



INQUIRY INTO SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND TEACHER LIBRARIANS IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS

Billions of government money has been spent on the physical building of libraries. However it is imperative now that due consideration is given to the adequate staffing and resourcing of school libraries to support teacher librarians in the development of the resource collections and educational programs to meet the educational needs of the staff and children in their schools.

See document titled: Learning for the future: developing information services in schools 2nd ed.

FACTORS INFLUENCING RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Funding is needed in a number of areas:

Suitably qualified and adequate staffing of school libraries in particular primary schools

Provide for fulltime and ongoing employment opportunities to create stability

Provision for training places to encourage teachers to train as teacher librarians

Provision of ongoing mentoring programs for newly trained teacher librarians

Provision for ongoing professional development to update knowledge especially in digital technologies and their place in the curriculum

FUTURE POTENTIAL OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANS TO CONTRIBUTE TO IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL AND COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

The role of teacher librarian has always been an exciting and rewarding position in schools. They are often at the forefront of change, finding new ways to use the many resources both book and electronic with students and teachers.

They are often the first point of contact for staff seeking resources to support their work in the classrooms.

They are the link between the student and books and are always promoting literature and reading as a valuable recreational pursuit.

They are often also at the forefront of developing the information literacy skills of students, by encouraging the development of programs that instruct students on how to extract information from the many online and book resources at their disposal.

Teacher librarians are an essential part of the school curriculum and with the newly developed contemporary libraries with new state of the art digital technologies they are well placed to lead the school community to develop global citizens.

PERSONNAL EXPERIENCE

Since qualifying as teacher librarian in 1984 I have worked in a number of Catholic primary schools in Victoria whilst it has been a rewarding position in the many schools I have worked in it has also been a constant battle to justify your role. It has been very exciting working with many students and seeing their love of literature develop over the years and the excitement they experience when they find that special book or that one piece of information they need. The frustration is trying to deliver quality service and educational programs that is constrained by the schools administration (due to lack of government funding) to allocate budget money to adequately staff the library. In deed in all the schools I have worked in the hours you are employed are determined by how many classes in the school that you have to take to give classroom teachers their release time. Therefore you are not involved in teacher planning which is vital to making links with the resources of the library and making connections between the classroom and library.

As I am now in my fifties I despair who will be trained to take up the challenge and work in school libraries if the issues outlined above are not addressed and very soon. It's a great role, I love it and I enjoy the work with the children and it would be a shame to see those great new libraries become white elephants when there is such great potential to achieve so much more to assist the children of the future become literate.

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Reference

Learning for the future: developing information services in schools 2nd ed. (2002) ALIA

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