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Fresh chapter for students using libraries

A survey has revealed libraries across the state are enjoying increased popularity with senior secondary students undertaking the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE).

Almost half of the South Australian libraries responding to a recent survey reported an increase in usage due to students undertaking their SACE Research Project.

SACE Board Chief Executive, Dr Paul Kilvert, said libraries were valuable for students learning about how to access and use credible sources of information.

“The resources available at modern libraries, such as text books, academic journals and databases, provide a rich source of valuable information for Research Project students,” Dr Kilvert said.

“The skills students develop by studying a Research Project that is self-directed, but also supervised and supported, are excellent preparation for university study.”

A total of 645 high school students from 15 schools participated in tours of the State Library in 2011, to support their Research Project studies.

The tours, traditionally undertaken by tertiary students, covered heritage archive material, the library’s large reference collection, and how to access databases from home.

The number of registrations for home access to databases, which contain information from periodicals, magazines and newspapers, jumped from 394 in all of 2009 to 520 in the first three months of 2012.

Stamos Ganiaris, Acting Coordinator of Education Programs at the State Library, believes the increase was mainly due to interest from Research Project students.

“Being able to choose what to research can inspire students to use these valuable resources and reference materials in developing their individual Research Projects,” said Mr Ganiaris.

“Studying the Research Project and taking part in these tours also shows students how relevant and vital libraries are as modern centres for research and learning,” Mr Ganiaris added.

Bethany Miller, who completed her SACE in 2011, achieved an A+ for her Research Project about advertising in Australian children’s magazines. She used the State Library’s Children’s Literature Research Collection to study magazines from the 1950s-1980s.

“The Research Project gave me the skills and confidence to seek information outside of my comfort zone; to use those materials for my project made my visits to the library worthwhile,” Bethany said.

“There is so much information that isn’t online, so I would encourage students doing Research Projects to visit their libraries and discover what resources are available,” Bethany added.

Bethany is now studying a media course at Adelaide University and hopes to work in publishing.

A total of 23 libraries responded to a survey undertaken by the South Australian Public Library Network in March 2012. Of these libraries, 11 said they had noticed an increase in usage of their facilities, due to the introduction of the SACE Research Project.

2012 has been designated the National Year of Reading – a joint community and public libraries initiative to promote literacy and reading.