

SCHOOL LIBRARIES SHARE



Our wish
list for
the future



Oliver^{V5}

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

Introduction

From its inception in 2010, respondents to the annual Softlink School Library Survey* have been using the open comments questions to share their innovative ideas, their challenges, what they love about their role, and what their wish list for the future is.

This passion, adaptability and ingenuity has been shared in previous Softlink feature documents such as “School libraries share innovative ideas” and “School libraries share ideas for school-wide collaboration”, available from the [Resources page](#) of the Softlink Education web site.

Drawing on analysis from both the Australian and New Zealand, and United Kingdom 2017 School Library Surveys, this feature presents a topic or theme-based top 5 wish list as provided by survey respondents.

The comments in this paper illustrate what respondents would introduce or change if additional budget or resources were available to them, and in many cases, how it would enable a more comprehensive library service for their students, teachers, and the broader school community.

Softlink is proud to collate these global comments within this feature document.

Further Softlink resources are included at the end of the document.

*Softlink has conducted school library surveys in Australia since 2010, and in recent years, extended the scope of the survey to include New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

Initially a response to the 2010 Australian Federal Government request for submissions to the ‘Inquiry into school libraries and Teacher Librarians in Australian schools’, the survey enabled Softlink to provide data which informed a unique response to the inquiry.

Since then, Softlink has continued to survey school libraries annually, helping to build a critical reference point for understanding changes, impacts, and trends over time, while providing a solid basis for school library advocacy.

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1

Changes to the library space

The most common challenge, and related wish list topic, for respondents was their physical library space. While new schools often benefit from more flexible, contemporary school library design and furnishing, changing the existing physical space is a high-cost item that many school libraries struggle with.

In this section, school library staff share their wish list items for improving the physical library space. Flexible or mobile shelving, furniture, and layouts were the most common items on the wish list, with comfort and vibrancy also featuring heavily in comments.

'I would love to change the learning environment to allow for more computers to be installed and extra space to be created for those using laptops and iPads.

I would also love to have new shelving on wheels so it can be moved to create an open learning area for all students, and to have new furniture that allows for a more collaborative work environment for teachers and students.' **AU**

'I would like a more relaxed reading space and a more "central community space" feel.' **UK**

'I would like to update the shelves, carpets, and seating.

I would also like to create zones e.g. research hubs and reading hubs.' **NZ**

'I would like flexible shelving and furniture.' **AU**

'I feel really supported in my position as senior librarian. However, there is a very traditional approach to libraries here - they are seen as quiet places for study.

I'm trying to balance this traditional view with some of the new attributes modern libraries can be - vibrant and fully engaged with technology & pop culture.' **NZ**

'I would like to refresh the space (buy new furniture etc) and change the design to make it more inviting.

I would also like to create a learning space with different areas suited for different learning.' **AU**

'I would make my library a more flexible space to better accommodate all the different groups that need to use it.' **UK**

'I would change the physical set-up of the space. The furniture is currently rigid and fixed, which means there is limited flexibility and, as a consequence, the whole space is open plan. This is not conducive to silent study and effective working.

I would prefer a number of different spaces, and furniture that could be easily moved (e.g. on wheels) so that the space could change depending on the event.' **UK**

'I would change the furniture and furnishings.

We have some shelving on wheels, I would like all freestanding shelving on wheels.' **NZ**

'I would like to make my library bigger, update the furniture, and rework the layout to allow for a greater variety of learning spaces.' **UK**





2

More information literacy and research teaching opportunities



'I would like to change the physical space to allow for more collaborative working.' **UK**

'I would like to be able to purchase some new furniture to make our areas a little more relaxing and collaboration friendly.' **AU**

'I would like the library to be bigger so more people can visit. At the moment, I always have a queue of people to turn away.'

I would like more space, not just for display but also seating.' **UK**

'The physical space is mixed, i.e. educational and social. I would like a larger space so that more social activities could occur without impacting on students who are studying.' **AU**

'I would like a bigger library to accommodate a study area.' **NZ**

'I would like our library to be completely made-over to reflect a 21st Century learning environment.' **AU**

'I would change the physical space and furniture to allow for greater flexibility and to provide students and teachers with a significantly different experience than a regular classroom.' **AU**



The ability to find, evaluate, and critically assess information is a vital skill set for students today. Second highest on the respondents' wish list is more opportunities to teach these skills.

In this section, school library staff describe how, why or what they would like to do to improve information literacy and research outcomes in their schools. 'More teaching opportunities' was the most common response.

'I would love for the teachers to bring their classes down to the library for me to teach them how to research, locate and critically analyse information.' **AU**

'No time is allocated for library lessons which makes it more difficult for students to navigate the library and resources.'

Library lessons are also needed to teach research skills including referencing, plagiarism, and online research.' **UK**

'I would like to see more opportunities within the library to teach research and information literacy skills at the different year levels.' **NZ**

'We would like the school to bring back library lessons for the lower school.' **UK**

'Given the number of students now entering further education the need for the school library to promote information literacy skills is greater than ever.

Students need to have, at least, a basic understanding of how to go about their own research, how to narrow their searches, and how to evaluate their resources.

It is here where the school library can be invaluable in setting them on the right path at an early age.

For those who do not go on to further education, the techniques for evaluating resources remain just as important so as to stop the acceptance of "fake news" items.'

UK

'I would like more resources (time, staffing, and budget) to allow sufficient time to plan and implement more research and literacy programs for students, offer research and literacy support, for innovation, technology resourcing, and to offer PD for staff.' AU

'I would like more involvement in planning with teaching teams, and to have an authentic role in teaching research skills and digital citizenship.'

AU

'I'd like more hours - particularly to teach info lit to senior classes and transition to tertiary courses.' NZ

'I would like to be able to operate with a fully-flexible timetable where I can team-teach with classes rather than provide teacher release time from face-to-face teaching.' AU

'I would like more information literacy teaching and digital literacy teaching for both students and teachers.' NZ

'Bring in a fortnightly session with each year 7 class for the first semester - incorporating Oliver, Overdrive and eBooks, referencing, and wide-reading - and set students up for all things digital.' AU

'I would like to have more opportunity to collaborate with staff on inquiry topics.' NZ

'I would love to have more time for lessons so I can incorporate more information literacy and digital technologies.' AU

'I would like to deliver an information literacy program.' UK

'I would like recognition and acceptance of the importance of reading, research, and digital literacy programs to foster the students' ability to become modern 21st Century learners.' AU

'More 'skill' teaching needs to be done on how to use technologies including internet search etc.

It's always assumed that students know these skills, but that is not the case.

Instead of going "back-to-basics" of the three Rs, we need to teach the "back-to-basics" in technology usage.'

NZ

3 More access to available technology

With the development and growth of digital technologies, educators are now able to provide a broader and more comprehensive learning experience for students that reaches well beyond the walls of their classrooms or library. But finding the budget to implement their technology wish list is still a struggle for many school libraries. Third highest on the respondents' wish list is implementing available technologies to improve library services.

In this section, school library staff describe the technologies - either hardware, software or digital resources - on their implementation wish list. 'Providing access to online resources' and 'additional hardware or devices for students to use' were common responses; some schools simply wanted to update to an online school library management system* so they can provide 24/7 access to their catalogue.

'I would like eBooks to play a greater role in our library and to enable our school community access to our library from anywhere.' **AU**

'I would like to improve the visibility and accessibility of the LRC catalogue to those using mobile devices.' **UK**

'I would like a small suite of computers so students can look at the catalogue - at the moment we only have one issuing computer.' **NZ**

'I would like to have new technology for students to use which would enhance their experience in the library and provide them with the latest products available. This would lead to greater usage of the library.' **UK**

'I would like a new cloud-based resources system.' **UK**

'If my budget was bigger I would get eBooks and audio books.' **NZ**

'I would like to see more investment in e-reading and to offer the use of tablets as an option.' **AU**

'I would like an increased budget to offer more online resources.' **UK**

'I would like better technology and more digital resources.' **NZ**

'I wish I had the budget to spend on incorporating new technologies into the library.' **UK**

'I would like online subscription databases that meet the research needs for units of work across the curriculum, especially for Years 10-12.' **AU**

'I would like a bigger budget to allow for more new resources to be brought in.'

I would also like to offer a wider *variety* of resources such as magazine subscriptions and digital media, which we currently do not have.' **UK**

'I would like to upgrade our LMS to allow for 24/7 access.' **AU**

'There is a gradual shift in our library away from print materials to databases and online resources.'

We added JSTOR to our New Zealand EPIC, Newstext and The Source databases this year.

I will be investigating what other databases would be useful for my students next year.' **NZ**

'I would love to have more laptops for the students to use.' **AU**

*Oliver v5 school library management system by Softlink is a fully web-based software system available as cloud or local install.



4

Time and increased opportunities to collaborate

Respondents to the 2017 Softlink School Library Surveys were asked a specific question about collaboration between their school library and educators. A number of responses to this question were featured in the 'School Libraries Share – Ideas for school-wide collaboration' feature document.

While the question generated a multitude of great ideas and existing practice, for many respondents collaboration - or improved collaboration - was something they wanted to do more of, making it the fourth-highest theme in the respondents' wish list.

'I would like extra staff to assist with the admin. This would free up my time to collaborate more with subject leaders and work as a team to provide better resources for students.' **UK**

'I would like to have more collaboration with classroom teachers to provide a more meaningful library lesson.' **AU**

'I would like sufficient non-contact time to meet for planning and greater collaboration.' **UK**

'I would have more hours so that I would be able to collaborate with colleagues to plan, teach, and assess the curriculum.' **AU**

'I would like a more collaborative role in planning the curriculum.

'It would be great if the library was informed the term before an inquiry topic was started so we can enhance the collection in those areas.' **NZ**

It makes it easier to gather resources from Nat Lib, and make purchasing decisions when I know what the plan for next year is.' **NZ**

'I would like more collaboration with staff to develop engaging units.' **AU**

'I would like more library time to develop library/teacher collaboration.' **NZ**

'I would like to work more collaboratively with teachers in all of the faculties and institute more programs/initiatives within the library.' **AU**

'I currently collaborate with the English and History departments. I would like to collaborate more with other departments.' **UK**

'I would like to have meetings with HoDs or department representatives once a term to encourage more use of library for subject-specific research and literacy activities.' **UK**

'I would like more collaboration with other school staff so I know what their needs are, can plan for this, and support them more effectively.' **UK**

'I would like to work with other staff to develop a school-wide inquiry and information literacy plan.' **NZ**

'I would like to increase team-teaching and collaboration to assist teachers in developing and delivering their core program.

'I would like to work with staff whilst the assessment tasks are being written to ensure tasks include the use of information skills.' **AU**

'I would like each department to provide reading lists every term so I know what students are studying and can determine how I can support the curriculum.' **UK**

For this to happen I would need a reduction of RFF.' **AU**



5

Time and resourcing to improve service

Adequate staff resourcing is an ongoing challenge for many school libraries. Balancing changing expectations and finding time to develop new initiatives and work one-on-one with students was the fifth highest theme in the respondents' wish list.

In this section, school library staff describe how they would like more time and resourcing to extend and improve their library services.

'I would have a second staff member so there is always someone in the library to help.' **NZ**

'I would like to free up more time to spend interacting with and helping students instead of always being behind the loans desk.' **AU**

'With increased funding I could provide more adequate facilities, resources, and staffing to better service the school community.' **AU**

'I would like more staff time to develop other services.' **UK**

'I would like less time spent on library administration duties and more time available for pupil assistance.' **NZ**

'I wish that I had more time to spend supporting students to find that perfect book that inspires them to become readers!' **NZ**

'I would like more time or help with administering and curating the print and digital resources to make the library more responsive to student and staff needs.' **AU**

'I would like more staffing to enable greater reading intervention and promotion with pupils.' **UK**

'I would like additional help with day-to-day running so I can focus on the bigger picture.' **UK**

'Additional staffing would help to spread out the workload which would enable me to dedicate time to improving and updating the service.' **UK**

'I would like more hours to meet the needs of the students, especially with online resources and teaching digital literacy.' **NZ**

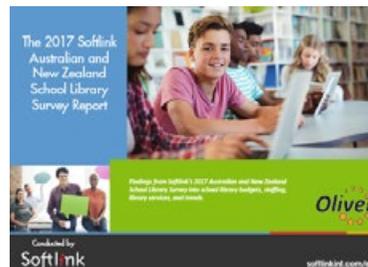
'I wish I had more time to read to the children instead of always teaching research. Both are valuable, but no matter how 'modern' the world gets, children still love to be read to.' **AU**

'I would like to increase the amount of time I am employed to allow time to create/contribute/improve/promote all things library.' **AU**

'I would like to have more time for one-on-one assistance for students with specific research enquiries.' **UK**

6. Other available Softlink reports and whitepapers

We have a number of reports and whitepapers available on our website (softlinkint.com/resources) including:



The 2017 Softlink Australian and NZ School Library Survey



The 2017 Softlink UK School Library Survey



School Libraries Share: Innovative ideas



How can the right school library software deliver educational outcomes for your school?



The Ongoing Importance of School Libraries - School library professionals reflect on changes in the library environment



True Federated Search: Helping School librarians rise to the information literacy challenge



5 Most Important Opportunities For School Libraries



School Libraries Share: Ideas for school-wide collaboration



What's Trending #SchoolLibraries

Softlink and Oliver v5

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.

Contact us

Would you like to find out more about how Softlink and Oliver v5 can support your school library? Visit our website softlinkint.com or contact us via email communications@softlinkint.com.

The logo for Oliver v5 features the word "Oliver" in a large, dark blue, sans-serif font, with "v5" in a smaller, lighter blue font to its right. The text is surrounded by several small, orange, circular dots of varying sizes, some of which are arranged in a semi-circle above the word "Oliver".

Softlink Australian School library Survey: A five-year review



7 Challenges for School Libraries

For even more ideas and resources visit our [blog \(softlinkint.com/blog\)](http://softlinkint.com/blog). Here is a sample of some of our posts:



How can e-resources help limited budgets go further?



10 National Literacy and Numeracy Week ideas for school libraries



Social media-rise your school library



National Simultaneous Storytime across The Hamilton and Alexandra College



Exploring visual literacy with picture books



How to get kids reading for pleasure these school holidays