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Submission to Inquiry into

School Libraries and Teacher Librarians in Australian Schools.

by The Children's Book Council of Australia

Submitted by

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Submission to Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher Librarians in Australian Schools.

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Terms of Reference

To inquire into and report on the role, adequacy and resourcing of school libraries and teacher librarians in Australia's public and private schools. Specifically, the committee should focus on:

- the impact of recent policies and investments on school libraries and their activities;
- the future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy;
- the factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians;
- the role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school librarians; and
- the impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarians.

Introduction

Australian school libraries represent a considerable investment on the part of the Australian public.

A substantial economic investment has been made in school library buildings both recently with funding through the Federal Government's $16.2 billion *'Building the Education Revolution'* initiative, as well as historically in the resources housed within these buildings. Replacement value of even a modest school library collection would start at hundreds of thousands of dollars.

School libraries are also a cultural investment. They recognise that both literacy and academic achievement are valued by the Australian population. NAPLAN results around the country are a topic of controversy. We take pride in our place in the world literacy rankings and there is great consternation at a slip in results. Reading is not just the third most popular leisure pursuit (ABS, 2008) but its role in creating a more literate, knowledgeable, creative and thoughtful Australia is valued.

Yet school libraries are under threat in many areas of Australia, with staffing and funding having eroded both the profession and libraries over the past two decades. Such factors as the lack of government or state policy mandating the staffing of school libraries with qualified teacher-librarians, a lack of library advisors in educational systems management, the devolution of power within Australian education away from centralised management and services giving principals power to make staffing and funding choices, the ageing demographic of teacher-librarians exacerbated by a lack of incentives to train or retrain, an increased need to maintain teacher conditions through relief from face-to-face teaching (RFF) often at the expense of library service, together with a focus on technology as an educational tool, and even teacher-librarians' repositioning themselves into IT management have all impacted on school library service within Australia.

The rate of change in digital technology raises questions about the role school libraries and teacher-librarians play in maximising the best access to and use of information through new technologies, highlighting their role in teaching information literacy, promoting reading and literacy, resourcing the curriculum and improving educational outcomes in a rapidly changing technological future. At this very time, many schools find themselves with a void in library service.

It is timely, therefore, that this Inquiry takes place. School libraries and the role of the teacher-librarian are in a state of peril in Australia. While some are functioning efficiently, many of these are in those independent sectors of education in some states where library practice has continued to be valued, adequately funded and staffed and even explicitly encouraged. While it would be politically correct to highlight best practice from a wide geographic and sector cross-section of Australian school library sectors, in some sectors, such as indigenous community schools in the Northern Territory, there are no teacher-librarians at all. We believe that this lack of parity strengthens the educational, cultural and socio-economic divide between Australians to our great detriment as a nation. While we may espouse the great cry of 'Education for all!' in Australian schools, in reality such equity does not exist.

Over a 10 day period in March 2010, the CBCA conducted a short survey of school libraries and teacher librarians in Australia in order to inform this submission with data and teacher librarian opinions. The survey attracted 624 respondents with a 100% completion rate. Results, including a full comment bank of responses to 5 of the 14 questions, are included as appendices to this submission.

This report focuses on the Terms of Reference for this Inquiry, while attempting to place them into an historical context.

Terms of Reference

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

In the 1970s, there was a great push to fund school libraries, beginning in 1968 when the Federal Minister for Education and Science, Malcolm Fraser, implemented Commonwealth grants that saw $57 million spent on buildings, furniture, equipment and resource materials relating to secondary school libraries, government and non-government, from 1969-1974. This was followed up by the Labor Government's grant of further funds for secondary libraries in 1974-5, for staffing and for training teacher librarians. From 1969-1975, approximately $3/secondary student was spent in grants for resources and equipment. State grants varied between $8/student in Victoria in 1975 to $15/student in NSW for materials (Lundin & Marsh, 1978). By 1980 all states had central school library services. These initiatives, however, did not fully extend into the primary school library sector.

While the present Federal Government has provided 3,089 new library buildings, many of these buildings may not be staffed by qualified teacher librarians. As one survey respondent commented:

"We are a school that is getting a wonderful new library, yet there won't be anyone to staff it. The library officer has 1 day a week and needs that to just put books away and try and tidy up after teachers and students have "trashed" the library during the week. I am a qualified TL and have no allocated time - I am now a "Maths specialist". I re-located to the library to keep a "weather eye" on things and open at lunchtime. I'm going to retire at the end of the year. I've had enough!"
Teacher, WA.

Library service is often poorest in the greatest areas of need. Figures available show professional staffing of school libraries around Australia is:

- Tasmania - only 50% of schools have teacher librarians,
- Victoria and ACT 65%,
- NT 5%. There are no teacher librarians in community schools in the Northern Territory.
- WA – Teacher librarians are not mandated in primary schools.
- In 2002, "...a third of school libraries around SA were understaffed and/or staffed with unqualified personnel" (Spence)
- In 2010, the CBCA Library Survey (Appendix A) showed that 19.6% of respondent school libraries were managed by people with no specialist training or certificate/diploma level only (no degree). This figure would have been much higher if a truer cross-section of ALL Australian school libraries had been reached.

  (Figures from The Hub, http://hubinfo.wordpress.com/background/few-statistics/)

There have been cuts in recent years not only to library staffing, but also to funding of many libraries. The Digital Revolution has funded much needed IT, too often to the detriment of the remainder of school library resource budgets.

- The CBCA Library Survey (2010) found that the average school library budget of respondent schools equated to $25 per child.

In other words, many school libraries today receive budgets below 1975 funding levels.

- 33% of schools received less than $15 per child (i.e. they did not have enough budget to buy one book per child per year, let alone fund a subscription to an electronic database);
- 52% of schools received less than $20 per child per year.

Funding for school library service shows a great divide between 'haves' and 'have nots':

- 8.2% of schools received over $50 per student per year in library budget.

New technologies increase rather than decrease the need for better funding. Quality information resources, whether print or electronic, are expensive. Teacher librarians' resource management involves both print and online formats – both e-books and printed books, online databases (many of which cost thousands of dollars) as well as free online sources, DVDs as well as video streaming.

Physical resources can never take the place of 'people' resources to facilitate the learning process. The billions spent by the Federal Government on library buildings will not translate into improvements in learning outcomes, unless that funding is accompanied by adequate resourcing, staffing, management, and administrative support for those libraries. In many school libraries in Australia, this is presently non-existent.

"*The potential of the BER libraries will not be fulfilled without qualified library staff in sufficient numbers to make the dream a reality. A realistic staffing model should be mandatory. TL hours should not be able to be traded away by principals.*" TL, QLD state primary school

(See also Appendices 2 & 3.)

- the future potential of school libraries and librarians to contribute to improved educational and community outcomes, especially literacy;

Qualified teacher librarians fulfil many roles in schools, which could be categorised into four key result areas (adapted from the Brisbane Catholic Education's Draft *'Guideline Role statement for the Teacher-Librarian'*):

- **Curriculum Support**: Teacher librarians partner teachers to develop, implement and evaluate a curriculum which facilitates student learning.
- **Information and Digital Literacy Education**: Teacher librarians work collaboratively to provide opportunities for students to become discerning users of information.
- **Literacy and Literature Promotion**: Teacher librarians advocate reading, promote literature for young people and offer reading guidance.
- **Resource Manager**: Teacher librarians manage a school's information resources and services.

The CBCA Library Survey (2010) found that responding libraries undertook a wide range of learning programs as part of their library service:

Teaching research skills	89.1%
Readers Cup	25.0%
MS Readathon	31.6%
Wide reading programs	52.6%
Premier's Reading Challenge	55.1%
Indigenous Literacy Project activities	10.4%
Literature Circles	27.6%
CBCA Book Week	82.5%
Reading Recovery	8.2%
Teaching information literacy	84.3%
Literacy programs	54.1%
Note taking	61.2%
Writing skills	34.5%
Using Web 2.0 skills – wikis, blogs etc.	48.5%
Planning assignments to incorporate curriculum elements	53.1%
Resourcing the curriculum	91.5%
Creating research 'pathways' or guides	46.4%
Creating resources to facilitate learning	65.5%
Managing school resources	92.0%
Teaching use of digital or electronic media	70.5%
Integrating ICTs into the curriculum	70.1%
Use of electronic databases	64.4%

Research shows a direct correlation between effective school library programs and academic achievement.

- The Lonsdale Report (2003) found that active school library programs run by a trained teacher librarian make a significant difference to student learning outcomes. Students in schools without a teacher librarian are educationally disadvantaged.
- This correlation is also supported by numerous studies in the US: http://www.crbsls.org/slsa/student-achievement.html

- Many studies which demonstrate the importance of school libraries to student learning outcomes can be accessed through the WA Department of Education's CMIS website: http://www.det.wa.edu.au/education/cmis/eval/library/value/val2.htm

Teacher librarians are literature and reading specialists – they keep up to date with books for children and young adults and match children to books which suit their interests and reading levels. The importance of school wide reading programs, promotion of free voluntary reading and the encouragement of reluctant readers is of paramount importance.

There is widespread recognition of the importance of reading, not only to aid literacy development, but also for the other benefits of reading for pleasure - to help create a more empathic, imaginative and thoughtful Australia.

"*...let me say that teaching kids to read is deadly serious...The role librarians and teachers play in helping kids find the right books and learn to love books is vital.*" (Kevin Rudd, 2010)

- Children become better readers (and spellers and writers) by reading. Teacher librarians are specialists in encouraging literacy through free voluntary reading, a guaranteed way to help kids become more literate (Krashen).
- 60 studies have shown that free voluntary reading is at least as effective as conventional teaching methods in helping children to do well on standardized tests. Reading for pleasure provides a great deal that these tests don't measure. Study after study has confirmed that those who read more know more. Their vocabulary increases and grammar and spelling are improved. (Krashen).

"*Only when all children are in a book-loving environment will they achieve literacy, yes, but a lot more: a confidence in handling abstract ideas, an understanding of a multiplicity of viewpoint and the complexity and diversity of human interaction that comes through reading widely and often.*" (Former UK Children's Laureate, Michael Rosen, 2008)

As life-long learners, students need to develop information literacy skills. **Teacher librarians specialize in teaching information and digital literacy.**

"*The school library professional role is as critical as ever, it is much broader now and open to constant change. It needs to be filled by a professional with high level multi modal literacy knowledge and skills.*" TL, SA primary state school

- New technologies exacerbate students' and teacher' needs to have specialised support to access, select and use information, to aid their navigation of the 'information superhighway'.
- Information literacy includes seeking multiple viewpoints and critically reading print, digital media, film, and all learning objects to make meaning and to build knowledge.
- Teacher librarians, in collaboration with teachers, select, purchase, organize and guide access to and use of print and non-print information sources which best suits the purpose of the learner.
- Teacher librarians willingly update their skills in IT, develop library web access points, digitize data, network with colleagues, review and select online websites, use Web 2.0 tools, learning objects, webquests, online databases, social networking tools, etc. This is part of their collection development role, their teaching and curriculum support role and their role in improving literacy.

"The school library provides information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning successfully in today's information and knowledge-based society. The school library equips students with life-long learning skills and develops the imagination, enabling them to live as responsible citizens."

School Library Manifesto, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)

/ UNESCO

"A school's teacher-librarian is its chief information officer, but in a networked world, the position is more that of moderator or coach, the person who ensures that students and teachers can effectively interact with information and leverage it to create and share and make a difference in the community and beyond." Joyce Valenza, teacher-librarian, author, and technology advocate, US

Further Australian research is needed into the role school libraries and teacher librarians play in improving educational outcomes.

- the factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians;

There is presently no federal policy or standards (as previously existed in *Books and Beyond: Guidelines for library resource facilities and services*. Canberra: Schools Commission, 1977, 2nd ed. 1979) to guide the development of school libraries, recruitment and training of teacher librarians, or staffing and resourcing of school libraries, so conditions including the staffing of school libraries vary widely from state to state and system to system.

As a rule of thumb, past research has shown that Anglican and other independent schools are among the best funded and staffed in Australia, and state and community schools among the worst. Where there is no regional or systemic representative voice, library conditions are often risked by principals facing economically difficult and often mutually exclusive choices, such as choosing to fund either smaller classes or the position of teacher librarian, both of which would be advantageous to student learning. The recent trend toward devolved, flexible staffing along with dwindling school budgets has also resulted in the increased use of teacher librarians in classrooms and the replacement of teacher librarians with less expensive staff. While unqualified staff may be able to 'keep the library doors open' and complete some of the technical tasks, they cannot fulfill the specialist teaching role or run the programs undertaken by teacher librarians (as outlined by survey respondents).

"A library without a Teacher-librarian is just a room full of resources. While a library tech is fully trained to handle stock and catalogue etc., only a teacher-librarian has the teacher training necessary to run educational programs, run PD with staff and to bring an educator's eye to the library program." TL, TAS primary & secondary state school

Teacher librarian training programs have decreased in number over the past two decades. We have no national data on teachers undergoing teacher librarian training. There are few incentive programs to entice teachers to undertake further training to become a teacher librarian. A notable exception is the recent scholarship program offered by Brisbane Catholic Education for Catholic teachers to undertake a Master of Education (Teacher Librarianship) qualification. Such incentives, notable in their rarity, are to be commended for their insight, and should lead to an influx of new and enthusiastic teacher librarians into Catholic schools in the South East Queensland region.

In contrast, state schools in South East Queensland are suffering. Seven large state high schools on the Gold Coast have no teacher librarian. Others are staffed by teachers in charge who, while they may be enthusiastic, may not have the skills necessary to conduct school-wide reading and literacy programs. No noticeable recruitment campaign has taken place to fulfill existing teacher librarian vacancies in state schools on the Gold Coast and there is no incentive for teachers to complete training of their own volition. There may not be TL positions to be filled when their training is complete, nor is there extra pay for undertaking further training. (See Appendices 4 & 5.)

- the role of different levels of government and local communities and other institutions in partnering with and supporting school librarians; and

"*Visit school libraries - long visits, not 15 minutes whip-arounds. Those without TLs, and then those where there is a great TL who collaborates with classroom teachers, builds a warm community atmosphere and works well with students. Look at the differences in reader behaviours and research skills. Then the benefits of having a qualified TL will become far more apparent than nebulous 'results of a study in 5 countries' type data.*" TL, TAS Anglican primary & secondary school

There are, at present, very few state education department consultancy and support services for teacher librarians (CMIS, WA excepted), except in some curriculum areas. Some school systems do provide support for school library staff through regional library advisors, scholarship schemes, some mandating of positions or clarifying role statements. Other states and systems provide very little support.

Good educational planning relies on good data. We have no complete national workforce data on teacher librarian numbers and use. We have no government school data on school library budgets, only surveys such as those conducted by The Australian School Library Association (ASLA) in 2008 and The Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) in 2010.

Professional associations have had to assume the majority of professional development for teacher librarians. Teacher librarians are supported mostly from within their own ranks, both informally and formally. This is provided through school library area networks, professional association memberships (such as the ASLA), or through voluntary associations such as the CBCA (which is dependent on volunteers and without any government funding), or by informal mentoring and support. Newly appointed and untrained school library staff are often dependent on local teacher librarian networks for their training.

While school library networks and professional associations provide collegiate support and professional development for members, if no teacher librarian is employed at a school, there may even be no point of contact for professional support of any kind for library staff. In the Northern Territory even network meetings have been disbanded because of the lack of staff and system support. The Children's Book Council of Australia and ASLA (NT) are two of the few professional groups operating in the Northern Territory with which teacher librarians can identify.

Educational leaders need support in developing excellent school libraries and excellent teacher librarians. This may require some mandating of minimum standards, also being informed about current research on the contribution of school libraries and teacher librarians to improved educational outcomes and the provision of exemplars of best practice (such as ASLA's document 'Standards of Professional Excellence for Teacher Librarians' or an update thereof).

Common policies for school libraries and the role of teacher librarian are needed across all states.

Conclusion

Things the Federal government can do:

- collect national data on school library staffing, funding, and scheduling;
- tie funding so that states can and must adequately staff and fund school library programs and services;

- require that literacy programs and other national curricula should explicitly recognize the central role school libraries have in student achievement, literacy attainment, and preparation for post-secondary success;
- develop national school library standards;
- increase teacher librarian training positions in university programs;
- develop and publish a national information and digital literacy curriculum;
- provide research funding on the effect of school library programs and teacher librarians on literacy and learning;
- provide grants for improving literacy through school libraries;
- facilitate national licensing of online databases for school libraries;
- declare a national school library day. Align that day between Children's Book Week and National Literacy and Numeracy Week (e.g. The Friday of Book Week leading into NLNW);
- and a National Information Literacy Awareness Month!
- Fund an Australian Children's Laureate to put a face and profile to reading for all young Australians.http://www.acla.org.au/node/10
- See also suggestions in Appendix 6.

"*Ensure that there is a quality, qualified teacher librarian in every school. Have set national standards. Have a set formula for school funding to avoid huge discrepancies between different schools' library budgets (more equitable system). Fund resourcing of the library not just a building!"* TL, SA state primary school

"Whatever the cost of our libraries,

the price is cheap compared to that of an ignorant nation."

Walter Cronkite

Examples of Best Practice

Examples of best practice could be seen by following awards such as:

ASLA's Teacher Librarian of the Year http://www.asla.org.au/advocacy/award/, ASLA Citation Award, School Library Innovation Award for Media Literacy Enhancement http://www.asla.org.au/advocacy/award/EnhanceTV.htm

Awards from Australian School Library state or branch associations:

Queensland: The Brian Bahnisch Award http://www.slaq.org.au/awards/bahnisch.htm

NSW: NSW Teacher Librarian of the Year, John Hirst Award, John H Lee Award http://www.aslansw.org.au/awards/

SA: The Joan Brewer Award and SA Teacher librarian of the Year Award.
http://www.slasa.asn.au/home.html

VIC: The John Ward Award, The SLAV Innovator's Grant, The SLAV School Leader Award
http://www.slav.schools.net.au/slav.html

I would be happy to be contacted further about examples of best practice within the Brisbane/Gold Coast area, however I feel that interstate exemplars would be best sourced through state professional associations, such as those named above.

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Appendix 1:

CBCA Library Inquiry Survey

Conducted 21 March 2010 –
2 April 2010.

Responses: 624
Completion rate: 100%

Questions 1 – 9

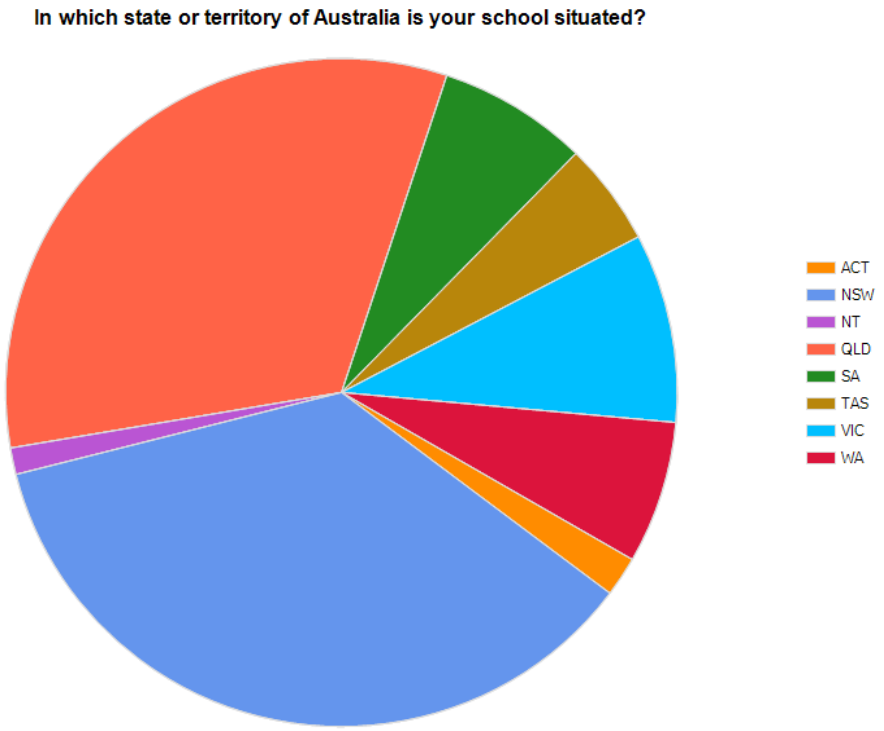
NOTE: Questions 10 – 14 are included as PDF attachments

Appendix 1:

CBCA Library Survey results

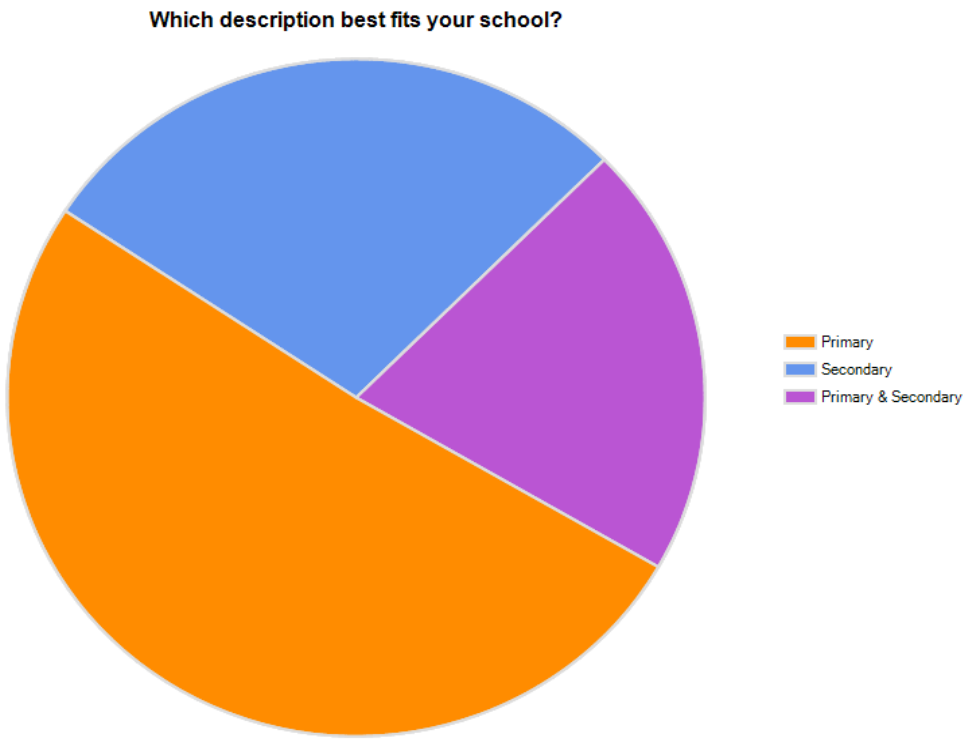
Question 1:

Answered survey: 624 Completion rate: 100%



	Response Percent	Response Count
ACT	1.9%	12
NSW	35.8%	223
NT	1.3%	8
QLD	32.7%	204
SA	7.2%	45
TAS	5.0%	31
VIC	9.1%	57
WA	6.9%	43

Question 2:

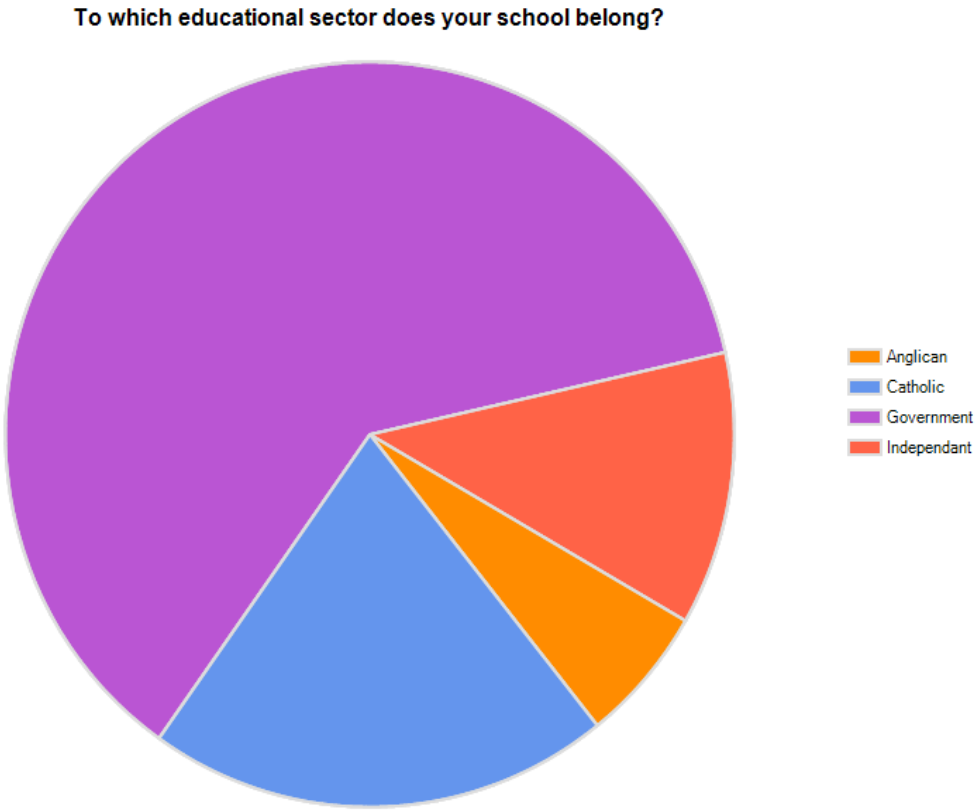


Which description best fits your school?

answered question	**622**
skipped question	**2**

	Response Percent	Response Count
Primary	51.0%	317
Secondary	28.3%	176
Primary & Secondary	20.7%	129

Question 3:

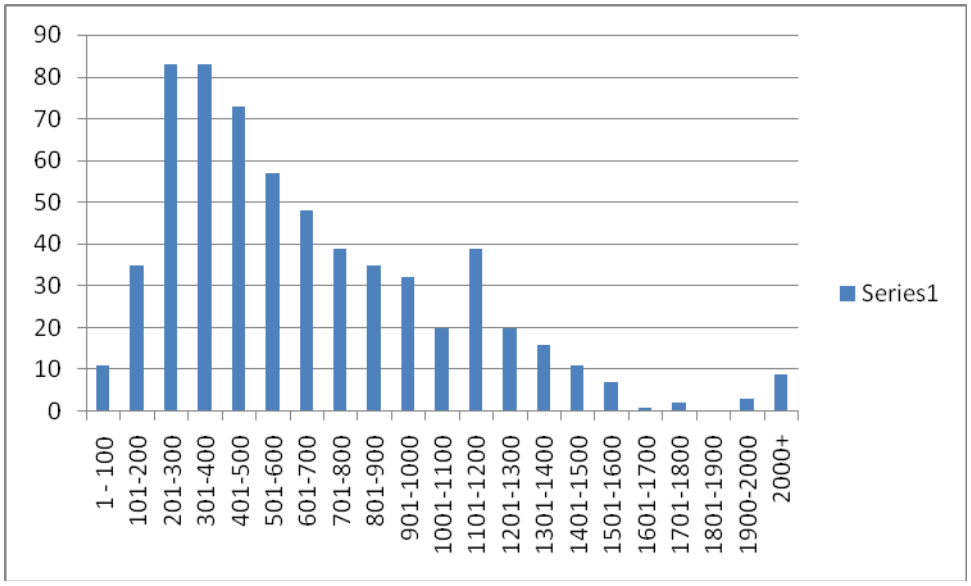


To which educational sector does your school belong?

answered question		**623**
skipped question		**1**
	Response Percent	**Response Count**
Anglican	5.9%	37
Catholic	20.5%	128
Government	61.6%	384
Independent	11.9%	74

Question 4: What is your school's present enrolment?

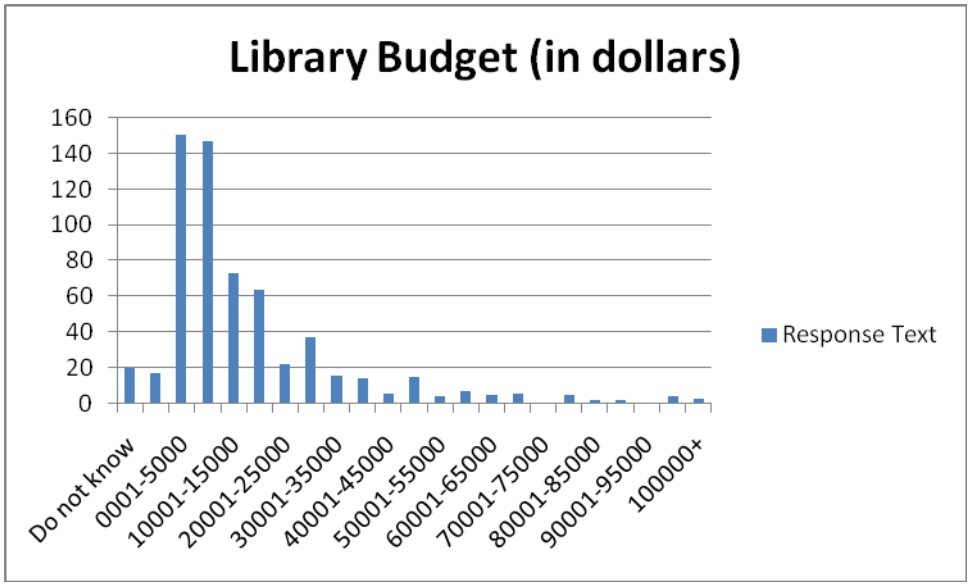
What is your school's present student enrolment?	
Answer Options	**Response Count**
	624
answered question	**624**
skipped question	**0**



1 - 100	11
101-200	35
201-300	83
301-400	83
401-500	73
501-600	57
601-700	48
701-800	39
801-900	35
901-1000	32
1001-1100	20
1101-1200	39
1201-1300	20
1301-1400	16
1401-1500	11
1501-1600	7
1601-1700	1
1701-1800	2
1801-1900	0
1900-2000	3
2000+	9

Question 5:

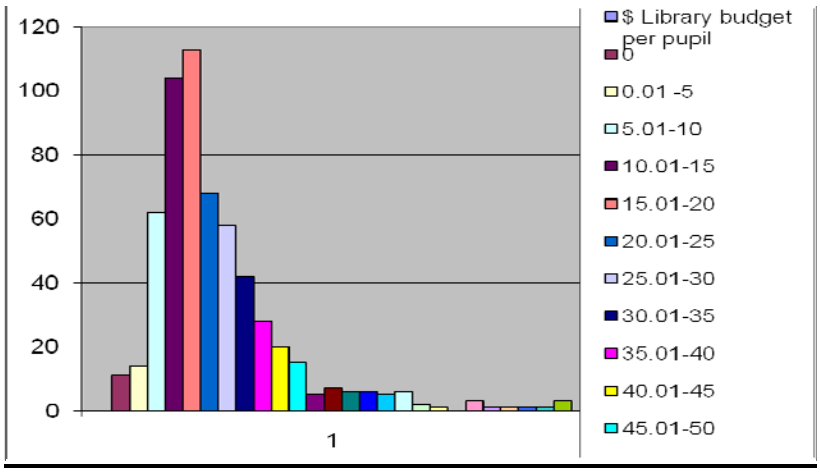
What is your school library's annual budget (excluding textbook hire)?



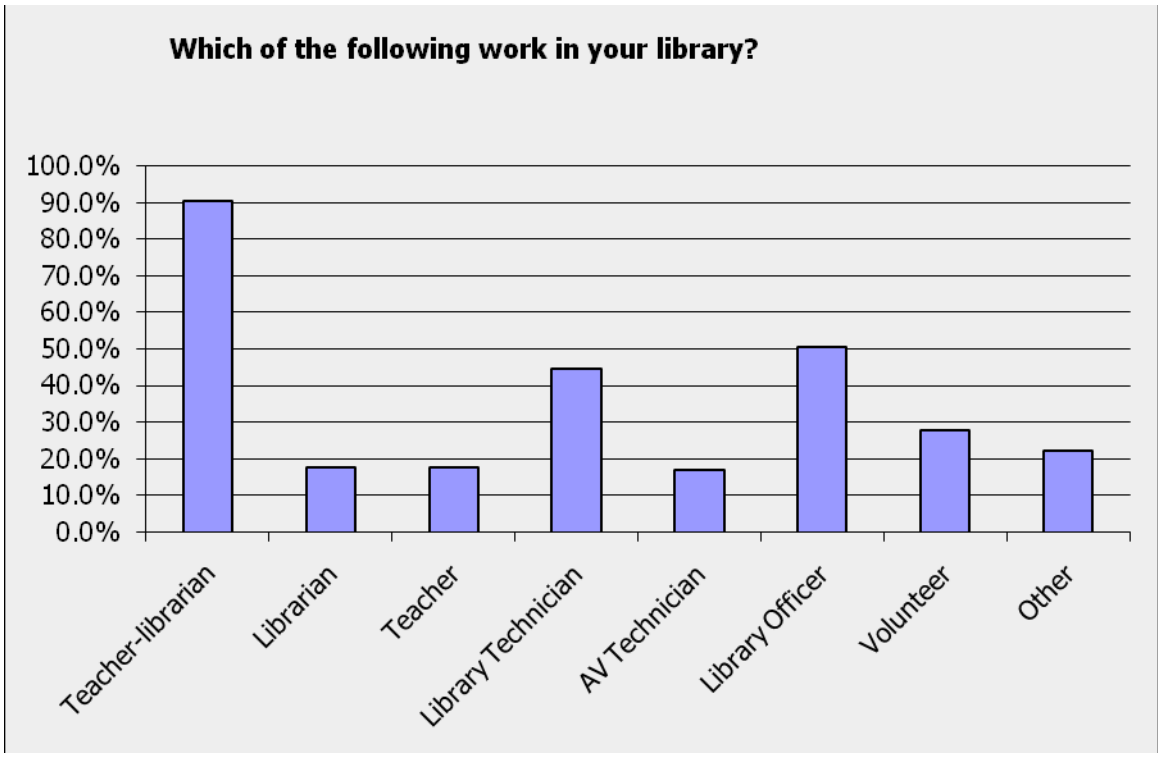
Do not know	20
No budget	17
0001-5000	151
5001-10000	147
10001-15000	73
15001-20000	64
20001-25000	22
25001-30000	37
30001-35000	16
35001-40000	14
40001-45000	6
45001-50000	15
50001-55000	4
55001-60000	7
60001-65000	5
65001-70000	6
70001-75000	1
75001-80000	5
80001-85000	2
85001-90000	2
90001-95000	0
95001-100000	4
100000+	3

$ Library budget per pupil

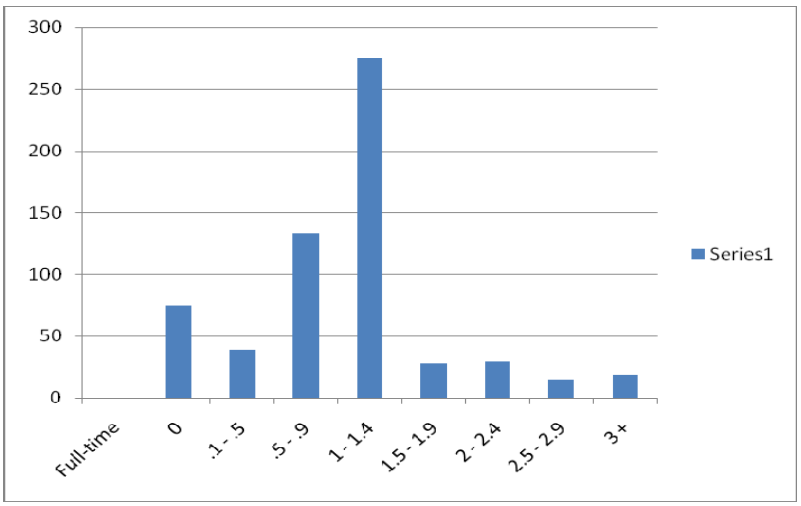
Zero budget	11
0.01 -5	14
5.01-10	62
10.01-15	104
15.01-20	113
20.01-25	68
25.01-30	58
30.01-35	42
35.01-40	28
40.01-45	20
45.01-50	15
50.01-55	5
55.01-60	7
60.01-65	6
65.01-70	6
70.01-75	5
75.01-80	6
80.01-85	2
85.01-90	1
90.01-95	0
95.01-100	3
100.01-105	1
105.01-110	1
110.01-115	1
115.01-120	1
120+	3
	583



Question 6:

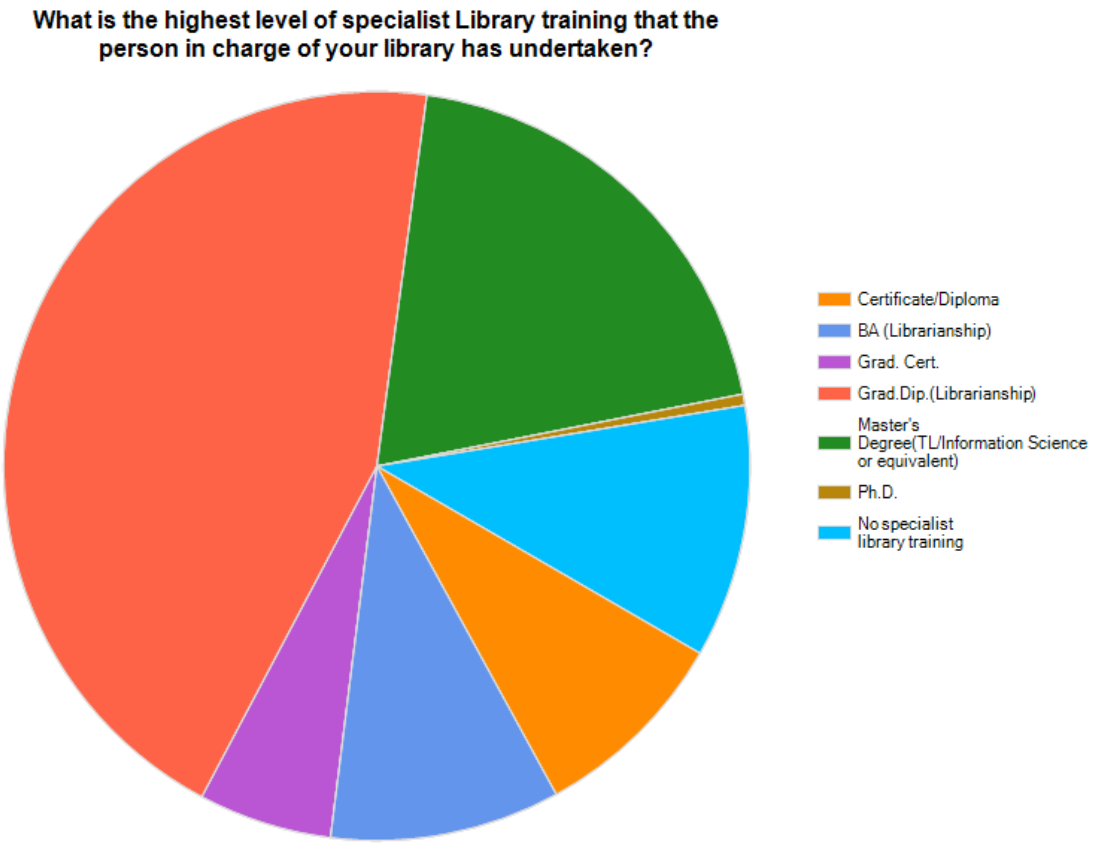


Teacher librarian positions in schools (fulltime positions)



TL Full-time Position	No. Of Schools
0	75
.1 - .5	39
.5 - .9	133
1 - 1.4	275
1.5 - 1.9	28
2 - 2.4	29
2.5 - 2.9	14
3 +	19

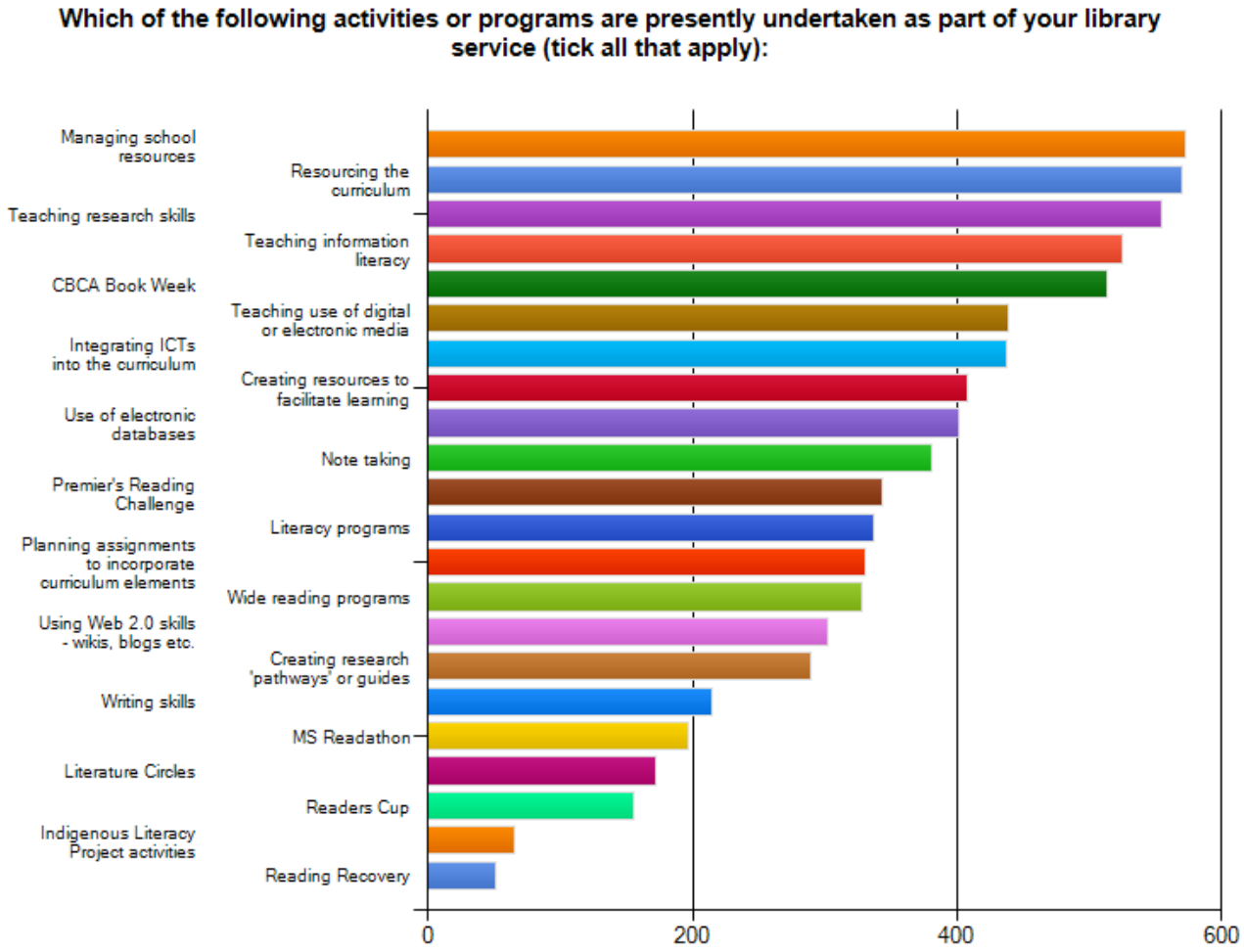
Question 7:



What is the highest level of specialist Library training that the person in charge of your library has undertaken?

answered question		**622**
skipped question		**2**
	Response Percent	**Response Count**
Certificate/Diploma	8.7%	54
BA (Librarianship)	10.0%	62
Grad. Cert.	5.8%	36
Grad.Dip.(Librarianship)	44.4%	276
Master's Degree(TL/Information Science or equivalent)	19.8%	123
Ph.D.	0.5%	3
No specialist library training	10.9%	68

Question 8:



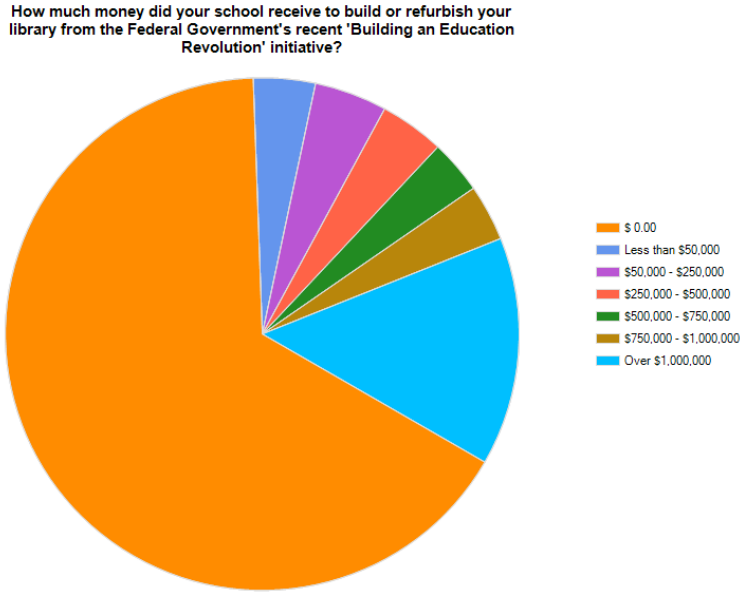
Which of the following activities or programs are presently undertaken as part of your library service (tick all that apply):

answered question		**623**
skipped question		**1**
	Response Percent	**Response Count**
Teaching research skills	89.1%	555
Readers Cup	25.0%	156
MS Readathon	31.6%	197
Wide reading programs	52.6%	328
Premier's Reading Challenge	55.1%	343
Indigenous Literacy Project activities	10.4%	65
Literature Circles	27.6%	172
CBCA Book Week	82.5%	514
Reading Recovery	8.2%	51
Teaching information literacy	84.3%	525
Literacy programs	54.1%	337
Note taking	61.2%	381
Writing skills	34.5%	215
Using Web 2.0 skills – wikis, blogs etc.	48.5%	302

Which of the following activities or programs are presently undertaken as part of your library service (tick all that apply):

Planning assignments to incorporate curriculum elements	53.1%	331
Resourcing the curriculum	91.5%	570
Creating research 'pathways' or guides	46.4%	289
Creating resources to facilitate learning	65.5%	408
Managing school resources	92.0%	573
Teaching use of digital or electronic media	70.5%	439
Integrating ICTs into the curriculum	70.1%	437
Use of electronic databases	64.4%	401

Question 9:



How much money did your school receive to build or refurbish your library from the Federal Government's recent 'Building an Education Revolution' initiative?		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
$ 0.00	66.1%	390
Less than $50,000	3.9%	23
$50,000 - $250,000	4.6%	27
$250,000 - $500,000	4.1%	24
$500,000 - $750,000	3.4%	20
$750,000 - $1,000,000	3.6%	21
Over $1,000,000	14.4%	85
	answered question	**590**
	skipped question	**34**

Appendices 2 -6
(attached as PDFs)

Responses to
Questions 10 - 14

CBCA Library Inquiry Survey

Question 10:
If you received BER funding, how has this impacted on your library and its activities? (If you did not receive funding, please write 'N/A'.)

Question 11:
How have recent policies at both state and local level affected your school library and its activities?

Question 12:
In your opinion, what factors influence the recruitment and further training of teacher-librarians?

Question 13:
In your opinion, how could the recruitment and further training of teacher-librarians be encouraged?

Question 14:
What suggestion/s would you give to the Federal Government's 'Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools'?

NOTE:
A compilation of all survey responses to Questions 10 – 14 has been included in PDF format as Appendices 2 – 6.