SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN LOCKDOWN

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FOREWORD

The School Library Association strives to bring library staff in schools together to share good practice, information, and resources. Those employed in this field work to bring the best of publishing and research to children and young people because, as the research demonstrates, reading is the best way to improve the lives of young people in every walk of life.

This report presents and discusses the findings of research conducted by the School Library Association with a range of UK library staff in the context of pre- and post-lockdown evidence and experiences.

"This report is hard to read at times, and my heart goes out to all those working in schools during this time – all of your efforts are appreciated and treasured by many. This report also represents a challenge – to school library staff, to the SLA and those in working within the school library sector, and to other educationalists to work on improving the relationship, understanding and communication between teaching staff and their library colleagues. This is something to which the SLA is wholly committed, and I look forward to working with colleagues from across the educational landscape to make this a reality.

My thanks go to all the people who helped fund this important piece of work during what have been ongoing difficulties."

- Alison Tarrant, CEO, School Library Association

"If the last couple of years have taught us anything, it is the vital importance of collaboration, communication and mutual support. This report highlights some significant challenges and some strong ideas for how we move forward to best ensure that our school libraries don't just survive but thrive and, safeguard the very best for our children; young people who have been deprived of so much, including the wonderful resources in a great library. What is clear is that there is a job to do and if we commit to communicating the importance of what we do so that we can catalyse meaningful collaboration and support, we can and will meet the challenges we face."

- Richard Gerver, President, School Library Association

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is an analysis of school libraries at a historical moment. It examines the role of school libraries at a point when everything was changing, and when schools, leadership, and the government were facing exceptional challenges.

This role is examined through the analysis of hundreds of survey responses spanning two years, interviews with school library staff, and statements from senior leaders. Lessons to be learnt are highlighted, and positives are celebrated.

The purpose of this report is not to assign blame to any individuals or groups, but simply to reflect and learn.

This report was organised by the School Library Association, written by Emily Davison-Cripps, and funded by donations from the public during the winter of 2020. Our sincere thanks go to them for allowing this report to be created.

KEY FINDINGS

- School library staff found themselves in a wide range of situations; the lockdown exacerbated pre-existing conditions.
- The impacts of the pandemic were wide ranging, impacting staff and pupils' attainment and wellbeing.
- In some cases, budgets were revoked while in others additional funding was provided.
- Although school library staff are often used to working independently, isolation was a significant risk during this time.
- Schools where the role (or potential role) of library staff was misunderstood or undervalued were less likely to utilise them during this time.
- The impact on the mental wellbeing of school library staff was significant.

PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE

The full list of recommendations can be found at the end of this report. However, there are three main priorities for the future:

- Strong sector bodies for school librarianship should be visible throughout the educational landscape.
- School library staff need to be visible and work towards the aims of their school.
- Senior school leaders need to develop an improved understanding of the role of their school library and how it supports the school's aims.

METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

The findings of this report are drawn from:

- 183 responses to the SLA Member Survey 2020
- 201 responses to the SLA Member Survey 2021
- The SLA/Softlink Survey comprising 1750 responses
- 8 1:1 interviews with library staff working within a range of differing UK school settings at the time of the March 2020 lockdown
- 4 statements provided by school leaders

Each interviewee was asked about issues specific to their experience in addition to the following general topics:

- Initial and ongoing communication with school leadership
- Room closures and repurposing
- Covid-19 mitigation measures
- Role changes and expectations
- Digital access and skills
- Mental health of library staff
- Perception of long-term outcomes (including any good practice that will continue)

Questions were tailored to the experiences and working circumstances of interviewees. Interviews remained open to topics and issues raised by the participants.

The report outlines key findings across all library staff groups, with group-specific findings presented where appropriate. By highlighting the experience of individual library staff, the report seeks to illustrate the shared experience of all library staff. It is hoped that by finding solidarity in the negative aspects and encouragement and inspiration in the positive, library staff will be able to move forward with greater determination than ever.

CONTEXT

School leaders were approached by direct email to comment on the contribution their libraries and library staff made to their schools during lockdown. While understanding the pressures senior leaders have been – and still are – under, the very low response to these enquiries could be indicative of a general perception of librarians as lacking value or priority in their schools.

Respondents to these interviews volunteered to share their experiences and views to provide qualitative insight into areas that had perhaps not yet been sufficiently explored in preceding studies.

Survey and interview respondents identified their role by several different titles, the majority of which are as follows:

- Librarian, or Head/Senior/Assistant Librarian
- Learning Resource Centre (LRC) Manager or LRC Assistant

Other job titles were also present in the survey respondents, as were additional roles within libraries. As the impetus of this report is related to the impact of lockdown on school library staff, the survey responses of staff holding these 'other' roles have not formed part of this report.

The 2020 Members Survey addressed several issues pertinent to this report, notably the initial responses of schools in regard to their library spaces and staff.[1] This was further illustrated in the 2021 survey when staff were able to reflect on their experience and any changes that had occurred.[2]

Questions were asked by both the 2020 and 2021 surveys, regarding perception of job security, effect on library, and effect on role. Although much can be inferred from these survey responses, it should be recognised that the survey did not ask specific questions relating to mental wellbeing. This was only raised in the 1:1 interviews.

The number of staff surveyed must also be considered, as less than 10% of members responded to each survey. This lack of data allows us to draw inferences only from the data given, and other library staff experiences may differ from those reflected in those surveys.

In order to allow for more conclusive findings to be drawn, additional quantitative data has been drawn from the Softlink/SLA 2019–2020 report.[3]

Additional contextual and general information and data has been gathered from a range of additional sources. (Please see footnotes for details of these sources.)

It should be understood that the survey and interview results provide additional insight into this area of research, and that no one library staff experience represents all library staff experiences.

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1   *School Library Association, 2020 Members Survey (2020)*

2   *School Library Association, 2021 Members Survey (2021)*

3   *Softlink, and the School Library Association, 2020 School Library Survey United Kingdom (2020)*, https://www.softlinkint.com/assets/img/content/2020_School_Library_Survey_United_Kingdom_-_Report.pdf

INTRODUCTION

"We knew it was inevitable, we knew it was coming." (Interview 2)

MARCH 2020

In a televised statement from Downing Street on 18 March 2020, Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced that, 'after schools shut their gates from Friday afternoon, they will remain closed for most pupils – for the vast majority of pupils – until further notice'.[4]

On the same day, the first minister of Northern Ireland announced that schools in their region would similarly close at the end of the school day on Friday 20 March, but 'remain open for staff to access resource materials, make arrangements for remote learning, and facilitate provision for vulnerable children and children of essential workers'.[5]

The English and Northern Ireland directives mirrored those of educational settings in Scotland and Wales.

Cases in the UK were rising at an incredible rate: from 22 on 1 March to 999 on 18 March and 4,512 by 31 March. [6]

Schools were awash with rumours that week. Students and staff who had recently returned from trips abroad were terrified that they had brought Covid-19 back with them. A growing number of schools were sending staff and students home, and the government had begun televising daily 'Coronavirus Briefings'.

The decision to close schools on 20 March was absolutely necessary and not at all unexpected. Thinking back, closing felt inevitable. It was just a matter of time.

But the closures themselves were not absolute. Provision for the children of keyworkers and for other vulnerable young people still had to be made. Schools had to find safe ways to accommodate approximately 2% of students, and how to best deliver remote teaching for the remainder. Decisions had to be made regarding teaching, supervision,

4   Boris Johnson, 'Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 18 March 2020' (2020), https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-on-coronavirus-18-march-2020
5   Walsh, Glenda, and others, Home Schooling in Northern Ireland During the Covid-19 Crisis (Belfast, 2020), p. 5, https://www.stran.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Research-Report-Homeschooling-in-Northern-Ireland-during-the-COVID-19-Crisis.pdf
6   Gov.UK Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK, 'Cases in United Kingdom', https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/cases

transport, catering, cleaning, equipment, IT, and more for these students as well as for many staff.[7] Libraries were simply not high on many schools' agendas.

"No-one was talking to me really. A few were talking about books and saying get ready to send them with stuff but mostly it was a case of – we have other things to think about. They know that there are great swathes of children who don't have books at home, but they were preparing for everything else that goes with that." (Interview 3)

Many socio-economic divisions were highlighted by this pandemic and librarians were as aware as anyone of how lockdown would affect their students.

"Poor area, few books at home, issues with access to internet etc. Pupils struggling for pencils and pens. Promoting free materials but aware not all families will see the links." (Survey 2020)

In later months, government initiatives, educational and private sector support came together to provide guidance, equipment, and the development of new methods of accessing information and applications. Online access was granted to buildings, books, and collections to an unprecedented degree in a unified bid to ensure children had access to educational resources if they chose, or were able, to engage with them.

"It opened up opportunities and closed them down. There was far more free information available digitally and I used SWAY a great deal to advertise what was available… pupils who struggle with reading lost out from [not] having me there to advise them on what to read and get them a hardcopy book. These pupils either cannot access digital sources or cannot be bothered to try." (Survey 2021)

Responses suggest that in those early days, many library staff felt panicked and that it was difficult to know what to do for the best. Respondents were also aware that the

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7   *Office for National Statistics, Coronavirus and the Social Impacts on Great Britain: 19 February 2021 (2021), section 7 'Homeschooling',* https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthand-socialcare/healthandwellbeing/bulletins/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsongreatbritain/19february2021#homeschooling

decisions that had to be made at the time were unprecedented and few would have chosen to be in the position of senior leadership teams (SLT) as they found ways to accommodate what became new ways of working for everyone.

"[My line manager's] time is so limited… I didn't want to use up too much space or too much airtime because they had so many big issues going on that all I could do was what I could do. There were different priorities and you've got to respect that to a certain extent." (Interview 2)

Library staff expressed their unerring desire to help and support their schools and that they understood the complexity and the priorities of the first few weeks.

"I decided for myself; this is what I can do myself. These are the things I can do from home. This is how I can make the library be useful. I said, 'this is what I can do, what do you think?' and they said, 'Yes brilliant, go for it.'" (Interview 5)

The Covid-19 pandemic caused an upheaval in not only the work of school librarians but their own view of that work. It provoked a reevaluation of how library staff deliver their role, requiring a challenge be issued to school leadership to recognise the value library staff can bring to schools through the unique position they occupy and the skills they can offer.

"It was nice seeing everyone rally round. It was nice feeling a bit more seen… It was nice to see the profession and the service valued or looked at again like, 'Oh yeah, you have always been there for us haven't you!'" (Interview 3)

Opportunities were missed. New opportunities were found. Moving forwards, it is imperative that the sector learns from the initial reaction of school leaders and library staff to the lockdown of educational settings, and reflect on the impact that may have had on both.

There was no universal response in the management of school libraries during the first lockdown. After the initial chaos subsided, there remained a wealth of difference between the way each school chose to manage their library and library staff.

"[Lockdown] provided a lot of distance between myself and the staff/ students. The teachers/support staff divide is now a chasm and I'm still feel[ing] a lot of distance between them, as much as they say they love the library and the work I do, it doesn't count for much anymore, it's just words. No one really cared to see if I was okay." (Survey 2021)

For some, things may have improved as schools moved through that first lockdown into the series of opening and reclosing that followed, but that first response was critical to how library staff and spaces were utilised for the remainder of the pandemic. This response also speaks to how these resources will be treated in the future.

"Some have said we are all in the same boat, which I strongly disagree. The storm has been the same, but our boats have looked very different." (Interview 8)

THEMES

1. CONTINUING TO WORK

The ways in which school library staff were informed of what was happening to their role at this time varied. When the schools closed their doors, the majority of library staff in schools didn't yet have any expectation of what the next months would look like. They went home on Friday 20 March and awaited instruction.

"I had two weeks when I wasn't told what was happening. The first week was just a limbo and then by the time we were due to start back I had an email from HR. I had a form to fill in and the word redundancy was mentioned so many times in this email, you know: 'we are going to be furloughing you because this is a preferable option to redundancy because we don't want to make you redundant and therefore we are furloughing you because redundancy would be awful.' I just remember reading this and so actually that first lockdown, what sat with me, was the shadow of redundancy... I really had a sense that I might not have a job to come back to." (Interview 6)

Library staff collect and curate not only physical and online resources but a wealth of connections and recommendations from students, families and colleagues, in order to be as responsive as possible to the needs of their school community, often without specific instruction. This often means that library staff are independent, creative, curious and that they tend to keep abreast of technologies and programs. However, a common theme among respondents is that their schools lack a good understanding of their role and skills.

"They don't have a great understanding of what I do normally, so they tend to leave me to it." (Survey 2020)

In short, school library staff are well suited to dealing with a pandemic where reliable information is needed, support for anxiety and wellbeing is vital, and access to information is essential.

In the first wave of Covid-19, in many schools, this was overlooked. 12% of respondents to the survey were immediately furloughed, cutting off any support that they could have given their schools. 29% were added to a rota to help with additional or alternative duties, including supervising the children of keyworkers, reception work, and other administrative roles with limited access to their library spaces. 52% were told to work from home: 16 of those respondents (8% of the total respondents) talked specifically about a lack of communication and support from their schools.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

No UK library staff reported in the survey that they were expected to continue to come into school and work as usual.

FURLOUGH

On 20 March, Chancellor Rishi Sunak announced the launch of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.[8] The scheme was part of a package of support designed to protect jobs and which allowed employers to claim for a cash grant of up to 80% of a furloughed employee's wages.

While it was announced in March, the scheme wasn't implemented until 20 April, which left a period of uncertainty in which some schools considered their options. Despite the Government intention to safeguard jobs, several library staff reported losing library assistants to redundancy in this period and many more felt their own jobs were under threat.

"Been told not to work. Attempt at making me redundant 2 weeks into furlough were withdrawn after 7 days (after my response made with the help of my Union)." (Survey 2020)

Just under three quarters of respondents reported feeling secure in their jobs during lockdown. While 23% reported not feeling secure in their job in 2020, this rose slightly to 28% in the 2021 survey. Some of this anxiety was due entirely to being furloughed as they felt their long-term job remained safe but were discouraged by the short-term option their school had taken.

For many of those furloughed, there was a significant mental health and wellbeing impact exacerbated by some worrying examples of poor practice from schools in the way this information was communicated to library staff:

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8   HM Treasury, 'Coronavirus Job retention Scheme up and running' (20 April 2020), https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-up-and-running

"Receiving the furlough letter was upsetting. Reading that my job was at risk and that I was effectively laid off was hard to read. At first, it felt very personal. I know that it wasn't, but as emotions were already running high with worry, it did feel personal. It was horrible to feel useless. Being told I was laid off and being vulnerable meant there was nothing I could do to help anyone in the crisis – all I could do was stay at home."
(Interview 8)

ROTA

For those added to a rota of multiple duties or other roles, some enjoyed being able to help and check in on their library:

"Working on a rota, my school has been very helpful and communicated with me throughout." (Survey 2020)

"...working on a rota 1 day a week (partly as I am a first aider) but also taking the opportunity to clean generally, tidy and weed out old stock, check shelving, get all the cataloguing done and covering books so I am up to date – generally all the little jobs I don't always get chance to keep up to date with." (Survey 2020)

Some were pragmatic:

"The direction was very relaxed – it was supportive, but it wasn't rewarded, but it was something that I felt I had to do and if you are paid to do a job then you should do it." (Interview 2)

However, others saw their primary role devalued by this decision:

"I wasn't given any guidance at all on how to run the library during that time... the library was just shut, closed down and on a couple of occasions when I did go in [I was] deployed as SEN support... the library had been taken over as 'community time'... with a PlayStation and kids unsupervised in there being able to do whatever. I did comment that

I wasn't happy with the library being used like that as everything had been quarantined and sanitized, but was told 'well they need somewhere to go other than outside'." (Interview 1)

In some cases, library staff felt that lockdown only highlighted the disparity between support and teaching colleagues:

"We were all working our little areas at home – what we would normally be doing, plus phoning up parents (welfare calls), plus coming in, so we felt that we were all doing the same thing where we knew other members of staff weren't doing any of that." (Interview 1)

The willingness to assist in other departments should not be to the detriment or devaluation of employees' primary role as library staff.

WORKING FROM HOME

The majority of Library staff went home on the 20 March with the expectation that they would work from home. Several ran into barriers to doing so effectively, be that due to a lack of access, equipment, training or support, or ineffective communication.

"We were told to more or less go away, get your stuff and leave." (Interview 7)

"Officially working from home but no guidance as to what I should be doing and ideas I have sent have been rejected." (2020 Survey)

"We were told as a school to work from home if possible, which I have been doing but from the tone of comments from my line manager and others, there seems little understanding of what this could entail for a librarian beyond reading. I have felt out of the information loop since working from home and am unsure if this is because there is little information coming out or because it is not being sent to support staff." (Survey 2020)

Similar to the responses of those combining their library job with other supporting roles, the responses to home working were varied. Some respondents noted the positives:

"I have been into school on a rota to look after key worker/vulnerable children but am now working from home. I am tracking whole school for our tutor time reading programme and also will be doing daily readings for Year 7." (Survey 2020)

"To eventually get all the books that needed to be covered and catalogued onto the library management system during my work at home in lockdown - the only time I've ever had enough time to do it!" (Survey 2020)

Others were more pragmatic:

"Haven't been told anything but am being paid still..." (Survey 2020)

Some respondents were frustrated by barriers, formed in part by a lack of understanding of what library staff need in order to work effectively:

"I am unable to do the work I want to do as the IT managers will not allow me to access my LMS from home as they have concerns it breaches GDPR rules." (Survey 2020)

"They gave us the links to teachers using it [Zoom] and showing us how to use it and that was fine for the teachers as they all had their school laptops but I was in a situation where I just had my iPad... so I had to purchase a laptop so I could do my job." (Interview 1)

Despite the challenges, some staple library events stood out as highlights for many library staff. Personal and professional achievements, big and small, deserve to be recognised and celebrated. A summary of these, as reported in the SLA surveys are:

- World Book Day, literary festivals, poetry and author celebrations: 62

- Book Clubs, Award shadowing and book gifting: 32
- Welcoming students back, introducing them to the library, recruiting training and celebrating student librarians: 31
- Competitions, reading challenges and quizzes: 22
- Working as a presence within the school despite room closures: Click and Deliver: 21
- Building library teams, school support and collaboration: 17
- Virtual author visits: 11
- Delivering online or mobile library lessons: 9
- New software (including new or hosted LMS) and development of e-book collections: 8
- Refurbishment (including both fantastic traditional spaces and the creation of an outdoor Forest Library): 7
- Readathons/charity fundraising: 5

Two pieces of feedback, also from the SLA Member survey, show how much school library staff care about the pupils:

"Launching an e-book platform during lockdown – lifesaver. Still managing to run weekly reading lessons in the library and a regular programme of digital author events for y7/8 through these unusual times. Sending home 700 sachets of hot chocolate at Christmas so families could celebrate Jolabokaflod - demonstrating the importance of reading at home." (Survey 2021)

"Following our library being closed due to COVID restrictions, seeing the joy and excitement on the children's faces when we delivered a box of library books to each classroom that could be borrowed and taken home." (Survey 2021)

The resilience and determination of library staff to continue, regardless of circumstance, to inspire, improve, promote and share their libraries in such a wide variety of ways is truly remarkable. However, from the point of view of many school library staff, the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic was one of missed opportunity.

Library staff, with their understanding of technical approaches to learning, their networks of colleagues, and their ability to ensure that the right learning and reading goes out to the right young people, were perfectly placed to help drive forward and shape online learning for students. They were well placed to embrace and support the

move to online working practice for staff and students in all areas of the school and at all ages.

Rather than schools taking proper advantage of this experience and resources, many chose to furlough or redeploy library staff to other departments. Many library staff were given alternative or additional responsibilities outside of their skill set that, while supportive of the school, did not allow the whole school benefits of what they could have achieved had they been involved in the consultation or decision making.

There is a stark difference in the experiences of those interviewees where library staff were given the opportunity to collaborate with other school staff, and were included in decision-making processes, and those who were not.

"Had book clubs with various year groups on Zoom. Got great sharing of information from our SLA branch and zoomed with them. Found the SLA website updates on Covid absolutely brilliant and shared with teaching staff and they were very impressed too. This was put into the Covid resources shared link with staff and students." (Survey 2020)

"I wasn't given any direction at all of what to do as librarian so… I was finding resources online, sending information and resources to teachers, sending emails all the time – didn't get any response whatsoever from any teachers, my line manager didn't contact me at all or Senior Leadership Team, so I had no direction whatsoever on what I was supposed to be doing." (Interview 1)

"Our school librarian (technically library coordinator) was a huge asset during lockdown. She helped run competitions to keep students interested in reading and reward their efforts. Alongside this she recorded herself reading to help encourage that love of literature in students." (SLT 1)

"My headteacher has been an English teacher and Head of English and line managed librarians so I've never felt there has been a misunderstanding in terms of the work I could deliver, or could deliver potentially, so I've never felt that… In my case I have never felt that [my role was misunderstood] because I know my line manager knows what's

achievable." (Interview 2)

The underuse of library staff and resources at a time when accurate information and literature is essential, speaks to a lack of understanding of what it is that libraries bring to their school communities.

When asked about the impact and effect on their role, almost 60% of respondents in the 2021 SLA survey indicated that they felt their position was devalued during lockdown. There was a sense that if furloughed, they had nothing to offer; if redeployed, their actual job was of lesser value; and if working from home without communication or guidance, their contribution was viewed with little regard and is of small value.

"The library was closed, despite me offering a click and collect solution to avoid browsing. There was no consultation. I have been redeployed as an LSA and in the autumn term, put in some situations way beyond my abilities causing a couple of breakdowns. There has been no attempt by management to maintain a reading culture. Despite this, I set up an e-library and promoted this where I could, much to the surprise of the headteacher. This has shown me how little the school (and management in particular) understands about the role of the library." (Survey 2021)

Similar feelings had been expressed in the 2020 survey.

"I feel totally neglected and not involved at all in the school online working. I worked hard to set myself up at home so that I could help the pupils as best as I could but was unexpectedly furloughed. Now parents have reading queries, and I'm not allowed to answer them, or share the fantastic resources I have access to. It's depressing." (Survey 2020)

So, how do library staff move forward?

First, by appreciating the amazing job all library staff did at keeping going. Whether from home or in school, in their library or in their own lives, all staff spent time reflecting on their role and how they could move forward.

Inspiration can be gained from looking at the incredible way library staff around the

globe came together and improved their situations. For those who could apply these examples at the time in their own school, brilliant. Others will have taken those ideas away to apply later.

Second, by recognising that there is an entire community of library staff out there and more than ever are accessible online to connect and support each other (for example the School Library Association, School Librarian Network, School Libraries Group, etc.). Library staff may work alone, but they do not have to feel alone.

Third, by getting visible and getting loud. Librarians need to be seen to be appreciated and need to have confidence that their role is worth fighting for.

2. THE LIBRARY SPACE

In 2020 there was a pre-existing feeling that library spaces in schools were under threat.

The Great School Libraries 2019 Survey of 1,740 schools across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, found that 'Around one in eight schools do not have a designated library space' and that 'Primary schools are less likely to have a library than secondary schools and often libraries are being used as classrooms or meeting rooms rather than for reading.'[9]

The temporary closures of the pandemic may have put more dedicated library spaces at long-term risk.

> **"No longer furloughed but must pack the Library stock into boxes over the next couple of weeks as the library will become one or more classrooms in September. I have requested 'closed access' bookcases... awaiting a response from the powers that be. Not positive so far."**
> **(Survey 2020)**

The government guidance on the use of libraries and library staff was vague: 'To provide capacity to accommodate social distancing... breakout space, dining space, libraries and indoor sports spaces may be utilised as learning and teaching areas'.[10] Policy needed to be adaptable to a huge variety of settings, but this allowed schools to make changes to their library provision that may have long term implications.

> *"Unfortunately, the library has been closed for over a year and is a classroom. I have to go to classrooms to deliver abbreviated lessons and use click and deliver to get books into students' hands." (Survey 2021)*

Several libraries became common rooms, mixed-use spaces, lunch rooms, classrooms, or meeting rooms, unable to retain any semblance of use as a library.

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9   Busby, Eleanor, 'One in eight schools do not have library and poorer children more likely to miss out, study finds' (16 October 2019), https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/school-library-reading-poorer-children-books-funding-cuts-austerity-study-a9158601.html

10   Department of Education, *Education Restart: Coronavirus (Covid-19) Guidance for Schools and Educational Settings in Northern Ireland* (2020), p. 19, https://neu.org.uk/media/11706/view, accessed 17 Aug. 2021.

"I just had to close my eyes to what was happening in the library."
(Interview 4)

Reopening to students was in fact, the biggest reported annual highlight from library staff answering the 2021 survey, with several reporting taking the opportunity presented by closure to revitalise their space:

"Transforming the layout of the library after it had been closed for a year... I wanted an inviting and welcoming space for the students. They love it." (Survey 2021)

RISK ASSESSMENT & SAFE WORKING

On 27 March 2020, Public Health England released a statement on the safe handling of library books:

During the COVID-19 emergency every person, including librarians, is being encouraged to wash their hands more frequently to protect themselves from any contaminated surfaces. The risk from books covered in a plastic cover handled by someone who is a possible COVID-19 case is negligible after 72 hours. The risk from books with a cardboard/paper cover is negligible after 24 hours.[11]

For staff continuing to work in their libraries, safely disseminating library resources that could be contaminated added an additional consideration to staying safe for themselves and others.

Even policies on safety of resources, quarantining, book bubbles, delivery, online access, handwashing, student access to the space (supervised or not) are all issues that librarians have raised and are notable for their lack of consistency. Policies and guidelines were not implemented with any degree of uniformity. Things like the SLA and CILIP guidance and risk assessment templates were a timely provision, but it is unclear how many schools implemented the recommendations made by their library staff to follow these guidelines.[12]

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11   *Libraries Connected and Public Health England, 'Public Health England statement on the safe handling of library books' (27 March 2020),* https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/page/public-health-england-statement-safe-handling-library-books
12   *Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, the CILIP School Libraries Group, and the School Library Association, Covid-19 Guidance for School Libraries (2020),* https://www.cilip.org.uk/news/506793/COVID-19-Guidance-for-School-Libraries.htm

"I passed it on but have no idea if it was read." (Survey 2021)

Public Health England also provided guidance, regularly updated, to support the setup of safe working environments, but again it is uncertain how many librarians were directed to this by their schools and how many schools looked specifically at their libraries when devising their own policies.[13] In some cases, it seems that different rules were applied to libraries in contrast to the whole school.

The practicality of re-opening was a challenge addressed by all schools. However, again, this is a conversation that many library staff felt excluded from.

"Working on my "Risk assessment" document for how to re-open in September. No idea what school management plans are yet." (Survey 2020)

Responses from library staff regarding the management of these preparations suggested a high level of uncertainty.

"We had a general school [risk assessment] which we were all given access to, so if there was anything that I thought was particularly missing from the school library point of view I could feed into it. The response tended to be from the powers that be that they were asking me what the regulations were for libraries, which were perhaps lacking.

There was nothing concrete – it was all disparate really, just guidelines really, but they were asking me rather than telling me what they wanted." (Interview 7)

Several respondents noted that it was important to contribute to the discussion, but were concerned that perhaps this, as with other communications during lockdown, should have been delivered top down and that SLT should not have relied on library staff to push it forward.

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13   *Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy and Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 'Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19)' (14 July 2021)* https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19

"I feel a little bit on the outside. You know, perhaps an afterthought? Or perhaps a unique situation? Depending how you look at it." (Interview 7)

As the situation in the UK and locally changed, so too did school guidelines. While librarians wanted to be accommodating, help their school, and support their leadership during a time of crisis, it meant retraining and reframing the thinking of many people as to what this library space is, how it should be used, and how information can be shared with students.

"Obviously it was all new to us, the Zoom meetings and everything, and I set up all these online competitions and escape rooms and everything and I was going to be using them using Google Meet. I set it all up and everything and then when I was in school one day I was told, 'Oh no, we can't use that now. It's not safe.' I said, 'But you told me beforehand I could, so I've just spent the past two weeks sorting this all out and now you're telling me I can't do it?' and that seemed like a waste of my time and resources. I kept getting things like that where I was told, 'Oh yeah that sounds good do that' and then when I had actually done it all and then went to use it I was told, 'No you can't actually use that because of GDPR or…' so just emails that was the only way." (Interview 1)

These experiences raised questions about how library spaces are perceived and protected.

At the core of many responses was disappointment that the library was sometimes seen as an add on, a wet-break common room, or something to show off only on open days, rather than what it can be – a place of sanctuary and independent study and peer to peer learning, that can lead to the discovery of whole new worlds of understanding, empathy and learning, beyond the constriction of time and limitations of curriculum. Initiatives such as the Great School Libraries group and the School Library Data Group demonstrate how passionately library staff have fought to have the importance of libraries recognised.

Eventually, on 19 July 2021, Public Health England released new guidance as part of the government's recovery roadmap: 'As advised by PHE, there is no longer any requirement to quarantine returned books and library resources, or to wipe down their surfaces.'[14]

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14   *NHS Health Education England, 'Adapting the workplace' (19 July 2021),* https://library.hee.nhs.uk/covid-19/adapting-the-workplace

The confirmation that libraries were safe spaces was a great reassurance and enabled library staff to start looking forward rather than back, although some staff reported finding the habits of the previous 18 months hard to break.

3. ENGAGEMENT WITH THE LIBRARY

The growing body of research into school libraries repeatedly demonstrates the multifaceted impact that libraries can have. In an academic setting this is most relevant in terms of impact on attainment, wellbeing, and information skills.

ATTAINMENT

According to the 2021 NFER research, learning loss in reading during the first lockdown has been calculated to be 1.2 months for primary school pupils.[15] Students in all schools have undoubtedly fallen behind in a number of areas, and it is important that schools make use of their libraries to help re-engage students and redress the balance.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that during the 2020 lockdown, reading enjoyment increased as young people stayed at home and looked to books to occupy them, confirming or discovering a joy in reading. However, this was entirely dependent on their access to books, and many library staff faced challenges in providing access.

"Library used as a classroom for Year 7 students, no stock purchased, only allowed in the library when no lessons were taking place."
(Survey 2021)

"Library got closed to students and is used by academic mentors and PGCE students as a base. We were in a bubble with Y11 until they left. Still not open to students; running a click and collect service for everyone"
(Survey 2021)

While many libraries were entirely inaccessible, some library staff who were able to continue working went out of their way to provide book collection services at reception desks, set up email request services, and tailored book finding services for pupils.

"I was working at home but we opened up on May 11th. Though the library isn't open for students to come to me, I've gone to them and are

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15   Rose, Susan, and others, *Interim Paper Authors: Impact of school closures and subsequent support strategies on attainment and socio-emotional wellbeing in Key Stage 1: Interim Paper 1 (2021)*, https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Covid-19_Resources/Impact_of_school_closures_KS1_interim_findings_paper_-_Jan_2021.pdf

arranging that they all have books to check out." (Survey 2020)

"Running the Carnegie Shadowing group with 3 local families whose books I can leave on their doorsteps. Gives us a potential of 7 student Shadowers plus myself and a teaching colleague." (Survey 2020)

For many students from disadvantaged backgrounds, the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated issues of access to resources. Students in areas affected by lower provision of public libraries found lockdown cut off what access to books they had. In addition, often these were the schools that had no additional funding to spare to provide the resources needed for home learning.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) produced a publication in 2002 that stated that reading for pleasure is more important for children's educational success than their family's socio-economic status.[16]

In addition to challenges in pupils accessing resources, the pandemic also caused a loss of momentum that library staff may have gained building relationships with students. Post-pandemic, the rebuilding of those relationships and making sure the library is visible to all students become more important than ever before. A respondent to the 2021 survey reported a highlight of their year as:

"Being able to be a visible presence around school despite the library being physically closed." (Survey 2021)

STUDENT WELLBEING

A key part of what library spaces and library staff do is to provide a safe space. Library staff are often the staff member students choose to confide in, and disclose to, and they often find themselves initiating safeguarding or wellbeing reports. The impact of Covid-19 on our young people's mental health has been significant, and library staff may need more support moving forwards to deal with the greater or differing need that may result.[17] Ensuring schools are prepared to support library staff with that it is an action well worth taking. Library staff are often well-used to providing pastoral support

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16   Kirsch, Irwin, and others, Reading for Change: Performance and Engagement across Countries: Results from PISA 2000 (2002), https://www.oecd.org/education/school/programmeforinternationalstudentassessmentpisa/33690904.pdf

17   Lewis, Philip, 'Covid-19: Impact on Young People's Mental Health' (18 September 2020), https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/covid-19-impact-on-young-peoples-mental-health/

to students, and it is unfortunate that in the conditions of the pandemic, most were unable to perform this role. They now can be and should be expected to help redress the attainment impact and help to recreate that safe space for students who are struggling with post-pandemic mental health and learning implications.

TEACHING STAFF

The SLA/Softlink survey highlighted that SLT engagement with the library and its staff in primary schools is a concern. Teacher and student engagement in different settings falls between 40-60%, leaving considerable room for improvement.[18]

The outlook in secondary schools is worse, with only moderate support from SLT at best being reported and teacher engagement even lower. The highest levels of support from SLT and engagement from teaching staff were in larger state schools.[19]

Going into the pandemic, the need to engage more effectively with school staff was clear.

"Lockdown brought my digital skills to the fore – I run the school website and it was used to provide pupils with work. I also provided training to teachers in how to use Teams, OneNote etc. I liked that it allowed me to be seen as something other than just the keeper of books." (Survey 2021)

INFORMATION PROVISION

Prior to lockdown there were some schools which had no online resources. Most cited a lack of staff interest as the reason collections remained physical.[20] However, during lockdown, a number of school librarians were able to begin to build e-book and other resource collections online, which has fundamentally changed the nature of their provision moving forward. Schools who were apathetic, at best, to building collections fit for the twenty-first century suddenly had the realisation that their lack of interest was setting their students back.

"I have set up access to a digital library." (Survey 2020)

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18   *Softlink, and the School Library Association, 2020 School Library Survey United Kingdom (2020),* https://www.softlinkint.com/assets/img/content/2020_School_Library_Survey_United_Kingdom_-_Report.pdf

19   *Softlink, and the School Library Association, 2020 School Library Survey United Kingdom (2020),* https://www.softlinkint.com/assets/img/content/2020_School_Library_Survey_United_Kingdom_-_Report.pdf

20   *Ibid.*

"e-Books I set up during lockdown. That was one of the things I pushed for and got budget for." (Interview 6)

All library staff know that when it comes to information, it is not about how much is on the shelf but about how relevant that content is.

The opportunity to promote information literacy skills tailored for home or blended learning led to the development of some great schemes of work. Working online allowed schools and students to react to current themes, including fake news, the Black Lives Matter movement, and climate change. The access granted by institutions, libraries and collections worldwide gave an unprecedented insight into the real learning potential of the internet for anyone with access. So much was open that navigating the possibilities and signposting to the relevant gems in the hoard became a key role – a role library staff were perfectly placed and trained to deliver.

"I was furloughed 10 working days after the closure of schools. In the 10 days, the library team was able to put together a number of pages on the schools virtual learning environment. This provides pupils and teachers with something to refer to." (Survey 2020)

"I deliver five live sessions a day as well as creating resources, films and information for students and teachers." (Survey 2020)

To mitigate the impact of library closures, a large number of books were read aloud and posted online. Schools quickly took note and wanted to record books and poems being read aloud and put them online for students. They also wanted textbooks made available online to all students.

"I did Storytime online and I was putting them onto YouTube. Suddenly I had teachers going, 'Oh, well that's not bad actually, that's pretty good!' you know? I did a Revolting Rhymes one but I did it where I dressed up as every single character from the 'Three Little Pigs' story… and then edited it all together. It took an age but it was worth it…

That's the positive I've taken out of this; I got to show off [what I could do] a little bit …" (Interview 3)

"SLT got me involved in running weekly webinars with students, she pulled me into that and getting authors online so the students could interview authors online." (Interview 6)

This was an area that librarians were well-equipped to navigate. Library staff know copyright law and were able to swiftly check or apply for the often-temporary licenses needed to make what schools wanted to do possible – or to let them know that it was not.

Publishers were fantastic about granting permissions, but there was a limit to what was legal and possible, a limit that other school staff were perhaps not always best placed to consider.

Closures did not lead to only negative impacts as lessons were learned and working practice in some cases was improved – for example, the development of online resources and access online for students to catalogues. In addition, time spent updating or doing stock work meant that library contents as a whole were better understood.

"Staff are contacting me, and I am forwarding emails from our magazine suppliers to keep staff informed of online content." (Survey 2020)

"I have been contacted and used by various staff for my reading and research expertise." (Survey 2020)

More school staff need to be educated on what libraries are, what they can be, and how their librarian colleagues can support them. Librarians are great communicators, and it seems a natural step that schools should encourage, and provide opportunities for, librarians to share their skills. This would allow other staff to benefit from their knowledge and skills, as well as help them understand the value of this work.

"Rather than waiting for people to come into the library or to contact me, it was on me to contact them and say this is what we've got for your subject, this is how I can support these students and I felt more inserted into the lessons than [I] ever had working physically in the library." (Survey 2020)

IMPACT OF SENIOR LEADERSHIP

It is unfortunate timing that the Covid-19 outbreak occurred before any impetus could come from the dissemination of the 2019 Great School Libraries (GSL) survey and its findings. At this point, the findings had been recognised but not yet addressed. There was no time to implement significant change or to build on the good practice that was shared in that report, so it must be considered that schools went into the Covid-19 crisis with the GSL survey results as the current state of affairs as reported at that point across the UK.[21] Unfortunately, these showed the under-valuation of school library staff: 'Our findings also highlight a disturbing trend of undervaluing school library staff as an integral part of the life of the school.'[22]

Responses from interviews suggest this issue was exacerbated by the pandemic:

"I don't feel like I've ever been managed...so the direction didn't come from above ...they were aware they couldn't place too many demands."
(Interview 2)

The National Strategy for School Libraries in Scotland neatly summarises how this issue can be prevented: 'The integration of school library services into the life of the school happens most effectively when headteachers and school managers have a good understanding of the value of library services and school librarians in the school community.'[23] If the value that library staff can bring to a school is to be fully appreciated, this has to be led from the top.

There are examples of good practice from SLT that ought to be highlighted – cases where librarians were asked for their help moving online, researching and applying learning, developing online access to resources and new reading initiatives. These reported cases are few, but shine a bit of light on what was, for many library staff, a very insecure time.

"Across the Trust... we have consciously invested in ensuring that the libraries in each of these schools are being proactively supported.

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21   *Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, the CILIP School Libraries Group, and the School Library Association, Great School Libraries Survey Findings and Update on Phase 1 (17 Oct. 2019),* https://d824397c-0ce24fc6-b5c4-8d2e4de5b242.filesusr.com/ugd/8d6dfb_a1949ea011cd415fb-d57a7a0c4471469.pdf

22   *Ibid. p. 6*

23   *Scottish Library and Information Council, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, and the Scottish Government, Vibrant Libraries, Thriving Schools (2018), p. 15,* https://scottishlibraries.org/media/2110/vibrant-libraries-thriving-schools.pdf

There has been improvements in the building facilities, in the software systems being used for day to day library management, in the books being borrowed from the libraries but most importantly in supporting the librarians that deliver service to our pupils. This group of colleagues have been instrumental in maintaining the character and culture of the schools during the pandemic. The librarians have ensured that library stock was being refreshed, books were still being lent to pupils, that the library facilities were being used when possible and that extra-curricular activities were being supported …

During the pandemic reading was one of the things that our pupils were able to continue to do and our librarians have actively supported pupils in their ability to access reading. We will continue to promote and support our libraries within the Trust and are very proud of the work done by a great team of librarians." (SLT 2)

Libraries were low on the majority of school agendas, and while the focus necessarily needed to be on teaching provision, it seems that a number of opportunities for schools to gain support, for that very priority, were missed.

"The teaching staff have learnt so much and risen to the challenge over lockdown, whilst those on furlough have not. There is a worry that I will have forgotten how to do my job, will not know how to use the technology in the same way and will have missed some essential preparation for pastoral care and communication." (Interview 8)

JOB SECURITY

The 2017 National Literacy Trust report concluded that it would be useful to know current numbers of library staff.[24] Unfortunately, no accurate data on these numbers

is currently available. Without such pre-pandemic numbers it is difficult to fully assess the real impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on library staffing levels. However, evidence from respondents suggests that job security is a major concern for library staff, especially post-pandemic. It is to be hoped that school leaders will continue to invest in their libraries rather than use online resources as a reason to cut library budgets or

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24   *Teravainen-Goff, Anne, and Clark, Christina, School libraries: A literature review on current provision and evidence of impact (London: National Literacy Trust, 2017)*

to "prove" the irrelevance of libraries and their staff:

"Why do we need library books? The students found everything they needed online." (comment made by SLT to Interview 7)

COMMUNICATION

Probably the most troubling things reported in the SLA Surveys and confirmed with every 1:1 interview held with library staff about this period, was the lack of communication from school leadership to library staff.

While it may be that non-respondents had a different experience, it is deeply troubling that a period of weeks to months, with zero contact from schools was the experience of so many library staff.

"I had NO contact from school throughout the first lockdown and honestly thought I was on Furlough." (Survey 2021)

For many, it is not a pleasant aspect of lockdown to revisit.

It is in fact one of the most fundamentally damaging things that schools did to their relationship with their library staff at that time and one that has inevitable implications moving forward.

It is important to note that these were not all furloughed staff. The majority of respondents were library staff who were expected to work from home with no guidance on what that work should involve and with no requirement that any outcome would be produced. This was with little or no communication of any kind and in many cases without the training or resources to be able to do their work effectively.

The Covid-19 pandemic was instrumental in highlighting existing concerns within school libraries. The difficulty library staff have faced in ensuring the value of their role is recognised, supported, and developed has been shown in clear contrast to the way that teaching staff colleagues responded to and were supported by school leadership. The priority in schools of course must be teaching, but the support that library staff could offer was overlooked and this is not due entirely to a failing of school leadership as such but more as a failing in general for libraries to be recognised as the essential resource that they are.

A second recurring complaint seen in every survey was the lack of consultation from

SLT regarding changes in use of the library space or of the role.

"The library closed and became used as a space for vulnerable/ key worker children to work during lock-down, then an isolation space for positive Covid cases, then a sixth form study area, then the behaviour room. As a consequence, I now do duties all over the school, run a reserve and deliver service, ran library inductions in classrooms in September, and only recently have been able to work in my office during the day." (Survey 2021)

"The library was closed... There was no consultation. I have been redeployed as a an LSA and in the autumn term, put in some situations way beyond my abilities causing a couple of breakdowns." (Survey 2021)

It is hard not to wonder what would have happened if a teacher was in charge of the space, instead of a librarian or member of support staff ... Would they have been consulted more? The divide between teachers and support staff permeates many issues; this does appear to be one of them.

"The first lockdown, there was no communication with support staff." (Interview 4)

This breach in trust has many library staff looking to move schools or sectors, and others are leaving the profession entirely. It is noteworthy that of the eight librarians interviewed for this report, four have left their school or are actively looking to do so.

4. BUDGETARY IMPACT

The struggle for many students to access reading materials during lockdown was highlighted by the 227 responses given to Read for Good in their May 2021 data request:[25]

- 81% of surveyed schools did not have a separate "reading for pleasure" budget
- 71% reported missing or non-returned books
- 74% had to divert library resources during the pandemic to support school in general
- 61% said their book budget had shrunk in recent years

School library staff are hired to be specialists in their role. There are few schools with the budget or will to employ multiple librarians or library assistants to support a Lead, something that is almost exclusively reserved for independent or all-through schools with multiple libraries on site.

The majority of librarians are hired to work alone to carry out a job that it is very likely they will be the only staff member in that school to fully appreciate or understand.

Looking at secondary-level job descriptions that ask librarians to also be the careers lead, a subject teacher, teaching assistant, or deputy safeguarding lead suggests that being a librarian is somehow not enough. Understandably, in smaller schools it may be a necessity to double-up on jobs but sadly this is not a situation unique to smaller schools.

When it comes to funding library stock, there are also significant variations. The 2020 members survey reported no budget at all in five responding state secondaries and in four responding academies.

The picture from the 2021 survey respondents was worse, reporting no dedicated library budget in a broader variety of settings: three private/ independent schools, six academies, four local authority maintained, and one community school.

The variation in library funding overall varies dramatically from as little as £500 to upwards of £20,000.

Academies overall saw a decrease in budget during the pandemic. Some schools froze budgets, which limited the access to online resources and which has now left libraries reopening without key publications released in the last 18 months – and facing the concern that this may impact re-engaging with students.

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25   Smith, Annie, *Report on pandemic's impact on reading for fun stock in school libraries* (*Reading for Good, 2021*)

Some libraries were able to send home resources but struggled to get these back, many more books walked out the door with school leavers and were lost. Libraries are now struggling to make up for those losses. There is little additional money available and often little will to rebuild lost collections.

Online resource provision was varied at the start of 2020, with less than 50% of schools having e-books or other online resources available. This was reported as due to a lack of willingness on the part of schools to invest in online platforms, perhaps reflecting a lack of understanding of the technology and its uses. While the SLA/ Softlink Survey reports numbers of schools building new collections during lockdown, it will be interesting to see the longevity of investment of these post Covid-19.

5. THE IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

CHALLENGES OF LONE WORKING

The challenges of lockdown were varied. Many library staff had their own children at home or other household members working from home, sharing space in new ways. Many had personal losses, their own health issues, or those of friends and family members to contend with. Everyone was affected.

Alongside those whose wellbeing and mental health suffered in lockdown, are those colleagues who report feeling a deep sense of guilt for not having a bad time. Some people were okay – it wasn't a problem for them to be at home, working within the restrictions of their area. They should not feel guilty for being okay and yet they do:

"A lot of the time I found myself thinking everyone else is talking about their mental health and how this is terribly affecting them and there's me thinking I don't actually mind being at home every day. I'm not sitting around doing nothing but at the same time I'm not itching at the skin to go outside and actually it's quite a relief not having to go thinking about being 'Typhoid Mary' going around from school to school. I don't have to worry about that... the online world was so angry I had to ban myself from any news because it was just too much anger going on but in terms of everything else, I was fine. I was okay." (Interview 3)

Library staff had not only their own health and that of their loved ones to consider but in many cases, that of students as well. Many of the rules that were being applied outside did not seem to apply in school.

Library staff report feeling afraid and angry at how lockdown news was delivered to them and how decisions were made by school leaders:

"I was incredibly angry at the start. Very angry. I was angry that I couldn't do my job and didn't know what to do. It took me a few weeks to work out what I could do and how I was going to do it. That [feeling] stayed very much to the summer... and another thing was that in both my schools that some support staff and senior management had been in the whole time, during lockdown. I could have been but I was never given the option.

The chance to work from here and have all my resources was denied to me and that really, really upset me and got to me." (Interview 7)

Some responses also emphasise the sense of isolation within the school that library staff often contend with:

"The whole lockdown made me realise how isolated I actually was in my role. I always knew that, you know, we work on our own but you tend to work on your own and it is quite a lonely job and you have to push yourself out there, but I was doing that but nobody was even saying thanks for the email, thanks for these resources, this is great, yeah we'll use this, so I was getting no feedback at all. So for all I knew I could have just sat and done absolutely nothing all that time because actually I felt no one really cares." (Interview 1)

Library staff work, most often, in a degree of isolation. They are used to being the one librarian in the school and as such, setting their own workload and schedule. Most library staff work with a flexible approach, often disrupted by sudden enquiries. Each have their own interpretation of what library support looks like in their school, for their students, their demographic area, their region of the UK.

"I had no contact at all from school whatsoever … I didn't hear from my line manager until we actually went back into school and then the second lockdown was even harder and then I did have to say I'm not right; I was really struggling, getting very depressed and then I have to actually go and get counseling because it was getting all too much." (Interview 1)

The lack of communication with library staff very often translated into a feeling of isolation and lack of recognition of the relevance and importance of libraries and their staff. Unfortunately, respondents suggested that this was not unexpected, despite it not being good practice or acceptable in any way.

It should be noted, however, that working independently, even during lockdown, was not always a negative experience and in some cases pushed library staff to try new approaches:

"Working on my own I reached out and did other things that I might not have done if I was working in a team." (Interview 2)

THE VALUE OF NETWORKS

Networking with other library colleagues became an essential strategy during lockdown. Sharing access to good information, strategies, and risk assessments and also for support.

"No guidance so, as usual, we are organising ourselves and focusing support wherever we can." (Survey 2020)

"As a librarian in a school you can feel very isolated … The local schools in the area we have a network and used to meet up each term but during lockdown we ended up having weekly Skype chats and it was great. It was really nice to connect and stay grounded." (Interview 6)

"I was very lucky, because in our school librarians' group there are five of us and we chose to meet every week or few weeks at least just to check up and share resources. I was very lucky from that point of view that I had that connection and working in the education hub gave me a purpose." (Interview 7)

"There's lots of librarian networks that I was already a member of but there were definitely fabulous resources for sharing and for getting information and sharing ideas and just kind of venting if you needed to vent about anything because there were lots of people going through the same thing, so they were really useful online tools and just to build that community … it was really interesting and useful." (Interview 6)

Building resilience meant finding strategies that worked for staff to cope with the stress of this change in circumstances:

"From the start I realised that I would need a work day routine to replace going to school and I treated every school day as a working day

replicating the same hours and making sure I took walks during the day for exercise and break from the PC. Having regular meetings with my librarian colleagues also helped and we were a kind of self-help group listening to each other, supporting each other and it was sometimes just great to make contact to see other people if only virtually. One outcome of that is we all felt we became a closer group in supporting each other and sharing information and resources." (Interview 7 follow up email)

In addition to networking with other library staff, some respondents discussed attempts to engage with the wider school community:

"I was furloughed at the end of March, so have been told not to work. However, I am still running our staff book club online, as when I asked my Deputy Head if this was allowed, he said yes as it is voluntary and crucial for the staff community and wellbeing."
(Survey 2020)

Despite difficult circumstances, staff found the resilience to bring the best of their skills to their schools:

"I made the offer to staff; I'm here, I'll support you any way I can. Just ask and if I can help you I'll do it." (Interview 7)

However, even with everything that library staff were doing to contribute, there was at times a lingering sense of doubt, born perhaps of always pushing back against irrelevance.

"I was a bit worried about losing the momentum at some point because I wasn't really being asked, I was just doing stuff and putting it out there and I don't know if I had stopped, I don't know that people would have necessarily chased up ... I think it would have been easy for the library to be forgotten." (Interview 6)

Although many of the respondents commented negatively about networking within schools, there are examples of more positive experiences:

"Getting a little bit more tech savvy was a real plus. And I also organised some online events and I was really pleased with how well they went and how well attended they were by students." (Interview 1)

6. DEFINING THE ROLE

Let's start with an easy question: what is your job title? The 2020 Member Survey asked that question and came back with 23 alternative job titles.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the word library staff use most to describe themselves is invariably 'librarian.' There is a certain level of understanding that comes by simplifying terms to something everyone can recognise. The librarian – the one who looks after the library. However much the day-to-day job evolves, there remains a fundamental understanding of what we mean when we say librarian. Enough so that staff who are listed on their job description as 'Learning Resource Centre Co-Ordinator' for example, are likely to clarify in the next sentence that: 'My job description says that but I am the…'

"I asked for the change [to Librarian] from LRC Manager as nobody really understood what that meant!" (Survey 2021)

Why do library staff need to re-define themselves in conversation? Because they are already on the back foot having to justify and explain their job before they can even start doing it.

"The one thing that really bugs me is that there's this disconnect between teachers and librarians I get very tired of explaining who I am or what the school library service is to teachers – they should know about this!" (Interview 3)

The lack of understanding of what the job actually is, is a cause of a great deal of frustration.

"I could have sat in the garden got a lovely suntan and read lots of books – but I didn't." (Interview 1)

Contrary to stereotypes, library staff don't actually read all day, but long before the lockdown, it was apparent that the lack of understanding of what a library staff member's job actually is and could be, was widespread.

Since the advance of e-readers, library staff have found themselves increasingly challenged as to their relevance. However, studies demonstrate that 'students reading

from printed documents had more retention power and greater understanding of the text than students who read from screen'.[26] Furthermore, 'screen-based reading can dull comprehension because it is more mentally taxing and even physically tiring than reading on paper'.[27]

Reading for pleasure has proven health, wellbeing, and learning benefits: Dr David Lewis found reading as little as six minutes a day reduced stress levels by more than 60%.[28]

This argument that e-books obviate the role of the librarian ignores the fact that e-books still have to be found, chosen, bought, promoted and managed. In a world with so much false information available and access more open than ever, the reverse is actually true. The librarian's role is increasingly necessary in schools to help young people to learn not only the skills needed to successfully navigate that information but the curiosity to learn for learning's sake – beyond the curriculum and the narrow focus of those assigned reads considered "worthy".

The role includes broadening the horizons of young people, encouraging them to find their own answers and ask their own questions, creating a space where they feel comfortable exploring with the safety of the librarian as guide to what is correct, factual, researched, proven, escapist, thought-provoking, beautiful, ugly, true, and of course, fun to read.

"I've had a lot of support for getting the library open again – but also comments along the lines of 'You won't need to do library lessons because we're working on devices now', because people don't understand what I do in those lessons." (Survey 2021)

We need to have a clear understanding of what library staff's job is and the confidence to hold that up, with an expectation that schools will also understand, recognize, and value that role so that the effectiveness of library impact on students' attainment, inside and outside of the classroom, grows.

"If you're not going to instruct me what you want me to do then I'm

26   Hussain, Sajjad, and others, 'The effects of E-Reading and Printed Document Reading on Students' Comprehension and Retention Power', Journal of Applied Environmental and Biological Sciences, 6, (2016), http://www.textroad.com/pdf/JAEBS/J.%20Appl.%20Environ.%20Biol.%20Sci.,%206(2S)165-170,%202016.pdf
27   Jabr, Ferris, 'Why the Brain Prefers Paper', Scientific American, 309(5) (2013), pp. 48–53.
28   Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England, 'Why reading can be good for mental health' (6 September 2018), https://mhfaengland.org/mhfa-centre/blog/reading-good-mental-health/

going to be proactive and decide for myself what I'm going to do and that, for me, was a large part of how I think the library has developed in a really positive way because I got to say: this is what a library does and this is what I'm going to do for you and it took them by surprise in a really positive way." (Interview 4)

The dissemination and support of this understanding of our role across school staff is essential. With the support of senior leaders, there are many ways the current situation can be improved: enabling visits to other schools, encouraging networking with colleagues and cross-school activities, making room in teaching staff induction and continuing professional development (CPD) for library introductions, ensuring the time is given to enable library staff to meet and share good practice with teaching staff and each other.

There is an opportunity post Covid-19 to take what has been learned about the way schools understand the potential and reality of their libraries and use that to push back harder and more effectively than ever before.

The SLA has led on attempts to unify the role of the librarian in schools.[29] Although they often have the same budget holding responsibilities and delivery expectations as a department head, librarians are very seldom titled, paid, or included at that level.

This "support" or "administrative" role where a librarian may be expected to teach; work overtime; run newspapers or websites; recruit, train, and supervise volunteers; organise events, visits, assemblies, etc. often feels taken for granted and is seldom compensated. In many schools, little effort is made to ensure that all staff are aware of what happens in the library and know to use and promote it with their students and in their subjects. That kind of understanding has to come from the top of the school.

"I had to present at a governors meeting to talk about the work that I had done during lockdown and what's been happening during the closure and they've been really supportive because they could see the content, they could see the YouTube content and I had had messages throughout lockdown from governors saying, 'Oh yes I like that I can see the chess club or something'. So it wasn't 'Please justify what you've been doing'; it was more tell us what you've been doing.

I think it's really important to reach out to the governing body as well

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29   *School Library Association, Skills and Expertise Required in School Libraries: A Guide (2018)*

because they will know what can be achieved and put my role in the appropriate grade and know that it's important not to cut it down. The governors did say they didn't feel that we had been shut because we still had this output." (Interview 2)

Lockdown had the effect of exacerbating existing tensions and perceptions of status. In schools which were supportive, informed, knew what the library was and were able to promote it and use it, then library staff were utilised well during lockdown. In schools which had a limited understanding of the role of librarian and what they could do, library staff were underutilised or completely ignored – that dismissal has ongoing ramifications.

Despite the majority of survey respondents having a similarly hard time during lockdown, some schools are lucky enough to have very supportive, communicative senior leadership who include their librarian in discussions and ask for their opinion on those things that are a librarians' specialism.

"Keeping children connected to the wider world during lockdown was so much more than providing remote lessons. Having the opportunity to direct your own time opened up many more students to doing new things. Our library was instrumental in providing support throughout this time with inventive ways to choose, access and read books. A free delivery service is not something we could offer during a normal school day but what a treat to be able to provide this during lockdown. Having an active Librarian and Library Assistant allowed us to continue with virtual assemblies, World Book Day activities, reading recommendations, competitions, reading groups and so much more.

Our library is central to everything that we do. All of our students have timetabled lessons in the library to ensure that they understand that it is a space for everyone. Having a proactive Librarian challenges students and staff by opening their minds to new opportunities and offers huge support in making cross curricular connections. The investment that a school makes in its library speaks volumes about its approach to supporting young people in all aspects of their learning." (SLT3)

7. REFLECTION

THE ONLY ONE SKILLED IN THE ROLE

Working alone in a library role can be draining. No one else really understands what you do. You don't always have a sympathetic ear on hand if you become disheartened or to even ask for the opinion on a display or potential project.

Most librarians would agree that students are the center of it all. They provide the justification for everything that school libraries do, giving library staff feedback and guiding buying and activity choices as much as the school curriculum does.

SPACE

When library staff lost their schools, they lost contact with colleagues but also with students. Fundamentally, these daily interactions with regulars or with students who struggle and with whom they can really make a difference are the responsibility and privilege of the librarian – being that safe place in the school, the refuge for the ones who need it, a trusted adult without an agenda.

There is plenty that school library staff can do without a library, in the same way that there's a lot a teacher can do without a classroom, but the work and experience is different. The engagement is different, as are the skills needed.

THE LURE OF INDEPENDENCE

Librarians tend to be very well suited to working independently. It is a key part of the role and one they are well able to manage in ordinary circumstances. Library staff know what needs to be done and are able to quickly adapt and respond to the changing, often short notice, demands of students, colleagues, and senior leadership.

Library staff do not need to be micromanaged and nor would they welcome it. But they are part of the school. They are key staff and deserve to be regarded with the same level of respect and support as any of their teaching colleagues. The role they play is just as vital, and schools need to move away from allowing the dismissal or reduction of that role.

Ask library staff, and they almost invariably say that a previous colleague only issued books and managed the catalogue. But it is unclear how much of this comes from knowing that is what they did and how much of that attitude comes from school staff reporting on something that they had little real knowledge of. Perhaps they are right, and it is only in recent years that librarians have started doing so much more to support their schools, but it is more likely that library staff have always done more than they are acknowledged for.

THE RISK OF ISOLATION

Just because library staff can work independently does not mean that they should have to. Librarians need to be part of conversations that should include them: decisions about room use, staffing, curriculum changes, behaviour policy and more are very often taken without the librarian being involved. SLA and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) have long presented the case that librarians are heads of department, and while some schools may agree, they are in the minority. The majority see school libraries as a luxury and one with varying levels of relevance.

When you are the only voice in your school trying to be heard, it can be almost impossible to keep shouting. The need for librarians to come together to support each other and be heard was demonstrated clearly in lockdown. Library staff who were furloughed were cut off entirely from every form of support they had. Many chose not to participate in any CPD or networking outside of schools, either in response to that rejection or out of fear induced by the language schools used to communicate that furlough, which added to their anxiety.

The SLA Member Surveys have demonstrated that library staff were used to working with a certain level of isolation, but that during lockdown this was amplified. New staff in particular, were left thinking there was no one there to support them, not knowing what they needed to do and how to begin to think about doing it.

LIBRARIANS AS APOLOGISTS FOR THEIR OWN POOR TREATMENT

Many library staff stated that they understood why they were overlooked in planning, risk assessment, and even basic communication or wellbeing checks.

"I am under no illusion that a librarian is a privilege to have in schools and not considered a necessity." (Survey 2020)

Despite the high levels of empathy to senior leaders this shows, it is alarming. There is no doubt at all that the priority for schools in the early days of lockdown was finding ways to support students who would be learning from home.

There were formidable barriers to overcome and in a rapidly developing, fear-fueled situation. It was impossible to know exactly how to do everything well and a huge challenge to tackle. In the face of all of that, there is one thing that cannot be anything other than frustrating to library staff: they could have helped.

Starting before it was clear what was happening in schools, library staff were sending home resources, compiling lists of reliable websites, putting together online resources,

getting a book group set up using Teams, Padlet, Google Classrooms – those who were allowed to keep working went on to put together competitions, read aloud stories, promoted authors online, contributed reading and writing help for all ages.

"In terms of getting students engaged there were lots of exciting things I could throw at them … we had lots of authors donating their time. A lot of the online stuff I put together was things I had been meaning to do for a long time but never had time to do it, I had an online information portal that I had started to put together … and having lockdown gave me time to concentrate on that and get that built up. And shared with the school and on various librarian forums. I've gotten some really great feedback from that. Sometimes you do all this work and you put it out there and you don't know what the impact is so to have that direct feedback was really useful and something I wouldn't have necessarily got otherwise."
(Interview 6)

There was so much available as time went on. Library staff curated and reviewed this content and sent it out to their colleagues, their schools, their students and shared it in online forums.

"We are putting resources and useful links on the library part of the school website, some of them from the SLA school closure resources, for which many thanks." (Survey 2020)

Librarians who had no contact at all from their schools for weeks or months nonetheless continued to do what librarians do best: put out reliable information and share their passion for reading for pleasure, learning, and wellbeing at a time when these things were most useful.

Working away in the background of their schools, many librarians continued to improve online access to systems, where possible, introducing e-book or e-journal collections, updating or upgrading online catalogues, putting out information about free resources. The feeling that no one was listening was a hard one to keep pushing against, and so much credit has to go to all library staff for managing to keep going.

"I am tracking [the] whole school for our tutor time reading programme and also will be doing daily readings for our year 7." (Survey 2020)

During lockdown, those who were required to keep responding to redundancy letters to renew their furloughed status every few weeks had to deal with a huge additional strain. Some of those who were unable to work continued to access training or CPD, while others occasionally looked at forum posts and some felt unable, or unwilling, to access any resources at all.

Working or not working; minimum contact or none at all; redeployed; watching the library space be turned into a classroom, a common room or closed entirely: as long as library staff are apologists for poor school behavior, as long as they see themselves as of less worth than their teaching colleagues, then the more they are at risk of being sidelined.

"I have felt out of the information loop since working from home and am unsure if this is because there is little information coming out or because it is not being sent to support staff." (Survey 2020)

"The lack of management response to my reopening information means I don't feel secure, but they might just be focusing on other issues." (Survey 2020)

Almost overwhelmingly negative experiences can nonetheless lead to great gains and positive outcomes. It is important that all school leadership get to know what good libraries look like and strive to reach the same levels or better for the sake of their students and in support of their staff.

BEING SEEN

"I was trying every week to make sure that there was stuff from the library in the weekly digital assemblies that were going out I was in contact with lots of different members of staff and pushing the reading achievements and all the webinars we were doing. I was making an effort to connect with the various different areas of the school." (Interview 6)

"I think a lot of librarians are not necessarily 'put yourself out there' kind of people but it doesn't necessarily have to be a big 'yahoo' kind of gesture I think lots of little conversations and individual conversations

with certain people to let them know what you can offer what you can do what the library can do how the library can support them so talk to heads of department about how the library can support their staff and their students talk to SLT about the various things that libraries can do for even helping teach staff how to do research and things like that I'd say you don't have to be out there shouting singing dancing just go and have little conversations and make sure people remember you and make sure they're aware of what you have to offer." (Interview 6)

"Carry on reaching out to Governing bodies to makes sure that they know of all the work that you can do." (Interview 2)

Shared strategies for getting SLT attention:

"I can chat happily to little groups but if I send out an email it doesn't register, nothing does so I have to catch them at the right time on a Friday afternoon, to physically be there in front of them and say by the way did you know that I can do this?" (Interview 3)

"I am working full hours from home, video conferencing with staff about resources and book groups and Shadowers. I tweet every day, go to remote staff meetings every week." (Survey 2020)

SENIOR LEADERS AND A LACK OF UNDERSTANDING

The lockdown highlighted some fundamental ways in which some senior leaders simply don't understand how school library staff could have assisted them in the challenging times. However, this seems to have stemmed from a pre-existing lack of understanding. The role of librarian is one which is rife with stereotype, and this hampers school library staff who want to contribute to education and pupils' development.

CONCLUSION

The pandemic provided a warning – a stark reminder that library staff are often not viewed in the same way as other school colleagues. Without understanding, their role and the physical space they occupy can be discounted, dismissed, and underutilised.

The pandemic magnified the strengths or shortcomings of each school's relationship with its library and the opinion that schools already held about their library staff. It was more important to concentrate on other areas at first but too often "first" became only.

It was acceptable to move library staff to other roles where their contribution was obvious and practical and understandable, or to let them do as they have always done, be trusted to know what their own job is and expect them to go do it without leadership, direction, or support.

While that level of trust in such a complex organisation as a school can be gratifying, when experienced during a period of extended isolation in a time of great anxiety and fear, trust can look very much like neglect.

If you don't know what library staff do at the best of times how can they help you at the worst of times?

The stress and strain of such a high level of expectation when in school can be hard enough, but to be relegated to the silence of isolation under these circumstances was just unbearable for many staff – all interviewees had been shaken by the reaction of their schools. Even those who spoke positively about their schools had little to no communication with leadership, line managers, or teaching staff.

There can be room for an unspoken understanding between senior leadership and library staff that they are competent and trusted and an expectation that as experts in their field they are best placed for self-governance, therefore no one else in school needs to understand their role. However, the danger in this approach was never more starkly realised than in the first lockdown.

Too few senior leaders or teachers knew what library staff could do to support them, so when library staff most needed the reassurance that they were part of the school body and integral to its working – when all they wanted to do was help – they were silenced.

"I wanted teachers there at a librarian event to say look we work with you. Part of our job is to serve you, is to help you… We don't just provide

for children we provide books and advice for you, everything to help you. After lockdown we got that a bit from some teachers… It was nice to see that happen. I kind of wish it was happening more now.

I wish there was more. I wish there was someone in teaching forums and teaching groups. I wish someone like TES was talking about librarians, remembering that we are part of the system, we're just very quiet."
(Interview 3)

Library staff cannot remain passive. While the chances of a similar situation arising are, hopefully, slim, the lockdown served to illustrate how tenuous their role in schools can be.

It also allowed library staff the opportunity to showcase some of the incredible work they do when empowered and recognised by peers, teachers, students, and school leadership.

Lessons were learned from the first lockdown. By the second, staff knew what to expect and could rightly be forgiven for thinking that it would be different. Unfortunately, the situation with most schools remained the same: poor communication if any, lack of support, furlough, and redeployment. Libraries were once more utilised in ways they were not designed for, and budgets were frozen or reallocated.

But library staff are resilient: those able to keep working did so. They reached out to each other in even greater numbers and pulled together schemes of work, training, and CPD to develop the skills needed to manage to do their jobs as best they could, re-defining them on their own from home.

Examples of successes reported in the SLA Surveys included many librarians providing mobile library services to students and building new online connections:

"They closed the library, so I blagged a trolley with display shelving from careers. I visit each year group bubble each day. I think the children have really appreciated this, in their bubbles, where connection with the rest of the school is so limited." (Survey 2021)

"We hosted a number of virtual author visits … and I know these meant a great deal to the students involved." (Survey 2021)

"Hosting the biggest online event that the school has ever hosted, from my living room, dressed as Mary Poppins for World Book Day." *(Survey 2021)*

"We were running a tutor reading task each week with a video of a book being read and follow up questions – I was impressed by the level of engagement this received." (Survey 2021)

"Creating a monthly library newsletter using Wakelet." (Survey 2021)

"Setting up hosting of our library management system, so being able to have access from anywhere at any time." (Survey 2021)

"Sending home 700 sachets of hot chocolate at Christmas so families could celebrate Jolabokaflod – demonstrating the importance of reading at home." (Survey 2021)

Many incredible pieces of work came from this experience: librarians gained new skills and new confidence to use online resources and tools to bring books and learning to students in whole new ways. Ways of supporting teaching staff with accessible, often free, online content were developed and shared.

Growing evidence of the benefits of an effective school library was gaining a great deal of momentum for positive change ahead of the pandemic. Research such as the GSL survey (2019) and the Scottish 'How Good is Our School Library Framework' (2017) are each indicative of the kind of reports that bring together years of research.

The pandemic may have hindered that progress, but it may be that it has given us the opportunity to reassess our priorities and our approach. Out of a period which could have been stagnant, library staff have produced outstanding developments in their delivery of services, bringing their collections forward to embrace new technologies and new ways of working to reach students, families, and teachers in new and more engaging ways and to reaffirm just how essential a service school libraries are.

"Our librarian makes an enormous difference to the school culture and atmosphere, and to the students' experience of school life and learning, both in school and virtually. During the pandemic, [they]

created an amazing SharePoint site, not only to enable students to keep reading, but also to promote well-being, engage them in fun activities, and support our older students with their research and independent study. She frequently sought and shared links to e-Books, web-based resources and lecture-style events.

Through videos, assemblies and now, face to face events, the library has become a real focal point for the school, supporting students and staff in their quest for scholarship skills, as well as providing a safe space for students to develop their love of reading." (SLT4)

RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR SECTOR BODIES

1) **More support is needed for the development of networks.**
   Isolation was a significant issue before and throughout the pandemic, leading to a lack of awareness and wellbeing issues.

2) **The sector needs leadership.**
   The work done between CILIP, the SLA and CILIP SLG with others, under the umbrella of the COVID School libraries working party was essential, and helped many; however, this needs to be continued in order to allow the sector to recover and support conversations with senior leaders.

3) **Tools, resources, and advocacy are required.**
   There is an ongoing need for sector bodies to build links with wider educational establishments and support discussions with educational leaders about school libraries.

FOR SCHOOL LIBRARY STAFF

1) **Be connected.**
   Where possible join a network in order to benefit from the conversation, support, and advice of others in similar roles.

2) **Be seen.**
   Talking to colleagues, appearing in assemblies (even if not leading them) and taking the lead to explain how you can support colleagues is essential for ensuring better understanding of your school library.

3) **Taking the space.**
   Advocacy in all its forms is needed to create a stronger sector. This may require you to do things you haven't done before (such as presentations for senior leaders or assemblies) or which you feel may not be appreciated. Do them anyway, and try different approaches if they don't work.

FOR SENIOR LEADERS

1) **Line managers should be familiar with librarianship bodies.**
Line managers of a school library staff should make time to familiarise themselves with the school library sector, bodies and expectations. This will build understanding and raise the level of expectations, meetings, and general communication. Find an organisation to support you and them.

2) **Library staff cannot operate in isolation.**
Support and networks are needed so that school library staff know they may lone work but are not alone. Networking builds the strength of the profession behind them and creates opportunities for CPD.

3) **Understanding the role is vital.**
Recognition and understanding of the role from teaching colleagues and senior leadership is currently lacking and should be improved. This will lead to enhanced relationships, a greater effectiveness and impact, and increased support for teaching and other school colleagues.

4) **Recruit and grow the best in the sector.**
When recruiting, senior leaders should be aware of best practice and the skills and expertise needed. Salary is important (particularly when support staff conditions are applied) but being explicit about other elements can also be crucial – library budget, CPD budget and opportunities, and career development are all ingredients to a perfect job. Suitable candidates will only enter and remain in the sector if they are compensated and supported with access to robust, relevant training, and able to meet the needs of the pupils they serve.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABOUT THE SLA

The School Library Association is committed to supporting everyone involved with school libraries, regardless of their role, as the educational, emotional, and developmental benefits of a school library deserve to be felt by all children. School libraries promote high quality reading and learning opportunities for all.

Membership is £95 a year for a school, and that provides all staff members with access to our advice line and resources.

Our Skills and Expertise in a School Library document is invaluable for recruitment and planning staff development, and is completely free. It can be downloaded here: https://www.sla.org.uk/jobs

Our Recruitment Pack is essential for those recruiting school library staff – school librarians/managers or library assistants. With interview questions (and answers!), career progression, and explanations of job titles, it can help you recruit the right candidate for your school. Download it here: https://www.sla.org.uk/jobs

In response to the impact the pandemic was having on children's reading, we created an accessible guide for all schools on how to create a reading for pleasure culture. Written by Alec Williams, *Get Everyone Reading* is a great place to start the journey: https://www.sla.org.uk/get-everyone-reading

To see how else we can support you with your school library, reading, or research please get in touch.

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