



Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools

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

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

- Recent Federal government initiatives have funded increased numbers of computers in schools. The library is an ideal location to store laptop computers for use in the classroom. However library staffing needs to increase to ensure the computers are properly maintained and accurate loan records are kept of these valuable items. There are issues of storage as battery recharging and security require library AV offices to be modified and expanded. Renovations and storage provision is a cost to the school because it's not covered in the grants.
- Many new BER (Building the Education Revolution) libraries will have no qualified teacher librarian and no new books. There needs to be a renewed emphasis on schools having teacher librarians to foster reading among young people and to lead students through online and print learning resources

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

- Big literacy and reading comprehension challenges are facing schools, today. Many children are reluctant readers. By becoming better readers and by reading more, students' whole school experiences are enhanced. Teacher librarians are specialists in encouraging reading by using proven literacy techniques to improve skills of comprehension and enjoyment of books. Teacher librarians lead by using personal example of wide reading to foster enjoyment of reading among the young.
- As trained teachers, teacher librarians are able to communicate and design curriculum programs with teachers to implement whole school literacy programmes. They can fulfil the duty of care requirements as stated in the Education Acts, while working with small student groups or whole classes to implement literacy strategies and promote reading. Teacher librarians are

uniquely placed in schools to develop student literacy standards, focusing on schools' goal of improving literacy.

The factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians

- For school budgets, teacher librarians are as expensive as classroom teachers. The recent trend toward devolved, flexible staffing along with tight school budgets has resulted in the increased use of teacher librarians in classrooms and the replacement of teacher librarians with less expensive staff.
- There are less career opportunities in school libraries compared to the 1970's. There is little reason to enter a part of the teaching professional when there is a declining number of positions in government schools. School Principals need to see the link between improving literacy standards and having teacher librarians in the library.

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

- In Victoria, for decades until the 1980's, 'Library Branch' provided advice, support and standards for school libraries and teacher librarians. In contrast today, SCIS provides cataloguing support on a subscription basis for schools. The role of a central government funded body could be to unify the whole system by setting minimum standards and implementation of national priorities regarding literacy and learning. Today we need common policies for school libraries and information literacy across all states.
- There is possibility to set up the means by which cooperation exists between school libraries and other publicly funded libraries to ensure the maximum use of public information utilities and equity of access for all students. Voluntary bodies can span the libraries of other interested organisations to promulgate standards of information use and access ensuring minority groups e.g. people with disabilities receive adequate library services.

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

- Teacher librarians are always available to assist classroom teachers, whole classes of students and small groups of students sent to the library for specialist assistance. Teacher librarians have the skills and interest to ensure all students have access to the school computer network and the necessary skills and information required to find information resources that are appropriate to the students' needs. Teacher librarians are well suited to teach skills of accessing online information.
- Teacher librarians maintain web pages that direct student learning in ways that are appropriate to the particular school.
http://www.roxburghcollege.vic.edu.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=6&Itemid=4
- Search engines like *Google* are a great service for students, but they do not offer reliable information in all cases. Without training in search logic, many

users wander about drowning in data that may be distorted, inaccurate, irrelevant or biased. The teacher librarian is aware of and disseminates information about relevant learning resources available from reputable sources on a range of issues across the curriculum e.g. study skills and essay writing on the ERGO website. Up-to-date information is made available to students onsite and at home via the library links on the schools' websites.

- As life-long learners, students need to be information literate. Teacher librarians specialize in teaching information literacy. Information literacy includes critically reading print and examining non print resources to build knowledge. The information literate seek diverse viewpoints. Information literacy includes the ethical use of information and responsible use of social networking tools. We need libraries and librarians now more than ever to point the way through the complex information landscape

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