



# 21ST-CENTURY COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT IN SCHOOL LIBRARIES

**C**ATHERINE RYAN attended a half-day seminar about disrupting the traditional school collection development policy.

How regularly does your school library review its collection development policy? A regular review of budget priorities usually includes targets for fiction versus non-fiction, but you need to consider if your policy has incorporated, and acclimatised to, digital resources. Furthermore, we should be aware if we are providing a diet of what we believe our clients need rather than what they want.

This was the topic of a rich half-day of reflection run by ALIA Schools in Melbourne in March. Drawing participants from throughout Victoria and interstate, the seminar looked at rethinking the moulding of our collections for a 21st-century user environment.

Policy is only one part of the wider discussion. Collection development requires us to take a step back and look at user needs and user behaviour. Many of us need to take the time to think about the level and quality of resources and where users will be consuming each resource before we shape or reframe our policies.

Traditional collection development policies do not necessarily refer to user-driven acquisition or digital content as a percentage of the collection. Pru Mitchell, Manager of Information Services at ACER, suggested that we rethink the library collection. She said that a library that accommodates 21st-century users must move away from a policy of acquisition of assets to one of provision of resources which are fit for purpose, seamlessly accessible and edited, and that contain metadata for bulk

management. Resources may be leased or even hosted from external collections. Not all resources need to be owned and located locally.

Karin Gilbert from Lowther Hall School in Essendon, Melbourne, talked about taking a disruptive approach. She said that we need to move from the idea of the space being about the physical arrangement of assets and think more about how we are integrating and curating digital platforms. She emphasised the importance of an integrated approach to accessing the internal and digital collections. Clients need to be provided with a wealth of resources with multiple access points.

Anne Whisken from Carey Baptist Grammar School in Kew, Melbourne, came back to basics when she proposed that we constantly refocus in terms of 'What is the learning we want to take place?' We need to arm ourselves with an understanding of the research surrounding digital reading and learning before we frame our policy. She said that this will help us to focus on appropriate, high-quality and relevant resources.

It is tempting to think that collection development in schools is an unchanging process. This seminar allowed discussion about reframing our policies and revisiting priorities based on changes in user needs and current research. \*

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