

Volume 41 Issue 2



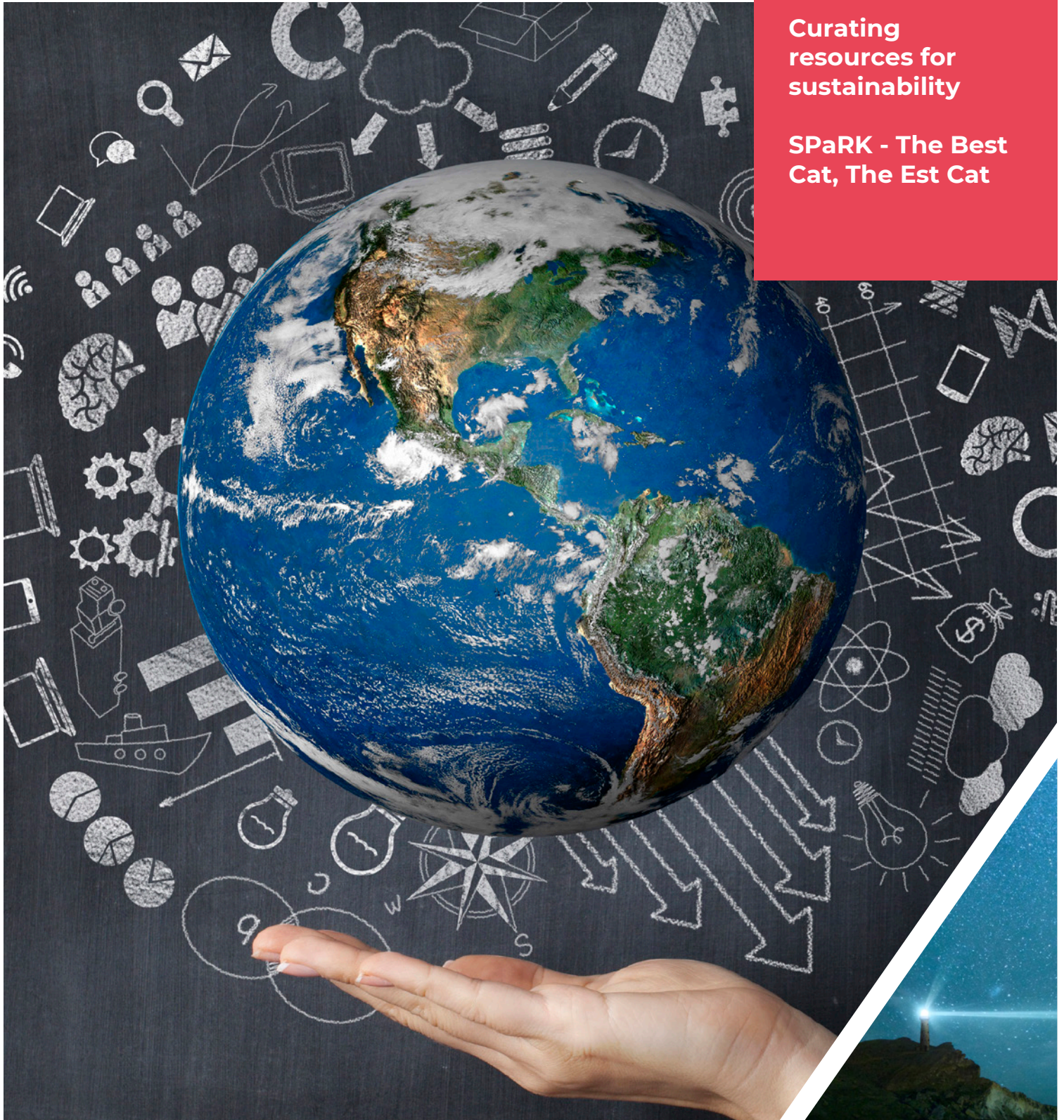
# Scan

The journal for educators

**Leadership in  
disruptive times**

**Curating  
resources for  
sustainability**

**SPaRK - The Best  
Cat, The Est Cat**



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Scan is a leading refereed journal, published monthly between February and November. Scan aims to bring innovative change to the lives and learning of contemporary educators and students. Through Scan, teachers' practice is informed by critical engagement with peer reviewed research that drives improved school and student outcomes across NSW, Australia and the world. Scan aims to leave teachers inspired, equipped and empowered, and students prepared.

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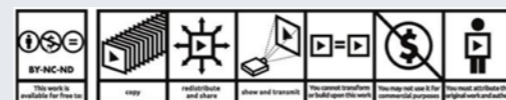
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# Leading in a time of disruption



**Andrew Smith**  
Chief Executive Officer, Education Services Australia

**On behalf of Education Services Australia (ESA), Andrew Smith considers the impact of recent disruptions and challenges on education and the significance of careful planning by school leaders.**

One of the many strengths of effective school leaders is their ability to calmly navigate uncertain and unstable times.

Over the past two years, the pandemic has tested us all with different disruptions and challenges. It has forced our education system to transform, with many schools temporarily moving their entire learning environments online and integrating complex digital technologies to support their work. Now schools are returning to the classroom well prepared for changes to pre-COVID processes and procedures.

The disruptions caused by the pandemic have transformed our society and its future. But are we reaping a digital dividend or worsening a digital divide in education?

Schools have responded to the disruption in many and varied ways, but the main challenges have largely been in these four areas:

- the balance between planning and agility
- capability and confidence across the school community
- equity and inclusion
- safety and security.

## The balance between planning and agility

Without a plan, a school community may find it challenging to advance digitally, even without forced remote learning. School leaders said having a plan was critical for their school's transition to remote learning, and kept them focused in the face of overwhelming challenges and choices.

The first step in any good digital strategy is to set a goal. School communities with positive outcomes in times of digital disruption are clear about the goal they want to achieve.

Unfailingly, that goal focuses on increasing the impact of teachers in ways that lead to improved student outcomes.

## Capability and confidence across the school community

Technology should enhance rather than replace great leadership and teaching. Building capability helps schools operate with confidence in a digital environment.

To do this, effective school leaders put time and effort into a strategic framework based on:

- systems and processes that support school and organisational capability
- people capability and confidence – school leaders who take time to increase their knowledge and learn from others, and a teaching workforce that confidently uses technology and understands how to integrate it into its pedagogy.

## Equity and access

The [Australian Digital Inclusion Index](#) shows that digital inclusion is uneven across Australia. Income, age, education levels and employment all play a part.

In 2019, around 20 percent of Australia's four million students were from households in the lowest income bracket. These students face a much higher risk of digital exclusion from remote online learning, and poorer educational outcomes as a result.

School leaders have found creative ways to support their communities. The catchphrase of 2020 was 'devices, dongles and data'. Some schools distributed devices and portable wi-fi connections to students most in need. Others set up central help desks to



**School communities with positive outcomes in times of digital disruption are clear about the goal they want to achieve.**

support parents trying to navigate unfamiliar devices and connections.

Some school leadership teams introduced online education programs for parents on how to support their child's education during remote learning. Recording school assemblies and gatherings for families who could not attend kept parents engaged and will likely continue in some schools beyond the pandemic.

There is much to do to address digital inequity. Yet there is much to learn from what school communities have done so far, are able to do, and are still doing.

## Safety and security

Mental health issues among young Australians were already at a disturbing level before the pandemic. This has only become worse.

School leaders are also grappling with the challenge of supporting the wellbeing of their staff. This is on top of their own fears about the health and wellbeing of their own family members.

In addition, the online safety and security of students has been tested as they have navigated remote learning. The [Notifiable Data Breaches Report: January–June 2020](#) showed education as the third most breached sector when it came to cyber-attacks.

The disruption has truly put the safety and wellbeing of students and teachers at risk.

To counter this, many schools' efforts to engage and connect with students, families and staff have been beyond anything we have seen before.

Virtual events, social gatherings and competitions helped people stay connected and supported.

**Initiatives such as Safer Technologies for Schools (ST4S) assess online education products and services against a nationally agreed set of privacy and security criteria. This helps leaders make informed decisions about the digital education technology products they bring into their schools.**

Gathering in small groups to walk together or organising time to socialise online helped teachers maintain important staffroom relationships.

Leaders and classroom teachers have also put time and effort into learning about data security and best practice to minimise threats. Initiatives such as [Safer Technologies for Schools](#) (ST4S) assess online education products and services against a nationally agreed set of privacy and security criteria. This helps leaders make informed decisions about the digital education technology products they bring into their schools.

So far, ST4S has assessed more than 100 products. It found that around one third of products needed security and privacy improvements to meet the criteria. Almost all vendors have committed to making changes to meet the standard. The rest have withdrawn their products from the market, rendering the classroom a safer place for all students.

### Beyond the disruption

School leaders and school communities have taken the challenges of digital disruption and met them with careful planning, time and energy. They have built capacity and kept a close eye on wellbeing and safety.

When we move beyond the pandemic, school leaders can use the lessons learnt during the pandemic to encourage innovation and produce enduring benefits for their schools and communities.

**How to cite this article – Smith, A. (2022). Leading in a time of disruption. Scan, 41(2).**

## Safer Technologies for Schools (ST4S)

### About the ST4S assessment

ST4S was developed in collaboration with all Australian state, territory, Catholic and independent school sectors to provide:

- an assessment approach with transparent requirements and standards; and
- summary reports aimed at reducing risks to schools when choosing digital products and services.

It seeks to enhance the security, privacy, interoperability and online safety of software applications and services commonly used by Australian schools.

Schools and educators benefit from clear, consistent information regarding products and services, generic risks and suggested treatments. Students, teachers and families benefit from schools choosing more compliant products and services.

### Who manages ST4S?

ST4S is administered by Education Services Australia (ESA) on behalf of state and territory governments and the Catholic and independent school sectors.



# Curate, advocate, collaborate: Updating a school library collection to promote sustainability and counter eco-anxiety



**Pooja Mathur**

Teacher librarian, The King's School Senior Library

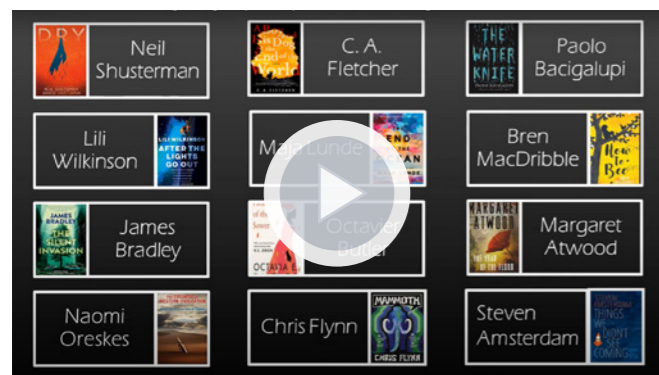
**Pooja Mathur highlights the role teacher librarians can play in promoting the cross-curriculum priority of Sustainability.**

### Holding up the mirror: reflecting our current environmental zeitgeist

Environmental scientist, Yadvinder Malhi (2017), argues that we are living in the age of Anthropocene, which comprises a range of adverse impacts on the planet due to human activity. Such impacts can lead to climate change, loss of biodiversity, limitation of natural resources, and pollution.

Future generations will need 'active and informed citizens' working towards preservation and enhancement of social and natural habitats (Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals

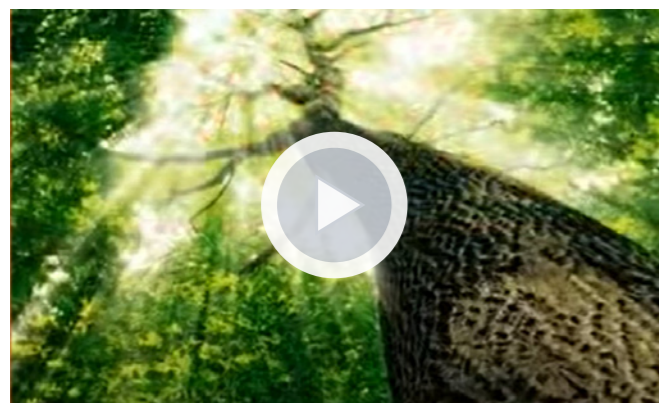
for Young Australians, 2008). However, as Judith Wakeman (2020a) points out, issues like 'eco-anxiety' (fear of environmental doom) and 'solastalgia' (distress caused by environmental change) affect many youngsters today. In the light of such concerns, Wakeman poses the importance of reading carefully curated titles to help combat these negativities. In a YouTube presentation, [Judith Wakeman Cli-Fi: Reframing Young People's response to Climate Change](#) (25:47), on fiction relating to climate change she suggests implementing 'developmental bibliotherapy' (guided reading programs for teens run by trusted adults) as a preventative strategy against eco-anxiety and solastalgia, and to promote and nurture wellbeing.



'[Judith Wakeman Cli-Fi: Reframing Young People's response to Climate Change](#)' by Judith Wakeman [25:48 minutes, YouTube]

## Focus on sustainability

Emphasis on sustainability starts with concerns about the future of the world that coming generations will inherit (University of California, 2021). As noted in [Shining a Light on Sustainability](#) (18:53), Albert Einstein declared that a new way of thinking needs to be adopted to secure the survival of humans.



'[Shining a Light on Sustainability](#)' by the Australian Research Institute for Environment and Sustainability [18:53 minutes, YouTube]

Sustainability prioritises conservation of natural habitats, promotes balanced interaction between humans and nature as well as human societies themselves, and encourages humanity to build a more socially and ecologically equitable world through targeted knowledgeable activity ([Sustainability cross-curriculum priority](#), ACARA, 2016). Nine organising ideas have been developed and embedded in all key learning areas (KLAs) across the Australian curriculum to promote sustainable education ([Australian Education for Sustainability Alliance](#), 2014, p 10).

## Teacher librarians' mantra: curate, advocate and collaborate

'Know students and how they learn' ([Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership](#), 2017) is the first professional standard for teachers nationally and it certainly resonates with teacher librarians. It is imperative to support the varied learning and teaching styles across a school. Resources in multiple formats and delivery modes should be procured to assure the engagement of all students. Options should also be provided to support flexible ways of teaching and learning (Warren, 2010). Francis Drury (cited in Johnson, 2009, p 6) states that the aim of resource selection is to proffer 'the right book for the right reader at the right time'. To develop a balanced collection, a teacher librarian needs to consider a variety of selection aids (Kennedy, 2006, pp 45-46), censorship issues, budgeting details, available resources, range of formats supported by existing technology, physical space available in the library, general and specific selection criteria (relevance, appropriateness, authority and bias, quality, source, licencing issues), the curriculum, teaching-learning needs and the community's educational ideology (Hughes-Hassell & Mancall, 2005, p 33; 35).

According to Dennis Carrigan (cited in Johnson, 2009, p 1), 'choice' is the essence of collection development. Many experts like John Kennedy (2006, pp 61-84) have detailed the collection development process. In brief, a collection development team consisting of school library staff and classroom teachers:

- determines the need for such a collection
- establishes links to broad curriculum and school community requirements
- ensures that CCP Sustainability is embedded in every KLA.

Resources in multiple formats should be made available to address all learning and teaching, and extra-curricular requirements.

In addition, the collection development team:

- predicts expected outcomes of developing this collection, for instance, the ease of spreading sustainable education across KLAs, resulting in greater awareness and understanding
- identifies relevant resources within existing collection which would support sustainable values
- allocates a budget for the new collection
- investigates free online resources and explores multi-library collaborations to save on cost
- contacts relevant and reliable publishers, booksellers, educational databases for resources linked to sustainability
- orders, processes and advertises carefully chosen resources.

Apart from the expected nonfiction resources, it is important to remember that fiction is a compelling medium to disseminate information and enhance understanding of our society (Baer & Glasgow, 2010, p 31), as well as to develop empathy (Gaiman, 2013) in the readers. When students read and contemplate fictional (and literary nonfictional) narratives based on relevant issues, they 'live through' experiences with the characters or the author/s, identify with them, develop empathy, and ultimately feel the desire to do something about the situation. Hence, a carefully curated, balanced, and multi-medium library collection would be most effective in enhancing students' understanding of sustainability.

## Curated texts: fiction and nonfiction

The following resource list has been curated as a proposed starting point for high school libraries to support and promote sustainable ideas in an interesting and cohesive manner. Purpose, readability, content, cross-curriculum relevance, interest level, accuracy, scope, illustrations, presentation, navigation, cost, ease of access/availability, and authority were taken into consideration as selection criteria. Titles are predominantly Australian, with a few prominent international inclusions.

## Books

(Many of these titles are also available as ebooks and audiobooks.)

- Abela, D. (2010). *Grimsdon*. Random House.
- Abela, D. (2014). *New City*. Random House.
- Abela, D. (2019). *Final storm*. Puffin Books.
- Ahmad, M. M.(ed.) (2020). *After Australia*. Affirm Press in partnership with Diversity Arts Australia and Sweatshop Literacy Movement.
- Atwood, M. (2009). *The year of the flood*. Bloomsbury.
- Bacigalupi, P. (2015). *The water knife*. Orbit.
- Balchin, L. (2016). *Mechanica*. Five Mile Press Pty Ltd.
- Bell, D. (2020). *The end of the world is bigger than love*. Text Publishing Company.
- Betts, A. (2019). *Rogue*. Pan Macmillan.
- Bradley, J. (2015). *Clade*. Penguin Books.
- Bradley, J. (2017). *The silent invasion*. Pan.
- Bradley, J. (2020). *Ghost species*. Hamish Hamilton.
- Cunningham, S. (Ed.). (2020). *Fire flood and plague: Australian writers respond to 2020*. Vintage Books.
- Flanagan, R. (2020). *The living sea of waking dreams*. Hamish Hamilton.
- Flannery, T. F. (2017). *Sunlight and seaweed: An argument for how to feed, power and clean up the world*. The Text Publishing Company.
- Flynn, C. (2020). *Mammoth*. UQP.
- Gameau, D. (2019). *2040: A handbook for the regeneration: Based on the documentary 2040*: Macmillan.
- Garnaut, R. (2019). *Superpower: Australia's low-carbon opportunity*. La Trobe University Press in conjunction with Black.
- Healey, J. (2021). *Wildlife extinction crisis*. Spinney Press.
- Hortle, E. (2020). *The octopus and I*. Allen & Unwin.
- Jackson, T., & Guitian, C. (2020). *Climate change*. QED.
- Johnson, M. (Ed.). (2018). *How I resist: Activism and hope for a new generation* (Illustrated ed.) Wednesday Books.

- Jones, B. (2020). *What is to be done: Political engagement and saving the planet*. Scribe Publications.
- Juchau, M. (2015). *The world without us*. Bloomsbury.
- Klein, N. (2021). *How to change everything: The young human's guide to protecting the planet and each other*. Penguin Books.
- Klein, G., & Bauman, Y. (2014). *The cartoon introduction to climate change*. Island Press.
- Marlton, A. (2020). *The carbon-neutral adventures of the indefatigable envrioteen*. Allen & Unwin.
- McCourt, R. (2017). *No killing sky*. New Internationalist.
- MacDibble, B. (2019). *The dog runner*. Allen & Unwin.
- Mills, J. (2018). *Dyschronia*. Picador.
- Muir, C., Wehner, K., & Newell, J. (2020). *Living with the Anthropocene: Love, loss and hope in the face of environmental crisis*. NewSouth.
- Newby, J. (2021). *Beyond climate grief: A journey of love, snow, fire and an enchanted beer can*. NewSouth.
- Oreskes, N., & Conway, E. (2014). *The collapse of western civilization: A View from the future*. Columbia University Press.
- Ottaviani, J., & Wicks, M. (2015). *Primates: The fearless science of Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey, and Biruté Galdikas*. Square Fish.
- Park, L. S. (2010). *A long walk to water: based on a true story*. Clarion Books.
- Plimer, I. (2011). *How to get expelled from school: a guide to climate change for pupils, parents & punters*. Connor Court.
- Reucassel, C. (2020). *Fight for planet A*. ABC Books.
- Roberts, T., & Nomoco. (2020). *The great realisation*. HarperCollins.
- Sandford, B., & Extinction Rebellion. (2020). *Challenge everything*. Pavilion.
- Shusterman, N., & Shusterman, J. (2018). *Dry*. Walker Books.
- Slezak, M., & Johnston, E. (2017). *The best Australian science writing 2017*. NewSouth Publishing.
- Smith, M. (2016). *The road to winter*. The Text Publishing Company.
- Smithers, S., & Smithers, A. (2018). *Wraith: James Locke and the Azuriens*. Magabala Books.
- Squarzoni, P., & Whittington-Evans, N. (2014). *Climate changed: a personal journey through the science*. Harry N. Abrams.
- Thomas, I., & Paterson, A. (2020). *This book will (help) cool the climate: 50 ways to cut pollution, speak up and protect our planet!* Wren & Rook.
- Thunberg, G. (2019). *No one is too small to make a difference*. Penguin Books.
- Turner, G. (2013). *The sea and summer*. Gollancz.
- Weisman, A. (2008). *World without us* (Reprint ed.). Picador Paper.
- Whitmore, J., & Rawson, J. (2015). *The handbook: surviving and living with climate change*. Transit Lounge Publishing.
- Wilkinson, C. (2015). *Atmospheric: The burning story of climate change*. Black Dog Books.
- Wilkinson, L. (2015). *Green valentine*. Allen & Unwin.
- Wright, A. (2013). *The swan book*. Giramondo.

### Multimodal texts

- Atwood, M. (2009, September 26). [Time capsule found on the dead planet by Margaret Atwood](#). The Guardian.
- Morimoto, J. (2007). [Junko's Story: Surviving Hiroshima's Atomic Bomb](#).
- Raphael, S. [Greenpeace Australia Pacific]. (2019, February 20). [Let's make more minutes count](#). YouTube. [3:12 minutes].
- Roberts, T. [Probably Tomfoolery]. (2020, April 30). [The great realisation](#). YouTube. [4:00 minutes].
- Sydney Environment Institute. (2021, July 8). [The invisible now: Writing crisis and the future imaginary](#).

## Syllabus links and teaching ideas

As a means of showing how such resources can become the focus of cross-curriculum studies, the works of two different writers have been selected for closer analysis:

- The Grimsdon trilogy by Deborah Abela, has links to English ACELT1807 (EN4-8D), geography ACHGK051 (GE4-2, GE4-5), science ACSHE135 (SC410PW, SC411PW), design and technologies ACTDEP038 (TE41-DP, TE410-DS), as well as valuable connections to the cross-curriculum priority of sustainability OI.2, OI.4, and OI.8.
- 'Junko's Story: Surviving Hiroshima's Atomic Bomb' by Junko Morimoto, an interactive digital narrative with links to English ACELA1548 (EN4-6C), ACELT1626 (EN4-8D), geography ACHGK051 (GE4-2, GE4-4, GE4-5, GE4-8), science ACSHE135 (SC4-10PW, SC4-11PW), Japanese ACLJAC163 (LJA4-1C) and the cross-curriculum priority of sustainability OI.5 and OI.8.

### Teaching activities

The following samples indicate some of the ways various key texts can be used to focus on sustainability in the process of classroom teaching based on stage, KLA and specific cohort requirement. Additionally, teacher librarians may collaborate/partner with school co-curricular clubs such as book club, science club, nature club, maker space, future problem solving, debating, public speaking, art and craft clubs, and so on, suggesting relevant titles from this collection for reading and/or using as stimulus/prompts for their meetings.

### The Grimsdon trilogy

These narratives offer a captivating series for stage 4 students. They take readers on an adventure which is both entertaining and educational. Isabella, Griffin, Fly, and twins Bea and Raffy live in the flooded city of Grimsdon and survive by relying on their ingenious, inventive skills. Meeting Xavier, with his fabulous flying machine is instrumental in the children's arrival at New



'Deb talks about Grimsdon' [4:29 minutes, YouTube]

City, where they face freakish weather conditions, sea monsters and bigger dangers created by unscrupulous adults. Differences between the lives of 'haves' and 'have-nots', the citizens and the refugees, are vast. Climate change, innovative inventions, ingenious children, friendship, political motives, and the will to survive against all odds are recurring themes in these compelling novels.

Ideas for teaching could include:

- Student research into issues such as causes and effects of global warming, sustainable innovative inventions, politics of greed, basic human rights and living conditions.
- Students draft ideas, design and build their own eco-friendly everyday essential items.
- Students watch the YouTube video '[Deb talks about Grimsdon](#)' (4:28). Using the questions Deborah responds to, or related questions, students present their own responses in writing, orally, or as a mixed media presentation.
- An author visit/Skype/Zoom may be possible.

### Junko's story: Surviving Hiroshima's atomic bomb

This resource is a first person account of devastation caused by nuclear bombs and would be appropriate for stage 4 and 5 students.

On 6th August 1945, 13 year old Junko's world exploded when an atomic bomb was dropped on her city of Hiroshima, Japan. The unimaginable plight of that young girl's family, as well as of thousands of inhabitants of Hiroshima has been portrayed in simple sentences that depict a horrifying scenario. Devastation caused by that bomb, including death, inhumane suffering, destruction, pollution, black rain, and more, is cleverly depicted in the illustrations and is further enhanced and supported by various artefacts, diagrams, links and a video. At the end, there is a reminder about the existence of thousands of powerful nuclear weapons currently around the world and the threat they pose to humanity's future.

Ideas for teaching could include:

- Discussion and research on World War II, with a deeper and closer look at the use of nuclear weapons, including the devastatingly long-lasting physical and emotional results.
- An investigation of nuclear weaponry in the world today.

## Further suggestions for advocacy and collaboration

- Library team may recommend titles for independent reading by preparing reading lists available on the library portal for year groups
- Library lessons can be utilised very efficiently to promote resources through book talks, read aloud sessions, book trailers, book tasting sessions, speed date with books, and so on
- Physical and digital library displays, for example a 'Think green' display
- 'Shelf talkers' placed prominently around the library for promotion
- Library run school wide competitions
- Student made book trailers
- Book reviews (written, video or multimodal format)
- Bookmarks
- Fanfiction (short stories, comics, poems or plays)
- Posters designs for an alternative book cover or movie poster
- 'Book bento boxes'.

According to social anthropologist, Ursula Münster, 'Many young people experience climate anxiety, which is why education is important in enabling them to see the opportunities and alternatives, not just gloomy prospects for the future' (2020). Access to a curated, comprehensive, targeted resource collection within the school library, coupled with active collaboration between a teacher librarian, classroom teachers and students could facilitate a reading culture across school (Hay, 2013) that would not only assist students in dealing with climate related anxieties, but also guide and motivate them to take an informed stance.

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# SPARK

## Shared Practice and Research Kit

## The Best Cat, the Est Cat



### Sally Rasaiah

Teacher Librarian, Wahroonga Public School

In this Shared Practice and Resource Kit (SPaRK), Sally Rasaiah demonstrates how *The Best Cat, the Est Cat* by Libby Hathorn and Rosie Handley inspires curiosity and can be used as a learning resource across stages in a cross curriculum mode.

### Educational significance

One way students learn is through inquiry and following their curiosity. This engaging book sparks curiosity in the 'best', 'rarest' and 'finest' historical and literary treasures contained within the State Library's collection. It invites students to pursue various lines of inquiry via the children's captivating guided tour.

This is an excellent example of a cross-stage, cross curriculum resource. Teachers will see many teaching opportunities which could inspire students across a range of key learning areas. The book's theme, vocabulary and format could be adapted to suit varying stages and levels of engagement.

### Resource overview



*The Best Cat, the Est Cat* (State Library of NSW, 2021)

Created by Libby Hathorn and Rosie Handley, *The Best Cat, the Est Cat* is the first book the State Library of NSW has published specifically with children in mind. It showcases some of the displayed and hidden treasures within the library's significant collection.

This quality picture book 'tells the story of a mysterious talking cat who takes two children and readers on a rollicking adventure through the State Library. They're chased by ghosts and discover an array of fascinating treasures, before finally learning the Best Cat's secret' ... (State Library of NSW, 2022).

From the initial endpapers to the closing pages which ask, 'Did you see these items in the story?', this historical picture book entices its reader with multiple sensory delights. As the ghost of a notable cat points out the salient features of the State Library of NSW, two children observe a gallery of artifacts, artworks and books.

A video recording of Libby Hathorn reading *The Best Cat, the Est Cat* is available via the State Library of NSW's YouTube channel.



'Author Libby Hathorn reads *The Best Cat, the Est Cat* by State Library of NSW [4:45 minutes, YouTube]

## Syllabus links

*The Best Cat, the Est Cat* has value for learning and teaching in a number of subject areas, including English, history and visual arts for students in Early Stage 1 through to Stage 3. Teachers may use this text as a focus for a cross curriculum unit of work.

### English K-10 Syllabus

ENe-1A Speaking and listening 1

- A student communicates with peers and known adults in informal and guided activities demonstrating emerging skills of group interaction

EN1-8B Reading and Viewing 2

- A student recognises that there are different kinds of texts when reading and viewing and shows an awareness of purpose, audience and subject matter

EN2-10C Thinking Imaginatively, creatively and interpretively

- A student thinks imaginatively, creatively and interpretively about information, ideas and texts when responding to and composing texts

EN3-7C Thinking imaginatively, creatively, interpretively and critically

- A student thinks imaginatively, creatively, interpretively and critically about information, ideas and texts when responding to and composing texts.

### History K-10 Syllabus

The literary features and style in the 'Best Cat the Est Cat' facilitate the achievement of outcomes of historical inquiry as defined in the syllabus' glossary as:

The process of developing knowledge and understanding by posing questions about the past, and applying skills associated with locating, analysing, evaluating and using sources as evidence to develop an informed argument or interpretation.

(Note: A lesson on [notetaking](#) at this juncture could clarify how to extract the important points from a text to reach a conclusion about the main idea.)



Statue of Trim outside the State Library of NSW (by User:PanBk, 2005 / CC BY-SA 3.0)

As aspects of our shared past are woven throughout the story via language, for example 'Here are the stacks that hold who we are...' and illustrations (artistic and factual reproductions), this book supports the History skills outcomes of historical inquiry and communication:

- HTe-2 demonstrates developing skills of historical inquiry and communication
- HT1-4 demonstrates skills of historical inquiry and communication
- HT2-5 applies skills of historical inquiry and communication
- HT3-5 applies a variety of skills of historical inquiry and communication.

Using sources from the library also enables students to develop an understanding about, and to address the cross curriculum priority, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

### Creative Arts K-6 Syllabus (visual arts)

By exploring and experimenting with Rosie Handley's techniques, students engage with various forms, including drawing, collage, painting, photography, and other digital forms.

Making

- VAES1.2 Experiments with a range of media in selected forms
- VAS1.2 Uses the forms to make artworks according to varying requirements
- VAS2.2 Uses the forms to suggest the qualities of subject matter
- VAS3.2 Makes artworks for different audiences, assembling materials in a variety of ways.

Appreciating

- VAES1.3 Recognises some of the qualities of different artworks and begins to realise that artists make artworks
- VAS1.3 Realises what artists do, who they are and what they make
- VAS2.4 Identifies connections between subject matter in artworks and what they refer to, and appreciates the use of particular techniques
- VAS3.4 Communicates about the ways in which subject matter is represented in artworks.

## Suggestions for using this resource

*The Best Cat, the Est Cat* stimulates curiosity and inquiry about Australian history and the contents of libraries and museums. Students consider the significance of these institutions in preserving our heritage. These ideas can be explored through historical concepts such as cause and effect, change and continuity, significance, empathy and contestability using historical inquiry processes. The book also supports learning in English and visual arts for students in Stages 1 to 3.

In any scenario, this picture book can be enjoyed as a shared read aloud. Pre-reading activities include a close examination and comparison of the fascinating endpapers. During reading, the class explore the word play, typography (especially on '-est'), and the composition of Handley's intricate collage illustrations. Post-reading activities involve students exploring intriguing artefacts from the State Library's collection (virtually or in person), investigating the circumnavigation of Australia by Matthew Flinders and Bungaree, and learning more about Trim (Flinders' cat and the children's tour guide). Students experiment with artmaking using collage composition, inspired by Handley's illustrations.

Some other examples of how the content of this book links to the curriculum are included below.

### ES1-S3 English

- The play on words in the title conveys how language can shape and make meaning according to purpose, audience and context. The many floors of the library are unveiled as the characters and the reader are treated to a superlative collection described as the 'finest', the 'bravest', the 'rarest' and the 'mappiest'.
- This use of superlatives supports learning in the morphological component of spelling as students use the comparative and superlative suffixes -er and -est'.

### Learning across the curriculum in NSW syllabuses for the Australian Curriculum

As the employees of the library are introduced in the story, their [work](#) is heralded and applauded. From the restorers to the guides, each '... keeps this place turning'. This aspect of the book illustrates the positive impact of collaborative practices, a component of general capabilities.

## Teaching activities

- Before reading the book, ask students to brainstorm their first impressions of the images on the endpapers. This prediction of what the book might be about can be revisited and discussed when more of the book is revealed.
- Determine the salient features of the title page. What is the significance of each character's gaze? Could this be the hook that propels the reader forward? Does this spark the reader's curiosity even before the story commences? Document students' predictions about these characters before, during and after reading the book.
- List all the superlative adjectives used in the story, and separate the invented words from those in the dictionary. Have fun inventing other superlatives which could be used in a future creative writing task.
- As the central character in this picture book, the ghost cat takes charge of the tour, only revealing his identity at the end with a snippet of his own life. Have the composers switched our learning about this wondrous library to learning about a significant figure from Australia's past? If so, how has this been achieved? Teachers may choose to present this by focusing on the literary concept of **style**, which refers to '[the characteristic ways the composer chooses to express ideas in a variety of modes](#)' (English Textual Concepts and Learning Processes, 2017).
- Discuss whether this cat has the historical insight needed to bring authenticity to the story. This can demonstrate the core concept, **point of view**, after the book has been introduced and discussed several times ([English Textual Concepts and Learning Processes](#), 2017).
- At the conclusion of the story, there is a double page spread entitled: 'Did you see these items in the story?' Why have the composers included photographs, headings, dates and factual writing in this narrative? A lesson on **authority** could be helpful to describe how authors and illustrators use varied literary devices to achieve their purpose ([English Textual Concepts and Learning Processes](#), 2017).



- Discuss Rosie Handley's illustrations and chosen medium: why do you think collage was selected to represent the ideas in this book? (In her 'Q&A' with the [State Library of NSW](#), Handley explains, 'sometimes a project just asks for a certain medium – this book was inspired by an amazing combination of objects and stories, and collage seemed a perfect reflection of that.')



- Compare the two images on the right. Both depict the same scene but are composed in different ways. What techniques show the reader that the image has been constructed or photographed? Discuss how the reader is positioned in this double page spread in the book. This is an example of perspective in [visual arts](#). Students could write what they imagine the characters are thinking as they behold the 'bookiest place'.



The reading room at the Mitchell Library, depicted in a photograph (top: [User:Wpcpey – own work, 2017 / CC BY-SA 4.0](#)) and illustration (bottom: [Rosie Handley, 2021](#))

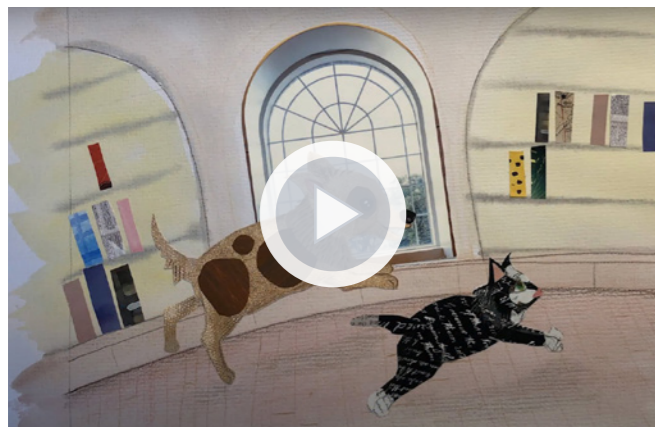
- Watch Rosie Handley's short video, [Illustrating The Best Cat, the Est Cat](#) to learn more about her use of collage, digital artwork and drawing techniques to create the library setting and characters. Inspired by Handley's artmaking process, students create their own artworks using a range of media and forms.

- Choose an artefact or painting from the [State Library of NSW's digital collections](#) to research. Use age-appropriate reference books or pre-selected sites such as [Kiddle](#) or [National Museum of Australia](#). Discuss how to ensure [cybersafety](#) and maximise efficiency when searching online (Morrison, 2021).

### Extension activity

Inquiry questions:

- How and why do libraries such as the State Library of NSW exist in societies around the world?
- Do societies need libraries and museums? If so, why? If not, what would be the consequences of not documenting history?
- Research a time in history when libraries either did not exist or were destroyed.
- Use evidence collected as a basis for a debate over the need in the modern age for historical artefacts. Can a society preserve its history and culture through collections of realia or is it more advantageous to use technology to create digital memories?



'[Illustrating The Best Cat, the Est Cat with Rosie Handley](#)' by State Library of NSW [2:53 minutes, YouTube]

Additional teaching ideas can also be gleaned from the excellent [teaching notes](#) prepared by the State Library of NSW.

### Experimenting

Students experiment with ideas triggered by the focus text in the following ways:

- Select a room you are familiar with, such as the school library, your classroom, or your bedroom. List 6-10 things you could present as '-est' items (for example the noisiest, the silliest, the funniest, the cuddliest, the 'colourfulest', the oldest, the newest, and so on). Using yourself as the tour guide, create an illustrated tour of your chosen room with a written track (in verse if you wish) using *The Best Cat, the Est Cat* as a model.
- As a class, select items from daily life today to be placed in a time capsule to be opened in 20 years time. This could be placed in your school library stacks to be opened in 2042.
- Ask an older member of the community (grandparent, neighbour or friend) if they have something really old. Talk to them about it. Prepare a copy or photograph of their treasured item and write what you have learnt about it. This could be shown or displayed in class or in the school library.

### References and further reading

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## Writer biographies



### Andrew Smith

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Andrew Smith is ESA's Chief Executive Officer. Education Services Australia (ESA) is a not-for-profit education technology company committed to making a positive difference in the lives and learning of all Australian students. It is owned by all state, territory and Australian Government education ministers.



### Pooja Mathur

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Pooja Mathur is a teacher librarian at the King's School Senior Library. She is the coordinator of their Reading Club and an active member of the school's Wellbeing Committee. Additionally, Pooja is the Secretary of School Library Association of New South Wales (SLANSW) and a member of the International Boys' School Coalition (IBSC) Action Research Team for 2022-23, researching 'Shattering stereotypes: helping boys cultivate healthy masculinity'.



### Sally Rasaiah

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Sally Rasaiah has been a teacher librarian in independent and public primary schools since gaining her Master of Applied Science (Teacher Librarianship) in 2005. As a former editor of Scan, Sally has written many reviews for digital and print resources that supported teaching and learning across the K-12 curriculum. Sally is particularly interested in the way picture books enhance the reader's knowledge of culture and the world, past, present and future.

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