



**Queensland Department of Education and Training response to
Parliamentary Inquiry into School Libraries**

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

The provision of new library facilities within the Building Education Revolution (BER) initiative has sparked significant interest and excitement across Queensland state school communities.

In the majority of situations where new Libraries have been constructed, they have been designed to be aligned with and integrated into the vision and broader operations of schools. Where practical, internal and external spaces have been provisioned to maximise functionality and flexibility to meet broader school and community needs.

The new Library Spaces feature innovative design and approaches in the provisioning of learning spaces and resources that mirror contemporary teaching and learning practice.

The BER investment is stimulating the transition from traditional libraries to more contemporary learning spaces where research, information literacy, content and knowledge creation and presentation are encouraged through a digitally rich environment with enhanced functionality to improve digital literacy and learning.

Many schools have rethought and re-imagined their library spaces to be the hub of learning for their school. This together with the Digital Education Revolution (DER) investment has strengthened the importance of these facilities to meet students', teachers' and the broader communities' expectations and demand for digitally rich learning environments in a constantly evolving and challenging global digital landscape.

Inquiry focus: The future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improve educational and community outcomes, especially literacy.

In Queensland state schools, the school resource centre (or library) assists students to achieve information literacy, and become lifelong independent and interdependent learners, informed decision makers and effective communicators.

The teacher-librarian should play a key role in integrating the teaching of information literacy skills into all curriculum, providing a hub to access and to provide support for digital technologies, and ensuring that the teaching and learning experiences across the school incorporates the most up-to-date resources to contribute significantly to quality student outcomes.

The Queensland Roadmap for curriculum, teaching, assessment and reporting Years 1-9 provides a clear direction for school leaders and teachers to support the implementation of curriculum and includes practical examples of school curriculum plans to ensure high-quality teaching with a specific focus on student achievement.

Within the context of the Roadmap, whole of school curriculum planning across all key learning areas is essential. The teacher-librarian may play a key role in this planning process, providing leadership and expertise in supporting access and dissemination of consistent information, designing archival systems, ensuring shared

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access to ICT technologies and partnering with teachers to develop a greater knowledge base to support student learning.

There is potential for the future role of school libraries to play a greater role as the hub for school leaders and teachers in the consistent access, analysis and support of performance information and the utilisation of resources to improve student learning and achievements, in particular literacy.

Information literacy is a vital component of literacy. Literacy and ICT are specifically identified within the Australian Curriculum as general capabilities to be represented in each learning area.

In this environment, the evolving role of school librarians would be well placed to provide guidance to teachers and students to understand and utilise new technologies, research engines and methodologies and to critically challenge and interpret information and sources.

Inquiry focus: The factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians

The current work expectations of teacher librarians in Queensland state schools is articulated in the *Functional Job Requirements For the Position the Position of Teacher Librarian* (<http://education.qld.gov.au/health/docs/functionaljobreq/teacher-librarian-final-report.pdf>).

As with many specialist teaching areas, the role of teacher librarians is changing. The impact of new technologies is significant and that significance will grow as broadband width increases and emerging technologies, such as e-book readers, become more prevalent.

Looking forward over the coming decade it is difficult to imagine the role remaining as it is in 2010, and a broader question should be asked regarding the human resources required in schools to support teachers and student learning through access to physical and digital teaching and learning resources. Part of this question is whether there needs to be a convergence or divergence in the role – between an educator on one hand and a resource manager on the other. Another part is whether an individual on site is the approach that is the most efficient and productive service delivery model for the 21st Century.

Across all Australian jurisdictions there is a consistent yet variable shift towards school autonomy. With regards to the workforce, this means a greater voice and flexibility for principals in selecting the appropriate mix of staff to drive high standards of school performance. At the same time, schooling systems are reflecting on current processes for resource allocation to schools and school delivery methodologies in a world increasingly impacted by new technologies, globalisation and social and demographic change. Repositioning the role of the current teacher librarian needs to be considered within this broader context.

In addition, there appears to be a lack of quantitative data to support some assumptions about the role.

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For example, the Department holds no data that could form an evidence base to support the perceived limited promotional opportunities for teacher librarians. All departmental staff are supported through the *Developing Performance Framework* to identify career options and to seek professional development opportunities that will position them to achieve their career aspirations. Given the role and responsibilities for Classified Officers with the Department, teacher librarians are well-positioned to demonstrate the capabilities required for promotional opportunities within schools, such as Head of Curriculum or Deputy Principal. The notion of 'limited career pathways' needs to be supported by evidence. It may be suggested in the context of a singular pathway relevant to teacher librarians only, and there only within the confines of the Department as experience in such a role would appear to open opportunities in other work contexts such as public libraries. It is likely that, for teachers, a pathway into teacher librarianship is alternative to a career contained within the classroom.

Analysis of the Department's workforce data does indicate a higher age profile for teacher librarians in comparison to the broader teaching population (61.7% over 50 compared to 29.4% for teacher in general). The starting point for teacher librarians would need to be considered for this to have significance. Whilst relevant data is not readily available, one explanation may be that teachers tend to opt for a pathway into teacher librarianship when advanced into their career, hence a skewing of the age profile. The data is also significant only where supply chain issues arise. There is no current indication that the Department is facing a shortage of teacher librarians, nor that emerging supply will not meet future demand.

The most recent staff qualification survey, conducted in 2007, indicated that 72% of state school teachers who identified as a teacher librarian also identified as having a qualification relevant to their field. A further 13% identified as having had significant (5 years +) experience in their current role. The appointment of staff to teacher librarian positions is the responsibility of the school principal.

Currently it appears Queensland higher education tertiary programs to gain a qualification as a teacher librarian are limited to postgraduate programs delivered through the Queensland University of Technology (Masters of Education – Teacher Librarianship, Master of Education - Information-Learning Connections, Graduate Certificate in Education - Information-Learning Connections). Given the emergence of online delivery of such programs, it is likely that Queensland teachers may be undertaking postgraduate studies through higher education providers located in other jurisdictions. Further investigation is required to determine the full range of options available for achieving an appropriate qualification, and to determine the business drivers for higher education providers that are not providing appropriate programs.

In Queensland the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT) only registers an individual as a 'teacher'. There is no differentiation between teaching areas or qualifications, nor sector (primary, secondary). The QCT considers it is the employer's role to determine whether a teacher is appropriately qualified for employment in a specific role. People who have undertaken teacher librarian qualifications may choose to update their qualifications on the QCT register, but there is no requirement for them to do so.

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

The future role of the teacher librarian and school libraries will encompass a greater utilisation of new technology, enhanced information management systems and multimedia platform facilities to meet student needs.

Within this context, there is a role for the different levels of government and local communities to support the development of school libraries to provide a greater range of services both in and outside of the physical school environment, particularly in rural and remote schools and communities.

For example, the Cherbourg Indigenous Knowledge Centre (IKC) provides a direct link with the local community and specifically focuses on assisting students to develop and value literacy skills and to feel pride in their history through the use of multimedia access.

In addition to the traditional library role of lending students books, IKC operates a homework club, assists in the collection and sharing of local Indigenous history amongst students and the community, provides an environment for community based activities to operate and undertakes educational and functional computer and cinematic classes.

Digital media developed at IKC, often involving members of the community, are recognised as an important way of storing local cultural knowledge, teaching values and sharing opinions.

There is evidence through programs such as Community Renewal that developing a holistic approach across government and community can result in improved outcomes for that community.

The enhancement of libraries and a greater involvement of the community in the development of the teacher-librarian role would be seen as a future partnership arrangement which could encourage a greater involvement of students in their own literacy and ICT development.

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

Digital technologies are a key driver in strengthening the role of school libraries in a transformative learning agenda. Historically, libraries were designed as resource repositories to manage a collection of scarce resources (Treadwell, 2008). Digital technologies now enable libraries as information hubs and gateways to unlimited information and resources.

The skills of information literacy were once the fundamental skills of a teacher-librarian. These skills now make way for a new construct known as 'informed learning' (Bruce, 2008). Informed learning is about using information to learn and in the context of digital technologies is a blend of non-digital and digital practices: an amalgamation of media, technical, visual, language, critical and information literacies.

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The library as a learning space provides the physical, digital and professional learning resources to support the development of digital literacies within schools. A digitally literate informed learner can: search, retrieve, authenticate, evaluate, synthesise, summarise, infer, create, re-purpose and re-imagine information and knowledge from a diverse range of content formats. A school library as the information and knowledge hub needs to provide services that lead the informed learning process for all learners in a school.

Digital technologies enable opportunities for learners to publish, create, re-purpose, review and respond to real and authentic contexts. eLearning spaces and web 2.0 environments provide content platforms for students to explore self authoring and publishing multi-modal texts.

Digital content applications also provide opportunities to create dynamic multimedia based content incorporating multimodal texts. School libraries in a transformative learning agenda will lead higher order media rich content development, storage, discovery and access through efficient digital content and learning management systems.

Digital technologies are driving an emergence of multi-modal texts in the market that challenge the traditional understanding of a resource. These new texts incorporate a growing range of content types including: audio, video, animations, simulations and in the context of literature also include eBooks and Virtual books. Many of these resources are openly available on the web and as such value add to the collections accessible to school libraries, based on the capacity to discover these resources.

In order for digital technologies to have a transformative impact on the services school libraries can offer, a skilled teacher-librarian/information and knowledge worker is needed. Current training and accreditation systems do not necessarily guarantee a teacher-librarian with qualifications has the required skills to fully utilise digital technologies in a contemporary library/learning setting.