

A well resourced library managed by a skilled teacher librarian is a basic requirement for schools and the impact of such a resource on the school literacy culture, classroom practises and options, as well as individual literacy learners is immeasurable.

The additional layers of learning opportunities provided by a skilled librarian can ensure that schools fully cater for the range of learners, from the most timid beginner, through to the most highly able and sophisticated reader.

The unique skills of trained teacher librarians help connect children with appropriate texts and then teach them the skills to gain the maximum learning and enjoyment from their encounters. Such positive literary experiences also provide a strong equity outcome as more reluctant literacy learners view the world of the written word as being accessible to them, this in turn encourages them to work with texts more readily and see themselves as able to engage constructively in communicating.

The benefits to schools of specialist teacher librarians include access to the range of enrichment activities that are beyond the planning capacity of busy classroom teachers. With such a clear focus on developing basic literacy skills, schools benefit from the perspective of a teacher librarian to add value by providing the extension opportunities (national and state competitions, author visits, celebrations, etc) to challenge students and enable them to confirm and transfer skills as well as enjoy connecting with the broader literacy world of publishers, authors, illustrators etc.

Teacher librarians can also be charged with ensuring that schools keep pace with the legal requirements associated with copyright and information technology. This role fits closely with the area of expertise of teacher librarians who can provide professional learning to colleagues, liaise with families, monitor the skill development of students, and oversee the processes used within schools.

As the collection managers within schools, teacher librarians oversee the acquisition, maintenance and circulation of a vast number of resources, many housed in separate locations according to need. This provides an overview of expenditure that ensures efficiencies, avoiding unnecessary duplication, timely maintenance and currency to meet curriculum needs.

The provision of BER funding for libraries is an extremely positive step for literacy learning, however, it can only be fully utilized if complemented by the provision of specifically trained expert teacher librarians. The impact of these professionals should not be underestimated and their direct connection to the improved literacy learning outcomes of all students undervalued.