Inquiry into Teacher Education
Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training

Submission

Council of Australian State Libraries
Ms Anne-Marie Schwirtlich, Chair
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Information Literacy

Introduction
The Council of Australian State Libraries (CASL) is the peak body representing the National, State and Territory Libraries throughout Australia. These libraries are an essential resource for the education sector in Australia, providing library services to students and teachers at all educational levels, as well as supporting the learning and information needs of the community outside the formal education system.

More than 50% of the clients of the National, State and Territory Libraries are students, equating to more than 3 million visits annually. If Public Libraries are included, this figure rises to more than 30 million visits annually across Australia.

Libraries are in the front-line in being able to assess the effectiveness of the information literacy skills of students. These information literacy skills, including proficiency in information seeking, interpretation, analysis and evaluation, impact directly on the ability of students to learn, to innovate and to fulfil their potential.

This Inquiry into Teacher Education is an opportunity to recognise the importance of increasing the information literacy of teachers to enable them to develop and learn professionally, as well as to pass on these skills to students.

Information Literacy
The need for information literacy is increasing with the exponential growth in information and the changing methods of access. Increasingly information is unfiltered, gathered through search engines that trawl enormous numbers of web pages from a vast array of sources. This information must be analysed for its authenticity, validity and reliability before it can begin to be sorted, evaluated or understood.

The Council of Australian State Libraries and the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), endorse the Information Literacy Standards adopted by the Council of Australian University Libraries (CAUL) in 2001. These standards were, in turn, developed from the US Information Literacy Standards for Higher Education, January 2000.

As defined in the CAUL Information Literacy Standards, 2001, "an information literate person has learned how to learn, and is able to:

- Recognise a need for information
- Determine the extent of information needed
- Access the needed information efficiently
- Evaluate the information and its sources
- Incorporate selected information into their knowledge base
- Use information effectively to accomplish a purpose
- Understand economic, legal, social and cultural issues in the use of information
- Access and use information ethically and legally
- Classify, store, manipulate and redraft information collected and generated
- Recognise information literacy as a prerequisite for lifelong learning"

This definition was refined into seven information literacy standards by CAUL in 2001 and is now in a second edition as *Australian and New Zealand Information Literacy Framework: principles, standards and practice, 2004, edited by Alan Bundy*. This framework provides an analysis of the principles as well as an extended definition of information literacy, including examples and outcomes. The standards can be used as a mechanism for assessing an individual's information literacy and recognising areas where further development is required. They should be incorporated into the training for all teachers, irrespective of the discipline and age group they intend to teach.

Australian and New Zealand Information Literacy Framework: principles, standards and practice, 2004 is available at:

http://www.caul.edu.au/info-literacy/InfoLiteracyFramework.pdf

Libraries and the Education Sector
Libraries complement formal educational services and are a vital component in our educational and cultural infrastructure. They are predicated on principles of equity, access and social justice, across socio-economic and rural, regional and metropolitan divisions. They provide specialised support to disadvantaged groups in the community, including people from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds and those with disabilities that constrain their access to information. The CASL Libraries, in collaboration with the public library network, provide information through more than 1,625 service points across Australia.

Libraries have a culture of implementing new technology and developing new services for their clients to meet changing demands. As an example, the major infrastructure database that allows access to the Distributed National Collection of library materials is the Kinetica Database (www.nla.gov.au/kinetica) managed by the National Library of Australia. Kinetica holds the records of over 33 million documentary items in 1,100 libraries across Australia, providing the

backbone for research, inter-library loan and cataloguing services. There are also a range of digitisation projects and collaborative purchasing arrangements for subscription-based online information in place to maximise the resources available to library clients, wherever they are based.

While he was Federal Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Dr David Kemp said, "Libraries are a key resource in the realisation of lifelong learning. As we enter the 21st century, it is becoming more and more necessary for individuals to acquire and analyse information from a variety of sources as they seek to update their skills and enlarge their horizons. Libraries are a valuable instrument of democratisation, bringing within reach of Australians from all backgrounds not only the vast resources of the printed word but also newly available electronic channels of information. Today more than ever libraries play an indispensable role in making Australia a 'learning society'." (www.alia.org.au)

CASL Library Services for Teachers and Students
All CASL Libraries provide introductory orientation tours of their collections and services for school students. Some libraries, like the State Library of Victoria, concentrate their efforts on tours and workshops for lower secondary students building a base of understanding of the library system and introducing them to the wealth of resources available. Others, like the State Library of New South Wales, have targeted upper secondary students and run hands-on workshops teaching basic research skills, introducing major online databases and developing search strategies. Tailored help sheets, resource guides and pathfinders are available in the libraries and via library websites. Talks, workshops and presentations are also provided 'on demand' by many libraries on requested subjects, collections or to fit with curriculum requirements.

Professional development workshops are also conducted for teachers, demonstrating what is available in their State or Territory library for them and for their students, and discussing issues in information literacy. With changes to the school curricula over the past 10 years, teachers have encouraged students to pursue primary sources in their research because of their authenticity and to allow original interpretation. This strategy has had an impact on CASL Libraries that have heritage collections, influencing the priorities for digitisation of images and historical documents to include areas covered in the curricula.

CASL Libraries have developed relationships with schools to provide tailored document delivery services, usually concentrating on journal and newspaper articles for upper secondary students. These services are particularly crucial for schools in rural and remote areas. As an example, the State Library of New South Wales runs the Infocus service (www.sl.nsw.gov.au/infocus) which gives access to resources selected to support the Year 11 and Year 12 curriculum.

The Council of Australian State Libraries also supports local and state-wide partnerships and collaborations between libraries and the education sector. A register of current collaborative projects is at http://www.casl.org.au/projects, detailing more than 70 partnerships and projects nationwide.

Recommendation

CASL Libraries provide major infrastructure support for the Education Sector, working with teachers and students as they access information and learn to use it effectively. Information literacy is the crucial skill required to effectively evaluate, interpret and apply information. It is the prerequisite to success at all educational levels: in formal education; in self-directed lifelong learning; in original research; and in innovation.

CASL recommends that information literacy be explicitly addressed in the curricula for teacher training and implemented through mechanisms such as *Australian and New Zealand Information Literacy Framework.*

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