SUBMISSION

TO: Parliamentary Inquiry into school libraries
and teacher librarians in Australian schools

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Addressing the terms of reference:

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

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

Our school curriculums need to keep pace with the demands placed on students. Where once students were expected to give basic answers to topical questions, requiring a simple gathering of information, we now demand more skilled research. Students today need to be able to think rationally and logically, answering such research topics as *How effective were the tactics of the leaders in challenging the social, political and economic status of African-Americans in the Civil Rights era*? In addition they are faced with an ever increasing amount and type of information that they have to derive meaning from. Without the ability to sift process and evaluate information students will be literally unable to function.

The fact that students can retrieve several thousand 'hits' when searching on the internet, makes teaching the skills of evaluation, selection and organization all the more important. Students today need to be able to think rationally and logically. With more and more sources of information, both print and electronic, and the increasing difficulty of ensuring that students can derive meaning from this information, the role of the teacher-librarian becomes central. A trained teacher librarian, skilled in accessing and evaluating information regardless of format, is a valuable addition to the teaching staff, teaching both students and teachers alike, how to find, evaluate and use information effectively, using the ever increasing range of resources and technologies now available to us.With a sound knowledge of the curriculum and in collaboration with the teaching staff, the Teacher Librarian can ensure that such skills are integrated into the curriculum. The teacher librarian is in an ideal position to encourage students to access information legally and ethically and to encourage a curriculum wide focus on evaluation and critical thinking. They can serve as leaders and facilitators in using information technologies and ensure their effective use

A teacher librarian is well trained in professional information and management skills such as anticipating, identifying and analyzing users' needs. They have technological skills, organizational skills and subject expertise, together with a knowledge of a wide range of information sources, and the know how to access and integrate these. All this together with their skills in strategic planning, financial and change management ensures that the future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy is ensured

Libraries are not just a repository of information and place for quiet contemplation but a dynamic gateway to information that promotes equitable access and effective use of information, encouraging students and staff to explore investigate and retrieve information wherever it may be found locally or virtually. We should be promoting the view of Libraries as meeting places, actively striving to create social environments and networking to encourage informal learning.

A high-quality digital school library will ensure that the school library and its resources are available to teachers and students on a 24-hour basis. This can include

- Links to research projects that the student is undertaking with relevant research information.
- Links to electronic databases that provide high-quality information on almost any topic.
- Links to relevant, academically sound internet pages.
- Library Management Programs that can provide access to the print and multimedia collection of the LMC from the classroom or the home.
- Library Management Programs that offer instant links to television programs, podcasts and other digitally recorded programs.
- Tutorials and tips for students and professional development for staff members.
- Links to other libraries and information sources.
- Indiana's virtual library.
- Interactive blogs promoting reading and literature