



# Volume 38, Issue 10

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## The library as 'third space' in your school

**Lori Korodaj**, teacher librarian at Lake Tuggeranong College in the Australian Capital Territory, shares how her school is embracing the school library as a 'third space'

### Introduction

Beyond day to day service provision, the teaching of information and digital literacy skills and resource transactions, the school library is often a 'safe space' for our students and even our staff (teaching and administration). This article explores the concepts of school library as 'third space' and supporter of 'social capital', and pinpoints those who may access the library in this way. Along the way, the article also explores how the teacher librarian and members of the library team take part in creating this supportive space (in school and in a virtual environment). The author provides practical examples/scenarios from her school library space and practice.

When first considering how to craft this article and its earlier incarnation as a webinar, it happened to be quite timely. Our school was about to undergo its external school review which takes place every five years. For our Lake Tuggeranong College (LTC) library team, it was an opportunity to really explore how we support our learning community – academically, but also socially and emotionally.

### The 'third space' and 'social capital': what are these concepts?

'Third space' as a concept changes depending on the context in which it is raised. Fraser (2012) discusses it as the transition between one event and another – a place to leave the 'baggage' behind between events. From an information literacy/Guided Inquiry view (Kuhlthau & Cole, 2012; Kuhlthau, Maniotes, & Caspari, 2007), 'third space' allows the student to explore concepts between what they already know and the curriculum they are taught.

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*A space to consider and create their own view on what they are presented with by their teachers in the classroom.*

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At Lake Tuggeranong College Library, and across school libraries as a whole, the ‘third space’ is not school and it is not home. We contribute to the whole child through holistic education (Child, 2018). Most importantly, we provide social and emotional support for those in need. We also provide safe information and the skills to find this for students to take on to further education and the workforce beyond school.

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*‘Social capital’ is where commonalities and relationships are found in our society.*

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An excellent example of this is the library, where it is more than just borrowing books and browsing the Internet. School libraries are more than books; they are also about the relationships between members of our school community (classroom teachers and students; teacher librarians and students; teacher librarians and fellow teaching colleagues; the school principal and the teaching staff), and relationships between our staff and our school communities (teachers and parents). For some of our students: the school library may be the only space where they can come and speak to like-minded peers and/or a trusted adult that isn’t their classroom teacher or a parent.

### Lake Tuggeranong College: Context

Lake Tuggeranong College is a senior secondary college (Year 11 and 12 only) in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). We have two part-time teacher librarians, a library technician and a library assistant. We are one of three shared use libraries, which means that our school library is also one of nine Libraries ACT public library branches.

The benefit to having a shared use library is contributing to the social capital of our wider Tuggeranong community. Our students are in the same space with older adults and library patrons – the young and young at heart! They interact with community members from babies to the elderly. Old and young make the space vibrant and lively! Our students have the benefit of having access after school hours and on weekends as well.

For me, living and working in this community fosters a shared sense of being and I appreciate contributing to the social capital of our shared use library. We get to know the regular library patrons as well as our own students, and alongside our public library colleagues can sometimes be the only friendly face and person they speak from week to week.

### How does this look in the school library?

Following on from the ‘Reimagining learning spaces’ (2013) research, recent work published by Willis, Hughes & Bland (2019) has uncovered a direct correlation between the importance of school library design and wellbeing for students. Their definition of wellbeing for this research was developmental, involved a sense of belonging, and included safe and caring environments (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2012).

While their original research focused on school library design, pedagogy and curriculum, this second paper explored more fully the idea that well-designed school library spaces contributed to student wellbeing as outlined in the goals of the Melbourne Declaration: Confident learners, creative learners, and Active and informed citizens (Willis, Hughes & Bland, 2019, p.134). Their findings support ‘a framework for fostering student wellbeing through the school library that builds upon an apparent three-way synergy between the goals of the Melbourne Declaration, students’ ideal library features and preferred spatial qualities’ (p.121).

What resonated most with me in this research was that students were consulted about what they felt was important to them when visiting their school library, which mirrored the approach we take at LTC when making changes to services and learning spaces within our library.

From my past and current experience/practice/observation as a teacher librarian, discussions with other teacher librarians, and ongoing professional reading, I feel that the school library is safe in some of the following ways -

- Cybersafe: digital literacy and citizenship
- Playground safe: different spaces for different students, a chance to keep away from other students that may seem threatening
- A safe place to try out new skills: Child (2018) discusses this in the context of makerspaces and the ability of these spaces to build critical thinking, problem solving and self-confidence. Students can also shine in roles of responsibility as a library monitor, taking on shelving duties, or being the 'IT troubleshooter' for other students.

The school library as an alternate learning area – a place for students returning from long term illness, those who are keen to learn but unable to face the classroom. It can also provide that 'quiet zone' for students with additional learning needs.

The school library as somewhere else with trusted adults – the teacher librarian, library staff and volunteers can sometimes be that adult the student can speak with who is not their classroom teacher.

Other perspectives are presented in the video clip '[School libraries are a safe space](#)' (2 minutes, 20 seconds) created by the [Students Need School Libraries](#) campaign.



**School Libraries Are**  
**A Safe Place**

## Students and staff who need our support

In our school, our experience can be similar to primary and high school libraries. We often come across students who are socially isolated by peers. But sometimes, because of the age of our students, we can find students who are grappling with issues that some adults struggle with day to day. Some students find their home life difficult (and sometimes catch up on sleep in our space), we support young carers who juggle home, school and a job, and increasingly, we come across students with a mental or somatic (physical) illness.

While our students are our main clientele, it is also important to recognise that our staff need support from the school library. We reach out to new staff as they navigate their way through their first days, provide resourcing (and advocacy about the importance of school libraries) to our pre-service teachers, reach out to our specialist teachers (in primary schools, these are often teachers who work in isolation such as our music and Physical Education teachers), keep our relief and contract teachers afloat, and most importantly, try to provide just in time skilling for our learning support staff (who often don't receive the professional development they require because of their working hours).

## Making ourselves visible – how the TL and library team take part in supporting the wider school community

At Lake Tuggeranong College, we feel blessed to have a principal who supports the school library and the staff who work within the library. We present her with our many harebrained ideas and, because we align our services with the ACT Education Strategic Plan, our school strategic plan, and what we feel our students need via our whole school lens, she usually says yes to the many and varied ways we try to make ourselves visible in our school community.

How can you make this happen?

- Provide tutoring: lunchtimes, after school. This could be the TL providing this, it could be providing the space for peer tutoring or teachers tutoring.
- Library monitors: make use of your 'keen beans'. Share their successes and their leadership with your colleagues in staff meetings and in the school newsletter
- Makerspaces: do your research (I highly recommend Jackie Child's blog, [Tinkering Child](#)) and set up a space that will attract everyone. It can be paper and pencils, it can be origami, it can include Spheros.
- Displays: entice staff and students alike into your space with inviting displays of resources. AFL Grand Final? Get the footy books out and find a few jerseys to hang in the space. Close to the summer holidays? Drag out books about faraway countries, modes of transport, the beach...
- Be part of wider school community events: we showcase our student artwork in the Annual ArtsFest in the library (brings in the wider community), promote and hold our annual Literary Lunch (celebrating the word through writing and singing, and a guest author), showcase the Furniture Making class' final products (stunning).
- Be visible: this is a key part of my personal philosophy, which I discuss in my blog post, [All things to all people](#).



## Academic wellbeing at LTC

Students: my colleague Holly and I are available for individual student appointments on their study lines. We also support them in the 24/7 environment with the [LTC Library website](#).

lclibrary.com

# Lake Tuggeranong College Library

YOUR WINDOW ON LEARNING

HOME CLASSES & ASSIGNMENTS DATABASES RESEARCH & WRITING REFERENCING KEYS TO SUCCESS FOR TEACHERS ABOUT

LAKE TUGGERANONG COLLEGE WEBSITE

**HOME**

Welcome! We look forward to being your "one stop shop" for print and e-resourcing, supporting teaching and learning at the College.

SEARCH LTC LIBRARY WEBSITE

Search ...

Key tabs we point them to are:

- Curated resources under the [‘Classes & Assignments’](#) tab
- The ‘Research & Writing’ tab provides support related to academic integrity, essay writing, and the Help! I’m stuck page, which points them back to the teacher librarian and also points them to our College Life (student wellbeing) team if they are super anxious about their schooling or their health and wellbeing overall.
- [‘Keys to Success’](#): this is a program that hones students’ academic skills. Students can complete this over a term or over the two years they are with us. They can also nominate to just drop into any particular session that they need assistance with ‘just in time’ (such as

note taking, referencing or tackling assignments). For detailed information about this program, visit our [slide presentation](#) from the National Education Summit.

Staff: to support our teaching staff with their resourcing and professional development needs, we are available for collaborative planning appointments. These can involve simple resourcing for a unit of work all the way through to assisting with rubric creation, assignment creation, and being part of a program of learning via team teaching (more fully discussed and examples provided in [At the crossroads](#)).

- On the LTC Library website, we have a special 'For Teachers' tab:
  - Annotated professional reading lists by subject available in our professional reading collection
  - What a TL can do for you: outlining our services
  - Multimedia Room: Services and resources available
  - Board of Senior Secondary Studies guidelines around plagiarism

Pre service teacher induction: We want our newest teachers to come out of university loving their school libraries and demanding that they are present with qualified staff in each school they work in during their careers. How do we do this? With ninja like stealth, via an induction process.

1st year observations: LTC Library included in the whole school pre-service teacher program.

- Half a day shadowing LTC Library staff as part of 1st year observation rounds (For example, meetings, classes, staff/student appointments)

2nd -4th year: Appointment with TL as part of practical/observation rounds.

- provide them with the support while they study so they know to ask for our help when they go into the classroom.

'The library is your friend' is something we passionately instil in them. Many, if not all, walk away saying, 'I never knew how helpful and useful the library and the staff were in saving me time and supporting my teaching. I'll be back!' And they do come back during their practicum.

## Social and emotional wellbeing at LTC

### A simple chat

It's more than just getting the assignments completed when the students visit our library. We allow eating in our library (they never leave rubbish anywhere but the bins – true story) and socialising in small groups. All four of us really like doing our 'walk and talk' around during class time and break times, chatting with the students that are working, catching up with our 'regulars', and finding out how their school holidays were to keep a 'finger on the pulse'.

During this time, we often pick up on students who may not be their usual self. We may also find out about what is happening at home and relationship woes, or simply just find out that they aren't coping at school.

Last year, we had a student (quite driven) who we got to know via our Keys to Success program. They booked an appointment with Holly, ostensibly to discuss a specific assignment. Once in the appointment, Holly asked how they were – and they broke down. Starting college was overwhelming, they weren't coping as well as they'd hoped, and Holly and the student spent the

rest of the appointment sorting out papers into a folder and getting some general organisation back into their lives. The assignment was forgotten for the time being.

From this point, we touched base with the student's year co-ordinator (we alerted the student we'd be doing this) and also some of their teachers. Now about to complete Year 12 in a few short weeks, this young person is a confident student, ready to take on the world. And we believe that had we not been there to intervene in such a simple way early in Year 11, this wouldn't be the case.

### Alignment with College Life (our student wellbeing team)

In the last 2 years, we have started working more closely with our colleagues in the College Life space. Seeing students outside of the classroom, interacting with them differently to their classroom teachers, we feel we can provide a more rounded view on a student.

- We contact teachers directly after a student has seen us for an appointment to point out what we covered and what they may need further clarification about in the task;
- We contact year co-ordinators if we feel we've noticed a change in a student who we see on a regular basis (particularly if we are aware the student has mental health issues)
- We are currently working with the faculty Head in charge of College Life to be part of transition from high school to college in relation to academic skills, to minimise attrition of students in early Year 11.
- As part of my Master of Education (Knowledge Networks and Digital Innovation) degree, I explored online support by the LTC Library to keep students with mental and somatic (physical illness) connected with school (reducing isolation from peers). This was after observing a number of students in this situation over the previous year. This is still a work in progress and yet to be progressed. You can read more about this ongoing project, '[Library as third space](#)', where you will find journal articles, videos, websites and other helpful resources.

### Leadership

Our LTC Library team is passionate about providing best practice service to our school community. We believe that as an adjunct to the support we provide from the library, we lead from the middle. You don't need to be in a recognised leadership role in order to do so. It is about careful discussion and planning to ensure that we meet both the academic and social/emotional needs of our entire school community.

- We discuss future directions (particularly in relation to the General Capabilities and the [21<sup>st</sup> century learning framework](#)) with our principal, senior leadership and faculty heads to ensure alignment with pedagogy and delivery of curriculum;
- We actively plan out how we can save colleagues time in the classroom and our students time with research and completion of their assignments;
- We set up appropriate spaces and times in which both staff and students can work with us;
- We provide referral to our College Life team for those students we believe require social and emotional support, and they in turn refer students to us for additional academic support. This is an ongoing relationship we fully support.



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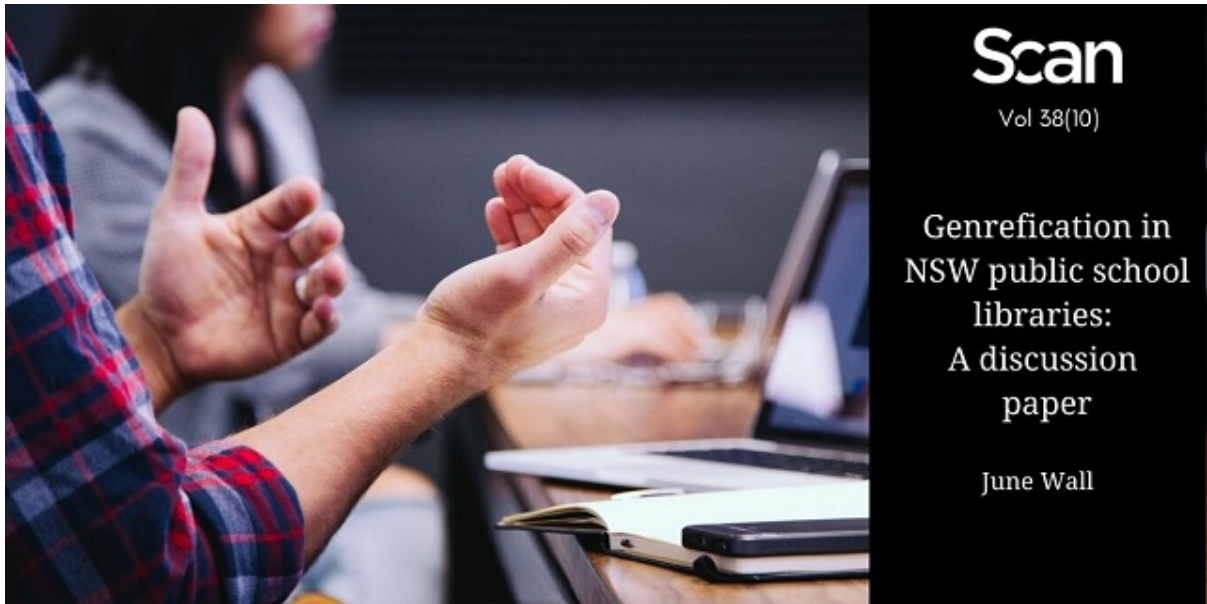
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## Genrefication in NSW public school libraries: A discussion paper

This discussion paper has been prepared by June Wall, Library Coordinator, NSW Department of Education.

### Introduction

The paper provides an overview using the current research and articles available on the trend in libraries to organise collections in genres. It is written to elicit discussion so that a broad understanding of the issues is identified. It is anticipated that some system wide decisions may be development. However, and more importantly, it will provide a base level for schools to make decisions relevant to their community needs.

### The problem

There has been discussion on various online forums, such as [Yammer](#) and NSWTL, about the place of genres as a location and browsing device in school libraries. It seems that some schools have started a variety of levels of change to their collection according to genre. In the process of this, it also seems, and there is data from Oliver to use as evidence for this, that the variety of genres and formatting of entries into Oliver means the possibility of a dysfunctional database if there is not an associated structure. As a result, and after a meeting between NSW Department of Education library support, SCIS and Oliver staff, it was determined that clarity on this was needed across NSW schools.

### Defining genrefication

Genrefication is a broad term used for an entire spectrum of processes used to organise school library collections (Sannwald, 2014). However, there is no other official or informal terminology for the existing variety along the spectrum of genrefication.

‘In general, any form of grouping individual physical materials according to subject content qualifies as genrefication. This single term has been used to describe everything from revitalizing directional signage (Fialkoff, 2009) to non-traditional shelving (Cox, 2011) to ditching Dewey (Whitehead, 2012) and revolutionising the purpose of a library (Introducing Anythink, 2009).’

While genrefication in NSW schools has predominantly been applied to the fiction collection, it is important to note that the broad definition of category grouping could be applied to any collection in the school library. The concept of genrefication has been applied whenever the following terms have been used in a library:

- Dewey light
- Ditching Dewey
- Bookstore model.

For the purposes of this paper, the term genrefication is not synonymous with literary genres, it is defined as category grouping. Category grouping is different from subject headings. A category is a larger concept than subjects, which tend to be specific to discipline areas. A category could be used as a literary category of Fantasy or a curriculum category of War and conflict. In the former example, subject headings such as Fantasy – Fiction; Space – Fiction; or Steampunk Fiction could be found. In the latter, subject headings such as World War, 1914-1918 – Australia – Pictorial works; World War, 1939-1945 – Australia; or Hastings, Battle of, 1066 which also mean different Dewey numbers could also be found.

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*Genrefication just means organising books, either fiction or nonfiction, by category in a scheme other than DDC or general alphabetical order.*

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## Types of genrefication

Four types of fiction classifications have been proposed over the years (Baker & Shepherd, 1987; Collazo, 2011; Plemmons, 2016; Sannwald, 2014; Whitehead, 2013) and include:

1. Format of work – short stories, picture books, junior fiction, senior fiction and young adult novels are examples of categorisation based on format.
2. Literary quality – easy reads and other categorisation that define either the literacy level or the quality of the literature.
3. Genre area – fiction books assigned a literary genre such as Science Fiction etc.
4. Broad subject headings – book store signage and organisation such as War and conflict. It is important to note that these broad subject headings are usually across Dewey areas.

Various combinations of these organisational concepts exist across the modern genrefication spectrum, employed as seems best for each library (Outhouse, 2017, p. 20).

While moving physical location is often the result of a genrefication process, it is not always the case as many instances of genrefication have been used where items are labelled specific to the genre and remain in their original location.

## Why genrefy?

The responsibility of all school library staff in NSW public schools is to ensure easy access to the collection for student learning and reading needs. This process of information access is determined and based on student and staff needs for each school within a framework of library standards.

The purpose of genrefication is to enhance students' ability to browse a library collection without staff or technological assistance. The teaching program for each school library will always include awareness and developing skills on how to use a library catalogue or to locate information.

In a primary school library, the main purpose for genrefication has been based on literacy needs, for example, boxes of series collections, while it seems the main purpose in a secondary school library has been based on quick access to specific content, such as HSC study materials. Anecdotal conversations confirm that students more often ask the library staff, 'Where is the green book on ...?' However, the collection needs to be organised based on ease of access to the material.

## Genrefication of collections

There is a difference in responses about genrefication between nonfiction and fiction, primarily due to the difference between the original organisation of the subject base in nonfiction, (Dewey) in the first instance, and alphabetical listing in fiction. The following attempts to provide a top level view of the main issues in both nonfiction and fiction and a corresponding genrefication approach.

Some quotes from the research and practitioner experience are:

### **The case for:**

'We observed that our students know some authors, but not many, and are more likely to read in genres.'  
(Davenport, 2017)

'Genrefication is also said to highlight usage patterns and gaps in inventory ...'  
(Cornwall, 2018)

'Arranging fiction by genre can encourage peer-to-peer book recommendations, conversations and reading mileage within a genre.'  
(National Library of NZ, nd)

"Genrefication helps students become more independent in the library by offering cues that help them find books they like on their own." (Martin, 2019)

### **The case against:**

'Genrefication could limit cross-genre reading by students ...'  
(Dunne, 2015)

'Many librarians found that genre selection was challenging — both in choosing which genres to use in their library, and in deciding where to shelve each book.' (Martin, 2019)

'With school libraries in mind, there is concern that if students do not learn the Dewey Decimal System when in school, they will not be prepared to use public and academic libraries.' (Sannwald, 2014)

## Nonfiction

The question as to why a nonfiction collection should be organised in any other way apart from the standard Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) as per SCIS standards has not been asked as frequently as genrefying the fiction collection. However, when the concept of genrefying the collection is

considered, as has been outlined in this paper as being more than like subjects, for example, an HSC collection, then the process and decisions about nonfiction need to be included in this discussion.

### *Advantages*

Much of the contemporary research, as cited in Outhouse (2017, p. 33), states that genrefication has had a visible increase in:

- circulation
- library attendance
- positive general patron feedback

(Buchter, 2013; Collazo, 2011, September 10; 2012 Dec 26; Cox, 2011; Kaplan et. Al, 2012; Whitehead, 2011, Jan 15; 2012, April 9; 2016, January 23; 2017, January 11).

The primary value in category grouping in nonfiction is:

- browsing the collection more easily. Student's ability to search for specific material is enabled.
- providing a different location schema other than the decimal system. It is important to note here that decimals as a maths concept does not cover sequencing of decimals until Stage 4 maths in high school and they move beyond 3 places past the decimal point.
- being able to categorise materials based on curriculum rather than the Dewey system.

Trott (2016) also suggests that the main reasons for dropping Dewey are:

- elimination of barriers as it constrains access
- browsability
- customer driven information as experience, which is in line with current patterns of information behaviours of students
- the structure of DDC means that often there are differences in location of seemingly similar topics. For example, sport stats (613), famous sports people (796 or 920), teaching sport etc.

The Book Industry Standards and Communication (BISAC) codes have been used in libraries as an alternative to Dewey. This is another example of genrefication.

### *Disadvantages*

Most of the disadvantages associated with genrefying the nonfiction collection are based on lack of consistency across libraries and the main argument being 'why change something that still works?' Genrefication of any kind is dependent upon community communication and the purpose espoused. On this basis, genrefication should only be examined as a result of local community needs or requests.

There are two main objections.

- It can disable quick retrieval of a single resource for a researcher.
- Standardisation across the profession is destroyed, the very purpose for which DDC was created (Dewey, 1864; Snipes, 2015), as cited in Outhouse, 2017, p.32.

The primary argument is uniformity of resource location across the profession versus increase of patron use and circulation.



## Fiction

### *Advantages*

In school libraries most of the literature reflects a genrefication approach in fiction collections. The experience reflected identifies that genre areas consistently expose overlooked fiction authors to student because having a genre narrows the reader's choices, a benefit for untried decision makers (Outhouse, 2017, p. 19).

### Reasons for genrefying

- Circulation increase for fiction owing to simplified browsing – anecdotal data suggests anywhere from 50% to triple circulation statistics.
- Particularly of use for reluctant readers or learning support where the decision-making process needs active support structures.
- Circulation increases and browsing a range of topics is enabled.
- Younger students read symbols or images more than text and, as genrefied collections tend to have symbols and images as location devices, this supports the user.
- Community needs met by responding to requests for easier location mechanisms.

### *Disadvantages*

The primary reasons stated against genrefication in fiction collections are similar to the disadvantages identified for nonfiction collections – that of the alphabetical order of the current system is appropriate. Additional issues have also been identified by Trott and Novak (2016):

- Defining genre. There are a variety of definitions available to use for literary genres and many books have multiple genres. The question is how should the school library approach the difficulty of assigning genres, for example, students may seek a book that has been classified as suspense when the student thinks of it as a thriller?
- Stigmatisation of genres.
- Time and space issues. It is time consuming to place stickers or move books and, depending on the number of genres within a library, there may be space issues for storage.
- The role of the readers' advisor. Those who argue against genrefication place emphasis on the role of the teacher librarian in providing the guidance to students for reading selection and so some of the main reasons to genrefy are not justified if a reader's advisor capacity is implemented effectively in the school.

### Some issues to consider

This paper has been developed as a discussion piece at this time for NSW public school libraries. Discussion on both sides of the argument is encouraged so that effective decisions are made for school communities. However, there are some issues that need to be considered at a system level.

### SCIS genres

The cataloguing standard for NSW public schools remains the [SCIS standards](#). These standards contain a specified list of literary genres. Other types of genres for both fiction and nonfiction, such as format (e.g. HSC materials) or subject based (e.g. War and conflict) are not included in these standards. To implement a genre approach that is not included in SCIS standards requires a considered approach based on library standards.

### Scot genres

Scot terms are also available from SCIS records and these have genres as well. Where there is a disparity between Scot and SCIS, the SCIS record should be maintained.

### Genres in Oliver

The genre field in Oliver has been used for many variations of the theme of genres. A library management system that is state wide needs state wide guidelines. It may be proposed to constrain the genre field to a controlled vocabulary (as for subject headings).

### Library standards

As a profession, adhering to standards is the basis of resource collections and location devices. It is critical that cataloguing records meet SCIS standards. It may be that changes will be on location only (the collection field in Oliver) and not within the Dewey field.

### Ways forward

#### System level

- It is recommended that there may be a need for core genres to be used in Oliver as a controlled vocabulary.

#### School level

- Localised identifying labels should still be used if this supports browsing and location skills for students.

## Next steps

To paraphrase a famous playwright – is the question:

‘To genrefy or not to genrefy?’

And therefore, is the answer –

Local schools, local decisions? Within an umbrella of school library standards?

The topic of genrefication tends to have proponents and opponents and both sides of the argument feel strongly about the topic. This paper has been an attempt to identify the core advantages and disadvantages and present some issues that need to be considered. It is not presented as an exhaustive overview of the research, rather as a practitioner approach to the topic. Critical discussion on this is an important part of the profession. Feedback is sought to:

- further inform school library staff
- develop a procedure as guidelines for this.

Please join the discussion on the [Great School Libraries blog](#) and provide feedback and your thoughts

Once the discussion has presented all items to consider, and conclusions have been released, a guidelines document will be published for schools to follow.

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## Genre fiction collections in Australian school libraries

**Martin Gray** shares the results of a survey he conducted on genrefication of the fiction collection.

### Is genrefication for you?

One of the common debates taking place between Australian school library staff is the discussion around moving a school's fiction collection to genre order, rather than the traditional order of using the author's last name. Bookshops have been using the genre system for years. It is familiar to book buyers and, presumably, a for-profit industry would not use a method unless they thought it was beneficial.

The growing popularity of the genre method in schools is clear from the number of articles and presentations on the topic. As the School Catalogue and Information Service (SCIS) recently added genre retroactively to all its records, schools using SCIS records should be able to add genre to all their resources easily. SCIS also publishes articles on how and why to move to genre order in their quarterly publication, [Connections](#).

In my own town, the public library switched to genre order several years ago and reported a lift in fiction borrowing of around 20%. Several of the local primary teacher librarians were also interested in moving, but all of us wanted more information to answer the following questions.

- Would an increase in borrowing for a public library work for a school library?
- How many other schools are using genre?
- How many genres to use?
- Most importantly, is it worth it?

While there were a few individual examples of schools that had moved to genre in literature, there were no overall figures easily available. To this end, I decided to ask the library community.

## Surveying the school library community

I created a survey using Google forms and requested responses through the NSWTL list serve, the NSW Department of Education Yammer forums, the OZTL list serve and through some direct emails to school library staff. The questions covered some logistical information such as, which sector and which state the library was in, does your school use genre organisation, why and why not. If yes, for how long and how many genres. It then moved to ease of use and borrowing statistics and allowed for final comments, for or against. After a month, and 100 responses, the survey was closed and the results analysed.

### Survey results

#### Which Age groups does your library serve? 100 responses

Primary	Secondary	Mixed/Central School
20	67	13

#### Which sector do you teach in? 100 responses

Public	Catholic Parochial	Other private/independent
65	14	21

#### Which State/Territory do you teach in? 100 responses

NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	NT	ACT	External Territory
56	19	5	6	5	4	1	3	1

#### Is your Fiction collection in Genre or Name order? 100 responses

Name Order: author's last name/traditional method.	72
Genre Order: Books in Genre, e.g. Fantasy, Historical, crime etc.	26
Other cataloguing method, e.g. Dewey Number, Size, age level, popularity?	2

#### Are you SERIOUSLY considering changing your collection? 100 responses

From Name Order to Genre Order	19
From Genre Order to name Order	1
Not thinking of changing (including those who just changed)	79
From Genre or Name Order to Other	1
From Other to Genre or Name Order	0

How long has your fiction collection been in Genre Order? (If it has) *100 responses*

Collection HAS NEVER BEEN in Genre Order	70
Collection WAS in Genre order, but now changed back to Name	1
1-2 years in Genre Order	14
3-5 Years in Genre Order	7
6 or more years	6
Our fiction collection is neither in name or genre order	2

IF you have changed your collection to Genre- Was there a change in how much/often students borrowed books? *30 responses*

No change in Borrowing	6
Increase of more than 50% in Borrowing	1
Increase of 20 - 50% in Borrowing	9
Increase of up 5 -20% in Borrowing	12
No or little increase in Borrowing.	2
Small decrease in lending	0
5 - 20% decrease in lending	0
20 - 50% decrease in lending	0
more than 50% drop in lending	0

n.b. this answer includes schools who use genre stickers while still being in name order.

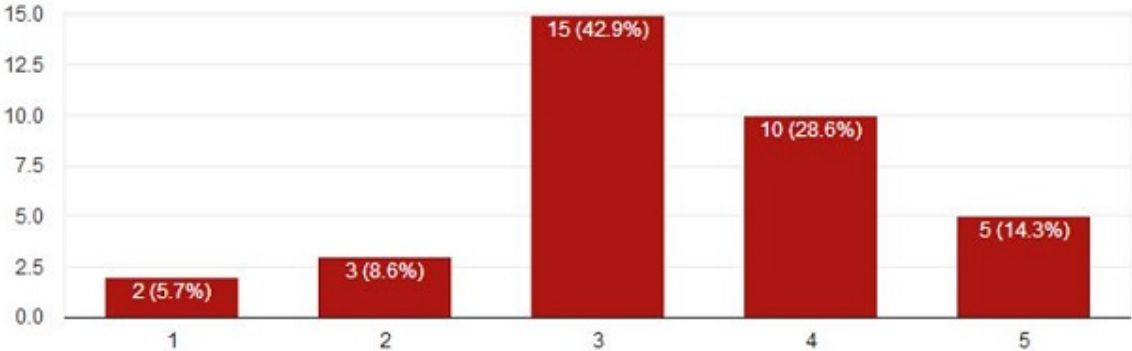
Is the above answer based on ...? *27 responses*

Checking borrowing figures in your library management system.	5
Anecdotal evidence, e.g. teacher comments, noticeably busier circulation desk.	5
Both	15
Other	2

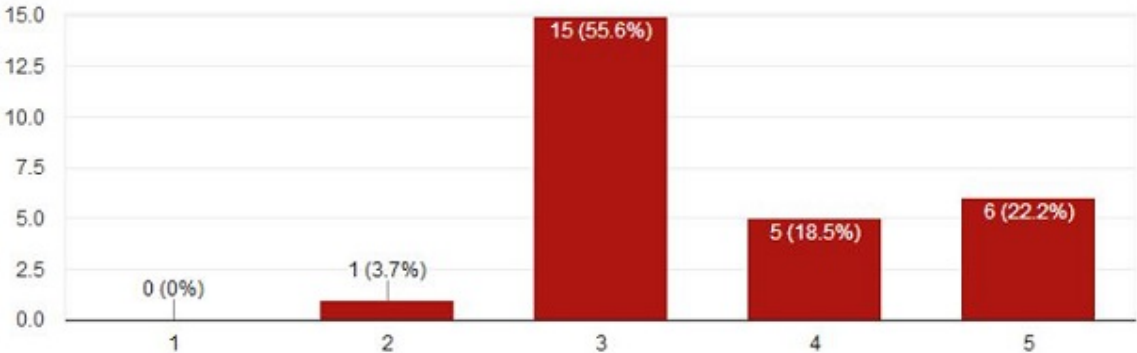
How many Genres do you have (only answer IF you have genrefied fiction)? *36 responses*

< 5	5 - 10	10 - 15	15 - 20	20 + genres
3	11	9	10	3

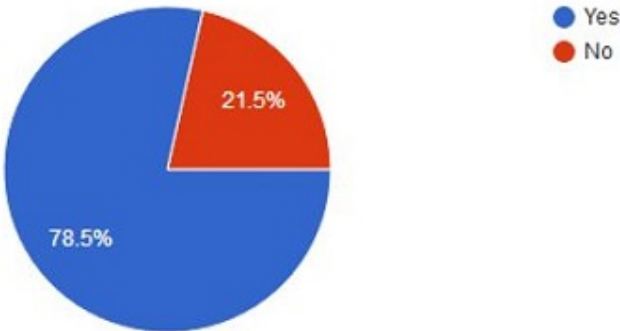
Have you found cataloguing and shelving of a Genre collection more difficult or less difficult than your previous model? 1) being much more difficult, 3) about the same, and 5) being much easier. 35 responses



Have you found stocktaking of a Genrefied fiction library to be 1) Much more difficult, 2) More difficult, 3) about the same, 4) Easier, or 5) Much easier than your previous model? (if you are yet to stocktake this change, do not answer) 27 responses



Were you aware that SCIS Australia now has added Genres to its records? 93 responses



There were also two long answer questions.

1. How did you decide on how many/which genre headings to use? OR, if you have not changed, or changed back, why, why not? 100 responses
2. Do you have ANY other comments or anecdotes about using Genre sections as the way to catalogue your fiction collection? Was it difficult to change, was it worth it? Staff attitudes, etc? 53 responses

## Analysis

From the results, we can see that of the 100 respondents, 26 are already using genre order with another 18 thinking of changing to genre order. One had moved from genre to name order and one more was thinking of moving from genre to name order.

When we look at the borrowing figures for those who use genre order, or have started to add genre stickers and genre breakouts, almost all had positive results in terms of borrowing figures. Only two responded that there was no or little increase in borrowing. The largest group, with 12/20 responses, saw an increase of 5-20% in borrowing. The second largest group, with 9/30 responses, saw an increase of 20-50%. One person even had a jump in borrowing of more than 50%. None reported decreased borrowing.

Genre order was more common in high schools and in private schools, than in public or primary schools. There seems to be no great difference between states, although all the Victorian Catholic schools were in Genre order.

The majority of libraries who were using genre reported that shelving or cataloguing was either the same or easier than name order, with 3/35 respondents saying it was more difficult.

Only 1 of the 27 respondents found stocktaking more difficult with genre order. The remaining 26 respondents said that stocktaking was either just as easy or easier.

A quick view of these figures alone, from our small sample, suggests that libraries would see an increase in borrowing with little additional ongoing extra requirements in terms of stocktake and shelving.

However, there are other factors, which need consideration. As the majority of the libraries using genre order have only been using the system for less than three years, it is difficult to determine if these borrowing increases will be sustained. This would require a study of the libraries who have been using the genre order for several years, of which this study found only six.

If we look at the responses to the long answer questions though, we find some harder questions to answer. Upon reflection of the online discussions around genrefication, there were many pros and cons brought up regarding changes.

## Pro genrefication

Many in the pro camp quoted two main themes: 'It is what the students want' and 'Borrowing goes up'. Indeed, many students ask for books by a type rather than by an author, so this makes locating a book easier. Also, some literature suggests that many students find traditional library classifications difficult to navigate, which leads to negative associations with libraries, and that genrefication is a way to combat this (Potter, 2016). Some teacher librarians reported asking their students beforehand if they would prefer to change.

Many students and teachers commented that they preferred the new genrefied system. There were even comments pointing out that, for a reading lesson, books are easier to find, so students settle into the lesson more quickly, which leads to better lesson outcomes.

## Against genrefication

Those against genre order focused on information skills, the difficulty of defining genre, the possibility of reducing a student's reading range and the lack of research showing the educational benefits over time.

Many teacher librarians believe that genre order collections may lead to a decrease in information seeking skills and, as schools are trying to improve these skills, the status quo is more educationally beneficial. I presume this refers to the use of the enquiry terminal and genre searches as training to develop skills needed in the future to effectively search databases or university library collections to find information, However, students wishing to find books by the same author in different genres would still need effective search skills to locate resources in their school library's collection.

Some teacher librarians commented that genre classification would lead to a reduced reading range, with students staying only within the genre they were comfortable reading. One said the change would be difficult for the ESL students. Some in primary libraries said there was no need to move to genre as books were in boxes in groups, often within the name order arrangement.

A common argument was that books do not neatly fit into genres. Some books cover multiple genres, raising questions such as:

- Which genre should the library use?
- What if a student thinks a book is a different genre to the library classification?
- How many genres should be used?

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*Some books cover multiple genres*

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Also, the popularity of a genre may change overtime. For example, one teacher librarian no longer uses the vampire genre, since the Twilight books era ended, and moved that collection back into the supernatural genre. An author's last name stays the same, but changing genres is a big job.

The lack of educational evidence for a benefit in changing to a genrefied fiction collection was a strong deterrent for data driven teacher librarians. There are few studies, if any, which provide definite numbers on increased lending, on how many schools have changed, and if it is more difficult to manage in terms of cataloguing and shelving. In short, there is little evidence beyond the anecdotal to say changing is worth all the time and energy.

There were also some neutral, pragmatic arguments. For instance, many teacher librarians do not have the time to rearrange a library. One school, Radford Library, took 10 days to make the switch, closing the library fiction area for this period (Davenport, 2017). For many schools this may not be an option. Other schools spoke of genre taking up more space. In NSW public schools, many teacher librarians, who have just changed from the OASIS to the Oliver management system, are more concerned with learning the new software, rather than any major change to the operation of the library shelves.

### Discussion points

In her article for SCIS Connections, Susan Davenport (2017) raised questions that a teacher librarian needs to ask about how students choose books, before thinking about moving to genrefication, and she believed genre was the answer.

From this survey's results, including the comments made in the long answer sections, I believe more questions arise. If a library has the resources to move to genre order, and we assume that borrowing increases:

- Are information skills affected?
- Is reading range reduced?

My town library is happy using genrefication because borrowing figures increased. That was a KPI they were working towards. However, a school library has more goals, relating to improved literacy and information seeking skills. If information seeking skills are affected, or reading range reduced, is that offset by the increases in borrowing and, we presume, in reading? What is the value of the weighting towards reading over information skills? How can we even determine if skills or range drop?

These questions, apart from being hard to quantify, would have different answers for different schools. A school, which already has a high library use and reading rates, may prefer to focus on encouraging more information seeking skills. A school in a low socio-economic area may be more interested in just getting the students reading.

There is also a question of how many genres a library should use. The SCIS subject headings (Education Services Australia, 2017) lists more than 30 genres. For many teacher librarians this is far too many. The Educational Services Australia Metadata Services manager recommends finding out what genres your clients/students expect and comparing this with what matches to the SCIS records (Kneebone, 2016). Personally, I would look at placing Science Fiction, Fantasy and Steampunk Fiction all under the one heading. However, this would require signage explaining that this is what to look for on the shelves if the students searched for one of these genres on Oliver. Some libraries used the available spine stickers to choose their number of genres, while others used the SCIS headings. Yet again, there is no clear answer for what is best.



## Alternatives

While moving to a genre collection was seen as having some downsides, including being a large job, some suggested alternatives could avoid the massive expenditure of resources while still providing many of genre order's benefits. The most commonly suggested methods, both in the survey and in the literature, involve using genre stickers on the books while still having them in name order (Dunne, 2015). While this requires buying stickers, choosing how many genres to use, putting the stickers on and explaining what the stickers mean, this is still considerably less work than rearranging the entire collection. It allows students to find genre without sacrificing reading range and can be used as a test to see if changing to genre is indeed worth the extra effort.

Other suggestions involved having break out displays of a certain genre on spinners on the library floor. Why not use both these methods? Use genre stickers and occasional highlighting of a certain genre in a display to encourage wider reading.

## Conclusion

While only a quarter of the schools who replied have moved to genre order, almost all reported that there was an increase in library use and little extra work after the initial move. From this small sample and these criteria, using genre organisation would appear to be a great success. If, however, we factor in the yet unaddressed concerns over information skills development and reading range, and then look at questions about the number of genres and the initial outlay of labour in making the move, this assumption becomes less obvious. Until a clearer answer can be given, the mixed approach may be the most sensible option. Most importantly, the individual situations of each school and the needs of the clientele must be considered before any decision is made.

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