



This submission has been written by the AISWA Libraries committee.

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

The Digital Education Revolution (DER) will impact on all schools. Teacher librarians/school librarians are strategic personnel in contributing to the sustainable and meaningful changes to teaching and learning. Teacher librarians/school librarians will assist in providing for new information and communication technology and are well placed to work collaboratively with teachers to embed new information technologies into the curriculum.

With the deployment of high speed broadband as part of the DER, teacher librarians/school librarians provide students with moral and ethical knowledge in dealing with the provision of new information formats and on-line safety.

As part of the DER, students need to develop skills to be discerning users of information. Teacher librarians/school librarians are specialists in this field and ideally placed to teach these skills.

As part of the DER, teacher librarians/school librarians will provide online curriculum tools and resources that support the national curriculum and specialist subjects such as languages.

The Federal government is currently investing money in the building of new school libraries. However, a building does not make a library and does not make its students better readers or scholars. Funding must be given to provide for professional staff and quality resources in order for learning outcomes to be successfully addressed.

The recent trend toward devolved, flexible staffing along with dwindling school budgets has resulted in the increased use of teacher librarians in the classroom, leaving the library to be run by less qualified staff. The implementation of the Independent Private Schools in Western Australia could worsen this situation.

Working with the national curriculum teacher librarians/school librarians “will assist to equip young Australians with the skills, knowledge and capabilities that will enable them to effectively engage with and prosper in society, compete in a globalised world and thrive in the information-rich workplace of the future”.

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

Current research indicates that national literacy scores are 10%-20% higher in schools with trained teacher librarians/school librarians

The foundations of a school library program of the future should be based on understanding the dimensions of authentic learning and authentic research.

Teacher librarians/school librarians working together classroom teachers can develop appropriate programs for the age and reading level of students to enhance learning and:

- are gatekeepers and mediators through which students connect to the world and become responsible global citizens.
- are pro-active in devising and writing programs to enable students and staff to try and keep pace with rapid developments in information technology and show the ways in which information is accessed, shared and communicated.
- use their knowledge to identify and provide access to information and quality resources which support curriculum and student learning outcomes.
- have tertiary qualifications in literacy and therefore make a significant contribution towards school leavers being able to communicate verbally and in the written word in the workplace.
- develop students' skills in information literacy which include critically reading print, graphics, video and learning objects to build knowledge.
- develop information literacy which includes the ethical use of information and responsible use of social networking tools.
- initiate and support reading enrichment programs which develop critical readers. Study after study has confirmed that those who read more have an increased knowledge base and are better able to contribute to the workplace and society in general.
- prepare school leavers for the workplace and to contribute to the community.
- provide a balanced collection that can serve the whole school community both in print and digital form.
- provide for a common equitable and stable access to all regardless of socio-economic status and regardless of information technology that they have access to at home

The school library may be the only place where students of particular socio economic and cultural backgrounds have access to emerging technologies and resources.

3. Factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians.

- School librarian training programs have greatly decreased in number in the past two decades.

- In many cases a teacher librarian qualification demands a 4 year tertiary undergraduate degree plus a 1 year specialist library degree course.
- The recent trend toward devolved, flexible staffing along with dwindling school budgets has resulted in the increased use of teacher librarians in classroom and the replacement of teacher librarians with less qualified staff.
- Lack of appreciation and understanding of the teacher librarian/school librarian role.
- Lack of promotional opportunities for teacher librarians/school librarians.
- Little or no professional development offered by the Education Department or its equivalent.
- The selection criteria for library positions across different schools, departments and states is not consistent

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

Little support is currently granted to the profession of teacher librarians/school librarians by the state government. Owing to state government rationalization school principals have been granted the right to select staff in the manner they see fit. Unfortunately, this impacts on the employment of professional staff in school libraries, particularly in government schools. For example, one teacher librarian with a school population of 1,000 students cannot effectively run efficient information and literacy programs as well as administrate the school library.

Government policy should outline the ratio of professional library staff to the student population; it should not be at the discretion of the current principal. The provision of a well resourced school library with qualified staff is a vital service and should not be allowed to be diminished or removed by one person.

The Education Department of Western Australia's *Teaching WA* site does not list a teacher librarian as a teaching option or a career opportunity.

State government, Catholic Education and the Association of Independent Schools need to be proactive in providing library support in the form of Library Liaison Officers and mentors. This service was previously provided at all levels but was removed several years ago.

All professional development for teacher librarians/school librarians is now organized through their own professional organizations with no assistance or recognition from the Education Department or Catholic Education Office.

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

Teacher librarians/school librarians are often the early adopters of information technologies in schools. They are the leaders in the implementation of Web 2.0 applications and new software etc and endeavour to embed these technologies into the curriculum.

While cyber-bullying is only one aspect of being a 21st century digital citizen, it is one of growing concern. Many library professionals have addressed this issue and have incorporated the teaching of on-line safety into their teaching programs.

The information found on the internet is overwhelming and frequently inappropriate for the school context. Many teacher librarians/school librarians produce, with their vast research skills, a Pathfinder or a list of websites appropriate to the topic, thus enabling the student to analyze and use resources that are appropriate.

Professional library staff can identify the best digital tool for the learning outcome and develop the staff and student's skills in this area.

Quality on-line data-bases need to be selected by teacher librarians/school librarians who have knowledge of the whole school curriculum and co-curriculum needs.

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