



Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools

Terms of Reference

To inquire into and report on the role, adequacy and resourcing of school libraries and teacher librarians in Australia's public and private schools. Specifically, the committee should focus on:

- the impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities;
- the future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy;
- the factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians;
- the role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school librarians; and
- the impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarians.

THE IMPACT AND POTENTIAL OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES TO ENHANCE AND SUPPORT THE ROLES OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANS

- Digital technologies should not mean that the role of the teacher librarian is dispensed with completely. It means that the role of the teacher librarian has changed. With an adequately equipped and funded library (in terms of technology – computers; video conferencing equipment etc) and ongoing training and support, teacher librarians could be at the forefront of changes in education in relation to digital technologies.
- The digital age allows opportunities to collaborate with other students in Australia and around the world using Web 2.0 tools, which a school library with adequate access to computers, staffed by a trained teacher librarian, can facilitate.

- Information Literacy is the ability to source and use information well. This includes deciding which information is relevant and whether a source of information is accurate and reputable. This is more important than ever with the plethora of information available on the internet. Teacher librarians incorporate information literacy skills into teaching and learning, particularly in relation to digital technologies, where students need to be able to identify the accuracy web sites they source.
- The importance of respecting copyright is also an issue which needs to be taught explicitly, especially with digital sources. It is all too easy for students to Google information, then cut and paste, without understanding anything they have read and sometimes without realising that they are breaking copyright laws. Students need to be taught how to reference properly, including how to write a bibliography. Teacher librarians, in collaboration with classroom teachers can help teach these skills.
- Teaching research skills is also an important part of a teacher librarian's job. Even though Google and other search engines sometimes make searching for information appear easy, students still need to develop skills in asking questions and thinking of key words which will help them to explore their topic in-depth.
- Most importantly, working with digital technologies is fun for kids and when they are enjoying their learning, they are engaged and on task. Teacher librarians, in collaboration with teachers, have the potential to make learning fun and engaging.

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