



Australian School Library Association (NSW) Inc.

Submission to the
Federal Parliamentary Inquiry into school libraries
and teacher librarians in Australian Schools

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The Australian School Library Association (NSW) Inc. (ASLA) is the professional association for teacher librarians who work in NSW government and non-government schools. The Mission of ASLA (NSW) is to promote the professional interests of Teacher Librarians and school libraries. Significantly the terms of reference for the Inquiry reflect the objectives of our association namely to:

1. *Provide a forum for issues related to school libraries*
2. *Promote and strengthen the standing and qualifications of Teacher Librarians and support staff*
3. *Advocate on matters relating to the profession*
4. *Promote the education and professional learning of Teacher Librarians and support staff*
5. *Promote research to advance the profession*
6. *Promote quality teaching and learning*

It is pleasing to the teacher librarian profession that this Inquiry is clearly seen as a significant component of the federal government's school education agenda. This is heartening as it suggests an appreciation of the vital function that teacher librarians exercise in enhancing quality teaching and learning in the schools of the nation. The strength of the current focus on school education is arguably as significant as that of the 1960's and 1970's when the federal government provided the impetus for significant improvements in school infrastructure spending that included new facilities for science education. Moreover that period is significant because of the construction of school libraries primarily in the secondary schools of the nation. For some decades after that period the number of tertiary institutions offering qualifications specifically designed for educating teacher librarians grew in number. The promise of these past decades has not been sustained. Yet the terms of reference for this Inquiry indicate an appreciation of the concerns that members of our profession have long known to hinder our capacity to execute our role as effectively as we would wish. As professionals teacher librarians do their very best in a climate typified by reduced budgets, aging infrastructure and encroachments on the time that teacher librarians have available to perform the core areas of their role. Whilst typical this climate is not universal. There are schools where policy makers have recognised the valuable contribution to be made by a well resourced and adequately staffed school library. Such schools provide the model that all schools need to emulate.

Hence this Inquiry is timely indeed and on behalf of the membership of ASLA (NSW) Inc. the committee of the association is grateful for the opportunity to contribute and trust that this submission is of assistance to the Inquiry process. In it we as a profession hold an optimistic hope.

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

It has to be acknowledged that in New South Wales Department of Education and Training (NSW DET) schools there exist policies and investments that, correctly implemented impact positively on school library programs. Significantly it is NSW DET policy that each school must have a school library staffed by an accredited teacher librarian. An ongoing retraining program funds the annual retraining of teachers as teacher librarians who graduate with a *Graduate Certificate in Teacher Librarianship* through Charles Sturt University (CSU).

The official NSW DET *School Library Policy* (1987) clearly outlines the role of the teacher librarian. These initiatives are supported by the publications *The Handbook for School Libraries* (2005), *Off the Shelf* (1999) and the quarterly journal *SCAN*. Significantly the *School Libraries and Information Unit* (currently undergoing restructure) provides leadership for teacher librarians in DET schools by providing support and training. The NSW DET publication *Information Skills in the Schools* (1987 updated 2007) is a mandated approach to teaching information literacy skills to K -12 students in NSW DET schools. Additionally in order to assist teacher librarians and school administrators to understand the role of the teacher librarian and to regulate their work a Memorandum to Regional Directors, School Education Directors and Principals from the General Manager of Industrial Relations and Employment services has been negotiated and signed off on 29th July 2005 (Memorandum: IRC 05/18, DN/05/002277).

The retraining program permits the NSW DET to meet its policy by guaranteeing that a trained teacher librarian is appointed to schools. However the *Graduate Certificate in Teacher Librarianship* does not meet the professional standards of ASLA (NSW). There is no incentive for holders of the graduate certificate to upgrade their qualifications to the minimal industry standard of a graduate diploma. Concerns have recently been expressed over freedom given to school principals in 47 pilot schools that has in at least one case been interpreted as consent to not employ a teacher librarian in their school.

Ostensibly these policies and initiatives are clearly positive. Teacher librarians in NSW DET schools are appointed above establishment with the express purpose of permitting the teacher librarian the time and freedom to carry out their teaching, collection development and management roles that are defined in the *School Library Policy* and by the Memorandum. Despite these facts teacher librarians are typically overstretched by carrying out a variety of non teacher librarian roles, such as supervising senior students throughout the school day whilst also trying to perform their other duties. For some two decades in primary schools across all sectors the teacher librarian's role has been co-opted to provide for the very limited relief from



face to face (RFF) teaching that primary school classroom teachers are permitted. These additional duties rob the teacher librarians of the time they need to engage in the duties their role requires such as collaboration with teachers, team teaching with teachers, carrying out research for students and staff, assisting students and teachers with their research and reading needs to name a few.

An increasing number of secondary schools in NSW across all sectors now require the teacher librarian to be responsible for all the textbooks throughout the school. This is a transfer of a significant amount of work that had once been the responsibility of faculty heads and classroom teachers. Typically there is no additional support staff allocation to process and handle the textbooks. In government schools OASIS the library management system (LMS) is inadequate for this additional teacher librarian responsibility.

Under resourcing of public education has had the result of school library budgets being significantly reduced in recent years in many schools. This is often the result of funds being redirected to technology. Paradoxically the delay in replacing OASIS the LMS that has been used in NSW DET school libraries for some twenty years denies the school libraries in these schools the efficiencies available in more recently developed LMS's.

The incremental impact of reduced library budgets inevitably has given rise to aging and thus irrelevant collections. Teacher librarians find it difficult to develop school library collections that meet the expanding resource demands of the wide curriculum choices that schools must offer. The new National Curriculum will challenge teacher librarians to adequately resource their libraries to meet the information needs that it will impose. In many schools budgets are so low that database subscriptions are not possible let alone the purchase of eBooks required by the new national Curriculum primary English syllabus.

The NSW DET policies and investments in retraining in particular are indeed positive and set a standard to be emulated by other systems. However in the non government school sector in NSW there is an absence of specific uniform policies. It appears that each school possesses the freedom to make their own policies regarding the school library and the role of the teacher librarian. However in most private schools and Catholic systemic schools throughout NSW a teacher librarian will manage the school library. Yet there are anecdotal reports of a small number of librarians being employed in preference or instead of a teacher librarian. This may be due to a shortage of teacher librarians in particular locations.

In many NSW DET schools the school libraries are now outdated and often poorly maintained. Reduced investment in education has typically resulted in little new construction in existing schools. This lack of investment in infrastructure means that many school libraries in the government and Catholic systemic sectors lack the ideal

facilities necessary to provide a 21st century school library service. Comparison can be made with many private schools that have the benefit of better resourcing much of it provided by generous federal government investment in the non government school sector over many years. Such a comparison is necessary because the decision to invest in modern library buildings together with generous resource provision and staffing of the school library serves to substantiate the research findings that a strong school library program enhances student learning outcomes.

Hopefully the recent federal government initiative to construct new libraries in primary schools is a positive precursor to future spending on new school library buildings in more primary and secondary schools over the coming years. However it is essential that all school libraries be adequately staffed with fully qualified teacher librarians and suitably trained support staff. Staffing levels need to be based on student numbers. At present in most schools in this state (government and non government) secondary libraries are ordinarily staffed by one full-time teacher librarian and one support staff member (for whom the allocation time may be based on student numbers). Many secondary schools have large student numbers, yet only one teacher librarian will be employed. For example a school with a student population of 1200 will have the same staffing allocation as a school of 600 or less. Whilst in primary schools the teacher librarian allocation is based on student numbers leaving the library unstaffed by a teacher librarian for part of the week.

The increased emphasis on literacy and numeracy demonstrated by the prominence given to NAPLAN is a manifestation of the need for well qualified teacher librarians who have not been demarcated away from their primary role as supporters of the quality teaching of each teacher and the quality learning of each student in the school. The teacher librarian's dual role as collaborative teacher and collection development professional is crucial to provide the rich learning environment necessary for our young people to acquire the manifold skills necessary to become lifelong learners. Basic literacy and numeracy skills are the core building blocks for future knowledge creation.

The Digital Education Revolution is indeed a brave educational initiative that will advantage so many Australian students. Interestingly and disturbingly many secondary teacher librarians report that they were not recipients of DER notebooks in the first rollout to teachers. It is not known how many still await one. This may surprise those outside schools but it is hardly surprising to teacher librarians.

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

There exists considerable evidence that links school library programs with improved student learning. Some examples are the Lonsdale's literature review (2003) and

evidence produced by Todd (2003 & 2005), Oberg (2002), Hay (2005) and Hartzell (2002). Links to various international studies that provide evidence of the strong impact on student learning that can be achieved through the school library may be viewed at: <http://www.iasl-online.org/advocacy/make-a-difference.html>. All education stakeholders need to recognise that well resourced school libraries, under the leadership of fully qualified teacher librarians can be the hub of resource-based learning. Such an environment is required by the *Quality teaching in NSW public schools* (2003-2004) documents and the *NSW Pedagogy Model*. Whilst non government schools are not bound by these documents they will pursue similar pedagogical models.

Whilst the research supports the prospect that strong school library programs do enhance student learning outcomes it is very hard for a lone teacher librarian to achieve this task without the total support of the school principal. Oberg and Henri (2005) stress that principals cannot be content with relying on the teacher librarian to work in isolation to bring about school change for whole-school involvement is essential (p.79). They insist that the leadership role of the principal is pivotal by:

- *Modelling the way*
- *Inspiring a shared vision*
- *Challenging teachers*
- *Enabling others to act*

(Oberg & Henri 2005 pp.87-88)

Yitzhaki and Anzenberg (2005) provide a detailed literature review of the importance of the principal to the library's destiny (p.3). Hartzell (2002) unequivocally states: "Principals should support school libraries because it is in both their students' and their own best interests to do so" (p.1)

Funding and staffing pressures alone cannot possibly be the cause of the now very common practice of assigning duties that reduce the capacity of teacher librarians to perform the role their position requires. Rather, cultural attitudes to teacher librarians mirror that of librarians generally. Ann and Colin Steele (1991) have considered this and refer to Stuart Gardner's (1990) short story, *Miss Cosgrove*, suggesting that "education chiefs" have negative images of teacher librarians that stem from their youth (Gardner, 1990 pp.23-26 in Steele & Steele, 1991 pp.7-14). Van Every (1997) identifies stereotyped views of librarians in children's fiction. Negative stereotypes are not limited to Australia as disclosed by the Israeli (Yitzhaki & Anzenberg 2005) and Canadian (Pon 2004) experience.



Even 'enlightened' principals can possess vestiges of this thinking, as evidenced by Watts (1999) and Schutz (2004). Lau's survey found that 50% of principals see teacher librarians only as the library "caretaker" (Lau cited by Todd 2005 p.3).

Somewhere amongst the other 50% there is great promise even in the less well funded public education sector. However it is in the private school sector that one can witness what can be done with generous funds and forward thinking school administrators. Globalisation and the Information Age make such school reform imperative. Moreover libraries in these schools demonstrate what is needed to enhance the successful implementation of a National Curriculum that is part of a response to the need for school renewal. These commendable school libraries are staffed by library teams with at least two teacher librarians and a variety of support staff. Support staff personnel perform a variety of secretarial, processing, audio-visual and IT support roles. All of this guarantees that the teacher librarians are free to perform their dual specialist function as teacher and librarian to support student learning outcomes. The following provides some measure of what teacher librarians can do when unfettered and supported in their contribution to educational and community outcomes especially literacy.

This is included also because teacher librarians rarely communicate beyond their colleagues and are often dismayed that their role is misunderstood. Countering this requires that:

We [teacher librarians] must tell our story, to ensure that decisions are made based on facts rather than on stereotypes or assumptions. We must clarify our role to our employers so that we are counted and supported in our work.
(Haycock, 1999 p.7)

This is an opportunity to tell that story in an effort to counter misunderstandings and promote a reassessment of the role of the teacher librarian.

Teacher librarians know that students need information literacy skills to survive in a world of rapid change where lifelong learning will be essential. They can define both concepts to promote them. The 'American Library Association's Presidential Committee on Information literacy' (1989) definition states:

To be information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information (1989, p.1).

Mayes (2002, p.1) states that lifelong learning has become "shorthand for" a new educational vision of:



...a world where re-skilling is continuous, where all kinds of informal learning is accredited, and where people build their own knowledge and skill profiles from an instantly accessible menu of 'bite sized chunks of learning', delivered just in time.

Teacher librarians draw upon Department of Education and Training (DET) policies such as the *NSW Information Skills Process* (1989), research and from the policies of professional associations. Kuhlthau's research for instance can inform initiatives and can easily be implemented. Her article in *Scan* (August, 2001), outlines how, centring on inquiry-based learning, her *Information Search Process (ISP)* can enhance learning and with guidance develop higher order thinking skills essential for lifelong learning. Kuhlthau explains how learners develop along the six key concepts of constructivist theory that provide a practical theoretical basis for school reform and for reorganising school library programs (Kuhlthau 2001 p.27).

Promoting literacy requires knowing the interests and tastes of young readers and the books and authors available. Accordingly, books are chosen that makes reading enjoyable, the main function of literature for young readers. Teacher librarians know that reading tastes vary; that boys are often reluctant readers; that a language background other than English; socio-economic background; a disability or whether parents read are factors that affect children becoming independent readers. Teacher librarians are familiar with literacy policies, and research especially: *Young Australians Reading: from keen to reluctant readers* (Australian Centre for Youth Literature and the Australia Council 2003), the *Focus on literacy* documents (NSW DET since 1997) and *The National Inquiry into Teaching of Literacy* (reviewed by Rowe 2006).

The *Quality teaching in NSW public schools* documents resonate with the concepts of constructivist theory. Together they inform an understanding of the NSW DET's model of pedagogy and enable teacher librarians through Collaborative Planning and Teaching (CPT) to assist its implementation. Central to pedagogy is Intellectual quality because it produces quality student learning outcomes; supported by a quality-learning environment with work that has significance (Discussion Paper 2003 p.5-8). Resourcing a quality-learning environment necessitates knowing the socio-economic, cultural, cognitive stages, interests, skills and abilities of students. Significance requires that student background and cultural knowledge be included to make meaningful connections with new ideas and information to achieve high knowledge integration; then using narrative to enrich understanding (DET NSW Discussion Paper 2003 p. 5).

Significance requires the teacher librarian to assess the information literacy and information skills needs of students and teachers to do this they may use the *Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning* (American Association of School Librarians and Association for Educational Communications and Technology

(AASL & AECT 1998). Above all teacher librarians know that information literacy, information skills, ICT competencies and skills relating to critical thinking and problem solving are best learnt when the learning experiences are as relevant to the student as is possible. This is why it is unwise to timetable teacher librarians in secondary schools with Year 7 library lessons. These skills cannot be taught effectively in isolation for they lack relevance. Relevance requires teacher librarians to know their school curriculum and programs. Familiarity with relevant curriculum documents including embedded cross curriculum competencies and content is essential. As are the resource needs of literacy programs such as 'Reading and Doing' and other programs such as 'Success for Boys'.

Teacher librarians select reading material that contributes to student appreciation of literature and that appeal to the differing interests, abilities and changing tastes of young readers. Enjoyable books, in an approachable and friendly atmosphere enhance the teacher-librarian's role in leading the promotion and fostering of reading. Faced with diversity and change, strategies to promote literacy must continually adapt and may include the Premier's Reading Challenge. Students entering reading competitions exemplify the fostering of a reading culture.

All teachers should know about outcomes-based assessment, public examinations, and subject specific tasks such as the 'Independent Research Project' (IRP) for Community and Family Studies; and NAPLAN. This knowledge enables teacher librarians to assist students with work and informs CPT. The *Quality teaching* documents: *An assessment practice guide* and *Continuing the discussion about assessment practice* (DET NSW 2004) are essential to inform practice.

Collection development in the school library requires the selection of resources in a variety of formats to cater for individual differences and there should be access to the school library during student free time. The teacher librarian must be approachable and the atmosphere should be student/learner centred, non-threatening where students are treated with respect (Stripling 1996 p.5).

The teacher librarian needs to create a library that is comfortable, well lit and appealing to students. Signage and labelling should be clear and instructive. There should be places to display all aspects of student work. The library is for students and they should have a sense of ownership.

In a rich learning environment the teacher librarian's professional knowledge is applied to the core business of teaching and learning. A quality teaching focus provides an opportunity for teacher librarians to promote constructivist theory via CPT that integrates appropriate use of embedded ICT by using an information skills model like the *ISP* of inquiry based learning. CPT will ensure that library programs respond to the needs of learners and empower students and teachers with the skills

to be productive independent lifelong learners. By these measures the teacher librarian places the school on the path to becoming an information literate school community (Henri 1999).

3. The factors influencing recruitment and development of school librarians.

Teacher librarians are dual professionals as both teachers and librarians. All too often the teaching role is overlooked and librarian frequently becomes the nominative determinate for what is a specialist education profession. However there has been a paradigm shift that the role of the teacher librarian has undergone in the last decade from provider of resources to educational leader of information age schools. This shift may not be universally recognised but ignorance of it will not make it go away. Along with their subject teacher colleagues many teacher librarians are close to retirement age. There are seemingly significant numbers however who are teaching well beyond the average age for teacher retirement. They are predominantly women and they continue to work presumably because they have limited superannuation entitlements. Yet the rate of retirements continues and with those retirees a wealth of talent and knowledge is lost to the profession.

There is almost always a shortage of teacher librarians. Over time this has necessitated funded programs to assist appropriate teachers to be re trained for the profession. The DET Retraining Program is the latest initiative. Getting into the retraining program requires that the candidate secures a position in a NSW DET school as a 'teacher librarian'. The candidate must apply for an advertised vacancy. The successful candidate will be required to complete the graduate certificate over one year by distance education, whilst coping with the rigor of managing a school library. Ironically the selection panels are appointed by and composed of individuals who will have neither experience of nor real understanding of the work of teacher librarians. Yet they will often also hold a misconception of the role,

Those teachers who wish to become a teacher librarian independently ordinarily enrol in one of the three remaining universities that offer programs. NSW candidates usually enrol in the CSU programs. The preferred program appears to be the master level qualification. However an alternative route into the profession is for graduates who hold a graduate diploma in librarianship or higher and who also have teaching qualifications. The graduate certificate does not meet the professional entry level described below. It does not cover subjects such as children's literature and cataloguing. In the non government sector there are no schemes available for training teachers as teacher librarians. However this was a feature of the retraining scheme in the 1980's when funding permitted full-time study towards a graduate diploma in teacher librarianship on full pay.

Qualifying for this profession is not easy and entails the holding of recognised teaching qualifications and qualifications in librarianship that are defined by meeting



the requirements of the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) for professional or Associate membership. The minimum qualification for Associate membership of ALIA is a degree and an ALIA accredited graduate diploma in librarianship.

Ideally the candidate for this profession will have experience as a competent classroom teacher and have the qualities and ability to aspire to the demanding *Standards of professional excellence for teacher librarians* endorsed by the two national associations for librarians and teacher librarians (Australian Library and Information Association and Australian School Library Association). Part-time, distance education is demanding and for the candidate who pays their own way debts are incurred. These are good reasons for many NSW DET retraining participants not to proceed to upgrade their qualifications to graduate diploma or higher level.

Career advancement is very limited for teacher librarians especially in NSW DET and Catholic systemic schools. In the private schools there are promotion positions available yet these are small in number. Even teacher librarians managing very large schools will be paid the same as their colleagues in much smaller schools.

The DET NSW; ASLA (NSW) and the Association of Independent Schools offer very good professional learning for teacher librarians. In NSW there are a number of large regional teacher librarian organisations such as the Sydney Region TL Network and the Western Association of Teacher Librarians (WATL). There are also many metropolitan teacher librarian networks that organise professional learning meetings on a term basis. These tend to be constructed along educational sector lines. Teacher librarians also exchange ideas and provide assistance to colleagues via the listservs OZTL_NET and NSWTL.

There are many negative aspects of a career as a teacher librarian and at times some teacher librarians long to regain their career as classroom teachers. It is the negativity that they often experience along with the continued erosion of their working conditions and lack of regard for their true worth and capacity. It is a sense of invisibility and unimportance that is most vexing.

It is little wonder then that teacher librarians become resentful when suggestions of employing teachers with no library training; librarians; library technicians or administrative support staff to fill a teacher librarian position. More must be done to attract those best suited to the profession such as financial assistance to study and time release to study. Pay incentives might encourage teacher librarians to gain full teacher librarian accreditation.



There might also be an effort to raise the profile of teacher librarians in schools to acknowledge their contribution as valuable members of the teaching staff who are there for every teacher and student.

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

As stated elsewhere in this submission the teacher librarian needs to be conscious of the background and interests of the students in the school. Hence local community engagement is important. In some schools the teacher librarian will have developed strong local community links by accepting volunteers to help in the school library by processing books, assisting in literacy programs or telling their life story to students to name a few. Often local businesses can sponsor various school library initiatives or display student work in shopping centres. Not only do these activities assist the students via the benefits received but they link the world that is relevant to the students with their school life.

Limited information resources, especially access to databases can be augmented by partnerships with the local library. Often local libraries will have many services, events and resources to interest and assist students in their studies and recreational interests. The State Library of NSW is extending its reach with services that assist metropolitan and regional school libraries. Museums and galleries can also augment both the work of the teacher librarian and the services of the school library. Local library membership for school students must be promoted. Local councils could assist teacher librarians achieve this by appointing a school library liaison librarian in each local library.

Stronger partnerships need to be developed with tertiary institutions and TAFE colleges so that students and staff can develop relationships and familiarity with those institutions. Student success in post secondary education will benefit from stronger links.

The federal government is starting the process by reviewing the role of the teacher librarian and school library in the education of the young. Specific funding of new library buildings would require federal government funding along the lines of that already given to the non government sectors over many years.

Whilst state governments maintain control of education they can assist by enforcing the industrial rights of teacher librarians as outline in Memorandum IRC 05/18, DN/05/002277, and by defining the role description so that the role outlined in the NSW DET Library Policy is adhered to. Government directives could ensure that teacher librarians are guaranteed meal breaks by being replaced by another teacher so that they can have an uninterrupted break. Senior student supervision must no

longer be a teacher librarian responsibility alone. In the schools where textbooks are part of the teacher librarian's responsibility there must be an increase in ancillary staff and the provision of software and hardware to manage the circulation of those books.

The negative perception of teacher librarians held by so many of their teaching colleagues needs to be reversed. This has been achieved by so many private schools. Principals need to be informed of the valuable contribution that the teacher librarian can make to their schools. The traditional hierarchical administrative structures in schools reinforces the locking out of teacher librarians from the decision making process. The leadership role of teacher librarians needs to be recognised via official policy.

Current management theory supports the view that many teachers within a school can exhibit leadership. They do not have to hold a leadership position within the traditional hierarchy. Hierarchical school leadership structures are inadequate for the needs of Information Age Schools (Belisle 2004 p.1). The "command-and-control" leadership model favours "fear, distrust and internal competitiveness" that inhibits "collaboration and cooperation" (Senge 1997 p.30). Instead "genuine commitment" will create "knowledge-creating-organizations" in an interdependent "community of learners" (Senge p. 30). This model provides the basis from which a school of the Information Age can become a "learning organization" (Senge cited by O'Neil 1995 p. 20). Whilst defining leadership is problematic with over 350 attempts (Bennis & Nanus 1985, cited in Burdenuk (1992) p. 20) there is consensus "that many classroom teachers possess the full range of capabilities essential for school transformation" (Tasmanian Department of Education 2004). Innovation tends to occur in pockets (Fullan 1994, p. 10). But school improvement requires that "teacher leadership has to take place everywhere" (Belisle 2004 p.5). In Tasmania, professional learning programs support systemic adoption of a new leadership paradigm. Principals need guidance to empower teacher leadership. The concept of 'parallel leadership' is a proven approach.

Parallel leadership is based upon five years (1992-1997) of research that investigated positive examples of school renewal conducted by the 'Leadership Research Institute' at the University of Southern Queensland. In parallel leadership "teacher leaders work with principal leaders, in distinctive yet complementary ways, towards goals they all share" (Andrews & Lewis 2004 p. 5).

Crowther et al. (2002) maintain that even the most competent principals are not likely to "manage the complex and sensitive development of school wide approaches to teaching and learning without teacher leadership" (Tasmanian Dept. of Education, 2004 p.12).

School leadership structures are firmly established industrially. Appendix 2 of the NSW DET statement *Leading and Managing the School*, Section 11 (Management of Schools) of the Teaching Services Regulation 2004, outlines the management obligations required of staff holding management positions in schools. These obligations are examples of school leadership performed by teacher librarians. However the position is not a promotions position. Yet the *Standards of Professional Excellence for Teacher Librarians* (ASLA/ALIA) expect teacher librarians to perform many of the duties of head teachers. 'Merit pay' could be based on leadership contributions rather than on student performance. Perhaps it is time for macro level policy with effective union support as indicated by the work of the NSW Independent Education Union (White 1999).

It would be helpful if school library budgets were regulated so that they were linked to student numbers to guarantee a base level that could not be reduced. Staffing for the teacher librarian and the library support staff should also be linked to student numbers and the services offered by the school library.

5. The impact and potential of digital technologies to enhance and support the roles of school libraries and librarians.

Teacher librarians know that Information and Computer Technology (ICT) alone is not the solution to the Technological Age, for ICT users must know how to locate, evaluate and use appropriate information from the plethora available. Policy makers often confuse providing technology with educational outcomes, instead boosting the teaching of information literacy to prepare students for a life where constant management of information is essential (Bundy 1999 p.1). The 'shorthand' lifelong learning describes this need (Mayes 2002 p.1). Yet as stated above not all secondary teacher librarians have yet received a DER notebook.

Basic literacy and numeracy skills have to be adapted "to information rich environments and applied to new technologies" (Kuhlthau 2001 p. 33). Accordingly teacher librarians know that the national statement: *Learning in an Online World* (Commonwealth of Australia 1999) delineates a variety of strategies to integrate ICT in teaching and learning. They realise that students need to be capable of:

using digital technology, communications tools, and/or networks to access, manage, integrate, evaluate, and create information in order to function in a knowledge society ('Educational Testing Service's Center for Global Assessment, Digital Transformation' cited by Serim 2002 pp.1-5).

Anecdotal reports suggest that falling library budgets are in large part due to a perception that the Internet has all the information and all the answers. So why do teacher librarians want money to buy books? This is despite syllabus requirements that students access information from a variety of sources. Many teacher librarians

lament the marked decline in the use of books as sources of information in the wake of greater school computer availability along with improved IT support. The DER notebooks will presumably reduce book use further.

The DER is certainly a significant contribution to education and an important response to the need for our young people to embrace digital technologies. Yet as stated above the availability of technology in itself is not the solution. Rather teacher librarians are needed more than ever to take on a leadership role to assist teachers and students to engage with digital technologies to seek meaning not information. The apprehension with digital technologies is that the transfer of information is easily facilitated by the 'Copy and Paste' functions of *Microsoft Word* that students are so frequently not constructing new meaning from the information they find.

The subtext clearly identifiable in the above observation is plagiarism. This is a problem that requires all students to learn to "use technology to seek meaning in all aspects of their lives" (Kuhlthau cited in Todd 2001 p.25). Plagiarism is feedback symptomatic of poor information literacy skills requiring the intervention of teacher librarians.

The NSW Board of Studies has implemented a compulsory ethical studies requirement for all students entering Stage 6 known as *All My Own Work*. The need for this initiative is clearly the plagiarism that has become so easy when using digital technologies. Many teacher librarians have assumed responsibility for overseeing the successful completion of the compulsory online modules.

Using the NSW DET *Information Skills Process* and Kuhlthau's *ISP* as the focus for inquiry based learning students can be guided to learn how to make the connections between what they already know and the new information and ideas they find using digital technologies. By so doing they will construct their own new understanding (Kuhlthau 2001 p.27).

Teacher librarians are needed to assist and instruct students and teachers to learn search techniques to move beyond a reliance on Google as an information source. Accessing what is known as the 'deep' Internet requires the acquisition of well honed search skills and teacher librarians can teach these skills to their students and colleagues.

Subscriptions to databases are prohibitively expensive for most schools. Many teacher librarians encourage students to use databases via the local and State libraries. However this is a cumbersome undertaking. Factor in as well that database searching is often time consuming and one can understand why the usage is limited. Lack of time largely due to the necessity of performing so many tasks unrelated to their core role limits the assistance the teacher librarian can offer. Hence in



understaffed school libraries students and teachers are disadvantaged. Bulk subscriptions to database licences by educational authorities would permit poorly funded school libraries access to databases from school computers.

In their management of the school library teacher librarians need an efficient LMS not a consistently failing relic of the early days of computer software. In addition software to assist preparing orders and budget submission would be very useful.

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- Discussion paper
- A video introduction
- A classroom practice guide
- Continuing the discussion about classroom practice: Lesson extracts 7-10 (video)
- Continuing the discussion about classroom practice: Lesson extracts K-10 (DVD)
- An assessment practice guide
- Continuing the discussion about assessment practice

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