



Katrina Germein

14 April 2010

Standing Committee on Education and Training
PO Box 6021
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

Dear Sir/Madam

Re Inquiry into school libraries and teacher-librarians in Australian schools

I write to you as a parent, children's author and former teacher, to express my views about the importance of the role of school libraries with trained teacher-librarians in Australian schools. Thank you for providing opportunity for my opinions to be considered.

The two Terms of Reference that I am addressing specifically are:

- The future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy;
- The impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarians.

In order to consider these I have chosen to share genuine personal anecdotes and sincere hopes as a parent today.

A public school in the 1980's.....

In the library foyer was a scratch and sniff jelly bean poster. Inside were the stories waiting to be read. At the start of each lesson we sat on the floor, almost holding our breath, waiting to see what the day's book would be. We knew a story had already been chosen especially for us. These stories were chosen by the teacher- librarian. A teacher-librarian who knew us, loved books and choose titles we would love too. I relished being read to. I remember specific covers, series and favourites.

We didn't know that such immersion in literature supported an invaluable love of reading and an appreciation of storytelling, books and the written word. We didn't know that these things would lead to improved literacy outcomes for us later in life. We didn't know that our librarian was helping to expand our vocabularies, our general knowledge and our world view. And we didn't know that by reading to the class as a group, by our sharing the stories together, part of what we were enjoying was a feeling of connectedness and community. We just thought library was fun.

2010.....

I want my own children to have what I had, and more. Today's best libraries encompass new digital literacies also. They help our children to become fluent in the ever unfolding technologies that will be always present in their lives. I want my children to enjoy dynamic technology that can motivate and impress. And I want my children to enjoy literature and community that can entertain and comfort. These modern and traditional mediums support and inform our children. They are education disguised as fun. They are meaningful and essential. They support literacy of all kinds.

The Future.....

The things I want for my children are achievable. They are most possible with well resourced school libraries staffed with trained teacher-librarians; librarians passionate about children, children's literature, and new technologies; librarians with the specific knowledge to support other teachers; librarians with the specific expertise to know, guide and inspire our children.

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I hope that these thoughts have helped to illustrate the essential nature of well staffed libraries in Australian schools today.

Yours faithfully,

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