Submission to:

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training

Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools

Provided by:
Ms Jan Barnett MAppSc, BEd, AALIA
Teacher librarian
St Patrick's Senior College
Mackay Queensland
16 April 2010.

Summary

Now that the Federal Government has recognised the importance of **school libraries** through its *Building Education Revolution* and other initiatives, it is equally important to promote the educational value of **teacher librarians** in Australia. Students in 21st century Australia deserve to have dynamic qualified **teacher librarians** in well resourced **school libraries** in every school in Australia. By ensuring that every school has a library which is well resourced, with ongoing funding and staffed by appropriately qualified **teacher librarians** and other qualified **school library** staff, student learning will be optimised.

We must recognise the vital role of qualified **teacher librarians** and well resourced **school libraries**, in developing literacy, lifelong learning, information literacy, and digital literacy skills. Ongoing adequate funding together with educational and professional development opportunities is essential to achieve the best educational and social outcomes for young 21st century Australians.

Contact details:

Ms Jan Barnett
Teacher librarian
St Patrick's Senior College
PO Box 252,
Mackay
Queensland 4740

Submission to Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools
J. Barnett Mackay Qld
16 April 2010.

Introduction

It is commendable that the Federal Government has recognised the importance of **school libraries** and **teacher librarians** by holding this parliamentary inquiry. The provision of **school library** buildings and the refurbishment of some **school libraries** under the Building Education Revolution is also to be commended. However, without having qualified **teacher librarians** in school to work with teachers and students to improve literacy, the infrastructure alone is of little use.

The terms **teacher librarian, school librarian** and **librarian** are not interchangeable terms as they have been used in the *terms of reference* for this Inquiry.

A **Teacher librarian –** is a dual qualified experienced teacher with postgraduate qualifications in **teacher librarian**ship. This person holds recognised teaching qualifications and librarianship qualifications (eligibility for membership of the *Australian Library and Information Association*). This person has extensive knowledge of curriculum, teaching methodology and learning styles which is matched with extensive knowledge of resource management, information services, personnel management and information access. **Teacher librarians** work in collaboration with teachers to ensure that students have curriculum specific resources and learning strategies which ensure that students can successfully undertake their studies. **Teacher librarians** are curriculum leaders, information specialists and information services managers. To provide effective, dynamic **school libraries**, **teacher librarians** should be supported by qualified support staff: including other qualified **teacher librarians**, qualified library technicians, qualified library assistants, qualified audio visual assistants and qualified IT support.

Australian **teacher librarians** are viewed by their overseas colleagues to be international leaders in their field. This has been recognised on many occasions by prestigious awards, for example from the *International School Library Association*.

School librarian or librarian – is a qualified librarian with eligibility for membership of the *Australian Library and Information Association* and no teaching qualifications who works in a **school library** with students (a common position in UK schools).

Background

St Patrick's Senior College is a Catholic co-educational school for years 11 and 12 with 537 students. The College holds a unique position in Queensland, as one of the few senior colleges in the state. It caters for a wide variety of students (academic, mature age, vocational) and offers them a new start for the final years of their school education. Students come from our main feeder school (Mercy College Mackay - years 8-10 co-educational) plus all other schools in the district. Students at the College are offered 48 OP (matriculation) and non-OP (vocational) subjects. All year 11 students are new to the College each year. We have a highly qualified and experienced teaching staff of 42 with 23 school support staff.

Our library is staffed by an experienced (34 years), highly qualified **teacher librarian** and two (2) term time library aides each with Certificate IV in Library and Information Studies. The library has an extensive print, audio visual and digital collection which reflects the learning and teaching styles of the College population. The technology to support the collection is available for loan by all students and staff. The library is available to the College community from 7:30 to 4:00 each day and is used

as a study hall on Saturdays in term time. The library maintains a digital presence through its catalogue and in the near future a Library wiki.

The **teacher librarian** has established strong local, regional, state and national networks and has held executive positions with the peak bodies for **school libraries** at State and National levels: the *School Library Association of Queensland* and the *Australian School Library Association*. Her involvement at these levels is ongoing.

1. The impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities

- **Building Education Revolution (Federal)**
  - o **School library** buildings have been provided to schools and this will have some positive impacts on student learning. However without ensuring that there are qualified teacher librarians available in the school libraries optimal learning and literacy education will not follow. The building program was not related to the characteristics of the school population including the teaching and learning styles used.
  - o Refurbishment of secondary **school libraries** was not available to all secondary schools. Again the grants were not related to curriculum needs, learning and teaching styles of school population, the diversity of the student body and the IT implications were not emphasised.
- **Digital revolution (Federal)**
  - o The impact of technology particularly 1:1 student owned laptops on **school library** infrastructure and staff time must be considered. At the same time qualified IT staff need to be in place to provide support for the infrastructure which is required to cope with the influx of technology and student requirements.
  - o Impact on curriculum needs, learning and teaching styles of school population, diversity of student body was not taken into account.
  - o Having a laptop for every student does not mean that they have access to resources. Students only have access to quality digital resources when they are matched to the curriculum and when students have the skills to use the resources (ICTs). These skills are best taught in collaboration between the teacher and the **teacher librarian**. The provision of the digital resources is the role of a qualified **teacher librarian**.
- **National curriculum ACARA (Federal)**
  - o The major focus on literacy (reading print resources, primary resources) in the curriculum documents necessitates that all students are exposed to and have access to a wide range of resources both analogue (print, audio visual) and digital. This requires a major investment in resources to ensure that they are relevant, age and subject appropriate and accessible to students.
  - o The national curriculum documents emphasise the need for primary documents. The documents are not necessarily available by simply "googling"[sic]. These documents are more often found in the **school library**.
  - o Resourcing of schools requires budgetary and personnel investment in resources particularly with respect to the **school library**.
- **Grade 7 into secondary (state – Qld)**
  - o Although this does not appear to impact on a senior secondary school, it may have implications in the future for the type of learning these students will develop. More resourcing will be required at a variety of levels to cater for the new students entering secondary schools in Queensland. It is not just a matter of teachers and classrooms but also appropriate curriculum and reading resources.
- **My school website (Federal)**
  - o To improve the usefulness of the *MySchool* website consideration must be given to including data on the school's library which is central to successful student learning outcomes. The data must include: collection size, type and actual staffing by appropriately qualified **teacher librarians** and qualified library support staff.

- **Indigenous education programs (Federal)**
  - These programs require schools to demonstrate measurable literacy improvement. The programs need to take note of the positive impact that well resourced **school libraries** staffed by qualified **teacher librarians** have in literacy programs.
- **NAPLAN (Federal)**
  - **School libraries** must include an increased variety of resources which demonstrate a variety of genres and textual styles so that students are familiar with them. This requires recurrent funding.
  - Provision of a variety of resources which cater to all levels of literacy in the student population must be available in the **school library**.
  - Provision of a wide variety of written texts which demonstrate a variety of literacy and numeracy skills must be available to all students in the **school library** collection.

2. The future potential of school libraries and librarians [sic] to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy;

Well resourced and well funded **school libraries** staffed with qualified **teacher librarians** supported by a variety of qualified **school library** staff are essential to Australian students' education in the 21st century.

Research evidence from Australia and overseas (Curry, et al 2000, *School libraries work* 2008) proves that students attain higher levels of achievement when there is an adequately resourced **school library** staffed by at least one qualified **teacher librarian**. For example in the Australian *Lonsdale report*

> 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.
> Lonsdale, M 2003.

Teacher librarians are essential in schools to teach information and digital literacy skills in schools. The successful implementation and use of the national broadband network depends upon Australians having these skills. The development of information literacy skills - seeking, evaluating, using and creating information effectively to achieve educational personal, social, occupational and spiritual goals is essential to Australia's long-term economic development.

> The fusion of learning, libraries and literacies is creating dynamic, if not confronting challenges for teacher-librarians, teachers and administrators, particularly when set against the backdrop of learning and information environments that are complex and fluid, connective and interactive, and ones no longer constrained by time and space.
> Todd, Ross 2001

- **Teacher librarians have knowledge of a variety of literacies which include, but are not limited to:**
  - Print – reading for information, reading for leisure, lifelong learning

- o Information literacy – knowing how to locate, analyse, evaluate and subsequently use quality information.
- o ICTs (Information communication Technology) – integrating these skills across the curriculum with students at the appropriate level
- o Digital – knowledge of internet, databases, Web 2.0 technologies, communication, digital citizenship, social networking, software
- o Visual – pictures, films, TV, media
- o Technical – how to use technology and software to fulfil assessment tasks
- o life skills – forms, applications,
- o financial – tax, banking
- o subject specific
- o Learning opportunities for gifted students
- o Learning opportunities for the less abled students
- o NAPLAN – literacy and numeracy skills
- o Multiple intelligences
- o Fostering relationships with other **teacher librarians** and other non **school libraries** (local networks, community, university, TAFE, virtual networks)
- o Strengthening links within the school community:
  - Access to resources (analogue and digital)
  - Education opportunities for parents on curriculum related resources
  - Use of Web 2,0 technology e.g. website for **school libraries**
  - Liaising with community groups to improve educational outcomes for students (meetings, for a, information sessions)
- o Providing professional learning opportunities for teachers within the school in a variety of the above literacies.
- o Providing learning opportunities for all students with their teachers in the above literacies.
- **Quality resources**
  - o Provision of adequate ongoing funding to ensure that all **school libraries** provide quality resources for all students that reflect a variety of reading levels and learning styles.
- There is a need to develop nationally recognised standards for a variety of student literacies.

3. The factors influencing recruitment and development of school [sic] librarians;

- **Staffing**
  - o The benchmark document for Australian **school libraries** was published in 2001. It is currently being revised and new documentation is due out in the near future. *Learning for the future* 2001, recommended staffing levels in 2001 have not yet been met in most schools in 2010 as was demonstrated in the 2008 research report undertaken by staff from Edith Cowan University.
  - o The role of teaching for a **teacher librarian** is not teaching a class but working collaboratively with all subject and class teachers in a school. This is often misunderstood by school administrations who use **teacher librarians** to "plug the gaps" in their staffing formulas.
  - o The staffing formulas used by Queensland regional Catholic Diocesan offices and Education Queensland are inadequate for both primary and secondary schools.

Students are being educationally disadvantaged ([Curry et al] 2000; [Hay, Lyn] 2005, *School libraries work* 2008) by not having access to well resourced school libraries staffed by qualified teacher librarians and library staff. **School libraries** are operating on the barest minimum of staffing and consequently students are not being provided with optimal library services.

- o **Teacher librarians** need support services in all states for **school libraries** (In Queensland Library and Resource Services was disbanded/subsumed in 1980s). **Teacher librarians** are often professionally isolated within a school and must rely on their professional (personal and digital) networks for support. If support services were reinstated the **teacher librarian**ship community would be more invigorated and more dynamic.
- o **School libraries** need to be staffed by qualified **teacher librarians** with other qualified **school library** staff – professional people assets need to match the demands of a constantly evolving curriculum.
- o If **teacher librarians**' qualifications were recognised of at a national level then the role would be enhanced.

- **Professional development for current teacher librarians**
  - o The professional development available for **teacher librarians** is provided by their professional associations and occasionally by state education authorities.
  - o The provision of **school library** support services at a state and regional level for **teacher librarians** in **school libraries** would enhance the professional development opportunities.
  - o There is no financial acknowledgement of the extra study required to work at Masters level to become a **teacher librarian**.
  - o Recognition needs to be given to regional **teacher librarians** who need to travel long distances to access in-service opportunities.

- **Qualifications for new teacher librarians**
  - o Courses in **teacher librarian**ship need to be nationally recognised as essential qualifications for **teacher librarians**
  - o Qualifications are essential for prospective **teacher librarians** with either:
    - ▪ Post graduate qualification for experienced teachers with 5 or more years experience (makes qualifying difficult as 1 year full time or 3 years part time study is required)
    - ▪ Pre-service degree course four years study

4. The role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school [sic] librarians;

- **National initiatives required:**
  - o Recognise the national body for **school libraries** in Australia the *Australian School Library Association* (ASLA) as the peak organisation.
  - o Establish a liaison office with ASLA
  - o Develop national **school library** standards for staffing.
  - o Develop national standards for **school library** resourcing.
  - o Develop national standards for **school library** infrastructure.
  - o Recognise at national level the professional status of **teacher librarians** (please note this term which is vital in the role description of the **teacher librarian**) to staff all **school libraries** in Australia

- o Funding provided so that all employing authorities must staff **school libraries** with qualified **teacher librarians** and qualified library support staff.
- o Funding of resources for **school libraries** be raised at a national level so that existing collections can be developed and enhanced so that 21st century students can learn appropriately.
- o Recognise the essential role of the **teacher librarian** in all curriculum documents.
- o Maintenance and development of national organisations such as SCIS and Education Australia who provide specific support services to **school libraries** and **teacher librarians** nationally.

- **State initiatives required:**
    - o Need for support services in all states/territories for **school libraries** for both government and non government schools
    - o Recognise the *School Library Association of Queensland* at the Queensland level as a point of contact and professional lobby group.

- **Institutional partnerships**
  Without the support of the University of Queensland Library's [Cyberschool](), schools such as St Patrick's Senior College Mackay would not be able to access the wide range of electronic databases that our students require in their senior years. This ensures that the students are not disadvantaged by being distant from resources available to students in south east Queensland and the south eastern corner of Australia.
- **Parent associations** encouraged to liaise at the national, state and local levels with **school library** associations to foster enhanced understanding of the positive impact on student learning that well resourced **school libraries** and **teacher librarians** have on student learning.

5. The impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarians [sic].

The digital collection is only one aspect of the school library collection. It both supplements and extends the collection when the resources are professionally selected. As the digital revolution continues, it is imperative that we have more qualified staff in **school libraries** to match new digital technologies and resources to student learning. At the same time teachers rely on **teacher librarians** to make the links between the digital technologies and resources and their teaching styles. **Teacher librarians** lead students and teachers into the most appropriate application of the constantly evolving digital technologies.

- Recognition of the roles of both analogue (print, audio visual) and digital resources in school education.
- Need for financial support for **school libraries** to access Australian curriculum specific electronic resources (e-resources).
- Funding provided for the development of Australian curriculum specific electronic resources (e-resources).
- Best practice of new technologies requires professional in-service for **teacher librarians** and as a result teachers and the teaching of students in the application of these e-resources to their learning needs and abilities.

- Digital technologies allow students to access resources at any time and in any place. This requires that the **teacher librarian** is highly skilled and is supported by IT staff. Digital resources enhance the analogue resources in a **school library** and require considerable time input and thus higher staffing levels to ensure that the school library can be accessed anytime and anywhere.
- Students expect to use digital resources in their learning and **teacher librarians** provide the link between the learner and the most appropriate resource (whether it be analogue or digital) at that student's level.

Submission to Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools
J. Barnett Mackay Qld
16 April 2010.

Recommendations:

- Recognise the national body the *Australian School library Association* (ASLA) as the peak organisation on **school libraries**.
- Establish a liaison office with ASLA.
- Develop national **school library standards** for staffing.
- Develop national standards for **school library resourcing**.
- Develop national standards for **school library infrastructure**.
- Recognise at national level the **professional status of teacher librarians** (please note this term which is vital in the role description of the **teacher librarian**) to staff all **school libraries** in Australia
- Ongoing funding provided so that all employing authorities must staff **school libraries** with qualified **teacher librarians** and qualified library support staff.
- Funding of resources for **school libraries** is raised at a national level so that existing collections can be developed and enhanced so that 21st century students can learn appropriately.
- Equitable and consistent resourcing of technology for all schools in Australia to allow for greater access to technology, digital learning tools and print resources.
- Recognise the essential role of the **teacher librarian** in all curriculum documents.

- Maintenance and development of national organisations such as SCIS and Education Australia who provide specific support services to **school libraries** and **teacher librarians** nationally.
-

Submission to Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools
J. Barnett Mackay Qld
16 April 2010.

References:

Australian School Library Association 2010, viewed 15 April 2010, <http://www.asla.org.au>

'The Australian School Libraries Research Project' 2008, *Australian School Library Association,* Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) and Edith Cowan University (ECU), viewed 15 April 2010, <http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/portals/ASLRP/publications.php>

'Awards' 2010, *International School Library Association*, viewed 15 April 2010, <http://www.iasl-online.org/awards/>

Curry Lance, K, Hamilton-Pennell, C & Rodney, M 2000, *How school librarians help kids achieve standards: the second Colorado study,* viewed 15 April 2010, <http://www.lrs.org/documents/lmcstudies/CO/execsumm.pdf>

Hay, Lyn 2005, 'Student learning through Australian school libraries Part 1: A statistical analysis of student perceptions', *School Library Association of Victoria,* viewed 15 April 2010, <http://www.slav.schools.net.au/synergy/vol3num2/hay.pdf>

Learning for the future: developing information services in schools 2001, 2nd edn, Curriculum Corporation, Carlton

Lonsdale, M 2003, *Impact of school libraries on student achievement: a review of the research, report for the Australian School Library Association*, ACER, Camberwell, Vic., p. 27. Available <http://www.asla.org.au/research/Australia-review.htm>

School libraries work 2008, Scholastic Library Publishing, viewed 15 April 2010, <http://www2.scholastic.com/content/collateral_resources/pdf/s/slw3_2008.pdf>

School Library Association of Queensland, 2010, viewed 15 April 2010, <http://www.slaq.org.au >

Todd, Ross 2001, 'Keynote paper: Virtual conference session', *IASL conference 2001*, International School Library Association, viewed 15 April 2010, <http://www.iasl-slo.org/virtualpaper2001.html>

Todd, Ross & Kuhlthau, Carol 2003, *Student learning through Ohio School Libraries,* viewed 15 April 2010, <http://www.oelma.org/studentlearning/default.asp>

University of Queensland Library Cyberschool 2010, University of Queensland, viewed 14 April 2010, <http://www.library.uq.edu.au/schools/>

Submission to Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools
J. Barnett Mackay Qld
16 April 2010.