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School libraries, teacher-librarians and their contribution to student literacy in Gold Coast schools

Executive Summary and Synopsis of Findings



Lead Researcher:

Dr Hilary Hughes, Children and Youth Research Centre, QUT

Research Assistants:

Dr Hossein Bozorgian, Dr Cherie Allan, Dr Michelle Dicoski

SLAQ Research Committee:

Toni Leigh (SLAQ president), Sally Fraser, Chris Kahl, Marj Osborne, Helen Reynolds



**School Library Association of Queensland
Queensland University of Technology**

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student literacy in Gold Coast schools**

Executive Summary and Synopsis of Findings

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Photos of the Gold Coast region courtesy of Marj Osborne.

This study was conducted with ethical clearance from QUT Research Ethics Unit (ref: 1200000141) and permission from Education Queensland, Brisbane Catholic Education and Lutheran Schools Queensland.



Full research report

A full copy of this study, including explanation of the method and further discussion of the findings, is available on the School Library Association of Queensland web site at <http://...>

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Location: Gold Coast schools

This study focuses on schools in the Gold Coast area of Queensland, Australia. The City of Gold Coast is Australia's sixth largest city with a population of over 500,000. It lies about one hundred kilometres south of Brisbane. As illustrated by photos through this report, the Gold Coast area features densely populated urban areas, with long sandy beaches to the East and rain forested hills to the West. (City of Gold Coast, n.d.)

For purposes of this study, schools were identified in 2011 via Education Queensland's *Schools directory* using the search term *Gold Coast*. The schools all fall within Education Queensland's South East region. Further details and regional map can be found on the Education Queensland (2013) web site.

Glossary

ALIA	Australian Library and Information Association www.alia.org.au
ASLA	Australian School Library Association www.asla.org.au
EFT	Equivalent full-time staff
NAPLAN	<i>National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy</i> (NAPLAN) is an Australia-wide annual assessment for school students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. (ACARA, 2011). The NAPLAN scores referred to in this report relate to the 2012 <i>Preliminary results</i> (ACARA, 2012).
SLAQ	School Library Association of Queensland www.slaq.org.au
Teacher-librarian	In line with peak Australian professional bodies ALIA, ASLA and SLAQ, a teacher-librarian is understood to hold dual qualifications in teaching plus teacher-librarianship or library/information science. In this report the term is hyphenated (except when citing other authors) to emphasise the combination of professional expertise that characterises the professional teacher-librarian role.

Overview of the study

When was the study conducted?

January to December 2012

What was the aim of the study?

To respond to research needs identified by the *Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools* (House of Representatives, 2011) with regard to:

- Statistical breakdown of teacher-librarian numbers in Australian schools (Recommendation 3)
- Links between library programs, literacy and student achievement (Recommendation 5)

To investigate:

- The current nature of school library provision and staffing in Gold Coast schools
- How school libraries and teacher-librarians contribute to school students' literacy development

How as the study carried out?

- Review of previous research and collation of findings across US, Canada, UK and Australia
- Survey sent to principals of all 97 schools in the Gold Coast area
 - 27 principals responded (28% of all Gold Coast principals)
- Survey included a mix of 17 closed and open questions, based around themes identified in literature review and the *Inquiry* report (House of Representatives, 2011):
 - school demographics
 - school NAPLAN scores for reading and writing
 - EFT library staffing and qualifications
 - literacy and reading development activities provided by the school libraries
 - principals' views on contributions of school library & teacher-librarian to literacy development
- Follow-up telephone interviews (with 3 of the 27 survey respondents)
- Exploratory analysis of quantitative data and thematic analysis of qualitative data

What are the study's key outcomes?

- Extensive review of international research about the relationships among school libraries, teacher-librarians and student literacy and learning outcomes
- Current and first snapshot of school libraries and teacher-librarians in the Gold Coast region
- Australian findings consistent with international research showing links between student literacy outcomes and the presence of a qualified teacher-librarian
- Principals' perspectives of school libraries and teacher-librarians related to literacy development
- Findings presented in this report and journal articles

Who would be interested in the study's findings?

- Education authorities
- School leadership teams
- Teacher-librarians
- Teachers
- School library and library/information professional associations
- Library and information science educators and researchers

Key findings of the study

Provision and staffing of school libraries in the Gold Coast region

- 81% of the school libraries are managed by a qualified teacher-librarian
- All non-government schools have at least one part-time qualified teacher-librarian
- Six government schools have *no* qualified teacher-librarian

Government schools tend to have:

- Higher *student-to-EFT library staff* ratios than non-government schools
 - i.e. fewer library staff to enrolled students
- EFT staffing clusters around 1-2 irrespective of student enrolment

Non-government schools tend to have

- Larger total EFT library staff than government schools
- EFT library staff rising steadily with greater student enrolments

Provision of literacy and reading activities by the school libraries

- All libraries except one provide some literacy and reading activities
- Non-government schools tend to provide more activities than government schools
- School libraries with a teacher-librarian generally provide a greater number of activities
- Schools without a teacher-librarian provide fewest activities

School library staff - teacher-librarians - NAPLAN¹ scores

For schools in this study the data show relationships between:

- lower *student-to-FTE library staff* ratio & higher than NAPLAN national mean score for reading and writing
 - even more pronounced for schools with a teacher-librarian
 - the effect is strongest for reading but still significant for writing
 - non-government schools generally perform better than government schools

At schools with a qualified teacher-librarian:

- 50% had NAPLAN scores higher than the NAPLAN national mean scores for reading and writing for corresponding year group

At schools without a qualified teacher-librarian:

- School NAPLAN scores were consistently below national mean score for NAPLAN reading & writing
- One principal relates declining NAPLAN results to lack of qualified teacher-librarian

Principals' views of school libraries and teacher-librarians

- 93% of the school principals (all except two) indicate that a library is necessary to support literacy development in their school
 - Over two thirds consider a school library is *essential* for literacy development
- 93% of the school principals (all except 2) consider that their school library has an *influence* on students' literacy development
 - Over two thirds (67%) consider that it has a *great/very great influence*
- Teacher-librarians/library staff contribute to student literacy in many ways, including as:
 - Literacy & curriculum leaders, collaborative teachers, resource experts, promoters of information and digital/ICT literacy & reading, peer educators
- Library-related needs to achieve school literacy goals include:
 - Increased funding for staffing and resources
 - Appointment or increased hours of teacher-librarian
 - Raised awareness of the school library among teachers

¹ NAPLAN = Australia-wide *National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy* (ACARA, 2011).

Recommendations of the study

The findings provide evidence about school library provision and staffing in the Gold Coast region, with potential to more widely inform and advance:

- policy development and school-based management
- school library responses to literacy needs of 21st century learners
- evidence based practice and professional development of teacher-librarians
- further collaborative research on a state or national level

The findings prompt three recommendations:

1. Teacher-librarians and professional associations present the findings of this study, in conjunction with previous research findings, to education policy makers, education employing authorities and school leaders – as evidence to raise awareness and demonstrate the extensive contribution that school libraries and teacher-librarians can make to student literacy development and learning
2. Education authorities and schools leaders provide adequate and equitable funding to ensure that school libraries and teacher-librarians can contribute to student literacy development in the varied ways outlined in the research literature and this report
3. Researchers and professional partners extend this research into other education regions of Queensland or across Australia, to gain evidence and insights concerning the role and contribution of school libraries and teacher-librarians to literacy and learning in schools



SYNOPSIS OF FINDINGS

Introduction

There is an urgent need for Australian research about the impacts of teacher-librarians and school libraries on student learning. The future viability of school libraries and teacher-librarians depends in large part upon reliable evidence of their positive impact on student outcomes. Evidence of this kind is essential to securing adequate and continuing funding for school libraries, especially when school budgets are severely stretched and administrators face multiple, competing needs. For school-based management, school principals and leadership teams require this evidence to support informed decision-making about the library. Teacher-librarians need this evidence to guide and improve professional practice.

In the contemporary environment, rigorous evaluation of all aspects of educational provision is required. School leaders and individual teachers need to demonstrate compliance with varying levels of accountability, to governments, parents and the wider community. Increasingly, students' and teachers' performance is measured by standardised testing, as represented by PISA/OECD on an international scale, and by NAPLAN² on a national scale. With diminishing budgets and calls for financial restraint, reasoned allocation of resources becomes ever more critical. In the F–12 school context, sound data and detailed evidence provide the essential basis for future planning and implementation. (Australian School Library Association, 2013, p.16)

The Australian Government is committed to significantly raising literacy of school students by 2025 (Browne, 2012). Extensive international research demonstrates that school libraries and teacher-librarians can make a significant contribution to students' literacy and learning outcomes. The *Standards of professional excellence for teacher-librarians* (ASLA & ALIA, 2004) outline numerous goals which support literacy development and promote reading. Achievability of these goals is dependent on professional opportunities for teacher-librarians and adequate funding for school libraries. However, submissions to the *Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools* indicate significant gaps between recommended standards and realities (ALIA, 2010; ASLA, 2010; Kirkland, 2010; House of Representatives, 2011; SLAQ, 2010). Since there are no mandatory standards for school libraries or the employment of teacher-librarians, provision and staffing levels vary greatly between schools, States and education systems. Many school libraries in Australia are under-funded and teacher-librarian appointments are declining.

The Inquiry associated the under-resourcing of school libraries with a lack of solid evidence demonstrating their value to students, schools and the wider community. Although the Inquiry submissions provide many examples of good practice, they often lack evidence of the difference they make. There are abundant anecdotal accounts, commentaries and practical guides in the professional teacher-librarianship literature, but formal research-based evidence with an Australian focus is quite limited. Consequently, this study aims to expand the evidence base, by collating international research findings and new Australian data about the relationships between school libraries, teacher librarians and literacy. The findings of the Gold Coast study present evidence of the vital contribution school libraries and teacher-librarians can make to students' literacy and learning outcomes. In particular, for the 27 Gold Coast schools they show:

1. An inverse relationship between lower student to EFT library staff ratio and higher school NAPLAN scores for reading and writing.
2. Schools that employ a teacher-librarian tend to achieve higher school NAPLAN scores than the national mean.

While the findings are not generalizable due to small sample size, they are consistent with many other international research studies (reviewed in this report).

² NAPLAN = Australia-wide *National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy* (ACARA, 2011).

Review of previous research: The impacts of school libraries and teacher-librarians on students' literacy development and learning outcomes

What does this review contribute?

- Presents compelling, extensive evidence about the positive impacts school libraries and teachers have on student outcomes
- Contextualises and identifies the need for this Gold Coast study
- Provides collateral information for interpreting new data generated by this study
- Furthers teacher-librarianship research and practice by updating the evidence base

What does other research show?

- Consistent and significant evidence that school libraries and teacher-librarians have positive impacts on student reading, literacy, information literacy and learning outcomes
- Contributing aspects include:
 - Greater full-time equivalent library staffing
 - Presence of qualified teacher-librarians
 - Supportive principals who value school libraries
 - Collaborative relationships between teacher-librarians, teachers and principals
 - Higher library budgets
 - Larger library collections, newer resources, varied formats
 - Networked online resources accessible in the library and other classrooms
 - Heavier student use of library, indicated by library visits and circulation
- School principals are often unaware of the full potential of school libraries and teacher-librarians
- Limited Australian research showing impacts of school libraries and teacher-librarians
- Need for teacher-librarians to operate as evidence based practitioners - to demonstrate their impact on student learning and literacy

Need for evidence

Numerous studies conducted in the US, Canada and Britain provide compelling evidence that school libraries have positive impacts on student literacy, reading and learning outcomes. In contrast, only a handful of studies exploring the impact of schools and teacher-librarians have been conducted in Australia (Hay 2005, 2006; Hay and Todd, 2010; Softlink, 2012).

Given the prevailing school-based management system in Australia, it is concerning that school principals are often unaware of the full potential of school libraries and teacher-librarians (Hartzell, 2002; Henri & Boyd, 2002; Ragle, 2011). This is one likely reason for diminishing library budgets and teacher-librarian positions. On the other hand, research outlined later demonstrates the positive impact on student achievement in schools where the principal actively supports the library and has a strong collaborative relationship with the teacher-librarian (Henri, Hay & Oberg, 2002; Lance, Rodney & Russell, 2007).

Australian professional journals provide a rich picture of contemporary school libraries around the country and examples of good professional practice. Articles and conference papers offer thoughtful commentaries and informative anecdotes. However, these accounts tend to describe 'inputs' (planning and actions) rather than 'outputs' (evaluated outcomes). The persuasive power of these accounts is often limited by lack of solid evidence

demonstrating real differences attributable to school libraries and teacher-librarians. There is a critical need for what Ross Todd (2009, p. 89) calls ‘evidence for practice’ that focuses on “the real results of what school librarians do, rather than on what school librarians do”. The need for more consistently compiled research about the Australian school library scene was first highlighted in a report commissioned by the Australian School Library Association in 2003:

If practitioners in Australia are to mount a strong case for recognising the positive impact of school libraries and school librarians on student learning ... it is important to know how applicable the existing research is to an Australian context and what kind of additional research might be needed to demonstrate the positive relationship between school libraries and student achievement. (Lonsdale, 2003, p.1)

The Inquiry report *School libraries and teacher librarians in 21st century Australia* (House of Representatives, 2011) reiterated the need for research in this area. The Inquiry highlighted serious problems associated with the lack of (a) mandatory standards for school library resourcing and staffing; and (b) regular and consistent nationwide reporting about school libraries. The Committee’s concluding comment 6.12 states:

There is a fundamental need to collate some hard data to ascertain how many teacher librarians there are in Australia’s primary and secondary schools; to identify where the gaps are; and to start to extrapolate the links between library programs, literacy (especially digital literacy, which is as important as regular literacy and numeracy skills), and student achievement. (House of Representatives, 2011, p. 118)

International research

International research identifies recurring patterns across different school library settings in US, Canada and UK. The findings demonstrate relationships between: (a) student attainment (in terms of test scores or learning outcomes); and (b) variables relating to school libraries such as: general staffing levels; presence of a qualified teacher-librarian; extent of library programs; collaboration between teacher-librarian and teachers and/or principal; size of library budget; size and currency of the library collection; and access to information and communication technologies (ICT) and digital resources.

The majority of studies focus on test results for student attainment in areas such as reading and language arts. This reflects the widespread practice of standardised testing in the countries where these studies were conducted. However, some studies adopt a qualitative approach to evaluate the nature of the relationships between school libraries/teacher-librarians and students’ learning outcomes, for example: Ohio (Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005a & 2005b) and New York State (Small, Shanaham and Stasak, 2010). In Scotland, Williams and Wavell (2001) used focus groups and case study to explore perceptions of school library impacts among teachers, librarians and students. In Ontario researchers developed a rich case study to identify the characteristics of an exemplary elementary school library (Klinger et. al., 2009)

Impacts of school libraries

The first US studies were conducted in the early 1960s (Gaver, 1963). Isolated studies occurred through the 1970s and 1980s (Lance, Welborn & Hamilton-Pennell, 1993) and then gained momentum from the early 1990s onwards. Between 2000 and 2008 more than twenty studies across the United States and Canada repeatedly found positive relationships between school libraries and student academic achievement (Francis, Lance & Lietzau, 2010; Kachel et al., 2011). These studies included about 10,000 elementary, middle and high schools and more than three million students (*School libraries work!*, 2008).

In many cases, the data were controlled for social and school-based variables (for example: Francis, Lance & Lietzau, 2010; Lance & Schwarz, 2012). This means that the findings reflect the impacts of school libraries and teacher-librarians, irrespective of students' socio-economic or educational backgrounds, or other aspects of their school environment.

General impacts

Keith Curry Lance of the Colorado Library Research Service has led or contributed to multiple studies that have examined various relationships among student test scores, school libraries and teacher-librarians. These include a recent national report documenting the deleterious effects of cutting librarian positions in terms of fourth-grade students' reading scores between 2004 and 2009 (Lance & Hofschire, 2011); and four influential Colorado studies (Lance, Welborn & Hamilton-Pennell, 1993; Lance, Rodney & Hamilton-Pennell, 2000a; Francis, Lance & Lietzau, 2010; Lance & Hofschire, 2012).

These findings are consistent with the findings of other studies. For example, the impact on student achievement of:

- Higher full-time equivalent staffing in Iowa, (Rodney, Lance & Hamilton-Pennell, 2002), Pennsylvania (Lance, Rodney, Hamilton-Pennell, 2000b), Texas (Smith, 2001) and Wisconsin (Smith, 2006).
- Larger, newer resource collections in California (Achterman, 2008), Indiana (Callison, 2004), Iowa, (Rodney, Lance & Hamilton-Pennell, 2002), North Carolina (Burgin, Bracy, & Brown, 2003), and Texas (Smith, 2001).
- Access to online resources and ICT in Delaware (Todd, 2005), Indiana (Lance, Rodney & Russell, 2007), Ohio (Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005a), and Ontario (People for Education, 2011)
- Higher total library expenditures in Illinois ((Lance, Rodney & Hamilton-Pennell, 2005), Minnesota (Baxter & Smalley, 2003) and North Carolina (Burgin & Bracy, 2003)
- Heavier student use of library in Michigan (Rodney, Lance & Hamilton-Pennell, 2003), Oregon (Lance, Rodney & Hamilton-Pennell, 2001) and Texas (Smith, 2001).

Impacts of school libraries on reading

Reading expert Stephen Krashen (2004) indicates that wide reading and access to reading materials through libraries are critical for literacy development, especially among students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. In addition, the international Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD, 2010) indicates an association between reading enjoyment and student achievement. Therefore, it is significant that many of the above studies, including Colorado, highlight the impact of school libraries on reading ability and enjoyment. For example, Delaware (Todd, 2005), Idaho (Lance, Rodney & Schwarz, 2009), Ontario (Ontario Library Association, et. al., 2006) and Wisconsin (Smith, 2006).

In Ontario, Grade 3 and 6 students in schools with a qualified teacher-librarian are more likely to report that they enjoy reading; and Grade 6 students are more likely to attain higher reading test scores. The researchers conclude that based on the PISA results for Canada and this study: "a teacher-librarian supports reading enjoyment, and hence contributes to higher student achievement" (Ontario Library Association et al., 2006, p.10-11).

Similarly, a British study (Clark, 2010) showed a very strong relationship between reading attainment and school library use. Most school library users claimed they did so because it has books that interest them, offers a friendly space and – importantly - they think it will help them do better at school. In contrast, it found that young people who read below the

expected level for their age were almost twice as likely to not use a school library.

Those [young people] who read above the expected level were nearly three times more likely to say that they are school library users ... Compared to young people who do not use the school library, school library users were more likely to say that they enjoy reading and to rate themselves as good readers. (Clark, 2010, p. 4).

Consistent with these findings, an Australia-wide school literacy survey (Masters & Forster, 1997) shows that extensive use of the school library is associated with a difference of as many as 27 points to students' literacy achievements when compared with non-use of the library. It also indicates that students in schools where teachers make greater use of the school library with their classes tend to achieve a higher standard of literacy.

Impacts of school libraries on information literacy

School libraries contribute to students' information literacy development, through school library programs and individual assistance to students. Again positive outcomes are related to higher school library staffing; involvement of a qualified teacher-librarian; expenditure on information resources; and integration of information resources and technology. For example, New York State (Small, Shanahan & Stasak, 2010); Pennsylvania (Lance, Rodney, Hamilton-Pennell, 2000b) and Wisconsin (Smith, 2006).

Impacts of teacher-librarians

While larger total library staff is often related to student achievement, the research emphasises that there is generally greater impact when staff includes qualified teacher-librarians. As teachers and information specialists, they make an impact by developing library collections to suit the curriculum, and enabling effective use of the resources in that collection to support learning (Lance & Loertscher, 2005).

An Ontario study associated significant benefits with “exemplary teacher-librarians” who are “leaders in their school and outstanding teachers”. Exemplary teacher-librarians project a vision of the library as: “a central hub of the school, prominently placed and a central place of activity and learning” and “a welcoming place of learning.” They are shown to couple “enthusiasm and ingenuity” and maximise teaching and learning opportunities for students. They achieve this by adapting their approach to suit the styles of individual teachers, working collaboratively and supporting the educational outcomes of the school (Klinger et al., 2009, p. 36).

Similarly, other studies show that qualified teacher-librarians influence student achievement through:

- Provision of library and information literacy programs; and assistance to individual students with research information needs. For example, Indiana (Callison, 2004); Minnesota (Baxter & Smalley, 2003); New York (Small, Shanahan & Stasak, 2010); Wisconsin (Smith, 2006)
- Collaboration with teachers in curriculum development and teaching; and professional development for teachers in these areas. For example, Illinois (Lance, Rodney & Hamilton-Pennell, 2005; Idaho (Lance, Rodney & Schwarz, 2009); Ohio (Todd & Kuhthau, 2005a, 2005b).

The Colorado studies provide particularly compelling evidence that relates presence of a qualified teacher-librarian and reading. Lance and Hofschire (2012) demonstrate that schools that either maintained or gained an endorsed librarian (with teaching qualifications) between 2005 and 2011 tended to have more students scoring advanced in reading in 2011, and increase their performance more since 2005 than schools that either lost their librarians or never had one. The researchers conclude:

Regardless of how rich or poor a community is, students tend to perform better on reading tests where, and when, their library programs are in the hands of endorsed librarians. Furthermore, at schools where library programs gain or maintain an endorsed librarian when school budgets get tight, students tend to excel. At schools where library programs lose or never had an endorsed librarian, students suffer as a result (Lance & Hofschire, 2012, p. 9).

Conversely, Lance and Hofschire's (2011) US-wide study using data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) highlights the detrimental effect of cutting teacher-librarian positions. In many cases, fewer librarians translated to lower—or a slower rise—in standardized reading test scores.

Impacts of school principals

School principals also contribute to a school library's impact on student achievement, especially when there is a strong collaborative relationship between principal and teacher-librarian (Henri, Hay & Oberg, 2002). The Indiana study (Lance, Rodney & Russell, 2007) found that better-performing schools tend to have principals who value regular meetings with teacher-librarians and collaborative planning and teaching by teachers and teacher-librarians. In Idaho the same researchers (Lance, Rodney & Russell, 2007) found that students are more likely to succeed where principals value strong library programs and can see them having a positive effect.

The Ohio study

The Ohio study deserves special mention since it provided a model for important research conducted in Australia (Hay, 2005, 2006). It also adopts a different approach to most of the other reviewed studies. Rather than a statistical assessment, this study provides insights through students' and teachers' eyes about effective school libraries.

The Ohio study (Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005a & 2005b) reveals that effective school libraries help students with their learning in many ways, both in and out of school. This study considered 39 school libraries that were identified as being 'effective' according to set of criteria validated by a panel of experts. In total 13,123 students in Grades 3 to 12 and 879 teachers completed web-based surveys containing 48 statements about how the school library might help students. The respondents ranked each statement on a five-point scale and provided additional comments. The resultant qualitative and quantitative data for students and teachers show that school libraries provide help in two important ways:

- *helps-as-inputs* : where school libraries support students in the learning process
- *helps-as-outcomes*: where school libraries enable meaningful learning outcomes, students' individual and academic achievements.

The researchers propose that the school library is “an agent for active learning”. However, the mere presence of a school library does not guarantee positive impact. As the Ohio study highlights, professionally qualified teacher-librarians who take a shared leadership role with teaching colleagues are essential to effective school libraries.

A school library is “not just informational, but transformational and formational, leading to knowledge creation, knowledge production, knowledge dissemination and knowledge use, as well as the development of information values” (Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005a, p. 85).

Australian research

Australian school library research is still limited. This summary includes findings of three studies that consider the impact of school libraries and teacher-librarians on student achievement; and three that provide insights about the state of school libraries and the role of teacher-librarians in Australia.

Student learning through Australian school libraries

This study by Hay (2005, 2006) responded to Lonsdale's (2003) call for Australian research showing the impact of school libraries and teacher-librarians. It replicated the previously mentioned study of Ohio schools (Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005a & 2005b). Hay focused on three hallmarks of an effective school library program: i) supporting learning and teaching; ii) resourcing the curriculum; and iii) providing a learning environment of effective school library programs. The study involved 6718 students in Years 5-12 from 46 metropolitan and regional public schools in Queensland and Victoria along with teaching staff (51 teacher-librarians and 525 teachers). As in Ohio, the participants ranked responses to 48 statements concerning school libraries and teacher-librarians, and they recounted a recent experience in which their school library helped them in learning. The results indicate that the school library and teacher-librarian help students learn by providing access to a range of current resources and technology to meet students' information and reading needs, and by developing information literacy to construct new knowledge. The students' responses confirm the usefulness of access to a well-resourced library and acknowledge the teacher-librarian's knowledge and expertise as a resource specialist. Hay concludes that an effective school library program managed by a dually qualified, full-time teacher-librarian contributes significantly to student learning.

School libraries futures project

This study (Hay and Todd, 2010) centres around a blog which gathered perspectives on the current status and future potential of libraries in New South Wales government schools. The respondents were predominantly teacher-librarians. Blog posts indicate a strong conviction that school libraries are an important part of current and future school life for a variety of reasons. They provide extensive examples of teacher-librarian activities intended to support information literacy and learning. However, the posts provide quite limited evidence of impacts or outcomes on student learning, despite two direct questions, and respondents' frequent claim that school libraries have a 'definite impact'. The researchers raise concern about the failure to make explicit and measure the relationship between inputs, outputs, actions and student outcomes. They suggest that invisibility of outcomes contributes to a wider educational perspective that school libraries do not make a significant contribution.

Australian school library surveys

Softlink (2012), a supplier of school library management systems, conducted surveys of school libraries around Australia in 2010, 2011 and 2013. Each survey examines school NAPLAN (2011) scores and shows links between: higher school library funding and higher than national mean reading scores; and lower school library funding and lower than national mean reading scores. In addition, the surveys find a significant positive correlation between the number of school librarians employed and the NAPLAN Reading Literacy results for the school. In these respects, the Softlink findings are similar to findings of the US impact studies discussed earlier. The Softlink (2012) report indicates that school resourcing across Australia is inconsistent, with the majority of schools having received no increase in their budgets or staffing levels in the previous twelve months. It states that major challenges facing Australian school libraries and teacher-librarians are associated with: gaining

increased funding; balancing online and physical resource collections; collaborating with teaching staff; and gaining recognition for teacher-librarian knowledge and expertise. The following studies provide useful findings about the state of school libraries and roles of teacher-librarians in Australia. While they do not set out to demonstrate impact, they offer insights about how and why school libraries can make a difference.

Australian school library research project: A snapshot of Australian school libraries

This report provides preliminary findings of a project (Combes, 2008) initiated by Australian School Library Association (ASLA), Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) and Edith Cowan University. The findings provide a bleak picture of Australian school libraries in 2007-8:

- dated library facilities: 55% of school libraries were older than 15 years
- inadequate seating and space for ICT
- limited budgets: 40% of school libraries received less than \$10,000
- limited professional staff: 50% of school libraries have less than 1 EFT or no teacher-librarian

Teacher-librarians' professional activity is relatively modest. While over 60% indicate that they teach classes in the library, only 47% consider themselves to be leaders in their school. Further analysis and more recent data are needed about associated trends and implications.

Submission: Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools

This survey of Australian schools formed the basis of the Children's Book Council of Australia's submission (Kirkland, 2010) to the Australian Government's Inquiry into school libraries and teacher-librarians. The 624 responses provide numerical data about school enrolment, school library budget, staffing and library-based programs. The findings indicate that despite the provision of new library buildings for many schools under the Australian Government's *Building the Education Revolution* (BER) many schools experience library staffing and funding cuts that affect their ability to provide adequate services. However, the findings of this study are somewhat more positive than those reported by Combes (2008). In particular:

- median school budget is \$40,000 and median library budget per student is \$60.00
- the majority (90%) of school libraries employ at least one qualified teacher-librarian
- school libraries provide an extensive range of reading, literacy and information literacy activities, as detailed in the submission

Untangling the evidence: Teacher-librarians and evidence based practice

This recent qualitative study (Gillespie, manuscript) investigates the lived experience of teacher-librarians as evidence based practitioners. The findings show that evidence-based practice for teacher-librarians is a holistic experience, which involves both purposeful and accidental evidence gathering and use. Evidence for teacher-librarians takes many forms, including professional knowledge, observations, statistics, informal feedback, and personal reflections. The findings provide a foundation for further research about teacher-librarians' potential roles and contribution; and for an evidence based practice framework for teacher-librarians.

Conclusion: Review of previous research

In collating the findings of extensive international research, this review reveals significant positive relationships between school libraries and teacher-librarians, and students' literacy development and learning outcomes. It also draws attention to limited Australian research in this area. This lack of research justifies the need for the SLAQ-QUT project about *The influence of school libraries and teacher-librarians on students' literacy development in Queensland schools: The Gold Coast study*.



Snapshot of Gold Coast school libraries, library staff and teacher-librarians in this study

The research participants were principals of 27 schools in the Gold Coast area of Queensland, Australia. They lead a varied range of primary, secondary and combined P-12 schools in the government and non-government sectors. The factual and qualitative data they provided inform the findings and recommendations of this study. The findings are significant, since they draw upon the principals' knowledge and expertise as school-based managers with strategic oversight of school libraries.

What does this research show about the provision and staffing of libraries at the Gold Coast schools in this study?

The 27 Gold Coast schools featured in this study are varied in size and nature

- All 27 schools have a library
- Most have traditional names such as *Library* or *Resource Centre*
- The title of the person in charge of the library in most cases is *Teacher-librarian*

School library staffing varies considerably across the 27 Gold Coast schools

- Marked staffing library differences between government and non-government schools
- All 27 libraries have at least 1 one part-time staff member
- 81% of the school libraries are managed by a qualified teacher-librarian with dual qualifications in teaching and librarianship/information science.
- All non-government schools have at least 1 part-time qualified teacher-librarian
- 6 government schools have **no** qualified teacher-librarian
 - 2 primary, 3 secondary, 1 special school

Government schools tend to have:

- Higher *student to EFT library staff* ratios than non-government schools (i.e. fewer library staff to enrolled students)
- EFT staffing does not rise with greater student enrolments

Non-government schools tend to have

- Larger total EFT library staff than government schools
- Library staff that includes teacher-librarian and support staff
- EFT library staff rising steadily with greater student enrolments

Summary of Gold Coast schools in this study

School type	Primary	Secondary	Senior secondary Years 11-12	Special P-12	Combined P-12
Government n= 16	10	4	1	1	0
Non-government n=11	3	1	0	0	7
Total n = 27	13	5	1	1	7

Total EFT library staff

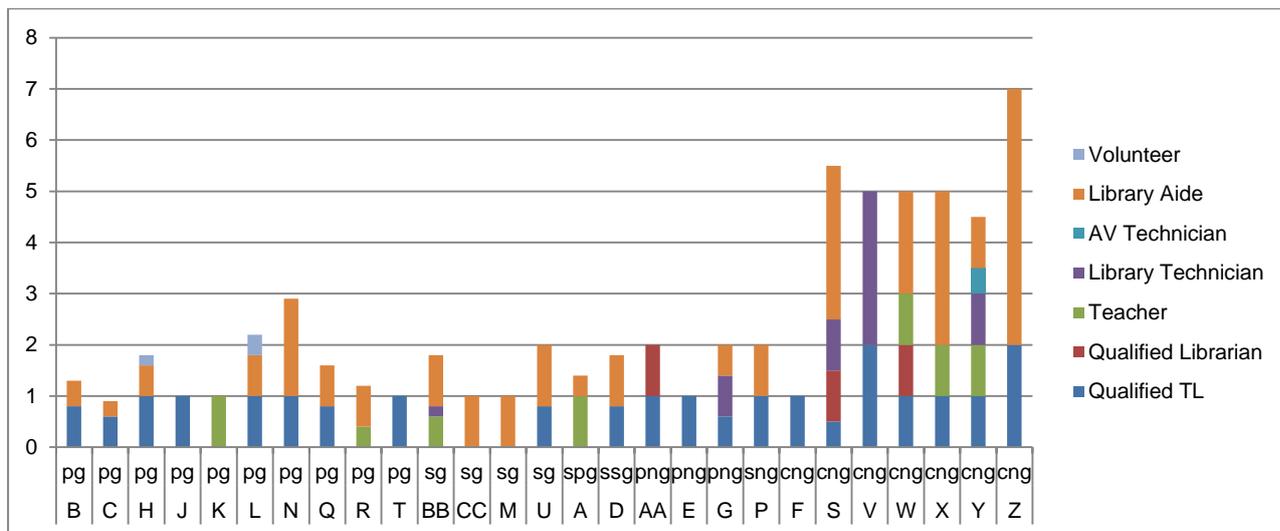
School types	Total library staff EFT														
	7	5.5	5	4.5	2.8	2.2	2	1.9	1.8	1.6	1.4	1.3	1.2	1	0.9
Government primary						(1)		(1)	(1)	(1)		(1)	(1)	(3)	(1)
Government secondary					(1)		(1)							(2)	
Government special (P-12)											(1)				
Government senior secondary college (Yr 11-12)									(1)						
Non-government primary							(2)							(1)	
Non-government secondary							(1)								
Non-government combined (P-12)	(1)	(1)	(3)	(1)										(1)	
Total (n=27)	(1)	(1)	(3)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(4)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(7)	(1)

Make-up of library staff

The make-up of library staff varies greatly from one school to the next, as shown below. Staff classifications range between qualified teacher-librarian, qualified librarian, teacher, library technician, AV technician and library aide. One school library also has a trainee and two have volunteer assistants.

The majority (78%) of the school libraries are managed by a qualified teacher-librarian with dual qualifications in teaching and librarianship/information science. However, six government schools do not have a qualified teacher-librarian: one state primary, three state secondary and one state P-12 special school. They constitute 22% of all schools in the study. In most cases, the title of the person in charge is *teacher-librarian*. However, at three schools the person in charge was designated differently, as: Head of Libraries and information services, Library Manager, and iCentre Coordinator.

Comparison of library staff across the 27 Gold Coast schools



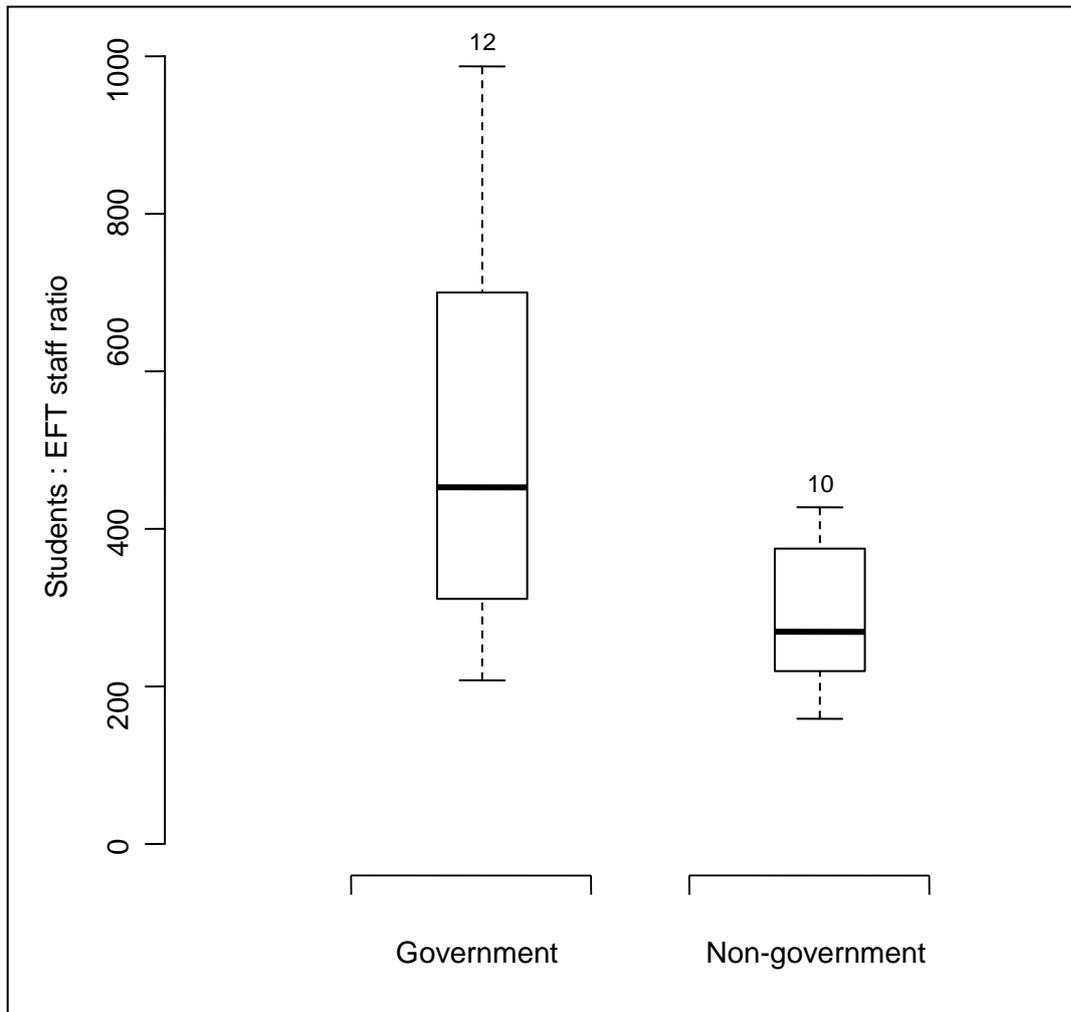
Schools by type:

pg = primary government school, sg = secondary government school, spg = special government school, ssg = senior secondary government school, png = primary non-government school, sng = secondary non-government school, cng = combined non-government school

Student to library staff ratios

The following boxplot diagram compares ratios of *students to EFT library staff* at schools in this study that participate in NAPLAN testing. It shows that the government schools tend to have higher *student to EFT library staff* ratios than non-government schools. In other words, government schools in this sample generally have fewer library staff per enrolled students compared with non-government schools.

Ratios of students to EFT library staff for government and non-government schools



Explaining the above boxplots:

The data for each school type are represented by a *boxplot*, which shows the range of *student to staff* ratios arranged in four sets or *quartiles* (Beckman, Thompson & Rubenstein, 2010).

The dotted line represents the range of ratios.

The figure above the dotted line is the count (or total number) of schools in the sample.

The whiskers (or horizontal lines) at the top and bottom of the dotted line respectively indicate the highest and lowest ratio in the range.

The top and bottom of the box represent the first and third quartiles, while the thick black horizontal line represents the median.

The left hand boxplot represents the 12 government schools that participate in NAPLAN, while the right hand boxplot represents the 10 government schools that participate in NAPLAN.

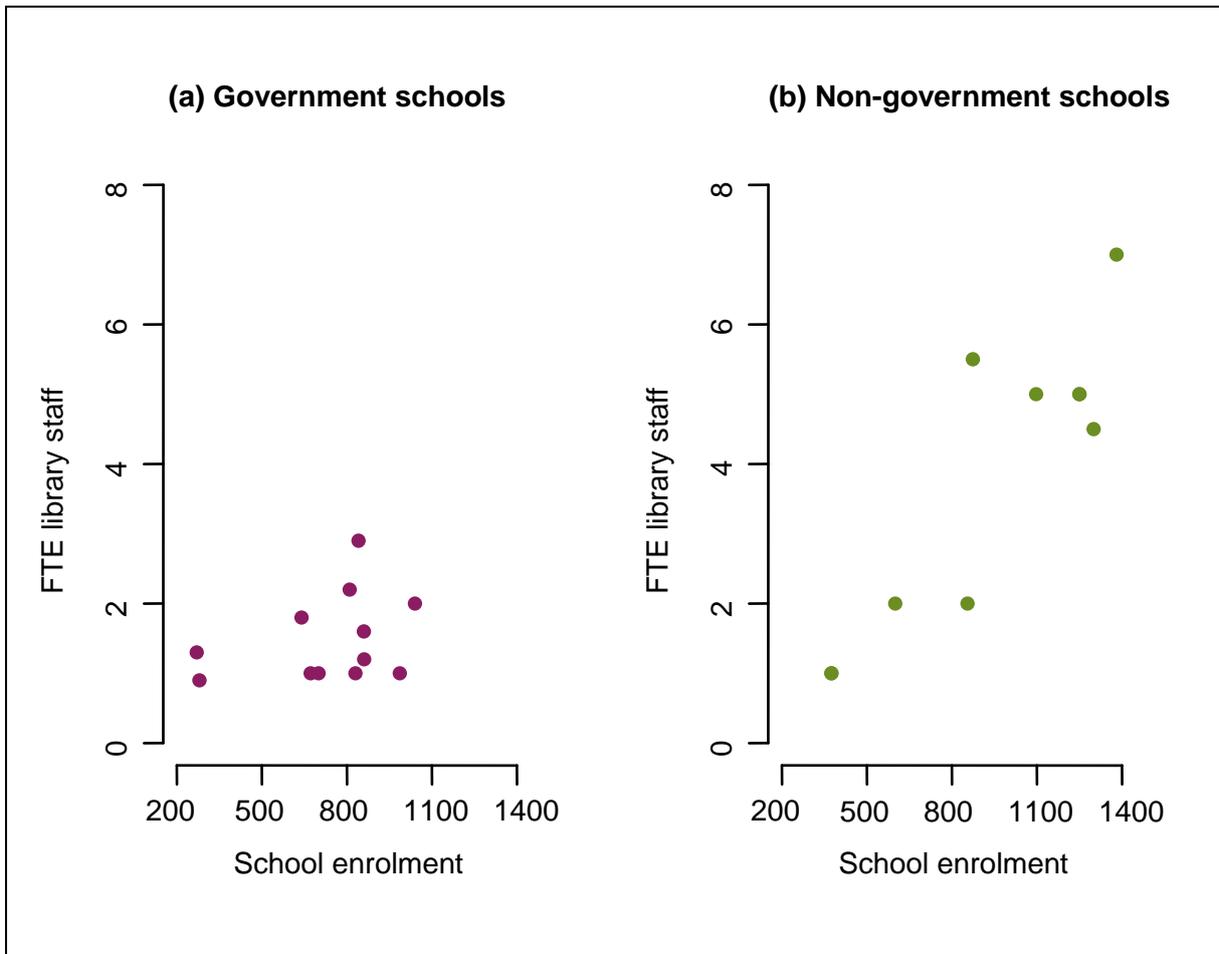
The median ratio for students to EFT library is considerably higher at government schools.

While the lowest ratio for both school types is similar, the top ratio for non-government schools is close to the median for government schools.

Note: these box plots include only 22 of the 27 schools, since enrolment data for 2 government and 1 non-government were not provided by respondents; and a further 2 schools do not participate in NAPLAN (special school and senior secondary college).

The following scatter plot diagram compares EFT library staff at government and non-government schools in this study. The data shown in Panel (b) suggest that library staffing at non-government schools steadily rises in line with student enrolment. In contrast, the data shown in Panel (a) suggest that the EFT library staff at government schools tends to cluster between 1 and 2 irrespective of student enrolment.

School enrolment versus EFT library staff for government and non-government schools



Explaining the above scatter plots:
 The maroon dots represent government schools and the green dots represent non-government schools. The higher a dot appears, the greater the school’s enrolment. The further to the left, the lower (ie. better) the school’s *student to EFT library staff* ratio.
Note: these graphs include only 22 of the 27 schools, since enrolment data for 2 government and 1 non-government were not provided by respondents; and a further 2 schools do not participate in NAPLAN (special school and senior secondary college).

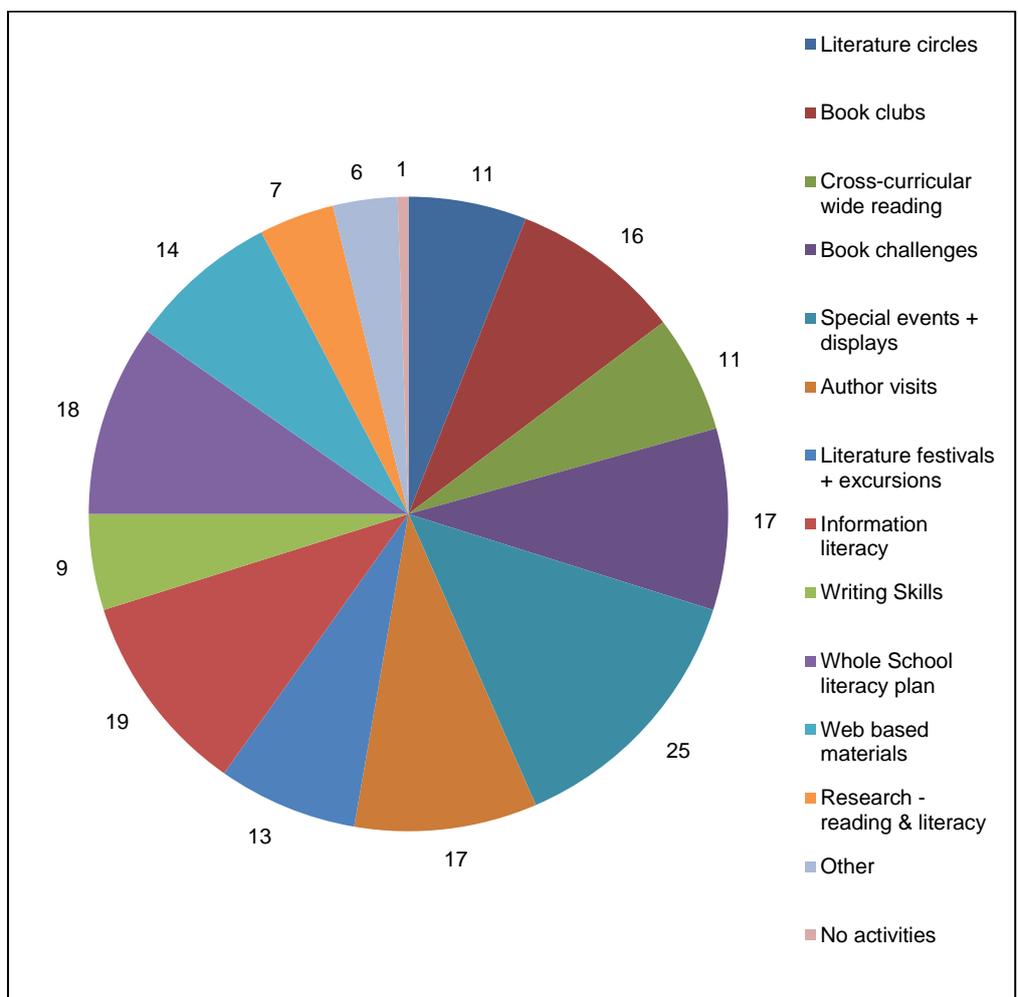
School libraries, literacy and reading development activities

What range of literacy and reading activities do school libraries provide?

- All except one library provide some literacy and reading activities
- Seventeen (63%) libraries provide five or more different activities, while eight (30%) provide nine or more activities
- Larger schools tend to provide more activities
- Ten smaller schools provide eight or fewer activities
- Six larger schools provide more than nine activities
- Non-government schools tend to provide more activities than government schools

The school libraries in the Gold Coast study provide numerous and varied activities related to literacy development and reading promotion as highlighted in the following diagram.

Range of literacy and reading activities provided by the school libraries



Teacher-librarians, literacy and reading development activities

What difference do teacher-librarians make on literacy and reading activities?

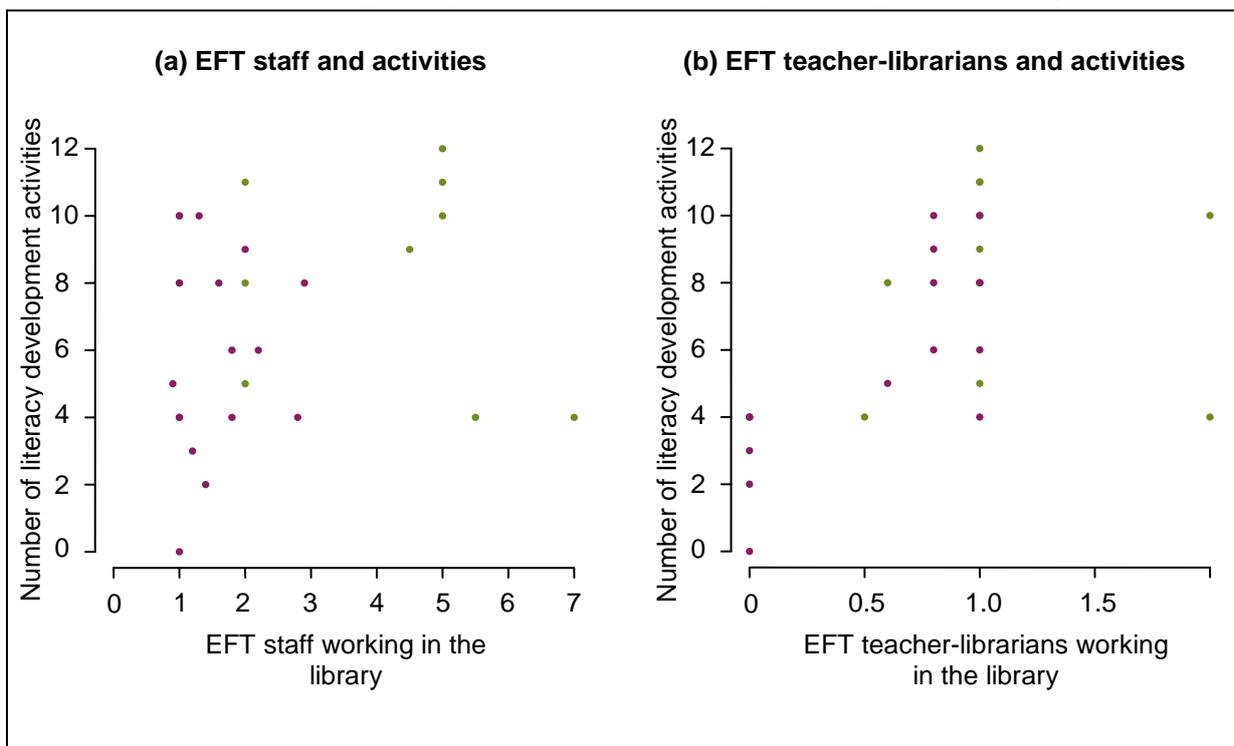
- School libraries with a teacher-librarian tend to provide more activities
- This association is particularly distinct for the government schools
- The six schools with no teacher-librarian provide four or fewer activities
- In contrast, there is no apparent association between the size of the whole EFT library staff and number of literacy development activities provided

The following scatter plots compare size of EFT library staff, EFT teacher-librarian and number of literacy activities provided by the school libraries. They indicate that the school libraries with a teacher-librarian provide more activities than those without one.

Panel (a) presents a plot of the total equivalent full time staff working in each library and the number of literacy development activities offered by the library.

Panel (b) presents a plot of the teacher-librarian component of the equivalent full time staff working in the library and the number of literacy development activities offered by the library. Panel (b) indicates a very clear-cut association between the size of the equivalent full time teacher-librarian staffing and the number of literacy development activities offered by the library. Taken together the data in panels (a) and (b) suggest that it is the size of teacher-librarian EFT staffing, rather than the size of the whole library EFT staff, that is associated with the number of literacy development activities.

Comparison of EFT library staff, EFT teacher-librarian, literacy and reading activities



Explaining the above scatter plots:

The maroon dots are government schools, the green dots are non-government schools. The higher a dot appears, the greater the number of activities the school library provides. The further to the left, the lower (i.e. better) the school's *student to EFT Library staff* or *student to teacher-librarian* ratio. Note: 24 of the 27 schools surveyed are represented in the scatter plots, since enrolment data were not provided for 3 schools.



School library staff, teacher-librarians and NAPLAN scores

What relationships are there between school library staff and teacher-librarians and NAPLAN reading and writing scores?

For schools in this study the data show strong relationships between:

- lower *student to EFT library staff* ratio and higher than national mean NAPLAN reading and writing scores
 - even more pronounced for schools with a teacher-librarian
 - the effect is strongest for reading but still significant for writing
 - non-government schools in this sample generally perform better than government schools

At schools with a qualified teacher-librarian:

- school NAPLAN scores tend to be higher than the national mean NAPLAN for reading and writing

At schools without a qualified teacher-librarian:

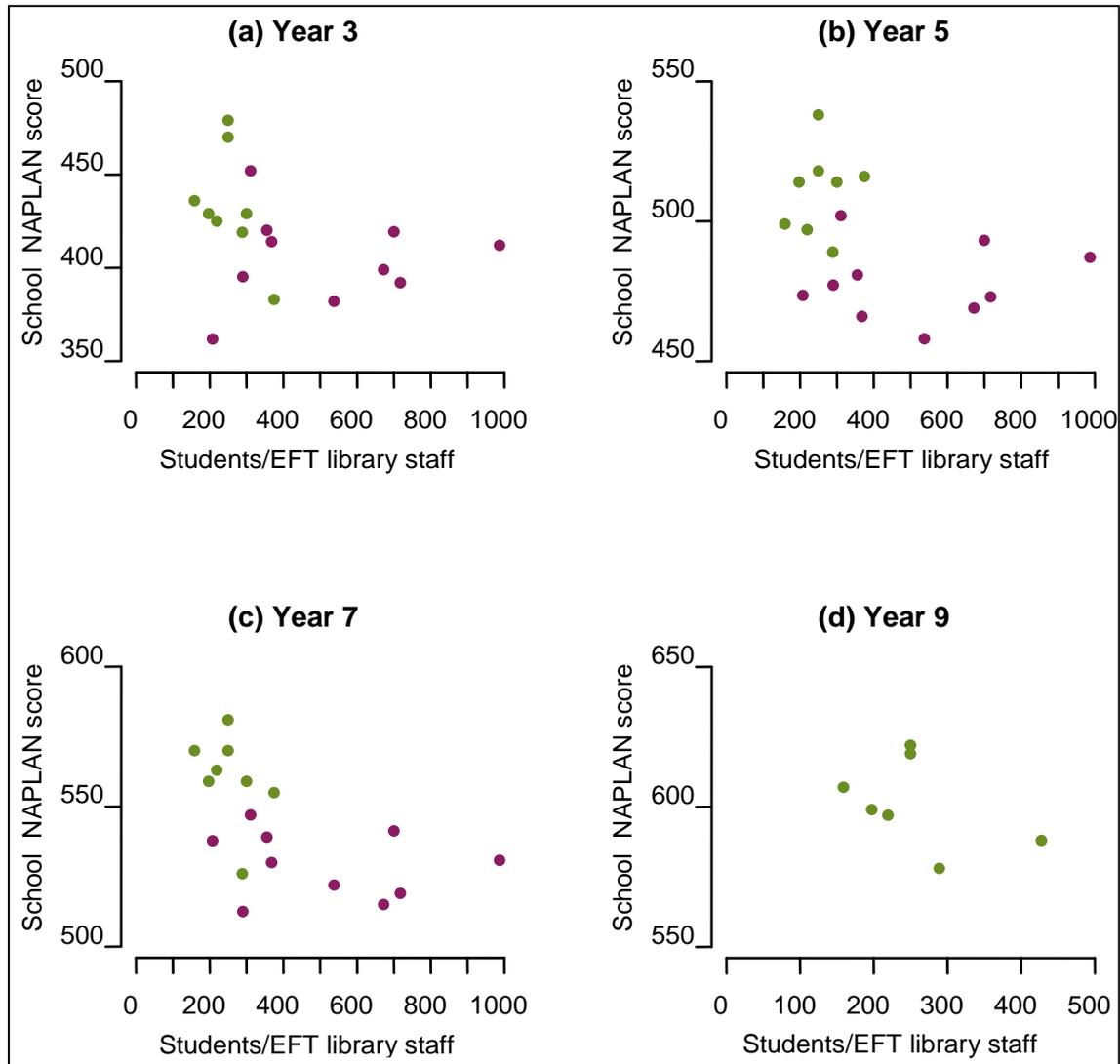
- school NAPLAN scores are consistently below the national mean for NAPLAN reading and writing

Student to EFT library staff ratio versus school NAPLAN reading and writing scores

The two following graphs compare the schools' NAPLAN³ scores for reading and writing and *student to EFT library staff* ratios. They show a general pattern where schools with lower *student to EFT library staff* ratios achieve significantly higher NAPLAN scores at all levels. Non-government schools in this sample generally perform better than non-government schools.

³ NAPLAN (*National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy*) is an Australia-wide annual assessment for school students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. (ACARA, 2011). The NAPLAN scores referred to in this report relate to the 2012 *Preliminary results* (ACARA, 2012).

Students to EFT library staff ratio – school NAPLAN READING scores

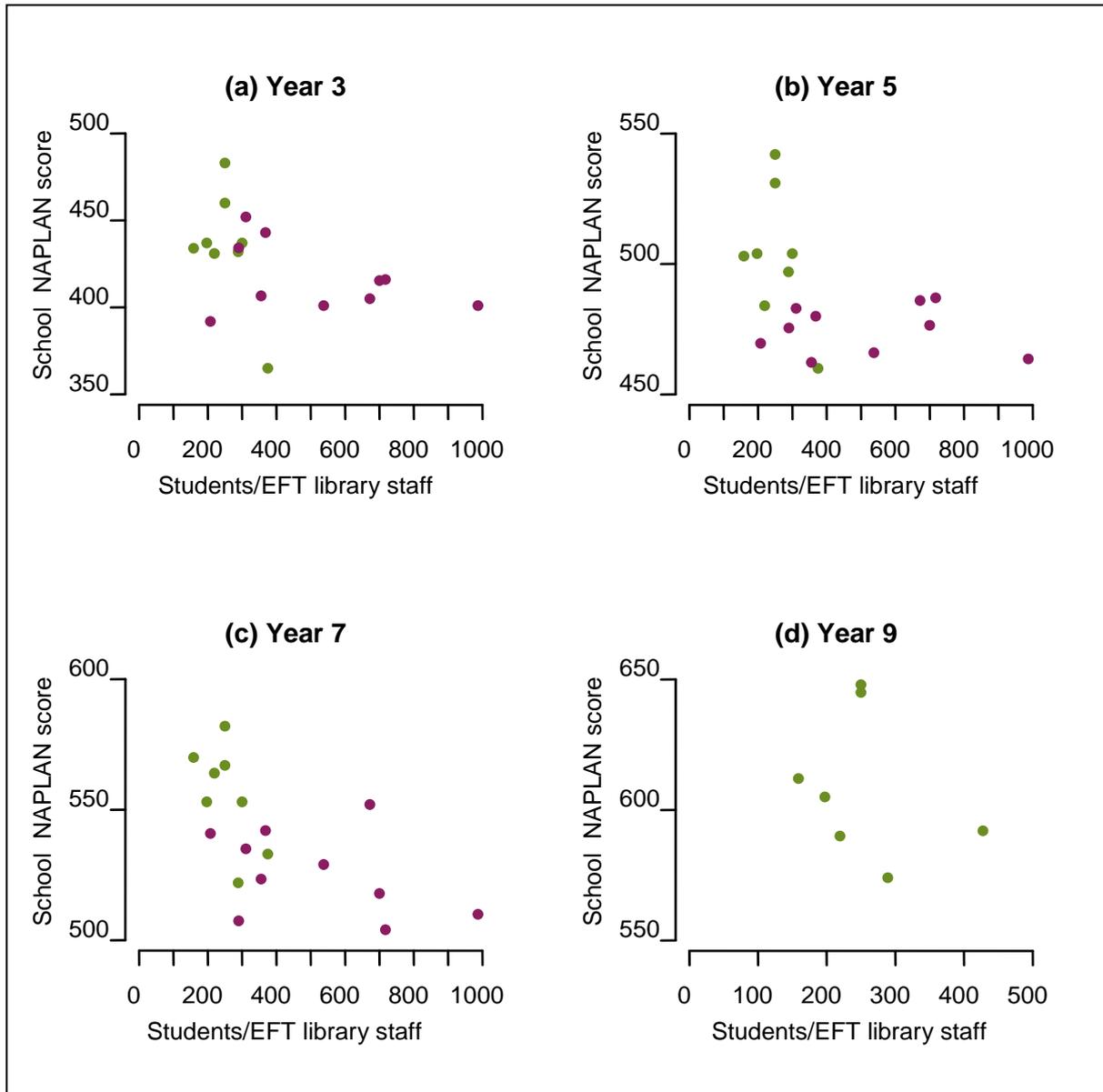


Explaining the above scatter plots:

The maroon dots represent government schools and the green dots represent government schools. The higher a dot appears, the better the school's NAPLAN reading score. The further to the left, the lower (i.e. better) the school's *student to EFT Library staff* ratio.

Note: these graphs include only 22 of the 27 schools, since enrolment data for 2 government and 1 non-government schools were not provided by respondents; and a further 2 schools do not participate in NAPLAN (special school and senior secondary college).

Students to EFT library staff ratio - school NAPLAN WRITING scores



Comparing NAPLAN scores for schools with and without a teacher-librarian

The two following graphs compare 2011 NAPLAN reading and writing scores at schools with and without a teacher-librarian.

They show that at every year level, the scores are significantly higher for schools with a teacher-librarian.

In addition, schools with a teacher-librarian gain scores considerably above the national mean for each year level, whereas the scores for schools without a teacher-librarian are consistently below the national mean.

Explaining the following box plots:

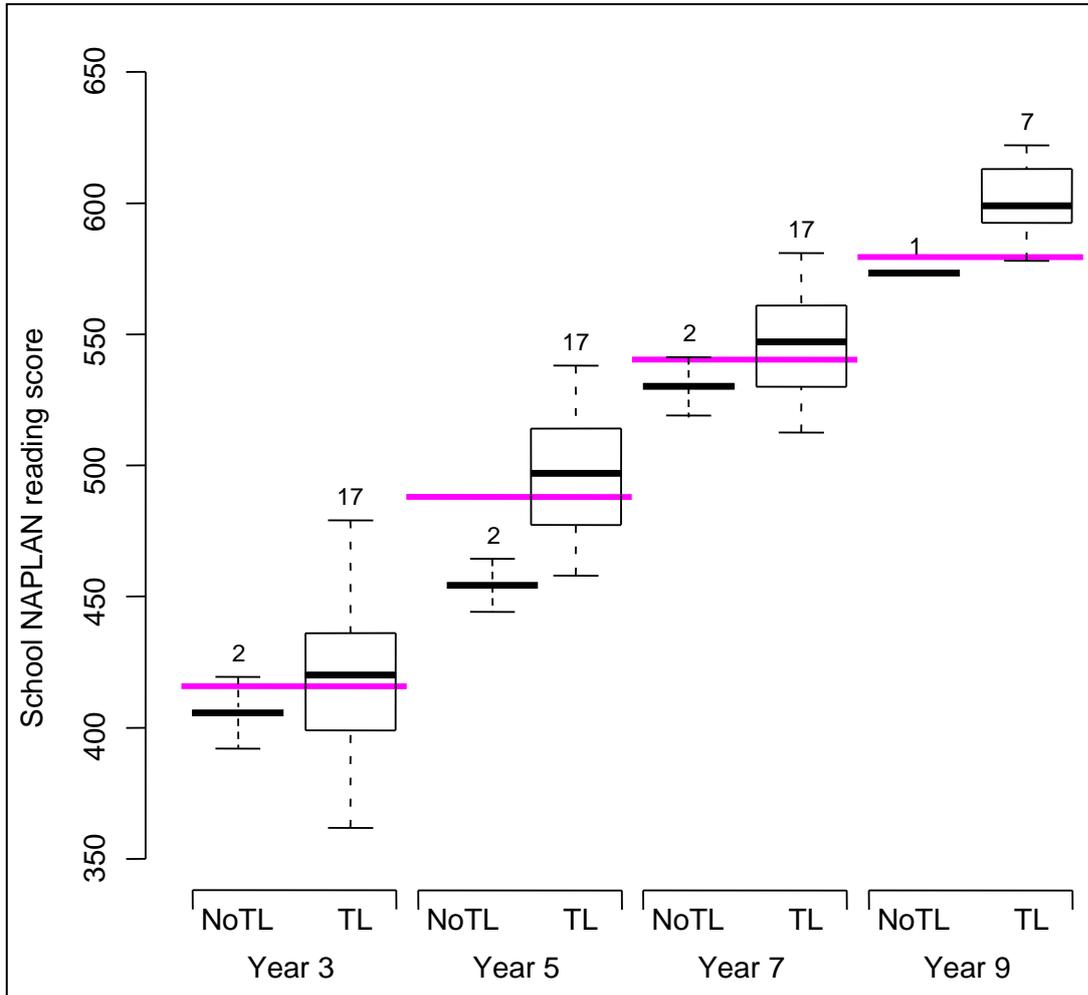
For each box plot, the dotted line represents the range of NAPLAN scores attained by schools in the relevant sample group. The figure above the dotted line is the count (or total number) of schools in the sample. The *whiskers* (or horizontal lines) at the top and bottom of the dotted line respectively indicate the highest and lowest NAPLAN score in the range. The top and bottom lines of the boxes represent the first and third quartiles, while the thick black horizontal line represents the median NAPLAN score for the schools at each year level.

The magenta horizontal bars are the Australian national mean reading and writing scores for 2011 for the corresponding year groups (ACARA, 2011, pp. 2, 66, 130, 194 - reading; pp. 13, 77, 141, 205 – writing).

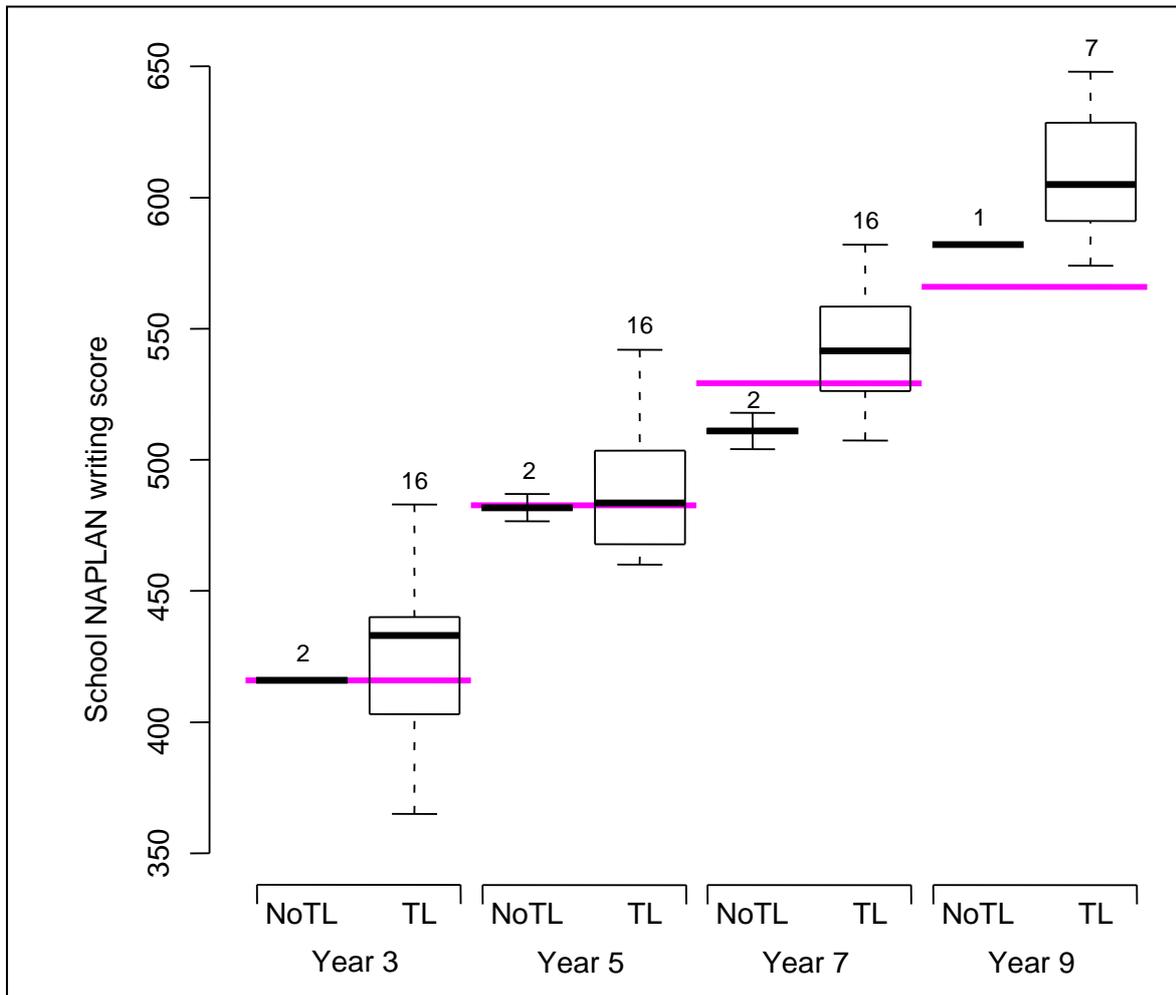
Notes:

- (i) 25 of the study's 27 schools are represented in the box plots: 2 schools do not participate in NAPLAN (a special school and a secondary senior college)
- (ii) Data for No TL schools for Year 3, Year 5, and Year 7 are from just two schools and are represented by the sample mean and the higher and lower scores (thick horizontal bar, upper whisker, and lower whisker respectively).
- (iii) Data for Year 9 No TL are from just one school and the thick horizontal bar represents that single NAPLAN score.

Comparison of NAPLAN READING scores for schools with and without a teacher-librarian



Comparison of NAPLAN WRITING scores for schools with and without a teacher-librarian





Principals' views of school libraries and teacher-librarians

How necessary is the school library to support literacy development?

- 93% of the school principals (all except two) indicate that a library is necessary to support literacy development in their school
- Over two thirds consider a school library is essential to support literacy development

How much influence does the library have on students' literacy development?

- 93% of the school principals (all except two) consider that their school library has an influence on students' literacy development
- Over two thirds (67%) consider that it has a great/very great influence
- 78% of the principals who consider the library to be essential indicate that it has a great or very great influence on students' literacy development.
- Principals of primary and P-12 non-government schools rate the necessity of a school library more highly than principals of other schools
- One principal directly relates declining NAPLAN results to lack of a qualified teacher librarian

How do teacher-librarians/library staff contribute to student literacy development?

As:

- pedagogical and curriculum leaders
- literacy leaders, collaborative literacy teachers
- promoters of information and digital/ICT literacy
- promoters of reading
- peer educators
- resource experts
- learning space creators
- researchers

How could teacher-librarians/library staff contribute more to literacy development?

By:

- leading literacy
- promoting information and digital/ICT literacy
- collaboratively teaching
- providing professional development
- creating learning space

What are the library-related needs to achieve school literacy goals?

- Resource needs: Increased funding for staffing, especially teacher-librarian, literacy resources and facility improvements
- Professional practice needs: Flexible teacher-librarian, professional development
- Awareness needs: Raised awareness of the school library among teachers
- (Re)appointment of a teacher-librarian, increased hours for teacher-librarian

Principals' views about teacher-librarian/library staff contribution

Our librarians are on our curriculum committees. They are seen as pedagogical leaders. They work with staff in planning time and work with students in class work and individually.
(Principal School V)

The principals' comments indicate awareness that teacher-librarians and school library staff already contribute – or potentially could contribute - to student literacy development in multiple ways, as summarised in their own words below.

Principals in this study consider that teacher-librarians/library staff contribute to student literacy development ...
As pedagogical and curriculum leaders - <i>Curriculum planning partnership.</i> (Principal School Y)
As literacy leaders - <i>[Library staff] leads literacy assessment and planning.</i> (Principal School A) - <i>Work with school leadership and curriculum team to strategically plan school improvements in literacy.</i> (Principal School B)
As collaborative literacy teachers - <i>Librarian undertakes literacy lessons with prep to year 3 classes related to C2C literacy units.</i> (Principal School N) - <i>Teacher librarian wrote whole school literacy plan as part of team.</i> (Principal School P)
As promoters of information and digital/ICT literacy - <i>Work collaboratively with teachers to develop literature and information, media skills aligned with units of work.</i> (Principal School B) - <i>TL models and promotes the use of technology to find information, to create and communicate and for recreation.</i> (Principal School T)
As promoters of reading - <i>Cater to students' tastes and levels of reading with interesting and current resources.</i> (Principal School AA) - <i>Literature appreciation.</i> (Principal School H)
As peer educators - <i>Models literacy lessons to staff.</i> (Principal School A) - <i>Model and support teachers and students in delivery of high quality practices and improved standards.</i> (Principal School BB)
As resource experts - <i>Ensure there are resources to support Australian Curriculum.</i> (Principal School AA) - <i>Resource advice and management.</i> (Principal School Q)
As student-focused library managers - <i>Friendly and efficient operating of the resource centre.</i> (Principal School AA)
As learning space creators - <i>Provide inviting, engaging environment to promote a love of learning and inquiry through print and ICT.</i> (Principal School BB)
As researchers - <i>Research analysis.</i> (Principal School H)

It is notable that 'current ways of contributing' at some schools are mentioned as 'further ways of contributing' at other schools. For example, one principal indicated the need for the teacher-librarian to more actively engage in:

Continual promotion of the values of literacy throughout the school.
(Principal School Z)

This suggests that some teacher-librarians and school libraries are meeting principals' expectations more actively than others. In other words, established practices at some schools are still opportunities for development at others.

Principals in this study consider that teacher-librarians/library staff could contribute more to student literacy development by ...
Leading literacy and information/digital/ICT literacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Coordinate online. Provide greater faculty support in information literacy.</i> (Principal School Z) - <i>Programs through school of distance education ... more wireless access.</i> (Principal School N) - <i>Further ICT skills and the relationship to writing.</i> (Principal School Q) - <i>Improvement in technology resources.</i> (Principal School X)
Collaboratively teaching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>An integrated approach to skills formation within school. More incentive for teachers to integrate information skills into assignments. Focus on process rather than assessment results.</i> (Principal School P) - <i>Increased connection to the real world with literacy skills.</i> (Principal School J) - <i>Further integration within the curriculum and pedagogy.</i> (Principal School X) - <i>A more structured whole-school approach to teaching information skills.</i> (Principal School T) - <i>Work closely with head of curriculum and teachers to provide literary support.</i> (Principal School L)
Providing professional development (as peer educators) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>PD for staff and parents on library services.</i> (Principal School Y)
Creating learning space <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Further development of physical library space.</i> (Principal School X)

Principals' views about the teacher-librarian role

The role of teacher librarian is critical to literacy development and curriculum support.
(Principal School S)

The principals' responses indicate generally well-informed views about the varied and changing nature of the teacher-librarian's role. Several commented that teacher-librarians play an important role in their school. Some noted that the teacher-librarian role is changing, with an increasing focus on managing learning and literacy. Several principals recognised that literacy now encompasses use of digital information and that teacher-librarians play an important role in promoting other teachers' use of technologies. They see that the increasing mobility of technology is extending the context in which teacher-librarians operate, beyond the library itself.

Principals see teacher-librarians as ...
<p>Literacy leaders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Effective TLs now manage literacy, English, information and not books.</i> (Principal of School R)
<p>Contributing beyond the library</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>In the digital age and the advent of 1:1, a great deal of what used to occur in libraries is now taking place in the classroom. It has impacted on the perceived role of TLs.</i> (Principal of School M) - <i>Both the physical space and the sum of library-school community relationships should reflect a cooperative, integrative and supportive model of learning and being. This model supports communication and community and these support literacy.</i> (Principal of School W)
<p>Teachers and information managers (dual role)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Teacher librarians have teaching qualifications and also specialised knowledge of resources to support the school curriculum. Thousands of dollars are spent each year on resources and it is essential that they are accounted for, processed and organised efficiently so they can be accessed.</i> (Principal of School AA)

Principals' views about library-related needs to achieve school literacy goals

[It] all comes back to strategic plan and money
(Principal School E)

While the principals generally recognised that the school library can contribute to students' literacy development, they also indicated further needs must be met for it to fully achieve the school's literacy goals.

Increased funding is needed for staffing, resources, digital technologies and improved library spaces. Several principals focused on the need to either appoint or increase the hours of a qualified teacher-librarian. One identified the need for professional development for teacher-librarians, which probably would have funding implications.

In addition to increased funding, some principals identified practice-related needs: for teacher-librarians to adapt their practice with changing conditions, or take a more active teaching role. Meanwhile, some principals saw a need for teachers to develop greater awareness about the role libraries and library staff can play in literacy and curriculum development. However, one principal noted that teacher-librarians also need to do more to promote their skills.

Resourcing needs ...
Increased funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Funding, staffing and priority in planning meetings/inclusion.</i> (Principal School P) - <i>All comes back to strategic plan and money.</i> (Principal School E) - <i>Extra funding to extend library e-resources - iPads, apps.</i> (Principal School BB)
Increased staffing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>More staffing - assistants to ensure general workings of library can be maintained to free up TL time.</i> (Principal School Q) - <i>Allocation of additional time to the TL role. Allocation of additional teacher aide time. Allocation of technical support time.</i> (Principal School BB) - <i>Increased staffing. Revision of timetable.</i> (Principal School Z)
Qualified teacher-librarian <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Full time TL.</i> (Principal School C) - <i>Re-appointment of a teacher librarian.</i> (Principal School CC) - <i>A teacher librarian!</i> (Principal School S)
Varied resources to support literacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>A wide range of current resources that will support different interests, abilities and reading levels in the school's prep-year 7 literacy program.</i> (Principal School AA) - <i>A school information skills overview which takes into consideration the sequencing of the C2C teaching program.</i> (Principal School T)
Improved library spaces <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Larger facilities with break-out rooms.</i> (Principal School J) - <i>Financial investment in the redevelopment of the junior library.</i> (Principal X)
Teacher-librarian ...
A flexible teacher-librarian <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Teacher librarian role needs to be flexible to cater for literacy and ICT demands.</i> (Principal School N) - <i>Professional development for teacher librarian.</i> (Principal School L) - <i>Continual updating of ICT skills</i> (Principal School BB) - <i>Adequate time release</i> (Principal School S)
Awareness raising ...
Raised awareness of library among teachers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>The staff continue to see the staff in the library as integral to the literacy development in school.</i> (Principal School V) - <i>Greater teacher understanding of the role libraries can take in curriculum development teaching and student learning.</i> (Principal School W) - <i>Promotion of their skills</i> (Principal School S)

Conclusion: Contrasting tales of two school libraries

The findings of this study and previous research repeatedly show significant contributions of school libraries and teacher-librarians to student literacy development.

Finally, two contrasting accounts illustrate the difference they can make.

School B: A quality resource

School B exemplifies the active contribution of the school library and teacher-librarian to literacy development. It is a small government primary school, with 270 students and a new BER library. The principal comments:

The new BER library facilities at our school have lifted the profile and value of a quality resource managed by a highly effective TL.

A part-time teacher-librarian (0.8) and library aide (0.5) provide an extensive range of literacy development activities that span reading promotion events and book challenges, information literacy and research skills. The principal recognizes that the teacher-librarian plays an active role as curriculum and literacy leader:

The TL leads and manages many aspects of the 21C learning program and the new literacies at the school

However, this high level contribution places significant demands on the small library staff. The principal is aware that the school staffing level is inadequate to sustain this level of activity and is concerned about the impact on the teacher-librarian:

The under-supply/over-demand for using the library and the expertise of the TL is an ongoing issue ... and the (TL) needs to be protected from an impossible workload and burnout.

School CC: If only ...

School CC is a government secondary school. Year 9 NAPLAN results were 573 for reading (below the national mean score of 580) and 582 for writing (above the national mean score of 566). The library is managed by one full-time library aide, without either a teacher or teacher-librarian. No literacy-related activities are offered by the library.

While the principal acknowledges that the library currently has no influence on literacy development, he still considers it to be essential. He notes a significant decline in NAPLAN results since the teacher-librarian's position was discontinued four years ago:

We lost our librarian 4 years ago and now we recognise the need for one, particularly since the negative growth in reading on NAPLAN yr7-9 declined by 30% from 2010-2012. Double the % of neg growth for the previous cohort.

In response to the question 'What do you need to achieve literacy goals?' this principal tellingly comments:

Re-appointment of a teacher librarian.



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School Library Association of Queensland
Queensland University of Technology

School libraries, teacher-librarians and their contribution to student literacy in Gold Coast Schools

Contact details:

Dr Hilary Hughes, lead researcher, QUT
h.hughes@qut.edu.au
+61 7 3138 3266

Children and Youth Research Centre, QUT
<http://www.cyrc.qut.edu.au>

School Library Association of Queensland
<http://www.slaq.org.au>

