



MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR BUDGET

This booklet is designed to accompany the ALIA Schools webinar 'Maximising Your School Library Budget: Achieving More With Less'

TOP SIX WITH VIRGINIA

Curate & centralise: Set up or create a free Google Site (or similar) as a “one-stop shop” for staff and students. Use it to house curated links, pathfinders, and quick guides, organised by grade level, genre (fiction/nonfiction), subject, or unit of inquiry. Include age-appropriate databases, free online resources, and websites curated by the teacher librarian. We save a significant amount by creating our own literature guides, which students and teachers can access 24/7

Digital library guides: Develop quick “how-to” guides for recurring needs (research skills, referencing, plagiarism checks, eBook access). These can be reused year after year and shared across multiple classes

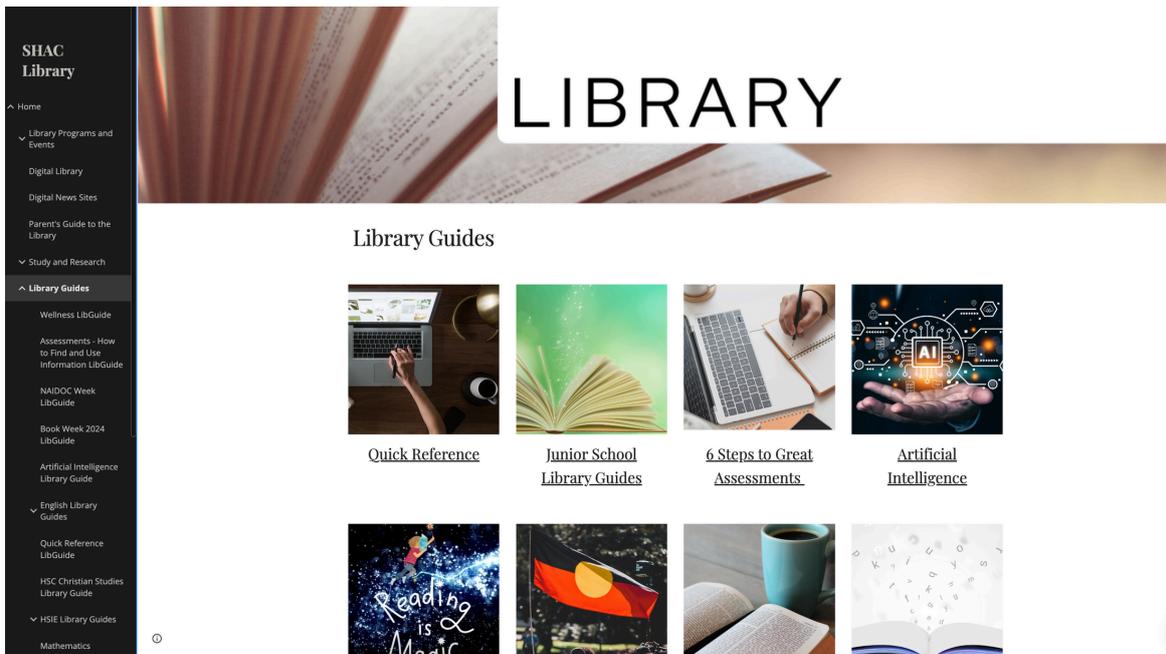
Author/genre spotlights: Run a rotating “author of the month” or themed bookshelf using only existing library resources. Pair this with free online content (author interviews, podcasts, YouTube talks) for enrichment without additional cost

Inquiry support: Curate free, high-quality websites around curriculum units (e.g., history timelines, science experiments, online museums) and embed them into the Google Site so students always have a safe, vetted set of resources to explore

Student contribution: Involve older students in curating or recommending titles and resources. This saves time, builds ownership, and creates authentic peer-to-peer recommendations

Parent volunteers: Invite parents to support the library by helping with shelving, book covering, or reading aloud to younger students. Many also bring specialist skills (languages, IT, arts, storytelling) that can enrich library programs at no cost





A screenshot of Virginia's Google Site that shows the wide range of topics her in-house guides cover for students and staff.



[HSIE LibGuide](#)



[Ancient Historical Sites](#)



[Australia and World War I](#)



[Australia Day - Extension History Examination](#)



[Australian Endangered Species](#)



[Australia's Place in the Global Economy](#)



[The Bombing of Hiroshima and War Weapons](#)



[China from the 1700s to 1900s](#)

Further examples from Virginia's library Google Site.

STORAGE TUBS

My current best friend is the humble Kmart Cut Out Edge Storage Tub in Clear. I have dozens of them around my library in different sizes and they're an incredibly affordable option that can be used for quite literally anything you need. I use them not only for organising supplies and keeping work supplies together, but they're an integral part of my collection organisation.

I use the medium size to store my school's take-home readers which are currently organised by F&P reading levels. This has been a huge improvement over our old system of keeping individual cardboard book boxes of levelled sets - now they're grab and go, clearly labelled, and my shelves look so much more organised.

I also use them to highlight new books or popular series above my non-fiction shelves, which are also genrefied and make it easy for lower-primary students to find something they're interested in reading.

The small size is a fantastic option for front-facing novel series and I've done that with my Junior Fiction collection - each popular series has its own tub or two (or four, in the case of *The Bad Guys!*)

Small Cut Out Edge Storage Tub - Clear: \$3.50
Medium Cut Out Edge Tub - Clear: \$6.50
(Prices at August 2025)



The medium is great for face-out displays of non-fiction books.



Take-home readers organised by F&P level - easy for class teachers to drop off old ones and grab a new handful.



Junior Fiction books organised by series in a face-out display.

LILY'S STUDY CENTRE AND MICROSOFT FORMS

Our senior school library offers all students the opportunity for further study during our extended after-school opening hours (3.20pm – 7pm).

As a result, library staff have used school provided iPads and customised Microsoft Forms to tailor a sign in app for students who access the library after hours.

Since the school has access to the Microsoft 365 Education package, this was a feature inbuilt for us to utilise in the library. We were unable to pay for an external company or pay for a purpose built app, so we needed something that was able to host student data and was able to be shared within the school's network only in a secure online space.

A few reasons for adopting Microsoft Forms for library operations:

- We tailored the sign in sheet to include student name, year, and subject of focus. At the end of each week, we then curate this information in the form of quick grab graphs (a functionality of Microsoft Forms) to send to key staff like Year Advisors to inform them of student movement throughout the term (especially with peak exam seasons)
- We also use this as a form of feedback to assess each individual student's ability to be focused during a visit to the Study Centre. When students sign out before they leave, it has proven to be a good accountability tool for them to complete individually and reflect on their study session
- The plan with this is to put together a bit of a 'Spotify Wrapped' function that shows a student's study habits over the course of a year (or provide a snapshot of their study habits as they switch from Stage 5 to Stage 6).
- We're a very small space (maximum capacity at 100) and we needed additional staff for supervision and duty of care. The app helped with recording student and staff ratios as statistics to provide Executive to assist with this request.





Lily's library has a school-provided iPad running Microsoft forms to help track student sign ins to the Study Centre, a free option that also provides valuable library usage data points.

QUICK TIPS

If you are in a wider system of schools, be active in your Teacher Librarian network. Schools often have library furniture they are moving on that might be useful to you (likewise with your public library) - **Rachael**

For database subscriptions, don't just pay the renewal fee. Talk to colleagues in other schools to ensure you aren't overpaying and also speak with the company rep to negotiate discounts - **Anna**

Invest in a Cricut. This is an initial outlay but you can create classy displays all year round using cheaper card board options. If the library can't afford on their budget, approach other departments and go shares in this tool - **Helen**

Corflute from old real estate signs or political posters makes great, long lasting backing for signs and decorations - **Rachael**

Get discounted books by going on book buying afternoons to Dymocks or other book stores - **Margaret**

Partner with your local public library if you can. Maybe you can walk there or they can come to you, but this has the dual benefit of increasing the selection of books available to your readers (especially good for the upper primary borrowing slump), increasing their membership stats and widening your professional network - **Rachael**



A Cricut cutting machine does have a large upfront cost of a few hundred dollars but the payoff is professional looking displays - consider asking other interested departments to split the cost!

QUICK TIPS

It's counter intuitive but get rid of the crap. Weeding makes your collection pop. Keep on top of it and move things to where they will be used and this stops you having dead resources. Display and market your resources. Be relevant! - **Catherine R**

Parent working bees - a small team of interested parents can be a huge help when your time budget is as small as your financial one - **Rachael**

Create accounts with book shops so that you are eligible for discounts. We have found that book grocer is a great site to double check purchases with, as they often have items 50-60% off - **Margaret**

Student decorators! Display student artwork or activities, or even have some of your usual visitors come up with a display for you. This works to increase student agency and ownership as well - **Sarah**

Subscribe to a free education Canva subscription - **Helen**

Make friends with your local big chain store (you might find a parent who works there). They often discount book packs heavily if one is damaged etc. If you can get your hands on that first, winning! - **Rachael**

Make sure that senior students join their state library and the NLA. Even if they never set foot in the physical space it will still give them access to a wide range of journals, e-books, and other digital resources - **Caroline**



Use what's already in your collection to make book displays, but weed, weed, weed! A modern library isn't a museum and you can even use those weeded books for craft projects!

CONTRIBUTORS

This booklet is the product of contributions from school librarians all across Australia. They are based in different school sectors, work across all demographics, and have wide and varied budgets to work with. Here is complete list of all contributors to this resource.

Anna: 7-12 Catholic school, Northern suburbs Melbourne

Caroline: K-12 independant non-denominational school, Northern Sydney

Catherine B: Post-secondary education, South Australia

Catherine R: P-12 Christian school, Western suburbs of Melbourne

Ela: K-12 Catholic school, Northern Sydney

Emma: Post-secondary education, South Australia

Helen: EC-12 independant non-denominational school, Central Queensland

Rachael: K-12 Catholic school, Greater Western Sydney

Rosie: K-12 independant non-denominational school, Northern Sydney

Virginia: P-12 Christian school, Regional NSW

Margaret: 7-12 Catholic school, Eastern suburbs of Melbourne

Sarah: P-12 public school, Western suburbs of Melbourne



Visit the ALIA Schools website for school library resources, research articles, and even sign up for our newsletter!

