



16th April 2010

Dear Sir/Madam

Thankyou for the opportunity to bring for you concerns and ideas about the role of the Teacher Librarian in the education of our children.

I have been teaching for twenty five years and been directly involved and employed as a TL in schools, government and private, K-12 for 15 years. I also have experience in the TAFE, University and public library sectors. I have managed school libraries and IT departments and have some understanding of how the modern school library can be a great power for good in the life of a school and the educational experience of our children.

I have also been denied positions in schools where I had the qualifications and experience to manage the school library. In many cases an administrator, non-library trained teacher, an IT technician, a library technician or even a student has been given the role because of cost cutting, most often to the detriment of the total library service. I have seen school libraries down graded in favour of IT infrastructure or at the whim of a disinterested principal.

I believe employment of a Teacher Librarian in every school library should be mandated to ensure the full school library service is provided. The metaphors too easily, come to mind – we wouldn't want a nurse providing neuro-surgery or a motor mower mechanic working on jet engines. We must employ the right person, properly trained in both education and library and information sciences to properly manage school libraries so that our children across the school system get the best possible education -an education where literacy, the love of learning across the disciplines and the skills of life-long learning are inculcated.

Reading, the ability to read, the improvement of literacy, the development of a love of reading across the school sector is of paramount importance for students from kindergarten to year 12. Libraries and teacher librarians play a key role in this critical endeavour. Knowing the literature suitable for each year level or each child, knowing the curriculum and how to find and use pertinent resources, knowing how to effectively search the web, edit videos, effectively use the new Web 2.0 technologies and knowing how to provide an environment in the library building and across the school conducive to reading and learning and many types of literacy is critical. The school teacher librarian is a generalist by definition.

The library building provides not only resources from print to web but also the space, the ambience, the computers or study rooms for collaboration, for talk, for small groups to work together and the expertise to facilitate learning if needed.

OECD research (2002) has shown that: *reading enjoyment is more important for children's educational success than their family's socio-economic status.*

(www.oecd.org/dataoecd/43/54/33690904.pdf)

Reading for pleasure could be one important way to help combat social exclusion and raise educational standards. According to Krashen: *When children read for pleasure they get hooked on books, they: acquire involuntarily and without conscious effort, nearly all of the so-called language skills many people are so concerned about...* Krashen, S. (1993a). The case for free voluntary reading. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 50(1), 72-82.

Teacher-librarians provide and promote quality reading experiences K-12 and for staff. How often do we hear someone say “the right book at the right time”. That’s our job – across the multimedia mediums.

I’m sure Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard are aware of the importance of good school libraries. The Education Revolution has put library building at the forefront of its program. As Teacher- Librarians we are thankful. Many generations of Australians will be thankful for this amazing initiative. It is imperative that Teacher Librarians are employed to properly run them. Just as a ship needs a captain so that that investment is wisely guided and those resources, that access to information, those teachers and student lives be not just informed with information but transformed by knowledge.

President-Elect Barack Obama spoke to the American library Association:

Bound to the Word. Guardians of truth and knowledge, librarians must be thanked for their role as champions of privacy, literacy, independent thinking, and most of all reading.

If you open up Scripture, the Gospel according to John, it starts: “In the beginning was the Word.” Although this has a very particular meaning in Scripture, more broadly what it speaks to is the critical importance of language, of writing, of reading, of communication, of books as a means of transmitting culture and binding us together as a people.

More than a building that houses books and data, the library represents a window to a larger world, the place where we’ve always come to discover big ideas and profound concepts that help move ... the human story forward. ...

That’s what libraries are about. At the moment that we persuade a child, any child, to cross that threshold, that magic threshold into a library, we change their lives forever, for the better. It’s an enormous force for good.

I remember at different junctures in my life feeling lost, feeling adrift, and feeling that somehow walking into a library and seeing those books, seeing human knowledge collected in that fashion, accessible, ready for me, would always lift my spirits. So I’m grateful to be able to acknowledge the importance of librarians and the work that you do. I want to work with you to ensure that libraries continue to be sanctuaries of learning, where we are free to read and consider what we please...

President-Elect Barack Obama keynoted the opening general session at the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago, June 23–29, 2005, while a U.S. senator from Illinois. This article, published in the August 2005 issue of *American Libraries*

Libraries are not just storage institutions for books or even multimedia access points - they are a transformational institution which is not limited by its physical structure but can impact lives through its resources into the school campus, the school community and the students

homes not just by the portability of a book but the flow of its resources on the web. As Obama says: *That's what libraries are about. At the moment that we persuade a child, any child, to cross that threshold, that magic threshold into a library, we change their lives forever, for the better. It's an enormous force for good.*

Teacher Librarians are not just taking care of books or taking care of students they are agents of transformation within a school. They have a professional knowledge of both the library and information world and also that of the educational world. That broad overview, that multidisciplinary outlook is essential in providing rich, curriculum supporting, educational resources and teaching expertise to help to guide and transform the profession of teaching and student lives.

Why a Teacher Librarian and not just a librarian? Why a Teacher Librarian and not just a teacher? Because both professions come together in the act of providing a fully functioning library resource in a school to truly support the teacher, the curriculum and the student. They are there to add value and transform the educational experience and provide a resource rich environment not just in the library building but across the school and the school community.

Please consider our claims carefully.

Many thanks for the opportunity to bring you our concerns and ideas about the role of the Teacher Librarian in the education of our children.

Sincerely,

Malcolm Anderson

"In the nonstop tsunami of global information, librarians provide us with floaties and teach us how to swim." -- Linton Weeks, Washington Post, Jan. 13, 2001.

"We cannot have good libraries until we first have good librarians -- properly educated, professionally recognized, and fairly rewarded." -- Herbert S. White, Library Journal, Nov. 15, 1999.

"To read is to fly: it is to soar to a point of vantage which gives a view over wide terrains of history, human variety, ideas, shared experience and the fruits of many inquiries." - Anthony C. Grayling in the introduction to A history of reading by Alberto Manguel 1996.

Malcolm Anderson