



Media release content

John Hirst Award 2019

The recipient of the School Library Association of New South Wales John Hirst Award for 2019 is Phyl Coath. Phyl is the Owner and Director of Syba Signs, Australia's leading provider of library signage, and Syba Academy, an experienced provider of quality professional learning for teachers, teacher-librarians, and education professionals.

The John Hirst Award honours the memory of the Association's founder, who had a vision and a passionate drive to establish the primary place of libraries in every NSW school.

As a former teacher librarian, Phyl well understands the professional learning needs of teacher librarians and the importance of creating relevant, supportive, and interesting library environments. In 1998, she founded Syba Signs and developed a wide range of student-centred signage that, over the years, has helped create modern, functional, and stimulating learning spaces that have enhanced the library experiences of students across Australia and internationally.



In 2006, Phyl extended her support of school libraries by designing professional learning for teacher librarians that was based on evidence-based practice and research. In 2013, what was

then known as Syba Seminars received endorsement from NESA as an accredited provider of professional learning, which facilitated not only the expansion of professional learning opportunities for teacher librarians and other educators, especially into the digital realm, but also prompted a name change to Syba Academy. Today, Syba Academy continues to be a leading provider of professional learning for teacher librarians in areas such as literacy and inquiry learning.

Phyl also supports school libraries through professional partnerships with various advocacy campaigns and literacy programs. Currently Syba Signs is partnered with the Australia-wide *Students Need School Libraries* campaign and the *Children's Book Council of Australia Annual Book Awards*.

Phyl Coath has played a fundamental role in the professional learning journey of many teacher librarians through excellence in professional leadership. She is a worthy recipient of the John Hirst Award 2019 and members of the School Library Association of NSW congratulate her on this achievement.



The [School Library Association of New South Wales](http://www.slansw.net.au) (SLANSW) is a professional association centered on professional learning, advocacy and research. Our membership is interested in learning about, and supporting and advocating for, the importance of school libraries as a part of the K-12 educational experience.

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