



***“There is no Frigate like a Book to take us Lands away.”***

- Emily Dickinson

### **Prelude**

Somerset College is set on a magnificent 32 hectare Western Cape winelands campus. The High School component of the College provides learning for 560 students from Grades 8 – 12 and includes the provision of boarding facilities. We speak to Rose Humphreys, the High School Library Manager.

OverDrive was already at the College when she joined Somerset in 2014. The Prep School Librarian had motivated for it to be acquired. Between the High School Teacher Librarian and herself, she is the one who does most with OverDrive. “Reading adds to your academic success” she says. It is in this context that she promotes reading be it in a physical or digital form.

### **Reading Engagements @ Somerset High School**

- The Spanish teacher has made significant inroads towards incorporating OverDrive and SORA as a resource in the teaching and learning programme.
- The English teachers are referring their students to suitable and relevant e-books for their needs. They are aware of the value the OverDrive platform provides by reading on SORA, inter alia, the provision of different fonts (even the dyslexic font), the size of the font, a choice of lighting etc. for personal preference.
- Rose has organised the well-loved “Battle of the Books” with Grade 8s. The choice of books is made available on SORA as well as in the physical library.
- The English and Afrikaans teachers have collaborated with the librarians to select titles of books in both languages to recommend to Grade 11s to read as many as they can from the list. Students subsequently write book reports and participate in other book reading related tasks. Reading from SORA provides ease of access. The programme ends with the awarding of prizes to students who have met the requirements of predetermined criteria.
- The existence of a Book Club is part of an ongoing reading culture that incorporates reading from SORA.
- Covid19 has driven an increased number of students to e-books and to SORA because of the move to remote teaching and learning.

“Any kind of in-house reading competition incorporates reading from SORA. The App is user-friendly to checkout, navigate and use. The student engagement with the SORA

App is increasing daily. Book lovers really get excited about SORA.” – Rose Humphreys. She adds, “I love the 'instant access' aspect of acquiring e-books as students ask for a title we might not have in the library.”

When prospective parents are taken on a tour of the school, the staff member always makes sure to mention that there is also a virtual library and many parents express their appreciation for that.

There is a possibility that Somerset College may roll out Chromebooks: editor’s note: SORA works with Chromebooks. In the meantime, students use their personal cell phones to access the OverDrive e-lending library and read on SORA.

Rose is the first to admit that there is still plenty of room to promote OverDrive services and use of SORA.

### **Current to Future SORA Promotion Plans**

- With the English department, Rose has created Recommended Reading lists for a range of reading levels, always indicating which ones are in the physical library and which on Sora.
- Rose has recently instituted the Library Newsletter in which she embeds hyperlinks to themed collections to read. One example is books on South African Women’s Month.
- Rose has posted the OverDrive video that introduces teens to SORA on the Library Instagram page.
- At the time of this lively conversation, the creation of QR codes to promote e-books available on SORA is a strong consideration.
- Rose was yet to encourage students to link to the nearby public and/or provincial e-lending libraries. This will expose students to a wider variety of books to access and read.
- Rose has delivered a poster about Sora to each teacher and many of them have put the posters up in their classroom. As well as expressing their appreciation for the information, several have or intend to sign up themselves.

### **In conclusion**

“As we are a high school, we do not have any limit on reading level access on our Sora platform and I make sure to provide many titles suitable for the older readers and adults so there are several teachers who use Sora too.”

Although every incoming student and teacher is given adequate orientation to the availability and use of SORA, Ms Humphreys is continuously working on balancing the input, throughput, and output in relation to the use of OverDrive and SORA.

With tools to make every student’s reading more pleasurable and a support team excited to help you, getting started with Sora has never been made easier. *Email: [Booktalk@booktalk.co.za](mailto:Booktalk@booktalk.co.za) Telephone: 011 325 2266*

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