



**Australian Education Union  
Submission  
to the  
House of Representatives Standing Committee On  
Education and Training**

**Inquiry Into  
School Libraries and Teacher Librarians in  
Australian Schools**

**April 2010**

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**CONTENTS**

**Page No.**

INTRODUCTION..... 3

INQUIRY TERMS OF REFERENCE ..... 3

1. The impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities .. 3

2. The future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy ..... 7

3. The factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians..... 9

4. The role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school librarians ..... 9

5. The impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarians ..... 10

CONCLUSION ..... 11

APPENDIX 1 ..... 13

APPENDIX 2 ..... 17

## INTRODUCTION

The Australian Education Union (AEU) represents 180,000 teachers and educators in the primary, secondary, TAFE and early childhood sectors throughout Australia.

Teacher librarians make a significant contribution to school communities and questions around their roles, staffing and funding warrant significant attention.

The inclusion of new libraries as a key element of the Rudd Government's *Building the Education Revolution* schools' infrastructure funding program is a recognition of the vital importance of school libraries to school communities.

In the words of the Prime Minister and Federal Minister for Education, Julia Gillard:

*The construction of 21<sup>st</sup> century libraries is the first priority for 'Primary Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' ... These buildings will provide students, teachers and the wider school community with access to a range of high quality resources, information and cutting edge tools to support learning and improve the quality and diversity of learning environments.<sup>1</sup>*

Despite this recognition unfortunately it remains the case that there is a crisis with regard to school libraries and teacher librarians in Australia.

The AEU welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this Inquiry.

## INQUIRY TERMS OF REFERENCE

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

Almost all Australian schools have a school library, and school libraries and teacher librarians make a significant contribution to school communities and student learning outcomes. But key findings from recent research reports and surveys show that over time budget constraints and a failure to adequately staff school libraries have undermined the capacity and quality of library services provided by schools. Many teacher librarians are frustrated by what they see as a lack of understanding of their educative role on the part of administrators, policy makers and governments.

Separate submissions from a number of Branches and Associated Bodies of the Australian Education Union provide specific state/territory information about these developments but in general it is clear that changing funding and staffing policies and practices have seen the erosion of library staffing, resources, services, equipment and facilities.

The following summary of preliminary findings from the 2008 Australian School Library Research Project [ASLRP], an initiative of the Australian School Library Association [ASLA], the Australian Library and Information Association [ALIA] and Edith Cowan University [ECU] highlights these issues.

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<sup>1</sup> Julia Gillard, *Building the Education Revolution: Primary Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. P21 Round Two Factsheet*. Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. [www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Building the Education Revolution/Documents/P21%20Round%20Two%20Factsheet.rtf](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Building%20the%20Education%20Revolution/Documents/P21%20Round%20Two%20Factsheet.rtf)

- **Age of Library facilities**

- 44% of all school libraries in this survey are older than 20 years, with a further 11% between 15 and 20 years old.
- Few libraries reported recent refurbishment (8.5%) or new facilities (5.5%).
- NSW reported the highest number of older facilities, but this was high for all states except the ACT.
- Government schools had the highest number (10% more) of buildings older than 20 years.
- The independent Schools sector reported more new buildings and facilities less than five years old.
- 49 libraries were housed in classrooms or temporary facilities.
- Most school libraries were either a dedicated building (QLD and WA) or part of a building (TAS, VIC and ACT).

- **Space seating and ICTs**

- 58% of school libraries have less than the recommended space for seating (<12%).
- Another 13% seat only 12% of their school population.
- Government and Anglican schools have the least amount of seating available and WA schools the worst in the ASLRP dataset.
- 67.5% of all schools do not have the recommended space for ICTs (<14%) with a further 7% allowing 14%.
- SA and VIC are the worst states for ICT space.
- Space for ICT is reasonably comparable across school sectors.

- **Annual Library Budget**

- 12.5% of all schools reported an annual budget of less than \$1000. A further 16.5% reported an annual budget of less than \$5000. Nearly a third of all school libraries received less than \$5000 to provide curriculum, recreational reading and access to virtual and electronic resources.
- Across the whole survey group 45.123% of schools received less than \$10,000 as their annual budget.
- Few libraries reported budgets over \$50,000 (8.296%) and these tended to be the large independent schools.
- Independent schools fared much better than government schools. 54% of government schools reported an annual budget of less than \$5000.
- Subscriptions to electronic database resources are few and depend on the school's capacity to pay rather than central sector provision. Independent schools provided these resources more often than government schools.

- **Professional Staff**

- The Independent Schools sector, particularly Anglican schools, reported much higher levels of professional staff than the government schools.
- In total, over 50% of schools in this survey had either no professional staff or less than one FTE working in their school library.
- Tasmania, Western Australia and Victoria reported lower numbers of TLs employed, but higher numbers of para-professional staff (Library Technicians) (Tasmania and Victoria) and Library Officers (Western Australia).

- **TLs as Leaders**

- 53% of the survey group indicated they were not leaders in their schools.

- Tls from Western Australia, Victoria and Queensland were more likely to feel they were leaders than in other states.
- Tls in government schools scored much lower than the Independent Schools sector.
- Of the participants in the survey, 85.152% (585) indicated they were in charge of the library or the library coordinator.
- Since only 71.179% of the survey group are Tls, this means that there are some school libraries that are being managed by either librarians, para-professional or non-professional staff.
- Of the whole survey group over 60% indicated they teach classes in the library.<sup>2</sup>

Across the country, teacher librarians report that it is much cheaper to replace a qualified teacher librarian with a library aide or technician and there is ample evidence of what award-winning educator and teacher librarian Sue Spence calls a ‘make do –and–mend’ approach, characterised by “put[ting] someone, anyone, in the library just to keep it functional. Even where there is a qualified teacher librarian there may be little support staff available, so the teacher librarian is required to take on an SSO [school assistant/teacher aide] role (e.g. processing and circulating resources) at the expense of their teaching role.”<sup>3</sup>

*We used to have dedicated library aides and regional library advisers to support these schools with a set budget for resources. All gone. Library budgets in small schools today are so small or non-existent it is impossible to maintain a collection that will entice young readers even if they had the staff to select and manage the resources.*<sup>4</sup>

*In the Northern Territory, Tls are very rare ....It is up to the principals as to how the staffing allocation is used –with the result that most schools have no TL and an untrained office person in the library.*<sup>5</sup>

*Staffing levels [in Victoria] have deteriorated over the years. When I arrived at the school 20 years ago there were 960 students, 3.4 Tls and one library tech, which increased to 1.5 when student numbers reached 1,000. Now with 1,200 students, there is one TL and 0.6 library techs. We are providing more services and people expect more of us with fewer staff. Our budget has decreased dramatically because the money is being spent on computers. ‘Libraries are not important’ is the view of the principal.*<sup>6</sup>

Devolution of aspects of decision making and financial management to the local level means that funding for school libraries relies on the resource allocation priorities established at the local level, which might or might not place a high priority on the need for a well-staffed library system. It is now commonplace to see schools ‘cashing out’ teacher librarian positions and choosing to use teachers without library qualifications or administrative staff to run libraries. This has led to marked differences between schools where library funding and staffing is as the discretion of the individual school and there are competing budgetary demands within schools, as the above anecdotes reveal.

*Studies conducted in Canada and the USA have identified this marginalisation of specialists – cutting back of specialist areas to prioritise other areas – as a particular problem in devolved education systems. Their research concluded that there were no separate equity measures*

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<sup>2</sup> Combes, B. (2008). Australian School Libraries Research Project: A snapshot of Australian school libraries, Report 1. *Australian School Library Research Project*, ASLA, ALIA & ECU. Retrieved from <http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/portals/ASLRP/publications.php>

<sup>3</sup> Sue Spence, ‘Oh , where is a teacher librarian when you really need one’, <http://slasa.asn.au/Advocacy/docs/aeuarticle.pdf> accessed April 7, 2010

<sup>4</sup> The Courier-Mail, *Libraries at risk*, Tuesday March 30, 2010

<sup>5</sup> The Courier-Mail, *Libraries at risk*, Tuesday March 30, 2010

<sup>6</sup> The Courier-Mail, *Libraries at risk*, Tuesday March 30, 2010

*existed, school counsellors and teacher librarians generally lose out to classroom teachers who are in the majority.*<sup>7</sup>

A recent joint review by the ACT Department of Education and Training and the AEU ACT Branch (November 2008) looked extensively at the evident decline in current employment of qualified teacher librarians in ACT government schools. A survey was undertaken of current staffing patterns for ACT government schools. The information provided by the principals who were surveyed showed:

- A lack of teacher staff resources to provide any qualified teacher librarian service in primary and early childhood schools where, typically, teacher staff resources are insufficient to provide a range of services, so that teacher librarian positions compete for points against other specialist teaching positions such as music and languages.
- Limited library services in early childhood schools, provided by school assistants, none of whom are full time.
- Approximately 25% of schools have a full time qualified teacher librarian in the primary sector.
- Almost 50% of primary schools do not have a qualified teacher librarian, although most have a teacher providing access to library resources for some of the time.
- A number of schools do not have any teacher employed to provide library services.<sup>8</sup>

The reasons given by principals for not having a qualified teacher librarian included:

- the unavailability of qualified teacher librarians;
- the need to 'top up' teacher librarian allocation with a teacher;
- insufficient staffing points to cover a librarian within current staffing arrangements/entitlements /points too tight to maintain a teacher librarian;
- insufficient funding/unable to finance;
- school population too small to sustain a teacher librarian
- a teacher librarian not being considered a priority due to much conflicting pressure from other areas like Learning Assistance and LOTE; and
- lack of provision in the current distribution of staffing points for the amount of administration time required for a teacher librarian to adequately undertake this role.<sup>9</sup>

The Review Panel concluded that there is a significant inconsistency in the provision of information literacy and other services provided by qualified teacher librarians, and stressed its strong belief that all students should have access to learning opportunities from qualified teacher librarians.<sup>10</sup>

*Students enrolled at schools with a qualified teacher librarian who provides programs such as information literacy, promotion of reading, ICT skills and effective management of the library resources are advantaged. Consequently, those students at schools where there is no qualified teacher librarian are significantly disadvantaged in their access to successful literacy programs.*<sup>11</sup>

As the AEU's Tasmanian Branch points out, in an observation which summarises the situation across the country well:

*Without an appropriate funding formula and guidelines for school libraries, the existing inequitable funding arrangements will continue to allow some libraries to become marginalised*

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<sup>7</sup> Quote from R Hull *Leading the Way: The Changing Role of the Teacher Librarian*, AEU Tas Branch pp5-6

<sup>8</sup> ACT Department of Education and Training/AEU ACT Branch Teacher Librarian Review Working Party Report, November 2008 p2.

<sup>9</sup> ACT Review Report p3

<sup>10</sup> ACT Review Report p4

<sup>11</sup> ACT Review Report p2

*through underfunding and neglect, while others are prioritised within their schools and are able to provide quality print and multimedia resources as well as access to emerging technologies, electronic databases, the internet and other online resources.*

*For some school libraries, rather than integrating computers into the library as another valued source of information to be used as an effective research tool for teaching and learning, the overwhelming priority has been purchasing, updating and maintaining computers within the school. This has often been in direct competition with the funding provided for other research and recreational resources within libraries, creating an imbalance within library collections and their capacity to support quality literature and resource-based teaching programs, as well as the professional learning requirements of staff.<sup>12</sup>*

Such marked differences between schools are hardly compatible with the Rudd Government's commitment to provide a world class quality education for every Australian child.

## **2. The future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy**

There is a significant body of recent research on the positive contribution that school libraries and teacher librarians make to student learning outcomes, which is wider than the immediate role of teaching information literacy skills.

The International Association of School Librarianship [IASL], *School Libraries make a Difference to Student Achievement*, provides an annotated bibliography of research reports and other documents from a number of countries which show that school libraries make a difference to student achievement and show the positive relationship between professionally staffed school libraries and student achievement.

It includes the report *Impact of School Libraries on Student Achievement: A Review of the Research* prepared by Australian Council for Educational research [ACER] Research Fellow Dr Michele Lonsdale for the Australian School Library Association [ASLA] in March 2003, which focuses on studies conducted since 1990 and which show that school libraries can have a positive impact on student achievement and a research project by the department of Education, Western Australia, which collates Australian and International research studies that continue to show that an active school library program run by a trained teacher librarian makes a significant difference to student learning outcomes.<sup>13</sup>

School libraries can have a positive impact on student achievement – whether measured in terms of reading scores, literacy or learning more generally – where an adequately staffed, resourced/funded strong library program exists<sup>14</sup>.

Lonsdale's work also shows that where collaborative relationships exist between classroom teachers and school librarians there are significant benefits for student learning.

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<sup>12</sup> AEU Tasmanian Branch Teacher Librarians and School Libraries Policy 2008 Background Paper: Reaffirming the Essential Role of School Libraries and Teacher Librarians in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century p3. The Background Paper is attached as Appendix 2.

<sup>13</sup> International Association of School Librarianship [IASL], *School Libraries make a Difference to Student Achievement*. Available at <http://www.iasl-online.org/advocacy/make-a-difference.html> Last Updated 2 April 2008

<sup>14</sup> Michele Lonsdale, *Impact of School Libraries on Student Achievement: A Review of the Research*, ACER 2003 [www.asla.org.au/research/Australia-review.html](http://www.asla.org.au/research/Australia-review.html)

*Teacher librarians are familiar with both the curriculum and with how students learn. They work across all curriculum areas to resource the curriculum with suitable resources catering for the individual student. They collaborate with teachers, help students to develop research skills and guide students to become independent learners who can negotiate myriad complex digital sources of information. Teacher librarians help students develop “the ability to process and use information effectively ... the basic survival skill for those who wish to be successful members of the 21st century”.*<sup>15</sup>

The 2008 ACT Review Panel found that effective teacher librarians have a high profile in their schools, and that key indicators of good practice included:

- use of explicit, targeted teaching interventions;
- a guided inquiry approach to information;
- the integration of information literacy and ICT skill development to support teaching and learning;
- the development of an interactive and responsive teaching and learning environment; and
- the practice of the core professional values of collaboration and flexibility including collaborative partnerships with teachers and students.<sup>16</sup>

Their description of the core duties performed by teacher librarians in all sectors clearly outlines the role of teacher librarians in fostering literacy in general, teaching information literacy and ICT skills, and is attached as Appendix 1. Similarly the ALIA/ASLA *Statement on Teacher Librarians in Australia* stresses the important role of teacher librarians in the development of information literate citizens who are lifelong learners.<sup>17</sup>

The roles of all educators, including teacher librarians, are changing in 21<sup>st</sup> century learning environments. New and innovative technologies are having an impact on education in general and teacher-librarians in particular; an impact which goes beyond the traditional library setting.

As Victorian teacher librarians Jennifer Hall and Carolyn Carver-Gibson point out in **Cracking the Code: Enhancing literacy through learning in the digital environment**, emerging technologies are changing the way we socialise, educate and connect as global citizens, and that really making a difference to student outcomes requires understanding the changing nature of curriculum design and technology, the importance of information literacy and the changing nature of students and the role of educators, including teacher librarians.

*Our library team made a conscious decision three years ago to critically examine current pedagogy and relevant research to access how it impacted on the needs of our learning environment. The result has been the identification of a different understanding of our role and how we as teachers can effectively work in Value-Added partnerships (VAP). We realized that we had to be different; we had to offer a different approach to learning and teaching if we were to successfully work in partnership with teachers and students in addressing education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.*<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> ASLA, *Learning for the Future: Developing Information Services in Schools*, 2001  
<http://www.alia.org.au/policies/services.in.schools.html>.

<sup>16</sup> ACT Report p5

<sup>17</sup> ALIA/ASLA Statement on Teacher Librarians in Australia 2003  
<http://www.asla.org.au/policy/teacher.librarians.Australia.htm>

<sup>18</sup> Jennifer Hall and Carolyn Carver-Gibson, *Cracking the Code: Enhancing literacy through learning in the digital environment*, paper presented at Somerset Conference for Librarians, Teachers, et al Tuesday March 13, 2007 [www.somerset.qld.edu.au/.../Jennifer%20Hall%20%2B%20Carolyn%20Carver-Gibson.doc](http://www.somerset.qld.edu.au/.../Jennifer%20Hall%20%2B%20Carolyn%20Carver-Gibson.doc) accessed April 7 2010



### 3. The factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians

*... I am a qualified TL and have no allocated time. I am now a maths specialist. ... I'm going to retire at the end of the year. I've had enough.*<sup>19</sup>

The erosion of library staffing, resources, services, equipment and facilities has had a significant impact on the recruitment, retention and development of school librarians.

The shortage of tertiary trained librarians has been identified as an issue for several decades. The workforce is aging and younger people do not appear to be attracted to the profession<sup>20</sup> with serious implications for the provision of library services in schools.

The Australian School Libraries Research Project's 2008 'snapshot' of Australian teacher librarians, undertaken in conjunction with its survey of Australian school libraries, shows that teacher librarianship is an overwhelming feminised profession, and also an aging profession with almost 90% of the survey group aged 40+ years, almost 80% aged 45+ years, 55% aged 55+ years, and 10% aged 60+ years and only 3% younger than 30 years.<sup>21</sup>

A survey in 2008 by the ASLA SA Branch revealed 23% of schools were not allocating teacher librarians, and that 25% of teacher-librarians intended retiring in the next five years and 89 graduates would be needed to replace them. ASLA also said that across the country many schools were unable to resource their libraries adequately, and estimated that Australia has a shortfall of thousands of teacher librarians around the country".<sup>22</sup>

ALIA, the professional organisation for the library and information services sector, lists current tertiary courses for teacher librarianship on its website. It shows the extent to which the number of courses has declined over the years.<sup>23</sup> Across Australia there are no current undergraduate courses in Teacher Librarianship or Librarianship.<sup>24</sup> It is clear that this lack of librarianship courses both leads to and exacerbates the existing skills shortage.

### 4. The role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school librarians

At the state level, support services have diminished and professional associations have had to fill the resulting gap in consultancy services. The Hub, a leading school library and teacher librarian advocacy group, argues that while some curriculum support services remain, "professional associations have had to assume the majority of professional development, yet dependent on volunteers, this is dwindling. Newly appointed untrained school library staff are often dependent on local teacher librarian networks for their training."

They argue that:

- Educational leaders need easy access to the research on the contribution of school libraries and teacher librarians to improved educational outcomes.

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<sup>19</sup> The Courier-Mail, *Libraries at risk*, Tuesday March 30, 2010

<sup>20</sup> ACT Department of Education and Training Teacher Librarian Review Report November 2008 ACT p10

<sup>21</sup> Combes, B. (2008). Australian School Libraries Research Project: A snapshot of Australian teacher librarians, Report 1. *Australian School Library Research Project*, ASLA, ALIA & ECU. Retrieved from <http://www.chs.ecu.edu.au/portals/ASLRP/publications.php> p1

<sup>22</sup> The Advertiser, *Is this the end for school librarians*, Friday April 9, 2010

<sup>23</sup> ALIA, *Courses in Library and Information Science*, <http://www.alia.org.au/education/qualifications/>

<sup>24</sup> ACT Department of Education and Training Teacher Librarian Review Report November 2008 ACT pp10-11

- Educational leaders need support in developing excellent school libraries and excellent teacher librarians (PD in use of Standards for Excellence, IL Standards, Library Standards).
- Quality teachers and pre-service teachers need easy access to the research on guided inquiry, information literacy, collaborative planning and teaching with teacher librarians.<sup>25</sup>

Governments have a significant role to play in ensuring that all school communities can provide equitable access for all students to well resourced libraries. This requires planning and coordination and a body of comprehensive data, much of which is currently lacking. The Hub notes that there is no complete national workforce data on teacher librarian numbers and use, no government school data on school library budgets (only surveys such as ASLRP), and no current national government standards for school libraries to guide their development, despite the fact that historically they did exist.<sup>26</sup>

This dearth of data is also attested to by Maureen Nimon, in her paper for ALIA, *School libraries in Australia*, documenting the history of funding for school libraries in Australia and the changing role of both school libraries and teacher librarians since the beginning of the 1960s, which was published in the Australian Library Journal:

*As with statistics on the staffing of school libraries, other nation-wide data are lacking. In 1990 Hazell deplored the fact that 'twenty years after the first Commonwealth grants to school libraries, statistics relating to school library services on a national basis' were 'still not available' (1990:21). In 1981, Lundin had been able to support his overview of school libraries across the country by gathering data from the state education departments that had sections dedicated to the supervision and support of libraries in government schools, but such specialised sections no longer exist. Moreover the relationship between central and local authorities in regard to schools has altered drastically, complicating the picture further. Today an overview may only be constructed from a mosaic of reports, supplemented by the documentation of ASLA and the state-based teacher librarian professional associations. ...*

*What must be borne in mind in considering these statements is that where studies show changes are taking place, the effects of change should not be assumed to be equally distributed. For example, the discussion paper by the State Library of Tasmania points out that the drastic fall in the numbers of qualified teacher librarians in Tasmania is concentrated disproportionately in government schools so that the outcome is a sharp increase in inequality of opportunity in regard to school library services for children in that state (2000:10).<sup>27</sup>*

## **5. The impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarians**

In best practice school libraries the twenty-first century teacher-librarian now has electronic and digital resources, Internet and web-based resources, as well as a considerable number of technologies that serve as purposeful tools, not just entertaining add-ons:

*Teacher-librarians' professional contributions include involvement in professional learning communities, administration and management of information and technology resources, as well as meaningful involvement in classroom instruction (Kiefer, 2008). Now, more than ever, teacher-librarians act as 'agents of change', supporting, encouraging, assisting, nurturing and facilitating the adoption of technologies into daily practice (Harada, 2007). "The hallmark of a school library in the twenty-first century is not its collections, its systems. Its technology, its*

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<sup>25</sup> The Hub <http://hubinfo.wordpress.com>

<sup>26</sup> The Hub <http://hubinfo.wordpress.com>

<sup>27</sup>Maureen Nimon, *School libraries in Australia* <http://alia.org.au/publishing/alj/53.1/full.text/nimon.html>

*staffing or its building, but the actions and evidence that show it makes a real difference to student learning” (Todd, 2003, p27).<sup>28</sup>*

This view is consistent with the findings and recommendations of the *School Libraries 21C* report commissioned by the School Libraries and Information Literacy Unit of the NSW Department of Education and Training in June 2009. Lyn Hay (School of Information Studies at Charles Sturt University) and Dr Ross J Todd (Associate Professor, Director of Research for the Center for International Scholarship in School Libraries at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey in the US) have summarised the report in a recent edition of *Scan* (February 2010):

*.... school libraries [are] increasingly important, particularly as both students and staff try to keep pace with rapid developments in technology and the ways in which information is accessed, shared and communicated. ... School libraries provide a common information grounds for supporting learning across the school and fostering the development of deep knowledge through the provision of accessible resources, and the development of sophisticated information and technology understandings and skills.*

*The burgeoning growth of digital information and the emergence of participatory and collaborative web environments were further presented as arguments for the provision and maintenance of school libraries. This tends towards a conclusion that libraries are vital to both education and the national intellectual life.<sup>29</sup>*

## CONCLUSION

One of the many elements of a world class education for all Australian children is the provision of professionally staffed 21<sup>st</sup> century school libraries. This is implicit in the *Building the Education Revolution* program and represents an educational investment in a significant social asset.

Yet the current situation with regard to school libraries and teacher librarians is such that the following comments have become commonplace:

*... we are a school that is getting a wonderful new [BER] library, yet there won't be anyone to staff it. the library officer has [just] one day a week and needs. ... I am a qualified TL and have no allocated time. I am now a maths specialist.<sup>30</sup>*

*The potential of the BER libraries will not be fulfilled without qualified library staff in sufficient numbers to make the dream a reality. A realistic staffing model should be mandatory. TL hours should not be able to be traded away by principals.<sup>31</sup>*

The severe decline in the number of qualified teacher librarians staffing libraries, in the number of teacher librarian training programs, in school library funding, and in centralised school library services and policy advisers over the last several decades means that despite the welcome injection of federal funds to library buildings, many new BER libraries will have no qualified teacher librarian and no new books.

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<sup>28</sup> Carol Tonhauser, *Teacher-Librarians as Technology Leaders: The Evolving Role*, University of Alberta, 2009. Available at <http://tldl.pbworks.com/f/tonhauser.pdf> accessed April 7 2010 p4

<sup>29</sup> Lyn Hay and Dr Ross J Todd, *School Libraries 21C: the conversation begins*, *Scan*, Vol 29, No 1, February 2010 p31

<sup>30</sup> The Courier-Mail, *Libraries at risk*, Tuesday March 30, 2010

<sup>31</sup> The Courier-Mail, *Libraries at risk*, Tuesday March 30, 2010

The Australian Education Union is optimistic that this timely review will make comprehensive wide-reaching recommendations which will ensure that all Australian students have access to high quality modern library services.

## APPENDIX 1

### REPORT BY ACT DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING/AEU ACT BRANCH TEACHER LIBRARIAN REVIEW WORKING PARTY NOVEMBER 2008

#### Core duties performed by teacher librarians in all sectors:

- Implementation and use of technology
- Develop and teach literacy programs
- Create library displays
- Collaborate with other teaching staff
- Develop curriculum in accordance with the Essential Learning Areas and Every Chance to Learn
- Resource selection and purchase
- Management of library and information software
- Facilitating access for special needs students
- Community liaison
- Ensure OHS practices
- Supervise and manage administrative staff
- Maintaining professional development in both education and teacher librarianship.
- Developing relationships with other libraries in the ACT, including Public Library Service and National Library of Australia.

#### Promoting the Library

- Parent teacher nights – displays
- Information evenings – displays, presentations
- Creating library displays

#### Specific duties by sector:

##### Primary Sector

##### Management

In the Primary sector the teacher librarian is responsible for the development and maintenance of the school's teacher and student resources. This involves:

- selection of fiction and non-fiction for the library collection
- collaboration with teachers in the selection of teacher and classroom resources eg guided reading books, SOSE texts and materials
- maintenance and organisation of these resources
- contribution to school intranets eg *myclasses*

##### Teaching and Learning

Primary school teacher librarians teach information literacy and ICT skills. In this role they:

- explicitly teach the six steps to information literacy: *defining, locating, selecting, organising, presenting and evaluating*.
- work collaboratively with teachers to plan and implement lessons linking research activities to classroom learning
- assist students with the location and selection of resources: use of online catalogues, internet, *myclasses*

- provide individual assistance for students who are researching
- teach specific ICT skills to assist students in organising and presenting work eg word processing, Powerpoint
- Assist teachers to select suitable resources for class projects, integrated themes and their SOSE/term focus.

Primary school teacher librarians teach literacy skills and promote literature. In this role they:

- expose students to a range of authors, illustrators and genres
- assist teachers with the selection of suitable texts for class, group and individual reading and novel study
- liaise with the Department on initiatives such as the Chief Minister's Reading Challenge.
- assist students with the selection of appropriate literature to match their individual reading level, maturity and interests.
- collaborate with teachers to develop and implement literature-based reading programs eg reading circles, guided reading sessions.
- coordinate special events, activities and displays eg theme days, Book Week

As part of the school's teaching team, Primary school teacher librarians:

- teach additional classes and groups eg are involved in literature circles, excursions, sporting and cultural events
- promote the school library as a significant and integral learning space eg lunch time activities, special events, alternative programs
- contribute to the professional development of staff eg ICT & Information Literacy skills

## Secondary Sector

### Management

- maintain and build on library collection
- contribute to school website, intranet e.g. *Myclasses*
- coordinate displays, special events and activities

### Teaching and Learning

Teacher/Librarians are involved in teaching individuals, small groups and classes. In particular, they work collaboratively with teachers to ensure that all students are provided with **information literacy skills**. Skill development should be progressive beginning in Year 6/7 and developed throughout years 8,9,10. Programmes include:

- teaching class(es) in a key learning area
- teaching pastoral care group
- teaching information literacy skills - *defining, locating, selecting, organising, presenting and evaluating information*
- teaching use of research tools such as internet
- teaching up to date referencing format for written tasks

### Information/Communication Technology Skills

Teacher/Librarians provide tuition on the use of a range of resources and technologies including:

- using online library catalogue
- using indexes to journals
- using search engines effectively

- using online databases effectively

### **Literature Promotion**

- expose students to a range of genres
- select and critique suitable novels to present to classes
- organise events/displays to encourage
- liaise various departments on reading
- guide students in choice of reading matter.
- collaborate with teachers to develop literature-based reading programs

### **Curriculum Involvement**

- be proactive in keeping abreast of changes in the school curriculum to ensure resources support the current programme (liaise with faculty executives)
- promote student information literacy across the curriculum
- involvement in special curriculum related activities

### **Services**

- facilitate access to community resources, information services
- collaborate and participate in excursions
- instruct students in specialist information tools and services
- ensure that library is multi functional and a focal point for learning

### **Leadership**

- contribute to the professional development of staff (use of library management system, information literacy skills)
- encourage and provide professional readings for teachers
- sustain a high level of professional knowledge

### **College Sector**

#### **Management**

In the senior secondary college sector, the teacher librarian is responsible for the care of an expensive and diverse collection of resources.

The value of college libraries varies according to the age of the college and its collection. Some college libraries have been developed since the inception of the senior secondary college sector in the early 1970s, and have developed extensive collections.

Unique aspects of the management of a college library collection include a greater complexity in cataloguing and information search facilities, managing large multi-media resources and associated equipment, working with staff and students on improving literacy skills for non English speaking students (fee paying students), providing effective resources to support a range of courses and curriculum needs.

## **Teaching**

College teacher librarians cater for the needs of young adults which requires greater complexities and depth of resources. Typically, college teacher librarians implement adult focussed strategies to improve literacy as opposed to literacy needs of children and teenagers.

- Provide teaching and guidance on plagiarism
- Teaching Information Literacy and ICT Skills within the library through flexible delivery to individuals, small groups and class groups.
- Many college teacher librarians also teach in a key learning area.
- Provide reference support and supervision and individual assistance of students in the library

## **Moderation and assessment**

- Participate in Moderation Days
- As required organise and host Moderation Day meetings
- Deliver professional learning for teaching staff

## **Teacher Librarian duties unique to Joint-use libraries**

- Work co-operatively with public library management and staff to provide a stimulating, helpful environment, which aims to meet the information needs of all users.
- Provide reference desk support to all library users: students, teachers and the public, creating a seamless service.
- Interact with a wider clientele than a traditional school library:
- Select and purchase resources which are designed to complement those available in ACT public libraries.
- Contribute where appropriate to the online ACT Virtual Library.
- Participate in the training of ACT Public Library (ACTPL) staff.
- Attend Professional development activities ACTPL staff
- Prepare and monitor budget submissions to ensure public library compatibility (includes e-resources)



## APPENDIX 2

### **AEU TASMANIAN BRANCH TEACHER LIBRARIANS AND SCHOOL LIBRARIES POLICY 2008 BACKGROUND PAPER: *REAFFIRMING THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND TEACHER LIBRARIANS IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY***

Most, if not all, of the nearly 10,000 schools across Australia have a school library. This was largely due to generous Commonwealth funding in the 1960's and 70's, but this funding was only possible as a result of the widespread support for school libraries from a range of advocacy groups, including parent bodies and the Australian Teacher's Federation, who championed school libraries and the need for appropriate staffing of these new purpose-built facilities.

In deciding who would be best suited to staffing the new school libraries so as to optimise their value to the school community, the decision was made to have someone with dual qualifications in teaching and librarianship. This combination was considered the ideal mix; providing both the necessary knowledge, skills and experience in pedagogy and teaching, as well as library and information management practices, thereby allowing the position to cater for the specific needs of the teachers and students who were their principal clientele.

In Tasmania, this position is most commonly known as the teacher librarian.

#### **What has changed for school libraries?**

A lot has changed since those halcyon days when funding was readily available through a combination of State and Commonwealth grants to school libraries supplementing individual school contributions.

Some of these changes include:

1. The phasing out of library grants to schools.
2. The onslaught of CRESAP in the 1990's, which wreaked havoc on all areas of school staffing and funding and resulted in the loss of 1056 school/college employees, including 696 teachers.
3. In 1991, as a direct result of CRESAP, secondary school teacher librarians lost their separate staffing entitlement (primary school teachers suffered this fate some years earlier).
4. Post CRESAP, schools became more self-managing as the Education Department increasingly devolved responsibility to the schools.
5. The integration of computers and access to the internet within schools, as well as other information communication technologies (ICTs).

The implications for the staffing and funding of school libraries as a result of these changes has been the gradual erosion of library staffing, resources, services, equipment and facilities.

Library funding is at the discretion of the individual school and levels of funding between schools differ markedly. While some schools fund appropriately many more have seen the library as an easy target for funding cuts, particularly when there is such fierce competition within schools for a finite budget. Compound these cuts with inflationary trends and the buying power of the school library is severely diminished.

Without an appropriate funding formula and guidelines for school libraries, the existing inequitable funding arrangements will continue to allow some libraries to become marginalised through under funding and neglect, while others are prioritised within their schools and are able to provide quality print and multimedia resources as well as access to emerging technologies, electronic databases, the internet and other online resources.

For some school libraries, rather than integrating computers into the Library as another valued source of information to be used as an effective research tool for teaching and learning, the overwhelming priority has been purchasing, updating and maintaining computers within the school. This has often been in direct competition with the funding provided for other research and recreational resources within school libraries, creating an imbalance within library collections and their capacity to support quality literature and resource-based teaching programs, as well as the professional learning requirements of staff.

The need to resource teaching and learning programs and meet the ever-evolving curricular requirements necessitates that all aspects of the library's collection remains current, relevant and engaging for its users. This is a basic requirement for any school library and should be the norm rather than the exception. Equitable access to an appropriately funded and resourced library is the right of all staff and students in all schools.

### **What has changed for teacher librarians?**

1. Critical decline in the number of teacher librarians has reduced their capacity to be advocates for school libraries and their own essential role within those libraries.
2. Reduced levels of support staff as well as increased time on classroom teaching have made it increasingly difficult for teacher librarians to perform their cooperative planning, teaching and evaluating roles with other teachers on top of their library management responsibilities.
3. The role of the teacher librarian has changed in response to societal changes and their impact upon schools and school libraries. Some of these changes include—
  - The amount and quality of information potentially available to staff and students.
  - The increasingly sophisticated technological means of accessing information and the added responsibilities of the teacher librarian in assisting staff and students with the use of this technology.
  - The shift from content-based education to an outcomes-based education.
  - Emphasis on information literacy skills in addition to other essential literacies.
  - Integration of new technologies and their effects upon teaching and learning within the school library.
4. Shortage of teacher librarians and also financial concerns within some schools has increasingly led to library technicians or even unqualified personnel being asked to replace teacher librarians.
5. The axing of the *Graduate Diploma of Librarianship* course at UTAS which was only re-established as recently as 2002/3 as the *Graduate Diploma of Information Management*.

Arguably, the school libraries most damaging loss is the decline in staffing levels and in particular, the unsustainable decline in teacher librarians currently filling positions within our public schools.

The number of teacher librarians in Tasmanian DoE schools has now reached critical levels with most of them close to or over 50 and none below 30 years of age. This 'greying' of the profession was highlighted in a study done by the State Library of Tasmania back in November 2000, when it identified a loss of almost 50% of teacher librarians in a four-year period between 1996 and 2000.

A more recent report conducted in December 2005 confirms this grim picture, with statistic indicating that by 2015, if there are no more teacher librarians recruited, there will only be 15 teacher librarians remaining in Tasmanian state school libraries.

The lack of any Librarianship course for so many years has taken its toll and the resurrected UTAS course has failed to address the existing skills shortage. Those graduates who have pursued the new UTAS Graduate Diploma of Information Management course have not appeared as teacher librarians in the Government sector. One can only assume that they have found alternative employment in the information industry, private sector or within the Catholic and independent school system.

We need to attract these graduates into our Government schools by ensuring there are jobs available for them. This requires a separate staffing formula that provides a level of security and assurance that the positions are there to fill upon satisfactory completion of their course.

Unfortunately this may not be enough to address the critical shortage of teacher librarians within the Government sector. Enrolments in the UTAS course are few and the numbers graduating even fewer. To encourage more teacher trainee and teacher enrolments in approved library and information management courses, the costs involved in upskilling, and similar incentives, should be met by Government sponsorship.

Most other Australian states have already recognised the need for a separate staffing entitlement for teacher librarians and some of these have also introduced Government sponsored retraining programs for teachers, for example, the 'Retrain' program offered in NSW.

This decline in teacher librarian numbers is in part due to financial stringencies within schools, which have resulted in the 'cutting back' of specialist areas to prioritise other areas within their school or sometimes voting off one specialist teacher in favour of another. This process occurs repeatedly, particularly in primary schools, creating undue stress for all staff when a colleague and friend is 'traded off' for another.

*Studies conducted in Canada and the USA have identified this marginalisation of specialists as a particular problem in a devolved education system like Tasmania's. Their research concluded that where no separate equity measures existed, school counsellors and teacher librarians generally lose out to classroom teachers who are in the majority.*

Currently, Tasmanian Guidance officers (school counsellors), who are similarly qualified to teacher librarians, are on a separate staffing entitlement.

The existing skills shortage has meant that Principals requesting teacher librarians in 2006/07 had difficulty locating any. This exacerbates the problem by necessitating the employment of underqualified or unqualified staff to fill the position. This situation is due to worsen as retirements continue and dissatisfaction with worsening conditions forces many teacher librarians to return to the classroom, leaving schools with little choice but to go without a teacher librarian.

### **The changing role of the teacher librarian**

According to an extensive review of post 1990 research on school libraries by Lonsdale (2003) there has been:

*...an explosion in information production and the development of information communication technologies (ICT's); changes in educational philosophy and practice, including a greater focus on learning outcomes, inquiry-based learning, evidence-based practice and school accountability; and changes in the nature and role of the teacher librarian as a result of these developments.*

The shift from content-based to outcomes-based education; from what is taught, to the skills and understandings the student needs to acquire, has highlighted the importance of the processes of

learning and the development of information skills through resource-based (inquiry-based) learning. Teacher librarians have always had a role in the provision of information for educational programs, and teaching research skills to students to enable them to define, locate, select, organise, present and evaluate information, only now the breadth of information and the technology available to access it has made this role even more crucial.

In adopting and adapting new and emerging technologies to meet the information requirements of staff and students, teacher librarians have developed expertise in areas such as: using electronic databases; creating library websites for the school's Intranet; learning how to use search engines and secure websites to source appropriate sources of information; using digital technology, such as CD ROMs and PVRs; as well as the use of streaming media such as 'clickview'. This expertise has enabled the teacher librarian to become the interface between the technology and the user, facilitating access to ICTs, as well as other more traditional print and non-print resources; making them ideally suited to working cooperatively with other teachers to plan, teach and evaluate information skills.

According to Bonnano (1996)—

*Students who enter schooling today must develop skills to become independent lifelong learners. A key focus of teacher librarians has been to develop retrieval and interpretation skills with students. With the global nature of information it is important to emphasise the evaluation of the retrieved information; to provide our users with an ability to assess information and test for authenticity, reliability, bias and prejudice. Accessing and using information in an electronic world has become a complex task. Now, more than ever, students need to develop information literacy skills within a resource-based learning environment to survive in the Information Age and beyond.*

It is important to stress that information literacy is only one area of a teacher librarian's teaching responsibility and that their role encompasses everything from promoting literature and actively engaging readers, to working with classes on 'how to create a bibliography' to professional development for staff on areas such as copyright, plagiarism and using online catalogues.

The role of a teacher librarian is diverse and challenging but one thing that has been demonstrated definitively in landmark research both internationally and within Australia is that:

**SCHOOL LIBRARIES + TEACHER LIBRARIANS = POSITIVE AND MEASURABLE IMPACT ON STUDENTS.**

Much of the research has been conducted in America, but as recently as 2003, the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) conducted a review of National and International research from 1990 to 2002. In this study, Lonsdale identified the positive impact of school library programs on student achievement, whether those achievements were measured as test scores, reading scores, literacy or learning more generally—

1. 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;
2. a strong computer network connecting the library's resources to the classroom and laboratories has an impact on student achievement;
3. the quality of the collection has an impact on student learning;
4. test scores are higher when there is higher usage of the school library;
5. collaborative relationships between classroom teachers and school librarians have a significant impact on learning, particularly in relation to the planning of instructional units, resource collection development, and the provision of professional development for teachers;

6. a print-rich environment leads to more reading, and free voluntary reading is the best predictor of comprehension, vocabulary growth, spelling and grammatical ability, and writing style;
7. integrating information literacy into the curriculum can improve students' mastery of both content and information seeking skills;
8. libraries can make a positive difference to students' self-esteem, confidence, independence and sense of responsibility in regard to their own learning.

### **AEU (Tasmanian Branch) Research into School Libraries and Staffing Issues**

There has already been a considerable amount of Tasmanian-based research into the funding and staffing of school libraries, partly as a result of surveys and discussion papers by professional bodies such as ASLA (Australian School Library Association), ALIA (Australian Library and Information Association), the State Library of Tasmania and, of course, the AEU itself.

At the end of 2001, the AEU conducted a survey of Tasmanian Schools and received responses from 102 workplaces. Schools were asked to discuss issues from the State Library of Tasmania paper—*Enhancing Student Outcomes with Improved Information Services and Provisioning*, and asked to vote on three recommendations:

1. That all teacher librarians be excluded from the school's classroom teaching quota and placed on a central formula in the central staffing establishment.
2. That the State Government sponsor enrolments in Interstate teacher librarian courses. (This is still valid, even though UTAS has now re-established a Post Grad. Course for prospective teacher librarians).
3. That school library benchmarks be established to reflect national standards for services and program delivery and that schools be resourced to these levels.

**All three recommendations received an endorsement from 93% of the 102 workplaces that responded.**

This suggests that there is already a groundswell of support within schools for:

- improving the quality of resourcing and staffing in school libraries;
- ensuring that teacher librarian shortages are addressed; and
- providing equitable access to teacher librarians to maximise the outcomes of all public school students.