Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools
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The future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy

Summary

Unique perspective and depth of knowledge
Teacher librarians teach a range of students in different academic years - they are aware of a continuum of literacy needs and also of the teaching strategies to address those needs. Teacher librarians assist students who are doing assignments in any subject – they are extremely familiar with the literacy demands which accompany research tasks. Teacher librarians have a huge impact on students' enjoyment of literature, in their literature sessions.

Experts in diverse literacies
Indeed, teacher librarians are experts in teaching multiliteracies - information literacy, visual literacy, critical literacy and digital literacy. It is their core business to assist students to access, evaluate and generate an array of meanings in visual, multimedia, literary and factual texts.

Facilitators in transforming information and creating lifelong learners
Teacher librarians teach students to comprehend and assess information, and to transform information into their own personal knowledge and understandings. These are essential literacy skills for students at school, in the work force and as lifelong learners.

Recommendations: staffing
We need trained teacher librarians in every school library – **transforming information into personalised knowledge-for-action is a higher order, problem solving, constructivist process which is essential in producing empowered 21st century citizens.**

Recommendations: teaching approach
Team teaching is the most desirable approach to using the teacher librarian effectively. It supports the wide dissemination into classrooms of HOW to teach these vital skills.

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Information literacy: **Collaboration with classroom teachers and embedded learning**
I find *The statement on information literacy by ASLA and ALIA* at
http://www.asla.org.au/policy/information.literacy.htm to be an excellent summary of what should happen in the future in school libraries.

"Information literate learners are able to access, process, organise, create and present information in a range of ways that make meaning for them and all the construction of personal knowledge. Information skills must be embedded across the school curriculum and explicitly taught in the context of teaching and learning programs. Effective teacher librarians are expert in collaboratively developing and implementing such an approach."

A trained teacher librarian in every school library
Teacher librarians teach students HOW to create texts in their own words – to prevent a "cut and paste" approach to assignments. These paraphrasing skills are transformational – they require explicit "step by step" teaching and practice – this is expert teaching.

This is why we need trained teacher librarians in every school library – transforming information into personalised knowledge-for-action is a higher order, problem solving, constructivist process which is essential in producing empowered 21st century citizens.

These information literacy skills, taught by teacher librarians, will continue to be important in the future:
- how to establish the purpose, audience and context of any text
- how to navigate digital texts and how to generate new digital texts [digital literacy]
- how to critique a text for the purpose, expertise and bias of its author [critical literacy]
- how to preview online and paper-based texts for main ideas
- how to "uncover" the structuring within a text [eg cause and effect language chains]
- how to make connections across texts, to synthesise key concepts [inferential reading skills]
- how to make individualised notes to summarise information, HOW to restate the main ideas of a text
- how to provide evidence for interpretations of texts [for example, visual literacy skills in interpreting a visual text]
- how to create factual and literary texts, **in one's own words**, using the language and layout required for the genre/application

Information literacy incorporates diverse literacies
In the future, teacher librarians will continue to teach students to navigate texts in digital and paper-based contexts, by demonstrating how to use contents listings, indexes and glossaries, as well as menus and navigation bars. Whether students are interpreting and creating information via images, blogs, wikis, books, magazines, online tools, documentaries or in films, teacher librarians will continue to build students' success by explicitly teaching the skills required by diverse literacies.

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Team teaching: Widely disseminated knowledge and skills about information literacy

In my time as teacher librarian at Whalan Public School and at Windsor High School in NSW, my principals supported team teaching. This means that I was able to DEMONSTRATE to teachers the specific skills involved in teaching information literacy.

The teachers I worked with gained far greater confidence in teaching students the NUTS and BOLTS of how to deconstruct factual texts in their own classrooms, how to reword information from another source, and how to create their own factual texts. A time when schools began to use their teacher librarians for "Relief from face to face" teaching, my principal said to me: "There is no way I am stopping team teaching in this school."

> *Why is team teaching with the teacher librarian vital for our students?*
> *Students benefit when teacher librarians work collaboratively. Team teaching is the ideal context. It allows for a joint presentation or for work in groups. Although teacher librarians can achieve great benefits for students when they teach without another teacher present, I believe that there are very positive "flow on" effects for teachers and students when team teaching with the teacher librarian occurs. Deep understandings about how factual texts work can be consolidated for students by the classroom teacher who now has the language and confidence to deconstruct texts in a more sophisticated way.*
>
> *Team teaching is the most desirable approach to using the teacher librarian effectively. It supports the wide dissemination of HOW to teach these vital skills.*

Inferential reading and critical literacy

Teacher librarians teach effective comprehension at an inferential level, identified by NAPLAN testing as being of crucial importance. Teacher librarians assist students to pick up implied meanings, and to make connections between visual and written elements within texts. They are skilled at assisting students to think deeply and to solve problems.

Teacher librarians also support the teaching of critical literacy skills and should continue to do so in the future. It will continue to be essential for students to be able to sift information, detect bias, describe persuasive techniques and analyse information for accuracy, reliability and expertise.

> *Teacher librarians teach students how to prioritise information - a major skill for life*
> *Whether it is teaching students how to generate higher order research questions, demonstrating how to transform and personalise information, explaining copyright or teaching students how to critique information sources for reliability and accuracy, teacher librarians in the future will continue to support students in navigating their way through their assignments in an increasingly complex informational and technological world.*

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Personalised learning experiences for students

Teacher librarians have an outstanding depth of expertise about the interests and reading needs of enthusiastic readers within a school. They also have extensive knowledge of the range and diversity of literary texts. They are able to suggest books and websites which may appeal to less enthusiastic readers. Teacher librarians are skilled at sharing books in a way which builds great enjoyment and ALSO understanding. For example, when working with students from culturally diverse backgrounds, in their teaching sessions teacher librarians "unpack" unknown key words and contexts so that these students are able to access the subtexts and idioms which are present in many literary texts.

> *The unique perspective offered by teacher librarians*
> *Teacher librarians are a rich and unique resource for schools because they are able to combine a whole school focus [their role connects them with every year at their school] with an insight into students' individual reading tastes and academic challenges [as students come in to request resources and assistance; as they teach students how to make notes and tackle assignments]. As a result, they often belong to school learning support teams and literacy committees to share their understandings about the needs of specific students.*

Programs to enrich literacy skills and build appreciation of literature

Teacher librarians of the future will continue to:

- Read aloud to students and run literature circles
- Coordinate reading challenges; run reading cafes; run peer tutoring reading schemes
- Develop special interest collections for students' needs [e.g. graphic novels]
- Use book raps – online learning experiences – to support literature or non-fiction studies
- Use digital tools to build students' thinking and writing skills [Storybird, Prezi, Wordle, Carnegie Library My Storymaker etc]
- Use the internet and Web 2.0 technologies to support literacy skill development: Blogs and wikis to share ideas and build knowledge together; virtual excursions/exhibitions and video conferences
- Teach students to generate their own multimedia texts for specific audiences, contexts and purposes [e.g. Powerpoint, Animoto, Wallwisher, Edu Glogster, Xtranormal]

> *Teacher librarians inspire a love of literature*
> *Many of us know that our love of books came from a particular classroom teacher or teacher librarian. Sometimes we can even go back in time to the day a particular picture book was read which has marked us indelibly. We can remember hearing the words read aloud and discussing our favourite characters or events afterwards.*
>
> *With their extensive knowledge of Australian fiction, and their passion for stories, teacher librarians will continue to inspire new generations of readers. Let us make sure that they do not become an endangered species. The health of a nation rests on the capacity for empathy and a rich imagination which good literature evokes.*

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

Summary

Teacher librarians as leaders in ICTs and pedagogy
Teacher librarians have expertise in information literacy - in assisting staff and students to navigate their way through a 21st century sea of information. They teach how to select and evaluate the best digital tools for a learning purpose. They work with students to personalise their understandings - to transform information into knowledge.

Rich and purposeful teaching experiences are the key
There are a number of superb examples of digital technologies to enhance reading and literacy. Teacher librarians are frequently leaders in their schools in using these technologies effectively. Their teaching occurs in a context supportive of multimodal literacies, syllabus requirements and authentic purposes for reading, responding, sharing and creating texts.

A trained teacher librarian in every school library
The importance of STAFFING schools with trained teacher librarians is one of the most important potential ramifications of the Inquiry. Teacher librarians make a unique contribution to schools - they lead in terms of digital technologies AND they understand that students require explicit teaching about digital literacy skills.

A trained teacher librarian in every school library is the ultimate goal because it is the teaching expertise and specialist knowledge of teacher librarians which truly maximises the benefits of digital technology.

Resourcing to support essential 21st century literacies: An interactive whiteboard in every library
Well resourced libraries in terms of hardware and software are essential to maximise the benefits of digital technology for students. It should be an absolute minimum that all school libraries contain an interactive whiteboard and a bank of computers to enable individual student creation of multimedia texts.

Professional learning
With the provision of interactive whiteboards, it is important that all teacher librarians receive training in their use.

Sharing resources – online repository
There are high quality teacher librarian-generated resources which utilise the new digital technologies. Wherever possible, sharing these resources in a centralised Australia-wide online repository should be encouraged once the National Curriculum is underway.

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

What's happening currently with digital technologies?

There are a number of superb examples of digital technologies to enhance reading and literacy. Teacher librarians are frequently leaders in their schools in using these technologies effectively. This teaching occurs in a context supportive of multimodal literacies and authentic purposes for reading, responding, sharing and creating texts.

In NSW

The list below contains examples being used by teacher librarians, taken from *The teachers digital toolkit* at http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/digital_rev/libraries/toolkit/index.htm

- **Animoto:** Create videos from images
- **Classtools.net:** Create educational games
- **Glogster EDU:** Create interactive multimedia posters
- **Power League:** Create an online debate
- **Prezi:** Use a canvas presentation tool
- **Storybird:** Collaborative storytelling
- **Timetoast:** Create a timeline
- **Wordle:** Create word clouds to summarise main concepts of a unit for students

The Teaching and Learning Exchange

Other digital tools being used to support information literacy development can be found in the ***Web 2.0 tools in the information skills process Sites2See*** created by the NSW DET School Libraries and Information Unit and located in TaLe at https://portalsrvs.det.nsw.edu.au/LRRView/10457/10457_00.htm

Such tools include online mind mapping and thinking tools to assist in student research and problem solving for assignment briefs. The newly released NSW DET blog is providing an incredible opportunity for students to draft, publish and share ideas for authentic purposes and audiences. Some schools use platforms such as Moodle or OneNote 2007 live sharing sessions.

For NSW DET teachers and students, multimedia learning objects from the Learning Federation are available online through TaLe [The Teaching and Learning Exchange] which is a source of many other resources to enhance reading, such as the Writers talk video series. TaLe offers **Sites2See** and **Laptop Wraps** as helpful pathfinders for students to excellent websites on specified topics. Students and teachers can create their own Wraps and the Centre for Learning Innovation also offers Learning Activity Wizards, as templates to assist teachers to make their own tasks for interactive whiteboards.

Teachers and students using SMART software for resource creation

Some teacher librarians have the opportunity to use interactive whiteboards to jointly explore the world with students. A number of teacher librarians are teaching their students to create their own quizzes using the Lesson Activity Toolkit in the SMART Notebook software, to demonstrate student understanding of key concepts in a unit of work.   In my own work with the School Libraries and Information Literacy unit, I create SMART notebooks for use by teacher librarians. Many teacher librarians share the resources they have made and this collaboration and sharing is wonderful.

The importance of teaching and the role of the teacher librarian
As has always been the case, the successful integration of digital technologies will rely on the expert teaching of rich concepts. Quality teaching imperatives will continue to require that the digital technologies facilitate the gaining of deep knowledge and understanding, and that they allow for substantive communication.

The teacher librarian will continue to have much to offer in teaching students how to construct focus questions to explore, how to work as a team, and how to refine research topics.

Inquiry learning to solve problems and complete assignment briefs
Inquiry learning approaches will be well supported by the appropriate use of digital technologies because they facilitate problem solving and the joint construction of knowledge.

IE There is now an increased technological capacity for students to pose their own questions for inquiry, then draft their responses online using social networking technologies, for collaboration with other students.

Future trends

The 2009 *Horizon* report predicts 6 key future trends in ICT at http://www.nmc.org/pdf/2009-Horizon-Report-K12.pdf which will have the capacity to enhance and broaden the role of teacher librarians as ICT leaders in schools:

- Collaborative Environments
- Online Communication Tools
- Mobile devices
- Cloud Computing
- Smart Objects
- The Personal Web

These trends towards increasingly personalised and collaborative digital technologies will continue to provide teacher librarians with opportunities to teach students how to evaluate information, how to prioritise what is important to communicate, and how to communicate together in the context of the connected classroom: through virtual excursions, online exhibitions, video conferencing, blogs, wikis and free online digital tools.

Teacher librarians are information specialists
Without expert teaching in a digital context, students will continue to have limited skills in conducting effective web searches, and evaluating and prioritising online information. Teacher librarians are information specialists with the expertise to demonstrate these vital skills which are fundamental to information literacy.