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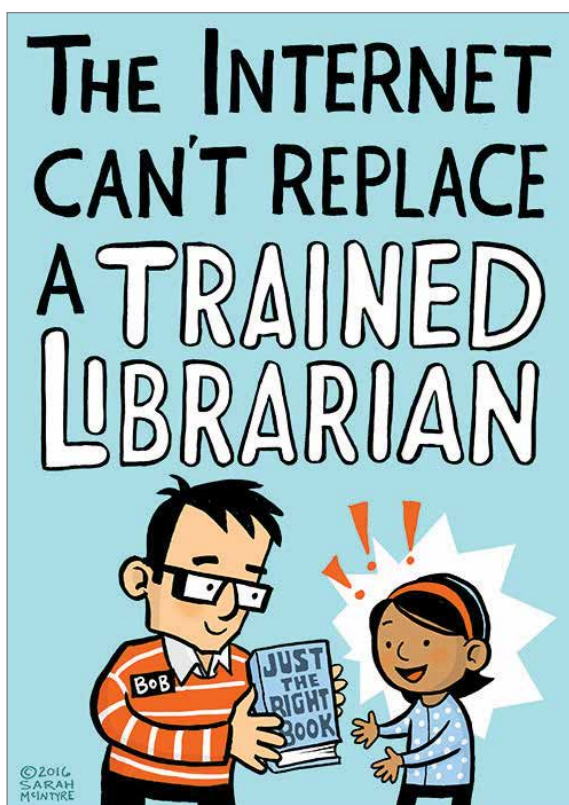
It's time: let's improve schools' perceptions of teacher librarians

I recently noticed that a work colleague shared a link to Sally Dring's fabulous article published in 2014, 'Don't overlook your school librarian, they're the unsung heroes of literacy'. When I read this article a couple of years ago, I shared it on Twitter, and was delighted to read Sally's reply: 'It needs saying!'

Dring's article highlighted the many valuable attributes and skills that teacher librarians bring to the school community. These are outlined below.

- Having dual qualifications in both teaching and library management allows teacher librarians to see the 'big picture' from the perspective of both student and teacher across a range of subjects and year levels.
- An expertise of teacher librarians is teaching information literacy. Learning how to locate information online and how to judge its value and relevance to the topic at hand are skills that can best be taught by teacher librarians.
- Teacher librarians can support teachers across the school by providing valuable links to resources relevant to the curriculum. Working with teachers to locate new resources when curriculum content changes, as well as providing resource lists for students and teachers, is a valuable skill held by teacher librarians.
- By encouraging students to shun plagiarism and instead demonstrate learned note-taking skills, teacher librarians can assist students to become independent researchers.

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» It's time: let's improve schools' perceptions of teacher librarians (cont.)

- Teacher librarians can teach skills in how to approach research assignments, and how to locate and assess relevant digital and hard copy resources. By making use of these skills in the classroom, teachers act as role models on how best to utilise the skills of teacher librarians.
- The core 'business' of teacher librarians is reading and literacy. Locating the right book at the right time for an individual child or teacher is a skill that should be highly valued and utilised by all members of the school community.

Dring concludes her well-stated thoughts by imploring school communities to make the most of a valuable asset so often overlooked:

But many school librarians are seen purely as minders of a spare IT suite or as date label stampers. They are enormously, depressingly, frustratingly underused.

So don't forget to seek out your school librarian. You will be amazed at how much support they can give you and how much time they can save you. And they really do want to be taken notice of.

It's disheartening that nearly two years after Dring's article was published in *The Guardian*, teacher librarians still need to assert their relevance within school communities. In her article in *Connections* 98, 'The importance of school libraries in the Google Age', Kay Oddone notes the positive attributes of teacher librarians, and implores readers to use her arguments as a 'catalyst for discussion' to bring about change.

As I consider the arguments presented by these two writers, and acknowledge the two-year gap between their publications, I wonder whether anything has changed in the intervening years. And if nothing much has changed, perhaps the question that we need to ask is 'How can we bring about change?'



Why is the teacher librarian role still undervalued in our school communities?

To bring about change, we need to objectively assess what it is we are doing: look at it from all sides and angles, and forge a new path.

We need to brainstorm different ways to approach our issues of concern. By looking at some of the statements mentioned by Dring and Oddone in their articles, the following ideas tumble to mind.

Highlight the 'teacher' in teacher librarian

Don't assume that teaching staff and students know that you have dual qualifications in teaching and librarianship. Repeatedly and excessively refer to yourself and those on your team as teacher librarians, highlighting what you can do to assist. If the school community doesn't know about your skill set, how can you expect it to utilise your skills?

Run assignment help sessions

Be proactive: volunteer to run an introductory session for a new topic or assignment, which may include how to start an assignment, where to find

resources, or how to best organise the information retrieved. Don't fall into the trap of volunteering to run these sessions for the one subject, the one teacher, or the one year level, as that leads to the possibility of routine, and overshadows the wide range of skills that can be offered by teacher librarians. By 'sprinkling' the offer to volunteer among different subjects, teachers, and year levels, a buzz can be created, and a need for the skills on offer can be generated. When demand can't be met, other voices may take their request to admin for you.

Collaborate with teachers

Ask teachers to assist in the location and evaluation of new resources. This initiates a team effort between teachers and teacher librarians, while increasing awareness of all the valuable resources available. Invite teachers to help locate new resources: hard copy books, ebooks, and online resources. Creating a joint 'ownership' of resources is an important and valuable way to increase their use.

Run library skills workshops

Run imaginative and fun workshops for students outside of class time on the basics such as using the library website,



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where to find information, how to use databases, the dangers of plagiarism, and note-taking. Creating a presence for the library in the eyes of the student body will underline that teacher librarians are able to do lots more than fix the photocopier.

Be heard in staff or faculty meetings

Teachers are busy and struggle to find time to do everything, so reach out to them. Request a short time allocation at full staff meetings, or ask faculty heads for 10 minutes of a faculty meeting. In these meetings, share skills that can be offered as well as how and where resources can be located on the school intranet or library webpage — but don't try to share everything at once. Aim for a series of show-and-tell sessions, or a few sessions per term/semester.

Hold workshops for teachers

Help staff overcome their hesitation to utilise library staff and resources by running orientation sessions, sharing the location of resources both within the library and on the library website. Hold these sessions at the start of the year, or during recess or lunch breaks throughout the year. Food and coffee/hot chocolate are valuable enticements.

Create 'foot soldiers'

Always have at the back of your mind the aim to create 'foot soldiers' to further the library cause. Once teachers know how much assistance teacher librarians can provide in the delivery and support of curriculum content, the more they will act as role models of how their students can use library resources and the skills of teacher librarians. And if — as I expect some of you are saying — you've tried this and it didn't change anything, try again by targeting different, more influential teachers in the school. Remember to *always* target those

teachers who are most likely to tell other staff what a fantastic support you have been to them.

Promote library resources

Share and publicise lists of resources available through the school library. Make access to these resources easy to find and easy to use, and share these with both staff and students.

Promote reading culture in the library

Never forget that library staff are the school's resident experts on reading and literacy. Promote this regularly in every possible way with all teaching staff and all year levels: hold book events; circulate reading lists online and in hard copy; and create challenges, flyers, posters, websites, and competitions. Being innovative, staying fresh, and keeping the library collection vibrant are as important as never giving up — even when programs laboured over don't succeed the way you hoped.

Create a visible presence for the library and its staff

Publicity is key to success. Once a program has been initiated and put in place, be sure to sell it: tell the school community about the program, who was involved, and what was achieved. Publicity should come in every form imaginable: newsletters, school and library blog posts, social media, wall displays, and student presentations. No amount of publicity is too much.

Conclusion

Taking a step back to look at a situation with fresh eyes can be demanding, exhausting, and time-consuming. Could the effort be worth it? Is an improved role for teacher librarians and school libraries guaranteed by the effort

expended? It's not guaranteed, but if we don't try to turn the situation around in our schools, another two years may go by in which teacher librarians continue to be underutilised and undervalued.

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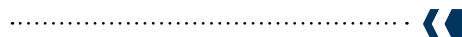
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Bev Novak has had extensive experience as a classroom teacher, specialist and Head of Library in a variety of school settings where she constantly aims to inspire a love of reading and ignite a joy of learning among students and teachers. Having published widely, Bev also authors two blogs, NovaNews and BevsBookBlog, in which she shares tips, tools and experiences while encouraging others to expand, embrace and enjoy their own lifelong learning journey.

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Narelle Keen
 Teacher librarian
 Pacific Lutheran College

Narelle Keen is a teacher librarian, English teacher, ICT Committee Chair, Code Club leader, Readers' Cup Regional Co-ordinator, and general go-to person at Pacific Lutheran College. She previously taught at West Moreton Anglican College and North Rockhampton State High as a classroom teacher and gifted and talented coordinator before seeing the light and becoming a teacher librarian 20 years ago.

Stopping the slide: improving reading rates in the middle school

At each end-of-year assembly, I give out our Champion Reader Award to students in the junior college who have borrowed more than 120 books throughout the year, and to students in the middle and senior college who have borrowed more than 50 books. In our junior college, we always have large numbers of students who meet the qualifying mark; however, we often struggle to have a dozen of the older students receiving awards.

For years, I had a general sense that borrowing rates dropped off as students entered the middle college, and in my 2015 annual report, I decided to look at the figures and quantify them. I compared the borrowing figures for our Year 6 cohort in 2015 to the borrowing figures for the same students in 2014. The results indicated a greater decline than we had realised.

Fifty-three students attended the school in both years. In Year 5, the average borrowing rate was 56.8 books per student; however by Year 6 – the first year of middle school – that number had fallen to 16.5 books per student. Of course, these figures do not take into account books borrowed from public libraries or from friends, or books that students had bought or received from family. However, the significant drop in numbers was concerning enough that it needed to be addressed.

I took my findings to a meeting with the English department, and discussed them in my annual review with our principal. Anecdotal evidence suggested that reading rates were dropping as students progressed into higher grades, but this was the first time we had hard data to support this. After consulting with these stakeholders and the Year 6 teachers,

I decided to investigate the causes and provide recommendations as part of my professional learning.

With the approval of our principal, I proposed the following process:

1. Identify objectives for this project, and their measurement for success.
2. Send out a student survey using SurveyMonkey.
3. Conduct follow-up interviews with students.
4. Analyse the results to see where improvements can be made.
5. Identify solutions, and implement the changes.
6. Review at the end of the year to determine the success of the project.



Not only do we hope to see an increase in our borrowing statistics at the end of the year, we also hope to maintain this increase as the student cohort progresses through the college. Other success criteria are more nebulous and difficult to measure, but include seeing students more engaged and enthusiastic about reading.

To make the survey and interviews more manageable, we only surveyed the first 20 students on the list.

Survey results

The interviews indicated that most students did not have an accurate idea of how much time they spent reading or how much their borrowing had decreased. Only one-quarter of the students recognised that their borrowing had decreased significantly and, interestingly, seven students thought their borrowing had *increased*. None of them were able to explain how they had formed this opinion, and were surprised to see that the data contradicted it.

Most students were keen to spend more time reading; some even lamented that they were no longer read aloud to in class like they were in junior college. The majority identified an increased

Number of books borrowed in Year 5	Number of books borrowed in Year 6
191	39
191	16
144	12
98	6
94	50
90	11
84	54
84	17
83	24
80	6
78	97
77	17
77	11
73	51
70	19
69	4
69	10
61	17
61	26
59	35

Comparing borrowing statistics between Year 5 and Year 6 students. Each row represents a different student.



workload and more extra-curricular activities as reading barriers. Worryingly, three-quarters said that they couldn't find books they were interested in. Our collection is fairly modern, but it is cramped, with no room to expand, and middle and senior college books are inter-shelved. (Our middle college students are not permitted to read senior fiction without a note from home.) Despite all of our front-facing books, displays, and the use of genre stickers, students said in their interviews that they found it difficult to find the books they wanted, and that they wanted more copies of popular titles.

Six students commented that they preferred to borrow books from the public library or to purchase the book themselves. Reasons included a preference for a bigger selection and longer loan period at the public library, and, for those in the latter category, the desire to own the book themselves.

Our middle school has a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) program, which means iPads are introduced into the classroom in Year 6. Although half of the respondents believed that the introduction of the iPad did not impact the amount of time they spent reading, anecdotal evidence from teachers suggested otherwise. The Year 6 borrowing rate in 2012, the year before we introduced iPads in the school, was 32 books per student. In 2013, the first year of the iPad trial, that figure dropped to nine books per student. Since then, numbers have recovered slightly, but not to the level they once were: in 2014,

the borrowing rate was 17 books per student, and 13 books per student in 2015. Admittedly, these figures represent different cohorts of students, but it does suggest a correlation between the introduction of iPads and less time spent reading.

Although most students understood that reading would benefit their academic results, few could articulate what those benefits were, or how reading might benefit them in other areas.

How can we improve reading rates?

After analysing the results of the survey and interviews, the following recommendations were made:

- Revise the Year 6 library program to include a wide reading focus and to provide extra time for students to read. Establish a routine around borrowing and silent reading, and clearly communicate reading expectations to students.
- Help students understand the benefits of reading by highlighting current research showing the myriad advantages of reading – not only academically, but socially and physically as well. Infographics are a great way to present this information in a clear and concise way. An example of useful infographics can be found on this webpage: <http://ebookfriendly.com/infographics-promote-reading>.
- In conjunction with the Year 6 teachers, encourage students to

borrow at least one book each week, with Year 6 teachers providing more opportunities for reading time in their busy schedule.

- Students to keep an online reading journal so that they have a more accurate understanding of how much they are reading. This will hopefully evolve into an online forum where students can discuss and recommend books.
- Separate the middle and senior collections to make age-appropriate books easier to find, creating a separate middle college library identity. We are fortunate to be getting a library extension next year, approximately two classrooms in size, which will give us the required space to do this.
- As far as our budget will allow, purchase multiple copies of popular titles to increase availability.
- Purchase more magazine titles, as students indicated that they enjoyed reading them.

The recommendations above are currently being implemented, with the exception of separating the two collections, which will happen next year when we get our library extension.

Where to next?

At the end of the year, I will run our borrowing statistics report again to see if these changes have impacted borrowing rates. If not, we will undertake further surveys, interviews, and reviews to lead to improved reading programs.

Many factors affect student borrowing, some of which are beyond the control of the teacher librarian. However, anything that we can do to make borrowing easier and more attractive to students will benefit not only the students, but the library as well. Having access to hard data has been invaluable in informing this project, and in receiving support from key stakeholders to implement new reading programs.

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Students reading. Photo supplied by Narelle Keen.





Stephanie Ellis
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After 12 years of classroom teaching, Stephanie Ellis realised that all the fun was happening in the school library. She has now spent nearly six years in the library at Napier Boys' High School and still thinks it's the place to be. As well as being slightly addicted to learning new things, Steph loves to have adventures – whether they are in the pages of a book or in the great outdoors.

School libraries supporting literacy

Makerspaces. Innovative learning environments. Online communities. Augmented realities. Digital citizenship. In these times of rapidly changing technologies, increasing amounts of information, and often futile attempts to keep up with the latest trends in school librarianship, it is sometimes handy to be reminded that the core business of a school library is *literacy*.

A growing body of international evidence shows the significant impact that a school library can make on student achievement. However, simply having a building that is dedicated to the usual library resources is not enough; that building must be adequately staffed by librarians who can implement effective school library programs. These programs may aim to increase student knowledge of and skills in information and digital literacies, though it is important to remember that reading literacy underpins all of this. After all, despite the proliferation of digital devices in schools, our students still require the skills to function in a text-based society.

A refocus on literacy is exactly what happened at the School Library Network meeting facilitated by the National Library of New Zealand in Hawke's Bay earlier in 2016. Participants at the network meeting were asked to share an activity or strategy that they have used in their schools to promote literacy. This exercise exposed attendees to a number of new ideas, and they were issued with the challenge of implementing at least one of them before they met again.

The literacy strategies shared are all 'doable'. For the most part they do not require a significant investment of budget or time, and many allow for one of the key factors in effective library programming: teacher collaboration.



Below is a summary of the activities and strategies that were shared.

How school libraries can support literacy

Book of the week

Promote a selected book either using your library management system, or by making a quick and easy-to-change display.

Create a reading environment

This could be as simple as changing shelving to create more eye-catching arrangements, or as a long-term option, by investing in more suitable furniture to create fun reading spaces for students.

Set up book talks

Talk to classes about new books, favourite books, or books on a particular theme. Five to six books per session will work best, and these books will almost always be issued afterward.

Know your book stock and your students

It is much easier to match students to appropriate or appealing books if you have a good understanding of both. This is not a quick-fix strategy, but it is one of the most rewarding.

Use the library TV

Display book trailers, or, even better, create videos of teachers or students talking about good books they have read. This will help to create a reading community in your school, and students will see that teachers are readers, too.

Create a summer reading program

Many school libraries insist that all books are returned at the end of the year, only to lock them up for the summer break. Why? Consider letting the students borrow books over the holidays. They will love you for it.



Buy student-recommended titles

Ask students to make recommendations, especially reluctant readers. This helps give your students ownership of the library.

Host themed library nights

Invite students and their parents along to a themed night at the library where they can participate in activities. Examples include genre themes such as action or fantasy.

Build a reading tree

One primary school commissioned a Year 13 student from a local high school to design and build a wooden tree. Paper leaves were then hung from the tree when students finished reading a book. Not only was this a great display and a great way to promote reading, the students also liked to sit under it and read – just as under a real tree.

Create shelf reviews

Bookshops have some wonderful ideas to promote titles, and we should consider adopting some of their strategies. Shelf reviews don't need to be long, and can be placed right beside the relevant book so that it is easy to find.

Set up forward-facing book displays

This is another bookshop strategy that is so simple and works wonders. If you don't have enough space for forward-facing displays, you can weed your collection. Nothing is more daunting (or boring) to reluctant readers than rows and rows of spines.

Host a book quiz

... but call it something cool, like 'Battle of the Books'. Lots of kids love competition, so why not make reading a competitive sport?

Display books in classroom windows

One school runs a whole-school read aloud time after interval every day. Teachers put a book that they are going to read in their classroom window, and students can then 'shop' around for which book they would like to hear. This would be a great idea for Book

Week if you want to sample it on a smaller scale. Students get to hear different teachers read, and teachers will soon get a gauge on whether they are picking the 'right' books – or whether their read aloud skills are up to scratch.

Create a reading wall

This is an idea adapted from Donalyn Miller's *The Book Whisperer*. Use a door or a wall to show what you have read, what you are reading, and what you're thinking about reading next. The idea is to promote discussion with students and they get to see you as a reader, too. Students will love to recommend which book you should read next.

Set yourself a reading challenge

Try to be more creative than setting a numerical goal. Display your challenge for your community to see so that they can help to monitor your progress. Again, this can start lots of conversations with

students and teachers, and reminds students that even experienced readers can be challenged. Ideas for challenges include: reading a stack of books as tall as you (or a local sports hero); reading around the world; reading banned books or the classics; reading through the alphabet; or play reading bingo.

Show your community as readers

As students leave the library, take a photo of them holding the

book/s they have checked out. Display these pictures on your library's TV, and students will see themselves and others as readers. This will also provide recommendations for other students and promote discussion.

Offer 'blind dates' with books

Shield the covers of five to six books, assign a number to each, and hold book talks about them. Students can enter a draw by writing their name and the number of the book they are interested in on paper. Entries are drawn until all the books have been claimed. This adds mystery and competition to the usual book talk. It also means that students aren't able to select books based on the

book cover, and allows them to read outside their comfort zone.

What else can library staff do?

Of course, school librarians can also support literacy in the day-to-day running of their libraries. Special events or activities such as these are not the only way to champion reading and readers. By taking stock of your library's services through the eyes of your students, you can make changes to encourage even the most reluctant readers.

It could be as simple as checking that you still enjoy working with young people. Being friendly and welcoming to all students and teaching staff has a big impact on how they feel about the library and what's inside it. It could involve a bigger review of library policies and procedures, and thinking about whether the 'rules' are there to support literacy. For example, low borrowing limits and strict overdue policies discourage both keen and reluctant readers. So who are they really for?

While we still live in a text-based world, the focus of the school library should continue to be on literacy. There are numerous events and activities of varying scale and impact that you can use to promote reading literacy and the library's contribution to it. Some of the most wide reaching ideas involve staff collaboration, which can help to develop a whole-school reading culture. As well as these special displays and events, the policies, practices, and attitudes of the library can help to support student literacy. By welcoming students into the library space and removing barriers to their library use, we can encourage borrowing and help to develop positive attitudes that could extend to lifelong library use.

This article is an extension of a blog post written for A Thoughtful Spot to Rest (<https://stephellisnz.wordpress.com/2016/04/11/school-libraries-supporting-literacy>). There you will find attributions for the literacy strategies shared. Because school librarians are such a creative and collaborative bunch, if you have ideas you would like to add to ours, please leave a comment on the blog or tweet me: @StephEllisNZ. Attribution will be given.

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'In these times of rapidly changing technologies and increasing amounts of information, it is sometimes handy to be reminded that the core business of a school library is literacy.'



Pam Saunders
Head of Library
Melbourne High School

School library spotlight

In this issue of *Connections*, we introduce a new regular feature, 'School library spotlight'.

This article gives us an opportunity to interview school library staff, so we can share with our readers what is happening within school libraries in Australia and New Zealand.

Do you have any questions you'd like us to include in this section? Please email connections@esa.edu.au.

What is your job title, and what does your role entail?

My name is Pam Saunders, and I am Head of Library at Melbourne High School, which is a Years 9–12 government, selective boys school with just under 1,400 students. My role is a blend of management, including supervising the day-to-day running of the library and overseeing the strategic direction, and library promotion. The teacher librarians and I offer curriculum support and collaborate with teachers to support student learning. I am also a Year 12 Form teacher, and jointly teach a VCE subject, Extended Investigation, with MacRobertson Girls' High School.

What is the most rewarding aspect of working in a school library, and why?

Being with our students and getting to know our regulars.

At Melbourne High School, we love doing unexpected things in the library to see the students' reactions. For example, after returning from the school holidays, we realised Pokémon Go would be very popular. Although our school has a 'no games on screens' policy, we held a two-week Pokémon Go amnesty.

We created a tally board for students to record which Pokémon they had caught. The novelty of the game worked well, and we had many fun, thoughtful conversations with our students about the game and its

characters. We are trying to subtly change students' perception of the space from a traditional library to a supportive community environment. A further highlight is having a team who share ideas and work together to make the library a dynamic space.

What do you see as the most important part of the library's role in the school community?

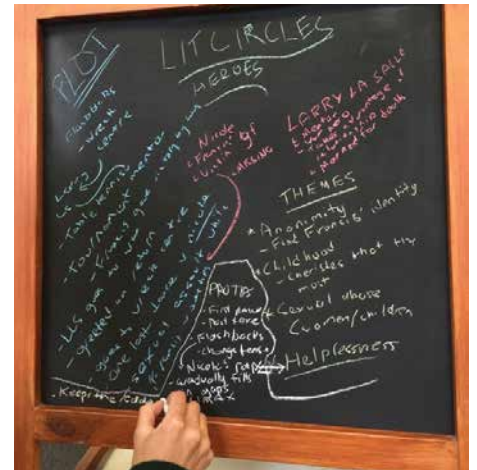
The library must be a positive space for students and teachers: a blend of the kitchen table, the study, and the lounge room. Although our decor is somewhat dated, the students gravitate to the various seating options. The space includes lounge chairs, tall tables, stools, and desks, with areas to work independently or together. It also includes a large collection of books and print material, which is promoted and easily accessible.

While it is important that the library is attractive, safe, and ordered, it is equally important that the library team members are approachable, smiling, and are skilled in the digital world. Students are encouraged to have input in the library's selection of resources, and the virtual library environment is given a high priority.

Are there any current issues facing your library? How are you working to overcome these?

There are always pressures on staffing and trying to do more with less. Building rapport and relevance can be difficult with some faculties. Finding enough space for all students and teachers who wish to visit is another issue, so we try to provide flexibility by offering as many options as possible.

We constantly review how and why we deliver services. We recently lengthened our loan period for books from two weeks to three weeks, and removed fines on books and magazines. The aim was



Students work in groups in the Literature Circles program before presenting to the class.

to give students more time to read, and this meant fewer reminders from us. This excluded high-use textbooks, but we changed the terminology from 'fine' to 'hire fee'. Weeding dated and irrelevant items gave our collection a major refreshment, which has resulted in increased loans. The print collection is becoming more recreational, whereas the electronic collections are more curriculum-focused.

After discussions about students having difficulties with organisational skills and completing assignments, we developed an afterschool program called Academic Mentoring. Students attend the program for six weeks, where they work in small groups with a teacher librarian to learn study strategies and how to set goals. This builds student relationships with teacher librarians, which provides opportunities for ongoing support. This program has proven to be so popular, there is a waiting list.

How do you promote reading and literacy in your school's library? Are there any challenges in doing so?

It is helpful that our library team are readers, and can talk about books passionately and from their own experience.

We work closely with the English faculty and have tried several programs such as the Premiers' Reading Challenge and the GoodReads challenge, but our current 'Literature Circles' program is having the most success. We work with English classes to help the students select titles. Students then read and discuss these books in groups of four, before delivering a mini-presentation to the class. The challenge was to build the literature circle collection to suit our students and staff; there is a bias toward the classics, contemporary fiction, and fantasy.

We also promote new titles by posting flyers on the back of staff toilet doors, and there is always a spike in loans after we do this. Our weekly lunchtime book club is popular with the students, and we also bring in authors for events during the year.

How do you engage with students through digital spaces?

Our social media presence has grown and is fortunately encouraged by the school principal, who is often the first

to read our posts. We use Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and a few different blogs. Our library blog includes posts written by the library staff, teaching staff, and students. Our vision is to promote happenings from the whole school, not just the library. Our followers are current and previous students, parents, and those with an interest in libraries. Each member of the team has a particular 'media' focus, so each post brings a different flavour and personality without replicating the same news.

How do you encourage students to make use of the library?

We have several clubs which operate from the library, including a writing group and a library assistant program. The latter has around 40 members who volunteer as junior librarians at least once a week. The volunteers help to spread the word about the library and what it offers. We also have activities such as chess boards, Lego, paper crafts, and a mini-makerspace with changing

activities. Our charging station for tablets and phones is also popular.

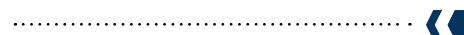
What is your favourite thing about SCIS?

We have almost completely outsourced our cataloguing to SCIS as they do a wonderful job, at a high standard. We rely on them being up to date with cataloguing changes and keeping us informed. We enjoy *Connections*, and it always generates discussion in the staff kitchen.

What would you like to see SCIS do more of?

As SCIS has an Australia-wide focus, it could consider including a job advertisement site for subscribers. SCIS experience would be a bonus!

You can find the Melbourne High School library on Instagram/Twitter: @MelbHSLibrary, and you can visit their blog at <https://melbhslibrary.wordpress.com>.



ELR School Library Survey

Encouraging the growth of Australian writing and publishing

What is ELR?

The Educational Lending Right (ELR) is an Australian cultural program administered by the Department of Communications and the Arts.

Every year SCIS manages the ELR School Library Survey on behalf of the Department.

The survey collects data to calculate the number of copies of specific titles held in Australian school libraries. These book counts are used as the basis for payments to registered Australian book creators and publishers. The payments support and assist book creators and publishers so that they can continue to produce Australian books.

Who is invited to participate in ELR?

SCIS has invited 750 schools to participate in this year's survey. Schools invited to participate have over 100 enrolments and use library systems compatible with ELR software.

How do schools participate in ELR?

Follow simple instructions to run automated survey software built into your library management system, or provide a backup file to be processed by your vendor.

Past participants report this to take only five to ten minutes to complete.



Education Services Australia

<http://www2.curriculum.edu.au/scis/elr.html>

elr@esa.edu.au

03 92 079 600 or 1800 337 405
(freecall outside Melbourne metropolitan area)



Deborah Abela
Children's Author
www.deborahabela.com

Deborah completed a teaching degree and Bachelor of Arts (Comm) before becoming the writer/producer of a national children's TV show at Network Ten. She left after seven years, and has since written *Stupendously Spectacular Spelling Bee*, and has also written over 20 novels about spies, ghosts, soccer legends, kids living in a climate-changed world. *Teresa: A New Australian* was inspired by her dad, who was born in a cave during World War II before migrating to Australia.

An inquiry-based approach to exploring Australian history

In the last few years, we have witnessed the largest movement of people since World War II, and both periods resonate with themes of fear, persecution, escape, identity, and hope. This made me think of my own family's history and how, when my father was a young boy, he left his war-ravaged home of Malta with his family for a new life in Australia. I wondered how it felt to be under siege, to have your country destroyed before your eyes, and then to leave for a new life in a country far away.

These thoughts formed the beginnings of *Teresa: A New Australian* (Scholastic 2016), a novel about a young girl's post-war migration to Australia after the devastation of World War II. I wanted the novel to not only focus on my family's story, but also on the story of the many Australians who share a similar history.

Backstory and historical context

My father was born in a cave in Malta in 1942. Lying between the battlefields of Europe and North Africa, Malta was highly prized by Hitler and remained under siege for three years, making it one of the most heavily bombed places of World War II.

After the war Malta was in ruins, and like many other Europeans, the Maltese people migrated to countries that offered the chance of a new life. They left loved ones, homes, and families behind to take a chance on an unknown future. My father, along with one million others, made the journey to Australia.

Work in Australia was plentiful, and many migrants held multiple jobs so that they could buy homes and give their children

a good education. They gave up so much to create a better future for their families.

But Australia wasn't always an easy place for them to be. The newly appointed Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell, knew that Australia needed a bigger population in order to build the nation and to defend itself in the event of another war. With only seven million people, he declared that the country needed to 'populate or perish', but the White Australia Policy meant Australia wasn't always welcoming of the new arrivals. My dad was picked on, bullied, and subjected to racial taunts — not only by other kids, but by adults and teachers, too.

When Australian officials interviewed potential new migrants, they wanted applicants who were healthy and of good character — but they also wanted those who were white. The Maltese knew this, so before their interviews, many women wore scarves to protect their skin from tanning, and ironed their hair straight so officials wouldn't assume they were from Africa.

When I was a little girl, my father told me about his time in Malta. His story of being born in a cave was always my favourite. When I learned more about the bombing raids, the caves that the Maltese built to hide from German bombings, and his journey by ship to Australia, I knew it would make a fascinating story for younger readers.

Reading *Teresa* as a study for historical inquiry

I used inquiry-based methods to learn more about my family's past, as well as the lives of Maltese who embarked on

similar journeys to Australia.

Research undertaken to create *Teresa* included:

- My own family's story
- Archival news footage, radio broadcasts and broadsheets
- Diaries and journals from the war and post-war period
- Historical non-fiction
- Aural history from members of the Maltese community
- Visiting Malta.

Personal history

My investigation began with my own family. I asked gentle, probing questions about their experience of the war and journeying to Australia, mostly as small children. I wanted to know what they experienced and remembered but also how they felt, so I could use these experiences to create my characters' lives. I was very careful to insist that if something was too painful to recall, they didn't have to tell me.

Some questions that I asked included:

- What was it like growing up in Malta? (I left this question open, so they could discuss family, neighbours, school, food, their village. I wanted the choice to be theirs.)
- What do you remember of the war in Malta, and how it affected your life and the life of those around you?
- Was it hard to make the decision to leave Malta? Was Australia your only choice?
- What was the process you went through to apply for passage to Australia?
- How were you treated when you arrived?



Primary sources

I then broadened my research to investigate primary sources, including archival news footage, radio broadcasts and newspapers from the time, and war diaries and journals from soldiers and nurses both from the war and post-war period. I found a number of organisations and their websites extremely helpful, such as the National Archives of Australia's Destination: Australia website (<https://www.destinationaustralia.gov.au/site>), which was filled with post-war migrant stories.

Trove (<http://trove.nla.gov.au>), another website developed by the National Library of Australia, is a brilliant resource to access information from sources such as books, digitised newspapers, photos, journals, and letters. This was particularly wonderful for discovering what kind of Australia migrants from the '50s faced. Not only politically, but also smaller details such as what brands of tea they drank, shoes they wore, and public transport they used. Through Trove, I found many digitised newspaper articles that not only reported on the new arrivals, but also indicated how the 'New Australians' were greeted.

I was very lucky in that during and after World War II, the world embraced new media and advances in communications. War journalism had improved greatly since World War I, which meant I was able to listen to radio broadcasts, and play newsreels of the dogfights in the skies over Malta. British Pathé (<http://www.britishpathe.com>) is a wonderful site with news footage broadcast during the war. I saw videos and images of Maltese people fleeing the bombs, hiding in the caves, and struggling to survive the onslaught of the war.

There were also diaries and websites devoted to the many people who migrated after the war, with first-hand recollections of the war and of their arrival in their newfound homes.

These sites allowed me to access a mix of not only personal views of the war, but also of how the broader media and world were reporting on and viewing this period.

Secondary sources

I read historical non-fiction to add to my growing understanding of the period. This enabled me to use historical facts

and dates to ensure the novel's timeline was accurate. I found *Fortress Malta: An Island Under Siege 1940–1943*, by historian James Holland, particularly useful. Non-fiction sources helped to add a sense of truth to the foundation of the story, but it was the personal stories that brought the novel to life.

Interviews

It was only after this initial research that I was ready to interview other members of the Maltese community who lived through this period of history. Researching Maltese history before conducting interviews felt more respectful to my interview subjects.

I approached the broader Maltese community through various associations and organisations, such as the Maltese Community Council of Victoria, Skola Maltija (Maltese Language School of NSW), and the Maltese Cultural Association of NSW. I also approached local community radio stations such as SBS radio, who had strong links to the community. After initial contact with interview subjects, I sent a list of questions so they would know what to expect in advance. This, I hoped, would put them at ease and allow them to think about their answers before we met.

The people I spoke with were incredibly generous and were often very humbled that someone wanted to tell their story. Over cake, many cups of tea, and the occasional tear, they told me stories of running from the bombings; of whole neighbourhoods being destroyed, of the dank, earthy caves; and of the *minestra* (soup) handed out by the nuns at the Victory Kitchens, which sometimes had goat meat prickled with hair. They remembered the long, rough sea crossings with bland food — but also the parties and friendships. They remembered arriving in Australia, full of hope and fear. They remembered the bullying, certainly, but what they remembered most was the peace and abundance that Australia offered.

These stories were the most valuable part in forming the characters and narrative that underpin the novel.

Additional research

Finally, I travelled to Malta, where I explored and photographed the cities, main battle sites, and caves, which allowed me to get a sense of the country, its people, and its architecture. This helped me add an authentic sense of place to the novel.

Bringing historical accounts to life

The end product of this historical inquiry is my novel *Teresa: A New Australian*. The novel begins in war-torn Malta, before Teresa and her family sail to Sydney for the promise of a brighter

future. Teresa experiences terrible hardships in Australia, facing racist taunts from strangers on the street and kids at school, but she soon learns she has a valid place in her class and in her new country. Teresa's story is a culmination of my own family's story, and the story of the Maltese community who shared this experience — both those in Malta and those who migrated to Australia.



Teresa: A New Australian is dedicated to Deborah's nanna, Teresa (pictured).

Historical fiction allows readers to consider various ethical concepts, values, and character traits of people throughout history. When I speak to children in schools about this book, I always ask about their heritage; finding a relationship between the content of books like *Teresa* and students' personal lives can be the starting point for their own historical inquiries.

Conclusion

Teresa raises questions about Australia's development as a nation, changing identity, ethics, and philosophy. It also provides an opportunity to look at how Australia dealt with migration as a nation after World War II, and encourages students to question how our country is dealing with similar issues today. It also provides a rich field to investigate the research that formed the novel and encourage children to carry out their own historical inquiry.

Image credits

Nanna Teresa. Image supplied by Deborah Abela.

The lowdown on authorities and authority files

You've probably heard the term 'authority files' used in reference to cataloguing. You might know that they have nothing to do with the long arm of the law, but that's about it. Or maybe you do know about authorities, but suspect they are something arcane best left to a secret enclave of cataloguers.

If you *do* belong to a secret enclave of cataloguers, you won't need to read this article. But if you don't, read on.

What are authorities and authority files?

An authority is also known as an authority record, and is the authorised or preferred form for a heading — most often names and subjects — in a controlled vocabulary.

An authority file is an index of all authority records of any given agency or library. SCIS provides authority files for Authority File subscribers. Beyond SCIS, other authority files exist, such as the Library of Congress Name and Subject Authority Files.

What are the benefits of authority files?

Consistency of headings

Authority files provide a more precise search. For example, some people may be known by multiple names, or by a more colloquial name or title. In the SCIS catalogue, you will find one record with the author listed as Francis Scott Fitzgerald, but this belongs to F. Scott Fitzgerald's authority record. This means catalogue users will not miss out on records with variations of names.

Enhanced search

Searching is improved by providing variations of terms and links to other authorised headings, which is known as cross-referencing. Cross-referencing includes the 'see' and 'see also' links.

These may show as related terms, and provide access to broader and narrower terms.

Since we don't all use the same words when we search, browsing authorised subject headings can help us to find what we are looking for. Say you're searching for the word *fighting* within SCIS products. When you look up the word *fighting* under subject browse, it returns eleven more specific authorised headings for SCIS, the first of which is 'Battles'.

This also works for names. The author J.K. Rowling, famous for her *Harry Potter* series, also writes crime novels as Robert Galbraith. The entries for both names show the link between the two.

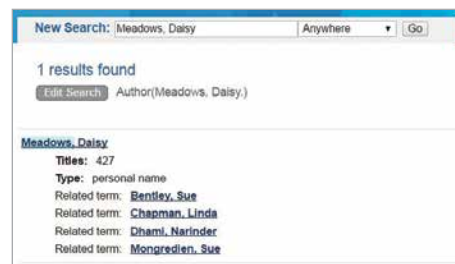
Provides additional information via scope notes

Scope notes assist users and cataloguers to know how to apply the heading. Say you are looking up information about nests. The SCIS scope note tells you to 'Use Birds AND Nests'. The benefit of this is twofold: if you are cataloguing the item, you immediately know that you need to enter two separate subject headings. If you're looking for information via subject headings, you know that you need to combine the headings.

Saves individual cataloguers time

Authority work — verifying headings and adding cross-references — has often been considered one of the more labour intensive and time consuming aspects of cataloguing.

Take the author Daisy Meadows, for example. She writes the *Rainbow Magic* fairy series and other fairy fiction. But Daisy Meadows is actually a publishing house pseudonym for four different children's authors: Sue Bentley, Linda Chapman, Narinder Dhami, and Sue Mongredien. One of the resources the Library of Congress used to establish



SCIS authority record for Daisy Meadows, showing links to various authors who write under her pseudonym.

the four-author pseudonym was a now-defunct website. But, assuming this information is not printed on her novels, how would you know that Daisy Meadows is a pseudonym in the first place? Cataloguers may need to look for additional information outside of the item itself.

For name headings that include additional information, the Library of Congress tends to have extensive source citations of where and how names are verified. It is not unusual for the Library of Congress to cite emails to authors and publishers, personal websites, and LinkedIn or Facebook accounts as consultation sources.

But can't I find everything with keyword search?

While it is true that information can be found via keyword searches, this is not as effective as having authorised headings in place. With a keyword search, you can only find the particular term/s that you are searching for, which means you could miss out on finding what you need.

Maybe you have been swayed by the TV cooking programs and can't wait to read more about cooking. If you enter the search term *cooking*, you'll find results, but you might miss out on any records that lack that particular word.



SCIS Authority Files will identify *cooking* as a non-preferred term, and return items listed with the preferred 'Cookery' subject heading.

Maybe you don't want to be as ambitious as a Michelin-starred or reality-TV chef, but do want to find some recipes. *Recipes* itself isn't an authorised term, but 'Cookery' is. *Cook books* is not an authorised term, but will again point to 'Cookery'. While keywords will work here, by looking under the 'Cookery'

heading, you can narrow your search to a more specific term. Maybe you want to cook with a blender — look under 'Cookery, Food processor'. The same can be understood for search terms that students use, such as in the fighting example above.

SCIS Authority Files

SCIS catalogue records contain SCIS-authorised name and subject headings. SCIS Authority Files enable 'See' and

'See also' references into your local library management system, to enhance resource discovery in your school.

More information can be found using the following links: http://www2.curriculum.edu.au/scis/authority_files.html and http://www2.curriculum.edu.au/scis/products_services.html.



Dr Ben Chadwick
Manager, SCIS
Education Services Australia

SCIS is more

Welcome to *Connections* 99.

Every year during September and October, SCIS sends out subscription renewals to all schools not covered by a bulk licence arrangement. If you are not on a bulk-deal arrangement and have not yet received your invoice, please ensure your administrators know it will be coming; we occasionally have unfortunate episodes where valuable subscriptions are ignored because other staff aren't aware of who we are.

This year, we introduced a welcome change for our New Zealand subscribers, with all invoices payable in New Zealand dollars into a New Zealand bank account. Please check the bank details on your invoice and email finance@esa.edu.au should you have any queries.

SCISWeb License

Every SCIS subscriber agreed to the SCISWeb Licence Agreement at the commencement of their SCIS subscription. This document outlines the SCIS terms of use. For example, all subscribers agree to keep their SCIS password confidential and to change it from the original.

As of 15 October 2016, SCIS will be renewing its licence terms. Item 15 in

the agreement has been modified: it requires that subscribers will not share certain fields in SCIS records in collective cloud-based catalogues. Item 16 is new: it specifies certain fields in SCIS records that subscribers must not alter or delete. These fields are important for identifying the record and 'stamping' its provenance as a SCIS record. This is also important, for example, in identifying records in the ELR survey.

Please read the renewed SCIS Licence Agreement (<http://bit.ly/2d27A9r>) and ensure you are familiar with the agreements you have entered into with SCIS. After 15 October 2016, we will require anyone accessing SCISWeb to acknowledge their understanding of the renewed agreement before using SCIS products and services.

Educational Lending Right (ELR) survey

Speaking of the ELR survey, it is currently in full motion. Many of you have previously participated in this valuable initiative aimed at making the creation of books a viable livelihood for Australian authors, illustrators, and publishers. If you are invited to participate this year, please take the opportunity to support book creators.

International Association for School Libraries

Rachel Elliott (Director, Metadata and Library Services at ESA) and I were fortunate enough to attend the International Association for School Libraries (IASL) conference in Tokyo in late August. It was a unique experience to mix with teacher librarians globally, and with academics concerned with advocacy and advancement of school libraries. We also mingled with some wonderful new Australian friends. At risk of 'blowing our own trumpet', we were reminded again what a special and unique treasure Australian and New Zealand school libraries have in SCIS; in no other countries are schools provided with such wholesale access to comprehensive, consistent, and quality library catalogue records.

Connections 100

Finally, I'd like to excite your anticipation of our 100th issue of *Connections*. It will be released in Term 1 2017, and promises to be a full issue, celebrating the past, present, and future of *Connections*, SCIS, and school libraries. Nicole Richardson is busy collating content, and I'm greatly looking forward to it.



Website and app reviews

Australia and the Vietnam War

<http://vietnam-war.commemoration.gov.au>

Developed by the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards NSW (BOSTES), this website offers a comprehensive range of information and resources related to Australia's role in the Vietnam War. Aspects of the conflict covered include combat, personnel, defoliation, conscription, public opinion, and the aftermath of the war.

SCIS no. 1777662

Chromebooks in the classroom

<http://www.schrockguide.net/chromebooks.html>

Noted educator Kathy Schrock provides comprehensive information for schools interested in using Chromebooks. She shares successful classroom practices, a variety of tutorials, Chromebook comparisons, and links to relevant blogs and Google Apps.

SCIS no. 1777674

Climate change is here

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/climate-change/special-issue>

This National Geographic special issue comprises three main sections: evidence that climate change is occurring, how we can attempt to fix this, and how our lives will be impacted by climate change. Students will be captivated by the stunning images, videos, and maps.

SCIS no. 1777682

Code Club Australia

<https://codeclubau.org>

Code Club is a free after school, volunteer-run coding club, where Australian students aged 9–11 can learn how to create computer games, websites, and animations. Curriculum information and training programs are also available for teachers.

SCIS no. 1777690



Nigel Paull

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The internet sites selected in *Website and app reviews* are often of a professional nature and should be initially viewed by teachers and library staff to determine suitability for students. The links, content and address of these sites are subject to change.

CSIRO is celebrating 100 years

<http://www.csiro.au/en/100YearsInnovation>

CSIRO's forerunner, the Advisory Council of Science and Industry, was established in 1916. To mark this centenary, the CSIRO is celebrating the innovations that have impacted Australia's industries, society, and environment. Website content includes history, patents, inventions, scientists, and exhibitions.

SCIS no. 1777706

Everyone can code

<http://www.apple.com/education/everyone-can-code>

Created by Apple, this website emphasises the importance of code in everyday life. Apple has developed an easy-to-use coding language called Swift, which is used in popular apps. This website includes ideas, lesson plans, presentations, and teacher guides.

SCIS no. 1777694

FoodSwitch

<https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/foodswitch/id478225318>

Students using this app can investigate the nutritional value of different food products. After scanning a product's barcode, users are shown healthier alternatives (foods with lower fat, salt, or sugar content) from the app's extensive database.

SCIS no. 1553720

Gifted and talented online

<http://gifted.tki.org.nz/For-students/Websites>

This section of New Zealand's Te Kete Ipurangi Gifted and Talented Online showcases a variety of resources suitable for primary and secondary students. There is a diverse range of content, including apps, videos, websites, and puzzles.

SCIS no. 1777713

Grammarly

<https://www.grammarly.com>

Grammarly is a step up from basic spelling and punctuation checking software. This online proofreader checks for grammar, spelling, and vocabulary errors, and provides explanations for corrections. Grammarly is free, though a premium subscription offers additional enhancements including a plagiarism detector.

SCIS no. 1777735

International Association of School Librarianship

<http://www.iasl-online.org>

The International Association of School Librarianship's mission is to 'be influential in the establishment and development of school librarianship in every country in the world'. The IASL website contains information regarding advocacy; professional development, information skills, and children's literature resources; and information about their annual conferences.

SCIS no. 1063540

International children's digital library

<http://en.childrenslibrary.org>

The International Children's Digital Library e-publishes significant historical and contemporary children's books from various cultural and language groups. Children around the world can access books in their first language, which helps them acknowledge their family heritage.

SCIS no. 1166685

Something in common

<http://somethingincommon.humanrights.gov.au>

Published by the Australian Human Rights Commission, this website is useful for young Australians interested in 'learning about, and becoming involved in, human rights'. Resources include information about current topics, how to become a human rights advocate, and where to access assistance or support.

SCIS no. 1777752



Nicole Richardson
 Communications & Projects Coordinator, SCIS
 Education Services Australia

Supporting Australian book creators

Every year, SCIS works closely with the Department of Communications and the Arts to conduct a survey of book holdings in Australian school libraries. This is the ELR School Library Survey, and it is integral to the growth of the Australian writing and publishing industry. The survey produces estimates of book holdings in Australian schools, which are then used to reimburse registered book creators for having their work freely accessible in school libraries.

We have commenced inviting 750 Australian schools to participate in this year's ELR survey. Schools are selected

randomly, and include government, Catholic, and independent schools from all states and territories. Invitations are sent either by post or by email, and include information about ELR and instructions for running the survey. We require a minimum of 300 schools to participate.

The ELR survey does not ask you to complete a questionnaire; rather, participants are asked to run an automated book count in their library management system, or to provide a backup file to be processed by their vendor. The surveys are set up with the

assistance of each participating vendor. The process should take no longer than five to ten minutes, and is a great way to help Australian book creators continue to do what they do best: make great books.

ELR is only interested in book holdings, and does not collect any lending information. Privacy is rigorously maintained, and no schools are identified in the final results.

Please keep an eye out to see if your school has been invited. We look forward to working with school libraries to support Australia's book creators and publishers.



Morris Gleitzman
 Author

One of the pleasures of my job is spending time in school libraries. I usually visit to speak to students, but if I'm lucky I can grab a few moments for myself — that's me, sitting in the corner, communing happily with a tattered, much-read copy of one of my own books.

It's not the story that brings a smile to my face, or the rather stylish way the words are strung together (thanks, editors). My pleasure comes from thinking about all the readers who have held that volume in their hands and allowed my characters into their hearts.

For some of the older copies of my books, their total number of readers is probably greater than the number of characters in the story, including passersby. It is a lovely thought; little wonder the pages are looking a bit windswept and worldly. A lot of friendships have flowed through them, and much emotion.

If my accountant was there in the library with me, he'd probably have a different view of these veteran volumes.

'A hundred and thirty-eight readers per copy', he'd mutter, 'and just the one royalty payment.'

That's when I would explain to him about a wonderful thing called Educational Lending Right (ELR): a generous but just annual stipend¹ from the public purse, to help that one royalty payment stretch a bit further.

To make writing for school library readers a practical proposition as well as a joy.

After hearing that, my accountant would be on his feet, inspecting the shelves. 'I reckon if it weren't for ELR', he'd say, 'some of these books probably wouldn't even have been written on account of the authors finding it a bit hard to type while they're working in other roles.'

I'd nod. He's a smart man, my accountant. I think it's because he used to read a lot as a kid. Library books, mostly.

¹ Estimated through an annual, national survey of a sample of school libraries. Eligible creators will receive an annual payment if their estimated book score is 50 books or more, and the payment is \$100 or more.

Connections

Connections is a quarterly journal produced by the Schools Catalogue Information Service (SCIS), a business unit of Education Services Australia. SCIS is committed to helping school library professionals keep abreast of the latest in information services and technology, as well as wider literacy and educational strategies. Current and past content is available online at www.curriculum.edu.au/scis

Submissions and advertising

Please forward inquiries to connections@esa.edu.au and include your contact details.

Disclaimer

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