



Submitted by

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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:

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

School libraries are indispensable adjuncts to education, a base for generating innovative thinking, a stimulus to culture, and an aid to individual self-development. The Teacher librarian has a number of key roles in the school library and school, all of which will become more important as information becomes more readily available via the internet, databases and print media.

Reading fiction is still an integral part of learning throughout students lives whether for recreation or as support for curriculum studies.

Librarian Staff and teacher Librarian focus :

1. Teacher librarians are specialists in choosing literature for school libraries that are age, interest and ability appropriate for their clientele.

2. Teacher librarian keep up to date on the current authors, work and movies to tie in with what the students are demanding and reading.

3. Teacher librarian are able to recommend titles for book clubs held in classrooms, they work with classes on literature circles, they recommend titles and create lists of titles that will support a unit of inquiry at their own initiative or at the request of teachers.

4. Parents often use teacher librarians for recommendations of possible titles for their own children, and using their knowledge of the child and interests and ability, the teacher librarian is able to fulfill these requests.

5. The teacher librarian knows when a child is cruising in their reading and through their extensive knowledge of childrens or Young adult fiction, they are able to move students past their slump in reading.

6. They are able to recommend titles to reluctant readers that hook these young people into reading to become lifelong readers.

7. They are able to look at a collection of resources and have the expertise to weed resources based on a criteria - keeping the collection fresh and vibrant.

8. The teacher librarian takes a leadership role in organising and promoting literacy projects and events that engage learners and motivate them to become lifelong learners through book weeks, author visits, spotlights on authors and genres.

9. In primary schools the teacher librarian has the opportunity to read to students, having fiction read aloud is one of the great pleasures of life and one which improves vocabulary, understanding of the world and question forming. Reading aloud is an experience which is sadly declining in families with busy working parents, having the TL read aloud helps to fill this void.

10. The TL will read the collection they are stewards of, they will know what is in what book, and what student would enjoy it. They are able to recommend titles to individual students through asking the right questions to find the students interests and reading level.

11. The teacher librarian is able to protect the rights of the reader through policies of privacy and censorship following the Unesco School Library manifesto, (<http://archive.ifla.org/VII/s11/pubs/manifest.htm>) along with ASLA Library Bill of Rights (http://www.asla.org.au/policy/p_bor.htm) and ALIA

12. The school libraries provide students, staff, and families with open, non restricted access to a varied high quality collection of reading materials in multiple formats that reflect academic needs and personal interests. The teacher librarian in collaboration with students and staff, builds on this collection. The Library collection allows students to have choices of a wide variety of genres authors, much wider than would be available with a home library. In our case, our community does not have a local public library and as result, the parents use the library to extend the reading materials of all the children in the household as well as themselves. The school library does not need to be limited to servicing the students and staff of the school.

13. The school library supports the English curriculum which focuses on language, literature and literacy through the reading of fiction, collaboration in literature circles and literature studies. In many cases the Teacher Librarian is used by the staff as the fountain of knowledge for suggestions on titles to be read in English, as the Teacher Librarian usually has the most current knowledge of what is available. Many teachers find keeping abreast of new titles and their contents overwhelming and tend to fall back on titles which may be quite old. It is part of the Teacher Librarians mandate to not only keep current, but to read and be informed about the literary world.

14. Reading is inherently social. Readers choose their next book based on recommendations. They share books to stimulate discussion. School Libraries and Teacher Librarians offer a central place for forums on literature through

book clubs, online social reading sites, and individual discussions about books with students.

Information literacy

The library programme in a school that follows a flexible scheduling of classes, allows the teacher librarian to collaborate with teachers on the best fit for introducing and reinforcing information literacy skills. The teacher librarian is aware of the myriad of skills that will help students become information literate, and these skills are best taught in context in a meaningful way at the time of need.

Resource management.

The school library and staff are an integral part of supporting the school curriculum, through having a central place in which resources are managed. Teacher librarians are knowledge management and systems specialists, able to find the best options for access for all to ensure that school money is not wasted. At the school I am at the library staff and catalogue are used to catalogue all resources in the school across all departments. This ensures that resources are not needlessly replicated, stocktaking and reordering becomes easier, and resources can be retrieved from any location in the school for use. The OPAC is able to be searched by all staff, students and parents at any time.

Curriculum Support

School libraries and teacher Librarians are an essential part of Curriculum support

The school library is the centre of the information universe in a school. The teacher librarian in collaboration with staff will select materials that not only support, but enhance the curriculum. Teacher Librarians have the advantage of having a school perspective with regard to curriculum, they know what is being taught when, and when ordering new materials they are always conscious of what is needed. They are also able to think broader with regards to specific curriculum. Teacher Librarians are also networked professionals with organisations they can tap into 24/7 to ask their colleagues for recommendations on a myriad of topics - resources ideas, teaching ideas.

They do this through teamwork and collaboration, which we model as professionals. teamwork with parents ... teamwork with the students of course.etc.

The well funded library is also able to offer a range of resources in multiple formats - video, print, magazines, online databases and website collection through the library catalogue specific to the needs and abilities of the students. The Teacher Librarian will also create new resources with the curriculum in mind. The library is also the information hub with regard to where and how to locate resources that teachers and students are trying to locate locally or internationally, with the information specialists in the form of Teacher Librarians, the teachers and students will more than likely have the requested resources in their hands sooner rather than later.

The library as a space

The library is more than books and computers - it is a meeting place, a social place, a human talking and sharing place, a visual place. It is about the behind the scenes organisation of the library that understands what people want and make it happen with the positive welcoming accepting energies of everyone. It is normally the only space open after school is closed where students can meet up, do their homework together, catch up on reading or wait for someone to pick them up.

For further comments on this topic see the blog posts from the students at this location

http://www.dc.edu.hk/users/library/weblog/2d252/What_do_you_like_about_DC_school_library_.html

Policy development and maintenance

The library and the staff are at the center of many school policies - copyright/ethical use of information, academic honesty, information literacy policies are collaboratively designed for the whole school with the Teacher Librarian heavily involved with other stakeholders.

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

Technology is an integral part of the library and school curriculum support. Libraries use digital management systems to organise the schools resources. Many resources are in digital form, and students need to be taught how to access these resources in the most effective way. Libraries also utilise many web 2.0 applications in the form of blogs, wiki's, front pages, blog readers. They also create learning spaces through moodle or other learning platform. In many cases the teacher librarian is at the forefront of new technologies for learning.

RFID technology allows libraries to undertake stocktake with less effort and time, and allows for self checkout options as well as decreasing the time for manual check out.

E-books, audio books on ipods, video and e readers offer a new avenue for the library to explore and find new ways to connect these resources with the patrons.