



**Submission to the Australian House of Representatives Committee on
Education and Training, Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher
Librarians**

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The health of school libraries internationally is threatened by economic downturns and also by ignorance of the library's value.

Hopefully, the financial picture is temporary, but technology seems to be a longer-term culprit, with the assumption that all information is free and on the Internet, and that today's youth are all technologically competent.

Both of these assumptions are erroneous, but school librarians need to inform our stakeholders of the truth. After all, we have the information, and our mission is to share that information and help our users make informed decisions based on accurate information.

In my research on the management issues of beginning school librarians, I found that the greatest problems came not so much from internal issues as much as from dealing with library stakeholders: teachers, administrators, students and parents. Crises dealt with textbooks, theft, inappropriate behavior, unreasonable demands, and so forth. One of the main ways to solve the problem was the use of good policies.

One approach to addressing library crises is position statements. Most recently, the European Network for School Libraries and Information Literacy (ENSIL), the International Association of School Librarianship (IASL) and International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) School Libraries and Resource Centres announced the publication of a joint document on professional school libraries worldwide (<http://www.ensil.eu/>). IFLA also has a number of policy statements ([http://www.ifla.org/publications/highlights? 21](http://www.ifla.org/publications/highlights?21)) that presents a convincing case for the need for school libraries and professionally trained library staff. The most well known IFLA-UNESCO position statement is the School Library Manifesto (<http://archive.ifla.org/VII/s11/pubs/manifest.htm>). The IFLA School Libraries and Resource Section lists this position statement as well as international school library guidelines (<http://www.ifla.org/en/publications/52>).

Examples of national position statements include:

- School Library Association (UK): < <http://www.sla.org.uk/policies.php> >
- Australian School Library Association: < <http://www.asla.org.au/policy/> >
- American Association of School Librarians: < <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/aaslissues/positionstatements/positionstatements.cfm> >
- Canadian Library Association: <

http://www.cla.ca/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Position_Statements >

I present these position statements as an affirmation of the value of school libraries worldwide.

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