

How did the Mentone Girls' SC library help our teachers and students during COVID-19?

By Neelika Kottachchi

COVID-19 seeped into the world slowly but more steadily than we thought it would. School closure was announced quite quickly – a week before the Term 1 break.

We had a hunch then that the students may not return for some time and decided to remove the borrowing limits. On the last school day the girls rushed to the library and borrowed as many fiction titles as they could carry. We love it when they borrow a lot of books because there is a good chance of them getting read.

Then we watched patiently to learn how the remote teaching and learning, a method which is very new to most of us was unfolding. In the first few days, a lot of Webex staff meetings indicated that the teachers experienced stress and anxiety due to being thrown into the new sphere where many had to learn a whole lot of new technologies. Internet overload and connection breakdowns added to this frustration. Many teachers felt that their workload doubled if not trebled!

We were desperate to help our user

community and listening to these meetings we decided that it wasn't just the information to support the teaching of subjects that they required. So, the library introduced some fun activities, games and quizzes we found online.

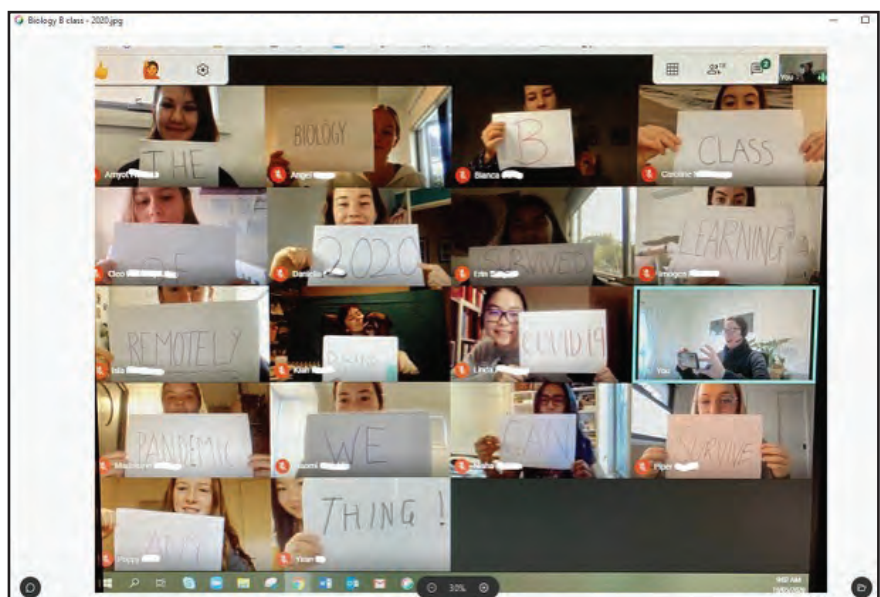
Here are few examples:

Yabba (<http://yabba.org.au/>) and (<https://markwilson.com.au/>), and Mindful Colouring (<https://binged.it/2ZVSV8N>).

Then there was a free webinar to support the emotional and psychological well-being of teachers offered by Alliance of Girls' Schools of Australia which I forwarded via Webex (<https://www.agsa.org.au/event/7-steps-to-embrace-anxiety-a-webinar-for-educators/>).

A few days into the lockdown, English teachers asked for some eBooks for our students. This presented a different kind of a challenge. The school had not offered eBooks before. So I had to think hard. My first port of contact was ex-colleagues. They pointed me in the right direction for this.

Then I contacted SLAV and they also directed me to some freely available sources.



Thanks to Science teacher, Louise Rienets, for sharing this image of her Biology class.

I found the Open Library (<https://openlibrary.org/>) very useful for our needs. The collection was more modern than some other sites e.g. Readcentral (<https://www.readcentral.com/>) and International Digital Library (<http://en.childrenslibrary.org/index.shtml>) and the like.

I also called up local libraries to enquire about their digital services. Kingston and Monash Libraries helped set up digital 'Borrow Boxes' so our girls could borrow eBooks. There, I hit the jackpot. Those council libraries have enormous and up-to-date eBook collections. All I had to do then

was to write up instruction sheets for each of the services I chose.

In the meantime most of the publishing world came to party with the world's learning/teaching population. Most of the acclaimed educational publishers brought out e-resources and also offered them for free. I grabbed these links and shared with our teachers. ABC educational website sent many handy resources too. I repackaged some of the information I found in them to suit our teachers.

SLV prepared a podcast on how to use the library sources digitally.

Using SCIS, I penetrated various freely available databases and catalogued into our library management system. Then they were packaged under subjects and embedded into 'Visual Search' tab so the teachers and students could access them via 'Intranet' from home.

Just a few examples of how we helped our students and teachers survive remote learning.

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Capturing students' interest and igniting imagination (cont. from p. 15)

gallery of the students' current work and interactive quizzes, to just name a few.

We also offer a Links Resource Page for staff and students to help them in planning and completing learning tasks. This resource has also allowed specialist classes to successfully link their lessons with those of the library. Our Spanish students were making books using 'The World of Seussville' – an amazing collaboration across the curriculum!

One of our recent successes was a 'Well Being Day' where we invited all members

of our community to visit the Library Portal Page and engage in a virtual visit to famous museums around the world or to visit a zoo and tour the animal exhibits.

Story Box Library is used by all classes and our social stream allows the students to post pictures of their work and to comment on new books read and current favourites. The students' involvement and interaction is vital in the success of online learning and to continue to inspire the love of reading and literature. Our latest addition is the installation of BorrowBox. This

enables all students and teachers to browse, borrow, read and listen to ebooks and audiobooks anywhere and everywhere. Our collection is growing and it has been a huge success.

Collaboration has made online learning such a success. Adjusting and being creative in how we teach has inspired the students to continue their love of books and their enjoyment in reading.

Edith Duggan leads the library team at Glendalough, the Junior School at St. Kevin's College.

SLAV Mentor / Mentee Program

The SLAV Mentor/Mentee Program aims to match participants so that the knowledge, skill and experience of members of the association is shared with those seeking support and advice. Participation in the program could vary from one meeting to ongoing meetings depending on your availability, skill/s or need/s, and meetings could be a phone call, an online meeting or a visit.

If you would like to be part of the program, please complete the registration form on the SLAV website located under the

opportunities tab. As per your request, you will either be mentored or assisted by a colleague, or alternatively, you may be called on to mentor or assist a colleague.

We are currently seeking Mentors for a number of SLAV members. Please fill in the form on the SLAV website if you are available to contribute to this program.

For more information please contact Joy Whiteside, SLAV Mentor/Mentee Program Coordinator, at joyw@sjc.vic.edu.au.