



Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training

Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools

Brisbane Catholic Education is a community of 133 primary, secondary and P-12 schools in the Archdiocese of Brisbane. We have a long standing commitment to developing and resourcing school libraries as important resource centres of learning in each of our schools. In the staffing schedules for schools, recommended guidelines for the provision of teacher librarians, according to enrolment numbers, are provided. Schools with an enrolment of 450 or more are entitled to a full time teacher librarian, smaller schools have a part time allocation.

In the early nineties, Brisbane Catholic Education funded 19 scholarships for teachers to train as teacher librarians. In 2009 and 2010 further scholarships were provided for teachers in our schools to complete the Master of Education (Teacher Librarianship) program at the Queensland University of Technology. Forty teachers have taken up this offer which will be repeated in the 2011 academic year.

During 2009 and 2010 we have further supported the information needs of our schools through the centralised provision of Oliver 4, a web based library management system (LMS). The system has been rolled out to over 100 schools with the rollout supported by expert technical and professional staff. Professional learning for all library staff in schools has been offered. The web based LMS enables great flexibility for all users (teachers, students, members of parent community) and is a powerful tool in developing communities of learning across all schools.

A number of teacher librarians in our schools also act in the role of curriculum support teacher with a number also providing ICT leadership.

With this significant level of support for school libraries and teacher librarians, Brisbane Catholic Education welcomes the opportunity to make this submission. In addressing each of the terms of reference below, we have consistently used the term teacher librarian and our focus is on best practice.

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

POLICY/INVESTMENT	IMPACT & POTENTIAL
<p>Building the Education Revolution</p>	<p>The inclusion of libraries in the Primary Schools for the 21st Century component of the Building the Education Revolution initiative is to be applauded and can be seen as recognition by the Federal Government of the important place of school libraries and their staff in resourcing and supporting student learning.</p> <p>With new and refurbished facilities the focus now turns to the best use of these spaces to provide quality information and educational services for students. School libraries and their resources represent a considerable investment which needs to be monitored to ensure that the service offered is relevant and responsive to the needs of its users.</p> <p>Teacher librarians are in a unique position in schools as they work across all year levels with all teachers and interact with all students. They are professional teachers with recognised library-related tertiary qualifications and as such are best placed to establish, develop, monitor and disseminate resources in consultation with teachers, cognisant of curriculum directions and demands.</p> <p>In collaboration with teaching colleagues, the teacher librarian is committed to –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the growth of students as independent, interdependent lifelong learners; • the integration of literacy skills and processes into all curriculum programs; • the development of a resource collection, systems and services which promote equity of access to information; • fostering the spirit of inquiry in an environment supportive of a diversity of learners and learning styles, and • the promotion and encouragement of an appreciation of literature and reading.
<p>Building the Education Revolution (cont'd)</p>	<p>As information professionals, teacher librarians are aware of multiple sources of information access and the skills required in negotiating these information pathways. The Primary Schools for the 21st Century guidelines indicate that library facilities should be “contemporary”.</p> <p>A “contemporary” school library space must be a space in which learning in all its manifestations</p>

	<p>can occur. Learners collaborate, perform, create, interact and explore. Similarly the services provided need also to be “contemporary” with informed teacher librarians best placed to provide such services.</p>
<p>Digital Education Revolution</p>	<p>The contribution of initiatives under the Digital Education Revolution to <i>sustainable and meaningful change to teaching and learning in Australian schools that will prepare students for further education, training and to live and work in a digital world</i> is both timely and commendable.</p> <p>It is important to note however that: <i>The information age school is one that is distinguished, not by its networked information technology nor its access to multiple sources of information, but by its capacity to develop students who are able to interact with and utilise this rich information environment to develop their own understandings and knowledge, and who are able to actively contribute to the ongoing development of a thinking, knowledgeable, creative and empowered society.</i></p> <p>Todd, Ross 2002, in Punshorn, M(ed), WE SOLVE it! School Library Association of Victoria Carlton, Victoria.</p> <p>The development of such students is the raison d’être of teacher librarians.</p>
<p>Digital Education Revolution (cont’d)</p>	<p>The development of good literacy practices in an information rich environment requires a knowledge and understanding of information in all its forms. An often cited phrase is <i>21st century literacies</i>, a catch all term which may then be enumerated as basic literacy, scientific literacy, economic literacy, technological literacy, visual literacy, information literacy, multicultural literacy and global awareness. Each of these “literacies” refers to competent use of information in multiple formats and contexts.</p> <p><i>Sometimes we overlook the fact that students are novice learners in searching for information; and that it takes a long time to become ‘expert’ in the skills and strategies involved. There is the temptation to think that the information found is the important ‘outcome’. It isn’t. In a return to the ‘Process vs. Product’ debate, how they get to it is the most important.</i></p> <p>Neary, K (2007) <i>School Libraries: making a difference in The Queensland Principal: the Journal of the Association of State School Principals Inc.</i> ,Vol. 3, No. 3, September 2007.</p> <p>Teacher librarians are committed to the principles of lifelong learning. They:</p>

**Digital Education Revolution
(cont'd)**

- *are well-informed about information literacy theory and practice*
- *thoroughly understand how all learners develop and apply lifelong learning skills and strategies*
- *have a sound understanding of how children and young adults become independent readers*
- *comprehensively understand the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in lifelong learning*

Australian School Library Association (2004) Standards of professional excellence for teacher librarians retrieved 10 April 2010 from <http://www.asla.org.au/policy/standards.htm>

As the information literate school community is based on information and its usage, the teacher librarian, as one qualified in the area of information management as well as teaching, has a fundamental role in creating the environment where individuals feel able to use information in their quest to become lifelong learners

The information literate school community views learning as ongoing, and recognises that knowledge can be actively constructed from information. The process of constructing knowledge involves critical analysis as well as problem solving. In an information literate school community, the library is not seen as a separate entity, but rather an extension of the classroom, connecting learning across the curriculum, across libraries, and bringing learning not only into the student's 'outside' life, but further, into the wider community.

Sykes, Judith (2001) 'The role of the teacher librarian in the 21st century' *School libraries in Canada*, v.21, No. 2, pp.5-8.

Teacher librarians are well placed to provide input and expertise into the use of digital tools in learning. Since the advent of ICTs in schools, teacher librarians have been early adopters of technology –

- organising, storing and disseminating resources in multiple formats;
- identifying appropriate sources of information beyond the school;
- providing equitable access to relevant quality resources;
- shaping the information-seeking behaviour of users in the school community; and
- guiding the development of information organisation, knowledge creation, and communication and presentation.

Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) and Australian School Library Association (ASLA) Statement on school libraries and information and communication technologies retrieved 10 April 2010 from <http://www.asla.org.au/policy/school.libraries.and.ICT.htm>

<p>ACARA – Australian Curriculum initiatives</p>	<p>The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) has developed draft Australian curriculum documents in English, History, Science and Maths for students in years K – 10.</p> <p>In using the <i>Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians</i> as its guide, curriculum developers have also committed <i>to supporting all young Australians to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens and to promoting equity and excellence in education</i> The Australian curriculum will <i>equip all young Australians with the essential skills, knowledge and capabilities to thrive and compete in a globalised world and information rich workplaces of the current century.</i> <i>ACARA website accessed 10 April 2010</i></p> <p>Both the Science and History curriculum documents currently in circulation for consultation have an inquiry learning focus. Such a focus requires students to investigate, think critically, draw conclusions, apply knowledge to new situations, share their understandings and create new knowledge and understandings.</p> <p>Teacher librarians are very familiar with the inquiry focus, employing inquiry practices in developing literacies in the information rich environments of the library and beyond.</p> <p>While many teachers are extremely innovative and have revolutionised the way they manage learning in their classrooms, at this time of considerable curriculum change teacher librarians are well placed to bring their knowledge and skills to support the work of teachers in improving learning outcomes for students.</p>
<p>ACARA – Australian Curriculum initiatives</p>	<p>New curriculum content will require significant resource provision of both digital and print resources. An understanding of proscribed content, learning styles and teaching focus is required to adequately and appropriately resource topics of study. The teacher librarian has an integral role to play in working collaboratively with teachers to enable this.</p> <p>The place of the teacher librarian in supporting the work of teachers implementing the Australian English curriculum is manifold. The most obvious link is in resourcing the literature strand, providing expert and informed input into the selection of contemporary texts which engage learners. Their contribution to developing literate practices as a general capability (across all key learning areas) cannot be understated. Such contributions go beyond traditional “research skills” and call on expertise in utilising a range of multimodal text types.</p>

	<p>Keith McPherson defines the literacies for the information generation as technological literacy, inquiry and problem solving, critical literacy, ethics and social responsibility and creativity and representation. All five literacies fall squarely within the role and skill set of the teacher librarian. These also reflect major concepts/approaches within the Australian Curriculum. A TL will be of invaluable support to teachers in its implementation.</p> <p>Cited in Asselin, M., & Doiron, R. (2008). Towards a Transformative Pedagogy for School Libraries 2.0. <i>School Libraries Worldwide</i>, 14(2), 1-18. Retrieved from Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts with Full Text database.</p>
National Partnerships	<p>The National Partnerships program with the states and territories supports a suite of reforms in the areas of teacher quality, literacy and numeracy and low socio economic status school communities.</p> <p>The potential of teacher librarians to contribute to programs developed under the National Partnerships initiative particularly in the fundamentals of policy development and teacher professional learning should not be underestimated.</p>
NAPLAN	<p>Teacher librarians are well placed to resource and otherwise support teachers in preparing students for NAPLAN testing (e.g. with the emphasis in 2010 on narratives the teacher librarian's knowledge of narrative structures, techniques, examples, devices etc aids in fully informing teachers' knowledge of narratives.</p>
Flying Start for Queensland Children	<p>This education Green Paper recently released by the Department of Education and Training is a consultation paper on the future of schooling in Queensland. It has three objectives:</p> <p><i>Improving children's development, well being and school readiness; Improving transitions from primary to secondary school and supporting adolescent development; and Improving school discipline and the quality of teaching and setting high performance standards for all schools.</i></p> <p>In two areas in particular there are obvious opportunities for teacher librarians. The first is in supporting and resourcing initiatives promoting reading to young children and the second is in ensuring that any changes to year 7 are adequately and appropriately resourced at the secondary level.</p>

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

POLICY/INVESTMENT	IMPACT & POTENTIAL
<p>Teacher librarians as information consultants in schools</p>	<p>Contemporary school libraries and teacher librarians must challenge stereotypes and perceptions of libraries based on outmoded models. The school library collection, facilities and services are integral to the school community and to the experience of learning for students and teachers. As such the school library must be responsive to the contemporary learning needs of all users. In commenting on the development of information literate school communities, James Henri questioned the core focus of teacher librarians in previous and current times.</p> <p><i>Many principals he commented, saw the focus for primary teacher librarians as providing library lessons (a student focus) and the focus for secondary teacher librarians was managing a facility to ensure that resources were available to users, who were predominantly students (a student focus). Over the years perceptions about major responsibility has shifted but many principals and many teacher librarians still focus on services for students who are typically the most significant client group.</i></p> <p><i>James Henri (2004) Building an information literate school community: Putting teachers first, ASLA Online 1: Constructing communities of literacy and learning, 15 – 31 May 2004.</i></p> <p>A more effective use of teacher librarian time and expertise is in working collaboratively with teachers and school administrators to lead the development of policy and practices in support of contemporary learning processes and to provide the appropriate professional support to teachers.</p> <p>Henri outlined the potential of the teacher librarian as leader, as an agent of change in supporting teachers <i>shift from product learning towards authentic process based learning</i>. To do so requires a shift in TL focus from students to teachers and a broad understanding of what support to teachers involves.</p> <p>In terms of improved literacy outcomes, extensive national and international research indicates that the services and programs provided by school libraries under the direction of teacher librarians make a significant impact on student learning. The Australian School Library Association (ASLA) website has links to these studies http://www.asla.org.au/research/</p> <p>The emerging body of research on the 'Net Generation' largely debunks the myth of an intuitive user who is capable of using electronic resources to find information - a fact many teacher librarians have long suspected.</p>

<p>Teacher librarians as information consultants in schools</p>	<p>UK Children Go Online (UKCGO), an ongoing survey of young people (up to 18 years of age) found that young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are not critical or discerning users • have poor internet literacy skills (and do not know where they are in virtual space) • trust the authority of information they find on the Internet and rarely question authenticity or authority <p>The survey also found that young people's skills were variably, and unequally, distributed across the population, with age, gender and socio-economic status all associated with differences in literacy</p> <p>Livingstone,Bober & Helsper 2004, 2005). cited in Combes, B. (2007). Techno-savvy or just techno-oriented?. Access (10300155), 21(2), 17-20. Retrieved from Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts with Full Text database.</p> <p>The skills of a teacher librarian are vital in supporting teachers to ensure information literacy skills are taught and to support teachers who also may be weak in this area</p>
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Factors influencing recruitment and development of teacher librarians

FACTORS	COMMENT
<p>Perceptions of the role</p>	<p>Recruitment is affected by perceptions of the role. Research would indicate that limited vision at a number of levels has lead to the role being undervalued.</p> <p><i>In Tasmania only 50% of schools have teacher librarians, Victoria and ACT 65% (probably lower)</i></p> <p><i>In Western Australia, teacher librarians are not mandated in primary schools.</i></p> <p><i>In Queensland too, teacher-librarian numbers are dwindling. Seven large state high schools on the Gold Coast alone have no teacher librarian. Others have teachers or even library aides in charge who have no formal training.</i></p> <p><i>Since 1983, the number of primary school libraries in Melbourne staffed by qualified teacher librarians has dropped dramatically from 55% to 13% (Reynolds and Carroll, 2001). 12% of the school libraries in their survey are managed by someone with no formal qualifications of any kind.</i></p>
<p>Staffing considerations in schools</p>	<p>Statistics provided by the Australian School Library Association (ASLA) based on research undertaken in 2007 indicate that qualified staff in school libraries has steadily been on the decline for a number of years. In some schools, teacher librarians have been used to provide non contact time for teachers, teacher librarians have been replaced with librarians and library technicians (with no educational background) or with library aides. This diminishing of the role in too many circumstances is a significant factor in recruiting teachers to the TL ranks.</p>
<p>Opportunities for professional learning</p>	<p>Professional learning for teacher librarians is usually offered by professional associations. Teacher librarians and school leaders and managers need to be challenged in their role perceptions and have the opportunity for a cross fertilisation of ideas. TL professional associations are clear in their vision of the role and its potential in schools as evidenced in the program strands of the upcoming International Association of School Libraries in Brisbane:</p> <p><i>Developing curriculum, Delivering excellence through standards, Supporting the Digital Education Agenda, Building literate communities (refer: http://iasl-online.org/events/conf/2010/)</i></p>

<p>Opportunities for promotion</p>	<p>The management of a school library is a complex and multifaceted task. The role of the teacher librarian should be viewed as a position of added responsibility and as such would have greater appeal to teachers seeking a leadership role in schools.</p>
<p>Availability or recognised training courses</p>	<p>According to the previously cited ASLA research, the number of teacher librarian training programs has also decreased in number from 15 to 3-4 in the past two decades. There is no national data on teachers undergoing teacher librarian training.</p>

The role of differing levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting teacher librarians

Please refer to Recommendations

The impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and teacher librarians

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY	COMMENT
Network Administration	In many primary and small schools, the teacher librarian often has network administration responsibilities. The TL role in such circumstances is one in which future visioning for ICT integration in learning is based on educational imperatives.
Library Management Systems (LMS)	Web based library management systems have great potential (under the supervision of a suitably qualified information professional) to manage the digital resources required by all learners for ease of access.
Collection management of digital resources	A web based LMS (under the supervision and management of a suitably qualified information professional) is pivotal in the collection management of a school's digital resources.
Multimedia resource applications	In collaboration with learners and teachers, TLs manage, investigate, establish, create develop, initiate and explore the potential of online databases and digital resources to enhance student learning.
Incorporation of digital tools (including Web 2.0 applications) into learning and teaching programs	<p>TLs ensure that digital resources support effective pedagogy. Along with classroom teachers and school leaders, teacher-librarians are responding to the challenges of realising the educational potential of digital resources and web 2.0 technologies.</p> <p>TLs are in a position to offer valuable support to teachers and staff in engaging students in authentic and personalised online learning.</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That national data is gathered to ascertain the current situation regarding the provision of teacher librarians and other library support staff in schools.
2. That the Federal Government develop national standards related to the provision of qualified teacher librarians in schools.
3. That the Federal Government in partnership with State Governments and in collaboration with professional organisations, invests in quality teacher librarian programs which focus on supporting improved literacy (traditional and digital) outcomes for students.
4. That policy makers, funding and employing authorities appropriately recognise the complexity and the educational leadership aspects of the role in staffing provisions.

If you are looking to distribute leadership in your school then look no further than your school library. Throwing the stone into this pond will have the biggest ripple effect for any school. It will also mean that you are making the most of an oft neglected asset."

Creating 21st century learning communities in *Principal Matters*, Issue No. 67, Winter 2006. It was reprinted with permission in *Access*, Vol. 20, Issue 3, 2006

5. That the Standards of Excellence for Teacher Librarians developed by the Australian School Library Association are used as performance indicators by employing authorities.
6. That the focus of the role in schools is principally on supporting student learning through engagement with teachers as an "information broker" who understands learning, teaching and curriculum imperatives.