



**Reference point 1: the impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities**

Recent Policies for the improvement of library infrastructure and buildings ignores the issues of professional staffing of school libraries.

I am the sole teacher librarian in a primary school of 1300. I have (the equivalent of) one full time teacher aide, a lovely old grandmother with no qualifications. I am obliged to advertise for volunteers to help handle the workload- eg. 10,000 items on loan at any one time, 600 items on the overdue list, 51 classes wanting to borrow every week, with potentially 5000 items loaned out each week to children. I teach at least 2 year levels a term, which involves between 5 and 7 classes at each year level - in Term 1 2010 I taught weekly lessons to all year 1, 3, and 4 students. This was 17 lessons a week, 400 + students in a week. And that was without the ICT lessons that I was able to squeeze in between information literacy lessons.

I am expected to organise and maintain the library (physical and virtual spaces); train volunteers to handle the different para-professional tasks in the library, such as processing new resources, cataloguing, labelling, covering, reshelving, handling circulation duty; provide access, through judicious selection and purchase of appropriate resources, to a range of sufficient resources that cater for different reading levels, curriculum areas and learning styles; work collaboratively with 60 + teachers to develop curriculum which integrates a range of resources such as online, print and audio; and provide access to quality virtual resources for curriculum programs; promote literature and enthuse 1300 children to select reading resources appropriate to their interest level and their abilities. And to facilitate author visits for every year level, run Book Fairs twice a year to supplement the library budget, and provide Professional Development to all staff in the use of ICTs in the curriculum. To maintain this workload, I need adequate support.

Policies for the improvement of library infrastructure and buildings has also ignored issues in regard to selection of projects within schools. It appears the Government has abrogated its responsibility to ensure that the BER guidelines are followed. In some cases, the choice of building project has been left entirely to the discretion of the Principal. Indeed, I was told, when I sought advice when I realised that our school was not proceeding with the building of our proposed new library, that I needed to remember that "in Primary schools the Principal is God".

This lack of supervision of spending has resulted in some schools having built facilities that are not needed or wanted by their school communities.

## **Reference point 2: the future potential of school libraries and teacher librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy**

There is a massive body of research which irrefutably supports the value TLs bring to academic programs and student learning, and which includes the importance of school libraries -

(<http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/portals/ASLRP/links-schoollib.php>)

School libraries should be staffed by Teacher Librarians. Teacher Librarians have a teaching qualification plus experience in the classroom, as well as a postgraduate qualification that is an entry level into the profession of Information Science (Librarianship).

As trained teachers, TLs are able to:

- Develop and deliver curriculum programs with teachers which incorporate a range of resource formats; and
- fulfil the duty of care requirements as stated in the Education Act.

As Information Specialists, TLs:

- provide access to 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.
- Provide Professional Development to all staff in the integration of ICTs into the curriculum

Without a teacher who is trained in information literacy (and that is our role as teacher librarians) to teach students to be discerning in their use of ICTs, students of the future will be condemned to "googling it" with the resultant billions of hits, and their Research will be little more than a cut and paste of dubious resources with no known authority. And if teachers are expected to take up our role as the digital specialists, who will train them??

## **Reference point 3: the factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians**

- Currently there is a shortage of qualified Teacher Librarians in schools across Australia.
- This is an aging population with grave issues associated with succession planning and sustainability.
- This is a time when information and the globalisation of economies means that the average citizen must have graduated secondary level education with some information literacy skills, if they are going to be able to participate in the information economy.

- Only three institutions currently prepare TLs in recognised Graduate Diploma and Masters Level courses - Charles Sturt University, Edith Cowan University and Queensland University of Technology.
- Hence many schools have libraries which are run by unqualified staff eg. The secondary school in Brisbane whose putative teacher librarian is actually a Manual Arts teacher who enjoys “ playing with computers”, or the many schools in Queensland where the Head of Curriculum is allocated to the position of teacher librarian (without any training) as a simple solution to the part time nature of the HOC role. Often school libraries are staffed by library technicians, and library officers or parents who are not qualified to provide the educational components fulfilled by the teacher librarian with dual qualifications.
- It has been decades since Education Queensland selected experienced and effective teachers to be trained as teacher-librarians. We were chosen because of our demonstrated skills, we were released for 6 months of full time paid training in the Graduate Diploma of Teacher librarianship and then completed the qualification in our own time.
- Teacher librarians are leaving the profession because of the intolerable workload. According to Education Queensland staffing quotas, if a primary school has an enrolment of 300 students, it is entitled to a full time TL. In the case of my school with 1300 students, we are still only entitled to one full time tl. Does this mean that the students in my school are entitled to less than one quarter of the service provided in a smaller school? Or am I expected to work four times as hard to maintain appropriate services? Why is it that there are 2 HPE teachers to cope with the student numbers, the equivalent of 2 music teachers, and 2 ESL teachers to work with 120 students??

There needs to be provision for adequate staffing of school libraries on the basis of school enrolments, and the complexity of the role.

I administer a budget of \$20,000; I manage a staff of 9 (7 of them volunteers, neither of the part time teacher-aides have any qualifications); I teach at least 4 classes a day; I work collaboratively with more than 60 teaching staff; I am active on 3 curriculum committees (English, Curriculum and ICT); I provide professional development to all staff on a regular basis; I support 60 students and more in two lunch breaks every day; I spend nights and weekends preparing lessons (because my lessons are watched by my colleagues every time, and I see these lessons as an opportunity to demonstrate teaching strategies to colleagues; I have a working knowledge of the entire school curriculum, Prep to Year 7; I am the most highly qualified and the most experienced member of staff.....

#### **Reference point 4: the role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school librarians**

A contact person who works across the curriculum and has a detailed knowledge of information services and resources is required for the effective communication and establishment of links between various levels of government and other institutions when supporting school communities.

Teacher Librarians:

- operate within a highly pro-active professional community through various listservs, and respond to and create links with the public library sector, and provide information services for the school community, including teachers, administration and parents and citizens;
- such links allow for the maximum use of public information utilities and equity of access for all students and their parents;
- provide programs which assist students in the transition from primary to secondary school and secondary to tertiary studies; and
- assist in the development of literacy programs for students

#### **Reference point 5: the impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarians**

Digital technologies as evidenced by the Federal Government's computers for all students program, does not include training for teachers or students.

In schools it is the Teacher Librarian who provides:

- specialist knowledge, support and professional development for staff in how to use and embed digital technologies into curriculum
- the management of technologies for equitable access
- the infrastructure and policy development required for acceptable and appropriate use of a wide range of digital resources and technologies, including cyberbullying, privacy, identity theft and security of information
- the educational rationale for the effective inclusion of digital technologies in the curriculum
- equal access to a range of digital resources and delivery formats which support the development of high quality literacy programs in schools.

#### **Recommendations:**

- All schools from primary school through to secondary (K-12) school should have a range of professional (teacher librarians), 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.

- School libraries should be adequately resourced, to cater for constant renewal of resources for their school communities, and their minimum allocation should be mandated from outside the school, by the relevant Education authority.
- Schools should be staffed realistically on the basis of enrolment. A cap in the staffing quota at 300 students to a full time teacher librarian is totally inadequate. Take into account the teaching load, the preparation, the management of the facility, the management of staff, the time spent in collaboratively planning, the time spent providing professional development... And staff schools according to need.
- There should be recognition of the additional training and qualifications of the teacher-librarian, reflected in the pay scale.
- Training places should be provided for experienced and effective teachers to be trained in the role of the teacher-librarian.
- The teacher-librarian role should be recognised as part of the management structure of the school.

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