

## PRACTICAL HOUSEKEEPING – STUDENT LIBRARIANS

1. Welcome to Practical Housekeeping, a conversation about student librarians in schools.
2. My name is Lois Huston, and I am the librarian at Hebron Christian College, an independent co-educational school catering for Year 1 – 13.

The school has 287 students currently enrolled. These are spread out fairly evenly across all years. Generally there is one class within each year level.



The library is in quite a small physical space. There are about 12,000 books - which I know is too many – but I also need to cover all age ranges.

3. A brief outline of what we will cover: why we have student librarians, recruiting, training, duties and responsibilities, rewards, resources.

Please be aware that I do not feel I am any sort of expert – just someone who is sharing her own experiences. Feel free to disagree!

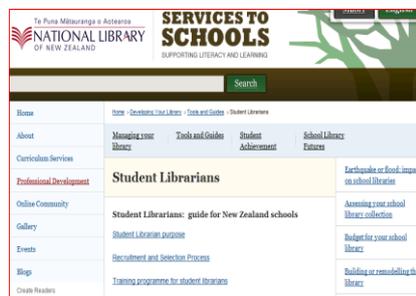
4. Why do we have student librarians? The National Library has stated that the purpose of student librarian's is to provide positive role models to library users, to develop a sense of student ownership of the library, create



opportunities for student input, raise the profile of the library through promotion to peers, extend the student's skills in using the library, enable students to work as part of a team, and assist with a range of library duties.

5. My own feelings is that it teaches responsibility, it enables team building through the co-operative interaction of different age groups.
6. Also, it adds confidence and it give students an identity and a place to be.
7. So how do you recruit your student librarians?
8. Just like a regular job, you need to advertise, you need a job description and you need an application form. By the way, the National Library has an

excellent section on student librarians, and includes all sorts of documents, such as student librarian job descriptions.



9. The application form from the National Library. I make my own, and recruit in the first week of each term. Once my spaces are full (30 student librarians plus 5 team leaders), I have a waiting list.
10. Training. Everybody does it differently, and what works for me, may not work for you. Only you know how your school operates.
11. However, once again, the National Library has some very good resources for training.
12. This is how I do it in my school: I have three basic ‘tests’. The first one is 15 questions on basic library information – opening hours, issue periods etc, based on the library handbook that is given to new students. These ‘tests’ are completely open – I have no problem giving out answers – but they must write it down. The second test is a simple map of the library, requiring the student to name the areas. The third test is a worksheet showing photographs of how



to (and how not to) reshelve books. This is often accompanied by a practical session where an older student librarian oversees the trainee in putting a number of different types of books away. At the completion of each of these introductory tests, a certificate is given at assembly. I find the

public acknowledgement of achievement very encouraging to the students.

13. Once the students have passed their first three tests, they are eligible for their first badge, the red one. I find that the need to complete three tests before a badge is given improves commitment. Within Level 1 are four areas, fiction, non-fiction, the Dewey Decimal system history and library words and definitions. The fiction and non-fiction tests are fairly simple written tests ... what is fiction, what is non-fiction, but they each have a practical component where the trainee must tidy 2 shelves in perfect alphabetical or numerical order.. (choose your most untidy shelf!) The Dewey Decimal system history section is not really a test, but an online video that they need to watch. (There is a good selection found on the SLANZA Wiki website.) Library words and definitions is a crossword puzzle using words like catalogue, OPAC, issue, reserve, reference and so on. At the completion of each of these levels, the

students receive a gold star to attach to the red badge. This is given out at assembly.

14. Once all four sections of Level 1 are completed, the students swap their red badge and stars for a blue one. Once more there are four sections, four separate tests. Searching the catalogue is a handout with screenshots and questions. Genre is information with a practical component – the student must first answer what sort of books the various genres contain, then find some in the library with an older student librarian watching. Repairing and covering are both practical tests. I only let my older students – the ones I totally trust – loose with a craft knife! Best to check your school's policy on this. At the



end of each completed section is a gold star to attach to their blue badge.

15. Here is a photo of our blue badge with two gold stars. I have made the stars myself out of star shaped beads glued to earring backs.

16. The final and highest level is the gold badge. Only gold badge holders can be team leaders – that is, in charge of a team of younger librarians on a particular day. Only they can issue books. (a librarian who has achieved gold status may not necessarily be a team leader, but they are the pool from which team leaders are chosen). Each of the sections in level 3 – issues, returns and reservations; customer service skills, creating displays / running competitions; and mentoring is a practical session with me. I do no more than four students at a time. The number of sections in my student librarian training may seem large, but I find it is a good way to ensure the students have the knowledge needed.

17. Duties and Responsibilities – here are two librarians discussing placement of a competition poster.

18. Once more the National Library has very good suggestions. I find most of my student librarian duties follow on from their training. Naturally, the most common duty is reshelving books. At any one time, our library has 1000 books issued, with about 150 books going in and out every day. Our librarians get points – one point for every 10 books reshelved, which leads to ...



19. Rewards.



20. My rewards are the certificates, the badges, and yes, chocolate. At the end of every term, the librarian with the most points gets a big block of chocolate. The next seven get a big crunchie bar, and everyone else who has worked at all get a little chocolate from one of those multi-bags. This is what works for me. I get students who are really into the competition, and others who only do the bare minimum. That's fine, because after all, it is voluntary. However, if they don't turn up for three weeks without good reason, they get kicked out. I always have a waiting list.

21. Naturally, you may not wish to use chocolate. I know some schools give special borrowing privileges. Others have librarian only outings.

22. Another reward is special morning teas with visiting authors.

23. Resources: The National Library website, the SLANZA wiki, looking up 'student librarians' on the internet and seeing what other schools do, talking to other librarians, but most of all ...

24. Listen to your students. They often have the best ideas of all. Thank you.

