

Potential of school libraries and teacher librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes

Having access to electronic information can never replace the contributions to learning provided by teacher librarians. The role of school information services and teacher librarians are key factors in the improved delivery of curriculum outcomes, attainment of the goals of education, promotion of literacy and reading, information literacy, technology use in schools and the curriculum, cyber-safety education, provision of print and digital resources and lifelong learning.¹

Research proving the link between school libraries and scholastic achievement

- 3.1 The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) said that there is much research evidence from the United States, Canada, Britain and Australia that students attain higher levels of achievement when they have access to an adequately resourced school library staffed by a qualified teacher librarian.² The Committee was provided with a reference list of this research.³

1 ALIA, *Submission 332*, p. 6.

2 ALIA, *Submission 332*, p. 9.

3 ALIA *Submission 332*, pp. 35-37.

International research findings

3.2 The Australian School Library Association (ASLA) website provides links to seminal research about the contributions of school libraries to students and the community. Research includes the *School Libraries Work!* Research Foundation Paper by the United States National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (reissued in 2008); the Colorado study; and Ohio study.⁴

3.3 According to the *School Libraries Work!* study:

A substantial body of evidence since 1990 shows a positive relationship between school libraries and student achievement. The research studies show that school libraries can have a positive impact on student achievement, whether such achievement is measured in terms of reading scores, literacy or learning more generally.⁵

3.4 Dr Fitzsimmons, Chairman of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science concluded:

From our perspective, a critical part of the comprehensive and renewed strategy to ensure that students learn to read and are effective users of information and ideas is the requirement that every school have a school library and that school libraries be staffed by highly qualified, state certified, school library media specialists.⁶

3.5 The first Colorado study, conducted in 1993, was considered groundbreaking insofar as it documented the link between a school's academic achievement and the presence of a professionally staffed school library. The methodology has since been duplicated in other American states and in Australia.⁷

3.6 The third and most recent Colorado report published in 2010 had findings consistent with the previous two studies. Namely, students tend to perform better on achievement tests where school libraries have:

- More full-time equivalents of staffing;
- Larger collections of periodicals and instructional videos;

4 ALSA, 'Research,' accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.asla.org.au/research/>>.

5 U. S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, Research Foundation Paper, *School Libraries Work!*, 2008 3rd. Ed, p. 10.

6 U. S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, Research Foundation Paper, *School Libraries Work!*, 2008 3rd. Ed, p. 4.

7 Ms S. Hewer, *Submission 269*, p.1.

- Better networked online resources made accessible via computers in the library, as well as in classrooms, labs and offices;
 - Higher total library expenditures; and
 - Heavier use, as indicated by both library visits and circulation.⁸
- 3.7 According to the authors of the third Colorado report, similar findings have been generated by studies across numerous other American states, as well as the Canadian province of Ontario. The studies show that the relationships between library programs and test performance cannot be explained away by other school or community conditions.⁹
- 3.8 Other factors critical to achieving the higher test results identified in more recent Indiana and Idaho studies (which were premised on the Colorado model) include principals valuing teacher librarians and ICT literacy.¹⁰
- 3.9 Other factors deemed to be of importance were:
- Flexibly scheduled access to the library;
 - Collaboration between the school library and classroom teachers in the design and delivery of instruction;
 - Provision of in-service professional development opportunities to teachers by the librarian;
 - Appointment of the librarian to key school committees;
 - Regular meetings between the librarian and principal; and
 - Addressing the instructional role of the teacher librarian during librarian interviews.¹¹
- 3.10 Further, credentialed librarians were two to three times more likely to report engaging in most of the activities listed above at least weekly, as opposed to others deputised to run the library.¹²
- 3.11 The Ohio study by Dr Kuhlthau and Dr Todd included a diagram 'Model of the School Library as a Dynamic Agent of Learning,' which is included

8 Library Research Service, *School librarians continue to help students achieve standards: The third Colorado Study* (November 2010), p. 20.

9 Library Research Service, *School librarians continue to help students achieve standards: The third Colorado Study* (November 2010), p. 20.

10 Library Research Service, *School librarians continue to help students achieve standards: The third Colorado Study* (November 2010), p. 20.

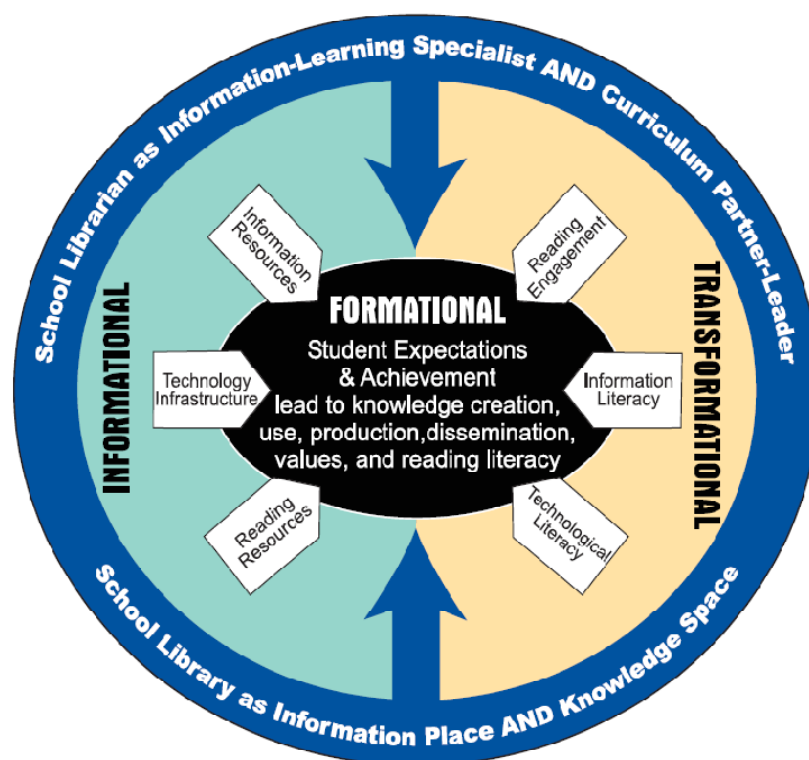
11 Library Research Service, *School librarians continue to help students achieve standards: The third Colorado Study* (November 2010), p. 20.

12 Library Research Service, *School librarians continue to help students achieve standards: The third Colorado Study* (November 2010), p. 20.

below because it is a useful pictorial representation of the components of high-performing school libraries and teacher librarians.

Figure 1.0 Model of the School Library as a Dynamic Agent of Learning

Model of the School Library as a Dynamic Agent of Learning



(C) 2014 Ross J. Todd, Carol C. Kuhlthau and CELMA. Additional information about the Student Learning Through School Libraries research study may be found at <http://www.oelma.org/studentlearning.htm>.

Source *Ohio Educational Library Media Association Research (OELMA) Study*

3.12 The Ohio study has been replicated in Australia. Just under 7 000 students from years 7-12 in Queensland and Victorian schools responded to a survey conducted by Ms Hay of Charles Sturt University about how the library helped them. The results in Australia mirrored those in the United States, namely that:

Where there is a well-resourced school library and a teacher librarian, the students indicated that both the environment and personnel contributed to their learning and supported them in their academic learning, in particular, helping them to prepare

their work, to prepare presentations and to complete research tasks and assignments.¹³

- 3.13 Ms Hay wished to highlight an especially interesting finding of her study, namely the increased importance of ICT assistance from teacher librarians:

It was interesting to see that of the seven key forms of assistance a school library could provide, the students rated most highly those that related to technology, but the teacher librarians and teachers of those students, who also completed the survey, did not see the provision of technological support by the library as being as important to the students as other forms of help.¹⁴

Australian research findings

- 3.14 Evidence to the inquiry, including that from library associations, referred to the Lonsdale report,¹⁵ which showed that ‘a well stocked school library and a teacher librarian makes a difference to the reading achievement of students.’ Lonsdale found that:

Existing research shows that school libraries can have a positive impact, whether measured in terms of reading scores, literacy or learning more generally, on student achievement. There is evidence to show that a strong library program that is adequately staffed, resourced, and funded can lead to higher student achievement regardless of the socioeconomic or educational levels of the adults in the community.¹⁶

- 3.15 ALIA emphasised two key findings of the Lonsdale study. First, that the quality of the library’s collection has an impact on student learning and, secondly, that test scores are higher when there is a greater usage of the school library resource centre.¹⁷

13 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 28 April 2010, p. 10.

14 Charles Sturt University, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 June 2010, p. 7.

15 M. Lonsdale, ‘Impact of school libraries on student achievement: a review of the research,’ 2003, accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.asla.org.au/research/Australia-review.htm>>.

16 M. Lonsdale, ‘Impact of school libraries on student achievement: a review of the research,’ 2003, p.30, accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.asla.org.au/research/Australia-review.htm>>.

17 ALIA, *Submission 332*, p. 9.

- 3.16 An earlier Australian Council for Educational Research report, known as the Masters and Forster study,¹⁸ was also cited by ASLA because it identified several school and teacher variables that were associated with literacy achievement, including, extensive use of the school library by each teacher's class:

This factor was associated with a difference of as many as 27 points in students' literacy achievements when compared with non-use of the library.¹⁹

- 3.17 The international research linking libraries to student achievement is a useful backdrop against which to consider the Australian evidence, not least because some of that research has been replicated here.

Evidence-based practice

- 3.18 Dr Ross Todd of the Centre for International Scholarship in School Libraries described the importance of 'evidence based practice (EBP)' in influencing the recognition of teacher librarians. Dr Todd explained that EBP is the process of teacher librarians documenting how they make a difference to learning at their school and bringing it to the attention of principals, teaching colleagues and parents.²⁰ More than just proving the worth of teacher librarians, EBP is about 'demonstrating the vitality of our [teacher librarians'] contributions to learning.'²¹
- 3.19 While there is no standard approach to evidence-based practice and strategies can vary from school to school, it is essentially about creating assignments that tie the library to the classroom curriculum.²²
- 3.20 Dr Todd suggests that a good starting point for teacher librarians is to focus on collaborative lessons with teaching colleagues, who, he says, can

18 G. Masters and M. Forster, 'Mapping Literacy Achievement: Results of the 1996 National School Literacy Survey,' 1997, accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.dest.gov.au/mla/mla.pdf>>.

19 G. Masters and M. Forster, 'Mapping Literacy Achievement: Results of the 1996 National School Literacy Survey,' 1997, p. 207, accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.dest.gov.au/mla/mla.pdf>>.

20 CIISL, *Submission 163*, p. 4 & Todd, R., 'How to prove you boost student achievement,' *School Library Journal*, 4 January 2003, accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA287119.html>>.

21 Todd, R., 'How to prove you boost student achievement,' *School Library Journal*, 4 January 2003, accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA287119.html>>.

22 Todd, R., 'How to prove you boost student achievement,' *School Library Journal*, 4 January 2003, accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA287119.html>>.

become their biggest advocates, when they see them making a difference to their students' learning. While planning lessons, teacher librarians need to clearly identify what they are teaching and prove how their methods are successful. The documentation might take the form of samples of students' work, surveys or test scores.²³

- 3.21 For instance, a Melbourne teacher librarian devised a collaborative lesson with a history teacher colleague in order to help students develop more effective internet search strategies. The teacher librarian created a checklist that asked students to describe their search techniques for the assignment. Then the teacher librarian showed them the flaws in their techniques and gave them a lesson on how to more effectively find primary documents and other quality resources. The teacher librarian then surveyed the students on how that lesson assisted them better find the resources they were searching for, ultimately being able to demonstrate that her lesson had improved the quality of their projects.²⁴
- 3.22 ASLA referenced Ms Gillespie, a teacher librarian who worked to improve literacy levels across her whole school after receiving the school's first NAPLAN test results. She assisted teaching colleagues to provide resources that would support classroom activities.²⁵
- 3.23 The Committee appreciates that evidence-based practice takes time on the part of teacher librarians but agrees that documenting and highlighting examples of teacher librarians' successes in improving educational and community outcomes is critical to illustrating the enormous potential of school libraries to help students achieve better results. The Committee will discuss further the need for teacher librarians' self-promotion and marketing later in this chapter.

Literacy and the role of teacher librarians

- 3.24 ALIA referred to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's statement on literacy, which describes literacy as a human

23 Todd, R., 'How to prove you boost student achievement,' *School Library Journal*, 4 January 2003, accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA287119.html>>.

24 Todd, R., 'How to prove you boost student achievement,' *School Library Journal*, 4 January 2003, accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA287119.html>>.

25 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 24 June 2010, p. 5 and ASLA, *Submission 327*, p. 8.

right, a tool of personal empowerment and a means for social and human development.²⁶

- 3.25 In chapter one reference was made to Australia's declining literacy performance as reported in a recent Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development study. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics latest figures:

Just over half (54%) of Australians aged 15 to 74 years were assessed as having the prose literacy skills needed to meet the complex demands of everyday life and work. Results were similar for document literacy with 53% and numeracy with 47% achieving this level.²⁷

- 3.26 The Committee endorses ALIA's statement that, 'the importance of literacy is indisputable and crucial for students' future participation in the Australian economy and society.'²⁸

- 3.27 It was impressed upon the Committee that literacy in the modern age is about so much more than just reading and writing. Today our technological society requires students to have information and communications technology skills (sometimes referred to as digital literacy skills) as well:

This means that not only can students use a computer to do word processing and spreadsheets, but can also create, read and write digitally in order to access the internet, find and edit digital information, participate in electronic communications, and use online information and communications networks.²⁹

- 3.28 ALIA summarised the importance of having a teacher librarian in schools to support students' attainment of a range of literacies, as follows:

Schools with a qualified teacher librarian select appropriate fiction and non-fiction resources, and promote, design and coordinate literacy, literature, and information literacy programs across the school [to] improve literacy outcomes.

Literacy outcomes are enhanced by teacher librarians who provide curriculum support and design resource-based learning programs.

26 ALIA, *Submission 332*, p. 11.

27 Australian Bureau of Statistics, media release, *Australia's literacy and life skills*, 28 November 2007.

28 ALIA, *Submission 332*, p. 11.

29 ALIA, *Submission 332*, p. 13.

Teacher librarians teach digital literacy skills to both students and other teachers alongside information literacy skills. Such skills include verifying credible sources online and how to cite electronic resources. Issues such as copyright and plagiarism are also included.³⁰

Supporting classroom teachers

3.29 As alluded to elsewhere in this chapter, especially in the sections on evidence-based practice, literacy and NAPLAN results, teacher librarians clearly have a very important role to play in assisting classroom teachers in schools.

3.30 The Committee heard how teacher librarians are assisting classroom teachers to teach their students effective research skills and search strategies for finding appropriate information for their projects on the internet and via online databases. These include advanced skills that some classroom teachers may not have themselves, or may appreciate assistance with owing to time pressures they face.

3.31 Teacher librarians can also prove invaluable in helping teachers select appropriate teaching materials to support the curriculum. They design and coordinate a range of learning resources. Their value as skilled practitioners cannot be underestimated:

Through collaboration and involvement in curriculum design and delivery, teacher librarians model information literacy practices to teachers and ensure consistent practices are established across disciplines and grade levels.³¹

3.32 These skills will be especially important as the new national curriculum comes into effect and online, and new support materials are needed.

3.33 Ms Amy Scott-Preimonas, a secondary school teacher in a Queensland state school, described typical support a teacher librarian might provide a classroom teacher with:

Often I will book into a space in the library and 'book' a librarian to discuss research strategies, note taking or referencing with the students to enhance the quality of their work.³²

30 ALIA *Submission 332*, pp. 11 and 13.

31 ASLA Tasmania, *Submission 121*, p. 7.

32 Ms Amy Scott-Preimonas, *Submission 21*, p.1.

- 3.34 Mrs Margaret Cooper, teacher librarian at Shellharbour Public School in NSW referred to the valuable assistance provided by teacher librarians in relation to the newest resources and digital learning tools:

Teacher librarians are aware of all the newest resources and digital learning tools that complement teaching and learning programs. Teacher librarians are often the first teacher in their school to use new technology and demonstrate to classroom teachers through collaboration how the technology can assist classroom teacher's learning needs. I have done this with my use of the interactive whiteboard. Teacher librarians could make greater contributions if they had more time to do this.³³

- 3.35 Ms Lyn Hay, Head of Information Studies at Charles Sturt University, emphasised the facilitative role that teacher librarians can undertake integrating new technology into the curriculum:

[T]he curriculum coordinator...used part of her curriculum coordination budget to invest in employing a teacher librarian for three days a week to help with the curriculum and technology innovation that she wanted to implement in her school...after a 6 month trial...the person in the position showed the potential of that role. As a result that curriculum coordinator and principal have committed to a contract position for two years.³⁴

- 3.36 Unfortunately, under the current system teacher librarians are often under-resourced or underutilised, being used as relief teachers for classroom teachers who require release from face-to-face teaching (RFF) or for supervisory duties (see chapter four).

- 3.37 This may explain why the Committee did not hear as many examples as it might expect regarding the diverse ways that teacher librarians support classroom teachers to achieve the best educational outcomes for their students.

- 3.38 Teacher librarians certainly seem willing to work more closely with classroom teachers to support them but their full potential is often compromised.

33 Mrs Margaret Cooper, *Submission 79*, p. 3.

34 Ms. Lyn Hay, Charles Sturt University, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 June, p. 11.

Supporting literacy learning – NAPLAN tests

- 3.39 Softlink International, a long-standing supplier of library management systems, supplied responses from a survey it conducted in 2010 of five per cent of all Australian schools from the government, Catholic and independent sectors at both primary and secondary level.³⁵
- 3.40 It was almost unanimously agreed (99 per cent) amongst librarians surveyed that:
- Investing in school libraries and school librarians will improve literacy outcomes for students; and
 - School libraries and school librarians contribute to improved educational and community outcomes.³⁶
- 3.41 The Committee received numerous submissions supporting librarians' positive influence on supporting literacy in their schools.³⁷
- 3.42 The Softlink survey – like the Colorado study in the United States - revealed a positive correlation between those schools that invested in their libraries, by allocating larger budgets and more school librarian resources, and higher NAPLAN reading literacy results.³⁸
- 3.43 ASLA advised that there is some evidence in Australia indicating that in school libraries where teacher librarians are actively involved in supporting literacy programs, and tracking and monitoring those students, they are seeing improvements in the second NAPLAN testing for literacy as a result of that contribution.³⁹
- 3.44 The Committee is of the view that the My School website,⁴⁰ which publishes some 10 000 Australian schools' NAPLAN results, should include data on teacher librarians.
- 3.45 Doing so would be in the spirit of the My School website which enables users to quickly locate statistical and contextual information about schools in their community and compare them with statistically similar schools across the country.

35 Softlink International, *Submission 255*.

36 Softlink International, *Submission 255*, p. 4.

37 See for instance Dr Bales, *Committee Hansard*, Tasmania, 30 April 2010, p. 5.

38 Softlink International, *Submission 255*, p. 4.

39 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 28 April 2010, p. 10.

40 See the My School website: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 'My School,' accessed 18 February 2011 at <<http://www.myschool.edu.au/>>.

- 3.46 Including data on teacher librarians would provide an opportunity to improve data collection by gathering data in a more disciplined way. Like the NAPLAN results this hard data could be used to more rigorously assess the contributions of teacher librarians and tease out the correlation between their efforts and student achievement. It would also help elevate the profile of teacher librarians in schools.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority include statistical information about the breakdown of all specialist teachers, including teacher librarians, on the My School website.

Importance to gifted children

- 3.47 The Committee received interesting evidence from Mrs Erratt, a parent and representative of the Northern Territory Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented, who informed members that teacher librarians play a significant role in helping gifted children. Speaking to her experience she said:

[My daughter] was at a school where they could not cope with the fact she was 5 and quite literate. I had a lot to do with the librarian in trying to find her appropriate reading material because she chewed through books. The librarian was really helpful and then when we moved school to go into this [dedicated gifted] program the teacher librarian was completely and utterly integral.⁴¹

- 3.48 Mrs Erratt went on to describe how, as in other schools, when school numbers fell, the full-time teacher librarian at her daughter's school was replaced by a part-time position occupied by a regular teacher. Mrs Erratt observed how the replacement of a full-time qualified teacher librarian with a part-time non-specialist had had a detrimental impact on her daughter's education. She said that 'the hole has never been filled in the school.'⁴²

41 Mrs Erratt, Northern Territory Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 5 July 2010, p. 17.

42 Mrs Erratt, Northern Territory Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 5 July 2010, p. 17.

Encouraging a love of reading

- 3.49 Reading is a core skill for learning but school libraries are also places where reading for pleasure is fostered. The Committee heard from a great number of teacher librarians who are passionate about their profession and the need to spark students' imaginations:

Many of us know that our love of books came from a particular classroom teacher or teacher librarian. Sometimes we can even go back in time to the day a particular picture book was read which has marked us indelibly. We can remember hearing the words read aloud and discussing our favourite characters or events afterwards.⁴³

How are children supposed to master the long and difficult process of learning to read if they don't see the pleasure it will give...They need to want to read for pleasure - and the librarian is the one to give them this help - who can read to them and enthuse them.⁴⁴

Here there's life, love and imagination, where books are gobbled up and learning is fun...

[the library can be] theatre, a fairy's grotto, a walk through ancient Egypt...children learn through play and using their imagination.⁴⁵

- 3.50 Teacher librarians facilitate a wide number of activities that support a culture of reading in schools. These activities include coordinating book fairs, promoting and administering book clubs, and participating in Children's Book Week and ALIA's national literacy and literary campaign, National Simultaneous Storytime program.⁴⁶

- 3.51 ALIA and ASLA raised the prospect of a National Year of Reading 2012 which they envisaged would be similar to the United Kingdom's National Year of Reading held in 2008. ASLA says that the initiative:

Has the potential to join together the many reading and literacy initiatives which already take place in schools, libraries and community venues to improve educational and community outcomes.⁴⁷

43 Ms L. Chase, *Submission 12*, p. 4.

44 Dr Lowe, *Submission 28*, p. 1.

45 Ms C. Sowdon-Walters, *Submission 3*, p. 2.

46 ALIA, *Submission 332*, pp. 12-15.

47 ASLA, *Submission 327*, p. 9.

- 3.52 Both library organisations recommended that DEEWR support ASLA and ALIA in its efforts to coordinate a National Year of Reading in 2012.⁴⁸
- 3.53 The Committee is of the view that a National Year of Reading could be an effective mechanism for library organisations and DEEWR to work together in promoting reading and literacy. Moreover, it could be an excellent way to involve and highlight the myriad contributions of teacher librarians to student achievement.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government support additional initiatives to promote reading, such as a National Year of Reading. The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations should collaborate with the Australian School Library Association, Australian Libraries and Information Association and other education stakeholders in developing these initiatives.

Improving digital literacy

I think our students are information rich and question poor and search skills poor.⁴⁹

- 3.54 According to ASLA, students of the 'Google Generation' are surface web browsers, namely they do not have the skills for advanced web searching, evaluating the relevance of information nor the skills to use this information appropriately.⁵⁰
- 3.55 Research undertaken by Ms Barbara Combes⁵¹ shows that while post-secondary students were confident in using the internet for study and research there was a significant drop in skills when it came to their ability to evaluate the merit of, organise, and use the information they had found.
- 3.56 ASLA stated that there is a space for teacher librarians to:

48 ASLA *Submission 327*, p. 17 and ALIA, *Submission 332*, p. 13.

49 ASLA ACT, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 27 May 2010, p. 8.

50 ASLA, *Submission 327*, p. 7.

51 Combes, B, 'Techno savvy or just techno oriented? How do the Net generation search for information?', ASLA XX Biennial Conference Proceedings 007, 2-5 October, Adelaide, ASLA, ACT, 2007, pp 1-12.

...map the digital tools and skills required for learning to the Australian National Curriculum; and

...implement a digital literacy continuum linked to the national curriculum.⁵²

- 3.57 Mr Loukakis of the Australian Society of Authors stated that his organisation would also like to see teacher librarians have more input into developing the national curriculum.⁵³
- 3.58 ASLA and ALIA indicated that they had been part of various consultation processes in respect of developing the national curriculum and were satisfied with the level of engagement, as mentioned in chapter two.
- 3.59 DEEWR added that the next stage of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership's work on national standards would involve further discussions with specialist groups like teacher librarians, to exemplify the teaching standards in those specialties.⁵⁴
- 3.60 The Committee endorses the ongoing engagement between the Department, ASLA and ALIA and other important education stakeholders on ways to improve digital literacy through the national curriculum and the teaching of it by teacher librarians.

School libraries as socially inclusive learning hubs of the 21st century

In many respects, school libraries are being referred to as third spaces. There is the home and the school and the third space [the library] where the equitable access [to technology] is given. One primary principal indicated that the teacher librarian is the person who has the ability to touch the life of every child in the school.⁵⁵

- 3.61 The school library is not just a repository of information and a place where students come to research, study and learn. The space confers a host of additional social and community benefits.
- 3.62 ALIA says that the school library also acts as a communications hub where, for instance, children gather to play games at lunchtime, meet, and display their work:

52 ASLA, *Submission 327*, p. 8.

53 Australian Society of Authors, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 28 April 2010, p. 44.

54 DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 30.

55 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 11.

School libraries promote social inclusion within the community...uniquely linking children across different abilities, years, age groups and subject areas in a community of learning... in many schools teachers, parents, students and members of the wider community gather to work on projects or issues.⁵⁶

- 3.63 Witnesses described how libraries are especially important in remote areas or disadvantaged areas where students do not have access to electronic resources, and for whom a physical library and encouraging librarian can make all the difference to their engagement with learning.⁵⁷
- 3.64 School libraries can also provide a quiet and safe haven for students to retreat to from formal classrooms, or from noisy playgrounds at lunchtime.⁵⁸
- 3.65 Some school libraries with the facilities and resources run extra programs like Homework Help where a teacher librarian and other teachers are available before and after school hours to assist students with homework, and some even provide students with a meal. The Committee heard that this sort of program was 'highly popular amongst students':
- The students want a place in the school where they have access, before, during and after school, to technology that works. Some students have said, 'The school library really helped me with a printing crisis, or a technology crisis..; [that same] flexible and open access is not always provided in the school computer lab.'⁵⁹
- 3.66 The Committee acknowledges the evidence presented to it from studies in Australia, the United Kingdom and United States, linking the contributions of teacher librarians to student achievement. There was also a lot of anecdotal evidence from teacher librarians supporting this evidence.
- 3.67 ASLA suggested that what is missing is an Australian-based longitudinal study into how a strong school library program can lead to higher student achievement and literacy levels.

56 ALIA, *Submission 332*, p. 14.

57 Ms Ross, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 5 July 2010, p. 15.

58 ALIA, *Submission 332*, p. 14.

59 See for instance, Ms Pisel, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 5 July 2010, p. 7 and Ms Hay, CSU, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 June 2010, p. 7.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government initiate an Australian-based longitudinal study into the links between library programs, literacy (including digital literacy) and student achievement, including their impact on improving outcomes for socioeconomically disadvantaged students.

i-Centres

- 3.68 ASLA claims that school libraries have the potential to be ‘flexible, dynamic, high tech 21st century learning centres’ that are the hub of the learning environment of a school:

21st century school libraries remain the backbone of schools. They are changing – reflecting our world and our values. There will always be a need for resources – books, media, electronic...A critical feature of this will always be the ways in which information processes are taught and dispersed throughout student, teacher and parent worlds. Crafty librarians who are at the cutting interface of technology will be needed to meet the very individualised learning needs of clients...I see a thriving centre of learning and something that is integral to the way the whole school functions.⁶⁰

- 3.69 The library associations advised of discussions it had been instigating within the profession, and with principals, on developing the concept of an i-centre in schools, namely:

A one-stop shop model whereby the information, the technology and the teaching and learning services are all integrated into one space.⁶¹

- 3.70 ASLA went on to describe how they might work, with school libraries and IT departments (where they exist in larger schools) merging:

It becomes easily accessible for the students, it is available to them all day and they have staff who can guide them through technical problems and information problems.⁶²

60 ASLA, *Submission 327*, p 8.

61 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 3.

- 3.71 The i-centre concept is in its infancy or at least the evidence on it came to the Committee fairly late in the inquiry process. Despite early results indicating their success and increasing popularity, currently only a minority of Australia schools are trialling their usage. As with other resourcing issues it will ultimately be up to schools to choose the sorts of computers they have in their schools.

i-Pad trials

- 3.72 In chapter one, ASLA and ALIA referred to the iPad trials taking place a number of primary and secondary schools as an exciting development with the potential to significantly aid teaching and learning.
- 3.73 The iPads and one-to-one rollout under the Digital Education Revolution are part of 'a digital shift' which puts a new focus on what school libraries can be.⁶³
- 3.74 The Committee is interested to see the trials of iPad usage progress and certainly thinks that the i-centre concept is a very interesting one worthy of further development. The Committee would like to see these trialled in schools across the country as well.

Self-promotion

- 3.75 Teacher librarians are in a unique position to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes by promoting themselves and the services of their library. Unlike other school specialists they often find themselves having to define and defend what they do in schools.
- 3.76 This means that teacher librarians need to:
- ...leverage opportunities for vision-building to become empowered as their school's information professional...and proactive in instigating conversations within the school community about the role of the school library and their role as teacher librarian.⁶⁴
- 3.77 Many witnesses, including Ms Hay, Lecturer of Information Studies at Charles Sturt University, and Writing WA, spoke of the need and scope

62 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 3.

63 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 3.

64 CSU, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 June 2010, p. 3.

for teacher librarians to promote themselves and their profession more strategically.⁶⁵

- 3.78 Ms Hay alluded to a 2007 marketing campaign called 'Shaping the Profession' that the Charles Sturt University Faculty of Education ran for its courses, emphasising the importance of teacher librarians helping to recruit other good teachers into the profession.⁶⁶
- 3.79 Some strategies on how the status of teacher librarians can be lifted in schools and the community at large, especially by teacher librarians themselves, have already been mentioned. For instance, see Dr Todd's evidence-based practice approach earlier in this chapter.
- 3.80 The Committee recognises that this is something easier to do in schools where the principal is already open to working collaboratively with teacher librarians and more challenging in schools where principals are less inclined. The Committee heard that teacher librarians in independent schools often have more sway than a lone librarian might in a government school.⁶⁷
- 3.81 However, there are many instances of teacher librarians demonstrating initiative and well-thought out creative ideas, taking them forward to principals, and gaining traction.

Library Associations

- 3.82 Library associations also clearly have a role to play in promoting the profession. One teacher librarian suggested that they 'develop a little brochure of good ideas.'⁶⁸
- 3.83 ASLA and ALIA acknowledged that they need to 'capture good stories' as part of their advocacy efforts.⁶⁹

Teacher librarians' capacity for leadership roles

- 3.84 Teacher librarians clearly have a capacity for extended leadership roles within the school. It was suggested that more high calibre candidates

65 See for instance, CSU, *Committee Hansard*, 3 June 2010, p. 3, Writing WA, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 13 July 2010, p. 19 and CISLL, *Submission 163*.

66 CSU, *Committee Hansard*, 3 June 2010, CSU, p. 4.

67 CSU, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 June 2010, p. 14.

68 Ms Nielsen, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 27 May 2010, p. 9.

69 "School Library Roundtable minutes," 8 November 2010, provided to Committee at briefing on 11 February 2011.

would be attracted to apply for teacher librarian positions if the position was aligned with greater leadership roles within the school.⁷⁰

- 3.85 A number of teacher librarians referred to the diverse proactive leadership roles they had each taken in their respective schools, which had helped raise the profile of the school library and importance of the teacher librarian. Examples included approaching the principal with ideas for literacy programs to joining the school board and building a relationship with the parents.⁷¹
- 3.86 Others spoke of the desire to be empowered to take a leadership role in their schools but also referred to the challenges in achieving such a role. One teacher librarian said:
- One concern we have is not being part of the senior management team...the reasoning being that there are too many at the meeting so we cannot fit in.⁷²
- 3.87 Representatives from the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia described their respective roles as heads of department, members of literacy committees, middle school curriculum development and the like in independent schools, lending weight to evidence received that independent schools tend to value their teacher librarians in school policy making much more than other schools.⁷³
- 3.88 ASLA described how teacher librarians are moving away from being labelled teacher librarians and gaining new status as 'the head of digital learning' or the 'head of e-learning', as part of the development of i-centre concept.⁷⁴ In this context, e-learning refers to all forms of electronically supported teaching and learning i.e. online learning.
- 3.89 The Committee shares ASLA and ALIA's view that they need to capture and disseminate good stories about teacher librarians' work. The Commonwealth Government can potentially play a supportive role in this regard. It is especially important to highlight where teacher librarians are in leadership roles in schools and to illustrate their potential for ushering in e-learning in schools.

70 Ms G. Kaye, *Submission 205* p. 2.

71 Ms Nielsen, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 27 May 2010, p. 9.

72 Ms Pisel, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 5 July 2010, p. 10.

73 AISWA, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 13 July 2010, p. 50.

74 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 5.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government support promotional activities undertaken by ASLA and ALIA that demonstrate to the school community the valuable work that teacher librarians are doing in respect of e-learning in their schools, including those that highlight their leadership capacity.

Mandating a teacher librarian in every Australian school

- 3.90 It was suggested to the Committee that there is sufficiently strong evidence linking effective libraries and student achievement to mandate that there be a teacher librarian in each school.⁷⁵
- 3.91 In fact, each state does have its own formula or ratio of teacher librarians to students at the secondary school level. ASLA explained that it varies and there are inconsistencies between the states:
- In one state for the number of 300 students there is one full-time librarian. In another state they say it is for 362. From our experience, we know that 300 – 400 is a manageable number for a full-timer.⁷⁶
- 3.92 ASLA advised that it has been working on developing an appropriate formula that could be used nationally for the primary school level.⁷⁷
- 3.93 NSW is the only state in Australia to date that has a mandated quota allocation that ensures all NSW schools have a teacher librarian, be it full or part-time, according to their formula.
- 3.94 It struck the Committee that the awareness of the potential of teacher librarians' contributions for improved literacy varied greatly between Australian jurisdictions. NSW was very aware of the potential and clearly trying to encourage the use and training of teacher librarians through a quota system and sponsored graduate training. Victoria did not put a submission into the inquiry or appear before the Committee. Tasmania appeared and spoke about language and information literacy being every

75 See AEU Tasmanian Branch, *Submission 122*, p. 7, ALIA, *Submission 332*, p. 24, and Joint Use Libraries Association, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 12 July 2010, p. 11.

76 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 9.

77 ASLA, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 11 February 2011, p. 9.

teacher's responsibility [not just the realm of the teacher librarian], expressed concern at being at an impasse, unclear as to what the future role is for teacher librarians.⁷⁸ The Northern Territory appeared before the Committee and talked about the challenges they face in putting a trained teacher librarian in every one of their schools [many of which are small and remotely located].⁷⁹

- 3.95 Mandating quotas is something that has been mooted in the United States House of Representatives. In October 2009, HR-3928 *The Strengthening Kids' Interest in Learning and Library Act*, or the *SKILLS Act*, was introduced in the United States House of Representatives. The legislation would require local educational agencies that receive school improvement funds to ensure, to the extent feasible, that each of their schools receiving such funds employs at least one state certified school library media specialist. The Bill was referred to the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education but not reported on. The Bill would need to be re-introduced to be re-considered given it was proposed in a previous session of Congress.⁸⁰
- 3.96 The Committee cannot recommend a quota system in each state in the system we currently have in Australia where state education authorities are responsible for staffing matters and principals are responsible for managing their school budgets to best suit their schools' needs.
- 3.97 The Committee heard repeatedly from principals and education authorities that school budgets and/or student numbers often precluded having a full-time or even part-time teacher librarian in their school libraries.
- 3.98 Quotas do not guarantee that teacher librarians will be used solely as teacher librarians. The Committee heard from many NSW teacher librarians that primary school librarians are often required to relieve classroom teachers as part of a RFF teaching arrangement that exists to give teachers preparation and correction time.⁸¹

78 Tasmanian Department of Education, *Committee Hansard*, Hobart, 30 April 2010, pp. 58-59.

79 NT Department of Education, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 5 July 2010, p. 26.

80 Govtrack US, H.R. 3928: SKILLS ACT, 111th Congress, 2009-2010, at <<http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h111-3928>>.

81 N. Jackson, *Submission 131*, p. 4, Ms Margaret Cooper, *Submission 79*, p. 3, and Mr Dennis Granlund, *Submission 335*, p. 3.