



Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian Schools

I make the following submission as a teacher librarian who has been working in schools as a librarian for 23 Years. I have taught in small schools with only 13 children right up to Secondary schools with 1000 students. At the present moment I work in a Central school which caters for students K-12.

This inquiry comes at an appropriate time as we see many of the influences of the Digital Education revolution and the Building Education revolution in progress.

It also comes at a time when many of our profession is concerned about the demise of our position on a national level even though international many countries are pushing to reinstate libraries in their schools, after some dreadful decisions were made.

After teaching and promoting literacy for so many years it is important that we are acknowledge and we are valued in our workplace, before we become extinct. We are a small group of dedicated professionals and we need someone to listen to us.

Terms of reference:

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

Being a teacher librarian in a K-12 School there has been 3 major impacts on how we provide services to our students, staff and community users.

1. Global budgeting: Our funding for resources has met an all time low. I am now unable to meet many of the needs of my students in their quests for reading materials and research options.
 - a. The price of resources has increased but my budget has decreased. Being in a k-12 Library I need to be able provide recreational reading materials not only for my 5 year olds but right through to my 18 year old students. The average cost of a novel is between \$15 and \$30. At the present moment my budget allows me to purchase less than one new resource per child. Most factual books are over \$39.00. My budget depends upon what other priorities are in the school – we need to work on a budget which needs to meet our student needs.
 - b. I no longer purchase Teacher Resources as I cannot afford them.
 - c. My visual media section is out dated.
 - d. My audio books for my non readers are inadequate to cover their needs.
2. Relief From Face to Face:
 - a. Once upon a time teachers would come to the library and be involved in their students love of reading – helping them choose books, having that time to see what the children's interests are outside of "school" reading. With the introduction of teacher librarians providing RFF our teachers have lost that personal time of being involved with

their students learning in a personal way. Now too often Library instruction is given with no links to the classroom – this is a huge shame without education system.

3. The building sizes of libraries are not keeping up with our students.
 - a. Being in a central school and being funded under the primary section of the BER funding (k-12 schools) our new library is being built to Primary standards. This means that we are getting nothing more than what we have already got. In fact we loose air-conditioning which might not be important to many but at lunch time I often get 100 kids in a sardine can demountable library looking for refuge from the heat, rain or cold weather. These students choose to come to read, play board games or complete home work tasks.
 - b. Our libraries need to cater for reading areas for our wide range of readers, quite areas for private study as well as group areas for class group instruction and research. The areas must cater for our whole school – our kinder kids as well as our year 7 kids right through to year 12, teachers and community.
 - c. Our Libraries need to be designed to encourage learning and built right the first time. One size design does not fit all.
 - d. They need to be built to cater for all our students – not just based on our Primary numbers.

The future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved education and community outcomes especially literacy.

Our libraries are being hobbled. There is so much potential to improve and to keep our libraries alive and active to continue to support our users but:

1. Resources: Because of lack of funding we cannot provide resources for our students. I have increased my borrowing rates by being proactive with reading – but it is extremely hard when you can't finish purchasing a series of books ie Twilight because you have run out of funding.
2. Reading is Literacy – whether it is visual or text, Teacher librarians are the keeper of the books and we provide so many reading experiences for our students that are not Naplan tested etc. Children are free to read they are not tested on how many text types they have read. Kids who read don't go oh this is a narrative but instead they are excited about what is going to happen next. Students rely on to hand out the tissues on a sad novel or laugh with them.
3. Reading is knowledge – To have a child come in looking for a book on bats and then the next day come in and tell you some knowledge that is gained is so powerful. Children want to learn and we need to be available now to provide them with resources - sitting at a computer is not the same as sharing a book.
4. Reading is sharing – Our community doesn't have a town library so we have a section where our community members may donate and borrow from. It is a great experience to have a whole family come in to borrow – which strengthens our community as readers.

The Factors influencing recruitment and development of school libraries;

1. Student teachers are not permitted to have work experience in libraries. How can we encourage more students to become librarians when they cannot even complete it as part of their studies.
2. Teacher Librarians are often classed as “not real” teachers as they don’t have a class – they will be given extras because they are not on class and even given out of subject area classes to teach. This needs to be addressed.

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

1. We do not have a local town library – the nearest is 15 km’s away for our residents they rely on our services.

The impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school Librarians;

Digital technologies will complement our services that we provide to our students. But it will never replace the role of the school librarian. Everyone has a memory of the teacher librarian the bun, glasses and shhh image may have changed but the reality of having someone there to help you never will.

1. To have students being able to talk with specialists with connected classrooms is fantastic. For our disadvantage students they need to have access to these professionals to create a level playing field with their city counterparts, but it needs to work. At present we have a slag with students being able communicate which creates frustration.
2. School Librarians need training often we are the front runners of technology use for our students – but usually it comes from our own enthusiasm and dedication to continue to be lifelong learners.

School Libraries and qualified school librarians are important they are the central attraction to any school, whether it is for reading, quiet time, friendship, technology, or knowledge.

Albert Einstein once said “If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales.” Don’t make our libraries become a fairy tale something that started with once upon a time. Keep them and resource them correctly.

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