

Parliamentary Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher Librarians.

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Do we need a School Library into the future? A lot would depend upon the attitude toward the use of technology and digital technology/ media as well as hard copy and the value placed on real human interaction. I have heard it said by quite a few teachers, students and people in general that the new technology will overtake the book and thus the traditional library will go into history and the T/L will go with it and it will all be superseded with a Technology Centre run by a Tech. with no teaching skills or library skills. This would cause the loss of jobs to a great number of dedicated and hard working people who offer a great resource to student and teachers and parents.

Students will be forced to work and live in an artificial techno-environment. This is seen already, in schools as teachers and students make straight for the computer with no thought for the high quality book resources that are provided and in most cases these are easier to use than the internet. Many students won't ask for help with information gathering either as they think they know how to do it and thus they waste time by wrong searching technique. If you believe that the book is best you will lose out on the great diversity and immediacy of the new technology and the currency of this material.

If on the other hand there is a balanced view, the students will get the best of all things educational. The student and staff will get the new technology and the hard and still valuable copy as well as the human contact and guidance during the learning process.

If there is a move to be rid of the human interactivity and the book in favour of P.Cs the student will be forced to move in an environment that is sterile and devoid of human interactivity and an opportunity to experience the romance and warmth of organic books. Having said this though it is hard to hold a conference call without this new technology and this would similarly reduce the educational opportunity of the people needing the benefits.

Losing the human aspects would also lose the other benefits of libraries

- A place of refuge from the hassles and vagaries of the playground,
- A place of quieter solitude for personal reflection, study and work as well as recreational reading,
- The individual assistance of the T/L or other students who are doing the same thing.
- A place where quiet discussion can be had in the library.
- A place where body language and personal interaction is common at a level beyond that that is to be had in a classroom.
- The T/L can assist with validation, searching and synthesising of information. This is not done by a computer.
- The area is not dependant on electricity to access the information needed so education can still go on.

There need not be any conflict between the high tech. and the still valid technology of the book.

What has to happen is for the curriculum to call for the use of **ALL technologies** and provide the means for choice. The “education of the 21st. Century” should **use ALL the technologies** that are available to us not just one as was the impression given in Parliament.

A good T/L will be able to amalgamate **all technologies** to provide the best learning environment for the student and staff. But a good T/L can only be found if the position is valued by the teaching profession and the community in general. The fact that it is not a promotion position doesn't help and the fact that not all T/Ls have library qualifications is similarly no help but within the school the use, particularly in primary school, of the T/L as a baby sitter or for relief from “face to face” teaching only undermines the status of the job which is critical for a good learning situation.

Well meaning parents do not add to the status of the position of the T/L, indeed it may add to the poor status seen as the lot of the T/L. **Most or all of these very good minded people do not have qualifications as teachers or librarians, again lowering the status of T/L.**

The fact that in many Primary Schools the **T/L is not a full teaching position** is also lowering the status of the role. Indeed I believe that the Principal, School Secretary, Teacher librarian and General Assistant should all be full positions as the work level does not get diminished by small numbers.

The better T/Ls will need to have funding available in the school to attend in-servicing in all the disciplines of the school so they can be useful to all areas of learning as well as the running of the library and technology, this is particularly critical in secondary schools. This in-servicing needs to be done by qualified and experienced practitioners not parochial though well meaning acquaintances.

With an improved status and ongoing leaning the role of and status of the T/L will improve and more people will train to be T/Ls. To aid this further the provision of more tertiary courses would likewise be helpful.

In regard to the other libraries available to us, there needs to be clarity about access to their resources. The library at any University is accessible for all students to use but not to borrow from and the same is for TAFEs but I don't think that this generally known.

Local council libraries are also available to rate payers and students of the area. Distance is the biggest problem and the availability of transport to and fro at later hours and the restrictions on the times of bus passes etc restricts the use of these for many other students.

Many local libraries do offer school support programs and some students do access these but there is limited advertising and cost may be a prohibitive factor as well. To be considered also is the fact that many students need to have a job to supplement family income or to foster a sense independence of the family income and this prevents them accessing these events at later hours.

To some up.

- There need not be any competition between the new technology and the role of the T/L if the T/L is not the tech. but only the educator of staff and student in research skill and information gathering using all types of information. There must be a balance between ALL technologies.
- The qualifications of T/Ls need to be true and accepted.
- The qualifications need to be adhered to.
- T/Ls need to be inserviced in all areas of the curriculum.
- There needs to be sufficient funding to run the library to its fullest potential.
- The curriculum needs to reflect ALL technologies and information sources.
- The human qualities of the library and the education of the staff and students need to be enhanced and preserved as the dehumanisation that could come with the over use of computers is devastating to the health of all.