

The 2019 Softlink UK, Europe, Middle East, & Africa School Library Survey Report



Findings from Softlink's 2019 UK, Europe, Middle East, & Africa School Library Survey into school library library usage, support and engagement, library services, and trends.

Conducted by
Softlink

softlinkint.com/edu

Introduction

The Softlink School Library Survey was first launched 2010 and Softlink has continued to conduct the survey annually. We are proud to present the UK, Europe, Middle East, & Africa School Library Survey results for 2019.

The 2019 survey received responses from Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Qatar, Scotland, South Africa, Spain, Tanzania, UAE, and the UK.

Continuing the annual survey builds a critical reference point for understanding regional and global changes, impacts, and trends over time.

This report provides an analysis of the survey findings including school library services, engagement and support, future trends, and funding.

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“It is very important to have reliable resources and Whitepapers, which we can quote in discussions with the Administration and Politicians.”

All text quotes included in this report are drawn from two open-ended questions in the survey - “What is the one thing you would you change about your school library or your role?” and “Do you have any other comments you would like to add?”

1.0 Purpose of the survey

School libraries are central to a student's learning experience and their preparation for further education and school librarians play very important roles.

The annual survey provides a reference point for understanding changes, impacts, challenges and trends in school libraries over time.

1.1 About Softlink

Established in 1983, Softlink has school library and education department customers across 60 countries.

Our Oxfordshire-based UK office provides support for customers across the UK, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.

Softlink works with school libraries and educators to provide solutions which engage students and support school library staff. Our flagship school library system, Oliver v5, is continually developed to meet the changing needs of libraries, educators and students. Our new information curating tool, LearnPath, provides an easy-to-use platform to guide students, support the development of research skills, and promote the value of school libraries and resources.

Softlink products offer deep digital integration with eBooks and streamlined integration with virtual learning environments and school administration systems.

We have had a long partnership with the library and information industry and understand the challenges and opportunities the 21st Century learning and teaching environment presents for school libraries.



2.0 Survey findings summary

Key findings from the 2019 Survey include:

- 95% of respondents reported that promoting and supporting reading for pleasure is the most important service that the school library provides.
- 27% of respondents reported that they include a percentage of eBooks in their collection.
- 55% of respondents reported that they include a percentage of eResources - subscription databases in their collection.
- 61% reported a high or very high level of student engagement in the library, 35% of schools reported a moderate level of student engagement, 4% reported a low or very low level of student engagement.
- 25% reported a high or very high level of teacher engagement in the library, 52% of schools reported a moderate level of teacher engagement, 23% reported a low or very low level of teacher engagement.
- 51% reported a high or very high level of support from the senior leadership team, 30% of respondents reported a moderate level of support, 19% reported a low or very low level of support.
- 67% of respondents reported that they believed digitisation of resources to impact schools most in the future.
- 7% reported that if the school were to receive additional funding it was very likely or likely that the library would receive any of it, 32% stated that it was possible, and 61% reported that it was unlikely or very unlikely.
- 50% of respondents reported that if they received funding, they planned to invest it in physical books, 40% stated that it would be spent on furniture, and 38% reported they would spend it on staffing.

“Reading and information skills
need to be at the top of the
agenda.

They are the key to education and
teaching people how to teach
themselves.”

3.0 School library services

Respondents were asked to select 5 services/objectives that are the main services their library provides. They were also asked to select 5 services they would like to provide more of.

The top 3 services respondents currently provide included:

1. Promoting and supporting reading for pleasure (95%)
2. Providing an engaging and welcoming space for learning and leisure (92%)
3. Library administration – circulation management (81%)

The top 3 services respondents would like to provide more of included:

1. Developing or teaching information literacy or research skills programs (64%)
2. Providing 1 on 1 research assistance to students, teachers or faculty (59%)
3. Collaborating with other school departments (55%)

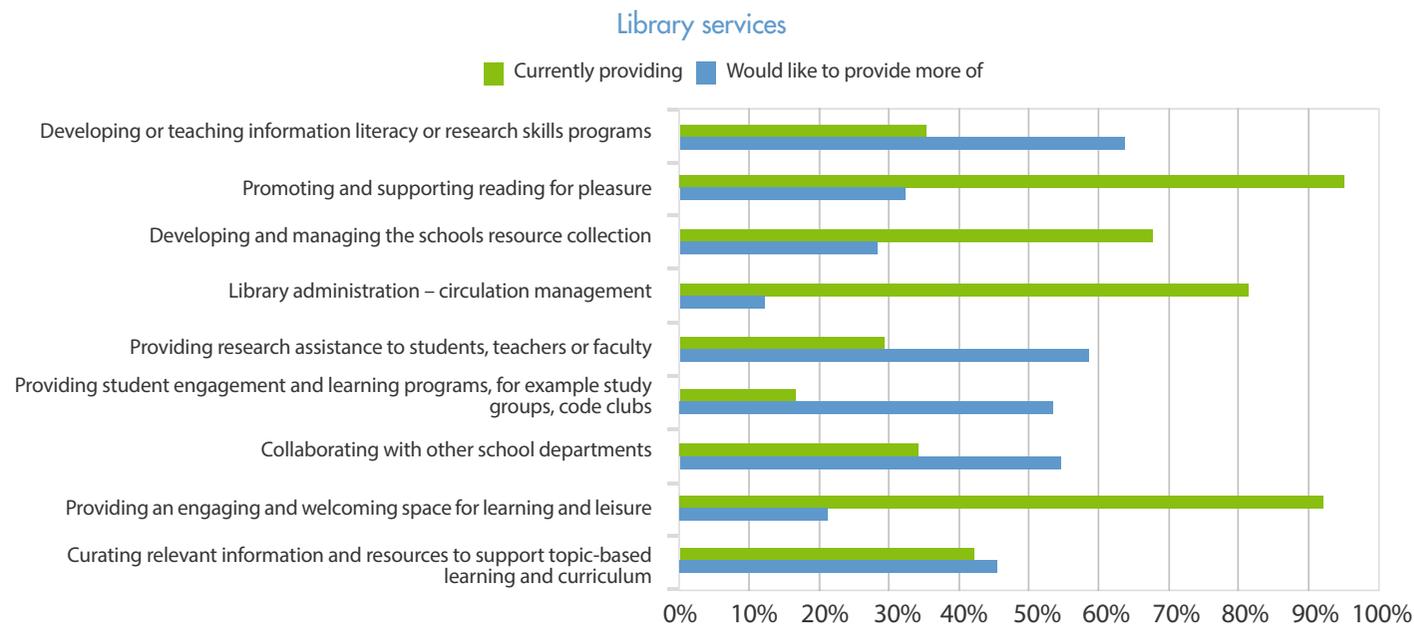


Figure 1: Library services 2019

4.0 School library collections

Respondents were asked what percentage of their collection was made up of the resources detailed in the charts below. Figures 2 - 5 show these percentages by school type.

"I love my library and everything it does for students, teachers, admin, and parents. Ideally I'd like more resources and more physical space so we can improve makerspace options."

Primary School Collections

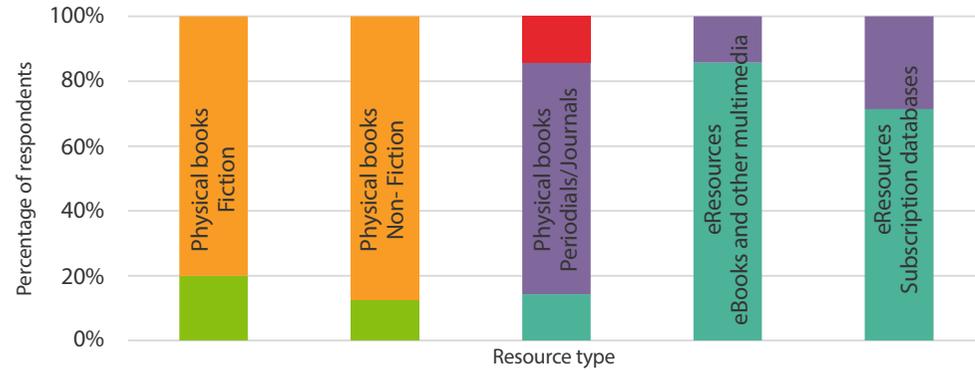


Figure 2. Primary/ Preparatory collections

Middle & Secondary School Collections

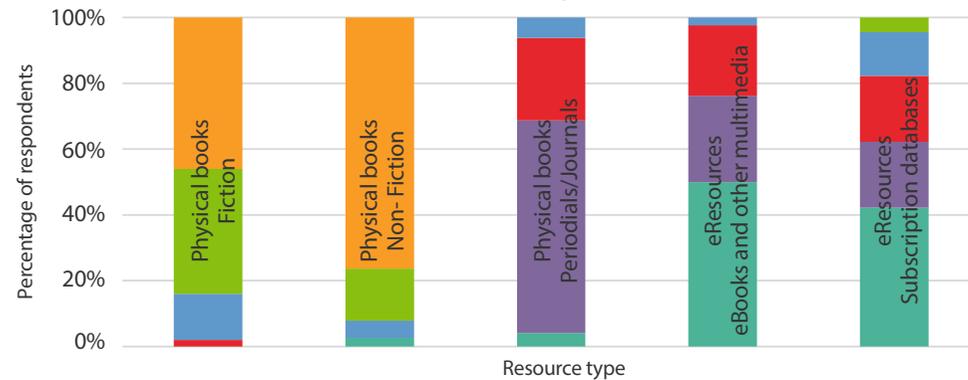


Figure 3. Middle & Secondary collections

■ We do not have any
 ■ Under 5%
 ■ 6 - 10%
 ■ 11 - 30%
 ■ 31 - 50%
 ■ Over 50%



6th Form/Secondary & 6th Form collections

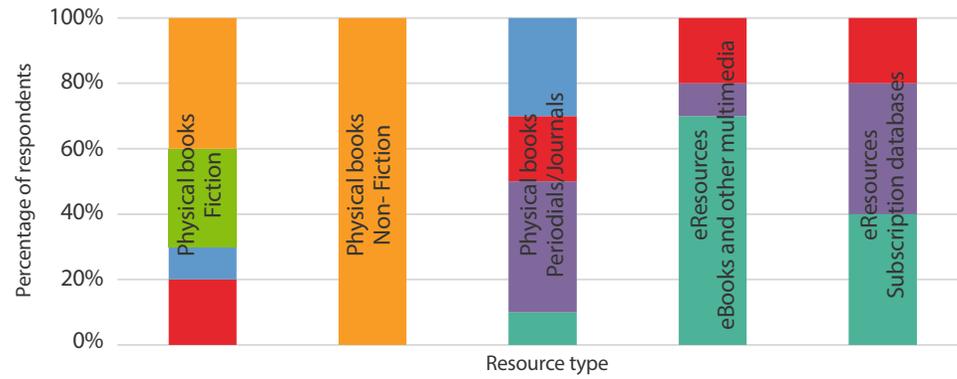


Figure 4. 6th Form/Secondary & 6th form collections

All Through School collections

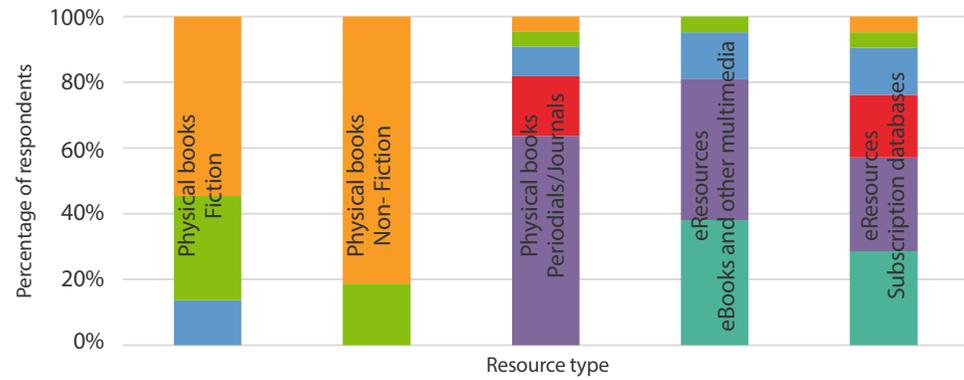


Figure 5. All through collections

■ We do not have any
 ■ Under 5%
 ■ 6 - 10%
 ■ 11 - 30%
 ■ 31 - 50%
 ■ Over 50%

4.1 eResource collections

Respondents were asked how long they have had eResources in their library. Figure 6 shows how long their school has had eBooks and eAudiobooks, figure 7 shows how long their school has had Subscription Databases in the library.

"I'd like an assistant, and to work more hours, to be able to integrate Inquiry skills across the school more effectively."

How long have you had eBooks or e-audiobooks in the library?

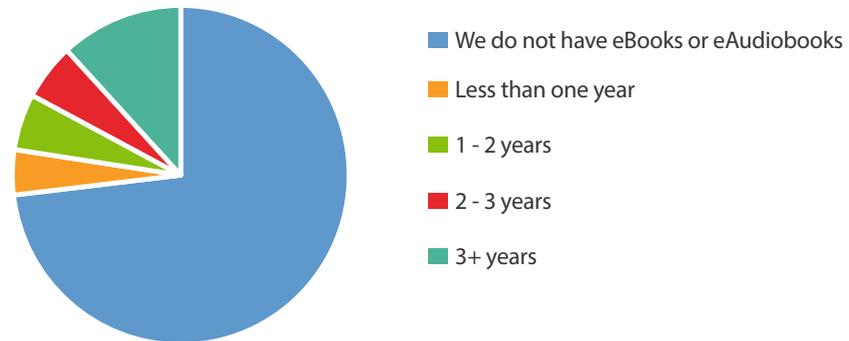


Figure 6: eBooks & eAudiobooks in the library

How long have you had Subscription Databases in the library?

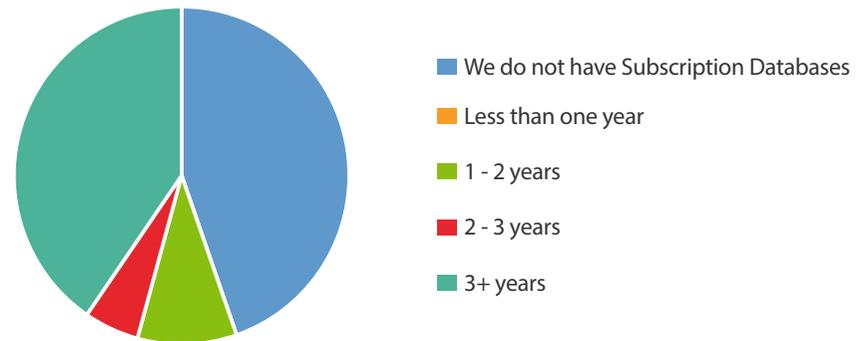


Figure 6: Subscription Databases in the library

5.0 Level of student engagement with the library

Respondents were asked about the level of student engagement with the library.

Figure 7 shows the reported level of student engagement for all schools.

Figures 8 and 9 show the reported level of student engagement by education provider and school type.

Sample sizes of less than 5 have not been included.

Level of teacher engagement with the library - all schools

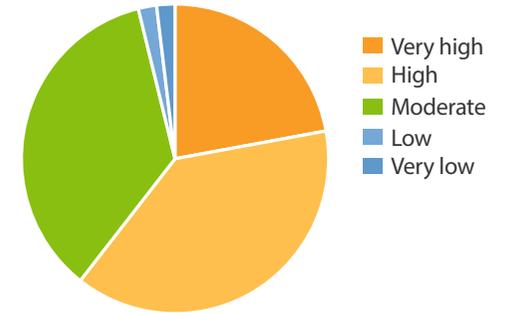


Figure 7: Level of teacher engagement with the library - all schools

Level of student engagement by education provider

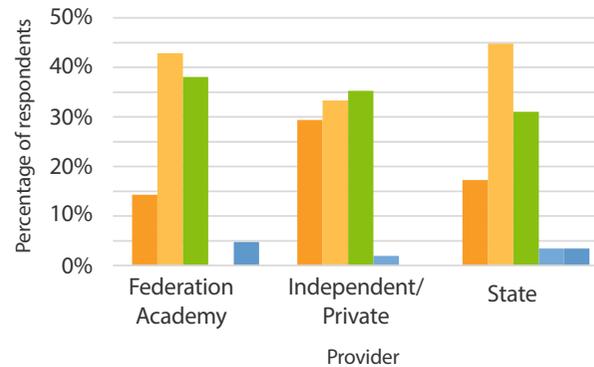


Figure 8: Level of student engagement by education provider

Level of student engagement by school type

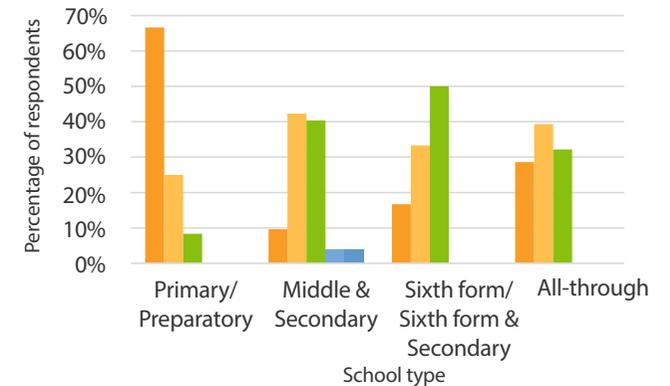


Figure 9: Level of student engagement by school type

Very high High Moderate Low Very low



6.0 Level of teacher engagement with the library

Respondents were asked about the level of teacher engagement with the library.

Figure 11 shows the reported level of teacher engagement for all schools.

Figures 12 and 13 show the reported level of teacher engagement by education provider and school type.

Sample sizes of less than 5 have not been included.

Level of teacher engagement with the library - all schools

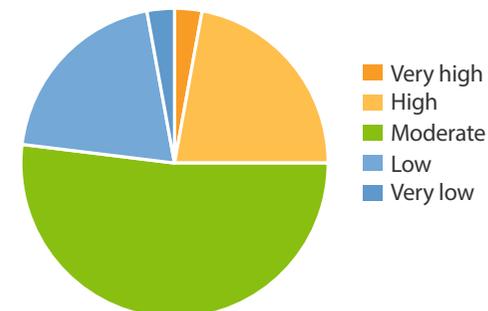


Figure 10: Level of teacher engagement with the library - all schools

Level of teacher engagement by education provider

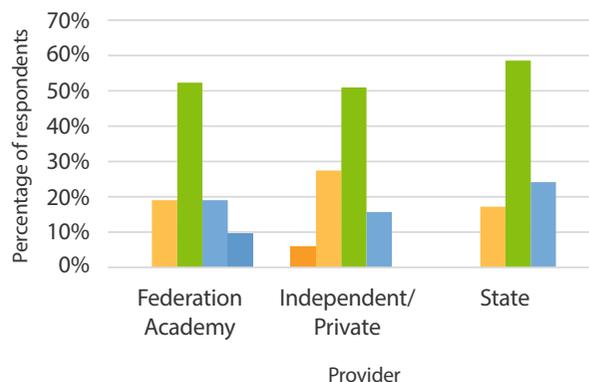


Figure 11: Level of teacher engagement by education provider

Level of teacher engagement by school type

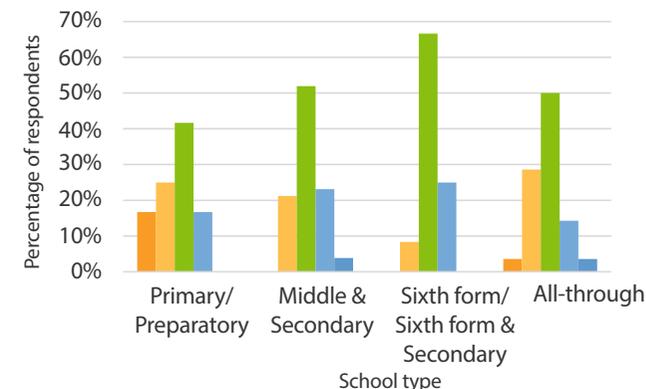


Figure 12: Level of teacher engagement by school type

Very high High Moderate Low Very low

“Information skills are becoming more important, especially as ‘fake news’ on the internet grows. However, all too often, research skills are seen simply as a ‘Google it’ option.

This is where the library can come in to its own, teaching research skills. Unfortunately time is not always given over to the teaching of such skills.

This is one of the reasons why I like ‘Oliver v5’, which allows me to put useful links on the Homepage to websites and search engines specifically designed for secondary school students.”

7.0 Level of support from the senior leadership team

Respondents were asked about the level of support they receive from the senior leadership team.

Figure 13 shows the reported level of support from the senior leadership team for all schools.

Figures 14 and 15 show the reported level of support from the senior leadership team by education provider and school type.

Sample sizes of less than 5 have not been included.

Level of support from the senior leadership team - all schools

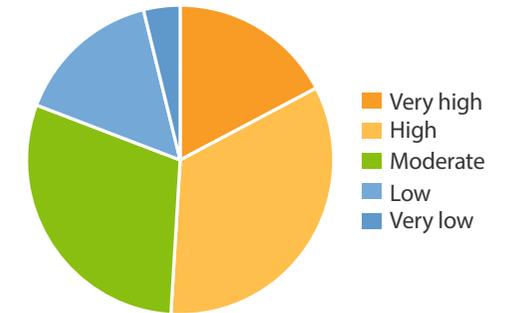


Figure 13: Level of support from the senior leadership team - all schools

Level of support from the senior leadership team by education provider

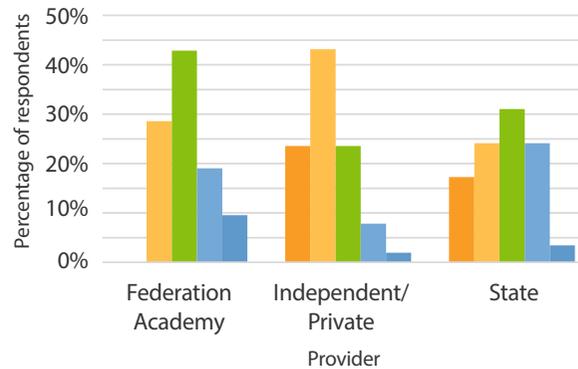


Figure 14: Level of support from the senior leadership team by education provider

Level of support from the senior leadership team by school type

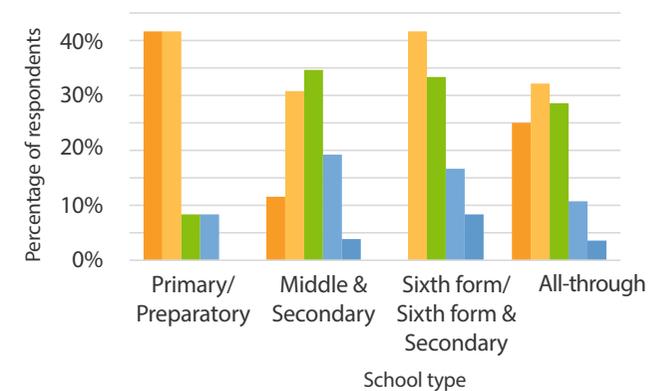


Figure 15: Level of support from the senior leadership team by school type

Very high High Moderate Low Very low

8.0 What do you see impacting school libraries most in the future?

Respondents were asked to rate the following in relation to how they will impact school libraries in the future.

The top 3 included:

1. Digitisation of resources (67%)
2. Government funding and policies (56%)
3. Cloud-based technologies increasing library accessibility (52%)

What will have the biggest impact on school libraries in the future?

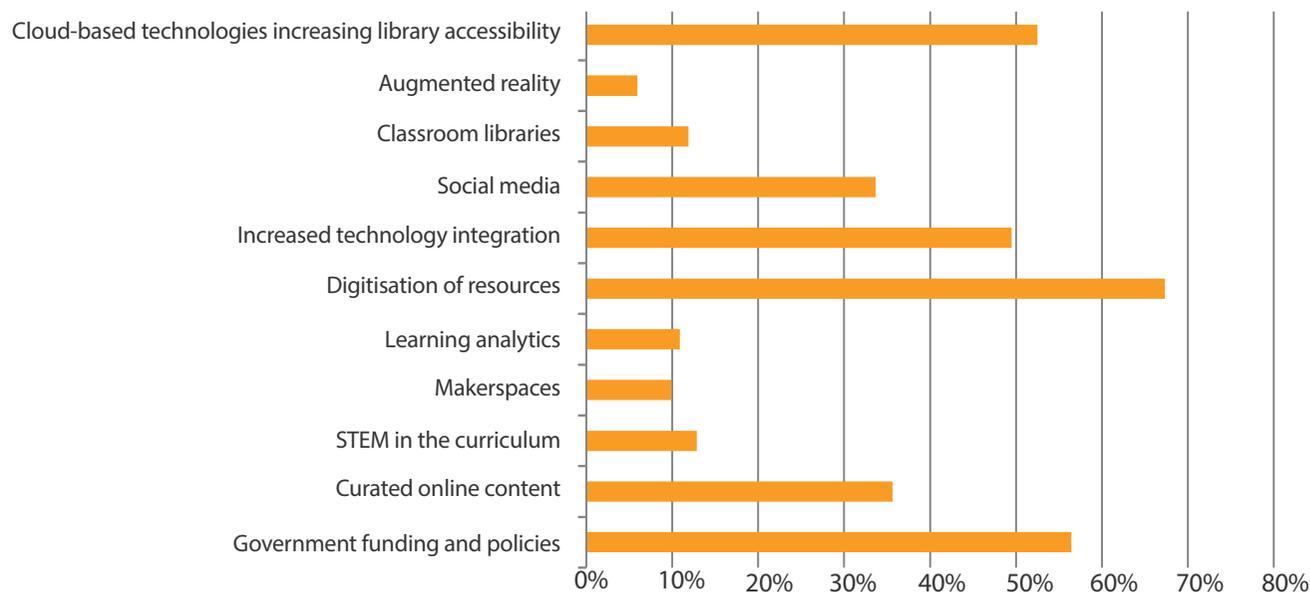


Figure 16: What will have the biggest impact on school libraries in the future?

Open fields provided opportunity for respondents to include other emerging trends not listed. Responses included school budget distribution, school culture and values, student needs and behaviour, and teacher involvement in the library.

“The library is often a safe place for many isolated and new students. I’d like to encourage more students like this to find the space and claim it for themselves!

A bigger area for casual reading and break and lunchtime relaxation would be great.”

9.0 Additional funding

Respondents were asked about proposed additional funding for schools - whether they thought the library would receive any of that funding and what they would spend it on.

Figure 17 shows the reported likelihood of the library receiving additional funding, and figure 18 shows what respondents plan to invest it on, or what they believe their library is most in need of.

Likelihood that the library will receive additional funding

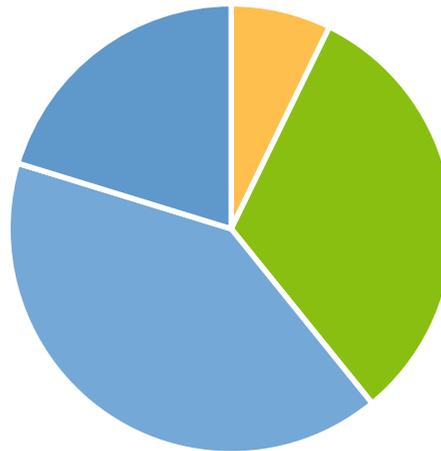


Figure 17: Likelihood that the library will receive additional funding

Likely Unlikely
Possible Very unlikely

What respondents would like to spend funding on

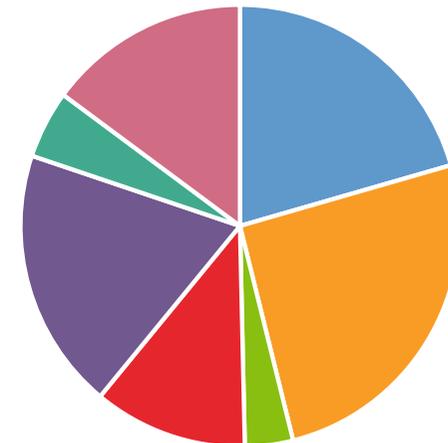


Figure 18: What respondents would like to spend funding on

Furniture Additional staff or increased hours for existing staff
Physical books Software/technology
eBooks Hardware (iPads, computers, eBook readers etc.)
Online resources - (databases or video)

Open fields provided opportunity for respondents to include other spending needs not listed. Responses included staff training and book protection supplies.

“There is incredible potential for school libraries, we need people to be advocating to government and school leaders about the potential uses.”

10.0 Feedback themes

Respondents were asked two open-ended questions about the library and their role. They were also asked to share what exciting trends are emerging that could impact libraries in the near future. We had a number of respondents share their thoughts which will be released in a Whitepaper in 2020.

Recurring themes include:

The library space

Respondents indicated that they would like a bigger library space to improve makerspace options, to accommodate more users, provide computers and more specialised technology options, and to create separate spaces for collaboration, relaxation, and study.

They also indicated that they would like more money to refurbish the library and upgrade the furniture to make it a more vibrant and functional space.

Staffing

Respondents indicated that they would like the library to have more staff, or introduce job sharing, to increase library opening hours, to introduce clubs, to provide a more comprehensive service, to teach information literacy, to integrate inquiry skills across the school more effectively, and to help manage a makerspace.

They also indicated that they would like to see their role recognised for the qualifications held and not seen as a support or admin role, and to have more qualified library staff in the school.

Making the library more central

Respondents indicated that they would like the library to be less remote and moved to a more central location in the school.

They also indicated that they would like to be more central to teaching and learning, and to be used as more of a resource within the school, to be able to help embed information literacy skills and research skills in the curriculum, and help address the problem of ‘fake news’.

Reading for pleasure

Respondents indicated that they would like more budget for fiction books to engage readers, and more time to devote to encouraging reading for pleasure, to talk about books with students, to bring awareness to the holistic (not just academic) benefits of reading, and to encourage students to read a wide range of genres.

11.0 Survey scope

The 2019 Softlink UK and Europe School Library Survey was promoted and conducted online. Invitations were open to all UK, Europe, Middle East, and African school libraries and consisted of 23 questions that covered the following topics:

- School library services
- Library engagement and support
- Emerging trends
- Government funding
- Viewpoints on opportunities and challenges

12.0 Respondents

The 2019 Survey received 107 responses from Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Qatar, Scotland, South Africa, Spain, Tanzania, UAE, and the UK. The distribution of respondents was as follows:

Percentage of respondents by school type

- Federation Academy - 21%
- Free - 3%
- Independent/Private - 49%
- State - 27%

Percentage of respondents by education provider

- Primary/Preparatory - 11%
- Middle - 2%
- Secondary - 48%
- 6th Form - 5%
- Secondary & 6th Form - 7%
- All Through - 27%



13.0 Conclusion

The 2019 UK, Europe, Middle East, and Africa School Library Survey provides insight into the school library industry and a basis for comparing with past and future surveys.

In 2018, 25% of respondents indicated a high or very high level of support from the senior leadership team, this has increased to 51% in 2019. In 2018, 33% of respondents indicated a low or very low level of support, this has decreased to 19% in 2019.

Likewise, reported levels of high to very high teacher engagement in the library have increased from 22% in 2018 to 25% in 2019; low to very low level of teacher engagement have decreased from 31% in 2018 to 23% in 2019.

Promoting and supporting reading for pleasure continues to be the top service the library provides; this was reported by 94% of respondents in 2018 and 95% of respondents in 2019.

In 2018 respondents indicated that Government funding and policies were most likely to impact school libraries in the future (63%); in 2019 respondents indicated that digitisation of resources was most likely to impact school libraries (67%).

Open-ended comments reveal that respondents would like to see an increase in the size of the library and improvements to the library space. Staffing continues to be a challenge with respondents indicating that they would like more staff, or more qualified staff, to help expand library services. Respondents also shared that they would like the library to be more central, both physically in the school and in teaching and learning.

Thank you

A special thank you to everyone who participated in and promoted the 2019 Softlink UK & Europe School Library.