Submission Number: 333
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This Submission has been prepared solely for the Inquiry and addresses two of the five Terms of Reference:

▪ **the future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy;**

Summary of main points:

School libraries and teacher librarians play an essential role in the development of educational outcomes, particularly in the area of literacy. The importance of literacy is recognised in the Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians and is reflected in the structure of the Draft Australian Curriculum in English. The expertise of teacher librarians is specialised and complements the work of classroom teachers in promoting and resourcing literacy and literature programs. Recreational reading plays a significant ongoing role in the development of students' literacy skills and their capacity to understand others. Teacher librarians are ideally placed to support classroom teachers' efforts to cater for the needs of all students, regardless of their age, gender, or level of literacy.

▪ **the impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarians;**

 Summary of main points:

The use of digital technologies to develop a virtual (digital) library at Overnewton Anglican Community College has significantly improved student and teacher access to resources, enabling learning to occur anywhere and at anytime. Online resources such as encyclopaedias and databases have been selected for inclusion in our virtual library because of their suitability for students' developmental stages and levels of literacy. Research has shown that collaboration between classroom teachers and teacher librarians can make a difference in the achievement of student learning outcomes. In a practical sense, access to digital technologies and discernment in their use has enabled teacher librarians to become more active agents and participants in the zone of intervention where real learning occurs.

This Submission contains no confidential information. It has been prepared for Overnewton Anglican Community College, 2-30 Overnewton Road, Keilor VIC 3036 by:

Andrea Dart, Head of Curriculum P-12

Dianne Galbraith, Head of Library (Taylors Lakes Campus)

Joy Whiteside, Head of Library (Keilor Campus)

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

Underpinned by the Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians, ACARA's newly released *Draft Australian Curriculum in English* comprises three strands. Each of the Language, Literature and Literacy strands can be developed and expanded through a fully integrated Library Program. Teacher Librarians support the literacy development of students of all ages and levels of ability. They provide essential and highly valued support for classroom teachers through their knowledge of current resources, specialised knowledge and skills in the area of collection management, up to date pedagogies, and programs to support the development of students' skills in each of the three strands.

Teacher librarians support classroom teachers to develop and improve students' skills and performance in literacy through the provision and facilitation of excellent resources and services within the school community. The value of this cannot be underestimated. A conclusion of the International Reading Association (2003) PISA Task Force Report was that "Performance in literacy is as strong a predictor of employment prospects as is a level of overall educational qualifications". This confirms the value of the contribution of teacher librarians to the improvement of educational and community outcomes.

Teacher librarians play a key role within the school in promoting and facilitating recreational reading. Wider-reading programs are developed in collaboration with classroom teachers and resourced by teacher librarians using their skill and expertise in collection management and resource knowledge. Such reading programs are responsive to the needs of students at particular developmental stages and aim to foster a life-long love of reading as a valuable and personally enriching activity.

Recreational reading supports literacy development and learning both within and beyond the school. It enables students to experience and develop a perspective on life, inviting them to expand their views of the world and their place within it. Such engagement encourages students' empathy for those from diverse cultural backgrounds and different life situations. Thinking about the dilemmas explored within texts enables the development of ethics, values and a deeper sense of justice. As well as developing literacy skills, reading is a safe and pleasurable way for students to spend leisure time.

Another literacy issue that has been well documented is gender-based reading habits and the challenges these habits pose to educators. An effectively integrated library program is responsive to the challenges presented by gender issues. The OECD (2009) PISA report *Equally Prepared for Life? How 15-year-old boys and girls perform in school*, addresses the significance of these gender issues on literacy standards. The research demonstrated that females had significantly higher reading achievement than males in all except two countries, Luxembourg and Spain. Whilst all students need to develop a positive approach to reading, this tends to be an even greater challenge for male students and their teachers. Teacher librarians play a crucial role in supporting and encouraging the endeavours of classroom teachers and by providing options and resources.

References:

International Reading Association (2003) *Report of the International Reading Association PISA Task Force.*

OECD (2009) Program for International Student Assessment report *Equally Prepared for Life? How 15-year-old boys and girls perform in school.*

Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs: *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*; December 2008.

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

A virtual (digital) library has been developed at Overnewton College in the last two years. This has better enabled us to meet the learning needs of our students in a proactive manner. The virtual library has improved the access our students have to resources that support teaching and learning. Resources are accessible from wherever the students can log on to the College Intranet: in the library, in the classroom at school, or at home. Digital technology has enhanced the role of the library by enabling the College's library resources to be accessible to students and teachers 24/7.

We know that students are comfortable using technology. Without providing a virtual library that meets students' learning needs, they would certainly resort to resources that are most familiar to them. These resources would include a search engine such as Google or an Encyclopaedia such as Wikipedia. These resources are not written for students as the target audience, may be inaccessible in terms of the students' literacy skills, and may provide inappropriate or misleading information. Digital technologies have enabled us to support our students' learning by providing online resources aligned to their learning needs. These resources include:

- Subscription-based online encyclopaedias and databases developed and presented at appropriately differentiated levels of literacy
- Research guides that guide and assist students to access a variety of resources appropriate to their learning needs
- Catalogued websites appropriate to their learning focus

The School Library Association of Victoria states that there is a large body of research that shows that teachers and teacher librarians planning and teaching collaboratively can improve student learning outcomes. At Overnewton, teacher librarians collaborate with teachers to support student learning through the provision of digital resources made possible by digital technologies. Cookson (2009) states that "In the age of print, people thought of knowledge as fixed and hierarchical, something that only great minds could change in a slow process of discovery. Not so in the age of electronic learning where knowledge creation is fluid, fast, and far more democratic." Our College library at Overnewton is part of this knowledge creation process. We are modelling best practice for students by enabling students to be involved in critical information use and knowledge creation.

Research has also shown that the "the school library becomes an important zone of intervention and socialisation process for learning how to function effectively in the complex informational and technological world beyond school," (Hay, L. and Todd, R., 2010). The zone of intervention has been defined as "That area in which an information user can do with advice and assistance what he or she cannot do alone or can do only with great difficulty,"

(Kulthau, C.C., 2004). Digital technologies have enabled our teacher librarians to be active within the zone of intervention for our students by facilitating use of the College's resources by students and teachers.

At Overnewton, digital technology enables the teacher librarians to continue to develop the College's virtual library. This will assist us to make the most of "zone of intervention opportunities" with students and teachers and enable us to provide library services to support learning anywhere and at any time.

References:

Cookson, P. W. (2009) What Would Socrates Say? In *Educational Leadership,* Vol 67:1

Hay, L. and Todd, R. (2010) School Libraries 21C: the conversation begins, In *SCAN,* Vol 29:1

Kulthau, C.C. (2004) *Seeking Meaning: A Process Approach to Library and Information Services*; Connecticut, Greenwood.

School Library Association of Victoria, *What a Teacher Librarian can do for you*, SLAV.