

## **WESTERN AUSTRALIAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RESPONSE TO THE INQUIRY INTO SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND TEACHER LIBRARIANS IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS**

The Department of Education has considered the five terms of reference and prepared this response for submission directly to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training.

### **The impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities**

*Building the Educational Revolution* funding for new libraries is most welcome. The contribution of these facilities towards improving educational outcomes, however, is dependent on how they are stocked and staffed. Department of Education schools have a flexible approach to staffing school libraries and allocating funds to resource them. Schools will work at a local level to maximise the benefit of this investment.

Digital technologies are profoundly affecting the operation of school libraries and there is much potential for the traditional library to rapidly evolve through the use of ICT. This provides both opportunities and challenges.

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

Realising this inherent potential depends on better utilisation of school library facilities, which in turn depends on exposure of students to an effective library operation. Department of Education schools have the flexibility to staff their own school library with teacher librarians, librarians or library officers. They also have the flexibility to staff them in a full time or part time capacity.

Learning and teaching in technology-rich, information-intensive schools is well established in public school classrooms. The move from the passive consumption of information to the active creation and/or re-mixing of information in collaborative environments requires new pedagogies and classroom teachers are embracing them. Dual-qualified teacher librarians are well placed to guide and support their teacher colleagues in applying these new pedagogies as they have a background in both education and information management.

### **The factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians**

Department of Education schools have the flexibility to staff the school library with teacher librarians, librarians or library officers according to the needs of the school.

As a result of direct teaching experience, teacher librarians are well placed to identify appropriate resources to support learning and teaching within the school. Teacher librarians also share common knowledge, experience and vocabulary with fellow teachers which allows them to select resources to support classroom activities. Their background also enables them to support the professional development requirements of teaching colleagues.

Department of Education schools have the flexibility to employ a librarian and/or library officer, to cover curriculum and library management requirements.

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

There is the potential for local government and tertiary institutions to leverage library services by engaging in joint-use library arrangements. Some of the already existing arrangements work effectively. This is particularly the case where the increase of access for public users is balanced with the curriculum needs of students. Melding interests and objectives can realise benefits beyond individual capabilities. This is a reality in rural or remote schools, where the school library is capable of performing roles well beyond its original remit.

The Department of Education has made significant steps towards developing learning management systems. For the school library to support the teaching program even more effectively in the future, the services provided by the library need to be further integrated into learning management systems. This will provide an opportunity for libraries to increase their relevance to students, while making most use of the information literacy expertise of the teacher librarian. This direction is recognised on an international level by the *IMS Global Learning Consortium Call For Participation: Integrating Libraries Materials in Learning Management Systems*.

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

Teacher librarians can add value to the promotion, distribution and management of curriculum resources available through state and national content repositories. Teachers and students also have the added advantage of ready access to a local school resource, such as a teacher librarian, to review, select and deliver resource selections appropriate for specific teachers, classes and individual students.

Digital technologies, such as learning management systems, content management systems and search systems need administering at a central and school level. School librarians play a lead role in managing the school level resource collections, ensuring attention is paid to copyright and digital rights.

A modern library is a gateway to knowledge of the past, present and a premier link to emerging knowledge. The digitisation of information means the future will require students to be adept and literate with software and hardware solutions for finding and using relevant information. School libraries will be the hub from which this essential skill can be acquired and put to use. Teacher librarians must continue to develop as masters of information management. The use of digital technologies multiplies the effectiveness and influence of a librarian. Encouraging, promoting and exposing information literacy to students is a key function of a library, and digital technologies are a powerful tool that teacher librarians can use to perform this function.

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