

Reviews

Understanding Australian readers

Wright, B, Lennox, A, and Mata, F, (2025)

Understanding Australian readers: Behavioural insights into recreational reading.

Reviewed by Joy Whiteside, Executive Officer, School Library Association of Victoria

This research by Australia Reads, BehaviourWorks and Monash University into the recreational reading behaviours of Australians aged 16 and over is the first of its kind. The researchers used a behavioural science approach and aimed to identify key decisions and behaviours that influence how and when people read. It sought to illuminate how we might meaningfully increase recreational reading rates in Australia. It also aimed to map the reading journey of Australians and uncover the drivers and barriers at each stage of reading: finding books, choosing books, getting books, starting to read, and continuing to read. The report breaks this down further by examining the specific barriers and drivers of different segments of readers, particularly those who read less often.

The report explains the science of behaviours in the reading journey: the reasons for reading, types of reading, and reading duration. It details the definition of segments of readers. From the data gathered, readers were described as avid, engaged, ambivalent, aspirational, lapsed and uninterested non-readers. There is a detailed profile of each of the segments of readers with key characteristics including the drivers and barriers of each of the reading behaviours. What is most useful is the intervention functions that are identified that could influence each of the reading behaviours.

There is a further section that compares reader and non-reader segments and their leisure preferences. An interesting fact is that the way readers identify does not necessarily align with how they report their reading behaviours. Despite the research focusing on the upper end of the school and adults, the key takeaways and opportunities are particularly beneficial for school library team members. They include: understanding behaviours helps drive change; different readers, different approaches; focus on infrequent readers to have the greatest impact; and encourage a range of formats.



For a more succinct look at this Understanding Australian Readers research, there is an Executive Summary report that is most useful as a preliminary to the complete report and accessible as a document that you could distribute to your library or school team or school leadership.

Designing school libraries of the future

Loh, C.E., Sia, E., Wan, Z. H., Sun, B., Lim, V. F. & Pang, E. (2024)

Designing School Libraries of the Future Study Report.

Singapore: NIE, NTU.

Reviewed by Joy Whiteside, Executive Officer, School Library Association of Victoria

The *Designing School Libraries of the Future Study Report* presents the research findings of the authors and begins by explaining that this research followed an earlier study that documented the positive impact of well-designed and stocked school libraries on students' reading. A case study approach involving three schools was used, as well as Design Thinking, an approach that is explained in the *Designing School Libraries of the Future Toolkit* by the same authors.

This study addresses the research questions:

1. What is the impact of the library redesign on students' reading and learning?
2. What were the enablers and challenges for the case study schools in the design and implementation journey?

The report begins with a summary of the research methodology; the key findings that redesigned libraries had significant impact by supporting students' engaged reading, varied ways of learning and wellbeing; and recommendations from the research.

The introduction includes a model and explanation of *The 21st Century School Library Framework*, which details the five core functions of the library: reading, research, collaboration, study and doing. Regarding each of these functions, access to resources, space and programming can be assessed as either optimal or lacking. The research context is explained, as well as information about the process and additional publications from the study.

The second section of the report includes the context of each of the three case study schools, as well as the spatial, collection and manpower features. The library floor plan and photos support each school case study and is helpful for visualising specific library features.

Designing School Libraries of the Future Study

REPORT 2024



An Institute of
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DEV02/20 LCE
Designing School
Libraries of the Future
Study

The third section of the report gives the key findings of the research: the impact of library redesign:

1. A 21st century school library supports engaged reading
2. A 21st century school library supports different ways of learning
3. A 21st century school library supports students' wellbeing

Each of the key findings is discussed, drawing on data and examples from the school library case studies and concluding with recommendations. A further section discusses enablers and challenges for future-ready school libraries.

This detailed research report closes with concluding thoughts with implications for the future, and an extensive reference list. Of note is the remark that the refreshed library spaces, collections and programs can enhance students' reading and learning, but the potential of the school library as a space for expanding students' knowledge and skills acquisition is not yet fully realised. While this study is focusing on the Singapore setting it raises issues relevant to Australian school library spaces, programs, staffing, and expertise and is well-worth a close read.

Designing school libraries toolkit

Loh, C.E., Sia, E., Wan, Z. H., Sun, B., Lim, V. F. & Pang, E. (2024)

Designing School Libraries of the Future Study Toolkit.

Singapore, NIE, NTU.

Reviewed by Joy Whiteside, Executive Officer, School Library Association of Victoria

The introduction to the *Designing School Libraries for the Future toolkit* states that the toolkit emerged from a desire to offer resources for schools working to improve their school libraries so that their library space, collection and programs meet their school's needs. There are three sections to the toolkit: design thinking, self-assessment and design walkthrough.

The first section of the toolkit begins with the question "What is design thinking?" This section outlines the design thinking approach, and the steps involved: problem identification, and solution creation and implementation. These phases are connected and throughout the project there is movement between the two phases. While there is enough detail to assist with implementing a design thinking approach, there is also a list of design thinking resources for additional information.

The second section is a self-assessment framework for school libraries that is used by the Singapore Ministry of Education for the School Libraries Handbook. The

DB/20/20 Designing School Libraries of the Future (LOTF) Study

DESIGNING SCHOOL LIBRARIES OF THE FUTURE TOOLKIT 2024



An Institute of



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framework details the five core functions of the library: reading, studying, collaboration, research and experiential learning. While considering these functions the toolkit reminds the user to attend to issues of access, space and programming. There is a detailed self-assessment checklist focusing on the core functions, allowing stakeholders to gather evidence rating the quality of the library. The checklist includes criteria descriptors, a rating of 1 – 5, and a section for anecdotal evidence. This section concludes with a critical focus on the vision and mission statement of the library.

The third section of the toolkit is a design walk-through, intended to assist relevant stake-holders to collaboratively consider the project spatial needs and the design brief. It has practical prompts and questions for guiding the exploration, the site context, the current setting and perceived needs, infrastructure, spatial and interior design and functions, zones, furnishing, lighting and comfort, school identity, wellbeing and environment and project costing. The design walk-through is a framework for further exploration and collaborative planning.

This toolkit is an excellent starting point for any school library planning for future improvement or redevelopment. Section two is a useful checklist for evaluating the current state of the library and planning for evidence-based change. The checklist could be used for evaluation purposes even if there were no immediate redevelopment plans. Redevelopment could focus on programs and change within the current space without extending to a budgeted comprehensive redevelopment.

Also edited by **Chin Ee Loh – Reading Lives of Teens (2024)**

London, Routledge.

Available through [Taylor & Francis](#)



The Kind librarian

Rimmer, Helen (2024).

The Kind librarian.

London. Facet Publishing.

Available in print and digital.

Reviewed by Margaret Sinnott, Library Coordinator, Emmanuel College, Warrnambool

Helen explores kindness and its power to transform libraries and library staff. She has qualifications based in coaching and has been employed in leadership for libraries and higher education.



The book is written in four parts. Part 1 focusing on the Theoretical Foundations of Kindness in Libraries as Workplaces. Part 2 explores Cultivating Kindness in the Library: a holistic approach to wellbeing and team empowerment. Part 3 is all about Leadership Approaches to Enhancing Kindness and Wellbeing In Libraries and Part 4 is Embracing Kindness and Wellbeing In Library Cultures: navigating change and toxicity. Kirsten Elliott and Darren Flynn have co-authored the chapter entitled Fair Library Jobs: Kindness, Empathy and Equity in Library Recruitment. Amy Stubbing has written a chapter on the kind use of data.

The book is written for all library staff not just for leaders of libraries. It includes reflection questions and exercises for individuals and teams, as well as case studies. It is based on research and includes many references from well-known

theories and models. Useful to use for yourself as a library team member, your library staff and the wider library network to think and reflect on current practice.

Kindness is explored in the risks of being kind (p60), creating a kindness charter (p72), conducting a kindness audit (p73). Workplace wellbeing (p88) and a reflection from Hannah, a Norfolk librarian working at an inspiring community centre (p122) could easily be used for staff reflection at a Library meeting or network professional development day.

The topics explored throughout the book include: self-care, compassion, managing workloads, kind recruiting, leadership approaches to enhancing kindness (checklist for library leaders p 386), the notion that everyone is responsible for kindness and wellbeing in a staff group. Rimmer lists the benefits of embracing kindness in the library workplace but also admit that there will be challenges to kindness. Effective conflict resolution strategies are listed along with pertinent case studies (Chapter 14) and the kind use of data in the library (Chapter 16).

The ASSET Model, Bridges Transition Model, Conversation of Resources Theory, PERMA Model, Malti's Kindness Model, HERO Framework and Job Demands-Resources Model are all mentioned in the book and give readers further insight in to the key details. The book includes an extensive Reference and Further reading list and a comprehensive Index.

Readers of *The Kind Librarian* are invited to reflect and assess, to do an audit, to question and challenge their beliefs and actions in relation to kindness and wellbeing, to try journalling. There are many reflective questions and exercises to be undertaken individually or with a Library team.

I can envision a Library team taking on the task of reviewing their library and all its services and workings by using *The Kind Librarian* as the beginning of their review.

Hidden Libraries

Helmuth, D.C. (2024).

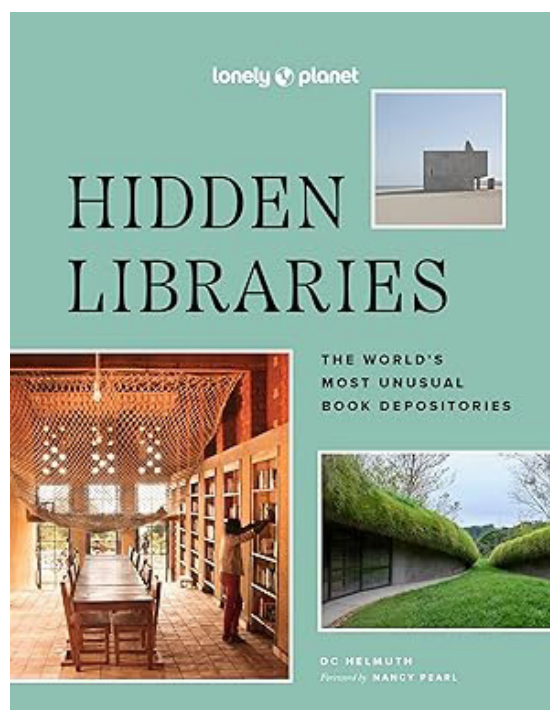
Hidden Libraries: The World's Most Unusual Book Depositories.

Lonely Planet

Reviewed by Bianca Oder, Acting Co-Head of Library and Research, University High School

When libraries feature in news segments and current affairs reporting of late, it seems to be our activist interests which are the focus: fighting against book bans and censorship, promoting community access, campaigning for acceptance and inclusion of marginalised groups. While Lonely Planet's *Hidden Libraries* may appear to be a quirky coffee table book about offbeat and whimsical libraries from around the world, what it actually contains is a wealth of proof for the value of libraries and the way our practice as library workers is inseparable from social consciousness and activism.

The stories within the book are organised by geographical region, and range from snapshots of 'official' funded libraries to purely volunteer endeavours. Some of the libraries featured are oddities and curiosities—for example, The Home Library of Bruno Schröder (p. 156), which houses some 80,000 volumes at an unknown location in Mettingen, Germany, un-accessed and in limbo since the owner's death in 2022. The photographs show rooms of Schröder's house lined with shelving, stretching even across the pitched ceiling of his attic. There is also the Heydar Aliyev International Airport Library, housed in a wooden cocoon like a cracked-open seed pod found in an enchanted forest; a liminal library "between 'where you are' and 'where you're going', in a way station of time" (p.83) which accepts donations from travellers hoping to lighten the load of their luggage. The Brautigan Library in Washington, USA, welcomes submissions of



manuscripts which have never been and are never intended to be published or shared otherwise (p. 39). These libraries and others like them are shown to represent a more eccentric, sometimes-obsessive side of story-sharing, sprinkling in the wonder and comfort which comes from hearing about people who, to put it simply, love books.

Several of the entries are labelled “In Memoriam,” and commemorate libraries which have been lost to history, mostly through deliberate destruction. The Libraries of Maya and Aztec, for instance, are paid respect with an exploration of a society which deeply valued learning and written records, whose knowledge stores were dismantled and desecrated by colonial powers (p. 43). In more recent history, The People’s Library of Occupy Wall Street is explored as an example of community action and the threat of sometimes-violent censorship (p. 23)—though the explanation of how the library was formed, the work it took to bring it together, and the fervency with which it was defended, is a truly bolstering one.

The intrinsicality of social activism to library work is reflected in most of the libraries which are profiled in the book: The Prison Library Project, operating from California, USA, is an example of reformative justice in action, giving incarcerated people access to information, stories, and the opportunity to self-improve (p. 9); The Strength of Words library in Bogotá, Colombia, is the work of a sole individual who rescues books from rubbish bins and has created a library in his home to give the children of his community access to stories and knowledge (p. 54); The Horse Library of Hawassa, Ethiopia services remote communities and displaced people, with the horse librarians holding reading sessions for the children in places they visit (p. 66). These profiles are not only testaments to the power of literacy, but to the community-building power of books and libraries more broadly.

Though published by Lonely Planet, *Hidden Libraries* is not really an unconventional travel guide; it’s more a guide to the value of libraries and the work that librarians do, full of reminders of exactly why libraries are worth fighting for. While maybe not a book which will be read cover-to-cover, the stories within are all instructional and inspirational in different ways—for library professionals, as examples which can inform and energise their practice and activism; and for community members, as examples of what libraries can do and the real power they hold. As a professional development text or recreational selection, *Hidden Libraries* is a comforting read, which proves that there are still people worldwide doing good work to give their communities what they need.

At a Glance

Brief listings, with both a local and global focus.

Softlink 2024 Report

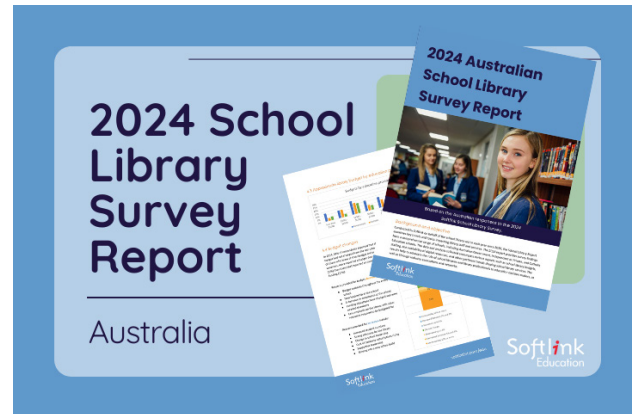
Report of annual survey exploring trends and issues in Australian school libraries.

Resource downloadable at softlinkint.com

ALIA Code of Ethics

Ethical framework devised for the Australian context. Well laid out web page, easy to navigate.

Resource downloadable at alia.org.au



IFLA Resources:

IFLA Trend Report 2024

The aim of this report is to provide a key planning tool for libraries and facilitate the building of resilience and sustainability.

Resource downloadable at ifla.org

IFLA/Unesco School Library Manifesto

Updated version. Originally endorsed in 1999.

“This update is a new chapter in IFLA and UNESCO’s historic partnership. It helps present a joint vision of how school libraries improve and enhance teaching and learning for the entire school community through active collaborations for literacies, critical thinking, creativity, and global citizenship”.

Resource downloadable at ifla.org



Realising Potential, Supporting Users: IFLA Statement on Copyright and Artificial Intelligence

Published April 29.

Resource downloadable at ifla.org

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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