



School library leaders, advocates, & influencers



## Introduction

Thanks to everyone who completed the 2020 School Library Survey – United Kingdom!

The 2020 School Library Survey, conducted by Softlink on behalf of the SLA, was launched on 24th November 2020 and closed on 20th December 2020. The survey asked a range of questions about school library spaces, staffing, resourcing, the impact of COVID-19, and other important issues that arose in 2020.

We had a fantastic response, with valuable feedback shared by school library staff across the UK.

We are busy working through the responses to produce a report in the coming months; we were particularly inspired by the comments we received in response to the question “Who do you look up to professionally?”

While there were a number of specific advocates, influencers, authors, associations (and more) named, what really stood out in these responses is the professional support offered and sense of community among school library staff.

As one respondent put it:

“Other school librarians. We are very good, as a profession, at supporting each other. I think this is probably because we are usually lone workers in our spaces of work.”

In the current climate where schools are in and out of shut-down (and nothing is certain) we wanted to share some of these inspiring responses, which we hope will continue to inspire and encourage you!

Softlink is proud to support school libraries through the annual school library surveys conducted in Australia, New Zealand and Asia Pacific, and the United Kingdom and Europe. The surveys provide findings on school library funding, staffing, evolving roles, delivery of digital resources, and visions for the future.

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## Who do you look up to professionally?

**“ALL other school Librarians. I can’t single any out. They all have different approaches, and they are all doing the best they can. (Although Lucas Maxwell is doing amazing work!)”**

‘I belong to the Library Services for Education in Gloucestershire. Meeting other local Librarians is an enormous help.’

‘I admire my Head and Deputy Heads for always been open to the bigger ‘reading’ picture and how this positively impacts our children’s education.’

‘Other librarians in my local school network who are battling with the same issues I am and who make a difference every day despite barriers.’

“Knights of” and Book Island publishers – for trying to do something different. Fellow Librarians who share their resources on Twitter.’

‘Organisations who I respect and rely on enormously are SLA, Booktrust, Reading Agency, National Literacy Trust, and Empathy Lab.’

‘If I need help or opinions on library matters, I tend to turn to Denise Reed at LIPSSEE.’

‘The many librarians I follow on Twitter and from the ‘Secondary School Librarians’ Facebook group. A colleague at my new school who is a Humanities teacher, PSHE lead, and a Head of Year and does all professionally, kindly, and with good humour.’

‘The IT manager and the Literacy Coordinator, both of whom are very supportive and understanding of my role and the position I find myself in. The English department have been great too and very considerate, as well as patient.’

‘No one particular person - all librarians, authors, illustrators, and poets who encourage reading/illustration and who share their experiences and skills within the reading community so we can all learn.’

‘The inspiring staff at SLA and CILIP who so freely offer advice and guidance to librarians everywhere.’

‘My line manager is an inspiration to me; my favourite authors and illustrators; other librarians within the network of schools that mine belongs to; the SLA as an organisation, and all the great work it does.’

‘Authors who promote the importance of school libraries; other school librarians who are leading campaigns to maintain and develop the school library and promote reading for pleasure.’

‘Bev Humphrey for her technical prowess, Alison Tarrant for her advocacy, and Lucas Maxwell for his engagement with students.’

**“My fellow librarians who come up with such creative ideas and are happy to share.”**

**“Nick Poole (CILIP) has really supported School Libraries; Alison Tarrant (SLA) is a fantastic advocate; there is a fantastic network of professional librarians on SLN including Barbara Band and Caroline Roche. Ellen Krajewski, chair of the Carnegie Medal this year, is a fantastic promoter of reading for pleasure.”**

‘Our head of CPD and Assistant Vice Principal. While not knowing much about librarianship, she has been encouraging and welcoming to me as a new member of staff and new librarian.’

‘All other school librarians - they all have such different ideas to offer.’

‘Various other librarians on Twitter - Lucas Maxwell and Elizabeth Hutchison for example.’

‘CILIP, SLA, and the CKG Awards process. Without these networks I would be very isolated.’

‘I try and follow a range of librarians and reading for pleasure sources on Twitter and Instagram. I am also part of a local group of librarians.’

‘I look up to my line manager, head of business and finance, as she has a lot to juggle but is committed to enriching the school in every capacity.’

‘I belong to a couple of networks, both physical and online, and look up to and respect the advice of many of my colleagues on these.’

‘A colleague who was not only born to teach, but with a natural ability to understand her staff (deputy head).’

‘Too many to mention! School library Twitter is always a source of inspiration. Librarians like Amy McKay are incredible too.’

‘Michael Rosen and the Head of English at a previous school I worked in.’

‘Fellow school librarians like Barbara Band, Caroline Roche, and Sarah Pavey who are always full of good ideas and good sense!’

‘Anyone who works tirelessly to help young people.’

‘Lucas Maxwell. He gives me a lot of ideas on Twitter.’

‘My local SL colleagues in Bristol!’

**“Other school librarians who are doing amazing work, working tirelessly reaching out to young people promoting reading for pleasure and all the library services we can offer them.”**

**“Elizabeth Hutchinson, Barbara Band, Lucas Maxwell, and all of the other Library Professionals and authors that I talk to through SLN or SLA.”**

‘The librarians in the SLA.’

‘My role models are the professional friendly efficient people I meet.’

‘Organisations who I respect and rely on enormously are SLA, Booktrust, Reading Agency, National Literacy Trust, and Empathy Lab.’

‘Local librarians in the School Library Association.’

‘Other librarians on social media.’

‘Other school librarians and those who are fighting to put whole school literacy at the top of the agenda.’

‘Elaina Ryan, director of Children’s Books Ireland, deserves a statue in Dublin city centre. She is a tireless campaigner for the right to read.’

‘Far too many people to mention! I find the SLN group invaluable alongside the group of School Librarians who regularly tweet and post in the Secondary School Librarians Facebook Group.’

‘All the librarians out there that are sharing their knowledge and good practice which inspires others.’

‘Lucas Maxwell, Elizabeth Hutchinson, and all sorts of fellow librarians who do so much and share their great ideas.’

‘I have huge admiration for my school library colleagues who deliver amazing and creative work often for little reward.’

‘CILIP, SLA, and the CKG Awards process. Without these networks I would be very isolated.’

‘I try and follow a range of librarians and reading for pleasure sources on Twitter and Instagram. I am also part of a local group of librarians.’

‘My line manager is head of the language’s faculty. He’s very enthusiastic about the library and I know he will support me 100% in my endeavours to make it more a part of the school community.’

**“Nina Simon who runs the Redbridge School Libraries Service and all the local librarians! I have also signed up for the mentorship scheme with SLA which has been very helpful. I am a librarian who has worked in public and academic libraries, but this is my first job in a school - so different to what I used to do, and I couldn’t do it without the help of the other school librarians.”**

**"I take a look at SLN regularly to see what discussion threads are running. I started this job with a post-it note (with a password written on it!). Like many in this unique school role I have had to build the role myself and seek support from wherever I can"**

'Kathleen Moran, head of the Irish Junior Certificate School Programme Demonstration Library Project, is a constant inspiration. She is a dedicated, thoughtful professional, with a can-do approach, and fantastic advice and experience.'

'A former colleague from the public library service, Carol Donnelly, is the kindest, most generous librarian on earth and whenever the going gets tough, or things seem daunting, I ask myself "What Would Carol Do?" and the path becomes clearer. She's an absolute paragon of public service and always has the best advice and guidance.'

'Our School Library Service and the School Library Association are my LRC Gurus! Elizabeth Hutchinson has also been inspirational.'

'Tricky! Within school, there are key members of the teaching staff who are themselves readers who work with the library staff on shared goals to promote all forms of literacy. Outside school, figures such as Theresa Cremin (RfP/OU), Sarah Pavey, Laura Taylor...'

'No one individual but Colric and SLA constantly raise awareness and offer training and support.'

'My line manager (not based in school), plus experienced library staff in SLN forum and SLA.'

'Authors such as Ruth Eastham, Cressida Cowell, Jason Reynolds, J. K. Rowling, and David Walliams.'

'The many inspirational school librarians leading the SLA.'

'Valerie Coughlan, retired lecturer in School Libraries, literally taught me everything I know.'

'Our school's Senior Dean and Head of English, Vivienne Naughton, is Wonder woman! The hardest working woman in education.'

'Lucas Maxwell and lots of authors who are being generous with their time and resources at the moment.'

'My fellow librarians, especially all those who offer advice and support on SLN.'

'I follow many librarians on Twitter for inspiration.'

'Fellow librarians in a Cornish network.'

'A number of fellow librarians who offer calm and common-sense advice.'

**"Barbara Band, Sarah Pavey, and Matt Haig specifically, although I follow quite a few other librarians on social media and via SLN where there are very useful discussion threads."**

## About the School Library Association (SLA)

The SLA is a UK focused charity which supports everyone involved in school libraries.

We believe that every pupil is entitled to effective school library provision and the educational, emotional, and developmental benefits that come with it.

The SLA is committed to supporting, promoting, and sustaining high quality reading and teaching and learning opportunities for all in a diverse and changing world.

With around 2300 members, we provide training and access to resources to support the running of school libraries and the continuing development of all library staff.

To find out more visit our website [sla.org.uk](http://sla.org.uk) follow us on Twitter [@uksla](https://twitter.com/uksla) or contact us via email [info@sla.org.uk](mailto:info@sla.org.uk)



## About Softlink

Softlink has been providing school library software for over 30 years, offering solutions to meet the ongoing needs of schools globally.

Users of **Oliver v5** benefit from regular new feature updates, which are developed in direct response to feedback and insights gained from our active user community.

**LearnPath** users can create, publish, and share rich learning guides and content. They also have access to over 300 ready-made guides produced by teacher librarians.

To find out more about how Softlink and Oliver v5 can support your school library? Visit our website [softlinkint.com/edu](http://softlinkint.com/edu) follow us on Twitter [@SoftlinkEdu](https://twitter.com/SoftlinkEdu) or contact us via email [communications@softlinkint.com](mailto:communications@softlinkint.com).



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Sources

\* 2020 School Library Survey - United Kingdom