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Submission



to

**Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians
in Australian schools**

prepared by

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Aora welcomes the Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools.

The 21st century has seen teacher librarian hours cut and school libraries under resourced.

The trained teacher librarian managing a well resourced library is integral to the learning progress of young Australians

In 2010 we live in a very visual world. If we want our children to be literate we must inspire, encourage and teach the enjoyment of reading through literary experiences.

A trained professional teacher librarian can select a book from the shelves or pull up a screen on the computer to make that experience fun and often life changing.

Travelling home across Sydney from a KOALA Awards Day on a train I observed a group of school children, heads in books reading or chatting happily about autographs from authors and illustrators. it was a moment in time for me to say "job well done" to the teacher librarian travelling with them.

..... Date.....

Miranda Harrowell AM

President Aora Children's Literature Research Centre NSW Inc

About Aora

Aora is a priceless cultural heritage collection of children's books, periodicals with a small audio-visual collection, which reflects the reading interests of children in New South Wales since white settlement in 1788. The collection contains over 20,000 items.

Aora's Vision is to be organised, resourced and respected nationally and internationally as a rich treasure house for the celebration and study of children's literature.

Its mission is to provide for the appreciation, study, research and celebration of children's literature for diverse users including scholars, students, librarians, writers, publishers, historians, children and families, by managing and preserving the Aora collection as a significant and unique cultural heritage and educational asset.

Who runs Aora?

Aora is an incorporated association. Its management committee, members and volunteers have extensive professional expertise and experience in school and public librarianship, teaching, publishing, writing and researching children's and young adult literature.

Our Patron is Dr Maurice Saxby AM world renowned expert on Australian children's literature.

Aora is a non-profit organisation listed on ROCO (the Register of Cultural Organisations).

Aora is housed within the St Peters Primary School grounds in the school's original kindergarten building. It is managed in partnership with the NSW Department of Education and Training.

Aora's responses to the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry:-

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

- The school library collection develops and nurtures an appreciation and love of reading, books and literature which is sustained throughout a person's later life, based on the school learning experience.
- The school library supports and encourages the nurturing role of parents for shared reading and provides a meeting place in a local community.
- The teacher librarian's training, expertise and knowledge are the key elements in opening the world of literature and information resources to the child, finding ... "the right book for the right child at the right time".
- The teacher librarian assists students to navigate through the vast range of information resources, both print and in electronic formats, with discernment and to use them efficiently and effectively.
- The teacher librarian understands the link between reading, literacy and lifelong learning and achievement of each student's potential and develops programmes to achieve these goals for students at both the class and individual level.
- The teacher librarian has a specific role in nurturing the reluctant reader in collaboration with other teaching staff.

the role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions partnering with and supporting school libraries

- Aora partners with St Peters Primary School (NSW DET) to house and manage the Aora Centre and its collection
- Public libraries provide for the lifelong reading and informational needs of people in their local communities. Their collections and services support students at school and tertiary institutions but do not in any way duplicate or substitute for the school library or academic library.
- To achieve curriculum outcomes the school librarian liaises with public libraries for research e.g. studies of the local community.
- In 3 States of Australia Children's and Youth Literature Centres work with school libraries, public libraries, communities, and the broad children's publishing sector to promote the joys of reading as a critical aspect of literacy and community cultural development. These established and emerging centres (WA, Victoria, Western Sydney Project and now Aora) do not enjoy stable funding although their reach into the community is impressive. These centres complement the work of teacher librarians but need to be funded for sustainability and viability and in order to deliver to wide audience of need.
- programmes such as the NSW Premier's Reading Challenge and the MS Society's Readathon have been supported in every school and have been highly successful in both the school and wider community in encouraging children to read; these

programmes often become a family event, involving members of the wider family and neighbours

- Since 1987 schools in NSW have participated in KOALA (Kids Own Australian Literature Award), a children's choice award. Teacher librarians manage the process and enable students to attend the presentation day where they meet their favourite authors and illustrators. KOALA is a non profit organisation with a management committee that includes school librarians. There are similar awards in other states
- Since 1946 teacher librarians have played a vital role in the celebration of Australian children's literature recognised by the CBCA (Children's Book Council of Australia Awards). It is a time when children's creativity is encouraged with writing projects and book character parades, for example. Parents, students, teachers and community members join together to recognise and celebrate children's literature and reading. The school librarian is the coordinator with the expertise to ensure the success of these programs. Local newspapers and local politicians support the programs as they realise their importance in supporting children's education.
- Teacher librarians identify books in their collection that deal with social issues, such as bullying
- School students who volunteer to work in their school libraries gain skills and insights which can help form their future careers

the factors influencing recruitment and development of school libraries

- Lack of teaching institutions offering courses on children's literature. Developing good readers is more than just using graded readers. It about challenging students with a wide variety of books and reading materials and being able to keep the reader up to date with books they will like eg fantasy
- Lack of school funding to recruit teacher librarians for 5 days a week
- Schools employ more IT staff at the sacrifice of teacher librarians
- Antiquated computerised library management system in NSW school libraries
- Schools unable to provide release time and funding for teacher libraries to attend seminars and conferences on children's and young adult literature. These experiences inspire participants and provide valuable networking and sharing of ideas

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

- Whatever format information for the use of students and teachers comes in it needs to be managed and stored so it is accessible to users. Teacher librarians have managed the changes and developments in technology over many years and have been responsive, despite limited resources to the challenges of digitisation and online networks.
- It is the teacher librarian with special skills, qualifications and experience who can evaluate and deliver appropriate material in diverse formats to children locally and in remote locations.
- The web provides opportunities to network, to develop collaborative and integrated systems that enhance access to material. Databases linked across school library collections are critical to the development of school libraries at the heart of education and learning.
- The web also provides innovative access to creative literacy programming such as on line literature festivals (Queensland) and to promoting and marketing creative writing projects.
- Technology also assists in publishing and making widely accessible the imaginative work of children and young people. In all these cases, school libraries have a role to play and must be adequately resourced to access relevant and up to date hardware and software.
- Teacher librarians are well placed to teach students, parents and the community about internet safety and how to check the validity of websites.