



This Submission to:

House Standing Committee on Education and Training

relates to the proposed

Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools

The contents of this submission specifically relates to:

- ◆ 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;
- ◆ the impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarians.

I am submitting arguments and recommendations as an individual, based on my experiences as a Teacher Librarian currently employed by the NSW Department of Education. More specifically, I base my observations on 30 years of primary school teaching experience, 10 years of which have been as a Teacher Librarian in 7 different rural NSW public schools.

I have recently updated my qualifications and skills by completing Post-graduate study in Teacher Librarianship through Charles Sturt University. My arguments are based on my experiences, as well as study of research and findings related to the role of Teacher Librarians in schools.

I aim to draw to your attention:

The central role of school libraries, and their Teacher Librarians, in the development of student achievement and literacy attainment.

The need for adequate funding for school library programs and services, including their reading literacy programs and digital literacy initiatives.

So, what's new ?

The explosion in the information environment in the last 10+ years means that we need to significantly increase the effectiveness of student use of ICTs. Rapid and continuing advances in ICTs are changing the way people share, use, develop and process information. Students are commonly involved in

collaborative and participatory digital spaces. But **just because students are using the internet more than ever as an information source, it does not necessarily lead to improved information skills.**

The traditional Librarian, who was once just the “keeper of books”, is no longer relevant to the needs of the school community. The 2010 Teacher Librarian is an **information literacy specialist** who has the expertise to find information from a multiplicity of formats.

The Role of the Teacher Librarian in Primary schools

Teacher Librarians are curriculum leaders, information specialists and information service managers.

Teacher Librarians can empower students and teachers to increase their skill level in all aspects of Information Literacy processes. In 2003 Michele Lonsdale completed her report for ASLA, and identified **8 key ways that school libraries impact on student learning outcomes**, and noted the contribution made by TLs to the acquisition of Information Skills.

Qualified TLS have **expertise in digital technology** that they could share by mentoring, modelling use during collaborative teaching sessions, or conducting professional development sessions within their school. Their **vital contribution to the professional development** of all staff members ensures that there is a planned approach to the use of ICTs.

TLs regularly explore the learning potential of emerging ICTs and Web 2.0 tools and resources, and so they support students and teachers in their knowledge and use of these. This is part of the **changing role** of TLs.

The teaching staff in all schools need guidance in accessing and using information. This ongoing Professional development can take place **EVERY DAY** in **collaborative teaching sessions** at **NO ADDITIONAL COST** to Education Authorities!

Tls can teach others how to find, critically evaluate and use information. In a society suffering from information overload, who else is best placed to do this?

What are the obstacles currently preventing the fulfilment of this role?

The continuing change, shift and expansion of the role of the Teacher Librarian in the Information Age **has not been supported by a corresponding shift in policy or funding** to support this expanded role.

Insufficient staffing formula – some schools only have a TL on site for 1 or 2 days a week. In my case I am employed for 3 days per week, even though my Library management role is no less than in a larger 5 day a week Library.

Unqualified Librarians employed – is this because of lack of prior planning, insufficient recruitment of qualified TLs or because the role of the TL in a school is not valued?

Qualified Librarians are employed but they teach in other areas of the school program – eg **Release from Face-to-Face teaching**, or providing Executive release time.

Poor understanding of the role of the Teacher Librarian by the Principal, hence no support for the valuable programs that a TL can provide.

Inadequate support Clerical assistance so TLs spend valuable time on Library management tasks. Many primary TLs (including myself) have NO Clerical assistance at all!

How can we fix it?

Libraries must continue to change to meet the needs of students, teachers and community. Teacher Librarians **can lead this change**, but only if supported by policy and funding.

Funding should be provided so that all school Library services are capable of becoming dynamic learning environments – there needs to be time available for **collaborative planning, implementing and evaluating of authentic learning experiences** that enhance Information Literacy in a planned and systematic way. In this way Information Literacy is embedded into all curriculum areas, so not only do students learn the skills, but they can then transfer them to other areas of study.

All primary schools need a **full time, qualified TL**, who is part of an instructional team who work in a collaborative quality teaching environment.

School Library programs should not be constrained by the need for the TL to provide Release From Face to Face Teaching. **Collaborative teaching is essential to improved learning outcomes** for both students and the participating classroom teacher.

What systematic research has been done into **how TLs are currently being used** in schools? The results MAY SHOCK YOU!

Do Education Departments **value Information services**? If not, why not?

Research is needed so that discoveries and new knowledge can lead to **improved Information Literacy skills** – this for the benefit of students, schools, the community and consequently the workforce.

What in-service training/workshops are available to new Principals so that they **can better understand and support the role of the TL** and the school Library service?

In conclusion, my plea to your Committee is that you see the need for improvement as **an educational investment**, NOT A COST!

Highest Priority:

Establish national guidelines for school library services, policies and practices.

All schools deserve a qualified Teacher Librarian who can facilitate the planning and implementation of learning programs that will equip teachers and students with the skills they need to succeed in the constantly changing social and economic environment in which we live.

Submitted by
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