

# New Zealand's first School Library Week

By *Miriam Tuohy and Sasha Eastwood*

## Snapshot

Miriam Tuohy and Sasha Eastwood describe the wonderful celebrations and activities undertaken for New Zealand's inaugural School Library Week.

In August 2022, the School Library Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (SLANZA) launched New Zealand's inaugural School Library Week | Te wiki whakanui i ngā puna mātauranga ā kura.

SLANZA's National Executive, led by President Sasha Eastwood, wanted to establish this as a special week dedicated to celebrating school libraries across the country and showcasing the difference the library can make for school communities. It's about raising awareness — especially for people who might not realise how much school libraries have to offer — that our school libraries are vibrant and thriving places thanks to the passion and expertise of the staff who work in them.

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From small beginnings this year we now have a foundation to build on, establishing Aotearoa School Library Week as part of our local library landscape. With a tight timeframe between the announcement and launch, plans needed to come together quickly. The week beginning 8 August 2022 (week 3 of term 3) was chosen to fit in with school schedules. This was especially important for secondary schools, so they could participate before senior students were occupied with exams. That week also coincided with New Zealand's Book Awards for Children and Young Adults (NZCYA), with the winners announced on Wednesday 10 August.



School Library Week artwork created by Paul Beavis

# Who was involved with School Library Week?

## SLANZA's role

Establishing this week-long celebration involved many people and organisations. Leading the launch was SLANZA's National Executive. This team is made up of representatives from each of eight regions across New Zealand and includes library staff working in every level of schooling.

SLANZA's business members helped support School Library Week. This enabled SLANZA to commission author and illustrator [Paul Beavis](#) to create the artwork for an activity guide, posters, and social media promotions. The guide includes ideas and activities to inspire school library teams and was designed to make it easy for schools to get involved. Business members also got on board by creating sponsored activities and donating book prizes to give away. Students and school staff were invited to share School Library Week-inspired activities via social media using the hashtag #AotearoaSchoolLibraryWeek. This put them in the draw to win books for their school library.

It was wonderful to see a range of people and organisations supporting and promoting School Library Week. This included the [National Library of New Zealand](#), [Read NZ Te Pou Muramura](#) (formerly the NZ Book Council), [LIANZA](#), [Tohatoha Aotearoa Commons](#), public libraries, bookstores, authors, illustrators, publishers, education organisations, and of course many schools across the country.

## National Library celebrating School Library Week



@wellyhighlibrary



@wellyhighlibrary



@mrs\_sowdens\_shenanigans

Every day, staff at the National Library of New Zealand's Services to Schools work with schools that want to do amazing things with their library to support staff, students and their families. Recently I've visited some of these schools to talk with school leaders and library staff. Their libraries provide a wonderful illustration of one or more elements of our [School Library Development Framework](#) – great leadership, expertise, and library services. For School Library Week we featured some of the videos, quotes, and photos that I'd gathered during those visits. To start the week, we shared a video message from the Hon Jan Tinetti, who is the Minister of Internal Affairs (which includes the National Library), Associate Minister of Education, and Minister for Women. In her message, Minister Tinetti says,

“I’d like to acknowledge the important mahi [work] that school library staff do to support literacy and learning across the curriculum. They provide access to diverse library collections to cater for a broad range of subjects, interests, abilities, cultures, and languages. They curate and share information resources for children and young people, using a range of channels and strategies to connect students with the resources they need. Drawing on their expert knowledge, they help develop students’ digital and information literacy skills.

As an ex-principal, I have experience of what school libraries mean for the school community. They are not only a place for literacy development and reading for pleasure, but they are also places of wellbeing and belonging — a safe and welcoming space in the school that connect people with stories and information and helping develop the skills they need to access these.”

You can read the series of posts and watch the videos — which have now been viewed hundreds of times — on our [Libraries and Learning](#) blog.



The Hon Jan Tinetti MP, Mike Anderson, and Paulina Watson — featured in National Library’s videos for School Library Week

## School libraries at the heart of the celebrations

It was exciting to see school library staff, students, teachers, and school leaders getting involved in the celebrations. Some schools who normally run a Book Week moved these to coincide with School Library Week celebrations.

It’s not always easy for school staff to fit more into an already busy term, but SLANZA’s activity guide gave schools some quick and easy ideas for participating. Some schools did one or two things to celebrate, and others were able to roll out a week-long programme of activities. Either way, it gave schools an opportunity to lift the profile of their library – and every little bit of that can make a difference.



@kkhslibrary



@laurbrarian



On the NZ school libraries email listserv and on social media, we heard from library staff who'd used the activities in the guide, adapted or expanded on them, and shared other ideas and activities along with supporting resources they'd developed for their own school. Schools shared photos and stories of their community enjoying the celebrations.

## Where to next?

Feedback from school librarians who celebrated Aotearoa School Library Week has been very positive. SLANZA's National Executive will invite members to share with them what worked well, what could be adapted and what new ideas can be incorporated into next year's plans.

We can see the reach that this year's social media campaign has achieved, and some great engagement with the National Library's videos and blog posts, throughout the education sector in New Zealand. School Library Week 2022 has succeeded in raising the profile of school librarians and school libraries for our communities.

Looking forward to next year, we hope even more schools will take part. For those who already have a thriving library and a wonderful library team, it's a chance to celebrate them. For others, it could be just the catalyst they need – some inspiration to show what's possible when you have a great school library and library staff. We hope that in time celebrating School Library Week will become a permanent fixture on every school's calendar!

## References

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***Miriam Tuohy** joined the National Library of New Zealand's Services to Schools as School Library Development Senior Specialist in 2016. Her involvement in the New Zealand education system spans early childhood education, primary and secondary school, and tertiary libraries. Miriam is a life member of the School Library Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (SLANZA), serving on the National Executive from 2010-2016 including a year as President in 2015-16. As part of her current role, Miriam has contributed to the publication of Services to Schools framework for school library development, the 2018, 2019 and 2021 reports of the nationwide surveys of New Zealand school libraries. She is also involved in developing and delivering professional development for school library staff and teachers and is a regular contributor to the National Library of New Zealand's Libraries & Learning blog.*

***Sasha Eastwood** is the current president of the School Library Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (2021-23). She has been the Librarian and Resource Manager at Manchester Street School in Feilding, Manawatū since 2009, becoming a SLANZA member and joining SLANZA's Central region committee at the same time. Since 2018 Sasha has represented the Central region on SLANZA's National Executive and she enjoys being an active member of such a dedicated and passionate group of school librarians, advocating and supporting the sector. During her time on National Executive, Sasha has been part of the School Libraries Transform campaign marketing team, and project lead for the New Zealand Libraries Partnership Programme-funded 'A Bit Sus' programme with [Tohatoha Aotearoa Commons](#) (formerly Creative Commons Aotearoa New Zealand).*