

Libraries: A wondrous universe to explore —by guest author Dimity Powell



I am delighted to introduce you to award-winning children's author [Dimity Powell](#).

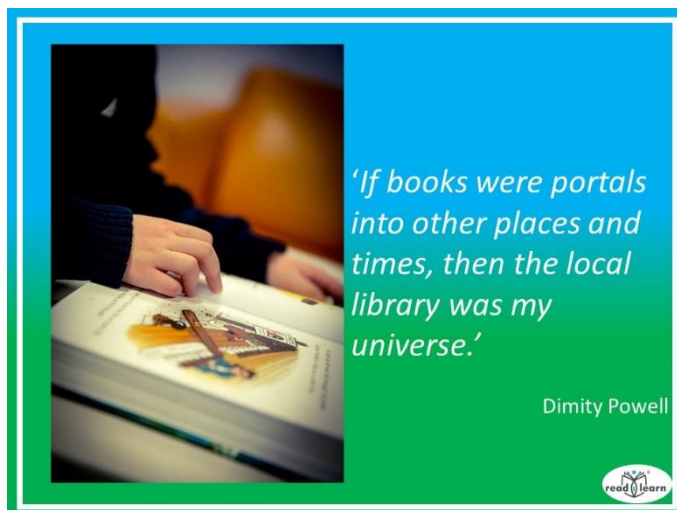
Dimity likes to fill every spare moment with words. She writes and reviews stories exclusively for kids and is the Managing Editor for [Kids' Book Review](#). Her word webs appear in anthologies, school magazines, junior novels, as creative digital content, and picture books including [The Fix-It Man](#) (2017) and [At The End of Holyrood Lane](#) (2018).

She is a seasoned presenter both in Australia and overseas, an accredited [Write Like An Author](#) facilitator and a Books in Homes Role Model Volunteer in Australia.

Dimity believes picture books are soul food, to be consumed at least 10 times a week. If these aren't available, she'll settle for ice-cream. She lives just around the corner from Bat Man on the Gold Coast although she still prefers hanging out in libraries than with superheroes.

In this post, Dimity shares her love of libraries and explains why it is important to ensure every child has access to a library at school and every reader a local library.

Welcome to readilearn, Dimity. Over to you.



'If books were portals into other places and times, then the local library was my universe.'

This simple notion must also include my primary school library, which utilised the space of just two normal classrooms, tucked away on the second story of one old building. More of an afterthought than an intentionally built resource refuge. Yet it was crammed to bursting full of books. I remember spending hours ambling up and down the narrow avenues of bookshelves, each towering well above me, rainbow coloured spines providing decoration and the promise of enrichment.

A librarian whose name I can no longer remember but whose presence remains with me like a birthmark revealed the secrets of the Dewy System to me in my school library.



I was one of those kids who loved books more than I loved other kids (being shy suited spending time with stories better than being in the playground), so I guess the library was a natural place to gravitate to, to be with my 'friends'.



These days however, it's not just the shy bookish kids that frequent school libraries. IT opportunities attract kids to the resource centre like ants to a picnic. Primary school libraries are purpose built, technology imbued, uber cool places to hang out in on a hot day – literally, but also because games, lounge areas, exhibits and competitions are at their hub.

A place that is safe, welcoming, socially stimulating, fun and, let's not forget, filled with a billion other worlds to explore, is a place no child can resist visiting...at least once. Even if the intention of spending time in the library has shifted for some kids, at least they are in a world of words and visual stimulation and therefore, possibilities. I'm a great believer in the power of osmosis by association, that environments can influence.

Therefore, I was shocked speechless and dismayed beyond measure to learn that the high school my child attends has but one or two shelves of physical books in their resource centre. Walls and shelves are bereft of fiction-based book titles. The atmosphere is one of slick modern minimalism. There is not a Dewey chart in sight.



I get this approach of course. Tomorrow's kids are riding a wave of IT based pedagogy; it's easier and more efficient to access text books on line not to mention easier on their backs not having to cart them around. I presume this is less of a financial burden on the school as well, allowing them to redirect tight budgets for other resources. However, the sheer barren atmosphere of a bookless library left me feeling empty and sad and hopelessly bereft, rather like seeing a track of verdant bushland cleared for a housing development.

Where will all those 'friends' dwell now?

The differential beauty of school libraries from other centres harbouring resources and literature for children is that we, the parents and caregivers, the guardians of our children's well-being and best interests, are not there.

In this case, that's a good thing. Why? Because it allows a young child to wonder through the vestibules of stories for themselves with minimal influence, and less judgement, giving them the time and freedom to deliberate, muse, sample, and choose the story that enchants them best; to establish ownership of their decisions then be rewarded for doing so instantly by the story they journey into. Until children can drive themselves to the local library or book shop, this is a unique opportunity for them to experience, constituting special moments in their psychological development.



As Jackie French once stated, '*Books are not broccoli!*' It may take several 'tries' before a fledgling reader finds the book that tempts them enough to want to read it to the very end. Imagine when they do, how that might stimulate their appetite to read more.



Simply, if kids read more, they will survive better in today's and in tomorrow's world. They will learn empathy, improve literacy, increase caring; all powerful attributes to unleash in a community.

To neglect our school libraries and ignore their demise to the point of their extinction in our schools is a travesty that cannot be understated. Without them, we remove our young people's chance to explore worlds and systems they simply cannot replicate online. We deny them the right to wonder through a sensory land of infinite possibilities and discoveries and strip them of even more human interaction, the very basis of storytelling.

Why remove a wondrous universe where children may look up, around, from side to side, behind and through for answers, not just down, creased in half over their devices.

Vive la expansion of this universe!

#schoolibrariesmatter #booksmatter #readingmatters

Discover more about Dimity and her writing at:

www.dimitypowell.com

or connect with her on social media:

Twitter: [@DimityPowell](https://twitter.com/DimityPowell)

Facebook: [Dimity Powell Author](#)

Linkedin: [Dimity Powell](#)

Instagram: [Dimity Powell](#)

Dimity's books are available from many great bookshops all over the world (please support them!)

or via [Boomerang Books](#) online and [Amazon](#).

Postscript: Dimity and I, along with others from our local literary community, recently had the great pleasure of attending an inspiring lecture by [Australian Children's Laureate Morris Gleitzman](#).

Gleitzman says that his role as laureate is a very simple gig. He says, *"My job is to remind those that need reminding that stories, sharing them, reading, reading to each other is incredibly important."* He says that, *"Every time we open a book, it has the potential of bathing us in the joyful light of possibility."*

He says, *"When every child finds the book that is right for them, and they are transported, it is virtual reality beyond their dreams. It is making connections with hearts, feelings and imagination. When we read a character off a page, there are always parts that we can create. It's a build your own friend exercise."*

Of course, we couldn't agree more.