

Collaboration – School Libraries

By Jane Viner

Around the state, the country and across the world there is an evolving transformation taking place in some school libraries, and hopefully your school library is one of these places. Sadly, some school libraries have already been closed by Principals and administrators trying to save a dollar or two, but they have forgotten about the connectedness, literacy and pastoral role that school library staff play in their school environment.

At Kilvington Grammar School, the McKie Library caters for all – without discrimination – the readers and the non-readers, the social isolates and the cool kids, the loners and the groupies, the study kids and the ones who need assistance. Students come in freely to our safe and caring school library in their own time and make it their space. Students from ELC to Year 10 come regularly with their class or English teachers and VCE students have interactions as individuals, small groups or with their subject teacher. Our regulars come before school, recess, lunchtime and others after school – to relax, read, chat, study or chill out.

As an independent, Baptist, co-educational independent day school located in the Glen Eira region of Melbourne, our school motto is 'Non nobis sed omnibus' which is Latin for 'Not for our own but others' good'. Our mission at Kilvington is to inspire students to strive for academic excellence, and to nurture their aspirations in a caring, family-oriented community to become people of depth, strength, integrity and character. Kilvington Grammar has a vision to be a school of excellence offering a holistic education to girls and boys, enabling them to excel individually and contribute meaningfully to the world. We are 'small enough to care, big enough to excel'. Since 2014 we have had the Principal's theme of Depth of Character and each term or semester the school has had a focus; 2015 was Diligence and Positivity. In 2016 we have Gratitude and Grit. The Character Initiative was launched in 2016 and the whole school celebrated with a Gratitude Day in May.

Our regulars come before school, recess, lunchtime and others after school – to relax, read, chat, study or chill out.

On arrival at Kilvington in January 2014 I immediately felt the connection between the students and the staff and was quite overawed by the sense of community and caring. As a teacher-librarian and library staff member it is essential to make connections in your school community between the key people, and the first focus should be students and staff. A positive outlook is vital, knowing that what you put in will reap rewards tenfold, and that you can make a difference in your school and school library for your school community.

McKie Library and change

The McKie Library was refurbished in 2009 and is a bright, light-filled space with seats for 70 secondary students and 25 primary students. When I arrived in 2014 I felt the library atmosphere and environment required a revamp to cater for the ever-changing needs of students. So firstly, we needed to make a connection with our current students and staff.

The library team and I went into action with the furniture, my trusty tape measure and paper to plan the physical changes. Shelves moved, furniture was rearranged and smaller items were introduced such as fresh flowers. Pictures were purchased for the walls. The students wrote on the glass using display chalk about their favourite authors and book titles. The library seemed a friendlier and more welcoming place and these physical changes helped alter our demographic and increase our daily usage. Then the big ticket items – relationship building, budget plans and collection development and a survey.

Suddenly, we started to be 'the place to be', as students voted with their feet in their spare time – from Year 9s hovering before roll call to Year 10 boys playing their card games at lunchtime. With new cushions and stools, another twenty students were able to sit, while others lounged or sat on the floor in corners with smaller cushions, and bean bags were still to arrive.



Since the initial ideas and changes we have added couches, more cushions, a story reading chair, moved shelving once again, rearranged the chess tables, weeded the collections, purchased some wonderful new books and digital resources, installed and rolled out a new library management system, established a Junior School Library Leader, and a Year 5 and 6 Book Club.

We have achieved these fundamental changes as a library team through enthusiasm, energy and cooperation. The focus on our individual strengths, different skill sets, experience, technical abilities and knowledge has assisted the process. The vital support from our Principal, Vice Principal, the School Executive and the Heads of School has enabled us to transform our school library into the 'library lounge room'. Over the last two years, encouragement from Academic Deans, teachers, students, parents and suppliers has found us being nominated on the 'Great school libraries honours list 2015'. SLAV also recognised the early changes with a panel presentation in late 2014 and a reflective article in FYI on my career change from a large school library team. As part of the reflective article a number of Kilvington teachers and Academic Deans offered their support by writing very affirming comments about my new role as Head of Library Resource Services and their only teacher-librarian. This led to a student video which became part of the EduTech 2015 presentation and now resides on our website.

We have achieved these fundamental changes as a library team through enthusiasm, energy and cooperation.

French Storytime

In 2014 and 2015 French Storytime became very popular with the Year 12 Senior French Language students and the Junior students. Two senior students were rostered weekly and they chose a French picture story book to read to the younger students who gathered on the mat and cushions with anticipation. This assisted them with improving their aural language and reading skills as well as learning about managing younger children. The Senior students also chose an associated colouring in activity, and after the story the Junior students sat at the tables colouring in – to either take home their creation or to have it hung from the hammock on the Junior Library ceiling. Informally the seniors said 'we don't know how Prep and Year 1 teachers do this every day'. This program became a significant learning experience for all involved.

The activity came out of a discussion with Kilvington's Academic Dean of Languages and she was delighted that we would support and promote this lunchtime program, providing a benefit to both departments, their staff, senior and junior students and the school. Due to changes in lunchtime rostering in 2016, the concept has been taken on by the enthusiastic Languages staff as a co-curricular activity, and Junior students meet the staff on the

Green and hold onto the edges of the French flag as they come to the library – a very cute procession of young children and their teacher.

Credibility

Lucie Dickens, Academic Dean of Languages, has been a very supportive part of the collaboration conversation to assist in changes within the library program:

Jane Viner has been a wonderful addition to our staff at Kilvington. She has transformed the library into a vibrant, safe and cosy hub where students like spending time much more this year. As a colleague, Jane is always positive and enthusiastic about any academic or co-curricular projects we might be offering to students: she embraces the ideas and promotes them extremely well within the library. For example, during Languages week, Jane decorated the library and made wonderful French and Japanese displays, she even dressed up accordingly for the events . . . Jane was also very helpful and supportive when I asked her if we could have a French corner in the Junior library. I feel confident that I can ask Jane for help anytime and know that she will try her best to assist me. We are very fortunate to have her at Kilvington. Academic Dean of Languages Lucie Dickens, 2014.

For those of you who have recently moved roles, or schools, establishing credibility with both staff and students in a new school environment is critical to your success as a teacher-librarian. Another Academic Dean also supported the teacher-librarian role and now regularly collaborates with me for her VCE History classes and their research tasks:

Talking with Jane about options has helped me become aware of a broader range of digital resources waiting in the wings to be discovered . . . We all need someone in the vicinity who can lead us by the hand and keep us up-to-date with the ever-widening circle of possibilities. Academic Dean of Humanities Lynley Clarnette, 2014

With support from these highly respected Kilvington teachers, it empowered me to continue on the road of change and collaboration, for the benefit of staff and students, and to improve the library learning environment for all. This helped encourage my risk-taking and to seek new library opportunities with students, staff and parents. These affirmations of my role enabled me to demonstrate to my Principal and Vice-Principal the continued importance of the role of the teacher-librarian in our school.

Students

Today, students from all year levels come along enthusiastically to activities during recess and lunchtime as well as the ELC and junior students excitedly coming in for their story time and borrowing and returning. Junior students are thrilled when you take the time to listen and assist them to find the book of their dreams – from dogs and cats to the latest Sally Rippin or the constantly popular Minecraft. Year 3 have reservations and holds that go on forever and we are constantly buying, cataloguing and covering more each week. The younger students have also discovered the power of the suggestion book – we actually use a real carbon copy book – and they love writing their name and class in their best writing and the book of their choice. Once the new books arrive the reserve slip goes in and students eagerly await the email or continually call in to check.

We have found with the younger primary students the printed book is the key – they physically want to touch and hold it – especially books on pets and spiders! Year 7 to 10 students in their English classes regularly enjoy their fortnightly hour-long reading session and celebrate a reading culture that is part of Kilvington. Author, genre and holiday book talks need to be negotiated with their class teacher as students do not want to miss their personal reading time. Print fiction books including the graphic novels for primary and secondary students are very popular, with a small group of students using the eBook fiction collection. Print picture books are a hit with all year levels and a cherished item with the ELC and younger primary students.



Technology

Is it a book, a website, a database? – discovering how to create a better search, having success and knowing that your assistance and intervention will make a difference to their finished product and may lead to increased knowledge the next time. This is part of the thrill of the chase and the teaching role of library staff. Technology is such an enabler for the teacher-librarian – there's no point pushing an eBook when the student wants print, and it is essential to know what is the most appropriate resource for the task.

It can be an enlightening realisation for your students and teachers that there are so many resources out there that are not just randomly connected on Google but have been selected and chosen by experts. My recent experience of introducing students to Ebsco ANZ Reference Centre reinforced the importance of my role as an advocate for students and teachers. It is vital that I make the time to do the preparation and the research to demonstrate how they can get success straight away and valuable classroom teaching time is not wasted. Teachers are grateful for the opportunity for their students, and once one class is booked, the others follow.

A Year 10 student mentioned to me in a private study session - "Can you show me that 'Ebsco' thing where I can find articles. I know you sent me the link but I can't find it?". They are the moments dear to one's heart as a teacher-librarian – and then seeing their eyes light up when we find a relevant article on 'the impact of population on coasts' – a favourite subject of mine.

In April 2016 we launched our new library information management system and have been thrilled with the seamless change. This new system has given us fabulous resource opportunities for our staff and students, and our parents can also view our information 24/7. Online reservations, renewals and reviews are becoming part of the Kilvington Grammar library culture. The interactive library homepage is simply updated with maximum impact.

Survey

Student survey responses (the truth)

146 students
responded, Year 5-12

86% of students use the Library at
lunchtime

66.35% of students rated the Library staff as
'excellent' when it comes to
approachability

97.12% of students rated the Library staff as
'very good' or 'excellent'

"They know their stuff."

"They always have time to
talk to you."

"[The] Library is one of the
most useful places with
the most knowledgeable
people at Kilvington."

"...it's actually my
favourite room in the
school."

"Always taking the time to
ask me about my day!"



Kilvington
Grammar School

At the end of the 2014 school year after our early changes we conducted a survey and we had a fabulous response rate. 146 students from Year 5 – 11 voluntarily responded with some insightful comments.

86% of students use the library at lunchtime
66.35% of students rated the library staff as "Excellent" for approachability
97.12% of students rated the library staff as "Very Good" or "Excellent"

- "They know their stuff"
- "They always have time to talk to you"
- "... it's actually my favourite room in the school"
- "Always taking the time to ask me about my day!"
- "... (The) library is one of the most useful places with the most knowledgeable people at Kilvington."

The survey reinforced that the library environment changes have been for the benefit of all. Two years down the track it is time to conduct another survey, film another student video and find out from staff and parents if are we meeting their needs as a school library.

The takeaway

These takeaways hopefully inspire you to make a small change in your school library. Most of us love the Friday night 'takeaway' – an easy night off even if you love cooking like myself so take away an idea from the list – entrée, main course or dessert, your choice!

Entrée

- Ask your Principal for the world and get a country in \$ terms
- Take a risk
- Use statistics to back up your value
- Try a student survey for honesty
- Collaborate and build co-operation with a range of partners
- Use Twitter and social media to browse resources and get ideas
- Build on established relationships
- Connect with the parent community
- Establish new relationships

- Try new suppliers
- Take on volunteers – students and parents

Takeaway entree



Kilvington
Grammar School

Main course

- Buy what students want
- Out facing books on show
- Discard non-borrowed items even if they are your own favourites
- Replace discards with new titles requested by students
- Put student suggestions on high urgency along with Department requests
- Invite a book supplier to your library as a guest of a literary event
- Do the hack work for parents with the Premiers' Reading Challenge
- Build strong relationships with the English Department and teachers
- Liaise with the Languages Department
- Look after your Primary and Kindergarten teachers
- Take your parent volunteers to a literary event
- Outsource your covering and use the time more effectively
- Remember maximum impact and minimum effort rule
- Look after your team and build on their ideas and abilities to make your school library fantastic!

Takeaway main course

Buy what students want	Put student suggestions on high urgency along with Dept. requests		Do the hack work for parents with the Premiers' Reading Challenge	Liaise with Languages Dept.
Out facing books on show	Discard non borrowed items even if they are your favourites		Build strong partnerships with English Dept. and teachers	Look after your primary teachers
Replace discards with new titles requested by students	Invite book supplier to your library as a guest of Book Week		Offer digital newspaper sub to all staff	Look after your team and build on their ideas, abilities to make your library fantastic



Dessert

- Encourage
- Enthuse
- Enjoy
- Excellence
- Empathy

Encourage	Enthuse
Enjoy	Excellence
Empathy	



A fabulous combo - dessert with topping made from collaboration with your school community – **ENJOY THE CAKE**



A fabulous combo – dessert with topping made from collaboration with your school community. ENJOY THE CAKE!

Kilvington Reads

In 2016 we launched the inaugural 'Kilvington Reads Festival' and this focus away from Book Week enabled Junior and Senior school students to participate in a variety of author, creative and fun activities. We took a risk, prepared a proposal, were successful, granted funding, engaged the authors and artists, students, teachers and parents and now this event has been established in the Kilvington Grammar School calendar.

Building relationships with teachers, staff, students, parents, suppliers all benefit student learning no matter which year level. Our local bookstore in Bentleigh, Benn's Books, has wonderful staff with literary knowledge who can find us the elusive book in a moment and their personal service is outstanding. From curriculum to prizes to student requests this working partnership has built trust and demonstrates the value of the local bookstore to the community.

Focus

Use the classic 5 W's and the 4 P's to achieve your goals: Planning, Preparation, Practice, and Persistence to make it happen. These fundamental changes do not happen overnight. I have been involved in leading change in government and independent school libraries for over three decades. It's up to you to focus, use the 4P's, and make a change to your school library, your school and its community.

80% of your impact comes from 20% of what you do and the 80/20 principle is important.

Task	High Urgency	Low Urgency
High importance	Do it	Delegate it
Low importance	Diarise it	Delight in it

It is a long road with bumps along the way but so well worth the ride. Risk taking is key – if you want a soft journey don't be a teacher-librarian, it's not as cushy as it may seem to some. The unpredictability of the day is what makes the role, but it can be quite a challenge too. When the technology is working it's fabulous but when it lets you down at a crucial teaching moment you need to be very resilient. As a teacher with loads of experience I have my treasured stories, favourite books, one liners and 'save the moment' lesson plans for both myself and others.

Schools are slow to change so the gung-ho approach does not always work; start small, and then you will have courage (like the lion in the Wiz) to go on. There will be setbacks along the way but once you see the space transforming and students voting with their feet you will be inspired to continue. And remember, it's the small things and personal touches that matter – listen, listen, listen, then take baby steps to change. Involve students – get their input, trial a few new furnishing ideas, if they're a hit buy more. Our walls were bare and grey, so I asked around, started with one image and gradually jazzed up the walls – many people's favourite is the picture of the dog and the ladybird above the photocopier.

... listen, listen, listen, then take baby steps to change.



The reason why I love the role of the teacher-librarian is the making of connections with a student, teacher or parent. I believe the key role is to guide, nurture, encourage and teach.

We need to be focussed on student learning, what they need and how to assist them with improving their own learning outcomes. At Kilvington we are lucky enough to have a magic eucalypt outside of our library and we see it every day through our windows. This strong tree is a beautiful image – a classic from the Australian bush. The strength of a eucalyptus tree – strong roots and branches and leaves of every hue from grey to green. I hope some of our experiences and ideas inspire, energise and help you build your own library tree.

... the key role is to guide, nurture, encourage and teach.

Check out the [Kilvington Grammar School Library Website](http://kilvington.vic.edu.au).

References

Ackroyd, Joan L (2014) 'The Evolution of a Traditional Library to a Learning Commons' in *Teacher Librarian*, 42 (2), December. pp. 25-28.

Bishop, A.B. (2016) 'Initiative Built on Character – Program Seeks to Prepare Children for a Challenging Future' in *The Age*. June 17 2016. p. 94.

EduTech Twitter post http://mobile.twitter.com/edutech_au/status/631702073386512384 @VinerJane August 12 2015 Accessed 8.45pm August 14 2016

Eucalyptus Tree Image

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/85/A_gum_tree_on_the_Finke_River_along_the_Larapinta_trail,_West_MacDonnell_Ranges,_Northern_Territory,_Australia.jpg. Accessed 8.40pm May 19 2015

Kilvington Grammar School Website, <http://kilvington.vic.edu.au> Accessed 4.00pm August 11 2016

Kilvington Grammar School Library Website, <http://library.kilvington.vic.edu.au> Accessed 8.30pm August 11 2016

Moodie, Brett. (2014) 'Bring the Teachers in: Enticing Teachers into your Library' in *Connections*, 9, Term 3, pp. 9-10.

Resource Link <http://resourcelinkbce.wrodpres.com/2015/06/08/edutechau-report-from-the-2015-edutech-conference/>

Accessed 9.00pm August 14 2016

Rice and chopsticks image https://farm1.staticflickr.com/145/350982990_eb90cef0ae_o.jpg Accessed 8.22pm May 19 2015

Summers, Shirley Ann. (2014) 'Delight the Teacher, Reach the Student' in *Incite*, 35, May (5) p. 23.

Viner, Jane (2013) 'Teacher Librarians – An Essential Species to Connect, Integrate and Lead Curriculum Change in our Digital World'

at *ASLA XXIII Conference. The Curriculum Experience: Connect, Integrate, Lead*. September 28 – October 1 2013.

Hobart.

<http://www.slideshare.net/ASLAonline/lead-curriculum-change>. Accessed 10.07pm May 16 2015

Viner, Jane (2014) 2013 'Onwards: A Reflection' in *FYI*, 18 (4) Spring. pp. 4-7.

Viner, Jane (2014) 'Changing Library Roles – A Panellist' at SLAV Conference. *School Library roles: a process of change*. October 31.

Viner, Jane (2015) 'Collaboration – The Tool or Survival and Success in School Libraries' at *EduTECH K – 12 Library Managers Congress 2015*. June 2-3 2015. Brisbane, Australia.

<http://www.slideshare.net/mobile/MaddyJaneViner/collaboration-kgs-jane-viner-june-3-2015> Accessed 8.43pm August 14 2016

Viner, Jane (2015) 'Collaboration', EduTech presentation at meeting. *SLAV Southern Metropolitan Branch*. August 19. Kilvington Grammar School.

Viner, Jane (2015) Food photos from my own kitchen – Jane's kitchen.

Williams, Dorothy; Wavell, Caroline & Morrison, Katie. (2014) 'Impact of School Libraries on Learning' in *Teacher Librarian*, 41 (3), February 3. pp. 32-35.

Editor's Note: This article is an edited version of the presentation given at EduTech Brisbane June 2015 designed to inspire collaborative ideas for staff in school libraries. Some additional notes have been added to bring the article up to date.

Jane Viner is Head of Library Resource Services at Kilvington Grammar School. She has extensive experience as a school library leader, teacher librarian, teacher, professional association member, participant and school library advocate. During her career Jane has presented at local, interstate and international conferences and has been published in a variety of journals. Jane has been a past Chairperson of the IBAP Library Group, Vice President of SLAV, Co-Convenor of Central Metropolitan Branch, member of the ALIA Policy Advisory Group for School Libraries and is currently Co-Convenor of Southern Metropolitan SLAV Branch.

Acknowledgements

Jordan Adams, Vanessa Grosso, Ellen McKechnie
Kilvington Students, Kilvington Staff, Kilvington Parents