



The House Standing Committee on Education and Training
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021, Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

As a teacher librarian in a Victorian Catholic all-boys College I strongly support the principle of all Australian schools – both primary and secondary – having school libraries staffed by fully-qualified teacher librarians.

Teacher librarians are unique education professionals who have qualifications and experience in teaching as well as a postgraduate qualification in Information Science (Librarianship). They add valuable services to schools as is outlined in the [Standards of professional excellence for teacher librarians](#) and a series of policies from the national bodies for school libraries in Australia – the Australian School Library Association (ASLA) and the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA).

Teacher librarians provide the opportunities and facilitate instruction that enable students to become life-long learners. Where teacher librarians still exist in schools, they are integral to the school's teaching and learning team. The teacher librarian plays a vital role in developing students' research and information literacy skills, which are so important in today's digital world, and developing an appreciation and love of reading.

In Victoria, like other Australian states and territories, the situation is dire for teacher librarians. There is a trend whereby teacher librarians are being replaced by librarians and library technicians who have **NO** formal teacher training. Teacher librarians possess curriculum knowledge and pedagogy and are able to understand student and teacher information needs.

As information literacy specialists, teacher librarians are uniquely positioned to understand how students learn and are knowledgeable with the curriculum. In working in all curriculum areas teacher librarians resource the curriculum with materials – print, audio visual and online - that cater for the wide range of student learning needs. Teacher librarians collaborate with teachers and encourage students to become independent life-long learners who need to be able to critically process information from an ever increasing array of sources.

Promoting reading for recreation and pleasure is a core function of teacher librarians. They have a sound knowledge of literature and are dedicated to assisting students find the most appropriate reading materials that suits their interests and abilities. In my own school I co-ordinate a specialised reading programme in Years 7 and 8 that encourages students to read while fostering positive and enjoyable experiences.

The role of a teacher librarian is so critical in today's digital climate. It is hard to accept that many people, including school principals, believe that computers, the Internet, the abundance of Web 2.0 technologies and social networking sites are rendering the teacher librarian's role and the school library redundant. But nothing could be further from the truth. Students need to acquire the critical thinking skills in order to become effective seekers and users of

information from books and online sources. Students need to think critically about the information they find and to use it in meaningful ways both in and outside of the classroom.

Australian and international research comprising over 60 studies has provided strong evidence that school libraries and teacher librarians have a positive impact on student learning and literacy.

A review of the research in Australia – the Lonsdale Report (2003) - [Impact of School Libraries on Student Achievement](#) indicated that adequately staffed, resourced and funded school library programs organised by fully-qualified teacher librarians made significant differences to student learning outcomes. Students in schools without trained teacher librarians were educationally disadvantaged.

In conclusion, all Australian primary and secondary schools must have qualified teacher librarians and adequately funded school libraries in order for students to gain the skills to be successful life-long learners.

REFERENCES

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Lonsdale, M. (2003). *Impact of school libraries on student achievement*. Camberwell, Victoria: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Yours faithfully,

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