



Parliament of Australia
House of Representatives
House Standing Committee on Education and Training

Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian Schools

This submission to this inquiry is submitted by

Cathy Hill
Head of Library & Information Science P-12
St Paul's Grammar School

and supported by

Linda Weeks
High School Teacher Librarian
St Paul's Grammar School

Julie-Ann Thomas
Junior School Teacher Librarian
St Paul's Grammar School

**Parliament of Australia
House of Representatives
House Standing Committee on Education and Training**

Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian Schools

Summary

Research has shown that qualified teacher librarians and qualified library support staff in school libraries *'can lead to higher student achievement regardless of the socioeconomic or educational levels of the adults in the community'* (Lonsdale 2003 p.30).

Teacher librarians as qualified teachers understand curriculum and curriculum development. They work collaboratively with teachers to develop learning programmes for students.

Teacher librarians as qualified librarians and therefore information specialists bring support to staff and students in the acquisition and use of information in its many and varied forms – print, visual and online.

School libraries are technology hubs of a school. Therefore teacher librarians, due to their work environment are continually developing skills in this area. Consequently they provide much support and professional development in the integration of information and communication technologies into school programmes.

Currently, across Australia, there are many discrepancies in the staffing of school libraries within education systems and across all education systems. These discrepancies are also reflected in Budget allocations.

There is a shortage of teacher librarians across Australia. The average age of members of the profession is rising/climbing.

Lonsdale, M (2003) *Impact of School Libraries on Student Achievement: A Review of the Research*, [Report for the Australian School Library Association]. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). Available at <http://www.asla.org.au/research/Australia-review.htm> Accessed 13th April 2010

**Parliament of Australia
House of Representatives
House Standing Committee on Education and Training**

Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian Schools

To inquire into and report on the role, adequacy and resourcing of school libraries and teacher librarians in Australia's public and private schools. Specifically, the committee should focus on:

♦ **the impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities;**

- The recent Building Education Revolution saw money made available to Primary schools for the building of Libraries among other possible school infrastructure. This was indeed wonderful for schools to have the opportunity to have a modern library. There was however a major problem with this provision as it did not include funding to ensure all libraries were staffed by qualified teacher librarians – the stimulus money was providing the buildings but not the personnel to ensure the school community would gain the maximum benefit from this addition to the school infrastructure. Staffing of school libraries needs to include not just a full time qualified teacher librarian but trained library support staff who work with the teacher librarian to assist the whole school community;
- Some of the areas qualified teacher librarians are trained to work with both staff and students include
 - Curriculum support – through the collection of relevant resources for school programmes; in collaboration with classroom teachers in the delivery of information literacy (across all subject areas) and literature programmes;
 - Library management – identification, acquisition and organisation of relevant resources for easy access by both staff and students; development & implementation of a Library budget to support teaching programmes;
 - IT support - as many resources currently use and require access to technology teacher librarians are involved in the integrating of IT into many school programs. Such integration may involve working with staff and students in Internet activities, such as raps, using the Internet to access information, the accessing of online databases, providing staff awareness of the many IT tools for possible use in the classroom.

♦ **the future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy;**

- Significant research, both in Australia and overseas, has identified the benefits to schools of the appointment of a qualified teacher librarian.
 - Hay, L (2005) 'Student Learning through Australian School Libraries. Part 1: A Statistical Analysis of Student Perceptions' in *Synergy*, 3 (2) pp. 17-30. Available at <http://www.slav.schools.net.au/synergy/vol3num2/hay.pdf> accessed 15th April 2010.

... a direct correlation can be made between student achievement and school library programs led by school library professionals... (p.18)

"The information in the school library has helped me workout the questions for the topics I am working on." (p.21)

"Responses acknowledged the important role of the school library in providing students with the intellectual scaffolds necessary to facilitate informed inquiry." (p. 22)

“ . . . school libraries in this study show that a well-resourced facility with an information-based instructional program in place helps student learn more.” (p.23)

Hay, L. (2006) 'Student learning through Australian school libraries Part 2: What students define and value as school library support' in *Synergy*, 4 (2) pp. 27-38. Available at www.slav.schools.net.au/synergy/vol4num2/hay_pt2.pdf Accessed 15th April 2010.

. . . students ranked school library help involving computer and Internet use as the most important form of help in supporting their learning” (p.29)

“The theme of the school library as students’ preferred place to complete project and assignment work resonated in many responses across a number of year levels.” (p.31)

“i asked our librarian if he could explain to me and tell me what my topic is about and where i can find good information on it. he showed me everything i needed. after he told me everything i finished my project really quickly and got at good mark.” (p.31)

“A number of responses recalled assistance given by the teacher-librarian in helping students organise their time and resources effectively . . .” (p.35)

- Lonsdale, M (2003) *Impact of School Libraries on Student Achievement: A Review of the Research*, [Report for the Australian School Library Association]. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). Available at <http://www.asla.org.au/research/Australia-review.htm> Accessed 13th April 2010
“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 staff, resourced and funded can lead to higher student achievement regardless of the socioeconomic or educational levels of the adults in the community.” (p. 30)
- *The Australian School Libraries Research Project*. 2009. Available at <http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/portals/ASLRP/index.php> accessed 15th April 2010. As stated on this website - 'The survey aims to build an accurate snapshot of all school libraries in Australia by gathering useable and ongoing data about collections, resource levels, budgets and personnel.' This data will enable:
 - opportunities for evidence based advocacy for school libraries;
 - the partners to run a comparative study of resourcing in school libraries around the nation based on accurate data; and
 - the partners to investigate the roles of library personnel in schools.'

The reports of this research are available at

Combes, B. (2008). Australian School Libraries Research Project: A snapshot of Australian school libraries, Report 1. *Australian School Library Research Project*, ASLA, ALIA & ECU. Available at <http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/portals/ASLRP/publications.php> accessed 15th April 2010

Combes, B. (2008). Australian School Libraries Research Project: A snapshot of Australian teacher librarians, Report 1. *Australian School Library Research Project*, ASLA, ALIA & ECU. Available at <http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/portals/ASLRP/publications.php> accessed 15th April 2010

- Student Learning through Ohio School Libraries : The Ohio Research Study N.D. <http://www.oelma.org/OhioResearchStudy.htm> accessed 13th April 2010;

- Todd, Ross J., & Kuhlthau, Carol C. and OELMA 2004 *Student Learning Through Ohio School Libraries : The Ohio Research Study Fact Sheet*. Available <http://www.oelma.org/StudentLearning/documents/OELMAResearchStudy2page.pdf> accessed 13th April 2010.;
 - *The Value of school libraries in learning*. 2009 available at <http://www.asla.org.au/research/index.htm> accessed 13th April 2010.
This website from ASLA (Australian School library Association lists links to both Australian and International research highlighting the importance of school libraries in student learning.
- Teacher librarians bring educational qualifications enabling collaboration with teaching staff in the development of curriculum and learning programmes;
 - Teacher librarians, with postgraduate qualifications in Information Science bring the skills of an information specialist to support staff and students in identifying and acquiring relevant resources along with skills in how to use information;
 - Staffing for school libraries has lead to inequities within education systems and between education systems. This staffing applies to the appointment of both qualified teacher librarians and qualified library support staff. The final staffing allocation for school libraries is usually at the discretion of the school principal.
 - Across school libraries in all education systems the level of voluntary assistance by parents amounts to hundreds of hours each school year. Without this assistance many of the services provided by teacher librarians would be delayed or not possible. This assistance needs to be noted and acknowledged.
 - In the 21st century there are still schools, particularly primary schools where the teacher librarian is required to provide the release from face to face teaching (RFF) for class teachers. This disregards the skills the teacher librarian has to offer both the teaching staff and students and isolates the work of the teacher librarian from the skills being covered in the classroom.

♦ **the factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians;**

- Programmes in Education authorities have included the retraining of teachers as teacher librarians. For example NSW Department of Education and Training has the *Teacher Librarian Retraining Program* for teachers who are working in libraries with no library training.
- The number of institutions across Australia training teacher librarians has declined to 4 institutions – Charles Sturt University, NSW; University of South Australia, South Australia; Edith Cowan University, Western Australia; Queensland University of Technology, Queensland
- Teacher librarianship courses are postgraduate courses following an education qualification – it should stay this way to ensure persons training as teacher librarians have classroom experience before entering teacher librarianship;
- As a career path there are currently few opportunities for promotion for teacher librarians. Within the Independent Education sector HS teacher librarians have the opportunity to be a Head of Department but this is dependent on the vision of the school leaders in making such a position available. Within government primary schools to accept a promotion position usually requires the teacher librarian to move out of the Library environment.
- It is very difficult to find qualified teacher librarians – currently there is a shortage – resulting in libraries without qualified staff.

♦ **the role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school librarians;**

- State governments determine staffing levels for government Primary & HS Libraries – however within NSW it is then up to the discretion of the Principal on the final staffing allocation. This has led to discrepancies across schools in terms of the staffing allocation for libraries.
- Teacher librarians, as information specialists develop links with many institutions and organisations. The following cites just some examples of current institutions and organisations providing various levels of support for school libraries. Access to some of these resources will be dependent on a school's library budget allocation
 - ASLA – Australian school Library Association and state associations and ALIA – Australian Library & Information Association have provided advocacy and professional development opportunities for teacher librarians. An important publication collaboratively written by ASLA & ALIA was the publication *Learning for the Future: Developing information services in Australian schools*. This publication provides guidelines for Australian school libraries as outlined by the CMIS School Library Support : Role of the School Library Website - <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/education/cmisis/eval/library/value/val1.htm>
Using the concepts of information and knowledge management, *Learning for the future : developing information services in Australian Schools* provides
 - Guidelines and indicators for developing information and ICT literacy in the school
 - A matrix of Information and ICT literacy
 - A planning structure for ICT implementation
 - An outline of staffing needs and expertise
 - Technical and practical recommendations for acquiring electronic resources;
 - UQL Cyberschool - <http://www.library.uq.edu.au/schools/> supported and developed by the University of Queensland Library provides extensive support for schools, school libraries and students. UQL Cyberschool also assists in the access to online databases for schools – particularly Queensland schools and have extended this assistance through to other states for some databases. There would be many advantages for this model of support to be extended nationwide;
 - While State Departments of Education have provided support for school libraries for many years such support has been declining. Current support is currently through online support such as The NSW Department of Education and Training - School Libraries and Information Literacy site - <http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/schoollibraries/index.htm> which provides support to schools and the Library and Information Literacy team, a part of the Curriculum K-12 Directorate publishes the valuable journal *SCAN*. The Western Australian Department of Education Curriculum Materials Information Services (CMIS) website - <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/education/cmisis/> provides support for school libraries;
 - Charles Sturt University has hosted the list serve OZTL_NET enabling teacher librarians to gain support from across the nation and overcome the isolation felt from being the sole teacher librarian in a school;
 - The National Library of Australia has formed the Electronic Resources Australia (ERA) scheme to provide access to online resources at reduced rates not just for schools but other library systems;

- The State Libraries of each state offer programs for students - e.g. Infocus - <http://www.infocus.sl.nsw.gov.au/res/home.cfm> through the NSW State Library – providing assistance to students and to schools. This service is currently being reviewed.
- One area for development is linking schools with university libraries – there are some programmes available but extension of these would benefit both parties – the schools and the universities;
- SCIS – Schools’ Cataloguing Information Service has now been operating for over 25 years and proved to be of major benefit to school libraries in dealing with the cataloguing process;
- Across Australia joint use school-community libraries have been developed – this is where a school library has partnered with a local public library to serve a community. An example in NSW is the Minto Community Library - *Minto Branch is a community library. It is both a branch of the Campbelltown City Library and the school library for Sarah Redfern High School, Sarah Redfern Primary School and Passfield Park Special School. This dual role gives Minto a unique character and the diversity of its resources benefit both student and public library patrons. (Minto Community Library. 2010. Available <http://www.campbelltown.nsw.gov.au/default.asp?iNavCatID=121&iSubCatID=423> accessed 15th April 2010.);*
- In all of the above organisations and/or institutions partnering with school libraries there are many instances where work is done voluntarily or on limited budgets;
- To access these facilities and resources it is usually the teacher librarian who has access to and knowledge of specialised resources;

♦ **the impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarians**

Libraries and School Libraries, in the 21st century are technology hubs. Therefore teacher librarians, due to their work environment are continually developing skills in technology and through this are able to provide

- support and professional development training for staff in the integration of digital technologies into curriculum
- assistance with policy development of acceptable and appropriate use of digital resources and technologies
- support and professional development training for both staff and students in the access of online databases

Cathy Hill
Head of Library & Information Science P-12
St Paul’s Grammar School
Locked Bag 8016
PENRITH NSW

15th April 2010