



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

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

**The factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians**

Budget Cuts. Until 1987 Teacher-Librarians in the Northern Territory were above establishment in the staffing formula. This meant that school libraries were allocated a professional Teacher-Librarian with specialist qualifications in both teaching and library and information management. Many experienced teachers like myself took up the challenge and commitment to undertake post graduate studies in their own time and at their own expense to complete the Graduate Diploma in Library and Information Services. Most of us continued to teach full time while completing the studies. The reward was the opportunity for a career change within the school system, a change that re-energised teachers and provided schools with a valuable educational specialist. The new teacher-librarians through their studies were familiar with new thinking, methodologies and trends in teaching and learning including the use and role of information technology in education.

In the 1990's most urban primary and secondary schools in the NT had a qualified teacher-librarian. Author visits, book fairs, library week were important events on the school calendar. Teacher-Librarians engaged in co-operative program planning and teaching with individual class teachers. The Professional body School Library Association of NT, (SLANT), was a vibrant and active group that met regularly, sharing knowledge and ideas to invigorate educational programs. This no longer happens as teacher-librarians do not have the extra energy required to attend yet another meeting after work or at weekends. A Silent Reading Program was adopted by most schools where 10-15 minutes of each day was dedicated to reading and everybody in the school read for pleasure. This program is no longer running. Four dedicated Library Consultant Positions were established to provide professional support and advice. All of these positions have now disappeared as the Consultants retired and their positions were not filled. The valuable guidance and services they provided are no longer available. The statistics they provided annually on individual school resourcing provided a guideline that was frequently relied upon by teacher-librarians to support various submissions for resources. There has been nobody to collate and distribute this information for the past three years. The erosion continues with teacher-librarians being asked to take on 50% teaching load on top of managing the library and its associated programs. Today many of the Middle Schools in the Darwin area do not have a

teacher-librarian. When students come to senior colleges from these feeder schools they have very limited knowledge of how to use library resource centres or how to access resources, a skill vital for survival in an information age.

I manage a Senior College Library servicing the information needs of 1100 students and approximately 120 staff. My statistics show that on average 750 patrons visit the library each day. Until this year the library was staffed by two Teacher-Librarians and two library technicians. The two teacher-librarians accommodated extended hours of opening from 7.45am to 6pm using a split shift roster. Since the beginning of the 2010 school year the library staff has been cut so that we now have one Teacher-Librarian, who also manages all Foreign and Exchange students and the College Yearbook. My proposal to maintain both t-l positions and provide formal timetabled library and information classes for all Year 10 students was rejected by the Senior Management Team on the grounds that it did not give any teaching lines to the college. Due to further cuts to the college teaching staffing formula by the Education Department, the college needed extra teachers to cover classes so the library program was rejected. In addition the library budget was cut by 46% a budget that had not increased over the past five years. Why would teachers invest time, money and effort to complete tertiary library qualifications when schools show little support for the position? Until the position is taken out of the staffing formula nothing will change. Education Departments must commit to providing all school with a trained full time professional to manage the resource centre.

There is also an urgent need for school Principals to have a sound knowledge of the role of the t-l and value the contribution they can make to the educational programs of the school.

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

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

The impact of these technologies on student learning is well documented. For the past 10 years technology has been pouring into schools. Principals know the importance of having a good ratio of computers to students. Interactive Whiteboards are a wonderful tool but little resources have been made available to provide teachers with the PD required to mastering the technology. However over the past few years there has been a trend towards the philosophy that Google is the source of all knowledge.