



By **Nikki Curtis**
Softlink Education, Director of Marketing

School library staff share: Ideas for promoting the library

The feedback provided in Softlink Education's School Library Surveys over the years demonstrates the enthusiasm and commitment school library professionals bring to their role. In particular, the energy they put into promoting their library and its resources and services is evident.

In the 2018 Softlink Education School Library Surveys, we posed a specific question about the theme of promoting the school library — 'What practices are in place or what ideas do you have to promote the library, the services it provides, or the role and skills of the school library staff in your school?'

The feature document, *School Libraries Share: Ideas for promoting the library* (released in February 2019) presents responses to this question from library professionals in Australia, Germany, Hong

Kong, Indonesia, Ireland, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Qatar, Scotland, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, the Netherlands, United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and Wales.

The responses are both inspiring and very, very generous. We hope this sharing of ideas can help all school library professionals get the most out of their resources and time.

This article presents a specific Australian voice, with feedback from a sample of the Australian respondents. It is structured into



school type groupings: Primary/Preparatory school libraries, Secondary school libraries and K–12 school libraries.

The *School Libraries Share: Ideas for promoting the library* feature document is available from the Softlink Education website — [Resources page](#). It is also available for download from the [Softlink Education Blog about the feature document](#), which provides a sample of the responses broken up into themes.

Background

Softlink has conducted School Library Surveys in Australia since 2010, when the first survey was designed in response to the Australian Federal Government's 'Inquiry into school libraries and Teacher Librarians in Australian schools'. Softlink Education has continued to survey schools annually, more recently extending the scope to include New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

The surveys provide a critical reference point for understanding changes, impacts and trends affecting school libraries over time.

Open comment questions provide an opportunity for respondents to share ideas, reflections, insights and challenges. They present a diverse, ground-up perspective into the workings of a digital-era school library.

Softlink has produced multiple feature documents that share and mobilise this combined voice and we hope that you will participate in the 2019 survey when it is released later in the year.

Participant summaries from the 2018 Softlink Australia, New Zealand, and Asia Pacific School Library Survey [are available here](#) with the full report expected to be published in late March.

Ideas for Primary/Preparatory school libraries

The following ideas, practices and suggestions come from Australian Primary/Preparatory school respondents.

'We promote through our Reading Knights program, Facebook updates, HUGE Book Week celebrations, and newsletter updates.'

'I have a student library committee which help run events — book swaps, colouring competitions, and Book Week activities. I also try to contribute to the school newsletter regularly.'

'Library lessons with all classes give me an opportunity to promote services and to teach children research skills. I promote the library in the community by using the local government library to display our work. I communicate with the school community through our newsletter.'

'Events are advertised on our Facebook page, our School App, Newsletter, and electrical signage at the front of the school.'

'Joint planning days, PEE and read, book club, reading time for enjoyment, and makerspaces.'

'We do regular colouring competitions, Bookclub and Bookfair competitions with prizes, and place an ad in our school newsletter informing the community of the exciting things that are happening in the library.'

'We celebrate Family Reading Month. We hold an Annual event called Booknic. Parents come and read a story from our library and bring a snack for the students. PRC challenge —students get library awards and their names are displayed on Oliver v5 and a poster outside the library. We also hold a Book Character Parade and 2 bookfairs.'

'The library needs to have a welcome pack for each new year about the services that it provides. The library could be promoted by holding events in

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the library so that staff and students can use the library for information sharing and learning new skills rather than just borrowing physical resources.'

Ideas for Secondary school libraries

The following ideas, practices and suggestions come from Australian Secondary school respondents.

'We are very proactive in our library, promoting our activities and initiatives in morning messages, on the display screens throughout the school, and by email and newsletters. We provide many experiences for our staff and students including Reading Cafe, Manga Club, virtual reality and Escape Rooms.'

'We have established a mobile library where we visit English classes with a selection of fiction and magazines that is curated to their potential interests.'

'We have a screen outside the library to promote events and display student work.'

'We invite all the staff to come to the library during our student free weeks at the end of each Semester, where we create a pop-up library within our library showcasing all the adult books they might like to borrow over the holidays. The first one is in winter, so we provide soup, and the second one is at the end of the year, so it is Christmas themed. We publish a series of newsletters: Get Connected which highlights one specific online database in each edition, Book Look for lovers of Junior Fiction, Book Pitch for lovers of Senior Fiction and Book Ends for the lovers of Adult Books. We also have a blog called Between the pages.'

'For Years 7 to 9 we hold "Orientation Tours" of the library and its resources

(space, collections, digital ...), then hold "Refresher Tours" in Semester 2. We also have several reading programs (RRR, DEAR, MAD ...). We have created our own bookmarks to promote and provide login instructions for resources such as World Book Online, Clickview Online, students' Library Account etc.'

'We promote Book Week, International Women's Day, and Library Lovers Week. We provide a safe space for study, leisure, and socialising whilst promoting a love of reading.'

'We make book displays and run book fairs.'

'I promote the library by keeping up to date with our LMS and providing varied learning spaces for different activities. I also provide bright, colourful, flexible spaces with changing displays, post events on FB, share information with relevant staff at time of discovery, and use surveys to determine user needs.'

'I run a reading club, directly support literacy programs, promote the VPRC, email staff, put items in bulletins, go out into classes, talk to staff, and design resources and posters about our products and services.'

'I work closely with the teachers to develop online resources for assignments to encourage students to research effectively.'

'I send emails to staff about services and resources that are available. I also make posters to hang around the school.'

'We promote the library and resources through LearnPath, in-house television advertisements, posters, workshops, and radio station.'

'We promote the library in the monthly school newsletter, morning notices, and Facebook. We run a weekly raffle for borrowers with the prize of a \$10 tuck shop voucher.'

'I currently promote the library through the school website and pamphlets. I would like the library to have its own social media site, but would need more staff to run it and keep on top of it.'

'I notify staff of new publications added to our collection. I seek opportunities to have students and staff utilise the library for reading. Staff and students share favourite books they have read through interviews. I then report outcomes in the school newsletter. I also promote new publications added to the collection to parents and students through the school newsletter.'

'We promote through regular newsletter items (at least 3 per term), visual galleries in our LMS, pop-up libraries at our separate Grade 9 campus, Instagram, and our College Facebook page.'

'I regularly promote the library and the teacher librarian role through my website, Facebook page and Instagram, within professional online networks, and our newsletter.'

Ideas for K–12/All-Through school libraries

The following ideas, practices and suggestions come from Australian K–12 school respondents.

'We promote through newsletters, daily messages, and "quick bites" of information or helpful tips. We also participate in Library Lovers' Day, NSST, Bookweek and the Reading Hour. We

make these big events and include staff and our parent/carer community.'

'I email links and resources to relevant staff, make announcements in school assemblies, talk at staff meetings, and run pre-school storytime to meet parents.'

'We use the daily and weekly bulletins for staff, pop-up sessions at staff meetings, and a parent online newsletter. We also promote through the school's Facebook and Instagram accounts, and a stand in the staff room where we place posters and pieces of interest.'

'I send regular emails to staff advising of new functionality or online resources and try to stay in their faces — in a positive way. I regularly offer to support teachers in the classroom, and present at professional development for staff. I'm involved in e-pedagogy and the team is pushing to start a BYOD program in the school.'

'Book week is very important at our school and all students from K–12 are catered for with activities, books, and visiting speakers.'

'We do school assembly promotions, staff meeting promotions, newsletter promotions, and signs. Face-to-face promotions are done when Junior School classes visit the library.'

'We collaborate with the English faculty to provide the Literature Circles program for Year 5 to Year 8 students. This has been very successful this year. We facilitate participation in the Victorian Premiers' Reading Challenge and our completion rates were higher this year — the highest since 2013. We provide resources to support the students and teachers with their Units of Inquiry, as well as providing

research guides where appropriate. We have a well-developed library page, which provides easy access to digital subscriptions, such as eLibrary, Echo newspaper index, Cambridge Companions online, Gale Virtual Reference Library and World Book and Britannica online encyclopaedia, Wheelers ePlatform, amongst others. Our Junior and Middle School students learn how to use these resources as part of their scheduled library lessons. Of course, we always promote the library during Book Week, with guest speakers, competitions, book parades, etc. Our library team is very good at promoting the collection and students love coming to the library.'

'We promote Book Week, International Women's Day, and Library Lovers Week. We provide a safe space for study, leisure, and socialising whilst promoting a love of reading.'

'We promote through the college weekly email newsletter to parents, send emails to secondary students, post articles on the college blog, post photos on the college Facebook page, send positive and informative emails to staff, occasionally present at parades, write a page for the college yearbook, and occasionally write articles for the local newspaper or library journals. Book Week is used to create an atmosphere where the whole college community is talking about books and the library.'

'I email students and staff with resources that may be of use to them, especially the seniors doing the HSC.'

'Primary classes have a lesson a week

in the library, promoting new books and borrowing/returning.'

'Our library promotes in the school newsletter but we'd like to increase our reach with students. Having them visit during lunch and recess would improve literacy, community, and make the library more relevant to students.'

'Our library works with a skeleton staff and I try to give the best customer service possible to promote the amazing service we provide. I use digital signage to promote new resources. I keep up with new titles and order them in. I create a warm and inviting space where everyone is welcome and valued.'

'Our parents can request resources online for their children. Our teachers also promote the library through the resources they send their students on a weekly basis.'

'Holding events in our library allows us to showcase our space and the available technology for staff. We have 2 pages in the school magazine, twice a term. We have a PowerPoint on a large TV screen at the front of our library to showcase events that are happening, or that have happened. We attend staff meetings and promote skills and practices. Working with teachers during library classes is the best way that we have to demonstrate our skills and expertise as TLs.'

Additional resources

1. Participant summaries from the 2018 Softlink Australia, New Zealand, and Asia Pacific School Library Survey [are available here](#) with the full report expected to be published in late March.
2. A number of feature documents presenting the voice of school library survey respondents are available from the [Softlink web site](#) Resources page.
3. The Softlink Blog includes a number of guest blogs from innovative, inspiring teacher librarians. Visit the [Softlink Blog](#) or follow us on Twitter @SoftlinkEdu for updates.

Softlink

About Softlink Education

Established in 1983, Softlink Education is an Australian company with global influence, serving school library and education department customers in almost 70 countries.

Softlink Education works with school libraries and educators to provide solutions that engage students and support school library staff. Our mission is to equip both individual schools and districts with the most comprehensive and effective solutions to engage their students, improve literacy outcomes and promote student achievement.

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 Education 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.

Five tips for back-to-school online safety



Office of the
eSafety Commissioner

With new shoes, school uniforms, stationery and tech devices to hand, Australia's kids are now back to routine — the school year is under way. As kids, parents and school staff settle in to new classes, new schedules and using new technology, it's a great time to take a step back and look at some of the challenging aspects of school life, and how to handle them. One of these is online safety.

At the Office of the eSafety Commissioner we've provided a head start, with five tips to help families stay safe online throughout 2019:

- 1. Know the signs for cyberbullying** — school can be a particularly challenging time for children, especially if they're being bullied. The eSafety Office's complaints show most cyberbullying stems from the schoolyard. To help, watch out for signs that a child may be affected, like being secretive with their online activities, avoiding school or social outings, a decline in school grades, or a sudden change in friendship groups. The eSafety Office has specific advice for parents if their child is [experiencing cyberbullying](#).
- 2. 'Sharent' responsibly** — parents need to be mindful of [sharing](#) a child's school photos and milestones on social media, thinking about who can see the photos and what information is being given away, because even a school crest on a student's uniform can say a lot about where they spend their time. Asking a child if it's okay to share their photo is also a great way to help grow their understanding of consent and respect.
- 3. Set screen time limits** — eSafety Office [research](#) shows more than half of parents are concerned about the amount of time their kids spend online. With screens increasingly being used at school and home, it's important to ensure that children have a [healthy balance of offline and online time](#). Setting screen-free



zones in the home and negotiating switch off times are useful ways to do this.

- 4. Use tools** — [parental controls](#) on smartphones, TVs and computers can help limit a child from seeing inappropriate content and can help manage their time online. [Privacy settings](#) can also be turned on in apps and games, and children can learn how to block and report people online.
- 5. Stay engaged** — as soon as we hand a child a device, we should be talking to them about the dos and don'ts of the online world, though it's important to also let them know they will be supported if anything goes wrong. Remember that there is no substitute for taking an interest in a child's online lives from an early age. This helps to establish strong foundations and open lines of communication that offer benefits in the long term.

Parents, teachers and library staff can learn more about [keeping children safe online](#), and can [register](#) to receive eSafety News, on the [eSafety Office website](#).