

# Engaging, enabling and educating users

*“You see, I don’t believe that libraries should be drab places where people sit in silence, and that’s been the main reason for our policy of employing wild animals as librarians.”*

Monty Python skit

In recent years libraries have been undergoing rapid change. In school libraries, librarians may be considered technology experts, curriculum leaders, literature gurus, web masters and providers of on-line information and professional development. You are expected to be knowledgeable and up-to-date with developments in educational pedagogy and adolescent psychology. The teaching role of the teacher librarian has a new found credibility and value among classroom teachers, as information literacy becomes part of every teacher librarian’s lexicon. You are expected to be a human dynamo, with energy to burn, to have a huge capacity to absorb new information, to have the imagination to deliver exciting new programs, whilst at the same time having the ability to maintain an efficient and relevant library service. However, this is probably still not enough!

There used to be more structure in the school day and more teacher directed activities. There were no computers, no Internet, no MP3 files and a visit to the library was not generally on the agenda, for anyone other than the keen readers and the dedicated teachers.

## Student expectations

Developments in technology have now resulted in a whole new set of library clientele.

What do students expect from their school library now? How are you adapting to those demands? There are students who never pick up a book, but could spend all day e-mailing and surfing the Internet; there are students accessing all the latest databases; there are students playing computer games and downloading files; while there are still students doing private study, and keen readers who want a quiet place to enjoy a good book. How are you connecting with these disparate groups? How are you catering for their educational needs and their recreational interests?

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