National Library's framework for school library development

By Miriam Tuohy

Snapshot

Our regular contributor from New Zealand, Miriam Tuohy, outlines the National Library Services to Schools framework for school library development, originally created in 2019. The framework provides school libraries with a basis for development, exploring their role, purpose and priorities and encouraging advocacy and evaluation as ongoing activities.

At National Library Services to Schools, we provide school communities with a range of services and supports, all aimed at promoting literacy and learning. Briefly, these include:

- provision of print and digital resources for students through our schools lending service and online content,
- teaching and learning tools, resources and support we've developed, including through collaborative partnerships with others in the library and education sectors,
- building capability within school communities so that all students have equitable access to library services.

In this article, I'll share one of the approaches that we use for the last of these aims above – our School Library Development Framework (the Framework).

Since 1942, the National Library has provided guidance and support to schools about developing and managing school libraries. This includes:

- advice provided by our staff based in regional offices, who work face-to-face with school leaders and library teams,
- the professional content on our website,
- and professional development for library staff, teachers and school leaders.

From 2007, our education system has seen major changes. New Zealand's national curriculum was introduced that year, following a lengthy consultation process. Now we are part way through a 6-year process of refreshing the national curriculum, and navigating further significant change as each learning area of the curriculum is updated.

Our advice and guidance about school library development has also continued to adapt, to keep pace with changes in schools and in school library practice. In February 2019, the National

Library published the **School Library Development Framework**. This is what guides all of our work with schools who are undergoing any school library development.
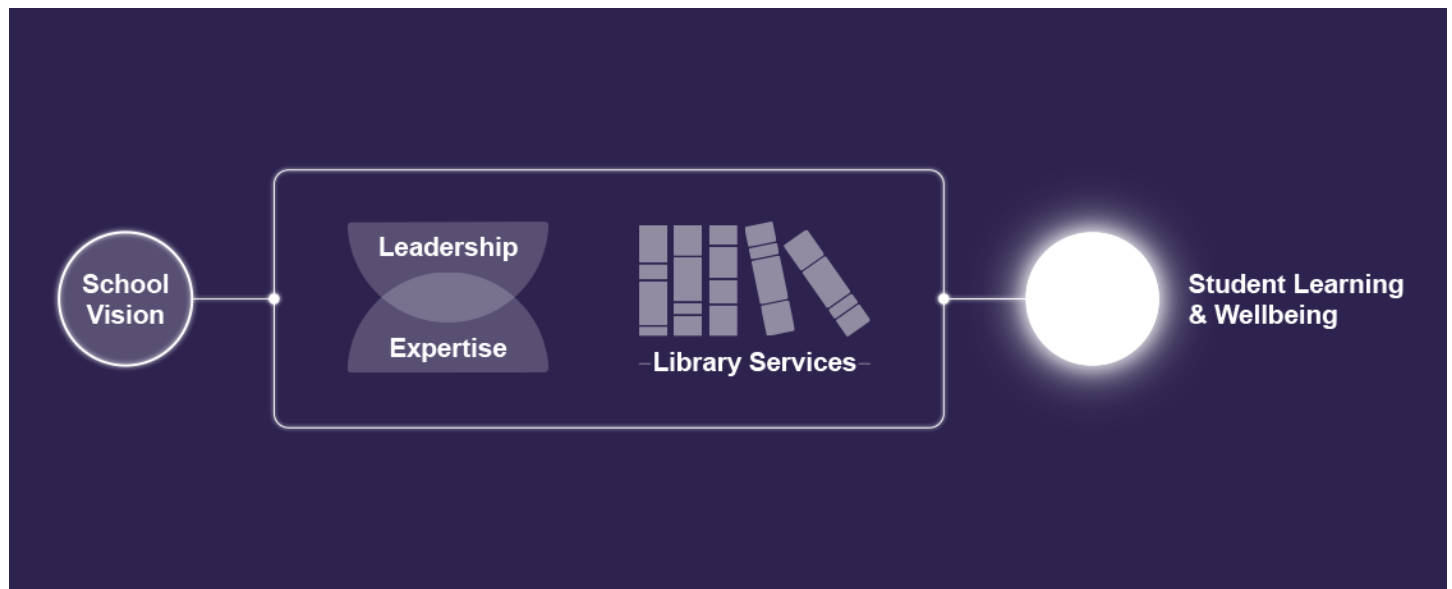
The Framework

Figure 1: Overview of the School Library Development Framework

School library development starts with a shared vision

In New Zealand schools, boards of trustees, principals, and the whole school community work together to develop a 3-year strategic plan. This generally includes an aspirational statement — the vision the school has for their learners — along with strategic goals. We encourage schools to develop a vision or guiding statement for their library too, and it's important that this is aligned with the vision and goals described in the school's strategic plan.

Schools must also develop 'an annual implementation plan that sets annual targets and actions for working towards their strategic goals' (School Planning and Reporting: Te Whakangārahu Ngātahi | Planning Together for Ākonga Success, 2023). The library, and library staff, have an important role in helping the school achieve the goals and targets in these plans. But how do they actually do this? The answer is: through the library services that are offered for staff, students, their parents and whānau.

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Library services

By providing a range of library services that are a good match with library users' needs, the school can:

- enable students' learning across the curriculum,
- support literacy and encourage reading for pleasure,

- improve student wellbeing, and

- ensure equitable access to books, information and technology.

Leadership and expertise

Getting the range of library services 'just right' doesn't happen by chance — it requires effective leadership, and expertise in designing and delivering those services.

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Making sure the library's services align with the school's vision and goals is a key responsibility of effective leadership. Strong leadership will also ensure there is a culture throughout the school community where the library and library staff are valued and supported, and where there is appropriate investment in library resources.

Expertise within the library team is also crucial to developing your library services. You need staff with the skills and knowledge to design and deliver what the school community needs. As all library staff will know, developing library services is complex work. It requires:

- awareness of your school's curriculum and pedagogies, and how these relate to the library,

- understanding what staff, students, parents and families need that the library can provide,

- in depth knowledge of literature and information resources for children and young people,

- relationships with people and organisations — inside and outside the school — that support or extend what the school library is able to offer, such as the National Library or local public library,

- and more!

Combining service elements: place, collections, connections and access

Within the Framework, we describe how library services involve 4 elements that work together. When designing any library service, we think about:

- where it will be delivered – the physical and virtual library environments,

- how the library's print and digital books, and other resources will play a part,

- how it will connect users to the stories, information, technology and other resources, people or organisations they need,

- how it might reduce barriers to access, and how to ensure library users know about and will use the service.

For example, book talks — an example of a readers' advisory service — might involve each of the library service elements this way:

- **Place:** Library staff will generally deliver book talks in the library.
- **Collections:** Staff will choose titles from the collection they hope will grab students' interest.
- **Connections:** Book talks are a chance to connect readers to books they might not have come across yet.
- **Access:** Library staff will encourage students to borrow these books and help them find other books they might also enjoy.
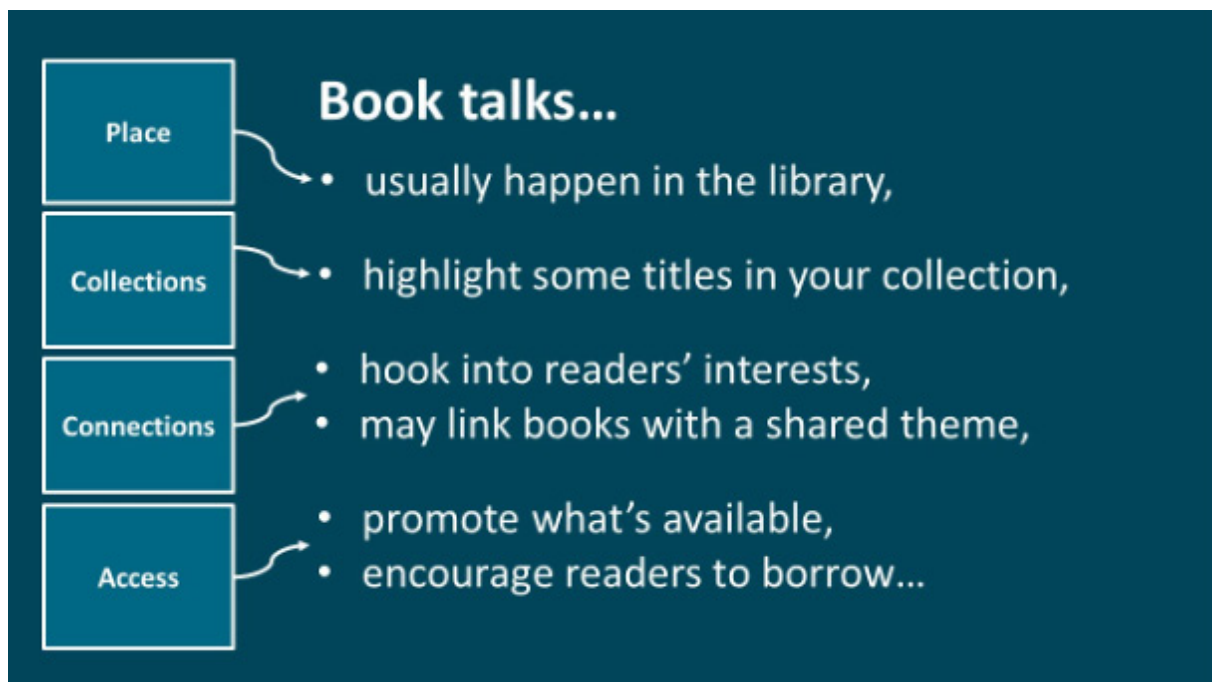
Figure 2: Library service elements and book talks

Using the framework

At National Library Services to Schools, we incorporate the Framework into how we support schools with their library development.

- Our team of Facilitators share the Framework in their work directly with schools, showing staff how to use it as part of library development.
- Our professional learning courses and workshops encourage schools to consider elements of the Framework as they relate to the learning focus.
- We include information about elements of the Framework in the school library development advice, blog posts, and stories available on our website.
- We conduct library reviews for schools using the Framework to structure the review, and our reports with feedback and suggestions for development.
    - Carla Bayard, the Librarian at Kaikorai Valley College, is also using the Framework to structure her annual report to the College's Board of Trustees.

'I decided to do it that way because it goes through a lot more of the features and benefits of the library than I think the BOT or school community are aware of.' (C. Bayard, personal communication, July 31, 2023).

> **Carla Bayard, the Librarian at Kaikorai Valley College, is also using the Framework to structure her annual report to the College's Board of Trustees.**

We encourage schools to start by reading the Framework document, and exploring the key questions posed for each section. We also have several tools and templates that accompany the Framework.

Self-assessment

The self-assessment tool is designed to help schools:

- start discussions about the role and purpose of the library,
- identify and prioritise areas for development, including building staff expertise,
- celebrate and advocate for more of what's working well.

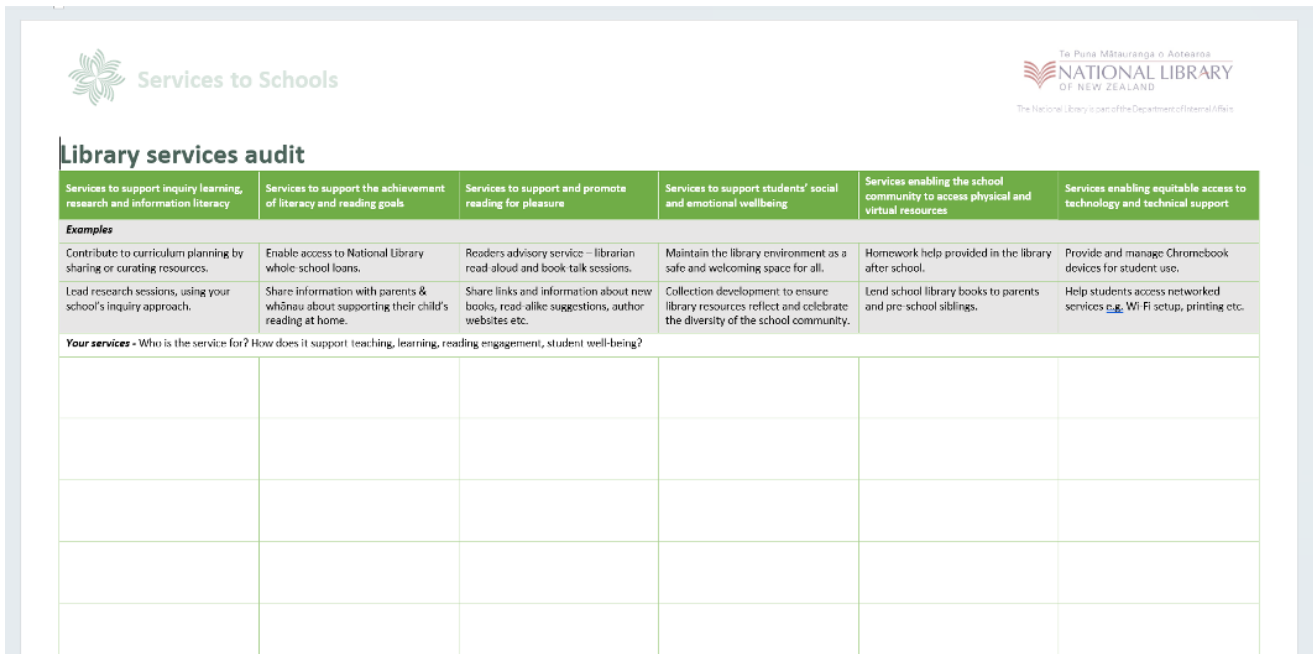Figure 3: A page from the self-assessment tool — Leadership

Library services audit and service descriptions

Library service design should be an ongoing process, part of a cycle of continuous improvement. In our work with schools, we often suggest they list the library's services as a part of their

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library planning or development. We provide a template with examples of library goals and potential services that might be offered to support each goal. Schools can list each of their library's services in the space provided. This can help schools identify areas where the library's services are working well or could need development.

It is also a useful tool if you need to advocate for or explain changes to the library's services. Library teams can use the template to show how new services will fit with the school's goals, and to support requests for any additional resources needed.

Figure 4: Library services audit template

We've created a detailed description template to help schools design, review, or plan each library service. The template includes some prompts to guide discussions and reflection, and space to consider how each service element plays a part within this particular service.
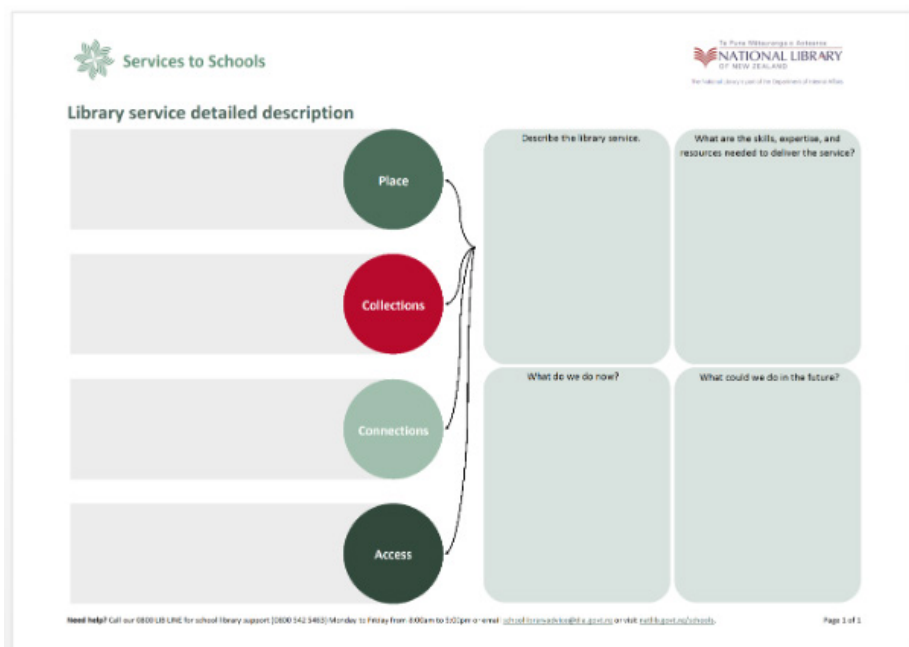

Figure 5: Library service description template

Find out more about the Framework

One of my colleagues recently met with the principal and deputy principal of a new school opening next January. She says,

> 'They were really delighted to see the school library development assessment tool [...]
> I think they were just so pleased that there was a framework that they could use to
> make sense of the process for getting the library up and running.' (L. Allcott, personal
> communication, August 2, 2023).

If you'd like to find out more, you can access the **Framework on the National Library website**. We've recently added a video which includes school leaders and library staff talking about each of the Framework elements.

The Framework is helping schools across Aotearoa New Zealand, and I hope it might help you navigate the complexity of library development in your school, too.

References

School Library Development Framework. (n.d.). **https://natlib.govt.nz/schools/school-libraries/leading-and-managing/school-library-development-framework**

School planning and reporting: Te Whakangārahu Ngātahi | Planning Together for Ākonga Success. (2023, July 6). Education in New Zealand. **https://www.education.govt.nz/school/schools-planning-and-reporting/**

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, and the reports of the nationwide surveys of New Zealand school libraries spanning 2018-2022. 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.*