Collaborators or Competitors?: The Roles of School Libraries, Classroom Libraries, Teachers and Teacher-librarians in Literacy Development

By Sue Reynolds and Mary Carroll

Introduction

Primary school students during the late 1950s learnt to read with *John and Betty*, *Holidays* and the *Victorian School Readers*, with one reader assigned for the entire year. As in many Australian schools of the time, public or private, there was no central school library and the concept of 'wide reading' was probably not even a twinkle in some future educator's eye. Students were fortunate if they had access to books for leisure reading at home, or from the public library, or sometimes in classrooms which might include a cupboard housing a small collection of books for reading in any time which might become available outside of the teaching program – a classroom library.

The immediate past president of the Australian Secondary Principals Association, Andrew Blair, has stated that he believes Victorian classrooms are stuck in the 1950s where students are merely being 'taught to the test'(Drill, 2009, p. 25); that is, the ability to demonstrate under test conditions specific literacy and numeracy skills. The test he is referring to is the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy test, or NAPLAN, introduced to Australian schools in 2008 to assess the reading, writing, language conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) and numeracy skills of students in years, 3, 5, 7 and 9.

In 2010, as a strategy for improving the NAPLAN test results for literacy, the Western Metropolitan Region (WMR) of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) in Victoria made classroom libraries an imperative under the impetus of the region's *Blueprint for School Improvement* for the period 2009-2011(WMR, 2009). During 2010 there was a flurry of activity as classroom libraries began rapidly appearing in Western Metropolitan Region schools, both primary and secondary; but despite the fact that school libraries have been recognised as important educational assets in Australia since the late 1960s they appear to have been generally isolated from the process (or have isolated themselves) in the WMR.

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From 1968 for secondary schools, and 1973 for primary schools, to the mid-1980s school libraries were provided for by the Commonwealth Government with funding for the necessary buildings, equipment, trained teacher-librarians, centralised services, books and other resources. Following this boom period, school libraries seemed to sink into stagnation, or even regression, into the first decade of the twenty-first century. Research by Reynolds and Carroll (2001) indicates that only 13% of state primary schools in Victoria had a teacher-librarian in the school library (a reduction from 55% in 1983) at the turn of the 20th century and in 2002 80% of Victorian secondary schools were staffed below the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) and Australian School Library Association (ASLA) benchmarks (Welch & Braybrook, 2002). In 2008 Barbara Combes (2008) found that only 68% of government school libraries in Australia had a teacher-librarian. In Victoria 35% of schools had no teacher-librarian at all and 62% had less than one fulltime equivalent.

In 2009, despite the shortage of trained teacher-librarians in Australian school libraries, the federal government under the then Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, implemented its Building the Education Revolution program (BER) as part of an 'economic stimulus plan' in the face of the global financial crisis. The BER included the building or upgrading of school libraries and this in turn prompted the library sector in Australia to request that the government conduct a national school library review with particular reference to training staff for the new and refurbished buildings. In March, 2010 an 'Inquiry into School Libraries and Teacher librarians in Australian Schools' was announced. This was the first such review since 1968 when the Australian Library Promotion Council commissioned *School Libraries: A Report to the Nation* (Trask, 1968), followed by *Primary School Libraries: A Report to the Nation* (Cohen, 1972), as part of the successful campaign to gain Commonwealth funding for school libraries in the following decade and a half.

The report of the 2010 'Inquiry' was tabled in Parliament in May 2011 (having been delayed by the Federal election called in August/September 2010), and it cites a substantial body of research attesting to the value of school libraries (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011). In particular, the submission made by the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA, 2010) stressed that research shows that both quality of resources and use of school libraries improves students' learning. Yet, more than forty years after funding by the Commonwealth Government fuelled the spread of school libraries with trained professional staff, amidst all the activity of the BER with its focus on 'iconic' school library buildings, the consequent calls for teacher-librarians to staff them, and the evidence given during the school library 'Inquiry', classroom libraries, in preference to school libraries, have attracted the attention and energy of the Western Metropolitan Region of the Victorian DEECD in an effort to improve literacy levels in the region. In this 'back to the future' scenario, school libraries have seemingly been disenfranchised from the initiative, with no reference made to school libraries or teacher-librarians in either the region's *Blueprint* (2009) or documentation relating to the establishment of the classroom libraries in the WMR. In fact, to the contrary, the WMR's *E5QuIP Professional Learning Programfor Literacy and Numeracy 2010* claims (without attribution of the research), that "research supports the notion that the books that students choose to read and enjoy the most come

from their classroom library . . . the most significant library in students' lives" (October 2009, p. 40). (This is particularly interesting in view of a document discovered on the internet (http://readingpd.wikispaces.com/space/content), but not apparently widely distributed in the WMR, or brought to the authors' attention during research for this paper, titled 'Secondary libraries – WMR version with my changes' (dated October 2009). This document states "Classroom and area libraries *ARE NOT meant to replace school libraries* but to work in conjunction with central libraries of all types to encourage students' reading development and enjoyment. Librarians are an important part of this work and can provide a great deal of guidance to the establishment and success of classroom/area libraries".)

The Western Metropolitan Region is culturally and linguistically diverse and, in association with these factors, is considered to be economically disadvantaged. The Regional Director, Katherine Henderson, has declared that "in this region . . . postcode does not equal destiny" ('Education Week', 2009) and the WMR has pledged to "Maximise the literacy learning and educational outcomes of every student in the Western Metropolitan Region" (WMR, 2009, p. 5). The *Blueprint* is an "agreed plan of action for improvement" aimed at making the WMR "the most rapidly improving region in student learning outcomes in the state" (WMR, 2009, p. 15). Part of this initiative is the directive that classroom libraries be established in *every* primary and secondary classroom.

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This article investigates the potential role of school libraries and teacher-librarians in classroom library initiatives and consequently in the improvement of literacy rates in children. The results of a survey of WMR schools with regard to their classroom library programs, conducted in 2010, have been analysed to provide a case study on which to focus the discussion to follow.

Reading and libraries

The ASLA website provides links to research into literacy development which presents evidence that libraries have a positive effect on student literacy outcomes (ASLA, Research), and interestingly both classroom and school libraries cite virtually the same research to lobby for support. But in the WMR, where the emphasis is on classroom libraries, school libraries have not specifically been included in the development of an "agreed plan of action" (WMR, 2009, p.15) to improve literacy.

The WMR *Blueprint* presents the aim that "within three years (2009-2011) the Western Metropolitan Region will demonstrate measurable, significant gains in student learning in literacy . . ." (WMR, 2009, p. 2). A document distributed in the WMR, titled 'Preparing Students for NAPLAN and Other Tests Within the Framework of High Quality Teaching Practices in Literacy and Numeracy' (Snowball, 2009) presents statements excerpted from various research documents (not directly attributed) as evidence for the guidelines given for improving literacy and numeracy (or at least for improving the test results for literacy and numeracy). With regard to reading competence and comprehension the following research statements (amongst others) are provided (Snowball, pp. 2-3):

The greater the volume of reading done by students the higher their reading proficiency and the more they will be inclined to read throughout their lives

> *Students who are active engaged readers will be high achievers in literacy . . .*
> *Engaged reading does not become part of a child's lifestyle in a week or a month.*
> *Comprehension is an outgrowth of a wide range of purposeful, motivated reading.*

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These statements can, of course, be applied equally well to the school library cause – and have been. For example, Stephen Krashen, a Professor of Linguistics and Education at the University of Southern California, answers his own question in an opinion piece titled 'What Do We Know about Library and Reading Achievement?'(2002, p. 38). He asserts that "we know that . . . more access to books results in more reading . . . more recreational reading results in more literacy development: There are consistent and strong positive correlations between the amount of reading children do and their growth in reading . . . sustained, silent reading programs that last longer than one year produce the most positive results". Krashen concludes that "Better school libraries are related to higher achievement in reading"' and he also asserts that "Children who attend schools with school libraries with better collections and superior staffing do better on tests of reading, even when the impact of poverty is controlled".

Krashen's statements regarding school libraries, and many similar testimonials, are supported by Scholastic's 2008 update of *School Libraries Work* (2008) which includes 20 research studies in the United States and Canada. These studies, which are included in the Australian school library 'Inquiry' report, found direct results between improved literacy and school libraries which are appropriately funded, stock and staffed. In Australia, Michelle Lonsdale, in her comprehensive research into the 'Impact of School Libraries on Student Achievement' also determined that 'a print-rich environment leads to more reading and free voluntary reading is the best predictor of comprehension, vocabulary growth, spelling and grammatical ability and writing style' (2003, p.1). Lonsdale reported that "the extent to which books are borrowed from school libraries shows a strong relationship with reading achievement whereas borrowing from classroom libraries does not" (Lonsdale, 2003, p. 31). This is a finding that is in direct opposition to the assertion that the classroom library is "the most significant

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library in students' lives" (WMR, October 2009, p. 41). Other recent research has found a direct and significant positive correlation, which increases between years 3 and 9, between well-funded school libraries, staffed with teacher-librarians, and NAPLAN results (Softlink, 2011).

It would seem that the same statements regarding reading achievement can be interpreted equally well to support the case for classroom libraries *or* school libraries, but the central fact remains that it is *reading*, and therefore literacy, which are enhanced by more access to books, regardless of where they come from. Arguments between the proponents of classroom libraries and the advocates for school libraries over the perceived merits of each, or superiority of one over the other, are futile, ineffective and unproductive since it is access to books which is fundamental to reading and literacy, and access can be augmented by both school libraries and classroom libraries (or public libraries or home libraries!). The energy and available funding, for either or both, could be better directed towards a combined effort to promote reading and improve literacy, particularly in low socio-economic regions such as the WMR. Stephen Krashen believes that both school and classroom libraries can be used to "defend children against the effects of poverty" (2011, p. 18). An Australian Education Union (AEU) survey titled 'State of our Schools', reports that over half of the principals surveyed said that their funding did not address the level of disadvantage at their schools (2009). With both limited funding and time available, teachers with classroom libraries who ignore school libraries and qualified teacher-librarians in their efforts to promote and improve reading are reducing their chances of success; and if school libraries and teacher-librarians ignore classroom libraries, teachers and children, they are enhancing their chances of obsolescence.

The WMR's *Blueprint* for "every child, every classroom, every school" (2009) and its support of classroom libraries towards this end is acting as an exciting stimulus for teachers to reinvigorate their reading programs. It should also motivate school libraries in the region to be part of the initiative and part of the excitement, particularly as the region claims that already schools in the WMR have "collectively demonstrated that WMR is the most rapidly improving region in the state" (WMR, 2011, p. 1). The *Blueprint's* cover message of 'Every child, every opportunity' is surely a mantra for every school everywhere. Classroom teachers and library staff in the WMR could together provide a model for classroom/library cooperation which is new, stimulating, even exhilarating, for children, teachers and library staff in the 21st century. As Stephen Krashen declares: "the school library and classroom libraries can make a huge difference: The library can level the playing field and provide ALL children with a print-rich environment. All children will have the chance to do wide reading and grow in literacy, knowledge, and understanding" (2002).

Classroom libraries in the Western Metropolitan Region

In August 2010 all primary, secondary and combined primary/secondary schools in the WMR (as listed in 'WMR Schools', but excluding special schools and the region's English language school) were surveyed about the implementation of classroom libraries in their school. Surveys were sent to 127 schools. In the first instance, emails were sent to the school email address as given in the 'WMR Schools' directory and individual schools were at liberty to allocate the completion of the survey to the most appropriate person. For all emails which bounced a second or third attempt was made to deliver the email. When emails bounced due to inaccurate or obsolete email addresses they were re-sent, where possible, to email addresses as determined from school websites. Phone calls were made to any remaining schools and often the reason given for a bounced email was that the school email boxes were full and the advice was to re-send in a week or so. Despite this advice being followed those emails generally continued to bounce and those schools were therefore not able to participate in the survey.

Fifty-seven schools completed the survey, a response rate of 44.9% of the original total number of schools included in the survey.

A variety of questions were asked about the classroom library initiative to get a picture of the uptake and running of the program in schools, and the involvement of school libraries with it. Classroom libraries are not mandated in the WMR but there has been an expectation that they will be established and every school which responded to the survey had at least some classrooms with libraries. Seventy-seven per cent of responding schools reported that they had such libraries in 90-100% of their classrooms. One school declared that "This was NOT an option. ALL classrooms now have substantial classroom libraries". Four secondary schools indicated that the program had so far been rolled out to years 7 and 8 only.
The high uptake of the program was supported by funding being provided to buy books in forty-four (77%) of the schools who responded to the survey. Only thirty-six of these schools had additional funds for other aspects of the classroom library program, such as shelving, processing, a lending system etc. One school reported that a lack of funding meant that only two classrooms had established classroom libraries, but in another school the library had dedicated its 2010 book budget to buying appropriate books for the classroom library program. This is a good example of classroom/school library cooperation, with the additional advantage of the teacher-librarian using professional expertise to select 'appropriate' titles.

Ninety-five per cent of the schools had both classroom libraries and a school library with only three schools indicating that they did not have a school library. For those schools which had school libraries, 76% reported that the school library was involved in some way with the classroom library program. Involvement varied considerably from school to school but usually the nature of involvement was routine eg. book covering, centralised borrowing, cataloguing or managing purchases. Ninety-three per cent of schools indicated that it was the classroom teachers who were responsible for selecting books for the classroom library, with only four schools reporting that library staff performed this task. Other individuals involved with the selection of classroom library books, apart from teachers, library staff or children, were the principal or assistant principal, the literacy co-ordinator or coach and, in one case, students' families.

Although the school libraries often performed traditional library tasks on behalf of the classroom libraries, in 95% of schools students were often also involved with undertaking some of the same tasks, for example, selection, arrangement, processing. Sometimes it

was the students who were responsible for organising both fiction and non-fiction books in the classroom, according to genre or author, and for lending out the classroom resources, plus the more mundane tasks of tidying and 'arranging furniture'. Students were often also able to recommend books they wished to be purchased. In some schools traditional library tasks were not considered necessary at all for the classroom libraries; for example, under 50% of the schools had their classroom books covered and labelled (that is, numbered or with alphabetical call numbers for title or author to identify and locate books). About half of the schools had a central list of classroom library books but only 35% kept a list of books within each classroom, resulting in teachers and students unable to consult an inventory of what was available in any particular classroom should a particular author or title be desired.

Classroom borrowing systems were in place in just over half of the schools but they were usually constructed by individual classroom teachers rather than utilising the library's system; only five schools (less than 10%) reported that classroom book borrowing was managed by the school library. Accountability for the books in classroom libraries seems to be a low priority. One surveyed school obviated the need for a catalogue of books or borrowing system by the rationale that it is the reading that matters, not control of the books or borrowing. Anecdotally, some schools in the region view missing books as being something to celebrate, rather than counting the cost, surmising that missing books must therefore be being cherished at home by children who need and appreciate them.

Although many schools reported that the school library assisted with purchases for the classroom libraries, only 39% of schools acquired books for the program by purchase only. Fifty schools, 88%, did purchase at least some of their books but one school stocked classroom libraries with donations only. Another school had a whole school fund raiser to make purchasing possible. Five schools did not purchase at all. Comments from survey participants indicate that methods of acquiring books, other than by purchase and/or donation, included books contributed by the classroom teachers, either donated or lent, and books acquired as a result of the accumulation of Scholastic Book Club points. In one case donations were received from the local public library and as discards from the school library.

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Some classroom libraries were supplemented by books borrowed in bulk from the school libraries, but whatever method was used to procure books for the classroom libraries, schools generally struggled to reach the target number of titles suggested by the region. It has been recommended that 500 titles are to be in each classroom, half 'factual' and half levelled (by vocabulary, semantic difficulty and complexity of sentences). Diane Snowball, literacy expert and a classroom library adviser to the WMR, believes that levelling some books will reduce the time taken by students to select books and therefore permit more reading time, while the inclusion of unlevelled books will allow students to develop self-selection skills. Five hundred is a very large number of books to be purchased and housed in a classroom – face-out as recommended – and only four schools reported that any classroom library in their school contained 500 or more titles. Nearly half of the schools in fact had less than 200 books in individual classroom libraries.

In the opinion of the authors, the schools in the WMR have done an excellent job of setting up their classroom libraries as an initial response to the requirement. While very few schools had reached the target of acquiring 500 titles for individual classroom libraries, or even 200 titles, nearly every school had at least some of its classroom collections with 'covers shown' as recommended. 'Covers facing out where possible' was often reported in survey responses in compliance with the region's recommendations. This method of displaying books mimics the attractive displays found in bookshops, although one school reported that the "students' preference was for spines facing out". Shelving methods include: tubs, baskets or boxes, shelves, book trolleys, spinners, a cupboard, ledges and 'wherever they can go'. Arrangement was generally by genre and author with some books levelled, however some classroom libraries were organised by size or title or interest groups and several were not arranged in any particular way. Often the students established the categories, or genres, used to organise arrangement.

The largest measure of the success of the classroom library initiative in the WMR, as indicated by the survey, was in response to the invitation to "Please comment on your perception or not of the classroom libraries in your school so far". Most of the comments are full of enthusiasm for the endeavour:

Very successful and have enabled children to do more reading at school.
Has changed the way teachers and students view reading.
Students are very explicit about their own reading goals and much more engaged in reading.
Extremely successful in engaging students in ready because they are able to choose what they read.
The kids love it.
Awesome.

Some responses, however, were not so positive and some teacher-librarians took the time to send personal emails highly critical of the classroom libraries, particularly with reference to their establishment at the expense of school libraries already suffering from a perceived lack of support. There are issues of accountability for the books purchased, comments on the amount of work it has taken to establish the libraries and how much effort it takes to maintain them, particularly if this takes time away from student learning, and remarks about success being dependent on the teachers involved. The school library is barely referred to in the survey responses except for the routine tasks already discussed; only two comments suggest any active engagement in the classroom library program, such as with book selection. In one school there had "been an increase in the number of students reading books but we have also focussed on students bringing their own books from home or borrowing from library" (presumably the school library) and in another the library staff were actively involved with helping children select 'Just Right Books'. One response was an implicit criticism of previous practice, aimed at a school library: "[Books] are now off shelves and in children's hands!". This enthusiasm is countered in

an email from an 'eLearning and Resources' manager who rather cynically suggested that the classroom library policy would last about 18 months before it would prove too costly in the replacement of items. Time will tell if this is to be the case.

Classroom libraries and school libraries

Why are school libraries not more involved in the classroom library initiative in the WMR? Or in many of the other classroom library programs (particularly in the United States) documented in research? It would be interesting future research to explicitly survey teacher-librarians in the WMR in an attempt to determine how they see their involvement in the classroom library initiative, now and in the future. One reason could be a decision made at school level in the WMR that only teachers and school administrators should be involved in the process of developing *classroom* libraries, with a perception that school libraries were conducting other business. For example, at a briefing attended by teachers in the WMR it was recommended that in order to develop their ability to select appropriate titles students could discuss their reading, be part of a student book club and share recommendations for books, but school libraries were not included in this suggested process. An 'Important consideration' presented at the briefing was for teachers and school administration to discover "Who is the knowledgeable person responsible for buying books" and to "Have a school plan for continual weeding and building". The authors of this paper believe that the most 'knowledgeable person' in a school would usually be a professional teacher-librarian and any school library would, or should, have a collection development plan which includes both ongoing acquisition and weeding. A qualified teacher-librarian is also trained in helping students select books for reading or research, and teacher-librarians, practising as they should, are usually only too happy to discuss reading; they could easily do so, and often do, by running book clubs, booktalking or sharing recommendations. The school library 'Inquiry' report listed many activities deployed by teacher-librarians in their efforts to make reading meaningful and pleasurable, e.g. involvement in the Children's Book Council Book Week and ALIA's National Simultaneous Storytime, both activities organised by associations particularly relevant to libraries and perhaps not known to classroom teachers. How might school libraries with trained library staff, and activities such as these, fit into the WMR (and beyond) classroom library initiatives?

In response to the survey, only three schools said they had no school library at all. It is possible that school library staff are not doing what they should and could do for the school and its population (beyond the physical embodiment of the library), or that the perceptions of what a teacher-librarian and the school library can do are negative and based on stereotypes. At the school library 'Inquiry' it was suggested that teacher-librarians are often seen

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as "elderly, staid, … a bit of a dragon" with "a cushy job . . . all [they] do is read books or newspapers or stamp books in and out" (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, p. 65).. Lyn Hay, a library and information studies lecturer at Charles Sturt University, reported to the school library 'Inquiry' that teacher-librarians need to actively promote both themselves and their profession to gain recognition for what they can do for a school and its population of teachers and students (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, p. 55). The School Library Association of Victoria advocates for teacher-librarians in schools by informing teachers of teacher-librarian skills in a pamphlet titled 'What a teacher-librarian can do for you' (SLAV): apart from "providing . . . effective resource management that supports individual learning", teacher-librarians can also provide and promote "quality reading experiences" to enable students to learn that reading can be for pleasure and they "can help you improve your students' literacy by recommending a wide range of reading opportunities that your students will enjoy . . . reading challenges, genre lists, webquests and book clubs". SLAV could well add assisting with classroom libraries to the list.

The Australian School Library Association has developed standards to which 'Excellent teacher-librarians' should aspire (while also acknowledging that not all teacher-librarians are excellent professionals) (ASLA Standards). These standards address professional practice, knowledge and commitment within the context of both education and librarianship. ASLA says (amongst other things) that a teacher-librarian, that is, a professional with recognised teaching and librarianship qualifications, should have "detailed knowledge of current educational pedagogy", understand "that professionally managed and resourced school libraries are crucial to the achievements of the school community", "fully understand the need to cater for the social, cultural and developmental backgrounds of learners in program implementation and curriculum resourcing" and "collaborate with teachers to plan and implement information literacy and literature programs that result in positive student learning outcomes". Teacher-librarians should "ensure that their programs are responsive to the needs of learners in the school community", "ensure that the library's policies and procedures implement the school's mission", "promote the profession of teacher-librarianship in their schools and the wider community", and be "dedicated to excellence in professional service". With regard to reading and literacy, teacher-librarians are qualified to "foster a reading culture through the active promotion of literature [and] an environment where learners are encouraged and empowered to read"; understand "literacy, literature for children and young adults, curriculum and specific programs in their schools", "how children and young adults become independent readers" and "how to promote and foster reading"; and, teacher-librarians should "demonstrate collegiality and mentor colleagues". Every one of these statements could be made in association with classroom libraries as a focus of the activities recommended.

In order for the school library and teacher-librarians to be active participants in a classroom library program there needs to actually be a school library and a teacher-librarian willing and able to perform in accordance with the standards suggested by SLAV and ASLA, particularly those relating to reading and literacy as detailed above. If a school has both a library and trained staff, their involvement with a classroom library program should be an imperative for greater success. Research shows that school libraries which are well staffed by trained personnel and well-funded increase reading scores for children who have access to them (Softlink). If schools had teacher-librarians who did what SLAV says they can (and should) do, and who aspired to excellence in the ways suggested by ASLA, classroom libraries could be in a natural partnership with the school library. And with teachers and library staff working together

classroom libraries could be even more successful (as they are reported to be in the WMR) in terms of their organisation, the acquisition and management of resources, the environment in which they exist and their success in developing and improving children's literacy, and pleasure in reading.

Teacher-librarians and classroom libraries

Teacher-librarians should take their skills and aspirations for professional excellence into the classrooms. They should be leaders, mentors and colleagues in the development of children's literacy. Teacher-librarians are teachers *and* librarians and as such they can actively and pedagogically demonstrate what books can do to improve literacy and develop reading for pleasure by choosing the best books to satisfy diverse interests and reading abilities and by making them come alive in classrooms – for example, by reading aloud, discussing, interacting, conducting reading circles, group discussions, and readers' theatre. Teacher-librarians can also select great books for classroom teachers' independent reading as they role-model for the children. Teacher-librarians know how to match the right books with the right readers, whether child or adult, and can transfer that knowledge so that readers can become independent in future book selection. And children capable of selecting books for themselves can then recommend the books they enjoy to other children as modelled by the 'enabling' adults in their school (Chambers, 1991).

Teacher-librarians should take their skills and aspirations for professional excellence into the classrooms.

In his 'Infomancy' blog, Christopher Harris noted that despite the idea that 'libraries=economy', classroom libraries (in the United States) were being developed without any economy of scale (Harris, August 6, 2007). He itemises some issues with classroom libraries in the United States which are already being reported (in the survey responses and in emails received during and after the survey) as occurring in the WMR's fledging classroom libraries. For example, in Harris' experience, in contrast to school libraries, classroom libraries generally offer only limited access to a small uncontrolled selection of materials which can't meet diverse reading needs and interests. Harris suggests that school libraries should be responsible for the collection development and the acquisition of the required resources, using their established library suppliers and even some of the library budget. They could rotate classroom resources to maximise the stock and refresh the collections, particularly in response to different children in different rooms in different years. They could control the inventory by barcoding every book and providing circulation systems in every classroom, thus offering the ability to gather statistics on the program and avoid the loss of stock. They could even devolve the library's fiction collection into the classroom libraries while still managing the books centrally and maintaining the school library as an 'information commons'. In response to the original 'Infomancy' blog post, Brian Mayer suggested further that school libraries could develop an electronic system for teachers and students to request items for classroom libraries which could be then supplemented by library recommendations (a la Amazon recommendations) in a "dynamic and interactive classroom library" (Mayer in Harris, August 7, 2007). Christopher Harris, as the 'infomancer', suggests that school libraries should "own the classroom libraries" (Harris, August 6, 2007). But co-operation could extend even further – school and classroom libraries together could *be THE library*.

In their book *Knowing Readers: Unlocking the Pleasures of Reading,* Susan La Marca and Pam Macintyre (Australian experts on literature for children and young adults) maintain that "The richest and most effective reading environments come when teachers and teacher-librarians work in cohort to demonstrate the varied pleasures of being a reader . . .. In both subtle and overt ways, teachers and teacher-librarians are enabling adults for the students in their classes" (2006, p. 49). The WMR could perhaps have as an appendix to its new *Blueprint for School Improvement* (currently in development), a framework for classroom and school library cooperation; and the Australian government should provide for adequate trained teacher-librarians and funding to support such a framework. Only time will tell if the school library 'Inquiry' recommendations (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011) will in any real way assist in this.

There is a wonderful synergistic opportunity waiting to be grasped in the WMR, and in all schools, by linking and developing already existing initiatives in classrooms and school libraries in new, innovative, imaginative ways, unconstrained by old ideas about either school or classroom libraries and with the school library and its trained staff firmly embedded in the process. With the National Year of Reading in 2012 as an extra stimulus, now is the time to do something about it.

This is a refereed article.

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