Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools.

The School Library Association of South Australia (SLASA) is a Professional Association that represents staff who work in or have an interest in school libraries. Our members come from schools across all sectors, government and non-government and some tertiary. We represent staff across all year levels.

SLASA's Mission Statement is: to have Teacher Librarians in every school fulfilling the dual role of teacher and information specialist, thereby improving educational outcomes by creating an information literate community.

SLASA advocates for school libraries and the profession, provides professional learning and resource materials and maintains clear and effective communication within and beyond the profession.

Terms of reference:

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

Many of the recent policies and investments will have an impact on school libraries, the services they offer and changed resourcing needs they will be required to meet.

Some of these include:

- BER funding – in particular for schools with new primary libraries; these libraries need to be staffed, full-time, with trained Teacher Librarians
- DER funding – the increase in the number of computers for school libraries and also the associated infrastructure that needs to be managed – often within Teacher Librarians role
- Broadband and internet filtering legislation and the impact on school services, often managed through the library and/or with the library the main use point
- Australian National Curriculum changes – resourcing needs to accommodate changes to local curriculums
- Premier's Reading Challenge, National Simultaneous Storytime with an in-school literacy focus but also provide valuable links to public libraries
- My School Website with Literacy and Numeracy data available with a strong correlation between well resourced school libraries and NAPLAN test results.
- Literacy funding and (Reading) Running records results
- New SACE (South Australian Certificate of Education) and changes to courses with changed resource needs. 23 of 54 of the Stage 1 (Year 11) subjects and 38 of 63 Stage 2 (Year 12) subjects require students to conduct an Investigation or in-depth Study. The support of the teacher librarian will be critical in providing access to suitable and appropriate resources.
- Superschool developments with integral library facilities
- New arrivals and diverse groups (including International Students) using school library facilities
- Scootle – national Learning Objects program
- National Standards documents

- Funding for indigenous education
- ECU (national) www.chs.ecu.edu.au/portals/ASLRP/publications.php and SLASA (state) survey to gather data about staffing, funding and resourcing of school libraries.
- Australian Children's Literature Alliance (ACLA) – setting up to appoint a Children's Literature Laureate (www.acla.org.au)
- Planning for 2012 Year of Reading
- School investments in websites etc so libraries accessible 24/7

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

The future potential of school libraries is vast with a myriad of opportunities forthcoming for influence and impact, including:

- Multiliteracies, eg reading, information, visual
- Information literacy
- Text v networks
- Digital, online, e-learning
- Learner Management Systems (eg use of Moodle, DayMap, Sharepoint and other programs to enable students and staff access to information and resources anywhere/anytime)
- Changes to Library Management systems (eg more/fully web-based)
- Working to achieve a balance between all forms
- Funding
- Links with public and other libraries
- School Community Libraries (South Australia) and Joint Use Libraries
- Ross Todd and other research findings directly related to school libraries
- New South Australian Certificate of Education - SACE (South Australia) curriculum
- New Australian National Curriculum
- Libraries seen to be hub of/central to school life
- Extended use of library and library facilities for school and wider community. Flexible spaces/flexible times
- Homework Centres (with outside agencies involved eg STARRS)
- Super Schools (South Australia)
- Keeping current Teacher Librarian's up to date with training eg web 2.0 tools and other ICT's
- Premier's Reading Challenge and other literacy initiatives
- Teacher Librarians have a comprehensive understanding of literacy and literature for children and young adults and provide leadership in specific programs in schools
- Teacher Librarians create rich learning environments that inspire students and support their literacy and learning development

- "The importance of the information literacy process and the role of ICTs in learning requires a broadening of thinking about the location of, and access to, information services. Many of these services can now be accessed through the school as well as remotely" (*Learning for the future: developing information services in schools*, Second edition, p. 40 and 41)
- "Information service centres require appropriate and flexible spaces to accommodate their teaching and learning functions" (*Learning for the future: developing information services in schools*, Second edition, p. 40 and 41)
- Working with various stakeholders within schools, eg, Principals, Subject/Learning Area Coordinators, classroom teachers, class groups, individual students, individual staff.
- "School libraries as powerful and engaging places in the lives of students do not happen by chance. They are achieved by deliberate acts of instructional intervention by teacher librarians" (Ross Todd Director of Research, Center for International Scholarship in School Libraries School of Communication, Information and Library Studies Rutgers, The State University of New Brunswick, NJ U.S.A. 2006)
- The unique position of Teacher Librarians in the school allows for the integration of all learning areas so they are able to give a cross curriculum perspective.
- Research studies continue to show that an active school library program run by a trained teacher librarian or resource teacher makes a significant difference to student learning outcomes. http://www.det.wa.edu.au/education/cmis/eval/library/value/val2.htm
- A substantial body of research since 1990 shows a positive relationship between school libraries and student achievement.
- Studies show that school libraries can have a positive impact on student achievement- whether such achievement is measured in terms of reading scores, literacy or learning more generally – in the following key ways:
    - a strong library program that is adequately staffed, resourced and funded can lead to higher student achievement regardless of the socioeconomic or educational levels of the adults in the community;
    - a strong computer network connecting the library's resources to the classroom and laboratories has an impact on student achievement;
    - the quality of the collection has an impact on student learning;
    - test scores are higher when there is higher usage of the school library;
    - collaborative relationships between classroom teachers and school librarians have a significant impact on learning, particularly in relation to the planning of instructional units, resource collection development, and the provision of professional development for teachers;
    - a print-rich environment leads to more reading, and free voluntary reading is the best predictor of comprehension, vocabulary growth, spelling and grammatical ability, and writing style;
    - integrating information literacy into the curriculum can improve students' mastery of both content and information seeking skills; and that

- o libraries can make a positive difference to students' self-esteem, confidence, independence and sense of responsibility in regard to their own learning. http://www.asla.org.au/research/summary.htm
- "Schools operating as strong learning communities are characterized by distributed ICTs and are underpinned by learning models that incorporate information and ICT literacy and recognize that: learning is an individual process; knowledge and understandings are constructed; knowledge transfer is affected by the degree to which people learn with understanding and learning is most effective when people actively monitor their learning experiences. Collaborative teaching and learning teams are recommended for the development of learning experiences that recognize individual learning needs and styles. Within the context of information and ICT literacy, fundamental practices such as RBL, problem based learning; active learning and authentic assessment encourage students and teachers to recognize themselves as learners utilizing a range of literacies and higher order thinking skills" (*Learning for the future: developing information services in schools*, Second edition, p. 9 and 10)

- Teacher Librarians play a critical role in the development of information literate citizens who are lifelong learners

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

Some local factors, including differences between educational sectors (Independent, Catholic and Government) influence response. Some of these factors include:

- Ageing nature of teaching workforce in general, including Teacher Librarians. In 2008 SLASA surveyed school library staff and from the results realises it will not be possible to replace those intending to retire in the near future with trained Teacher Librarians (as less are undertaking training than intending to retire). Information from the SLASA survey 2008 included: Concern over the perceived ageing of the teacher librarianship profession led to a question about predicted retirement or resignation, to provide some indication of possible numbers of new teacher librarians required to maintain staffing levels. If 48 teacher librarians retire or resign in the next two years, will there be 48 new people to replace them? This survey indicates a possible 25% of teacher librarian turnover in the next five years.
- Availability of (relevant) courses. At this stage specific school library/teacher librarianship courses are only available through Charles Sturt University (NSW) and Edith Cowan University (WA) and therefore require online/study by distance for those in SA wishing to undertake this study.
- Structure of courses. SLASA has been working with Uni SA in relation to their library and information studies courses and would still like to see more strands directly relevant to school libraries included.
- HECS fees, eg, if need to be paid by individual and/or system
- Library graduates need to be trained in two disciplines, ie, research and service skills as well as information skills. Teacher Librarians need to take on a third dimension of teacher and curriculum specialist

- Results of ECU www.chs.ecu.edu.au/portals/ASLRP/publications.php and SLASA surveys.
- Staffing variations in schools/sectors
- Part time nature of staffing of some libraries
- Para-professional (including SSO/ESO) skills and training (including TAFE courses)
- Demand for Professional Development from Professional Associations (volunteers)
- Collection management/access to information, including budgets for school libraries that vary widely between schools
- Teacher Librarian always a teacher and chief provider of information resources in schools.

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

School libraries depend on a variety of partnerships to assist and deliver services, including, eg:

- SLASA (School Library Association of South Australia) at the local/state level
- ASLA (Australian School Library Association) at the national level
- ALIA (Australian Library and Information Association)
- CBC (Children's Book Council) – both state and national branches
- A variety of computing and ICT groups (eg CEGSA – Computing in Education Group in South Australia)
- The May Gibbs Children's Literature Trust (both local and national connections)
- International Baccalaureate programs in some schools with a strong emphasis on libraries and research
- JULA (Joint Use Library Association and PLAIN (Public Library Network)
- IASL (The International Association of School Libraries)
- Principal's Associations
- State Library (local) and National Library
- Other groups of local significance, eg archives/local history and heritage, service clubs,
- Library suppliers and Booksellers.
- Universities
- The individual nature of school management adds complexities that may vary in each school and school library
- Staffing issues (not wholly local school choice for staffing and not always a preference for Teacher Librarian qualifications) – often dependent on awareness of/decision by Principal
- Different sectors dependent on funding etc from different levels of government
- Representatives at other levels of government 'watching out for' school libraries
- Program and Policy Officers with responsibility for various curriculum areas and levels of schooling. School Libraries in South Australia do not have this type of position and believe it would be advantageous to all parties to have this representation.
- Education Services Australia

- Many Teacher Librarians liaise with their local (public) library in a joint effort to ensure that students are aware of what the external library community has to offer them – all part of the lifelong learning skills they can acquire by being members of library communities.
- Time and commitment are required to establish and maintain connections, partnerships and relationships with the large range of individuals, groups and others libraries rely on and as they are a necessary component this is also part of the Teacher Librarians role.
- "The achievement of many of the common and agreed goals of schooling is dependent on the school's ability to deliver a curriculum supported by a relevant, dynamic and responsive collection of information resources. … The curriculum is resourced through the provision of access to human and material resources and information in the wider community, eg, the State Library, public libraries, community information agencies and electronic resources" www.asla.org.au/policy/school.library.resource.provision.htm

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

School libraries are embracing digital technologies as we understand these can/do have a positive impact on student learning outcomes and are also aware there are some issues that need to be taken into consideration, including, eg:

- Funding and support for digital resources
- A growing and changing range that needs to be considered
- Emphasis that is constantly changing
- Library Management system issues
- Impact of Learner Management Systems, including the ability to utilize federated searching
- Library available 24/7
- Virtual roles
- Increase role on supplying Professional Development from Professional Association's, eg, SLASA
- Increased Professional Development role of Teacher Librarians in schools (especially in relation to technology)
- Mentoring role
- Needing to match technology with learning outcomes
- The Teacher role in Teacher Librarian vital
- Differentiated Learning Plans/Learning Plans
- Impact when a Teacher Librarian moves schools (succession planning)
- Broadband/access issues
- Rural and metropolitan issues
- Need to keep ahead of changes
- Time eg to upload content into new systems (eg into ClickView) – a different staffing mix required in school libraries with the increase in technology

- Scootle/Learning Objects
- SCIS
- "In the 'knowledge society' increasing emphasis on independent, integrated resource based and technology based inquiry learning requires teachers and teaching teams to have access to an expanding range of curriculum information" (*Learning for the future: developing information services in schools*, Second edition, p. 20 and 21)
- "When teachers are effective and informed users of information services and ICTs they will influence the information-related learning outcomes of students (*Learning for the future: developing information services in schools*, Second edition, p. 20 and 21)
- Knowledge that for the foreseeable future libraries will have to run two parallel structures: the library as storehouse for printed materials and the library as network node because the present and the future means both print and electronic communications
- "The challenge for the Teacher Librarian is in finding the time to seek out and evaluate appropriate information resources online as well as identify and select good age-appropriate and curriculum specific literature" (Roulston *Connections* n.40 p.13-14 2002)
- "The information explosion has created far more information than one school library could possibly contain. The Teacher Librarian is responsible for locating, acquiring, disseminating and tracking information resources of many types. The Teacher Librarian also manages the budget and evaluates and selects new materials for purchase. In teaching students and teachers to be discriminating users of information the Teacher Librarian must also teach ethical use of the materials retrieved. Copyright and plagiarism become significant issues when digital copies may be seamlessly integrated into student work. The Teacher Librarian's are often the only people in a school with any training in these legal issues. This means they play an important role in the development of access policies and acceptable use agreements. All these tasks require managerial expertise equivalent to that required of corporate information centre managers" (Roulston *Connections* n.40 p.13-14 2002)
- The cost of ever-increasing technology needs versus the cost of print materials is a real dilemma for the TL" (Roulston *Connections* n.40 p.13-14 2002)
- Teacher Librarians work collaboratively with teachers to integrate information and communication technology within the curriculum –often at the forefront of embracing new and emerging technologies and supporting teachers in their use
- Teacher + Librarian = Teacher Librarian – twice the value!

Recommendations:

a) Development of national policy and standards for school libraries that support changes to the Australian curriculum and achieve positive learning outcomes for students.
b) Trained Teacher Librarians to be allocated as part of the staffing formula across all schools in Australia
c) Adequate resourcing of all school libraries

d) Commonwealth position in DEEWR to coordinate the outcomes of the Inquiry to facilitate a productive combination of TL/ICT and replicate at State/Territory Government level.

e) A Policy and Project Office with responsibility for school libraries in each state/territory

f) Continuation of support for Education Services Australia (previously Curriculum Corporation and Education.au)

g) Funding for initial 'start-up' for Teacher Librarian training (e.g. the DET NSW model) to increase number of trained Teacher Librarians in schools

h) Australian research undertaken on how Teacher Librarians and school libraries make a difference to student learning.

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