



Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools

The Catholic Education Office (CEO), Sydney is responsible for the leadership, efficient operation and management of the systemic schools which educate just over 63,000 students in 147 parish primary and regional secondary schools in the Archdiocese of Sydney. The CEO is charged with the implementation and management of the policies determined by the SACS Board.

The CEO, through its Central and Regional Offices, provides to schools a wide range of services and resources, which have been developed in consultation with Principals and teachers.¹

The Teacher Librarian is both an educator and an information manager with a profound understanding from both areas. Knowledge of the curriculum, teaching strategies and learning styles are combined with knowledge of resources and information access systems. This enables Teacher Librarians to undertake an active role in curriculum design, support and implementation. The role of the Teacher Librarian has a unique integrated nature.

As an Adviser in the Southern Region, part of my role description is responsibility for both primary and secondary School Libraries and Teacher Librarians. It is in this position and as a qualified Teacher Librarian I address the “Terms of Reference” points for the *Inquiry into school libraries and Teacher librarians in Australian schools*.

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

- 1.1. Building of new libraries – in our system, a number of secondary and primary schools have had or are having a new library built.
- 1.2. Refurbishment of libraries – alternatively a number of schools which already had an existing library are having it refurbished and/or extended.

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

- 2.1. Teacher Librarians are:
 - 2.1.1. Information managers
 - 2.1.2. Curriculum designers
- 2.2. In some schools they are:
 - 2.2.1. A member of the Middle Management Team
 - 2.2.2. The Teaching and Learning Coordinator
- 2.3. Environment – the library is the “hub” or “heart” of the school which is critical in developing 21st Century learners
- 2.4. The School Library is a place where students can:

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- 2.4.1. Engage in learning
- 2.4.2. Be encouraged to and be provided with the opportunity for creative and divergent thinking
- 2.4.3. Expand 21st Century learning skills
- 2.4.4. Be reflective (and spiritual)
- 2.4.5. Develop a “love” of reading and books
- 2.4.6. Become critical and evaluative in research, investigations and reading materials – both electronic and paper
- 2.4.7. Learn and understand the concept of copyright and intellectual property

3. The factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians

- 3.1. Accessible university qualifications
- 3.2. An obvious and available career pathway
- 3.3. Professional development which is ongoing, available and contemporary in the following areas:
 - 3.3.1. Research strategies; including digital and electronic
 - 3.3.2. Information technology
 - 3.3.3. Information management – including electronic databases and journals
 - 3.3.4. Reading material – both fiction and non-fiction
- 3.4. Inclusivity in the school community
- 3.5. Networks available so as to link with other “Information Managers”

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

- 4.1. School and community library partnership:
 - 4.1.1. Sharing of resources
 - 4.1.2. Schools accessing facilities of the local library e.g. electronic database, journals and encyclopedias
 - 4.1.3. Designing the school library so as to compliment and/or mirror the local library
 - 4.1.4. United approach to library events and themes e.g. Book Week, Premier’s Reading Challenge
- 4.2. Raising awareness of facilities such as; The State Library, University and Specialist Libraries etc

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

- 5.1. Integral in the context of 21st Century learning spaces
- 5.2. Ongoing Professional Development of Teacher Librarians is required and crucial
- 5.3. School Libraries (both Primary and Secondary) being designed flexibly so as to accommodate new and developing technologies

Extra information

The role of a Teacher Librarian in both secondary and primary schools is complex and can be varied depending on the school setting and needs.

Teacher Librarians:

- Are involved in curriculum planning and school committees.
- Plan, teach and evaluate co-operatively with teachers to ensure the effective integration of information resources and technologies into student learning.
- Raise staff awareness of the necessity for students to acquire information skills and of the importance of resource-based learning in developing these skills.
- Promote the use of the information process as a framework for the development of information skills and as the basis for systematic monitoring of students' development as information users.
- Assist in the interpretation of information systems and technologies to students and teachers in the context of curriculum programs.
- Provide specialist assistance to students using technology and information resources in and beyond the school for independent research.
- Provide specialist assistance to students using the school library resource facility for independent reading, viewing and listening.
- Provide additional assistance to students with particular learning needs or abilities and to students to whom social justice considerations apply.
- Develop and implement strategies for evaluating the resource collection and for determining curriculum and student needs within the context of identified school priorities.
- Develop policies, procedures and criteria for selecting resources which meet curriculum, informational and student recreational needs.
- Develop information systems and services responsive to student and teacher needs.
- Provide access to information resources through efficient and well-guided systems for organising, retrieving and circulating resources.
- Provide training and assistance to students and staff in the effective use of these systems.
- Ensure that the day-to-day administration of the school library resource centre is efficient and that systems, resources and equipment are well maintained.

- Develop budget estimates to ensure that teaching and learning requirements are met.
- Provide a stimulating, helpful environment which is a focal point and showcase for students' learning achievements.
- Promote the effective use of resources and information sources, systems and services both within and beyond the school.

Teacher Librarians work in co-operation with teachers to achieve outcomes described in each one of the inter-related areas which encompass the role of the school library resource service. They are responsible for the integration of these functions (as outlined above) into responsive and dynamic resource and information services for the school community.

Following are 2 relevant references:

1. *Learning for the Future Developing Information Services in Schools* (2nd Ed) Curriculum Corporation (2002)
2. : <http://www.blip.tv/file/1455517/> "The video aims to contribute to the design and development of visually stunning, fit-for-purpose libraries that support 21st century learning in extended school settings. It shows the contribution an effective library can make to the educational, creative, emotional & reading development of children and young people, and the aspects of design that can enable this.

Funded by CILIP School Libraries Group and MLA (Museums Libraries and Archives Council), the DVD features Stephen Heppell, Les Watson (Education Adviser), students, Head Teachers and senior managers from diverse schools and settings. Each has a different viewpoint, but all are convinced of the role of the library to support learning and argue convincingly for the library to have a fair share of the footprint."

CEO Guidelines for the development of an active role description for Teacher Librarians

This document has been designed as a guide for Principals and Teacher Librarians in the writing of an active role description for the Teacher Librarian, suited to the local context. The role description which is developed at the school level should serve to:

- “Promote the role of the Teacher Librarian within the school;
- Facilitate effective and valid appraisal;
- Assist in establishing a Professional Development agenda for the Teacher Librarian”¹.

Teacher Librarian

Teaching & Learning

- Be informed and proactive about current curriculum documents and developments.
- Facilitate knowledge management processes.
- Actively promote information literacy by embedding the skills into a school wide curriculum.
- Be inclusive of the diverse needs of learners.
- Collaboratively plan and teach units of work with teachers.
- Develop strategies to foster a love of reading and quality literature reflecting a variety of cultures and themes.
- Ensure that the library is a flexibly timetabled, multi-functional resource centre and a focal point for student learning.

Professional Management

- Provide a learning environment in which students feel welcome and confident.
- Provide professional assistance to members of learning community.
- Organise efficient flexible procedures for delivery of services.
- Develop and administer resource budgets and be accountable to school administration.
- Coordinate the roles and responsibilities of library/resource centre staff and volunteers.
- Take responsibility for the library management system and related technologies.
- Coordinate displays, special events and activities to support student learning.
- Select appropriate resources and facilitate access to community resources and information services.
- Develop and maintain a library page on the school's website or Intranet.

Leadership

- Contribute to the faith dimension of the school by supporting and promoting the shared philosophy and values.
- Sustain a high level of professional knowledge.
- Demonstrate practices that reflect current professional educational directions.
- Contribute to curriculum leadership in the school including the professional development of staff and school policy development.
- Participate in the ongoing development of the school's e-Learning plan.
- Advocate the need for staff and students to be information literate.

¹ Teachers (Catholic Independent Schools) (State) award 2006