The State of Digital Libraries in Schools

Data-driven growth tactics and emerging trends to guide schools into a digital-first education landscape.

2025

ePlatform
digital libraries

What's inside

01 A New Chapter for School Libraries

The Demands of Modern School Libraries

School libraries have always been an invaluable resource. Print collections still play a vital role in nurturing a love of reading and building strong literacy foundations for every student.

Today's schools face new pressures. Budgets are tighter, staff workloads keep growing, and classrooms are more diverse than ever. Yet nearly one in four students are not reading enough to build strong lifelong habits. More schools are turning to digital libraries as a cost-effective and staff-friendly solution to providing every student with access to a rich and diverse collection of books.

Question:

How often are school students reading?

- At least once a week
- Once or twice a month
- A few times a year
- Never or almost never

56%	17%	13%	13%

(Source: ACEResearch Snapshots issue 17, 2024)

With 26% of students reading only a few times a year or less, schools face a clear challenge, and opportunity, to spark more frequent, meaningful reading.

The Librarian's Role as a Literacy Leader

A modern school library is not just shelves and quiet corners. It is an active, vital part of daily learning, led by staff who connect students with books, ideas and opportunities to read more often.

Today's librarian is a literacy champion, a curriculum partner and a trusted guide for students navigating both print and digital collections. With the right tools and support, they help teachers bring reading into every subject and make the library a true learning hub for the whole school.

"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."

– Dr. Seuss, children's author

A Collection That Reaches Every Student

A strong digital library is more than just a shelf online. The best collections balance quality, variety and accessibility so every student can find something that sparks their interest.

From early readers to advanced learners, the right mix of ebooks, audiobooks and phonics-based decodable texts gives schools the flexibility to meet different reading levels, learning needs and classroom goals. These three elements work together to make sure every student has a way in, and a reason to keep coming back.

"I don't believe in the kind of magic in my books. But I do believe something very magical can happen when you read a good book."
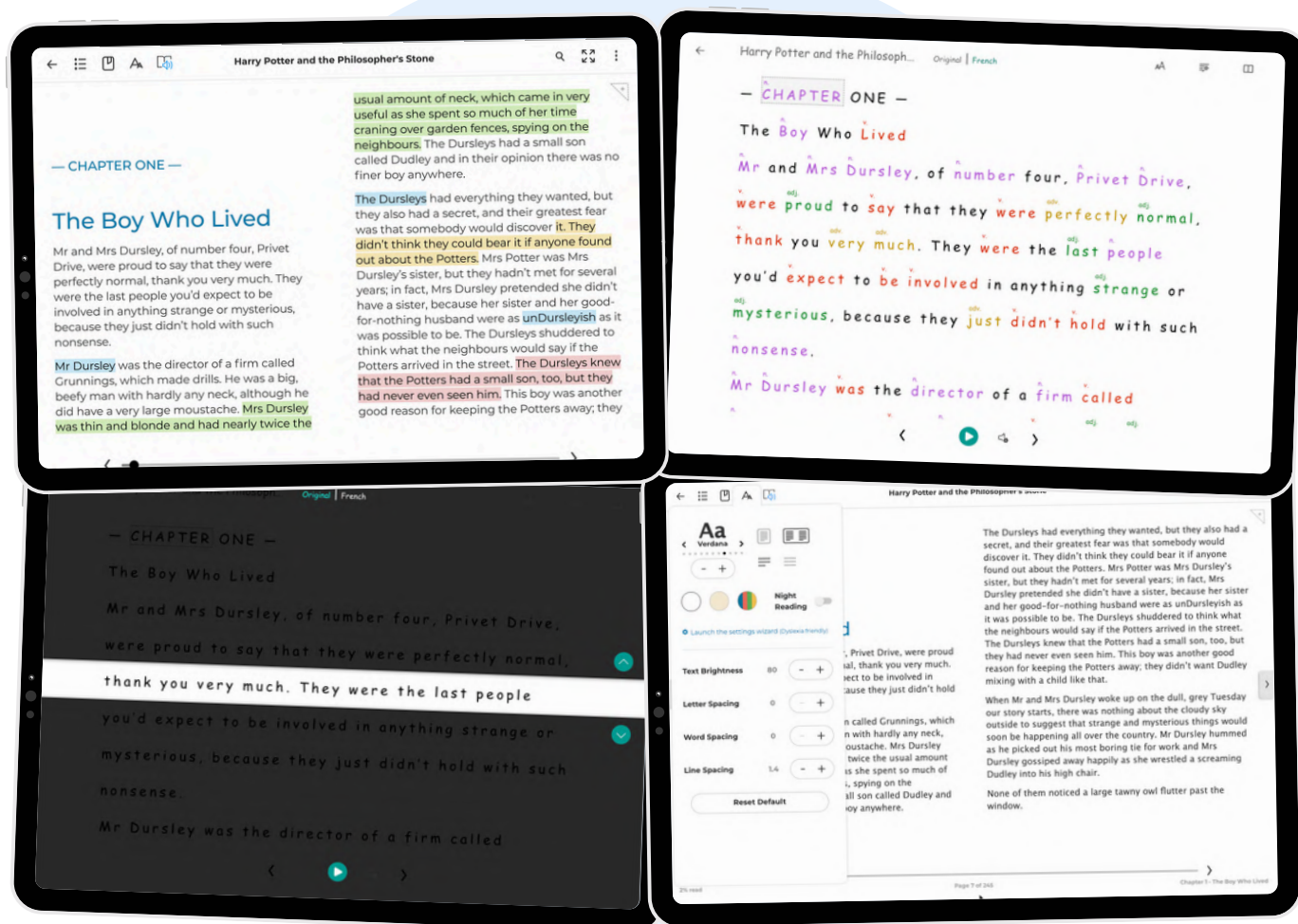
— J.K. Rowling, Author of Harry Potter

03 What's Inside a Modern Digital Library

eBooks: Personalise Every Book

A strong ebook collection puts thousands of titles within easy reach for students and teachers. Schools can offer fiction, non-fiction, classics, curriculum texts and popular new releases without worrying about wear, tear or lost copies.

With ebooks, students can read on any device, personalise display settings and keep reading even when they are away from school. A flexible reading experience helps every student feel comfortable and in control.
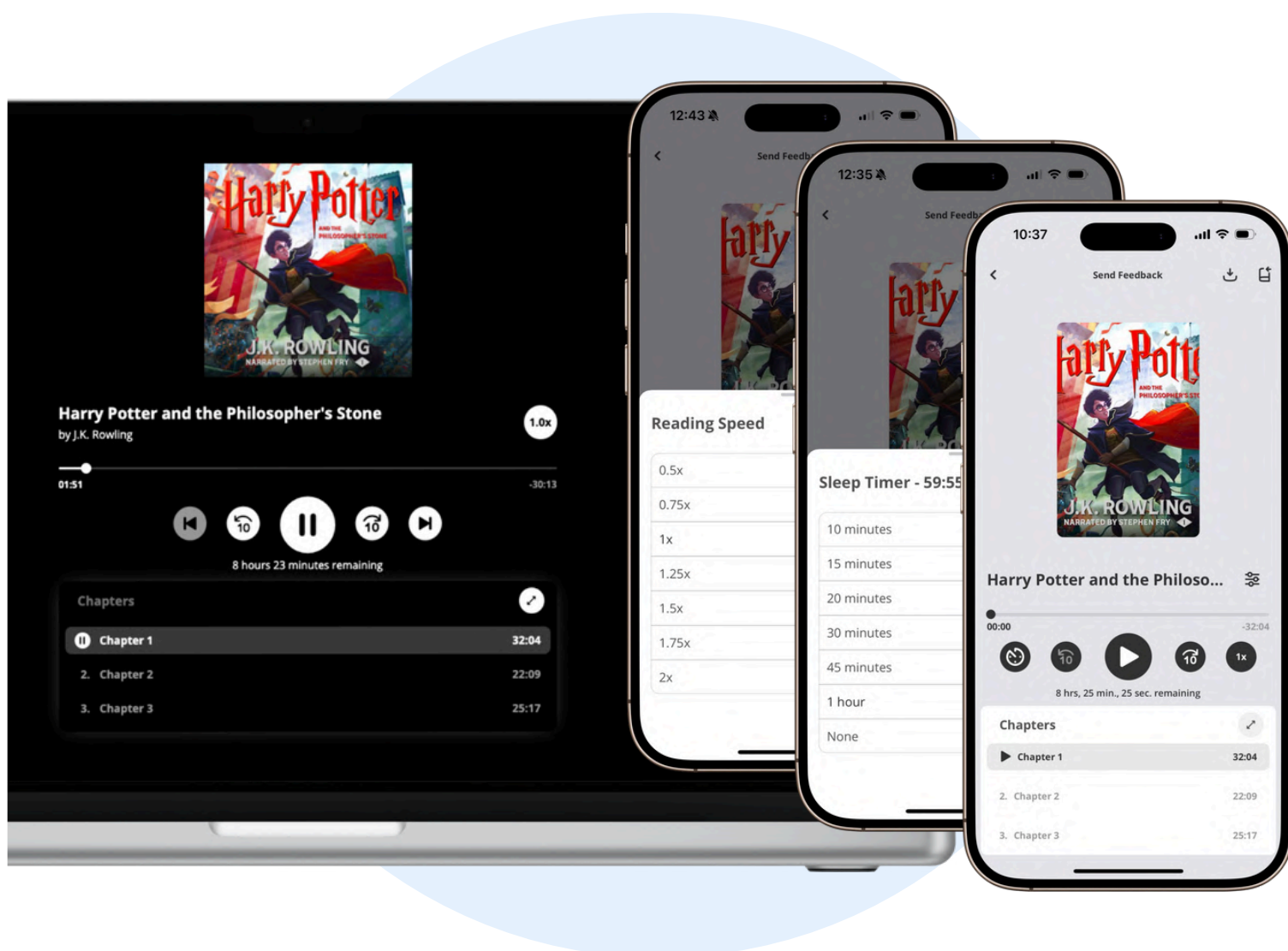
03 What's Inside a Modern Digital Library

Audiobooks: Literacy Through Immersive Voices

Audiobooks open the door for students who might struggle with print alone. They support listening skills, improve comprehension and help EAL learners, reluctant readers and busy families engage with stories in a way that fits their day.

For many students, having the choice to listen as well as read keeps them motivated and confident. Students have the freedom to listen however it suits them, while travelling, relaxing at home or during quiet study time.

Decodable Readers: Structured Phonics for Early Literacy

Phonics-based decodable readers are an essential tool for building reading fluency and confidence in young learners. A good digital library includes structured decodables that match how students learn to decode and blend sounds step by step.

With digital access, teachers can assign books by level, students can practise at home, and families can follow progress without needing extra copies in backpacks.
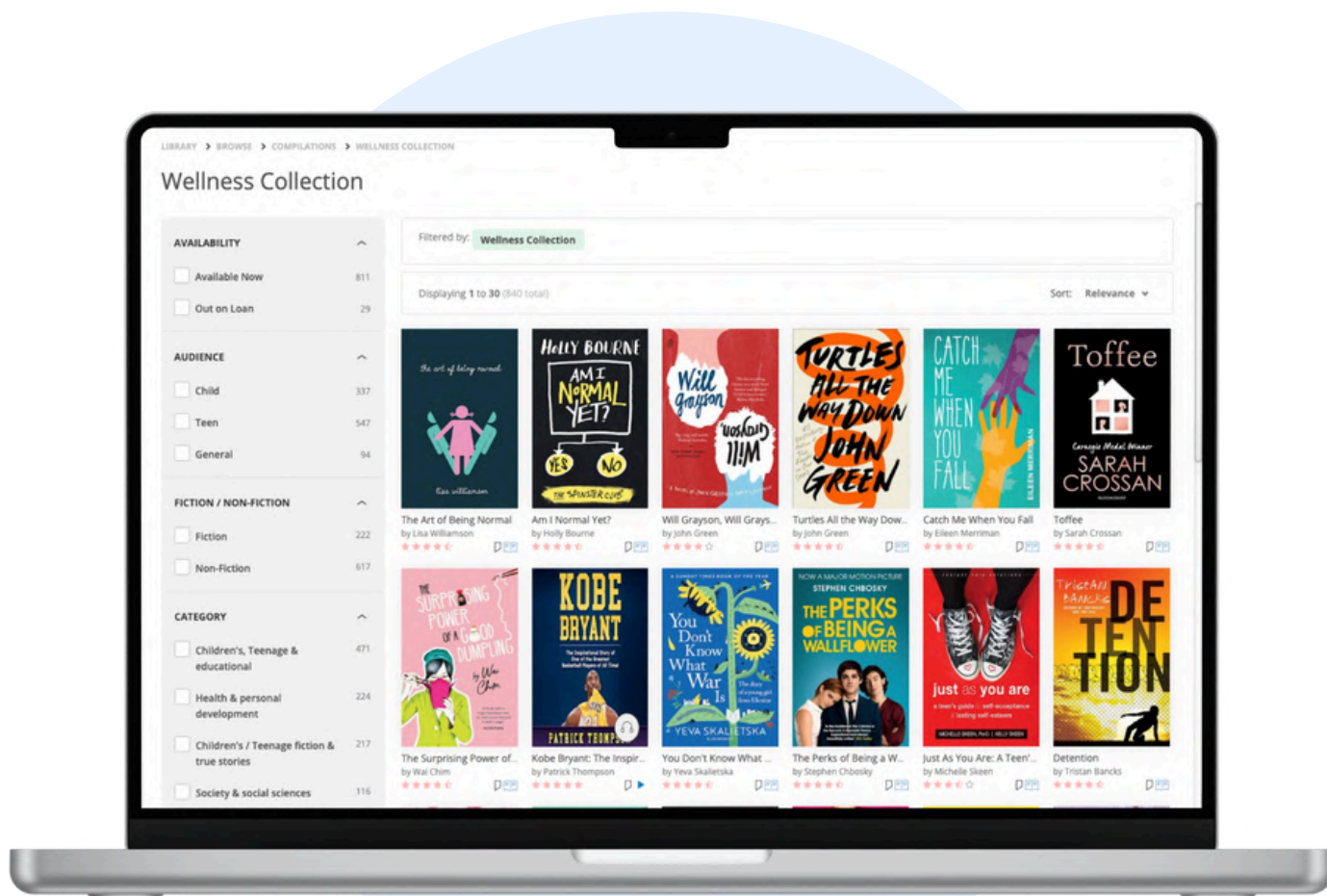
Supporting Students Beyond the Curriculum

A good library does more than build literacy; it should support student wellbeing too. Many school libraries include books that explore mental health, resilience, belonging and identity to help students feel seen and supported.

Digital access makes it easier for students to find safe, age-appropriate titles they can read privately, anytime and anywhere. For reluctant readers or those with anxiety around reading, tools like audiobooks build confidence and keep them connected to books in a way that feels comfortable.

Shared Collection Consortiums

A shared collection works like a reading club for schools. Instead of each school buying every digital book outright, schools join together to share access to a much larger library than they could afford alone.

These collections are professionally curated by experts to match each region's curriculum and reading needs, with options for primary or secondary year levels. Schools get fiction, non-fiction and age-appropriate titles that stay fresh and relevant every term. Fair use agreements make sure all schools benefit equally, while your school can still add private titles for local needs or special class sets.

By blending shared and private collections, schools get more choice, lower costs and a simple way to offer students new books all year without the burden of managing thousands of licences alone.

Collection Type	Private Collection	Shared Collection
2,000+ eBook Collection	$20,000 (AUD) £10,000 (GBP)	$1,295 p.a. (AUD) £595 p.a. (GBP)
1,000+ Audiobook Collection	$40,000 (AUD) £20,000 (GBP)	$1,875 p.a. (AUD) £845 p.a. (GBP)

"There is no such thing as a child who hates to read; there are only children who have not found the right book."
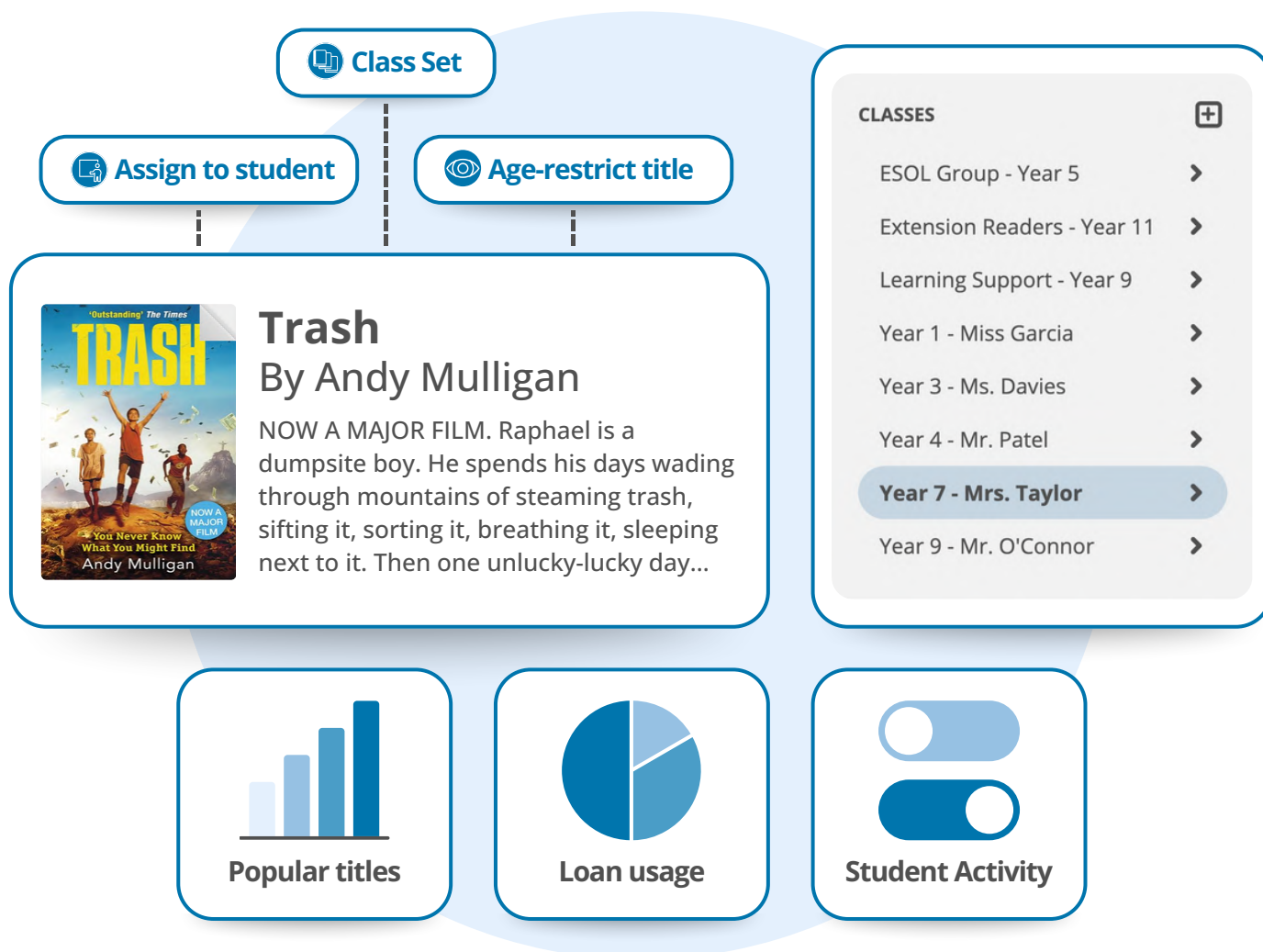
– Frank Serafini, Professor of Literacy Education

Teacher and Admin Tools That Save Time

On top of student-friendly reading features, strong digital library platforms include smart tools for teachers and library staff. Automated returns, usage reports, easy curation and quick book assignment help staff spend less time managing copies and more time guiding students.

These tools make daily library tasks smoother, freeing up staff to build a stronger reading culture and bring books into every corner of the school. This helps ensure no student misses the chance to discover new books and grow as a reader.
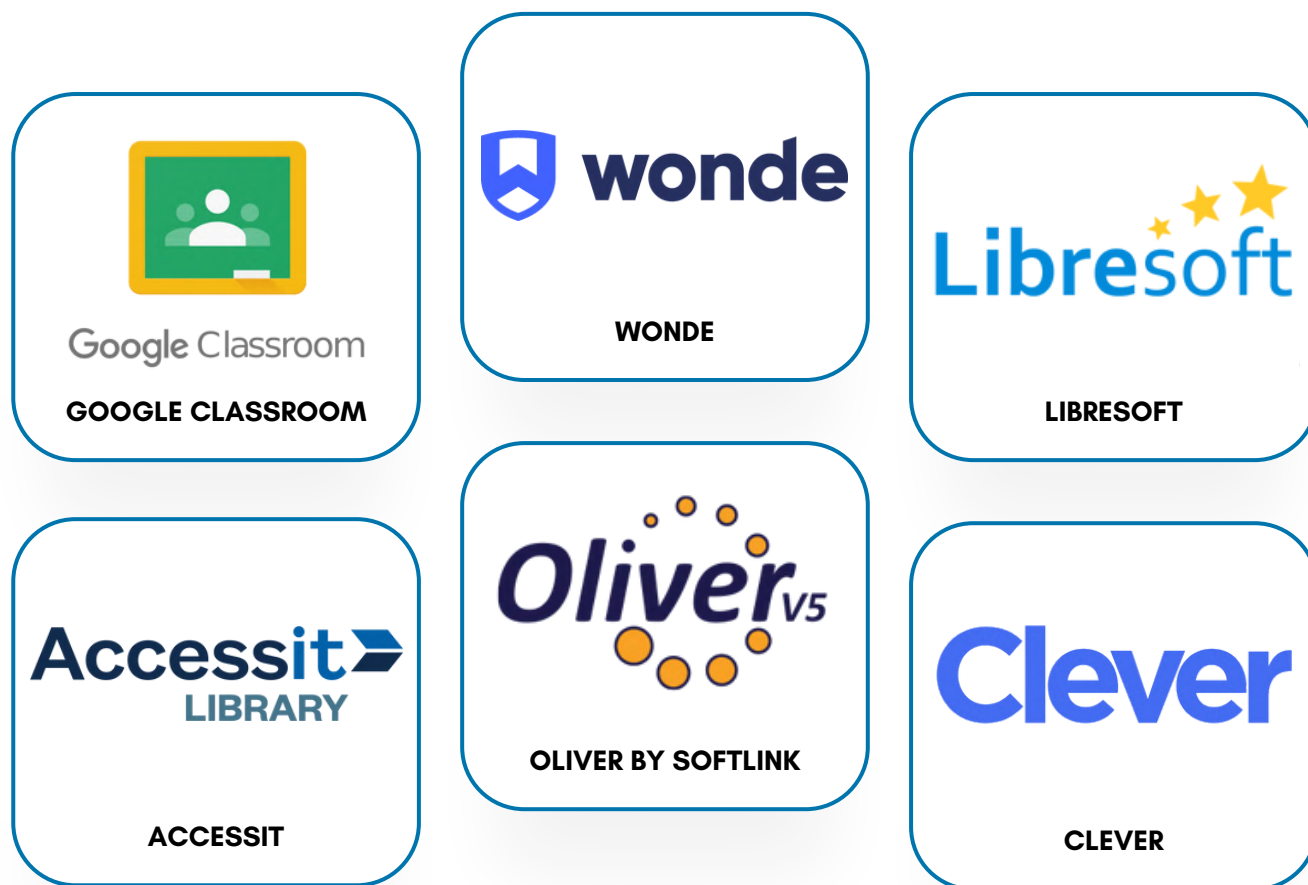
05 What Makes Digital Reading Actually Work

School Integrations, Privacy and Security

A good digital library connects smoothly with your school's existing systems. Single sign-on (SSO) and Library Management System (LMS) links mean students and staff use the same login details they already know, keeping access simple and secure.

Strong privacy and data protection standards help schools meet GDPR policies and reassure families that student information is safe and handled responsibly.

GOOGLE CLASSROOM

WONDE

LIBRESOFT

ACCESSIT

OLIVER BY SOFTLINK

CLEVER

"A library is not a luxury but one of the necessities of life."

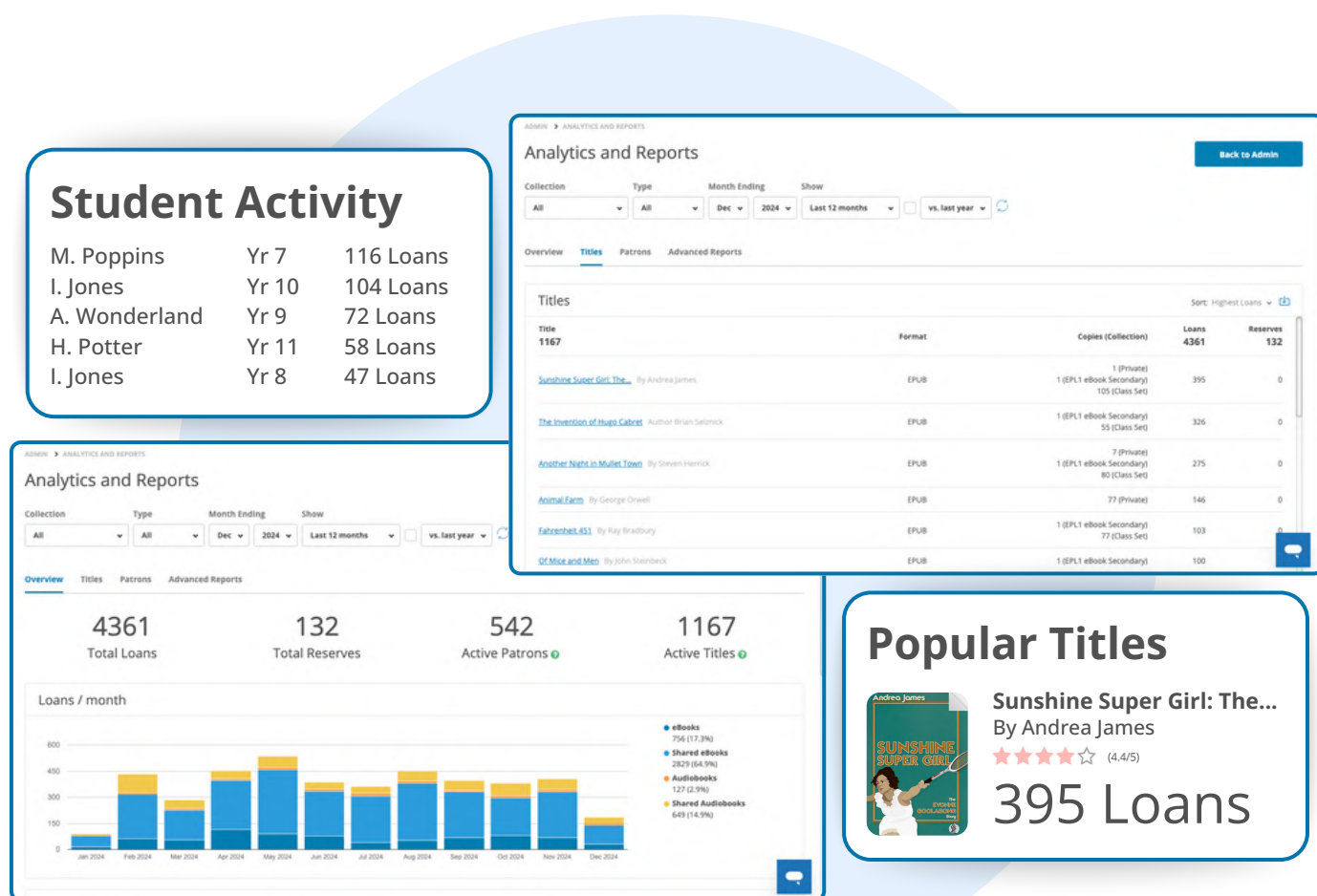*— Henry Ward Beecher, Author*

Actionable Insights From Analytics and Reports

A robust digital library enables schools to easily track their impact on student reading. Clear reports show which students are reading, what they are choosing and how often they come back.

Schools can track borrowing trends, student engagement and reading progress over time. This insight helps staff see what is working well, where extra support might be needed and how to build on successes. Sharing this data with leadership teams shows tangible impact and helps make the case for future funding and growth.

Student Activity

M. Poppins	Yr 7	116 Loans
I. Jones	Yr 10	104 Loans
A. Wonderland	Yr 9	72 Loans
H. Potter	Yr 11	58 Loans
I. Jones	Yr 8	47 Loans

Popular Titles

Sunshine Super Girl: The...
By Andrea James
★★★★☆ (4.4/5)

395 Loans

Making the Most of Limited Budgets

A digital library can be one of the smartest investments a school makes, but like any big change, it needs thoughtful budgeting and planning.

When preparing your budget, consider whether a shared collection, private titles or a mix best fits your needs. Talk with your leadership team early to align the digital library with curriculum goals and student outcomes. Use clear usage data and student impact reports to demonstrate value and secure ongoing funding year after year.

Don't forget to explore grants, literacy initiatives or regional funding that may help cover startup or subscription costs. With good planning, your digital library stays affordable, up to date and ready to grow with your students.

"Libraries allow children to ask questions about the world and find the answers. And the wonderful thing is that once a child learns to use a library, the doors to learning are always open."

— Laura Bush, Educator

How to successfully launch your digital library

A well-planned launch ensures your digital library isn't just switched on, it's actively used by staff and students from day one. This checklist provides your school with a practical roadmap for setting up, promoting, and embedding your digital library into every classroom.

Before Launch: Set Up Your Digital Library

- ☐ **Nominate a primary contact.** A (like a librarian or literacy lead), should act as the go-to for staff and students.

- ☐ **Connect your school systems.** Check that your digital library is integrated with your SSO & LMS for simple access.

- ☐ **Customise & Brand.** Add your school logo and colours so students recognise it as their digital library.

- ☐ **Prepare communications**. Draft an all-staff email, a letter to parents, and short student announcement.

- ☐ **Test Your Setup**. Log in as a student and staff member to check that browsing, borrowing, and device compatibility are working correctly before launch to fix any issues early.

"Nothing is pleasanter than exploring a library, where every book is a doorway to a new adventure, a new idea, or a new friend. Libraries are places of endless discovery and joy."

– Walter Savage Landor, Author

08 Implementation Checklist

Going Live: Launching Your Digital Library

☐ **Train your school staff.** Show teachers how to browse books, assign them, create classes and check student usage reports.

☐ **Student introductions.** Visit classes or run an assembly to show students how to log in, browse and borrow books.

☐ **Create custom compilations.** Set up curated digital shelves by year group, new arrivals or seasonal picks (e.g. book week).

Tips For Ongoing Promotion of Your Digital Library

☐ **Upskill staff.** Offer mini refreshers, tips on using new features or links to how-to videos for new staff.

☐ **Use promotional resources.** Use posters, bookmarks, and social media graphics to promote the eLibrary around the school.

☐ **Highlight usage.** Share borrowing usage insights in staff meetings and celebrate those who've used it most.

☐ **Run a reading challenge.** Organise simple challenges like Book Bingo or Top Reader of the Month and celebrate the winners!

☐ **Gather feedback.** Ask teachers and students for feedback. What's working? What do students love?

☐ **Plan ahead.** Each term, review curriculum links to check new titles that could support upcoming topics or events.

Frequently Asked Questions

How soon can a digital library be set up?
Your digital library can be live in under 48 hours, but we recommend having a clear launch plan in place to help ensure that students and staff get the most out of it from day one.

How do we know if students actually use it?
Your digital library provides clear usage reports that show which students are borrowing, what they're reading and how often. This helps school staff measure student reading engagement.

Are Curriculum texts (e.g. novel studies) included?
Shared Collections include popular curriculum novels and study texts for each region. Schools can also add private titles to cover specific syllabus requirements or teacher requests.

Can schools access multiple copies for simultaneous use?
Yes, with Class Sets, every student can access the same title simultaneously. Shared collections also include thousands of free titles from Project Gutenberg, offering unlimited simultaneous loans.

Who curates the Shared Collections?
Shared Collections combine real borrowing data from thousands of schools with input from member schools, so every title is chosen to be relevant and valuable for each region and year group.

What devices are compatible with eBooks and Audiobooks?
Students can read or listen on any computer, tablet or smartphone. Most schools access the library via a web browser, with a free app also available for offline reading.

A Trusted Partner for Your School's Digital Library

Choosing the right platform makes all the difference when you want a digital library that students and staff actually use and enjoy. ePlatform helps schools build, manage and grow a modern collection that works alongside your print books and supports every reader.

Schools get access to a large, expertly curated range of ebooks, audiobooks and decodable readers. Literacy support tools, seamless integrations and helpful admin tools make setup simple and keep daily tasks quick for busy staff.

Our team is here to help you plan, launch and promote your digital library with training, clear reports and ongoing support. Ready to see how it works? **Book your free demo today** and discover what's possible for your students.

"ePlatform is attractive to students and ideal for students with special education needs (SEN). I am so impressed with ePlatform and the training and support we have had. I thoroughly recommend ePlatform, it's a very worthwhile investment."

– Library Manager (Warington School, UK)

"Our students totally engaged with it, and our loans went through the ceiling. A student happily told me how his family are listening to an Audiobook on the way to school each morning. This made my nerdy little heart sing."

– Librarian (Pinehurst School, NZ)

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