



Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools

For students to turn into successful learners we expect them to:

- have the essential skills in literacy and numeracy
- Are creative and productive users of technology, especially ICT, as a foundation for success in all learning areas
- are able to think deeply and logically
- are creative, innovative and resourceful, and are able to solve problems in ways that draw upon a range of learning areas and disciplines

They also have to be:

- Confident and creative individuals having the knowledge, skills, understanding and values to establish and live healthy, fulfilling lives
- Active and informed citizens with ethical integrity when participating in civilian life.

To achieve these goals students need to be information literate. This means students must be able to

- identify the need for information, being able to locate it
- Select, evaluate, interpret, and organise that information and use it effectively and efficiently to meet their needs, including solving problems and creating new information.

How is it then possible that the important role of the teacher-librarian, the information specialists in schools is questioned? Schools are choosing to spend their budgets not considering these important issues because of the lack of understanding by, and lack of direction from, education authorities who does not emphasise the need for a qualified information management professional in every school.

This is particularly distressing as research indicates and proves the existing correlation between student achievement and well-staffed, well-resourced school libraries.

Teacher librarians are qualified, having degrees in teaching and post-graduate qualifications in librarianship, which emphasise the professional teaching requirements of the role.

Teacher librarians are experts of the curriculum, understanding the principles of lifelong learning and how these are supported. They have a detailed understanding of the pedagogy and curriculum. They also are specialists on information literacy and the information needs, skills and interests of the students in their schools. They prepare students for tertiary studies while provide expert assistance to students to access resources in and beyond the school so they may become independent in all aspects of literacy. .

Teacher librarians are also information specialists, supporting their staff through providing the appropriate resources to support the curriculum, leading colleagues in information literacy and create a whole school culture of an information literate school environment.

Teacher librarians as managers develop a well-balanced resource collection to support the curriculum and to meet the needs of the whole school community.

They will persistently assess the multimedia collection, decisively plan and budget for development in the library, to meet the changing needs of staff, students and the curriculum. Continually developing their ICT skills, teacher-librarians provide access to information retrieval systems; assist students and staff, supporting the changing culture of the whole school environment.

As a professional, a safe atmosphere with the necessary support and counselling is created for whole school staff. Teacher librarians, as proven, is a specialise profession that cannot be replaced by librarians or clericals without the appropriate qualifications and knowledge.

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