

# KOBOS IN SCHOOLS:

## Hot Tips for Reader Engagement



Megan Taylor and Rose Clifton from St Francis Xavier College Library.

As today's students are more than confident with technology and many are far less comfortable with reading recreationally, teacher librarians are using Kobo ebook readers to open up the world of digital reading for their students. Three schools from Canberra tell us about their ebook reader journeys.

### St Francis Xavier College

Library staff at St Francis Xavier College (SFX) have spent the last six months working on their Kobo project with some great results. Thirty Kobos were purchased: 20 for general use and 10 for a literacy program. The Kobos are rarely on the library shelves as the students have shown a strong interest in borrowing them. Staff note that the Kobos help engage lower ability readers; students can change the font size to suit themselves and, best of all, the Kobo ensures reader privacy. This allows lesser able readers to read books that are suited to their reading level without their peers noting what they are reading. Another advantage to Kobos are the reading statistics provided under the heading 'reading life' on each device.

It wasn't always plain sailing though. Rose Clifton, a Library Technician and AV Specialist at SFX, said staff implemented a 'problems board' to keep track of issues that occurred, including students altering the language on the Kobos, deleting books, and drawing or playing Sodoku on them. This message board

also allowed staff to keep track of the solutions to any of these issues as they went. To protect the devices, Rose purchased a skin for each Kobo as well as a neoprene case for each. All of the Kobos currently live in their boxes.

Megan Taylor, one of the Teacher Librarians at SFX, advises library staff to begin with around five to ten Kobos for a trial period. Megan purchased a variety of ebook readers to investigate which

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type would suit their library's needs and said that the Kobo's license agreement lent itself favourably to purchasing books once and being able to put them on all of the school's devices. Megan said that staff selected 40 books for the Kobos and the students were able to select 40 more. The English faculty also had input into the selection which assists students in accessing year level texts as well as books for accelerated reading classes.

Staff implemented a Kobo borrowing

policy which each student signs if they wish to borrow a Kobo. Parental permission is also sought to ensure the Kobos will be replaced by parents if a student damages them. This information is noted on the borrower's record.

### Campbell High School

Keith Mullumby, Teacher Librarian at Campbell High School, is enthusiastic about the Kobo ebook reader trial he instigated over the last twelve months at his school. Keith explains that he hopes physical monographs will be with us for a long time, but ebooks offer some advantages. These include: not taking up any shelf space, cost effectiveness, instant gratification (can be bought and available within minutes of a request), durability, and an inability to be lost (ebook readers can be lost, but the text can be re-downloaded from most vendors at no cost).

Campbell High's Library has 30 Kobos available for seven-day loans. The staff have purchased covers for the Kobos and currently have 165 books available, including non-fiction titles.

Keith indicates that their target audience is their students as well as the English faculty, as he hopes English texts can be provided in this format in the future. He has designed a feedback form for users to fill out to ensure the Kobo project at his school has data to inform the continued success of the Kobo trial. A library policy and contract for students' use of the Kobos has also been put into action.

### Merici College

Merici is an all-girls Catholic College. Merici has 30 Kobos for students and staff to borrow for a week and this loan is renewable. Tracey Kent, one of the Teacher Librarians at Merici, says library staff promote the Kobos heavily and notice they are becoming very popular with staff. The ebook readers are checked for damage before they are loaned out, but so far no damage has occurred. The Kobos are recharged by library staff before being loaned out.

Merici has one Kobo account and loads all of their devices with books from this account. Tracey advises other library staff to 'give it a go and iron out problems as they arise.'

Merici, Campbell High School and St Francis Xavier College staff are all part of an evidence-based practice group evaluating the success of implementing Kobo ebook readers in their libraries. All are interested in promoting higher rates of reader engagement. We look forward to reading about their results later in the year.

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