



New “Chapter” for Book Week

As education ministers, unions, principals and teachers engage in crisis talks to stem the flow of burnt out teachers, there is a powerful, but often overlooked, solution that will reduce teachers’ workload and increase student learning: a strong school library. Teacher librarians support classroom teachers to develop high quality lessons by finding the perfect resources for their students and helping teachers develop and team-teach rich research assignments. Students learn more, and teachers’ stress is reduced.

So, why isn’t school library staffing at the forefront of these discussions? Much of the work in a school library happens behind the scenes or with small groups of teachers and students.¹ That is why the new Australian School Library Day will shine a light on that important, but ‘hidden’, work.

Recent research² reveals that aside from socio-economic status, the strongest predictor of 10-year olds’ reading ability is a well-resourced school library. Significantly, we also know that having a qualified teacher librarian will keep students’ reading scores high even in the face of other staffing losses.³

“The problem is that after decades of school library staffing cuts, many teachers and even principals around the country have never experienced what a strong school library can and should be like,” says Holly Godfree, coordinator of the national *Students Need School Libraries* campaign. A 2019 ACER staffing census in South Australia⁴ exposed that less than a quarter of all schools employ a teacher librarian.

A teacher librarian is a qualified classroom teacher and a qualified librarian. They are specialists in digital literacy - including how to quickly find and evaluate good quality information - promoting a culture of reading, and creating an inviting space for students who might be struggling.

“Students thrive at schools with strong school libraries. They are excited about reading and writing, curious about learning and confident that they have a safety net when things get tricky,” Godfree says.

“Book Week is a time when communities are naturally focusing on their school libraries to celebrate the best Australian children’s literature as determined by the Children’s Book Council of Australia. Marking Australian School Library Day on the Wednesday of Book

¹ Merga, M. (2022). Challenges to Visibility and Advocacy for School Libraries and Staff. *School libraries supporting literacy and wellbeing*. Facet.

² Lau, C., Lee, S., McQuillan, J., & Krashen, S. (2021). Predictors of reading ability among ten-year olds: Poverty (negative), school libraries (positive), instruction (zero), early literacy (zero). *Language Magazine*, 20(10), 20-21.

³ Lance, K., & Hofschire, L. (2011). Something to Shout About: New research shows that more librarians means higher reading scores. *Library journal*.

⁴ Dix, K., Felgate, R., Ahmed, S., Carslake, T., & Sniedze-Gregory, S. (2020). *School libraries in South Australia 2019 Census*. Australian Council for Educational Research.

Week lets the community 'peek behind the curtain' to see the full suite of what a school library actually does.”

The first, annual Australian School Library Day will be celebrated on Wednesday, 24 August 2022.

END

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For More Info: <https://studentsneedschoollibraries.org.au/asld/>

A high resolution copy of this image can be emailed upon request.



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