The provision of information services for the new cohort of ESL students in the school concerned, meant staff had to consider existing services and how they might be adapted to cater for a somewhat varied range of literacy levels.

**Encouraging a Learning Community**
Ensuring that the staff were aware of, and familiar with, information skills was a foundation activity of the academic year. Members of staff were given an overview of how defining locating, selecting, organising, presenting and assessing were pertinent to all. A ‘refresher’ about referencing and the school’s style guide, and a reminder about library facilities were also part of this initial activity. All new students to the school receive information and guidance about the library’s facilities, and by reacquainting staff with the same information, the development of a common level of awareness is encouraged in the learning community.

**The Library Management System**
The *Softlink Alice* library management software used by the library provides accessible and helpful facilities for both regular and ESL students. With a Windows platform, its varied search and inquiry methods, maps and access to the Internet assist students in their information skill development in their second language.

**Search Methods**
The provision of search facilities suitable for a range of abilities is a beneficial facet of the *Alice* system. For the most basic users, **Quick Search** allows students to search for resources in three ways – by category, allowing students to make use of labels to find resources and by using the **One** or the **Two Term** facilities when entering search terms. The former allowing ‘exact matches’ and the latter, like a basic version of Boolean, providing options based on two enquiry words. The **QuickPic** facility offers an alternative method of searching the collection, through the use of graphical representations of subject headings, thus allowing ESL or younger students to have visual cues to aid their searches.
More complex search facilities are also available through Alice and as students progress, they are able to make use of them. As with most search facilities, author, title and subject are usual initial search terms and added to this, keyword is also a way of conducting the search. Students developing a second language vocabulary may find that they create a list of terms for subjects including specific ‘jargon’ that may be of use for keyword searches.

**Choosing Suitable Reading Material**

Students wishing to find appropriate reading are able to access the Book Wizard in Alice which allows a search for resources suited to their reading level and genre preferences. Reading ability is gauged by a number of questions, such as age, their enjoyment of reading, followed by a short reading test. Book Wizard combines the results with students’ reading tastes for non-fiction or fiction and other personal taste selections such as genre, main character, setting and humour. Book Wizard shows the books which match the selections and provides a short preview of the book. ESL students are able to have a ‘taste’ of what the books have to offer in a very unthreatening way. The library can set up Book Wizard to show only books the library has or it can display all books contributed to the database by a range of publishers. If the latter version is chosen, students can then indicate which books would be useful additions to the library.

**Graphical Information**

Graphical information is put to good use in the library. Softlink Alice offers a library map which assists library users to find the area or shelf location of the resources. Maps applicable to various sections of the library may be added to this facility and relevant labelling may be inserted. Library users of all ages and ability find it a very useful part of the system.

Additionally the library displays signage that caters to a range of ages and levels of literacy – particularly important in a school which deals with Pre-School to Year 12. The letters of the alphabet indicate sections of the Fiction section and simple commercially produced Dewey signs indicate shelf locations in Non-Fiction. Large Dewey posters show the various divisions of the classification system for those who wish to be very specific. Additional signage will be displayed to further assist students’ access to facilities in the library as the year progresses.

**Intranet and Internet**

Access to the school’s intranet and the Internet is available through terminals in the library. Users enter via a simple front screen that connects to search engines and reference tools. Information about the merits of the various search engines is displayed near computer terminals, allowing students the opportunity to consider the suitability of each, for the search they wish to do. Additionally, sites on the Worldwide Web have also been catalogued and library users are able to access the sites directly through the Alice library management system.
Recommendations from publications such as Scan magazine published by NSW Department of Education and Training are utilized to identify sites of educational merit. Display material regarding sites of interest is promoted within the school community.

**Promoting Familiarity with Information Services**

The ESL group has permanent bookings in the library each week encouraging the students to make maximum use of the facilities and promoting familiarity with information services. Additional periods in the library may also be booked by teaching staff. The ESL teacher and other teaching staff are encouraged to provide advance notice of research activities so information service staff can provide appropriate information or locate resources relevant to the research task. Cooperative planning and teaching and resource based teaching and learning are actively encouraged throughout the learning community.