



SHINE A LIGHT ON YOUR LIBRARY

Manager of Library and Information Science services at Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College in North Sydney, **DEBORAH BROWN**, shares her thoughts on the importance of producing an annual report for a school library.

I find great inspiration in the underlying culture of intellectual generosity that characterises the library profession: the perspective that a good idea is an idea worth sharing. We are great at bestowing public recognition on each other. This kind of advocacy is essential, but it's akin to preaching to the choir. Do we also ensure we are marketing ourselves sufficiently to the important decision-makers outside our libraries – in my case, senior management, the school executive and the school board? An informative, well-designed annual report is a key advocacy tool that shines a light

on your library's achievements and clearly communicates the evidence-based decision-making that is the hallmark of a professionally managed library. Your principal doesn't request an annual report? Don't wait to be asked. Just do it.

What your annual report says and how it says it depends on your target audience. Our library's annual report is written for the College Executive, but it's also pitched at the faculty heads, as we want to publicise what we do and how well we do it. Its content is aligned to the published Strategic Vision for our school: we want to convey the library's awareness of the school's high-level, long-term goals, and demonstrate that we are actively contributing to the achievement of those goals.

Here's a checklist to help you plan your annual report and get it right.

VALUES AND IDENTITY

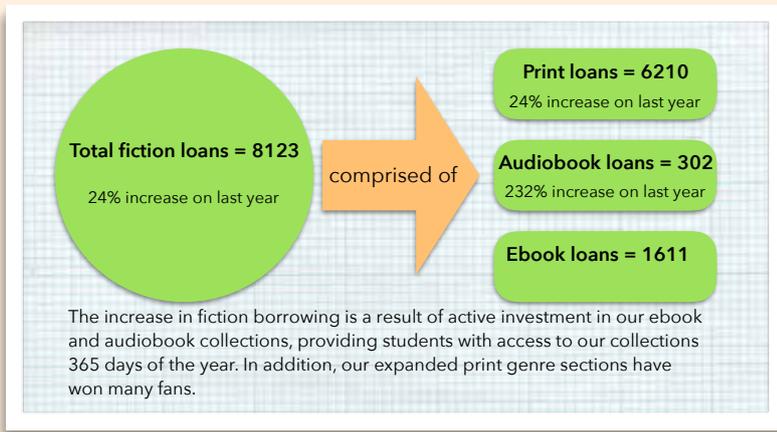
How has the library supported the underlying values of the school? Evidence of this are the displays we create and events we hold that that emphasise internationalism, empathy and principled learning. Our Human Library event breaks down stereotypes; a Maori visitor supported the teaching of the movie *Whale Rider* and promoted knowledge of other cultures, student volunteers in the library demonstrate stewardship for school resources, peer tutoring demonstrates caring and mentorship between students, and explicit teaching of referencing skills emphasises academic honesty and integrity.

LEADING LEARNING

Evidence for the library's direct influence on student learning includes the successful wide-reading program, highlighting its link to improved literacy skills; the number of library orientation sessions held; the number of subject-specific referencing sessions conducted; the number of students using referencing software. Highlight the team-teaching sessions where teacher librarians collaborate with faculties on curriculum topics. Does your library host afternoon homework-help sessions? How many students completed the Premier's Reading Challenge? Circulation data can be a key feature here. What do your statistics indicate: a decrease in non-fiction loans but an increase in database downloads? A rise in fiction loans that reflects a growth in your ebook collection? It's not enough to include numbers alone. The value lies in your interpretation of what the numbers represent.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

How has the library contributed to student wellbeing and engagement? Point out that the library is a neutral space for students, a central point of gathering and contact for them. Our circulation data tells us that 80 percent of our students borrowed something from us last year: that's 945 individual students we had the opportunity to interact with and perhaps whose day we made brighter. Many schools are looking at ways to enhance student wellbeing, so that's worth publicising. How many students contributed to your catalogue by writing book reviews? Include an example. Do students volunteer to assist in your library? Do you engage them by getting them to create displays or contribute to purchasing decisions? Include photos to make your report come alive.



It's a great help to check out the reports of other school libraries.

STAFF ATTAINMENT

By highlighting staff learning and leadership we demonstrate a commitment to continuous learning, and can reflect on skills gaps that may need to be filled. List the professional development activities that staff attended during the year: include conferences, networking days and training sessions. Have any staff had work published online or in print? Have studies been commenced or completed? Have staff presented training sessions externally or internally?

RESOURCES AND FACILITIES

How have improvements to the library's physical spaces enhanced student learning and access to collections? Have you added additional study spaces, desks, bean bags, whiteboards, armchairs, signage, display spaces for books or student work or new printers? Have you created, expanded or rearranged genres? Have you made better use of high-value library 'real-estate'? These all contribute to making students feel safe and welcomed, and listing them demonstrates that you are seeking out ways to increase the appeal of your library to students. Which library systems or resources were trialled, implemented or upgraded during the year? Have you moved a print resource to an online equivalent? Demonstrate your grasp of technology and willingness to experiment.

GOVERNANCE

How has data and evidence contributed to budget management in your library? What is the cost-per-article download from your database subscriptions, and how do the databases you have compare in terms of value for money? Compiling an annual report is an opportunity for reflection: should you terminate a database subscription based on a high cost-per-download, or is it worth marketing it differently within the school in order to increase usage?

Database	No. of full-text downloads	Annual cost (AUD)	Cost per download
Database A	649	\$1390.00	\$2.14 per article
Database B	305	\$1500.00	\$4.92 per article
Database C	11888	\$2415.00	\$0.20 per article
Database D	87	\$558.00	\$6.41 per article
Database E	202	\$1224.00	\$6.06 per article
Database F	1617	\$2500.00	\$1.55 per article

The relatively high cost-per-download of Databases D and Database E may reflect that increased marketing of these resources to senior students is needed. As a result, we will be creating screencasts to encourage adoption by students. In 12 months we will review these subscriptions to assess if they still represent good value for money for our library.

FUTURE PLANS

Include a section on what you aim to achieve in the coming year. What are your goals and how will you achieve them? What do you want to improve? What will you tweak? What will you implement? What will you do less of or more of?

It's a great help to check out the reports of other school libraries. Many of them are shared publicly online. Search slideshare.net and type 'school library annual report' into the search field for ideas.

An informative, smart-looking annual report is a powerful advocacy tool for your library. It takes time to produce, but it's a valuable way of shining a light on your practice. 🌟

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Further reading:

Hosseini-Ara, M., & Jones, R. (2013). 'Overcoming our habits and learning to measure impact'. *Computers in Libraries*, June. Retrieved from http://www.infotoday.com/cilmag/jun13/Hosseini-Ara_Jones--Overcoming-Our-Habits-and-Learning-to-Measure-Impact.shtml

Kachel, D. (2012). The annual report as an advocacy tool. *School Library Monthly*, 28(8), 2-2.