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Softlink

Australian School Library Survey 2012

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Findings from *Softlink's 2012 Australian School Library Survey* into school library budgets, staffing, and literacy levels in Australian school libraries.

Executive Summary

Softlink is a global supplier of leading knowledge, content and library management solutions (including ebooks) to schools, academic, public and special libraries and knowledge centres.

More than 50% of Australian school libraries use Softlink's knowledge, content and library management solutions such as Oliver and Oliver Junior (OliverJnr).

In April 2012, Softlink conducted the third annual Australian School Library Survey. This paper outlines the findings from the *2012 Softlink School Library Survey* into Australian school library budgets, qualified staffing levels and NAPLAN literacy results.

Principal findings from the 2012 Softlink Australian School Library Survey include:

- There is a positive relationship between well-resourced libraries and higher student literacy outcomes
- School library resourcing is inconsistent across school type (primary, secondary, P-12) and education provider (Government, Catholic, Independent)
- The majority of school libraries had no change in budgets in the past 12 months
- Very few school libraries received additional resources for implementing the National Curriculum
- Staffing levels remained unchanged for the majority of school libraries during the past 12 months
- There is a strong intention to purchase eBooks in the coming year
- Mobile technology (iPod, iPad, smart phone and tablet) use by students is widespread across all school types and education providers and is having a greater impact on the role of the school library
- Access to resources outside of the library is considered important by 75% of teacher librarians
- 80% of all teacher librarians understand the need to integrate with their Learning Management System but only 43% have done so
- Teacher Librarians see opportunities to remain relevant and current to staff and students through embracing eBooks and mobile technology
- Challenges continue to be: gaining funding, finding a balance between the physical and digital collection, collaboration with teaching staff and the recognition of Teacher Librarian's skills and their evolving role

The outcomes from the 2012 survey again show the correlation between school library budgets and literacy levels. This link between funding and literacy is an issue facing schools and their libraries worldwide.

The 2008 “School Libraries Work” report on school libraries in the United States concludes that well-resourced school libraries are linked to student achievement. The summary states:

A substantial body of research since 1990 shows a positive relationship between school libraries and student achievement. The research studies show that school libraries can have a positive impact on student achievement - whether such achievement is measured in terms of reading scores, literacy, or learning more generally. A school library program that is adequately staffed, resourced, and funded can lead to higher student achievement regardless of the socioeconomic or educational levels of the community.

A 2010 study in the United Kingdom undertaken by the National Literacy Trust also found a strong relationship between reading attainment and school library use.

In conclusion, school libraries are thriving centres of learning both in the physical library space and in the virtual classroom and teacher librarians enrich school teaching and learning programs through their specialist role.

Softlink’s research continues to indicate the positive relationship between well-funded and staffed school libraries and student achievement. These results are validated by the 2010 and 2011 results.

The report findings support a relationship between budget, staffing and student achievement. The findings indicate that literacy levels are higher for those schools that support and invest in their school libraries and record variances of resource allocation across all schools.

Continued investment in school libraries is integral to delivering the Australian curriculum as a world-class curriculum. With the focus on creating a teaching and learning environment for the 21st Century learner, the roles of teacher librarians continues to evolve.

The Australian School Survey highlights the correlation between funding and student achievement. With funding decisions devolved to each Principal and school community decision makers, advocacy at the school community level must continue.

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1.0 Introduction

Softlink is a global supplier of leading knowledge, content and library management solutions (including ebooks) to schools, academic, public and special libraries.

More than 50% of Australian school libraries use Softlink's knowledge, content and library management solutions such as Oliver and Oliver Junior (OliverJnr).

Since 2010, Softlink has undertaken the Australian School Library Survey in an aim to identify industry issues and trends and support the growth of ongoing industry development. Softlink is proud to support school libraries and teacher librarians across Australia with current information regarding funding, staffing, evolving roles, delivery of digital resources and visions for the future.

In this year, the National Year of Reading, Softlink is happy to help shine the spotlight on libraries around Australia and to promote and celebrate the importance of school libraries in the lives of young Australians.

1.1 About Softlink

Softlink is an Australian-based supplier of leading knowledge, content and library management systems (LMS) to schools, academic, public and special libraries world-wide.

Established in 1983, Softlink is an Australian company with global influence, encompassing 108 countries, and more than 10,000 clients. Softlink's head office is based in Brisbane, Queensland, with international offices in Oxford (UK), Seattle (USA), and Auckland (NZ).

Softlink products (Oliver and OliverJnr) integrate with virtual learning environments and school administration systems and since 2011, Softlink has delivered eBooks and digital media through OverDrive.

With a long partnership with the library and information industry, Softlink understand the 21st Century learning and teaching environment presents challenges and opportunities for school libraries across Australia.

1.2 The purpose of the survey

In 2010, the Australian Federal Government requested submissions to the 'Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools'. Softlink undertook a survey of Australian school libraries to provide data for an informed response to the Inquiry.

Since then, Softlink has continued to survey Australian schools annually in an effort to understand the issues facing Australia's school libraries and report on the findings. Continuing the annual survey builds a critical reference point for understanding changes, impacts and trends over time. The results provide a solid basis for advocacy for school libraries.

1.2.1 Survey Scope

The 2012 *Softlink School Library Survey* was conducted online. Invitations were sent out to all Australian school libraries and consisted of 31 questions that covered the following topics:

- General School details
- Budget and staffing
- eBooks and accessibility
- Emerging issues – National Curriculum and Learning Management Systems
- Federal Government funding
- Viewpoints on opportunities and challenges for next 12 month period

1.2.2 Respondents

This year we received responses from nearly more than 600 Australian schools. The table below shows the breakdown of survey respondents by Education Provider and School Type.

Table 1. Survey respondents by school type and education provider

Type of School	Education Provider			TOTAL
	Catholic	Government	Independent	
Primary	57	217	18	292
Primary & Secondary	12	39	100	151
Secondary	58	122	14	194
TOTAL	127	378	132	637

2.0 Survey Findings Summary

Each of the annual Australian School Surveys conducted in 2010, 2011 and 2012 have revealed a positive correlation between higher NAPLAN literacy scores and two key library resourcing indicators. These include:

- There was a significant positive correlation between the annual school library budget and NAPLAN Reading Literacy results for the school;
- There was a significant positive correlation between the number of school librarians employed in the school library and NAPLAN Reading Literacy results for the school; and
- Both the budget and librarian correlations strengthen as students progressed from Grade 3 through to Grade 9.

As with previous years analysis, it was determined that the median budget was the most suitable measure for comparing the school library budgets, instead of using the average mean. This is due to the large variance between the schools surveyed; some schools have budgets which are much larger than other schools, which result in a higher mean. For example some Primary schools in the 0-199 student size category reported an annual budget of \$400 and others of \$10,000. For P-12 schools in the 800-1099 student size category the annual budget sizes ranged from \$5,000 to \$100,000.

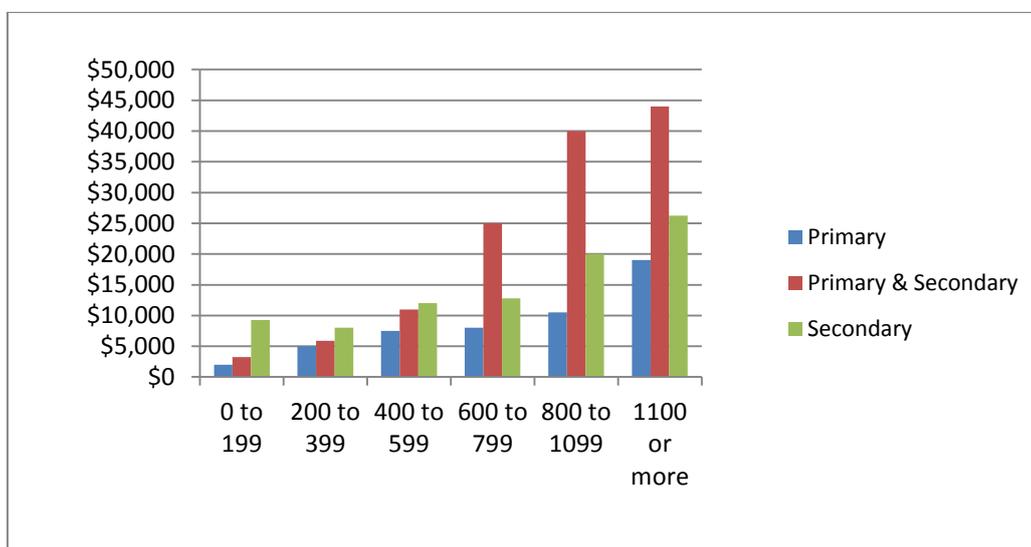
School libraries are thriving centres of learning both in the physical library space and in the virtual classroom and teacher librarians enrich school teaching and learning programs through their specialist role.

Our research continues to indicate the positive relationship between well-funded and staffed school libraries and student achievement.

2.1 Allocation of School Budgets in Australia

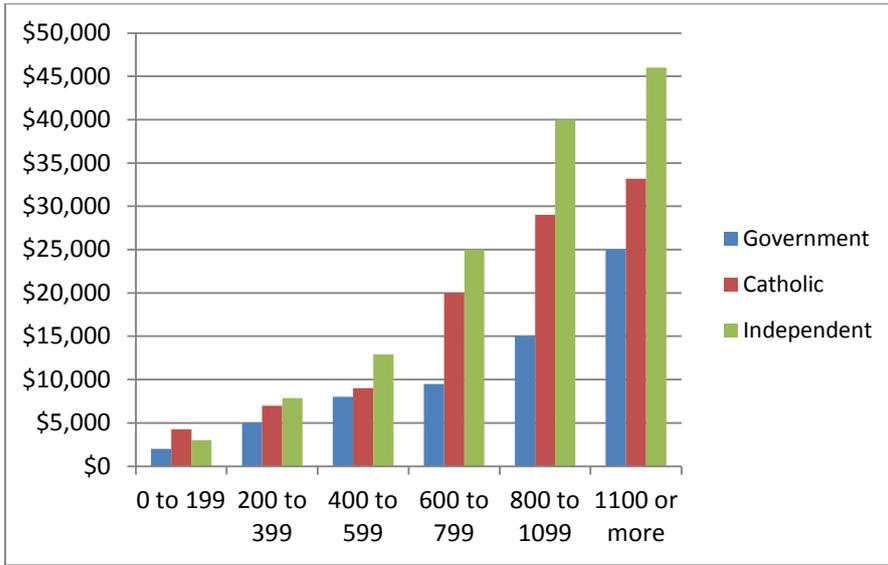
The below tables, Table 2 and 3, show the breakdown of school library budgets by School Type and Education Provider. Primary Schools continue to receive significantly less funding than Secondary and P-12 schools. Even where student numbers are the same Primary schools receive significantly less funding than Secondary schools. P-12 schools reported very high budgets in comparison to the other school types for schools with 600 or more students.

Table 2: Median School Library Budget by School Type in Australia 2012



Independent school libraries reported higher annual budgets than Government or Catholic schools. Government school libraries continue to receive the lowest amount of annual budget allocations. For example in the 600-799 school size category and the 800-1099 school size category Government schools received approximately 60% less funding than Independent schools

Table 3: Median School Library Budget by Education Provider in Australia 2012



Key Finding: Funding is varied across school type (primary, secondary, P-12) and education provider (Government, Catholic and Independent).

2.2 Change in Library Budgets

Overall the survey found that the majority of school library budgets remained unchanged during the past 12 months. The results in Table 4 below show the breakdown for School Type for the question “How has the budget in 2012 differed from the previous year”. Secondary schools had the largest budget decrease with 34% of schools experiencing a drop in funding. P-12 Schools had the largest increase with 26% receiving more funds than the previous year. These results reinforce the findings of our 2010 and 2011 surveys and it can be concluded that teacher librarians are continuing to do more with less.

Table 4: Changes in School Library Budgets by Type

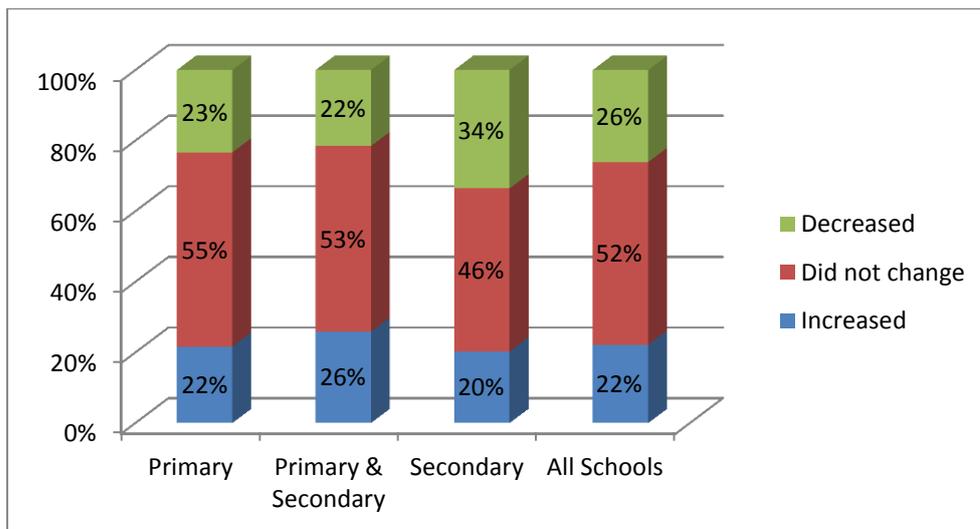
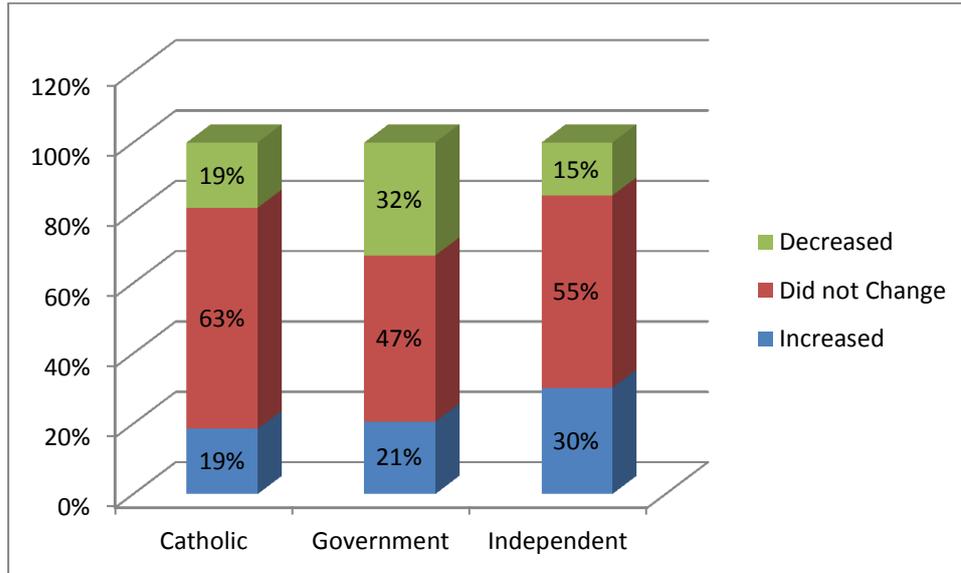


Table 5 shows the breakdowns for changes in school library budgets by Education Provider. It is evident that more Government school libraries had budget decreases than Catholic or Independent school libraries. More Independent school libraries (30%) received an increase in budgets during the past 12 months. Catholic school library budgets have remained steady with 63% reporting no change in the past 12 months. In terms of Federal Funding, 80% of the school libraries surveyed had not been awarded any Federal Government funding in the last 2 years.

Table 5: Changes in School Library Budgets by Education Provider

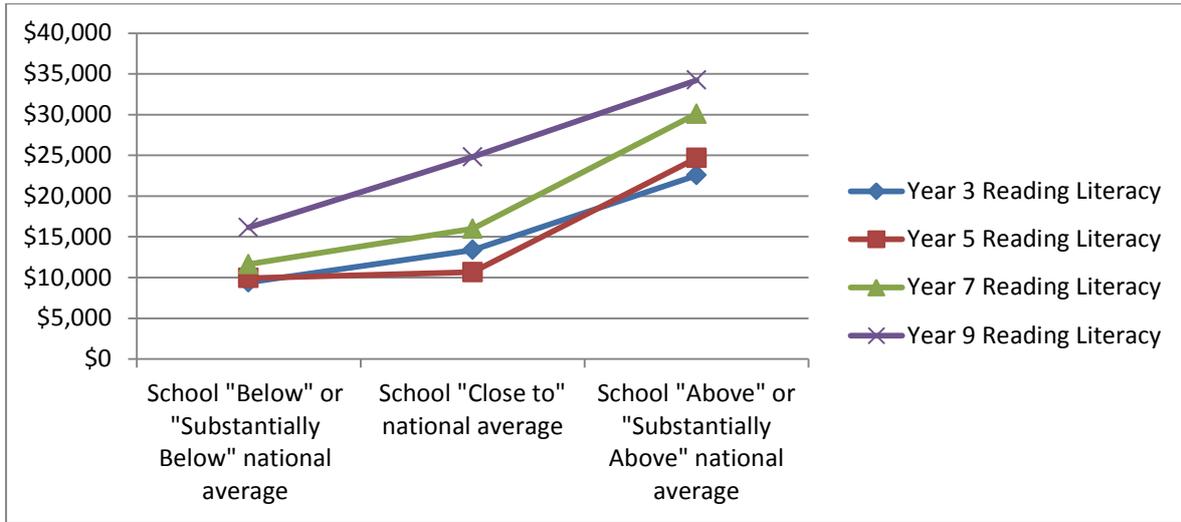


Key Finding: The majority of school libraries had no change in budgets during the past 12 months and had not been awarded Federal Government funding in the past two years.

2.3 Australian School Library Budgets and Literacy Levels

The survey results show a correlation between school library budgets and literacy levels. Table 6 below compares the NAPLAN reading literacy levels published on the *My School* website and the average annual library budget allocation to these schools. School libraries with lower funding achieve lower than the national average reading literacy scores. Those school libraries that receive higher funding show higher than the national average reading literacy scores. This finding reinforces the outcomes of the 2010 and 2011 surveys.

Table 6: Comparison of Reading Literacy Results for each Year Group with Average School Library Budget, Australia 2012



2.4 Library Budgets and NAPLAN results (2010, 2011 and 2012)

The table below shows the correlations between Australian school library budgets according to the survey respondents and NAPLAN Reading Literacy results obtained from the *My Schools* website for 2010, 2011 and 2012.

Table 7: Correlation of Literacy results with Australian School Library Budgets over past 3 years

Calculated Correlation	Library Budgets		
	2010	2011	2012
Year 3 Reading	0.26	0.27	0.32
Year 5 Reading	0.30	0.26	0.36
Year 7 Reading	0.30	0.36	0.38
Year 9 Reading	0.34	0.37	0.35

2.5 School Library Staffing Levels

The FTE staffing at the majority of schools remains unchanged with 69% of all schools surveyed stating that there had been no change in staff during the past 12 months. 22% of schools responded with a staff decrease while the remaining 9% experienced an increase in staffing levels. P-12 schools had the highest number of FTE staff with an average of 3.28 per school library. The average for secondary school libraries was 2.52 FTE staff and for primary school libraries 1.25 FTE staff.

Key Finding: Staffing levels remained unchanged for the majority of school libraries over the past 12 months.

2.6 Qualified School Library Staff and NAPLAN Results (2010, 2011 and 2012)

The table below shows the correlations between Australian school library staff according to the survey respondents and NAPLAN literacy results obtained from the *My Schools* website for 2010, 2011, and 2012.

Table 8 below shows the correlation of literacy results with the number of school library staff in Australian School Libraries.

Table 8: Correlation of literacy results with the number of school library staff in Australian School Libraries

Calculated Correlation	No. of School Library Staff Employed		
	2010	2011	2012
Year 3 Reading	0.22	0.21	0.33
Year 5 Reading	0.24	0.23	0.34
Year 7 Reading	0.31	0.28	0.38
Year 9 Reading	0.34	0.38	0.35

3.0 Findings for Future Directions

As part of the survey respondents were asked to comment on future trends and impacts. Listed below are the results of the key findings for future directions.

3.1 eBooks

A quarter of schools have purchased eBooks in the past year. eBooks are considered as an essential addition to the physical collections (as opposed to a replacement of the physical collection) with the majority of school libraries having eBooks as 1-2% of their entire collection. Certainly, there is an intention by school libraries to continue to extend their collections and services with digital titles. More than 50% of teacher librarians believe they will “definitely” or “most probably” purchase more in the next 12 months. Survey responses in general point to school librarians acknowledging eBook provision as tool for engaging 21st Century learners.

Key Finding: There is an intention to purchase eBooks over the next year.

3.2 Mobile devices

The survey results reflect the trend in society of personal mobile device ownership. Nearly 40% of teacher librarians say half and more of their student population own personal mobile devices (iPod, iPad, smart phone or other tablet). It is notable that nearly 20% of schools have more than 75% of their students equipped with these devices. Half of all primary schools surveyed now have more than 25% of their students accessing personal mobile devices.

Key Finding: Mobile technology (iPod, iPad, smart phone and tablet) use by students is widespread across all school types and education providers.

3.3 Digital resource access

There could be more room for schools to provide access to library resources from outside the library. Nearly a third of the respondents do not currently provide this access. In general the responses indicate that 75% of teacher librarians think providing this access to the catalogue, eBooks and electronic resources to a mobile device and outside school hours is important. With the increased students personal mobile device ownership and school-based technology programs such as laptops for particular year levels or using iPads/tablets and technology in the classroom we assume that over 2012/13 teacher librarians will face strong demands to provide access to digital resources outside of the library on these devices.

Key Finding: Access to resources outside of the library is considered important by 75% of teacher librarians.

3.4 National Curriculum

50% of respondents did not receive a budget increase to support the National Curriculum but it was needed. 43% of respondents did not receive staffing increases to support the National Curriculum but they were needed. There were very few libraries that received the extra support in terms of budget and staffing. Only 5% received a budget increase that they considered adequate. And 1% received a staffing increase that was considered adequate. Many teacher librarians stated that the biggest concerns with the introduction of the National Curriculum were with collection development to support teaching and learning resources, in particular, enhancing their Aboriginal and Asian resources. Respondents believe that the flow on effects of consulting, sourcing, purchasing and processing new resources was causing additional time and budgetary pressures.

Key Finding: Very few school libraries received additional resources for implementing the National Curriculum.

3.5 Integration with Learning Management Systems

A third of schools have introduced a new learning management system in the past two years. Nearly 80% believe that the new learning system should be integrated with the school library system. However in reality only 43% of schools surveyed have this integration. Many teacher librarians articulated the benefits of online visibility and accessibility for the library's resources as advantages for integrating learning management systems. The responses from those teacher librarians who responded positively to the question "How has the introduction of the new learning management system impacted your school's library?" highlighted:

- More collaboration between the library and teachers
- More integration of School online resources
- Increased use of the Library by providing more online access points
- A broadening of the teacher librarian's role

Key Finding: 80% of all teacher librarians understand the need to integrate with their Learning Management System but in reality only 43% have done so.

3.6 Opportunities for 2012/13

There are two recurring themes in the feedback regarding “what do you think are the greatest opportunities for your school’s library in 2012”. With 2012 being the National Year of Reading, there were many comments regarding not only promoting this year long event but also promoting and encouraging reading. The other main theme is teacher librarians ensuring that their libraries remain relevant and current to their students and staff. Delivering the library online with eBooks and electronic resources that can be accessed on mobile devices was seen as the best approach. Many described their vision of the library as the “hub” of their school community.

Key Findings: Teacher Librarians see opportunities to remain relevant and current to staff and students through embracing eBooks and mobile technology. Acknowledgement of the central role the school library and teacher librarian play in teaching and learning outcomes.

3.7 Challenges for 2012/13

The responses regarding the greatest challenges facing school libraries in the next 12 months can be summarised into four points:

1. Funding – a well-resourced school library is better equipped to enhance teaching and learning outcomes.
2. Finding the balance between online delivery and the continuing importance of the physical collection. And consequently developing savvy and critical information consumers/users.
3. Supporting and collaborating with teaching staff to provide high quality teaching and learning programs.
4. Teacher librarians being seen as valuable and being recognised for their skills, expertise, creativity and knowledge.

4.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings from the *2012 Softlink School Library Survey* are validated by the 2010 and 2011 results.

The report findings support a relationship between budget, staffing and student achievement. The findings indicate that literacy levels are higher for those schools that support and invest in their school libraries and record variances of resource allocation across all schools.

Continued investment in school libraries is integral to delivering the Australian curriculum as a world-class curriculum. With the focus on creating a teaching and learning environment for the 21st Century learner, the roles of teacher librarians continues to evolve.

The Australian School Survey highlights the correlation between funding and student achievement. With funding decisions devolved to each Principal and school community decision makers, advocacy at the school community level must continue.