

Reviews

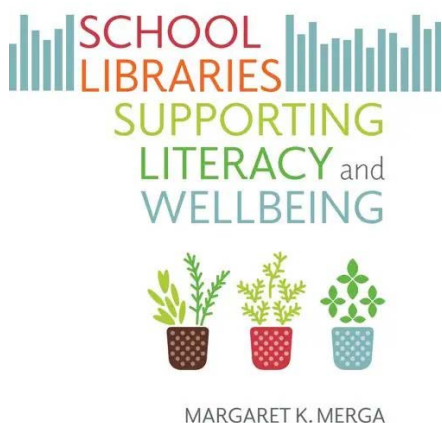
School Libraries Supporting Literacy and Wellbeing

Merga, M. K. (2022). *School Libraries Supporting Literacy and Wellbeing*. London: Facet Publishing.

ISBN: ISBN 9781783305872 (epub)



Reviewed by Margaret Simkin, Head of Library at The Hamilton and Alexandra College.



Much has been written in recent years on the key subjects of literacy and wellbeing. Margaret Merga's latest book effectively combines both. This detailed and well referenced title analyses concepts that staff working in school libraries intrinsically know but may not have had time or energy to process. The work is supported by a great list of tables all assembled under helpful headings covering more than 20 pages and including relevant Library related acronyms with their complete names. Data has been drawn from many countries which enriches the conclusions reached. For anyone preparing documentation or looking to enhance practices in their school library there is much to gain.

Merga includes many tables, which are very useful especially for those preparing documentation for their roles in their Library but also or looking to improve staffing or their own understanding of roles.

There are many resonating statements, here are some of the most pertinent for professionals in an area of education that is often undervalued or understaffed: "When you walk into a school library, you immediately feel that you are entering a special space with affordances that are unique to it" (Merga, 2022, p. 29). The potential sanctuary of such spaces is being supported in many schools.

Merga acknowledges that "contemporary school libraries are a place for everybody, but they need to be resourced and supported to be able to act as a refuge for students. They are exciting and dynamic environments that are constantly changing in order to be responsive to evolving demands within and beyond the school community, often catering to increasingly diverse client needs with limited resources" (Merga, 2022, p. 31).

Chapters 1 and 7 discuss the professionalisation of school libraries, not only In Australia but across the globe. The underfunding is impacting many countries (Merga, 2022, p. 296).

She also warns us of "the risk is that library professionals may fail to be sufficiently self protective and continue to accept new facets to their role, which could potentially lead to burnout and

redirection away from other valuable facets of the role. It is no surprise that burnout is a common phenomenon within libraries” (Merga, 2022, p. 134).

This is an empowering book for school library professionals, particularly through its linking of reading, literacy and wellbeing. Highly recommended.

Playing Games in the School Library: Developing Game-based Lessons and Using Gamification Concepts

Pavey, Sarah (2021). *Playing Games in the School Library: Developing Game-based Lessons and Using Gamification Concepts*. London, Facet Publishing



ISBN: 9781783305339 (PBk)

9781783305360 (eBk)

Reviewed by Nell Day, Teacher Librarian, University High School

In recent years there seems to have been an increasing amount of discussion around gamification and game-based learning in the school context. The school library provides many great opportunities to explore and apply these ideas across a range of curriculum areas as well as for the promotion of library services beyond the classroom. Sarah Pavey's book *Playing Games in the School Library* offers insight into both the 'why?' and the 'how?' of gamification and game-based learning. The book opens with a detailed examination of the research evidence into these practices and examines them through the lens of a number of

different pedagogical models. This sets up a robust foundation for the material covered in the rest of the book and allows teacher librarians to be clear with ourselves, our teaching colleagues and our school communities about why we use gamification and game-based learning in our libraries.

Pavey distinguishes between gamification (providing incentives to learn) and game-based learning (learning through play: this is the main focus of the book) and goes on to present many real-world examples of teacher librarians using these in a wide range of educational settings and across different age groups. This part of the book is a treasure trove of ideas for how different types of games can be used in the library, ranging from simple slide-based games, physical games, games using the LMS and OPAC, social media-based games, physical games, and games using mixed media. The book offers concrete and replicable examples of how games can be used to support curriculum, to reinforce information literacy skills, as an adjunct to reader's advisory services, and also to promote fun and connection in the library.

Playing Games in the School Library is of particular interest for teacher librarians as we return to our libraries and classrooms in the wake of the COVID pandemic. Pavey makes specific reference to this context throughout and also takes a look at how game-based learning can help students who have been especially impacted by the disruptions to their schooling, including those with specific needs in terms of academic disengagement, social-emotional difficulties, CALD status, and neurodivergence.

As teacher librarians, we are always seeking opportunities for collaboration and Pavey explores ways in which we can collaborate on game-based learning with classroom teachers, school leadership and the wider school community. The author has also developed an online course based on the ideas in this book available to teacher librarians who would like to deepen their competency around game-based learning. This book will be very valuable to practising teacher librarians as it offers us the opportunity both to take a deep dive into the research evidence base for gamification and game-based learning, and an instantly usable collection of tried and tested ideas for how to integrate these practices into our libraries today.

Adult Media Literacy in Australia: Attitudes, Experiences and Needs

Notley, T., Chambers, S., Park, S., Dezuanni, M. (2021). *Adult Media Literacy in Australia: Attitudes, Experiences and Needs*. Western Sydney University, Queensland University of Technology and University of Canberra.

84 pages

Available from: <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/226415/>

Reviewed by Camilla Elliott, Head of Library and Digital Learning Resourcing, Mazenod College

The report *Adult Media Literacy in Australia: Attitudes, Experiences and Needs* (2021) is the result of a collaboration between researchers at the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University, the Digital Media Research Centre at Queensland University of Technology and the News and Media Research Centre at the University of Canberra. It is published at a time of concern for the effect of the use of digital media on the future of democracy.

In 2020 the research team surveyed a sample of 3,510 adult Australians in the first nationally representative study designed to investigate the value participants place on different media activities, their confidence in their own media abilities and their access to media literacy support.

The research was motivated by the recognition that over the past two decades the use of mobile and networked media technologies has transformed lives in all facets of society. Where support has been provided for dealing with scams and online safety, less emphasis has been placed on adult media literacy education and the development of policies.

The authors argued that media literacy, defined as ‘the ability to critically engage with media and media technologies in all aspects of life’ — is essential for full participation in society and ultimately a healthy democracy. They consider that lifelong media literacy strategies and policies in Australia are long overdue for formal support and intervention. The responsibility for creating and maintaining a media literate society, they state, ‘cannot be borne solely by individuals who are left to work things out by themselves’.

The report is written in clear language supported by diagrams and illustrations. The visual presentation of data contributes to its value for both teaching media literacy and arguing the case for implementation. The table of contents provides an overview of the scope of the report including definitions, detailed findings and recommendations.

The competencies and key concepts of the Australian Media Literacy Alliance (AMLA) media literacy framework informed the design of the survey. The results confirmed much that was already known but also highlighted areas of concern.

The change in daily media use is clearly evident in the results. E.g. More than four in five adults (83%) report using social media on a daily basis (83%) outperforming traditional television (77%), whilst less than half adults report using radio daily (42%). 10% use print newspapers daily with only 2% reading print magazines.

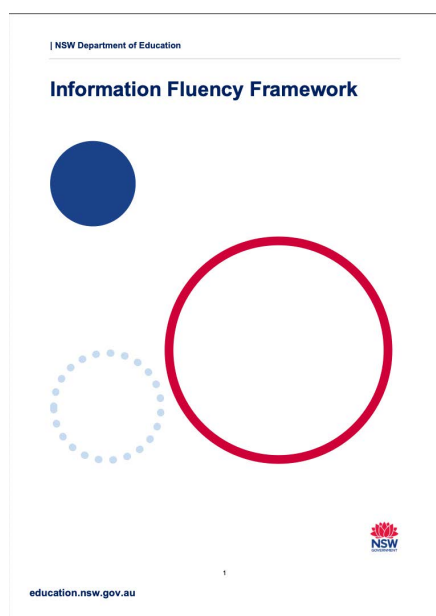
Of interest is the civic engagement of individuals with eight questions ranging from keeping up to date with politics, commenting on policies or participating in organisations. Overall levels of civic participation were found to be low with four in ten adult Australians (39%) being actively involved in civic engagement over the past 12 months. This, the researchers suggest, is indicative of a democratic disconnect.

The findings show that most Australians use several different types of media each day and believe it is an important part of their lives, but they lack confidence in their own media abilities. The authors present a well-written report with seven recommendations, in which they stress the urgency for a strategic national media literacy campaign. Suggesting also that it should be broad-based across all forms of media and, for long term success, be more fully supported for implementation within schools.

The report is timely as the influence of social media on society becomes increasingly evident. It provides support for existing media literacy programs and highlights the urgency for a concerted approach from government and organisations if the maintenance of a healthy democracy is to be ensured. This report is recommended for the attention of a broad range of educational, social and political individuals and organisations. Technology regularly outstrips the ability of governing bodies to keep pace with change; it is evident from this report that adult media literacy education should be a priority.

Information Fluency Framework

NSW Department of Education (2022). *Information Fluency Framework*



https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/media/documents/Information_fluency_framework.pdf

Reviewed by Mary Manning, Editor FYI

The Information Fluency Framework was developed by the NSW Department of Education in collaboration with teacher-librarians in NSW government schools. The document was officially published in February 2022 following a successful trial and is now readily available to download in pdf format.

The Information Fluency Framework (IFF) is a valuable and accessible document that builds on “what we have become familiar with as information literacy” (p. 4). embedded within curriculum documents, most explicitly in the General Capabilities / Capabilities strands. It acknowledges that information literacy is the basis for inquiry that underpins the Australian Curriculum.

I am immediately drawn to exploring this framework when I see the introductory question: What is information fluency? It is clearly defined in this document as “the ability to think critically while engaging with, creating and utilising information and technology, regardless of the information platform or medium”. (p. 4) The document asserts therefore that information fluency is both an overall competency and a collection of knowledge and skills.

Further positive anticipation comes when I read the rationale for the development of the IFF – “the design of this framework has been prioritised as an essential piece in maximizing the impact of every school library” (p. 4). It continues: “the framework is designed to articulate the work of the teacher-librarian so that:

- Teacher-librarians can more efficiently and effectively work with curriculum outcomes and information fluency,
- Teachers can better collaborate with teacher-librarians,
- Students know what expertise they can access from teacher-librarians,
- The impact of the library, and the expertise of the teacher-librarian, are known and valued in the school community.” (p. 4)

So does the Information Fluency Framework live up to these ideals and objectives? Let’s delve a little further and find out.

The document goes on to elaborate how information fluency standards are found throughout the curriculum (particularly in the Capabilities) and therefore incorporated into every learning area. “The IFF provides a structure for teacher-librarians and teachers to use so that they can work collaboratively to develop these skills in students.” (p. 5). The emphasis on collaboration in this document is pleasing – and provides practical and valuable advice.

When the Gonski report challenged teachers to “interweave the teaching of the general capabilities into different learning areas” (p. 5), it was acknowledged that this is a highly complex task. This document asserts that the teacher-librarian is well placed to support this practice through co-teaching relationships. The Information Fluency Framework is designed as a tool to help guide this collaboration and ensure that the learning is authentic and age-appropriate.

The structure of the IFF is as follows:

- Elements – Social, Literate, Innovative, Critical and Ethical,
- Strands – see students interacting with information both as consumers and as creators,
- Sub-elements – break down each element into a small number of statements that describe the development of student outcomes,
- Outcomes – what a student should be expected to do at the completion of the learning stage,
- Progression – outcomes are presented along a progression, linked to learning stages.

The document elaborates on each of the elements with an Element Statement and poses the questions: Why is this element important?, How can we teach it?, and What does it look like? The skills required, as consumers or as creators, relating to each element are then stated. Detailed progression points for these skills are then provided in a clear stage-appropriate table. Appendices that include an analysis of information literacy frameworks and affinity across frameworks, stage checklist tables and a glossary add to its usefulness and make it a ‘go-to’ reference when thinking about curriculum connections. It must be noted, however, that as this document is written to relate directly to the NSW curriculum and syllabus, it will be necessary for teacher-librarians to translate the document for their own local curriculum.

Reading through the document evokes familiar thoughts and I am reminded of the work of Dr. Ross Todd when he spoke of and developed a framework for ‘transforming information into deep knowledge and understanding’. I think this familiarity certainly makes the IFF relatable for teacher-librarians. It is pleasing to see so much in this document that reminds us of what we have been exploring and discussing over a long period of time. That said, this document goes further in that it distills information fluency into its elements (social, literate, innovative, critical and ethical) and breaks these down further providing detailed expectations and advice.

So, to answer my earlier question: Does the Information Fluency Framework live up to these ideals and objectives? The answer is yes. The Information Fluency Framework is a quality, learning-focused document – clearly referenced, easy to read and supported with valuable advice. It succinctly identifies the intersection between learning area outcomes and the development of

information fluency in the context of the role of the school library. Teacher-librarians often ask, “how can we get teachers to collaborate with us?” Well, dive deep into this document, and they will be eating out of your hand! I highly commend the Information Fluency Framework to you.

At a Glance

Brief listings, with both a local and global focus.

Wellbeing

Hargreaves, Andy and Shirley, Dennis (2021) [Wellbeing in Schools: Three Forces that will Uplift your students in a Volatile World](#). ASCD title

A detailed examination of what constitutes wellbeing and why it matters particularly in post Covid times

McDiamid, G Williamson & Zhao, Yong (2022). [Learning for Uncertainty: Teaching Students How to Thrive in a Rapidly Evolving World](#). Routledge

Merga, Margaret (July 2021). [Libraries as Wellbeing Supportive Spaces in Contemporary Schools](#)

This article was published in July 2021. It is complementary to the book reviewed in this issue by Margaret Simkin

Media Literacy

Sperry, Chris & Scheibe, Cyndy (2022). [Teaching Students to Decode the World: Media Literacy and Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum](#)

Constructivist Media Decoding is at the heart of this book with an emphasis on critical thinking and reflection

Roquet, Molly June (2022). [Rethinking Digital Literacy: A Critical Approach Empowers Students to Create Change](#) magazine.org/2022/03/01/rethinking-digital-literacy/

Edwards, Lee and others (2021). [Rapid Evidence Assessment on Online Misinformation and Media Literacy](#)

From the Executive Summary: This report is focused on studies that measure the effectiveness of interventions designed to tackle misinformation, both within the media literacy curriculum and in relation to technological interventions that draw on literacy principles (such as critical thinking, information evaluation and active engagement), even if they are not conducted in an educational setting.

[News and Media Literacy Resource Center](#)

Online Resources for Educators from Common Sense Education

[Media and Information Literacy resources from UNESCO](#)

New from Publishers

Australian Council for Educational Leadership – [New Releases](#)

[Facet publishing news and blogs](#)

[Facet on Twitter](#)

Contributions to this section are warmly welcomed, so please let us know if you discover a wonderful new resource you wish to share with your colleagues. Your review only needs to be a couple of lines.

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