

CONNECTIONS

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Two sides of children's literature: gatekeeper and creator

Drawing from the experiences of young people

The idea for my middle-grade debut novel, *All the little tricky things*, published by Text Publishing in May this year, came from a conversation with two Year 7 students. I have been a high school librarian for over eight years and throughout that time I have formed close relationships with the kids that come into my library. Sometimes I wonder if it's the nature of a library that allows students to be more open. I pride myself on it being a place where students feel safe.

During our chat, the two students began reflecting on starting high school. They were the first cohort at a brand new school, so their experiences were heightened by the focus being squarely on them. They told me starting high school had been terrifying, even without older kids to intimidate them. I asked them what their biggest worries were. 'This is going to sound ridiculous,' one of them said, 'but I was so nervous that I wouldn't remember where the toilets were.' We all giggled. The other student mentioned the stress of figuring out how to open their locker and they both said they weren't sure if they would make any friends on the first day. They admitted that, in hindsight, they were embarrassed at how scared they were, because everything worked out in the end, just like everyone said it would.

These concerns, which they could laugh about a few months later, are real for many young people, no matter how trivial they may seem. Moving from primary school to high school heralds a time of transition in students' lives, and with this comes all kinds of changes –

friendships, their bodies, the relationship with their parents, and all the glorious messiness that comes with deciding exactly who you are and forging your own path in the world. I've seen it happen for years in the schools where I work, and had similar experiences myself as a teenager. I decided to write that story: a quiet novel about a time where everything is changing, and a young person who is trying to make sense of it all.

From school librarian to children's author

For years I have been one of the so-called 'gatekeepers' of children's literature, in both my work with the Children's Book Council of Australia and as a high school librarian. This is not a responsibility that I take lightly. I also choose to see my influence on students as a positive thing, rather than something that could be restricting or damaging. School librarians are often the ones who introduce young people to literature, especially if reading isn't necessarily valued at home. Librarians have the power to put the right books into the right hands at the right time.

School library staff undertake their role in different ways; we all have our tried and tested methods for readers' advisory. One of my favourite activities to run with a class is a Genre Round Robin, where students each spend time at different library tables that are set up with books in an array of genres. Students read blurbs and first pages, and as they go along, they make notes about the books they have tried and which ones they'd consider borrowing. School librarians can also benefit from sharing our tricks with our

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Connections

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Professional learning

Term 2 Webinars



The Cataloguing Basics series

A series of four webinars that can be taken together or individually, designed to help you understand the basic principles of cataloguing that will save you time managing your school library. Whether you've never used SCIS before, or you're a seasoned user in need of a refresher, these webinars have you covered.

Understanding SCIS records

Thursday 5 May 2PM (AEST)

Learn why a high-quality catalogue record can improve the search experience in your library, and how SCIS records can save you the time it takes to produce these records by cataloguing them for you.

Dewey and book numbers in SCIS

Thursday 12 May 2PM (AEST)

In this webinar, SCIS will give you the skills to leverage the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) system to make resources easier to find in your library.

Subject headings and authorities in SCIS

Thursday 26 May 2PM (AEST)

Understand the critical role played by controlled vocabularies such as subject headings and authorities in creating a smarter library catalogue that helps students discover more resources every time they search.

MARC records in SCIS

Thursday 9 June 2PM (AEST)

Our most popular webinar covers Machine Readable Cataloguing (MARC), which underpins all the data in your library management system. In this webinar, SCIS will show you how an understanding of this data format can make managing your library easier.

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Students at Karys' school library.



The cover of Karys' new book, *All the little tricky things*.

colleagues in other schools. My friend Erin Wamala at Genazzano FCJ College recently posted on her Instagram account (@mswbooklady) a book tasting activity she ran with her classes. Her students were given time to explore several books in depth and write responses to determine if they were 'just right' for them, and why or why not.

While group activities like these are valuable, the most success I've had is with one-on-one readers' advisory. All young people have something to gain from working individually with a children's literature expert who understands what will be right for them, or has the time to figure it out. At Prahran High School, our English classes from Year 7–10 are held in the library at least once a fortnight. This gives me the chance to work with students and find the perfect book for each of them. I spend time getting to know the kids and match them with something based on their ability and interests, whether that's a particular genre, a past read, something new to challenge them, or something they want to learn about.

You always get one kid who says they hate reading. This isn't something to dismiss or be put off by; it's better to see it as a challenge. I often try to match these students with books based on what they're watching on Netflix or their hobbies. Sometimes they just want something short and easy, and that's fine! I'll give them an engaging graphic novel or even a magazine to hook them in. I always preface every recommendation by saying 'I won't be offended if you don't like this – just let me know and we'll find you something else.' I also usually give students two or three books when helping them choose

something, so they have a few options and aren't at risk of getting discouraged if the first one doesn't work. Something else that should always be considered is peer recommendations. As hard as I work, sometimes a kid is more likely to trust their classmate's or friend's suggestion, and that is perfectly acceptable. If a student asks for a fantasy recommendation and I know there's a kid in the class who is a voracious fantasy reader, I'll pair them up to let the former lead the latter in finding the perfect book, and just stay out of their way.

“Putting a book out into the world as a writer can be terrifying, maybe even more so when you know how discerning young readers are.”

What kids want from the books they read

Having spent nearly a decade matching young readers with books, I felt the pressure to get my novel right, especially the voice of my tween narrator, Bertie, and expressing what life is like for young people today. Kids are shrewd when deciding what to read. They don't like to be talked down to, they can smell writing that feels disingenuous a mile away, and they need to be hooked into

a story almost immediately. They all judge a book by its cover, even if you're not supposed to. I recommend books to students nearly every day and see this fussiness firsthand; I always try to embrace it. Not every book is right for every reader and kids should be entitled to take control of what they choose to read. Let's all encourage them to make their own decisions, and be on the sidelines ready to help when they need.

Putting a book out into the world as a writer can be terrifying, maybe even more so when you know how discerning young readers are. I have tried to write a story that is authentic to my own experiences as a tween, as well as drawing on what I see unfold in the schools where I have worked. These are my two hopes: that I have done justice to the experiences of the students who originally sparked the idea for *All the little tricky things*, and that my book will be 'just right' for at least some of the kids who discover it in their own school libraries, or have it handed to them by their passionate, intuitive school librarians.



Karys McEwen

Library Manager
Prahran High School
@karyswrites (Twitter and Instagram)

Karys McEwen is the president of the Victorian branch of the Children's Book Council of Australia. She is also a school librarian and is passionate about the role libraries and literature play in the wellbeing of young people. *All the little tricky things* is her middle-grade debut novel.

SCIS is more

Ben Chadwick shares the latest updates from SCIS. This term, we're excited to be talking to subscribers about a new automated feature that will be becoming available across the course of the next year.

Some things are fundamental to providing a library service. Of course, you need a decent collection of resources, but you also need to support students to discover it, explore it and use it to meet their interests and research needs.

Now, imagine a student came into your library and asked if you had any music by Ye. You could answer 'Not by that name, but we do have CDs he released as Kanye West'. Or you just say 'No' and smile pleasantly.

Imagine a student told you they had a project about bugs, and instead of showing them all the books you had with the subject heading 'insects', you smirk and say 'No, we don't have anything about "bugs" *per se*'.

Imagine they were researching 'disarmament' but were not happy with what they had found. You shrug your shoulders and walk away, when you could have encouraged them to explore other topics, like 'arms race', 'international relations' or 'antinuclear movement'.

You would not do any of those things, but too often that is exactly what students get when they use a library catalogue.

Catalogue records contain a number of what are referred to as controlled values: author names, subject headings and possibly series titles. But these pieces of information do not contain any context. That's where Authority Files come in.

Authority Files are a SCIS product that can be imported into your library system to provide context around authors, subjects and series titles. This crucial network of information includes see references (for instance 'Kennilworthy Whisp, see JK Rowling') and *see also* references (including broader, narrower and related topics). They provide the data that enables your system to level up its support for research and discovery. In terms of library practice, this kind of data is not secondary to the bibliographic data in your system – it is fundamental.

SCIS updates and re-releases its Authority Files twice a year. Occasionally subscribers have told us they are a bit intimidated by Authority Files. They're not sure what to do with these files or what the



files might do to their system if they import them. Rest assured they are very safe, and all major school library systems work with us to ensure the import process is safe, painless and fairly fast.

Even so, we've decided to make it even easier. So here is the big announcement: SCIS has been working with library system vendors to support automatic downloading and installation of Authority Files. SCIS Authority File subscribers will no longer have to download the files from our website and upload them into their system. It will all be done by your system talking to our system's API.

It's up to each system vendor to decide whether to use our new feature and, if they do, how they go about it. For example, solutions may involve a degree of automation but still require you to 'press the button' twice a year when we let you know the files have been updated. Talk to your system vendor if you would like to know how and when you can make the most of SCIS's

new API for downloading Authority Files.

If you're not a SCIS Authority File subscriber but would like to start providing this important service to your students, visit [our website](#) or [get in touch](#) with our friendly customer service staff. SCIS also provides plenty of professional learning to help our subscribers get the most out of our Authority Files, so keep an eye on our [professional learning](#) page.

With that big announcement out of the way I'd like to welcome you to *Connections* issue 121. I hope you enjoy it!



Dr Ben Chadwick

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Email SCIS at help@scisdata.com
SCIS website: scisdata.com
Professional learning:
scisdata.com/professional-learning

WEBSITE + APP REVIEWS

CANVA FOR EDUCATION

www.canva.com/education

Canva offers K–12 students and teachers free access to their templates for worksheets, lesson plans, reports and presentations. Also available are fonts, images and details on how to create and share assignments.

SCIS no: 5394929

EVERYDAY MATHS

education.nsw.gov.au/campaigns/mathematics/everyday-maths

Parents of K–10 students will uncover a variety of pertinent everyday mathematical concepts to explore at home with their children. Links are available for additional information for parents and carers.

SCIS no: 5394981

FREE TEACHER RESOURCES

www.lifeed.org.au/teachers-and-schools/free-teacher-resources

Developed by Life Ed, these preventative health education resources are searchable by year level, topic and curriculum. Some units relate to visits by Life Ed and others have ‘on demand’ online video availability.

SCIS no: 5395438

HEALTHY EATING GAMES AND ACTIVITIES

heas.health.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-services/curriculum-activities/healthy-eating-games-and-activities

Teachers can use the resources presented to engage students and help them to identify and undertake healthy eating habits. Activities include excursions, growing vegetables, experiments and learning about food in different cultures.

SCIS no: 5395005

HOT TOPICS

legalanswers.sl.nsw.gov.au/hot-topics

Year 12 students studying law will locate relevant material relating to recent changes and contemporary debates in the law. Issues include: human rights, the Australian legal system, elections, and domestic violence.

SCIS no: 5395027

NEW ZEALAND HISTORY

<https://nzhistory.govt.nz>

Major aspects of New Zealand’s history form the nucleus of this comprehensive and authoritative website. Students and teachers can search databases of topics, events, people and places. There are links to activities to promote class discussion and skills development, plus links to additional resources.

SCIS no: 5395044

AMSI SCHOOLS

schools.amsi.org.au

Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute (AMSI) Schools has jointly developed classroom resources and professional development opportunities for K–12 teachers. Supplementary material promotes the importance of mathematics in career choices, especially for young women.

SCIS no: 5395049

SHOULDER TO SHOULDER: FEMINISM IN AUSTRALIA

www.nla.gov.au/digital-classroom/senior-secondary/shoulder-shoulder-feminism-australia

These resources, emanating from the National Library of Australia, are aligned to the senior secondary history component of the Australian Curriculum. Specifically, they refer to the examination of ‘Women’s Movements’ in *Unit 2: Movements for Change in the 20th Century*.

SCIS no: 5395076

SOMETHING EERIE

apps.apple.com/au/app/something-eerie/id1324380907

Royal Life Saving Australia has an intriguing app for primary students to enhance their water safety proficiency. Students embark on an adventurous journey and have to use their water safety skills and decision-making abilities to solve the mystery of creatures inhabiting the town’s waterways.

SCIS no: 5395419

SYDNEY WATER: EDUCATION

www.sydneywater.com.au/education.html

Most aspects of water in the community are investigated on this website. Issues include: human rights, the Australian legal system, elections, and domestic violence.

SCIS no: 1442759

THINKING MATHEMATICALLY

sites.google.com/education.nsw.gov.au/get-mathematical/k-6-resources

Produced by the NSW Department of Education, this K–6 resource states that ‘learning in mathematics requires intentional, targeted teaching which takes place in different contexts, using various pedagogies.’ The resources are categorised into the *Targeted teaching section* or the *Contexts for practise section*.

SCIS no: 5395216



Nigel Paull
Teacher Librarian
North Coast, NSW

The websites and apps selected for review are often of a professional nature and should be initially viewed by teachers and library staff to determine suitability for students. The links and content of these sites are subject to change.

SCHOOL LIBRARY SPOTLIGHT: NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOL

A look inside Lucy White's school library in Sydney's inner west.

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

I am the teacher librarian at Newtown Public School in Sydney's inner west. It's actually the school I attended as a child, and I was so delighted to start working here back in 2018!

We are a school of 371 students from K-6. We have 15 classes this year, and I take each class for one hour of RFF (Release from Face to Face). What we're doing in our library time varies depending on the stage. We could be doing a novel study, exploring and responding to multimodal texts, undertaking guided research, creating podcasts, spotting character strengths and more. As a Cultures of Thinking school, I strive to ensure that student thinking is at the forefront of every lesson, and that students know their thinking is valued.

I co-lead our student leadership program, which is modelled on the Australian parliamentary system. Our eight ministers each lead a department, which provides opportunity for authentic student voice and participation within our school community. We even have a Department of Library, who ensure that students are actively involved in decision-making for this space.

“I am very lucky to be at a school where the library is so valued, and the collaboration with my colleagues is the other most rewarding part of my job.”

I am also part of the team leading the implementation of our whole-school wellbeing program, Grow Your Mind. I consider the socio-emotional role of the library to be significant, and I have really enjoyed seeing the impact this program has had on our students' mental health.

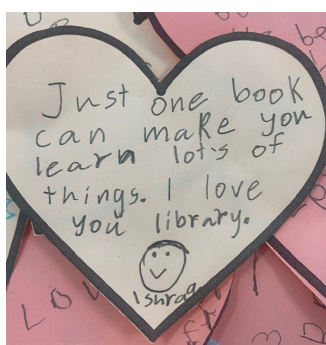


Students showing their work in Lucy's school library.

Then there are the other core elements of my role including collection development, collaboration with staff, resourcing the curriculum and keeping up-to-date with both school-wide and teacher librarian-specific professional learning.

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

When students take the time to communicate how much they appreciate the space, or even just that they enjoyed a book I recommended, it really makes my day. Libraries are such an important place for so many kids, and building that connection is a really special thing.



A Library Lovers' Day message from a student.

I am very lucky to be at a school where the library is so valued, and the collaboration with my colleagues is the other most rewarding part of my job. In particular, I love the less formal moments when a teacher recognises that you might have some further insight into a student they're puzzling over.

Working with every teacher in every stage, and knowing every student, makes the role of teacher librarian such a unique and interesting one. I love it!

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

A well-resourced school library with a qualified teacher librarian is fundamental in so many aspects of a child's learning and wellbeing. In particular, libraries play a role in developing the skills to allow students to critically engage with information as both consumers and creators.

The competencies, attitudes and behaviours around information use need to be explicitly taught before students can become fluent. I'm really looking forward to working with the new(-ish) Information Fluency Framework to help scaffold students in their journey to becoming lifelong learners.



The school library at Newtown Public School.

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

I think I speak for many teacher librarians when I say that time is the most precious commodity, and we never have enough! There are so many moving parts to this role and space that I often find myself pushing certain jobs (particularly time-consuming ones like making attractive displays) down the list.

I'm hoping to harness the power of the Department of Library to assist with this more frequently this year, which I'm hoping will add an extra sense of ownership over the library space for students. I am also so lucky to have an absolute gun of a library assistant – she's only in the library with me for a couple of hours a week, but without

her I'd be drowning in unshelved books and unfinished jobs. Thank you, Di!

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

Our staff are wonderful role models and advocates for reading for pleasure, and ensure that all students are given time every day to read. Modelling that enthusiasm for literature has a huge impact on our students, and they come to the library excited by the possibilities of what they might borrow each week.

We promote reading and literacy through our school's social media presence, the newsletter and directly to students using Yammer. Events like Book Week, the Premier's Reading Challenge, National Simultaneous Storytime, Library Lovers' Day,

book fairs and Indigenous Literacy Day are all opportunities to create a buzz around books, and the Department of Library do an amazing job in getting students excited to read.

Like any school, we have our share of reluctant readers. It can be a challenge to convince them that the library is an opportunity to find books they *will* enjoy. I find that graphic novels and a well-rounded non-fiction collection tend to be where the breakthroughs happen.

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

While our library isn't large, it's a calm and inviting space that students enjoy being in, and where they know they will feel welcome. One of our old staff created some beautiful light-up clouds that hang from the ceiling, and it adds a real sense of magic when students walk in.

At lunch times, students are encouraged to come and read, play board games, colour, draw and have a chat. During library sessions, I make time to ensure students are familiar with the library space and how to use our online catalogue to eliminate possible barriers to using the space.

At the core of what I do, I want to make sure that every child feels known, valued and cared for. Building those relationships, valuing student thinking and having high expectations of all students keeps students engaged with the library space.

What is your favourite thing about SCIS?

I love finding my copy of *Connections* in my pigeon hole! Being the only teacher librarian in the school means that I really appreciate having a point of connection to other libraries and library professionals. I consider this to be a huge component of my own professional learning.

The cataloguing work of the SCIS team is also so valuable and saves a huge amount of time.

What would you like to see SCIS do more of?

I would love to see more School Library Spotlights on primary school libraries.



Lucy White
Teacher Librarian
Newtown Public School

DIGITAL LITERACY: USING WIKIPEDIA AS A FACT-CHECKING TOOL

Is it time to start thinking about whether Wikipedia can be a useful research tool?

Mathieu O'Neil and Rachel Cunneen investigate.

Can Wikipedia be used as a legitimate source?

In November 2021 we published an article in *The Conversation* which obviously touched a nerve since it was shared by around 7,000 readers. The article, 'Students are told not to use Wikipedia for research. But it's a trustworthy source', derived from our observation that first-year university students are being held back by an outdated view of Wikipedia, which they were taught in school.

Given the usefulness of Wikipedia as both a source of information and as a media literacy teaching tool, this article was intended to change the narrative around Wikipedia. It represented the first step in a pilot project investigating the use of Wikipedia as a fact-checking resource in schools.



Research pilot in schools 2022

This pilot project started in Semester 1, 2022 with Year 4, 5, and 7 students in four classrooms at three ACT schools. Our educational resources, co-developed with school teachers, first outline traditional and crowdsourced means of generating and accessing encyclopaedic knowledge. Through engaging and interactive scenarios, we then aim to instil fact-checking 'reflexes' in students – i.e., when should you check the veracity of a claim? Thanks to structured feedback sessions with teachers and a survey held before and after the project began, we seek to find out how students reacted to these scenarios, and whether their fact-checking skills improved.

So, what should teachers know about Wikipedia?

Wikipedia started in 2001. It has matured over the past 21 years to become a trusted resource on the internet, and is the only not-for-profit platform of the most visited websites.

How does Wikipedia maintain content that meets acceptable standards for use in education, with an increasing number of third-party information services, given it can be edited by anyone?

Wikipedia has community-enforced policies on neutrality, reliability and notability. This means all information 'must be presented accurately and without bias', sources must come from a third party, and a Wikipedia article can only be created if there has been 'third-party coverage of the topic in reliable sources'.

For popular articles, Wikipedia's online community of volunteers, administrators and bots ensure edits are based on reliable citations. Popular articles are reviewed thousands of times and it's virtually impossible, for instance, for conspiracies

to remain published on Wikipedia. Some media experts argue that because of this painstaking process, a highly edited article on Wikipedia might be the most reliable source of information ever created (Bruckman, 2022). By comparison, traditional academic articles – the most common source of scientific evidence – are typically only peer-reviewed by up to three people and then never edited again.

Less frequently edited articles on Wikipedia might be less reliable than popular ones. But it's easy to find out how an article has been created and modified on Wikipedia. All modifications to an

article are archived in its 'history' page. Disputes between editors about the article's content are documented in its 'talk' page.

Wikipedia as a tool for fact-checking

Research suggests Australian children are not getting sufficient instruction in spotting fake news. Only one in five young Australians in 2020 reported having a lesson during the past year that helped them decide whether news stories could be trusted (Notley et al., 2020). At a time when it's increasingly difficult to separate truth from falsehood, Wikipedia is an accessible tool for fact-checking and fighting misinformation. Time is precious, so engaging with spurious online content, and potentially falling down misinformation rabbit holes, wastes a most valuable commodity – our attention.

Here are three ways teachers can train students to be effective fact-checkers using Wikipedia.

- Encourage students to use lateral reading when they encounter unfamiliar information. Go to the relevant Wikipedia page to check its truthfulness. If the unknown information isn't verifiable, they can discard it and move on.
- Help students to identify signs of Wikipedia articles being unreliable (such as warning banners or the lack of references). Students can also be taught to find and analyse the 'history' and 'talk' pages of an article, which provide clues about the article's reliability.

- Teach fact-checkers to make a beeline to the authoritative references at the bottom of each Wikipedia article.

In the future, we hope first-year university students enter our classrooms already understanding the value of Wikipedia. This would mean a widespread cultural shift has taken place in Australian primary and secondary schools. In a time of climate change, pandemics and war, everyone needs to be able to separate fact from fiction. Wikipedia can be part of the remedy.

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Bruckman, A. S. (2022). *Should you believe Wikipedia? Online communities and the construction of knowledge*. Cambridge University Press. doi.org/10.1017/9781108780704

Cunneen, R. & O'Neil, M. (2021). 'Students are told not to use Wikipedia for research. But it's a trustworthy source'. theconversation.com/students-are-told-not-to-use-wikipedia-for-research-but-its-a-trustworthy-source-168834

Notley, T., Dezuanni, M., Zhong, H. & Chambers, S. (2020). *News and young Australians in 2020*. apo.org.au/node/306717

Wiki in education resources

Reading Wikipedia in the classroom: Your quick guide to using Wikipedia in a way that won't make your teacher angry

Reading Wikipedia in the classroom: Teacher Guides: Using Wikipedia to foster media and information literacy skills

- [commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reading_Wikipedia_in_the_Classroom_-_Teacher%27s_Guide_Module_1_\(English\).pdf](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reading_Wikipedia_in_the_Classroom_-_Teacher%27s_Guide_Module_1_(English).pdf)
- commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reading_Wikipedia_in_the_Classroom_-_Teacher%27s_Guide_Module_2_%28English%29.pdf
- commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reading_Wikipedia_in_the_Classroom_-_Teacher%27s_Guide_Module_3_%28English%29.pdf



Mathieu O'Neil

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You can develop practical skills on Wikipedia fact-checking to use with students at a special free Wikimedia session for librarians on 17 May 2022. Visit the link to book: www.eventbrite.com.au/e/digital-literacy-teaching-students-to-fact-checktickets-301248090147



Australian Government
Civil Aviation Safety Authority

KNOW YOUR DRONE



Teach drone safety for students

Drone safety educational resources aligned to the Australian Curriculum are now available!

Explore fun and educational games, videos, worksheets, lesson plans and more.



knowyourdrone.gov.au/classroom

GRAPHIC NOVELS AND MANGA SELECTION: 101

Michael Earp from The Little Bookroom has some quick tips to help you select great graphic novels and manga for your school library.

Graphic novels and manga have been areas of exponential growth for us at The Little Bookroom. We may be the world's oldest children's bookshop, but that doesn't mean we can't move with the times! Before the pandemic hit, we had a small collection of our favourite hand-picked graphic novels as well as the harbingers of change, like Raina Telgemeier's graphic novels.

We now carry an extensive range that occupies two-thirds of the room they live in. At the time of writing, we have just shy of 1,100 individual titles in stock. Over the last year, sales have grown a further 30%. It is not (only) for my own pleasure that I order almost every graphic novel that crosses my path. We added graphic novels to our subscription services in January this year. It received the fastest response of all our subscription offers. Our readers want more. They are responding to having more choice.

I've always been excited by what the graphic novel format can offer. The pleasure of reading a picture book through the early (or late) years of life cannot be denied. So why would our desire for art with narratives fade just because we want a longer story? I will not accept that because these books have fewer words, they are somehow less valuable. The visual literacy skills they aid are bountiful. The gaps and mismatches between what's said and what's shown is a deep mine of meaning.

But we all agree we need them in our collections, which is why you're reading this!

“ I'm still learning what to stock in the shop. It's through conversations with customers, book clubbers and those engaged that I'm learning which are the hot series. ”

So, how to choose what to purchase for your library's collection?

For starters, you don't need to re-invent the wheel! You can rely on the same bestseller charts, reviews and bookseller recommendations you do for general fiction. But don't forget to bring across your regular development ethos with the following considerations.

Is it by Australian creators or published by an Australian publishing house?

Our local literary ecosystem is something we want to continue to thrive and grow. Graphic novels are hard to financially justify because of their high production costs. We heartily get behind



A picture of the graphic novels and manga section at The Little Bookroom.

any Australian endeavour to prove that there is a market and encourage more.

Does it have engaging stories and characters that reflect the diversity of society?

Readers are very keen to see themselves reflected in what they read. That might be in school dramas or sharing an identity trait while fighting aliens in space. I'm always asking myself, 'Who's missing?' Luckily, the answer to that question will lead you to what to buy next.

Is it appealing?

Talk about a subjective landmine! But the format, quality of publishing, and cover design helps lead to titles more likely to be borrowed.

Have you covered a range of emotional states?

It's not all hilarious nonsense (like *Dog Man*) for the lower end. It's not all heart-wrenching historical trauma (like *Maus*) for the older readers. Indeed, it might surprise some that it's not even all about superhero comics. Licenced ranges of comics like DC and Marvel are a tiny portion of our store's sales. (Although I'll confess, they are an enormous global market.) Ensuring you have as much levity for teens as you do identity drama for primary can balance the scales.

'But what about manga?' you ask, with a troubled look on your face. 'I don't know where to start!' Don't worry, we've all been there. My first job as a bookseller was in Sydney's Kinokuniya. I'm well aware entire bookstores could be filled with manga and barely make a dent in what's available. Do you know what gives me reassurance? Just because it exists, doesn't mean you need it all. I'm shown 1,000 to 2,000 new release titles every

month. (And that's just for 0–18-year-olds!) I do not order them all, or even consider ordering them all.

Just because something is less familiar to you, should not make it a daunting task that you ignore altogether. Manga is relatively new to me, too. But as much of a novice as I am, do you know who's an expert? Your readers. I'm still learning what to stock in the shop. It's through conversations with customers, book clubbers and those engaged that I'm learning which are the hot series. There is trial and error, as with your regular collection development.

I'll use Viz Media (a publisher) as an example to help vet the recommendations you might get from kids. Kids are always eager to push the limits of what they're permitted to read. Viz Media has a rating system that is printed on the back of all their manga. A = All Ages, T = Teen, T+ = Teen Plus, M = Mature. The way I have interpreted these ratings in a practicable manner is: A = Fair game. T = Sometimes quite violent, but often read by kids aged 10+ without much concern from them or their parents. Suitable for upper primary and all of high school. T+ = Just as violent, if not more so than T, but also with sexual content being introduced. I'd limit these to high-school-aged readers. M = Probably not ones to stock in a library for those under 18. Older readers might access them in other ways, but I don't need to be the one to put it in their hands.

All in all, yes, there's a lot to consider when buying visual texts for your library. Keep going. There is so much delight and depth

to be discovered. I wrote about the way we categorise our graphic novels in my *Schools and libraries* newsletter late last year. I got a lot of feedback that it was extremely helpful. It showed teachers, parents and even publishers how to approach the incredible, growing, amorphous mass that is graphic novels and manga. I'll finish with a short list of brilliant Australian graphic novels from the past 18 months that we, and our readers, have loved.

- *Ollie and Bea* by Renee Trembl (Year P–3)
- *Treasure in the lake* by Jason Pamment (Year 3–8)
- *Pawcasso* by Remy Lai (CBCA Notable 2022; Year 3–8)
- *Stars in their eyes* by Jessica Walton and Aśka (CBCA Notable 2022; Year 5–12)
- *Underground* by Miranda Burton (CBCA Notable 2022; Year 9–12)
- *Still alive* by Safdar Ahmed (CBCA Notable 2022; Year 9–12)



Michael Earp

Manager and Education Consultant, The Little Bookroom

With 20 years' children's and young adult specialist experience, Michael's mission is to connect readers with engaging, quality books. Michael was named 2021 ABA Bookseller of the Year and is a 2022 CBCA Older Reader judge. Their dedication to the industry is tireless.

Help students learn about storytelling



The new LanguageLift range of picture books from Putto Press, an imprint of MultiLit Pty Ltd, help children to develop key listening comprehension and story retelling skills.

Written by Australian authors, these picture books have been written to exemplify a range of typical narrative structures, as well as carefully chosen rich language features. Teachers can use the books as springboards for lessons on different language elements to support early reading and writing.

From interesting inventions to bossy ducks, these beautifully illustrated books will amuse and engage children at school or at home.



Titles are available individually and as book packs. Purchase your set today from [multilit.com](https://www.multilit.com) and The Bookshop by MultiLit at [bookshop.multilit.com](https://www.bookshop.multilit.com).

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THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

Professor Lisa Harvey-Smith is the Australian Government's Women in STEM Ambassador. She works with business, education and government to increase the participation of women and girls in STEM education and careers. An astrophysicist with 20 years' research experience, Professor Harvey-Smith presented ABC's *Stargazing Live* and regularly appears as a science media commentator. She is the author of five popular science books.

Children begin to aspire to careers in early primary school. However, their teachers often lack the confidence to explain science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) careers, and there are societal expectations about careers and gender that can put girls off STEM. This can affect children's awareness of just how far STEM can take them and foster negative perceptions, and this is often compounded at home with parents, carers and families. Yet girls growing up today will experience a future job market dominated by STEM skills like never before.

How can schools foster a greater understanding of the possibilities of working in STEM for girls, and what role can school libraries play in that education?

As part of a two-part special on primary schools and STEM, Connections spoke with astrophysicist and author Professor Lisa Harvey-Smith about how her work as Australia's Women in STEM Ambassador aims to change perceptions about the future world of working in STEM, and how school librarians can help.

Lisa, what are some of the preconceptions around working in STEM that young girls must deal with?

In our society, girls are conditioned from a very young age to be less engaged in STEM than boys. A US study found that parents of toddlers talk to boys three times as often about counting and numbers than they do to girls. Another study of family learning at the San Jose Children's Museum found that parents were three times more likely to explain science to boys than to girls while visiting interactive science exhibits in a museum.

Given that many children's toys, clothes, books and television shows also reinforce gender roles from a young age, is it any wonder that many girls struggle to see themselves as engineers, scientists, computer experts and inventors?

How big a problem is this now, and for the future?

It's a tremendous issue for our society, as well as for women individually and collectively.

The demand for STEM-qualified workers is growing one-and-a-half times faster than other fields, yet women still make up only 28% of the STEM workforce. They also receive almost \$28,000 less for full-time work in STEM than men do, and are under-represented in leadership roles.

If we don't improve the numbers of girls with STEM qualifications, we risk condemning even more women to an uncertain financial future, exacerbating existing inequities.

There is also the knock-on effect on society. In our increasingly technological world, a large amount of our technology, software, transport, systems and built environment are high-tech. If this continues to be designed and built primarily by able-bodied men, how will we achieve a society that caters to everyone? Inclusion of everyone in the tech world is crucial to ensure that our world is safe and comfortable for all.

What can primary schools do to encourage an interest in STEM careers?

The most powerful thing primary schools can do is to establish respectful relationships between children. So many problems in our society stem from disrespect and sexism. If that goes unchallenged, it turns into harassment and violence against women in workplaces and the home.

Another thing schools can do is to challenge gender stereotypes about work. By highlighting women in technical jobs like IT, engineering, technology and trades, and empowering all children to do things with their hands (building, creating), we can start to break down the stigma around women working in these areas.

“ I once saw a fantastic display of STEM books in a school library with books like *Rosie Revere, engineer*, which challenged those stereotypes about women in hands-on technical roles. ”

What role do school libraries have to play?

Showcasing STEM books, especially those with diverse protagonists is a great start. Running STEM-themed Book Week dress-ups, showcasing female role models and encouraging girls to participate in active challenges (making and doing), not just intellectual reading or writing roles, is a great step.

I once saw a fantastic display of STEM books in a school library with books like *Rosie Revere, engineer*, which challenged those stereotypes about women in hands-on technical roles. All the kids loved it. And remember, boys also need female role models; it's not just for the benefit of girls.



Professor Lisa Harvey-Smith, the Australian Government's Women in STEM Ambassador.

How does your work and the Future You program aim to address these preconceptions?

Future You is our national awareness-raising initiative for STEM careers, funded by the Commonwealth Government. It aims to engage children aged 8–12 years with diverse role models in exciting future STEM careers. The aim of Future You is to show children, their parents and teachers that STEM is for everyone.

Among the content we are developing is a series of short films – the Pathfinders – introducing awesome relatable women role models working in diverse areas of STEM, and linking their jobs to important challenges in our society. So far we've talked to a leading conservationist, a pilot, a mechanic and a digital storyteller. Lots more are planned, all of which will be available on the [Future You](#) website. These role models can help motivate kids who may not already be STEM-minded to think about how STEM fits in with their lives. We are also working with a fantastic graphic artist, Claudia Chinyere Akole, on a downloadable poster [see the poster on the back cover of this issue of *Connections*] series to accompany the Pathfinder series which can be put up in the classroom, libraries or bedroom walls, while schools will also have the opportunity to interact with the Pathfinders themselves in a series of live events.

Future You will also be drawing on STEAM content (with the A standing for Arts), including a large artistic mural called *The big picture*, which represents the important place of modern STEM industries in our world and into the future, and featuring 100+

STEM occupations. [More on this and our exclusive Future You giveaway in our next edition of *Connections*, due out in late July.] It will be accompanied by a soundscape and classroom resources, guiding children on an experiential journey through the world of STEM. We are also commissioning new STEM-related speculative fiction from leading middle-grade and young adult writers, launching creative writing and graphic art competitions, and developing a STEM challenge-based interactive game.

Any final thoughts?

By engaging with the creative and artistic elements of Future You as well as our role models, I hope that primary schools will benefit from the buzz and excitement that STEM can bring. I hope children, teachers and librarians everywhere can get involved. See you in the future!

@lisaharveysmith

@FutureYouOz

To keep up-to-date with Future You and find out how your school can get involved, join the Future You email list and social media communities at www.futureyouaustralia.com.

Don't miss our Future You giveaway competition in the next edition of *Connections*.

THE GREAT AUSSIE BOOK COUNT 2021–22

A peek behind the curtain of the Educational Lending Right (ELR) School Library Survey

We would like to thank everyone who participated in last year's ELR School Library Survey. We were thrilled to receive results from over 300 schools across the country: an outcome that is truly appreciated during another challenging year.

The ELR School Library Survey is conducted each year by Education Services Australia (ESA) on behalf of the Australian Government's Office for the Arts. This up-to-date library book count data ensures Australian creators and publishers can receive compensation for the free use of their books in school libraries through the Australian Government's ELR program. Five minutes is all it takes!

And don't let the name fool you: ELR is not your typical 'survey'. Really, it is a great Aussie book count – often automated by your library management system – of holdings available in school libraries. It's a quick and simple process that makes such a big difference to Australian book creators.

We discovered that the most commonly available titles in school libraries – that were included in the 2021 book count survey – are:

- *Macbeth* by Laura Deriu et al (SCIS no. 1291862)
- *Once* by Morris Gleitzman (SCIS no. 1226878)
- *Water* by Mark Stafford (SCIS no. 1283458)
- *Blueback* by Tim Winton (SCIS no. 1397113)
- *Jasper Jones* by Craig Silvey (SCIS no. 1456443)
- *Away* by Michael Gow (SCIS no. 438320)
- *The merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare, edited by Penny Gay (SCIS no. 841551)
- *The burnt stick* by Anthony Hill (SCIS no. 874598)
- *The simple gift* by Steven Herrick (SCIS no. 1007038)
- *Mao's last dancer* by Li Cunxin (SCIS no. 1213592)

And the most popular authors included:

- Lorraine Wilson
- Peter Sloan
- Jackie French
- Lisa Thompson
- Katy Pike
- Sharon Parsons
- Tim Winton
- Harry O'Brien
- Julie Haydon

Each year, a broad selection of primary, secondary and K–12 government, Catholic and Independent schools from across all states and territories are invited to participate in the ELR School Library Survey. In addition, government schools in the ACT, Tasmania and NSW are automatically surveyed by centrally extracting data through the SirsiDynix and Oliver 5 (Softlink) digital library vendors.

The ELR team always likes to receive feedback from participants who take part in the ELR Survey. Last year, 97% of respondents informed us that the ELR Survey was not time-consuming, and that most schools were able to complete the book count survey in less than five minutes! We also discovered that 28% of respondents had participated in ELR surveys in previous years.

From the feedback received, we learnt that 26% of those running the ELR Survey identified as library officers, 18% as teacher librarians and 16% as library technicians. Others included librarians, school administrative staff, heads of library services and IT staff: so really, anyone can take part!

Only 11% of participants told us that they required help to run the ELR survey, with most contacting ESA via email or phone, working with another staff member, or speaking to their library vendor to solve any troubles.

Overall, the feedback we received was very positive, with respondents telling us the ELR survey was quick and easy to complete, with the individual library management systems doing most of the work.

We'd like to offer big congratulations to Jane Salb at Rose Park Primary School in South Australia for completing our participant feedback survey and having her name drawn as the winner of a \$150 voucher.

ESA is always keen to hear suggestions from library staff about how the ELR book count survey can be improved. If you would like to offer any advice, please get in touch with us at: elr@esa.edu.au.

Further information about the ELR School Library Survey can be found on the [ESA](#) website. Details on how the survey supports book creators are available from the [Australian Lending Right Schemes](#) website. We also have a beautiful collection of [Great Aussie Book Count](#) printable items available for you to download and display, including a poster, flyer and colouring page.

If your school is selected to participate in the ELR School Library Survey in 2022, we do hope you'll take part and help us support Australian book creators so they can continue to do what they do best: make great books!



Michelle Harvey
ELR Project Coordinator
Education Services Australia

Australian Lending Right Schemes website:
www.arts.gov.au/funding-and-support/lending-rights

EAL/D IN SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Martin Gray and Nikki Moore investigate how school libraries are supporting EAL/D teaching.

At Singleton High School in New South Wales, Nikki Moore is an EAL/D teacher who is based in the school library. Situating Nikki in the school library has led to collaboration between the library staff and the EAL/D teacher, as well as the non-native English-speaking students who often use the library.

This natural collaboration has led the library to become a more inclusive space, according to Nikki. She says the library has become a space where students can access first language dictionaries, multicultural texts and, most importantly, specialist staff intervention for research, language skills, targeted subject areas and technological support with translation services.

This collaboration between key specialist teaching staff ensures that the students are supported every day of their schooling lives, and not just the days that the EAL/D specialist is present onsite. They are aware that they can seek advice from the librarian and learning support team related to accessing both physical and digital resources, researching across a range of search engine platforms, accessing first language resources (where available) and receive assessment assistance. The library as a space also provides them with a quiet and engaging environment within the school grounds where they can meet with other students or relax in order to improve their own wellbeing.

Examples like that of Nikki's school have led the New South Wales Department of Education to conduct a recent survey exploring the extent to which EAL/D programs and their students may be supported by school library staff. In the past, figures on the commonality of such collaborations have been hard to come by. This initial survey, which began in New South Wales but was expanded to include other states and territories, revealed that collaborations that bear resemblances to Nikki's are, in fact, reasonably common. The table on the right summarises some findings from the survey. A full report can be read on the SCIS blog.

From this survey it can be observed that 72% of schools have libraries which offer extra assistance to students from non-English speaking backgrounds. Collection support being the most common form of assistance. If these numbers are reduced to only government schools, that is 81 of 98 schools, 82%.

This shows that school libraries often play a role supporting LOTE students in a range of roles. As a general trend, the more EAL/D students a school has, the more services the library offers in a targeted manner. This may be due to economic factors e.g. more funding for EAL/D teachers, or a library targeting its own school needs.

Martin Gray

Teacher Librarian, NSW

Nikki Moore

EAL/D teacher, Singleton High School

| Statement | % of respondents who agreed |
|--|-----------------------------|
| The EAL/D teacher bases themselves in the library as an office. | 14 (12.3%) |
| The EAL/D teacher carries out all lessons in the library. | 7 (6.1%) |
| The EAL/D teacher carries out some lessons in the library. | 39 (34.2%) |
| The EAL/D teacher is able to request field relevant additions to the collection. | 52 (45.6%) |
| The EAL/D students are encouraged to use the library in break or study periods (for study). | 38 (33.3%) |
| The EAL/D students are encouraged to use the library in break or study periods (for wellbeing). | 40 (35.1%) |
| The EAL/D students voluntarily use the library in break or study periods (for study). | 45 (39.5%) |
| The EAL/D students voluntarily use the library in break or study periods (for wellbeing). | 51 (44.7%) |
| The library has a collection of reference books specific for the language learning of the students, e.g. bilingual dictionaries, language learner textbooks. | 49 (43%) |
| The library has a collection of general literature representative of the EAL/D students' cultures, e.g. cooking books, literature by home nation authors. | 59 (51.8%) |
| The librarian assists the EAL/D teacher in choosing appropriate texts for targeted work in English classes. | 36 (31.6%) |
| The library has an after-hours homework centre with extra support for EAL/D students. | 14 (12.3%) |
| My school has no EAL/D students. | 12 (10.5%) |
| My school has EAL/D students, but the library does not support them in a way different to native speakers. | 20 (17.5%) |

Use SCIS to develop your EAL/D Collection


To encourage librarians to keep developing their EAL/D resources, SCIS has produced a short video detailing how to search for resources you might add to your library collection. [Watch the video.](#)



FUTURE
you
PATHFINDERS


An Australian Government Initiative

Women in STEM
Ambassador



The illustration depicts a woman with long brown hair, wearing a grey t-shirt with a green planet and rings design, looking upwards with a sense of wonder. In the background, a large, pink, lattice-structured space telescope is visible against a dark blue space filled with stars and green nebulae. The woman is standing on a red surface, possibly a carpet.

LISA

stargazer

futureyouaustralia.com