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Title	Developing a future-ready school library collection for adolescents
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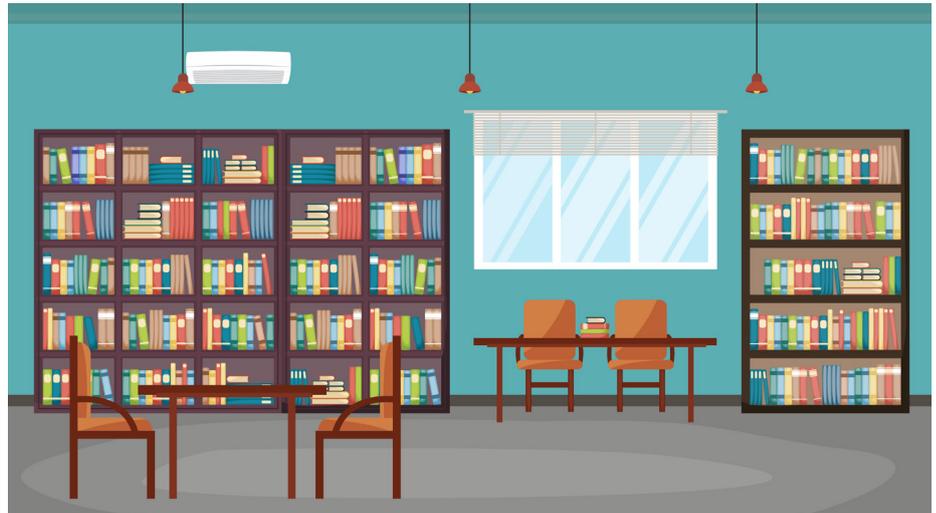
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# Developing a Future-Ready School Library Collection for Adolescents

By **Loh Chin Ee**

Loh Chin Ee is Assistant Professor at the English Language and Literature Academic Group at the National Institute of Education. Her research focuses on literacy and literature education at the intersection of social class and globalisation.

More about her research on reading and school libraries can be found on the *Building a Reading Culture* website: <https://www.readingculturesg.org/>



Following the earlier two roundtable discussions on designing library spaces and reading, Dr Loh's presentation focused on the unique role of secondary school libraries and the challenges faced by library staff and teachers in developing book and materials collections for the future.

From her research findings, it was evident that students, regardless of socio-economic status, language proficiency level and gender, were more likely to visit their school library than a public library due to proximity. Lower proficiency students were also less intimidated by the school library given the smaller size of its collection. This was also the case for reading in mother tongues (Chinese and Malay). In fact, some students never go to the public libraries and are reliant on the school library. The results of an earlier survey carried out by Dr Loh showed that students wanted to see more books in their school libraries as well as improved accessibility to books they wanted to read.

School libraries also need to support the school's pedagogical requirements and cater to the specific learning needs of various communities and profiles of its users (e.g., some schools may want to promote STEM and robotics). The *School Library Guidelines* of the International

Federation of Library Associations and Institutions ("IFLA") recommends that school library collections should "complement and enrich textbooks, teaching materials, and methodologies". The school library can also aid in the teaching of information literacy and research skills to students.

Citing the *IFLA Guidelines for Collection Policy*, Dr Loh highlighted that with developments in technology, libraries have seen the need to move away from merely archiving information which its users may want ('just in case') to ensuring that its users always have access to information they need ('just in time').

Dr Loh suggested that there was a unique role for school libraries and put forward three challenges when thinking about collection policies:

1. how to encourage **engaged** (i.e., independent and self-motivated) **reading** through the collection. This could be achieved by concentrating on the quality, quantity, variety and appropriate advertising of the materials in the collection;
2. how to provide **pedagogical support** to teachers and students. The school library could, after consultation with teachers, expand teachers' resources and support niche learning by creating specialised collections; and

3. how to inspire **independent learning**. The school library could provide more physical (eg. space) and technological (eg. specialised computers) resources as well as beef up research capacity through non-fiction and e-resources.

The roundtable participants raised several related issues. These were on how to ascertain students' needs and wants for the library collection, clearer guidelines on sensitive topics and age-appropriate material, how often to review and refresh the library collection and the allocation of funds.

Dr Loh also queried about the types of collections (e.g., audio, online, magazines) the school library should have, the roles of physical books versus e-books, the space and furniture needed to move books, and the kinds of technology and partnerships needed to support library collection policies.

She encouraged the participants to continue to reflect and discuss the issues put forward in order to develop future-ready school libraries.

## How to Cite

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