiarism in the digital world.
- Developing independent learning skills in Year 9–13 through project-based learning and librarian-led support.

- Preparing students to become independent learners and digitally literate.

In the workshop stream, I attended the session 'How librarians can use online resources to enhance information literacy skills, collaborate with teachers and win time in the classroom', presented by Elizabeth Hutchinson of Guernsey School Library Service.

The workshop explored how teachers want librarians to link resources to the curriculum, save them time and make finding resources easy. Resource curation and collaboration with teachers to support curriculum goals and projects is a big topic

and it was interesting to see the Guernsey School Library Service's examples.

Additional sessions in the workshop stream included:

- Using images in teaching — what you need to know about copyright.
- Innovative ways to increase student engagement.
- How to spark creativity, imagination and autonomous student-driven research in the classroom.
- Digital literacy in practice — lifelong literacy skills.
- Developing your research project: preparing students to succeed at a Russell Group university.

## What can we learn from our neighbours? School librarian collaboration — an Australian perspective

The initial concept for the presentation I delivered at the conference was developed from a feature document Softlink Education produced at the end of 2017 — *School Libraries Share: Ideas for school-wide collaboration*. The feature document highlighted the voices of real school librarians globally in response to a question posed in the 2017 Softlink School Library Survey: How do you currently collaborate, or what ideas do you



have for greater collaboration between the library and the rest of the school?

While not strictly related to digital literacy or independent learning, a number of responses related directly to digital research skills and resources, and it was clear from the presentation summaries already received that collaboration was going to be a key theme at the conference.

As well as incorporating Australian content from the Ideas for school-wide collaboration feature, I set to work interviewing some of the many wonderful and inspiring teacher librarians and library professionals we at Softlink have the pleasure of working with on a daily basis.

The interviews provided feedback and real life examples of how Australian teacher librarians are tackling digital and information literacy as well student engagement and support. Their ideas were well received by the UK school librarian audience.

If you'd like to explore this further, the *School Libraries Share: Ideas for school-wide collaboration* feature document is available through the [Softlink web site – Resources](#).

A few of the additional Australian teacher librarian interviews take video form and are available on [this blog](#).

### Collaboration and copies of presentations

In her welcome, JCS Director Joyce Martin said that collaboration between the library and teaching staff is critical for success and, as expected, it was a commonly recurring theme throughout the presentations.

The conference provided further opportunity for school librarians in the UK to learn from, share and collaborate with each other beyond collaboration in the school environment. I hope this article extends the same possibility to you.

Feedback from the conference was fantastic, Head Librarian from the Forest School in London, Archie Black, said 'it was about the best one-day conference I have ever attended; the focus was almost exclusively on things which were relevant to what I do, and we all came away bursting with ideas for things we want to try.'

Copies of all of the presentations are available at <https://jconlineresources.org/jcs-2018-presentations/>

### Softlink Education and JCS Online Resources

Softlink Education provides school libraries with reliable, innovative solutions and the support they need to become contemporary central hubs for learning and resource management.

Softlink's Oliver v5 is a fully web-based library system developed with feedback from school libraries. LearnPath, our information curating tool, helps schools structure and present focused content for improved educational outcomes.

We've been helping schools for over 34 years and have customers in almost 70 countries.

Softlink has had a long partnership with [JCS Online Resources](#). JCS carefully select e-resources to join their catalogue and negotiate licensing terms and subscription rates to help schools worldwide afford a well-resourced online library available 24/7. Schools across the globe use JCS to subscribe to quality academic resources in one convenient central place. All resources are available to trial for free.



### JCS 2019 Digital Literacy in Schools: building capabilities

Following the success of JCS 2018, this second conference on digital literacy will provide a focus on the importance of digital capabilities for schools and sixth form colleges — not just the skills required by staff and students but extending to culture and policies.

The program will again be a mix of keynote speakers, lightning talks and workshops, and will introduce round-table discussions to increase the opportunities to share ideas and help formulate strategic approaches to takeaway.

More information can be found at <https://jconlineresources.org/event/jcs-2019/>.

### References

Dweck, Carol S. (2008), *Mindset: the new psychology of success*, Ballantine Books, New York.

# Report from the inaugural Australian Children's Laureate Summit

28 February 2018

By Margo Pickworth



**ASLA was recently invited to participate in the inaugural Australian Children's Laureate Summit, which was held at the Women's College, Sydney University. The Administrative Officer, Sophie Partington, and Board member, Margo Pickworth, attended the Summit on behalf of ASLA.**

Noni Hazelhurst, the Patron, opened the event, highlighting the negative effects on children of continual exposure to technology and the decline of children's reading as a result. She emphasised the importance of 'story' in children's lives and the value of bringing like-minded groups together to support reading in children's lives.

The Summit began with each of the Laureates relaying their experiences of their roles, including their discoveries about reading and literature, encouraging children to read and highlights of their time as Laureates. All five Laureates were present, including:

- Alison Lester
- Boori Monte Prior
- Jackie French
- Leigh Hobbs
- Morris Gleitzman

Following the discussion panel of distinguished Laureates, the Summit divided into four 'themed' sessions, in which

delegates selected from the following promotion ideas, including:

- One Loud Voice
- Harnessing the Creative Impulse
- Crashing the Barriers
- Embedding a Reading Culture

Afternoon workshops were 'Choose your own Laureate Adventure', in which Alison Lester shared her experience of working in remote, Indigenous areas and Leigh Hobbs and Jackie French shared their passion for supporting the work of teacher librarians.

Several presentations from publishers followed and the winner of the best window decoration of Laureates' publications was announced, the winner being 'Bookface' at Gunghalin in the ACT.

The Australian Children's Laureate group is looking to make a unified approach to encourage children's reading and children's literature and it is believed that ASLA should be a strong part of this initiative.