



A School Library

A school library is halfway between a public library and a school library, because everything is bought to support the school curriculum. But the library is usually quite small and only open when the school is open, which makes it difficult for students to “browse” the material to see if there is something useful to them for an assignment, or visit the library, except during lunch or when time is given to them by a Teacher. Students mostly cannot go to the library after school, as they play sport or go home. A Teacher setting an assignment will usually liaise with the library to find books, magazines, or electronic database articles that are useful for that assignment, before giving the assignment to his/her students. The Teacher will often ask that these be kept separate for the students. Students mostly do not learn how to find information themselves.

Most school libraries have an equal mix of fiction and non-fiction books, as assignments often require them to do book reports, or read something on a particular subject. Most school libraries don't have videos or music CD's, except when the curriculum needs them. Most don't have magazines except general interest ones. Most don't have access to more than 2 electronic databases, because subscriptions are expensive. Often (as at Rundle College) the library relies on surrounding public libraries making their databases available. The Internet is widely used in school libraries to find information, because it is free and most assignments in the lower grades will be able to find enough information using it.

There is almost never a qualified Librarian available to students whenever the library is open, to help them with their needs and show them how to find information from different sources. The students are often not shown the mistakes that can be made using the internet, how to check it for accuracy, or what other ways they can find information. Because of this, many students believe that almost all information is available on the internet and that is all correct – this is very far from the truth. Because school libraries buy books from their own budgets, Inter Library Loan very rarely happens between one school and another.

Many school libraries are operated by “Teacher Librarians”. These are Teachers who teach at the school and also operate the library, when they have time. Often they are too busy to help students individually. It is also common that parents volunteer to run the library at certain times. For this reason, most school libraries cannot offer more than minimum services and aren't able to integrate into school life very well. Books in the library are often selected by book vendors, since the Teacher Librarian does not have the time to look through catalogues supplied by publishers. A school library relies on donations for a lot of material, much more than a public or university library. This does help the size of the collection, but often means that the library has an “unbalanced collection”. Often the subjects “overstocked” are English Literature and History. Most school libraries use the “Dewey Decimal Classification” for shelving their books. Many school libraries do not have an “integrated library system”. Rundle College has an advanced integrated library system, able to search the library, place holds and renewals and renew a patron's personal details.