

# Leadership, Advocacy, and Collegiality

*By Di Ruffles*

## Snapshot

Di Ruffles, SLAV President, discusses our association during the pandemic and champions our mission of leadership, advocacy and collegiality in what is our 60th anniversary year.

Dear Colleagues,

What an extraordinary six months in our personal and professional lives! I think we have all reinvented ourselves in various ways during this time and thought very carefully about how to best deliver our library services in our schools.

Clearly it has been crucial that our eplatforms have been well established and fully integrated into our schools' learning programs.

Our Association has also felt the impact of the pandemic in many ways, particularly in terms of the rescheduling of the professional learning activities to the second half of 2020 but it has never been more important to adhere to the tenets of our Association expressed in our Mission Statement:

- Leadership
- Advocacy
- Collegiality

Dr Susan La Marca, our Executive Officer, has implemented several new initiatives to provide leadership in our profession at this time. In particular, the [SLAV Global2 blog](#) has provided welcome advice on dealing with school library issues, in particular, online resources and safe practices, during the pandemic. [The Discussion forums](#) that have been created also provide a further point of contact and leadership advice for the profession.

The pandemic has also brought many challenges and changes to our operations and practices in the Secretariat. Increasingly, more of our meetings such as SLAV Committee of Management and SLAV Council have moved to online platforms and for the first time in our 60-year history, our Annual General Meeting was also conducted completely via videoconference in a simultaneous online environment. Although in the past we have often had some of our country colleagues attending our meetings via online platforms, we have always preferred the face-to-face meeting over the online platform but our experiences over the last few months would suggest that we should make more use in the future of the online platforms and not privilege one mode over the other.

Videoconferencing has been utilised further at the most important grass roots level of our Association to build collegiality by the conduct of our Branch Meetings online. Interestingly, many members who have rarely had the opportunity to attend Branch meetings before have enjoyed the opportunity to connect in this way and share and exchange strategies on how they were delivering library services in the time of COVID-19.

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Never has it been more important to connect than at this time and various structures within our Association are enabling our members to do this. A further initiative in building collegiality at this time has been new online [SLAV Book Club](#). The Book Club has been well subscribed with already 65 members. The online book club serves to focus on books for young people around a featured topic

but also provides an opportunity for participants to share recent adult reading. Please contact our Executive Officer, Dr Susan La Marca if you would like to participate.

For further advocacy of our profession, our Executive Officer has constructed a survey to obtain data on your experience in school libraries during the pandemic. As you aware, data is the new currency so we think it is very important to capture this snapshot of our school libraries in the time of COVID-19. This is the [link to this survey](#) please complete it to further build the evidence base and add to our understanding of how school libraries responded to the pandemic so we can 'mine the gold.'

The last few months have changed many of our practices both in our professional and personal lives. A strength of our profession has been our resilience and adaptability in delivering our school library programs in the midst of a pandemic. School Library professionals are to be commended on demonstrating their flexibility and creativity in providing high quality programs to their school communities even in a virtual environment.

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We look forward to seeing you at the professional learning activities and Branch Meetings scheduled for the second half of the year!

*Di Ruffles is the President of the School Library Association of Victoria and co-convenor of the Central Branch of the Association. Di is also Director of Library Services in The Nigel Peck Centre for Learning and Leadership at Melbourne Grammar School.*