Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools.
It is entirely appropriate that in the wake of Federal funding initiatives such as the Digital Education Revolution (DER) and the Building Education Revolution (BER), that this inquiry should review the role and function of school libraries and school librarians, at a national level.

I make the following submission as someone with 23 years of experience as a teacher and/or Teacher Librarian in 11 state schools and 3 Catholic schools. At times I combined the librarian role with that of Literacy Key teacher and ICT Coordinator .
 Since the late 1980s teacher librarians have automated their libraries, collaborated with staff to implement Resource Based Learning, in-serviced themselves re new technologies in libraries, specifically the Internet, adopted Guided Inquiry as a methodology for teaching in the library and most recently, been early adopters with the use of Web 2.0 tools (blogs, wikis etc) and the use of Interactive Whiteboards.
The benefits to students' learning (literature, literacy and information literacy) which are evident in schools with a dual qualified teacher librarian have been extensively researched and proven in overseas and Australian studies (1), yet despite this, Australian schools adopt a variety of models when it comes to staffing libraries. This is despite the extensive and very valuable work that is done by state library associations advocating for and training dual qualified professional teacher librarians.

"Many school leaders, and even worse, policy makers and bureaucrats, are ignorant of, or fail to understand that, a qualified teacher librarian can contribute to the school community to a significant degree, particularly with ongoing curricular changes and ICT impacting on teacher workload. Teacher librarians ease that workload, not by re-shelving books, but by using their expertise to collaborate with teachers; not by covering books but by providing valuable professional development in the use of ICT; not by checking books in and out but by joining committees to develop policies and practices that enhance student learning; not by chasing overdues but by working directly with students to develop their reading and information literacy skills" (2). (Spence, 2002)

This submission argues that given the considerable federal investment in school library facilities and technology, the following Federal Government measures are needed....
1. **recognition of the central role that school libraries have in student achievement, literacy attainment and preparation for post-Secondary success. This recognition should be made tangible through teacher librarian representation on curriculum decision making groups, such as ACARA.**
2. **the collection of national data relating to school library staffing, funding and scheduling**
3. **the development of national policy and standards re the qualifications, funding and role of teacher librarians across all sectors of primary and secondary schooling in Australian schools. These currently exist at state level but are frequently unacknowledged by decision makers with other funding priorities.**
4. **a review of training courses for teacher librarians and school library support staff, given that many highly skilled professionals in this area are nearing retirement age.**

Several current Curriculum reforms further highlight the value of professional teacher librarians as change agents (as outlined above) in their schools. The Draft Australian Curriculum highlights the general capabilities of: literacy, numeracy, ICT, thinking skills, creativity, self management, teamwork, intercultural understanding, ethical behaviour and social skills; all of which come into play

when students undertake multidisciplinary inquiry activities. Adequate and systematic attention to these cross-curriculum capabilities will definitely be at risk in schools where the teacher librarian, with their cross-curriculum perspective and knowledge and their information literacy and ICT expertise, cannot be involved in supporting teachers and students with these reforms.

Similarly, in order to complete the compulsory Stage 2 Research Project for their SACE, South Australian students need the support of their Teacher Librarian, not only in providing access to suitable resources, but also to teach the required research skills and strategies.

In order to convey the essence of the teacher librarian's contribution to student learning, I have chosen to illustrate my points with this **snapshot of a typical day in the life of a practising primary school Teacher Librarian**. My thoughts as I work are bracketed, with tasks requiring *librarianship specialist training* in italics.

7.00 am   Check home email for posts from *OZTL-Net list* serv re request for *particular literature text* and forward replies to relevant Staff member or *locate* and deliver text to pigeon hole (someone, interstate or overseas will have read my post from last night and responded. What a wonderful on-line PD / support group this is!!)

8.00am On arrival, *gather resources* (hard copy books, kits etc) for integrated unit and email group of teachers re relevant Clickview / Scootle *digital resources* to use on their Whiteboards (Remember to add these to planning documents for next rotation) Help Staff member with searching on *Bookmark system* for specific picture book. Parent phone call re volunteering to cover books.

8.30am Library opens. Early arriving students flock in to while away the 25 minutes before classrooms open, reserve new books, play games on computers, complete homework, chat to friends or read on beanbag.
Support from 2 ESOs (Education Support Officers) with supervision. One is called out to fix ICT problems, the other supervises the circulation desk while preparing a thematic display. The T/L does roving supervision whilst setting up "New Books" display (must *promote next book in that series* to student "X" when he comes in, follow up other student requests with book seller). A Parent of a Yr 1 student asks for help to get her child started with the Premier's Reading Challenge (I must put the website up on the IWB when the Yr 4/5s come in to borrow later today + promote searching it)

8.50 – 9.00am Email check. Most mail (catalogues etc) bagged to read at home priot to sending off *orders* made after checking *resource needs* for teaching of current integrated units.
Discuss with ESO his *cataloguing*, taping, covering etc tasks for the day, subject to ICT help desk.

9.00 –9.15 Lesson preparation (Get websites, Learning objects ready on Interactive Whiteboard) Individual Yr 3 student who is just starting to read chapter books, is sent by classroom teacher to get *support with initial choices.* (Must check with other Yr 3 teacher re other students needing this?)

9.15 Early Years Literacy group. T/L involvement with these high achieving Yr 1s makes possible smaller groups of "strugglers' with class teachers. (I incorporate *literature and information skills* where possible into the reading and viewing, listening and writing activities, especially the *use of first atlases, dictionaries, encyclopaedias* which this group loves!! I try to check the *borrowing history* of these capable readers and *recommend series* to extend them via the ESO who supervises borrowing for classes on the day I don't work)

11.05 –11.25 Recess break. T/L on duty in the library. Roving supervision of computers, games and table activities plus training of student assistants in *returning and re-shelving tasks*. (Must get assistants to help count brochures for up-coming Book Fair- before and after school for 5 days)

11.40 – 1 40 Yr 4/5 classes (2) come in with class teachers to borrow. I promote new books, series, magazines, publishers' websites. This always leads to increased reservations, loans and requests for particular titles. (I will visit local supplier on the way to speed up this process) Followed by cooperatively taught multi disciplinary unit using *Inquiry methodology*. (2 Staff /30 students allows extra assistance for students with literacy challenges) (Need to do cyber safety lessons with these groups next term)

2.10 – 2.50.   Rainbow Reading groups - individual students Yrs 4-7 (approx 12) sent by class teachers when convenient, to undertake listening/ reading activities at their level, 3 times / week (Assisting them takes up library administration time but is always necessary as these students' reading strategies are not well developed yet) (Follow up *purchase* of Percy Jackson book + tape for student X who is well below NAPLAN but not withdrawn from class, wants to be seen to be reading at level of peers)

3pm Fortnightly meeting with 2 ESO staff.
 Agenda items – *displays for this term, continuing work on Library presence on school webpage, reminder to weed out old damaged materials when returning (personal reminder to continue writing up library policy documents), PD for ESOs and sending out of overdue notices.*

3.30 Staff Meeting – planning for next term's integrated units (Work with 1 team – promote use of *information literacy outcomes, higher order thinking/multiple intelligences grid, IWB resources, integration of ICT,* T/L involvement – timetable lesson for each group, content outcomes and assessment rubric) (Before Staff meeting, print outline of integrated units for other 3 teams, *investigate resources* and email/ forward on to team leaders)

Whilst the role of teacher librarians is defined by individual school needs and contexts, what is **at stake in this Inquiry are the key impacts of teacher librarians** as outlined by Todd (3). (2010)
   ❖   "contributing to student development of reading for comprehension
   ❖   moving beyond information acquisition to deep critical thinking
   ❖   moving beyond the superficiality of skills development to deep knowledge development
   ❖   the ability to apply new skills and knowledge across discipline areas and grade levels
   ❖   the potential... to provide a differentiated curriculum which focuses on personalised learning experiences and instructional interventions for individual students at point- of- need"

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2.   Spence, Sue 92002) "survey Highlights major problems with library staffing" AEU Journal. SA branch, December, 2002.

3. Todd, RJ (2010) Research Columns One, 2010 School libraries 21C: the conversation begins, SCAN 29 (1) pp 30-42

SUBMITTED BY

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