

13/4/2010

Thank you Ms Gillard for the opportunity for teacher librarians (T/Ls) to share with you why T/Ls and libraries, make a difference to the education of students through this inquiry into the future of school libraries and teacher librarians in the country.

I draw my opinions from 12 years as a teacher librarian, six years as a primary T/L and six years in the secondary sector. Prior to that I had 16 years experience as a classroom teacher. I am currently the senior teacher librarian for the Dalton Road Campus Library of St Monica's College, Epping, Victoria. This is one of the largest secondary colleges in Victoria, having an enrolment of 1,982 students and 256 staff.

I co-ordinate a library that is well staffed with 5 part time T/Ls, one part time library assistant and one fulltime audio visual technician. In 2010 the T/Ls have, unfortunately, been allocated teaching roles outside of their library loads. It is my belief that libraries should be staffed with a balance of qualified T/Ls with post graduate qualifications and classroom experience. I believe all schools from primary school through to secondary school should have a range of professional T/Ls, para professional (Library Technicians) and clerical staff in their school libraries. The library should be the focus of learning and curriculum development in the school.

Without the expertise and enthusiasm of dedicated T/Ls, school libraries face the possibility of basically becoming sterile storehouses for resources or glorified computer labs. T/Ls transform school libraries into places where books and other valuable resources are not just kept, but where they are made more readily accessible and where they are actively promoted and celebrated. Libraries that have strong, passionate and committed T/Ls reflect vibrancy. Unfortunately, not all T/Ls have this commitment though.

For every science, history, religious, art, geography or literacy class I teach in the library I think to myself "One of these students maybe a doctor, lawyer, nurse, electrician, teacher, politician, mechanic or chef of the future - how can I inspire them to have passion for this research task, have an enquiry mind and to want to develop deeper knowledge, skills and questions about the topic? This happens for EVERY research task I have my library team provide support for.

Student literacy has come under threat from many things in the last 10 years: children not being read to by parents due to both parents working; children preferring electronic modes of entertainment such as X-Box; children using the computer and developing the habit of reading in short bursts and as a result not wanting to read a whole book; children's leisure time being very crowded with extra curricula activities. Students learn to read and to comprehend by reading. If they are reading a book they are enjoying, it will not even seem like a task of burden. Therefore, connecting a student with the right book is also my goal and that of my library team. This one action can put a student back on the path of enjoying reading. A passionate T/L can help do this.

Let me share just one recent example of this connection of student to a book:

I was presenting to a group of year 8 boys during our annual Teen Read Week 2010 program. The aim of this program is to highlight some of the latest and greatest fiction to males and at the same time

another T/L presents to the females. We have guest speakers come in i.e. author Paul Collins from FordStreet Publishing and Erin Wamala from Penguin books, competitions, and use I.T to promote books. This group of 15 boys told me they didn't like reading, they didn't have time or just don't. So I then set out to entice them with some titles. Half way through my presentation I picked up a book from a graphic novel series called "The Twilight Zone". A boy at the front who was one of the 'cool' kids who said he never read suddenly sparked up and asked, "Miss, is that book from the The Twilight Zone" on TV? I replied 'yes' and enquired if he watched it. The student answered "I love watching that series! Can I borrow that book? And do you have the other books in the series I can borrow?" And he did! After he borrowed, another 4 boys borrowed books as well. A very rewarding moment that made me more determined to do this for as many students as I can.

It is my intention to outline to you the services my T/Ls offer staff and students and the difference I observe these services make on learning.

## **1/ What do T/Ls offer teachers and students?**

A broad range of support is offered to our staff and teachers including:

- \* organise and maintain the library (physical and virtual spaces);
- \* selection of the best quality book, online and teaching resources;
- \* provide access to a range of sufficient resources that cater for different reading levels, curriculum areas and learning styles;
- \* develop curriculum with teachers which integrates a range of resources such as online, print and audio; and I.T;
- \* provide access to quality virtual resources for curriculum programs.
- \* provide access quality digital resources which support curriculum and students learning outcomes;
- \* design programs which train students in the effective, efficient and appropriate use of digital resources.
- \* support student use of all resources;
- \* encourage reading for enjoyment by offering quality fiction resources, promotion, reading programs and book talks
- \* T/L input on information literacy skills.

## **2/ How do T/Ls have an impact on learning?**

I observe teaching and learning on a daily basis and able to compare the behavior, level of application, perseverance and application of students who have access to both T/Ls and library resources and those who do not. I believe the T/Ls have the following impact on student learning:

- \* the acquisition of information to complete a subject specific task.
- \* research skills development is evident as students build on and incorporate previous library skills to subsequent visits and other research tasks.
- \* access to the library motivates most pupils to produce work, particularly if students have access to computers. Students tend not to want to waste the time when they have to access to quality resources.
- \* students develop as independent learners as they apply previous taught research skills to subsequent tasks.
- \* cross-curricular benefits of applying research skills and resources to other research tasks.
- \* recognition of the important role the library contributes to

the social development and interpersonal skills of vulnerable pupils by providing a safe environment with the opportunity to build confidence and make friends.

- \* enabling pupils to navigate the library, and its resources thus developing library skills.
- \* enabling pupils to become confident and independent in locating and handling information, selecting the most appropriate type of resource for their need, giving accurate and detailed information in project work, understanding the need for a bibliography and the need for appropriate presentation of work (information handling skills ).
- \* encouraging life skills, such as time management and setting targets and critical thinking skills.
- \* giving access to computers and developing the skills required to use ICT effectively.
- \* develop the reading habit, encouraging frequent borrowing, and the reading of quality and a variety of reading matter.
- \* develop personal interests and imagination.
- \* encouraging enjoyment for learning and enabling a positive experience to encourage learning and also increase morale.
- \* encourages pupils to take responsibility for their own learning, to use initiative and encourage creative thinking.
- \* enables pupils to share information, skills and knowledge in an informal setting and co-operate with each other.
- \* breaks down barriers and encouraging use by making libraries acceptable.

I am constantly seeing teachers who are time strapped and do not have the expertise in the area of information literacy. If they have not sought my assistance to obtain library support the level of student engagement, understanding and application to a research task is far shallower than those that do.

I truly believe teacher librarians make a vast difference to the quality of learning. Ms Gillard it is now your turn to make a difference. Ensure, by the provision of the necessary funding, that all students have access to quality teacher librarians and libraries that are leading the world in resources, staffing and connectability. Access is the new borrowing.

Thank you Ms Gillard,

Angela Anderson  
Senior Librarian