

I am the Information Services Leader (known as Head of Library in most places) for a large Catholic co-educational College in a western suburb of Melbourne. We have approximately 1,600 students drawing from the local community. I have been the Information Services Leader here for five years. This is my second appointment to a school library as Teacher Librarian.

I welcome the opportunity to respond to this inquiry and am doing so after consulting with my library staff – in particular the other 1.6 full time equivalent (FTE) Teacher Librarians on our team- equivalent to 2.6 FTE including my role. As background information my Resource Centre team also includes two Technicians (one Library, one Audio-Visual) two assistants and recently employed Theatre technician. I believe we are adequately staffed yet constantly striving to support the needs of our community and to improve the effectiveness of our service.

The views here have not been scrutinised by the College leadership or management but come from my perspective; as such they can only be seen to represent my view – not an official view from the school. My qualifications include a Masters of Education (Teacher Librarianship), Graduate Diploma of Special Education (Learning Disabilities) and a Bachelor of Education – Language and Literature. I have taught in Victoria, NSW and Queensland in Secondary schools and also TAFE with a career spanning almost 30 years. My teaching experience and qualifications form the content of my opinion.

Our College Resource Centre enjoys fantastic support from students, staff (teaching and non-teaching) and the administration of the College. It is not a very big space with only two areas available for class bookings – but it is a lively space, a shared space which strives to meet the needs of the users. During student breaks it is not unusual to see the Resource Centre full of students, they come here for a variety of reasons- some as simple as a game of chess with a friend, others might be enjoying the safe environment we provide, completing class work, printing assignments, reading or accessing computers. They come voluntarily, in their own time and it is a privilege to be able to work with them during these times.

I submit my comments re the terms of reference for your consideration and would be willing to discuss this more fully if the need arose.

I find it interesting that the Terms of Reference as copied below start off talking about school libraries and teacher librarians as highlighted in green but then in the dot points there is no mention of teacher librarians but rather librarians or school librarians as highlighted in purple. I think this shows some confusion even here, in the difference between librarians and teacher librarians. Perhaps that will be clarified through this inquiry.

#### **Terms of Reference**

To inquire into and report on the role, adequacy and resourcing of **school libraries and teacher librarians** in Australia's public and private schools. Specifically, the committee should focus on:

- 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**;
- the role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting **school librarians**; and
- the impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and **librarians**.

- **the impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities;**

A recent investment from the DER funding which we have benefitted from has been the roll out of student notebooks. This has had a significant impact on the teaching practices in the classrooms and on the functions of library staff. We did not receive any Building funding for the library.

Our College was well positioned to accept the 1:2 ratio of computers per student in years 9-12. We have structured lesson time of 100 minutes, an emphasis on group work and using a variety of teaching strategies in the classroom. Computers and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have been integrated into the teaching environment for a number of years with the view that they are a resource to be shared among the students.

Our College made a commitment to the use of these notebooks based on the belief that they need to be used as flexibly as possible - as needed, where needed and when needed. For us, that meant providing a wireless infrastructure around the whole College- both inside buildings and outside spaces. It also meant exploring the options for distribution and circulation of the notebooks. We spent considerable time experimenting with these ideas and are currently circulating 80 notebooks individually through two circulation areas – as booked by students or staff. The result for students and teachers has been dramatically successful. Impact on classroom

The evaluation of the project late last year revealed an overwhelmingly positive response from these user groups. Students enjoy using the notebooks, they are efficient and reliable. They appreciate having access to them, as and when they need them. Students like being able to book a notebook for themselves. Teachers report that the notebook program has affected the way they operate in their classes. Changes include more flexible use of Information Communication Technologies, greater use of digital collaborative tools in the classrooms and less frustration in terms of not having enough computers.

Our students engage in a suite of online activities- they use our school intranet to communicate with their classmates, there has been a rapid growth in the number of wikis which have been developed for online collaboration and teachers are encouraged to experiment with Web 2.0 technologies as appropriate to their needs.

#### Impact on library

From the whole school perspective the Resource Centre, in partnership with the systems and networks staff, is supporting teaching and learning practices in the College through the distribution and management of the notebooks. Library staff have needed training in simple trouble shooting to help support the notebooks.

The impact of this decision on the time commitment of library staff has been significant. It requires more people on desk duty during peak periods and has impacted on our ability to respond to other needs as quickly as we would like. It has been necessary to adapt to this extra demand on circulation but it has been very worthwhile. The anticipated increase in the number of notebooks over the next year will lead to further evaluation of their management, perhaps leading to a whole re-think of our processes.

Another interesting development and one we predicted (given our obvious lack of space for classes) is that with the increased access to notebooks, classes can run their research programs effectively in the classroom. The practice of requesting a box of books on a particular topic has increased, providing students with print and online resources for research. Unfortunately students don't often have the experience of searching the library stock database for print resources, then going directly to the shelves to locate resources – this is a direct consequence of building size being inadequate. Teacher librarians are available to work with students in their classrooms as they research.

It has been important for us to consider how we spend our budget – the investment into quality online resources has grown but we believe with greater online access across the College due to the growth in notebook numbers this shift in prioritising spending is necessary. We are working to develop our online library – which can give access 24/7 supporting students in their research and learning.

### Impact on the role of the Teacher Librarians

For years Teacher Librarians have been involved in teaching about evaluation of online information services. Teaching students to critically consider what they read on line, referencing, cyber safety are all areas which need to be taught across the whole College.

Teacher Librarians have a role in curriculum development. Our College has taken up a web based service to provide a portal for our online curriculum map. This was initiated by myself in response to the need to analyse the curriculum, to be able to evaluate and investigate the curriculum. The National Curriculum offers a wonderful opportunity for Teacher Librarians to collaborate with classroom teachers in the resourcing of their work and the delivery of the curriculum.

One frustration we feel as Teacher Librarians is that the time spent on supporting the technology, i.e. the hardware takes away from other teaching opportunities. We need to ensure we make effective use of our library support staff to manage circulation to enable the Teacher Librarians to teach information literacy and to promote literature and a love of reading.

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

In terms of future potential it really is up to the schools to imagine what that could look like! At the moment we are in a very exciting stage with the development of the National Curriculum. I see this as an opportunity to demystify some of the functions of Teacher Librarians as Australia wide we will be working on the same curriculum, developing, teaching and supporting the teaching and learning process. For the National Curriculum to reach its potential we need Teacher Librarians immersed in curriculum development, managing and developing library services, teaching students and supporting staff.

For example when I look at the literacy statements at ACARA Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority it is hard to find something we don't do as active Teacher Librarians in the school. A quick reflection shows actions of Teacher Librarians which impact on student outcomes.

Although this chart is not exhaustive I believe the contribution we currently make to the teaching and learning activities of the College will remain relevant in the new National Curriculum and possibly be in higher demand. I would like to do a complete audit of the National Curriculum and the role of the Teacher Librarian.

From the Year 7 draft information (English) we have :

<b>Literacy statement</b>	<b>Current Teacher Librarian action</b>
<p><b>Purpose of texts</b></p> <p>Identify likely purposes and audiences of written, spoken and multimodal texts</p>	<p>Promotion of reading resources – wider reading, class discussion re purpose and audience inconsideration of various text types.</p> <p>Collection development.</p>
<p><b>Comprehension strategies</b></p> <p>Retrieve information explicitly stated in texts by locating and connecting relevant information across sentences, across paragraphs and between the text and images. Make inferences including inferring meanings and messages using evidence from interrelated parts of the text Draw conclusions about main ideas, concepts and arguments</p>	<p>Validation of reading for the Premier’s Reading Challenge – students are questioned individually re comprehension of the text.</p> <p>Promotion of reading for pleasure- students engage at a level they can comprehend and build from there.</p> <p>Collection development- seeking appropriate resources for students especially minority groups – e.g. recent arrivals.</p>
<p><b>Reflecting on texts</b></p> <p>Interpret and analyse texts critically for different perspectives including identifying how aspects of subject matter and particular language choices contribute to the representation of characters, places and events Evaluate how well the purpose of the text is met and the accuracy of content, citing information from the text to support point of view</p>	<p>Evaluation of texts – seek recommendations from students regarding texts read.</p> <p>Investigate new forms of texts – eg: e-readers and online textbook solutions with publishers.</p>
<p><b>Vocabulary</b></p> <p>Build vocabulary of increasing precision and technicality, including metalinguistic vocabulary, and checking for understanding by using online and print dictionaries and thesauruses and digital databases</p>	<p>Use of digital thesaurus – online product selected to develop vocabulary.</p>
<p><b>Research skills</b></p> <p>Collect evidence from a variety of sources including libraries, websites, databases and search engines</p>	<p>Part of information literacy skills as taught through school library programs via Teacher Librarians (and also of course by classroom teachers). This is the bread and butter of Teacher Librarians - teaching the evaluation of websites, issues around plagiarism, copyright, creative commons. We don’t talk so much about libraries in the traditional sense but more as information services- our libraries now are diverse collections of print and non-print resources. We are involved in teaching the ethical use of other people’s intellectual</p>

	property
<p><b>Creating texts</b></p> <p>Create written, spoken and multimodal texts for imaginative, informative and persuasive purposes that contain vocabulary to show feelings and opinions, a variety of clause structures supported by appropriate punctuation to sustain meaning, reasoning and structure.</p>	In support of classroom teaching program.
<p><b>Responding to texts</b></p> <p>Select and organise subject matter and express a point of view drawing on personal knowledge, experiences, thoughts and feelings and the subject matter of texts they have listened to, read and viewed.</p>	Part of information literacy skills as taught through school library programs by Teacher Librarians.
<p><b>Features of texts</b></p> <p>Select aspects of subject matter and particular language to represent people, places events and things in ways that appeal to certain groups or audiences.</p>	Literature promotion and exploration.
<p><b>Oral communication skills</b></p> <p>Use strategies such as planning and rehearsing when preparing to make a spoken presentation.</p>	Discussion time – research or reading sessions.
<p><b>Listening and responding</b></p> <p>Listen carefully, ask relevant questions and present an accurate summary of what has been heard</p>	Seek clarification from students as part of the assessment process.
<p><b>Organising information</b></p> <p>Plan, draft, edit and proofread for accuracy using organising strategies such as focus questions and research notes</p>	Part of information literacy skills as taught through school library programs via Teacher Librarians.
<p><b>Handwriting/word processing</b></p> <p>Consolidate a handwriting style that is automatic and legible under conditions when sustained writing is required and use word processing software and select functions for communicating and creating</p>	Supporting classroom teacher with expectations re presentation and teaching students ICT skills as required – word processing, mind-mapping tools or other technologies as required.

As a Teacher Librarian I am in the fortunate position that I can take a whole of school view to the teaching and learning activities of the College. I do not have a vested interest in any particular area at the expense of another. This means that when I see a need it may be possible for the Resource Centre to step in to support the community. For example the decision to

subscribe to an online Visual thesaurus was taken with a view to supporting the English department – the choice we made also accommodates the teaching of Languages other than English with its French and Italian components. The centralized management of resources through the Resource Centre such as online subscription products means that opportunities to make the most of these resources are promoted by the Teacher Librarians across the whole school curriculum.

Clearly the future potential for school libraries and for Teacher Librarians to contribute to the educational and community outcomes (especially literacy) is enormous. The National Curriculum articulates the need for Teacher Librarian support, it is important that these positions are funded and in place in all of our schools across Australia.

- **the factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians;**

Schools need Teacher Librarians – teachers who can manage libraries. To attract teachers into school libraries there needs to be the respect of the position and an understanding of the value of the role. The stereotype of librarians is changing for the better and with greater involvement in online and multi-modal activity this will continue to improve – hopefully attracting people to the role.

As stated earlier our staffing profile deliberately includes Teacher Librarians and Library Technicians with other support staff. The librarian type functions are only part of the role and are in no means the most important. The teaching, the connection with what is going on in the classroom, the collaboration with staff – these are teaching roles which are vital for making the best use possible of the school resource centre. The investment in the resources and the building requires a Teacher Librarian to provide the link between resourcing and teaching /learning.

There are many in-service opportunities for professional development available which can develop Teacher Librarian skills. There needs to be encouragement for this particularly with the rapid rate of change in the digital environment. There is no point if a student is seeking assistance at lunchtime with a particular package or program if the Teacher Librarian is not able to assist due to lack of training.

- **the role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school librarians;**

Development of quality teaching and learning materials from Government funded agencies such as DEECD which create resources such as FUSE and Learning objects support schools and school libraries. The State Library of Victoria, National library, War Memorial are all examples of other institutions which extend their expertise to school communities. Other agencies such as Curriculum Corporation – now part of Education Services Australia are important contributors to the intellectual property of the nation and therefore as supporters of school libraries.

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

The potential of digital technologies to enhance the roles of school libraries has already been seen in our College with just the roll out of the 1 : 2 notebooks. Staff report changes in the way they operate their classes and have embraced the increased number of computer access points. Students also report satisfaction with the increased number of computers.

As Teacher Librarians we have been able to support the use of these technologies, teaching students and staff and exploring digital tools for the classroom. We are involved in investigating Web 2.0 tools and their potential in particular to support the thinking curriculum. Collaborative digital spaces have been embraced by students. Teachers need to explore the possibilities and integrate these into the delivering of the curriculum as appropriate, Teacher Librarians can support the staff in this process by investigating, evaluating and promoting relevant digital technologies.

The importance of teaching effective online research skills is ongoing and a key function of Teacher Librarianship teaching time. The provision of quality online information sources is a concern as they are expensive yet we need to provide authentic information sources to our students. Teaching students to access these types of resources is important for lifelong learning as well as for meeting the short-term requirements.

## **Recommendations**

- Staffing

School libraries need to be staffed with appropriately qualified teacher librarians. Teacher librarians are teachers first and librarians second. They understand students needs and are positioned through resource management to support these needs. I believe Teacher Librarians make a difference to student outcomes and I am concerned that many school libraries are not supported by the employment of appropriate professional staff – the Teacher Librarian. It seems a terrible waste to invest so much money in buildings and resources without the required attention to staffing.

- Research

Provide funding for research in Australia on the role of school libraries and teacher librarians in improving educational outcomes. I would like to see educational leadership researching the role of school libraries to ensure that an equitable arrangement is in place for all students across Australia.

- Collaborate with Teacher Librarians.

Involve Teacher Librarians in the development of the National Curriculum. Develop and publish a national information literacy curriculum. Work with School Library Associations to develop Standards of Excellence for Teacher Librarians – we have them within our industry – how do they fit in with Education Department and other structures?