



Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher Librarians

Submission by Margo Pickworth B.A. DipEd, M.Ed (Teacher Librarianship), M.Arts. (E-Learning)

As a currently practising, experienced and qualified Teacher Librarian I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher Librarians in Australian Schools. I thank the Minister Julia Gillard for making recognition of such a valuable issue in our education system.

As a member of ASLA (NSW), IPSHA (Teacher Librarians Umbrella) and a currently employed Teacher Librarian I would value the opportunity to represent my profession at the Public Hearing in Sydney on April 28th, if required.

IN SUMMARY:

1. Every Australian school needs a trained Teacher Librarian:
 - To manage and promote teaching resources both digital and print
 - To work collaboratively with classroom teachers to incorporate information literacy skills into Australian school curriculum
 - To be supported through ongoing training to ensure knowledge of current trends in teaching, curriculum development and technology
2. Opportunities need to be made available for undergraduate teacher librarianship training so that Teacher Librarianship is presented as a valued career option for young teachers

Reference Point 1: the impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities

While policies for the improvement of library infrastructure and buildings have been valued, the issue of providing qualified staffing also needs addressing.

Trained teacher Librarians are needed to:

- Organise and maintain the library (both physical and virtual spaces)
- Ensure there is a range of sufficient resources to cater for different reading levels, curriculum areas and learning needs and styles
- Work collaboratively with classroom teachers to integrate resources both print and online and ensure that students and staff are trained in the skills to use them effectively

Reference Point 2: the future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy

Overseas and Australian educational studies have clearly demonstrated the positive impact of trained Teacher Librarians on student learning. Three recently published academic papers are:

1. School Libraries work

'In short, the findings of this study and its predecessor support the belief that powerful libraries - and librarians - do indeed make powerful learners.'

-Lance, K. C., Rodney, M.J.,Hamilton-Pennell, C. (2005) Powerful Libraries make powerful learners: The Illinois Study.2005.

<http://www.islma.org/pdf/ILStudy2.pdf>

Taken from School Libraries Work, Research Foundation Paper, 2008, Scholastic

2. Student Learning through Australian school libraries

‘Evidence shows that an effective school library program managed by a dually qualified full-time teacher-librarian contributes significantly to student learning’

-Hay, L. Student Learning through Australian school libraries: Part 1: A statistical analysis of student perceptions Synergy Volume 3, Number 2

3. Impact of School Libraries on Student Achievement

‘Existing research shows that school libraries can have a positive impact, whether measured in terms of reading scores, literacy or learning more generally, on student achievement. There is evidence to show:

- ***A strong library program that is adequately staff, resourced and funded can lead to higher student achievement regardless of the socio-economic or educational level of the adults in the community***
- ***A strong computer network connecting the library’s resources to the classroom and laboratories has an impact on student achievement***
- ***The quality of the collection has an impact on student learning***
- ***Test scores are higher when there is greater usage of the school library***
- ***Collaborative relationships between classroom teachers and school librarians have a significant impact on learning, particularly in relation to the planning of instructional units, resource collection development, and the provision of professional development for teachers***
- ***A print-rich environment leads to more reading, and free voluntary reading is the best predictor of comprehension, vocabulary growth, spelling and grammatical ability and writing style***
- ***The extent to which books are borrowed from the library shows a strong relationship with reading achievement whereas borrowing from classroom libraries does not***
- ***Integrating information literacy into the curriculum can improve students mastery of both content and information-seeking skills’***

-Lonsdale, M (2003) Impact of School Libraries on Student Achievement, ACER

Reference Point 3. the factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians

Currently there is a shortage of trained Teacher Librarians and it is an ‘ageing’ profession

- There are no undergraduate training facilities for teacher librarianship, it is not presented to young teachers as a teaching option
- There are only 3 institutions preparing Teacher Librarians – at Graduate Diploma and Masters level courses. It is difficult/expensive to undertake such post-graduate studies
- In many schools the role of the Teacher Librarian is undervalued, often requested to performing a ‘babysitting’ role (providing release from face-to face teaching)

Reference Point 4: the role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school librarians

Federal, State and local government and community assistance is needed to partner and support school librarians through the provision of:

- Adequate funding for quality resources
- Equal and adequate access to resources
- Adequate funding and resources for ongoing training for teacher Librarians
- Funding for teacher training at undergraduate level
- Staff to support new teacher librarians and provide ongoing support and training for established teacher librarians
- Resources to provide a National Information Literacy document, concurrent with proposed National Curriculum
- Need to establish over-arching, formal acknowledgment of the role of the Teacher Librarian in the proposed National Curriculum

Reference Point 5: the impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarian

Digital technologies have revolutionised the roles of libraries in our communities and our schools. This revolution provides an opportunity to enhance the role of the school library and Teacher Librarians by ensuring:

- Each school has a fully trained teacher librarian who has skills in teaching, ICT and library management
- A government-supported mandatory policy document which ensures that the teacher librarian is involved in than a babysitting providing release role in the school. The introduction of the new National Curriculum provides such an opportunity.

Submitted by: Margo Pickworth B.A. Dip Ed., M.Ed (Teacher Librarianship), M.Arts (E-Learning)