

# STUDENTS INFLUENCE DESIGN IN SCHOOL LIBRARIES



The core business of a school is learning and teaching. Each school endeavours to provide for and ensure that all their students are successful learners and this is met by the quality of the students' learning outcomes. The role of the school library, therefore, is to underpin the learning and teaching of its school community. This is achieved by the provision of appropriate services and programs. The school library can make many worthy contributions to ensure that all members of its school community become effective and successful lifelong learners.

At Mercy College, a catholic girl's secondary school in the northern suburbs of Melbourne, we have approximately 600 students and 70 staff. With 48 different cultural groups, a high percentage of students come from language backgrounds other than English. The library is located in the centre of the school. Physically, it is accessible to the school community each weekday from 8.15am until 4.30pm while parts of it are accessible 24/7 via the school's ICT infrastructure. There is a team of four appropriately qualified library personnel comprising one full-time teacher librarian and three library technicians. The library team work to promote and provide the services and programs that support learning and teaching as well as ensuring accessible and equitable use of resources both on and off campus. They constantly work to keep abreast of the latest trends in education and librarianship so that they can work in collaboration to support their clientele's needs and wants.

How does a school of students and staff influence and affect the design of their school library? And how is this achieved? In reality, quite easily as our clientele is extremely influential. This is evident by their actions, how they vote with their feet or via the click of the mouse. Each day the clients decide how and when they will use the library.

The members of our school

community want to feel welcomed and comfortable in using their library. They are quick to work out if the library is able to assist them whether is for their learning needs or their personal reading needs. These learning needs fit a continuum from as simple as the use of a stapler to the more refined of the explicit teaching of the use of a data chart to record the researched information. It can also be as simple as charging an iPod to the more involved act of downloading footage into a movie software package.

Over the summer holidays a minor refurbishment of the library took place. The aim was to improve the learning

I believe that the clientele very much has an influence on the design of the school library by the way that they use the services and programs offered both on and off the campus. It is important that the school library responds to the needs of its client, but also has a responsibility to anticipate its clientele's needs.

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and teaching opportunities. Aside from freshening up the work environment with new carpet, new coat of paint, and accessible shelving, it also enabled a new layout. Even though the existing space was used, a more spacious look has been achieved. This has garnered many appreciative comments from the clientele. The improvement has allowed the clientele to work individually, in pairs, in groups, or as a whole year level. There is real sense of engaged learning as the clients use the resources, the digital resources, both fixed and mobile, sitting alongside the book, pen, and paper.



Images

1. Improvements have allowed the clientele to work as pairs, groups, or whole year levels.
2. Members of our school want to feel comfortable.
3. Students vote with their feet, or the click of a mouse.