top tips to transform your library.

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Fully flexible shelving.

Many libraries are moving away from fixed shelving to more mobile and flexible options. They not only hold books but also provide much needed storage for bags and displays, as well as doubling as room dividers to create quiet spaces or corridors. Modern shelving tends to be lower, so students and teaching staff see over and through it while making access to books easier for all age-groups.

"this space helps me to study good because there's more free space, no one's too close."

– Samisha - Student, Therese's Primary School, VIC.

Welcoming and workable – finding the balance.

It's the careful combination of a range of elements that really brings a library to life. Colour, light, furniture, noise levels and connectivity are the key aspects to think about. Soft furnishings for instance are not only colourful and comfortable, but also help to soften noise. In a lively library, acoustics become very important, so ceilings, walls, floors and furniture all have a role to play in dampening sound. Choosing furniture of differing heights, in a combination of hard surfaces and soft materials, will help create zones that naturally attract students to engage in specific activities. Wherever possible, let in as much natural light as you can and, for digital discovery, ensure easy online access throughout the library.

A space for everything.

As busy learning hubs, libraries can host multiple activities throughout the day. Clever design thinking helps create distinct but connected spaces for end to end learning, where students can consume, create and share. Areas might include:

Presentation spaces – for presenting and sharing back to classmates.

Study spaces – for quiet, independent research and learning.

Makerspaces – for building and creating, including space for activities like LEGO, robotics and STEM.

Social spaces – for meeting, sharing and collaborating.

Breakout spaces – for smaller, focused group work.

Reading and reflection spaces – for a quiet moment to read and relax.

"we're now moving into a pedagogy that encompasses collaborative learning, students co-creating with their teacher – and this is a space that can do that."

- Michelle Bruitzman – Principal, St. Therese's Primary School, VIC.
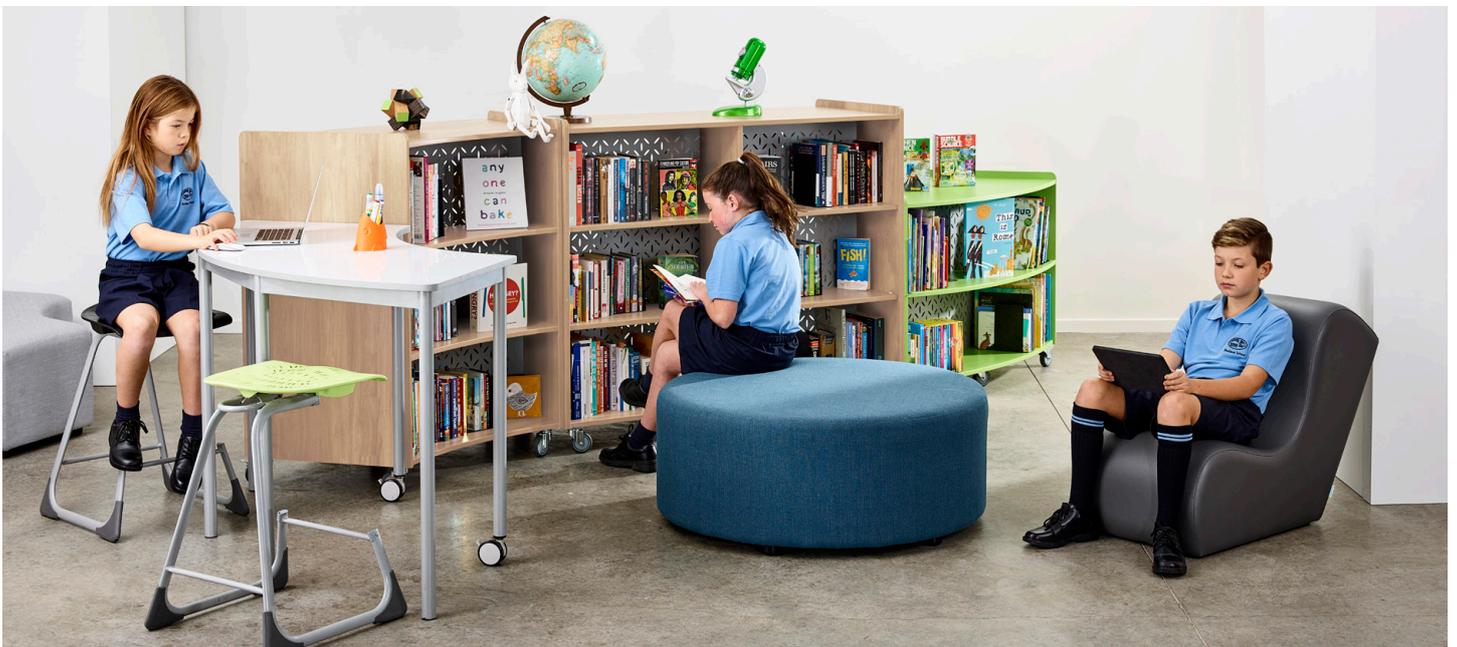
Furniture for all shapes and sizes.

Great libraries have the ability to make everyone feel welcome, across a range of ages and activities - that's where the right furniture makes all the difference. Furniture instantly creates identifiable zones across the library. Soft furniture and floor cushions are just right for quiet reading nooks. Whiteboard tables to encourage collaboration, and tables with built in storage for small components keep everything tidy. Seating and tables of varying heights means all ages can sit comfortably.

Mobile furniture is perfect for libraries. Flexible and agile enough to move quickly, making it easy to accommodate multiple activities and support students for however and wherever they like to learn. Furniture on castors allows for ease of movement, enabling shelving and furniture to be moved aside, creating more floor space for STEM and robotics.

Beyond books.

Before you design your library, decide on what you want it to be. As a dynamic centre of learning and information gathering, it can play a wide range of roles – these will affect the resources you need to consider. Will your students need access to printers and computers? How will they find what they're looking for and return what they've used? Will your library be a community hub, hosting out of hours public events, with a display board to share community messages? All these questions will give you a clear signpost into the extra resources you'll need.

"they love coming here, the students now are very excited when they're told they can come to the library."

– Helen Hancock - Grade 5 teacher, St. Therese's Primary School, VIC.

Designing your library.

You'll want your library to be welcoming and easy to use, so take your time to carefully design the layout. Think about how students will find books and resources while navigating the area, with easy access to the all-important circulation desk and library staff. Decide on the different activity zones you want to create and think about how to connect them without affecting the purpose of each space. Remember flexible, mobile furniture can help manage traffic flow and differentiate spaces and their function. Clear signage will help ensure the space works for everyone and assists with student management.

Three key questions:

- Does your library match and support your school's pedagogy?
- What is the purpose of your library and how can you use the space to achieve that?
- Is your library a place your students and teachers love?

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