An enabling adult: the teacher-librarian and the creation of a reading environment

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of the secondary school teacher-librarian in the creation of a reading environment. The factors that influence how and why a teacher-librarian carries out his or her role are the major focus of the study. These are explored through an analysis of the current literature and in case studies undertaken in six Melbourne secondary schools. The investigation found that each of the case study schools created and operated a reading environment that was affected to varying degrees by all of the identified factors. The factors are:

The attitudes of the teacher-librarian towards their professional responsibility in creating a reading environment, and towards their students as readers.

The relationships forged between the teacher-librarian and teaching staff, administrators, other library staff and students.

The organisational and policy decisions that affect access, such as collection management, reading promotion programs and the knowledge base and advisory role of the teacher-librarian.

The ambience within the library space and how this assists the teacher-librarian in creating a welcoming environment conducive to encouraging reading, including factors such as layout and display.

The influences external to the library within the school including: budget allocation, staffing levels, support from the school administration, curriculum needs and the demands and limitations of architectural structures.

The professional context of the school community and the wider educational and professional debate within which the teacher-librarian operates impact upon the attitudes and decisions of the teacher-librarian. In addition, changes to broad educational objectives, the impact of ICT’s, and the ongoing debate as to the role of the teacher-librarian have had a marked impact upon each of the case study schools and their reading environments.
Declaration

This is to certify that this thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used. The thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Signed..................................................
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Transcription Conventions

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Italics – indicate a question by the investigator.

( ) – indicate words inserted to the data to assist in better understanding of meaning.

[ ] – indicate the student interviewee responsible for this statement.

… indicate that irrelevant or unnecessary data has been left out.
Terminology

Teacher-librarian

A teacher-librarian is a library professional who has qualifications in both librarianship and teaching. They may have completed these qualifications as separate degrees or as an integrated qualification. In the school environment they may teach classes related to library areas of study – research or wider reading for example and they may also be a classroom teacher in their other studied method.

As well as this teaching capacity they exercise their librarianship qualifications in regards to library management. The dual qualification indicates a role for the teacher-librarian in assisting, supporting and leading teaching staff in curriculum planning

Other terms which are used for teacher-librarian:

Library Media Specialist
Library teacher
Teacher/Librarian

All of these terms indicate a school library:

Resource Center
Information Resource Centre
Education Resource Centre (ERC)
LRC - Library Resource Centre

Associations and Organisations

AASL - American Association of School Librarians
ACYL - Australian Centre for Youth Literature
ALA - American Library Association
ASLA - Australian School Library Association
BCTLA – British Columbia Teacher Librarians Association
CBCA – Children’s Book Council of Australia
CILIP - Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (United Kingdom)
CISLSL – Center for International Scholarship in School Libraries
IASL - International Association of School Librarians
IFLA – International Federation of Library Associations
ILMS - Institute of Museum and Library Services (USA)
IRA – International Reading Association
LEA – Local Education Authority (Great Britain)
NICHHD – National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (USA)
NIFL – National Institute for Literacy (USA)
NSWPPA – New South Wales Primary Principals Association
OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PETA – Primary English Teachers Association
PISA - Program for International Student Assessment (OECD)
SLA – School Library Association (United Kingdom)
SLAV – School Library Association of Victoria
VATE – Victorian Association for the Teachers of English
YABBA – Young Australians Best Book Award

Acronyms

ESL – English as a Second Language
ICT – Information and Communication Technologies
IT – Information Technology
KLA – Key Learning Area
LOTE – Language other than English
RIBIT – Read in bed it’s terrific (commercially available reading promotion program)
RMIT – Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology

BookZone

BookZone is a commercially available wide reading support program that is operated via computer. Students read books from selected lists and complete activities related to the book upon completion. There are various levels through which the student progresses and a variety of different activities from which to choose. The program requires the library to maintain a collection of BookZone titles in order for it to work effectively.
Part A – Background

1. Introduction

*The world in which a man lives is largely shaped by the way he looks at it.*
*Schopenhauer*

This research project aims to contribute to knowledge of the role of the teacher-librarian. Of primary interest is the role of the teacher-librarian in creating a reading environment in a secondary school.

As a secondary school teacher-librarian, I worked very hard at achieving what I thought was a conducive reading environment, an integral part of my role in a school library. I did this while juggling the managerial role and various teaching and service roles that a teacher-librarian’s life encompasses. My objective was to encourage, and assist in developing, the educational interests of the students. I did not consciously think about why or how I worked at bringing reading into young people’s lives. I did know, deeply, that it was important.

At the outset of working on this thesis, I wanted to explain and explore my own interest in the reading environment. I realised that my own work in creating a reading environment had, to some extent, operated at a subconscious level. I wanted to bring a level of analysis and discussion that did not previously exist to the question of what a teacher-librarian did to create a reading environment and the interconnecting factors that impacted upon that creation. Such an analysis, I hoped, would lead to a better understanding of what makes a good reading environment and, possibly, encourage members of the profession to acknowledge the importance of their role in reading promotion. Intermingled with this was a concern that, perhaps, a number of teacher-librarians weren’t as actively involved in the promotion of reading within their libraries as they might once have been. With little more than anecdotal evidence to support this, I was also interested in exploring this change and investigating how and why this might have come to pass.

Due predominantly to the changing nature of the profession of teacher-librarianship, my study has also become an analysis, in part, of the evolving role of teacher-librarians. I had expected to find amongst the six schools a majority of active, vibrant secondary school reading environments. I understood that some schools gave a lower priority to their role in reading but was genuinely surprised to find so many of the case study schools either in conflict, or ambivalent towards their role in reading promotion. The thesis has become, in part, a discussion of change, choice, and stop-gap measures.
Despite the evolving role of the teacher-librarian, creating a reading environment is still generally regarded as part of the job of a teacher-librarian within the framework of a secondary school. I hope to explore this role and chart the factors that impact upon it in an attempt to bring about a better understanding of the role of the teacher-librarian and the important part they can play in reading promotion.

Reading - the ability to read, and hopefully find pleasure in what we read - is a crucial factor in our education system. It is part of what prepares us for the work place and our role as a participating citizen in society. Few would argue its relevance. Reading has many functions and is conducted utilising various forms. In today's technologically aware world it may be an electronic format, for others it is hard copy print. For many the most attractive style is factual, for others narrative holds sway. Regardless of format, or style, it is pleasure reading; free voluntary reading that is of most interest to this study. In the school library setting this is most often linked to the reading of fiction in book form, some in the profession do venture beyond this, investigating and encouraging various formats. In creating a reading environment to support and promote voluntary reading school libraries become involved in curriculum based initiatives and areas of assessment generally linked to English teaching. In so far as these areas impact upon, or contribute to, the reading environment these areas are also considered.

The influences on student reading habits are many and varied and this must be acknowledged. Parents, carers, grandparents, teachers and peers are all recognised as playing a part, large or small, in a student's reading experiences. Many are powerful influences over what, how and when students read. Research indicates that there is also a powerful role for teacher-librarians to play in the reading experiences of young people. The Australian Centre for Youth Literature’s research report, Young Australians Reading: from Keen to Reluctant Readers, found that 28% of 10 to 18 year olds who read for pleasure mentioned the school library as a source of books. This figure is higher than for bookshops, the public library, family or friends (ACYL, 2001, p.29). While other influences on reading habits cannot be ignored, the importance of the school library as a reading environment, and the teacher-librarian as an enabling adult, is crucial in the task of bringing young people and books together. It is this role that this thesis will investigate.

The notion of the enabling adult, in relation to this study, is inspired by Aidan Chambers’s use of the term in his book The Reading Environment. Chambers discusses primary school teachers, though he does also allude to parents, librarians and other supportive adults. For him the enabling adult will:

..provide, stimulate, demonstrate and respond. They provide books and time to read them and an attractive environment where people want to read. They stimulate a desire to become a thoughtful reader. They demonstrate by reading aloud and by their own behaviour what a ‘good’ reader does. And they respond, and help others respond, to the individuality of everyone in the reading community they belong to (Chambers, 1991, p.92).
A number of commentators, Altman (1994), Brown (1987), Carlsen (1980), Clary (1991), Hale (1994), Hickman (1995), Holland (1994), Protherough (1983) and Zancanella (1991), also recognise the role of a knowledgeable, interested adult as a facilitator for students. This thesis argues that one of the most significant ‘enabling adults’ can, and should be, the secondary school teacher-librarian, and it is an exploration of the extent to which a sample of teacher-librarians have fulfilled this role that is the major concern of this study.

The concept of the reading environment is fundamental to this study. This is an elusive idea, however. The term ‘reading environment’ does not refer to a clearly defined physical space; it is not governed by a set of guidelines or rules. In essence, a reading environment within a school library is the atmosphere that is created that encourages young people to read. Aidan Chambers (1991) discusses the term:

All reading has to happen somewhere... But it isn't only a matter of place - setting. It is also a matter of having books we want, and what mood we're in, and what time we've got, and whether we're interrupted. Not to mention our general attitude to reading (whether or not it is something we enjoy for its own sake) and why, particularly, we are reading at that moment (as a work duty, or for private pleasure). These are some of the things that influence us. They make up the social context of reading (Chambers, 1991, p.7).

In this study, the reading environment is this and much more. David Lewis, in a chapter titled ‘The Ecology of the Picture Book’, outlines the idea of environment:

Birds, insects, reptiles and bacteria, as well as human beings, not only exist within an environment, they are also part of the environment and as such both influence, and are influenced by, the environment. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the term has been appropriated by non-biologists and applied metaphorically in a number of different disciplines to enable the investigation of how the differing parts of a field, or factors within a process, interact and mutually influence one another (Lewis, 2001, p.46).

In this thesis, Lewis’s ‘environment’ is the wider context within which Chambers’s reading environment exists. This thesis is predominantly interested in analysis of the interconnecting factors within the larger contextual environment that impinge upon, or contribute to, the establishment of the school library as a place for the encouragement of reading – its reading environment.

This will be undertaken through the discussion and comparison of the practices within six case study schools. This analysis will lead to a better understanding of the nature of what is taking place in relation to the construction of reading environments in these secondary school libraries, lead to a better understanding of the role of the teacher-librarian in creating an effective reading environment and indicate ways in which best practice can be arrived at.

In an article discussing research into school librarianship Ken Haycock writes:
research in school librarianship is fundamental to the guidance of effective school library practice (Haycock in Nimon, 1998, p.1).

The concepts to be explored in this research are worthy of discussion as they are crucial to teacher-librarians involved in the personal shifts and struggles to establish a worthwhile, valued role within their own school communities. It is important that we analyse what we are doing as professionals – and why we are doing it – if we are to understand what is taking place and if we are to make informed, proactive decisions about the future directions for our own libraries and our profession.

The role of the teacher-librarian is currently in a significant state of change. Various factors impact upon and play a role in this change. An investigation of the state of the reading environments within school libraries will throw further light on the everyday practicalities of this evolving role and contribute towards developing a greater understanding within the profession of the changes that are occurring.

In a 2002 overview of current research, titled ‘The pedagogical role of school libraries - a research overview’, Limberg states:

Surprisingly few studies were found on the role of the library for promoting literature and reading, which leads to the conclusion that there is a clear need for such research (Limberg, 2002, p.4).

A recent report commissioned by the Australian School Library Association titled Impact of School Libraries on Student Achievement: a Review of the Research found that:

In terms of professional expertise, more research is needed to determine the extent to which the success of a school library program is due to the librarians’ personal attributes or training and experience (Lonsdale, 2003, p.2).

These statements indicate both the timeliness and the relevance of this research project particularly since libraries are such ‘unique cultural sites’ (Dressman, 1997, p.2) dynamic, vital components of any school.

In undertaking this investigation the research questions to be explored are:

1.1 Research questions

What components make up a reading environment in a secondary school library?
What does analysis of each case study show the teacher-librarian to be doing within his/her school to create a reading environment?
What factors impact upon the teacher-librarian’s ability to create an effective reading environment?
How do these impacting factors connect and interact with each other?

1.2 Subsidiary questions

How does the attitude of the teacher-librarian affect his/her role?
What do others within the school perceive the role of the teacher-librarian to be? How does this work for, or against, the efforts of the teacher-librarian?
2. Reading and the teacher-librarian

*Language is our soul's ozone layer and we thin it at our peril.*
*Sven Birkerts*

2.1 Reading

*A man ought to read just as inclination leads him; for what he reads as a task will do him little good.*
*Samuel Johnson, 1763*

For the purposes of this study, reading refers to material read by students that is outside structured classroom requirements, that is, material that is not part of the curriculum and assessment structure. To some, this is recreational, or pleasure reading – free voluntary reading - perhaps private or solitary, sometimes a book or perhaps a computer screen. In all cases, it is material chosen by the student that they wish to read for no other reason than that it interests them. In any given interaction there may be many motives as to why a particular item has been chosen – it may have been recommended, have an appealing cover or have been a cherished gift. The primary nature of the interaction, though, is one entered into for no gain other than the act of reading itself and whatever benefits the reader may find in this.

Whilst it is pleasure or recreational reading that is to be discussed, it is the promotion of this interaction between the student and reading material within the context of the school library that is of interest to this study. This does set up some difficulty as, once within the school confines, there are continuing structures and rules that may inhibit a student in their recreational reading. Some quasi-recreational reading may take place as part of a wider reading program which may be part of an assessment program. Reading always has a context, no matter how recreational it may be as an activity, and it is the context of the school library and the involvement of the teacher-librarian that is of interest to this study.

The nature of the reading material is irrelevant in this interaction. Fiction, non-fiction, computer screen, magazine or comic, all may be part of the reading choices of everyday students. Yet, most commentators presume the reading of fiction is what is being discussed when reading for pleasure is contemplated. This is not to be assumed in all cases. There is no doubt that the reading of fiction brings its own pleasures, the delight in story is something that teachers may often wish to bring their students. Consequently, the narrative form is often encouraged. Despite this, other forms of reading material should not be discouraged, particularly as an interest in alternative forms is often common amongst young readers. White, in his recent commentary on library science and the nature of libraries, has stated that:
libraries always vary in content and methodology. They are not defined by format (White, 2000, p. 391).

The same can be said of the reading tastes of students as readers.

2.1.1 The importance of reading

Reading for me, is a means of thought. One way of saying this is that literature gives us images to think with. (Chambers, 1991, p. 14)

Reading remains an integral part of the learning process, and reading for pleasure one of the most effective ways of encouraging and extending students in their ability to decode and comprehend what they read in all situations. Sigurn Klara Hannesdottir in the preface to the book The Information Literate School Community: Best Practice said in defining the importance of information literacy to today’s teacher-librarian that:

...we must admit that the foundation, on which all other literacy skills rest, is the skill to read, decipher the symbols that are used to transfer ideas through media such as the printed book, magazine, computer screens, and so on. There is no information literacy possible without the basic skill of reading (Hannesdottir, 1999, p. ii).

Critical to this thesis is research that demonstrates that teacher-librarians and school libraries contribute to student achievement in reading. In a recent review of Canadian school libraries, Haycock noted that research studies supporting this relationship have been available for more than fifty years (Haycock, 2003, p. 17).

He goes on to say:

The positive correlation among teacher-librarians, libraries and reading - ability to read, motivation to read, quantity read, results on reading assessments - has been true across grade levels, socio-economic class, urban/rural areas and across several decades (Haycock, 2003, p. 26).

Recent research has also noted the relationship between free voluntary reading and student achievement. A 1999 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) long-term reading assessment study in the USA also linked free voluntary reading to student achievement, the study found that:

reading for fun had a positive relationship to average scores. At all three ages (9, 13 and 17 years), students who said they read for fun scored higher than peers who said they never read for fun (Campbell, Hombo, & Mazzeo, 2000).

A number of important and influential studies that have appeared in the past few years have had similar findings. The Reading for Change report produced by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), for the OECD appeared in the year 2000. This report investigated the
reading habits of teenagers in 32 countries, one of which was Australia. The executive summary found that:

Students who read well tend to be active readers. They gain in terms of both motivation and experience from reading regularly outside the context of school work (OECD, 2000a, p. 12).

and that it is important not just to teach students to read but to engage them in reading as part of their lives (OECD, 2000a, p. 12).

The possibility exists for reading for pleasure to be an integral part of any student’s learning and for all educators, particularly teacher-librarians, to see a role for themselves as an enabling adult. It is only a matter of whether we, as professionals, are taking up this opportunity.

Krashen (1993), in a discussion on the current research, cites a number of studies concerned with the benefits of reading for pleasure. He claims research (McNeill 1976, Southgate 1981, Alexander 1986) has shown students who are said to be regular readers are often better students in many areas of their study. The problematic nature of cause and effect in the interaction between reading and student achievement is noteworthy, yet the relationship is apparent and one to be fostered.

In a recent argument surrounding the poor reading test scores of students in California, Krashen argued against the view that these poor results were due to the introduction of whole language programs. He claimed the poor reading scores were the direct result of a number of factors, most importantly, lack of access to books through well stocked libraries with trained librarians. Krashen claimed:

There is strong evidence that California’s poor performance is related to its print-poor environment (Krashen, 2002, p. 2).

Krashen goes on to say:

There is also strong and consistent evidence that the availability of reading material is related to how much children read and that how much children read is related to how well they read (Krashen, 2002, p. 4).

Nimon (1992), after a study of the relationship between leisure reading and reading comprehension, found that leisure reading is vital to the development of student reading abilities. She states:

My work... offered evidence that encouraging children’s reading habits is an educational necessity, not merely an embellishment to the teaching of decoding skills (Nimon, 1992, p. 224).

Fry in his 1985 work Children talk about books: seeing themselves as readers, refers to the reading of fiction as a ‘seeing’ through reading, a ‘special kind of learning’ (Fry, 1985, p. 97).
The American Association of School Librarians, in a position statement on the role of the school media specialist in reading development, saw the flow-on effects of children reading books that they found relevant as influential in preparing lifelong learners.

As students read 'real books' and write to communicate, learning becomes relevant, interesting, and motivational in preparing students for life-long learning (AASL, 1999a).

Complementary findings are to be found in research undertaken in many other areas of the world: reading competency is important to many cultures. Machet in an article titled ‘Reading for Pleasure’ found:

research carried out overseas as well as in South Africa proves that a free voluntary reading program can improve children's grammar, reading and comprehension more than time spent on conventional language lessons (Machet, 2000, p. 1).

Carlsen, an early commentator in this field, argues that, of all times in our lives, it is the period of adolescence that can offer time to read. He feels adolescence can be a time of avid interest in pleasure reading and that large amounts of time can be found for this during this period, Foster (1979, p. 111), agrees with these views. Carlsen argues that pleasure reading can be a sought after pastime at this age if the activity is not discouraged. This can be a period when children may immerse themselves in books and benefit from this extensive pleasure reading. Carlsen says:

Recognizing that teenagers are still passing through reading phases is important in nurturing enthusiasm for reading, for this is the period when many potential readers stop reading for pleasure. Paradoxically, it is also the period when the young person, if encouraged, may devote more time to books than at any other period of life, provided interest is not killed by an overzealous adult (Carlsen, 1980, p. 33).

Reading can be a valuable tool in the development of students, it is also an activity that is still undertaken and enjoyed by many young people. A 1999 study into the reading habits of young people in Britain undertaken by Hall and Coles of Nottingham University, showed that:

Children are reading more books now than their parents did in the seventies - but girls are no longer interested in becoming Little Women (Hall & Coles, 1999).

The 1999 study compared the habits of 8000 young people with a similar, very well known study by Whitehead, undertaken in 1971. Coles and Hall found that today's generation is reading more, though not from the 'classics' but from newspapers and modern popular fiction. Theirs is a constantly changing, varied diet of material.

In the report on their study, Hall and Coles compare their findings with that of the 1977 exploration:
Children and their books (Whitehead, 1977) ends with a series of recommendations, most of which are entirely appropriate today, despite the cultural, social and educational changes which have occurred in the intervening years. The fact that recommendations we would wish to make from the Children's reading choices project would be essentially similar nearly a quarter of a century after the original survey, is not, in our view, an indication of lack of progress; rather, it is an indication of the potency of reading in many children's lives, and the enduring importance of high quality teaching in supporting individual children's development (Hall & Coles, 1999, p. 139).

Hall goes on to say:

Whitehead's team thought that 'schools and teachers need to devote more of their energies and resources to the encouragement and development of voluntary book reading over the 10-15 age range. (Whitehead, p. 285) We would endorse this recommendation (Hall & Coles, 1999, p. 139).

The large study conducted in Australia during 2000, titled Young Australians Reading: from keen to reluctant readers, commissioned by the Australian Centre for Youth Literature and the Market Development Division of the Australia Council found that:

more than eight in ten adults strongly agree that it is really important for children and teenagers to read for pleasure, thus indicating that the community in general approves of reading for young people and considers it to be important (ACYL, 2001, p. 14).

This is a reassuring finding for those trying to work at bringing books and young people together. More important in terms of encouraging reading amongst young people are the following findings:

the vast majority of 10 - 18 year olds claim to actually like reading for pleasure at least to some extent (ACYL, 2001, p. 18).

and

Young people claim that they read for pleasure no less frequently than they play computer games or use the Internet (ACYL, 2001, p. 1). These findings are encouraging, but, as is discussed below, in relation to this study, the ACYL report poses more questions than it answers, though, as to the role of the teacher-librarian and the promotion and facilitation of reading of all kinds. The nature of that link requires more exploration and this study addresses that matter.
2.2 The development of the role of teacher-librarian

*Librarian is a service occupation.*
*Gas station attendant of the mind.*

The discussion of the importance of books and reading in the education of young people led to the establishment of school libraries. This movement began in the Western world in the United States in the 1870s. Meder quotes Melville Dewey:

> The school teaches them (students) to read, the library must supply them with reading which shall serve to educate...The time is when a library is a school, and the librarian is in the highest sense a teacher, and the visitor is a reader among the books as a workman among his tools (Dewey in Meder, 1990, p. 4).

Over time, school libraries have developed into centres containing many forms of information. They have become areas for research, of study, of entertainment, and the stepping-off place for connection to the wider community. In recent decades, the added qualification of teaching has been developed for those who run school libraries. Austrom claims that:

> The very concept of a school library resource center program came about as a direct result of changes in education (Austrom et. al., 1989, p. 138).

In an article on time management for teacher-librarians, Wethered and Branch argue that changes to the role of teacher-librarians have gone hand in hand with other larger changes in the wider arena of education. They see a number of trends outlined by Werner as significant. They claim:

> These trends include:
> Greater cultural and linguistic diversity
> The effects of violence, poverty, substance abuse and changes in family structures on the school's traditional role
> The use of rhetoric about international economic competitiveness to frame and justify the debate about educational change


These types of change on a large scale, though significant in their effect, are minor in terms of this study as there are more direct, obvious and far-reaching changes occurring in the area of teacher-librarianship that impact on this study’s focus.

The development of teacher-librarianship, in the past few decades, with its emphasis on education and the development of information skills, has led to change for the school library. The advent of technology-based research possibilities, especially the World Wide Web, has opened up school
libraries, and teacher-librarians, to a computer-based method of providing information. As Wethered and Branch have said:

These skills are far from those necessary a generation ago: knowledge of the Dewey Decimal System and a love of books (Wethered & Branch, 2002, p. 37).

This new found form of accessing and distributing information has led to a major change in the way in which the profession is viewed by those within and those without. The demands of the new technologies have often taken time away from other tasks that were ‘traditional’ library based activities and skills. Though many school libraries have been urged to take on the mantle of computer research, they have often not been given the extra staffing to enable this new role to coexist with earlier roles. This necessitates choice on the part of teacher-librarians as to what they will undertake in their libraries.

Wiegand, in a 1997 discussion of the state of education courses for teacher-librarians, said:

I think it was so easy to shift our focus on 'print as object' to 'information as object' that we lost sight of the library's rich tradition as a reading institution (Wiegand, 1997, p. 323).

Statements like this indicate the obvious shift still taking place within the profession.

In Australia, statements from professional associations for teacher-librarians also mention the role to be played in the promotion of literature. In Skilling Up: developing a professional portfolio for Teacher Librarians (Ferretter & Manning, 1996), produced by the School Library Association of Victoria (SLAV), reference is made to a list headed ‘The professional role of the teacher-librarian’ taken from the ALIA (Australian Library and Information Association) handbook for 1995. In this statement of seven points the fourth reads:

The teacher librarian collaboratively devises and implements programs to encourage reading (Ferretter & Manning, 1996, p. 5).

The preceding points in this list discuss collaborative learning, the development of information skills and implementation of technology into the school. Though reading promotion is mentioned, it is clear that other areas of the teacher-librarian’s role have precedence in a school library world that is technology based.

Earlier statements on the role of the teacher-librarian place a different emphasis on the educational components of the role. In a discussion paper issued by the Western Australian Education Department in 1986, the place of reading promotion within the teacher-librarian’s role appears to hold greater weight. ‘Read widely in the field of children’s literature’ is the third point in a list detailing what a teacher-librarian should do as part of their educational role within the school. Leading the student to ‘an interest in and appreciation of children’s literature’ is the first point in a list of what programs offered by the library should aim to achieve. Interestingly it is only a matter
of ten years between the statements. Change in the role of the teacher-librarian has been rapid and this speed has often led to both confusion and disillusionment within the profession.

In a 1993 international study into the state of school libraries Singh (1993) certainly discovers a degree of confusion within the profession. Sixty-four countries responded to the survey, unfortunately, Australia was not one of them. The information within each country was collected from an ‘authoritative source’ (Singh, 1993, p. 1) identified through the United Nations. The results are revealing. In table 8, Singh outlines the role of the teacher-librarian, the highest percentage of respondents, 31.5%, see no defined role for the teacher-librarian, 29.6% see it as specialist teacher, 27.8% as librarian, resource collector and the remaining 5.6% see it as an instructional partner (Singh, 1993, p. 9). With just under a third of respondents seeing no defined role for themselves, it is apparent that not only is the profession moving away from its ‘traditional’ role but it may also be unclear as to what it is moving towards.

This confusion over role description has been highlighted by other commentators. Oberg reports on the state of research into ‘beginning teacher-librarians’ or ‘learning to be a teacher-librarian.’ She notes that:

Full-text searching of CD-ROM versions of the ERIC and Library Literature databases for the period 1986 to 1990 provided 624 records related to new or beginning teachers and 49 related to new or beginning principals but not one related to new or beginning teacher librarians (Oberg, 1997, p. 81).

This lack of research must contribute to the confusion over the role and the difficulty faced by many teacher-librarians as they attempt to define who they are and, what they hope to be, in relation to their operation of the school library and the wider school community.

Maureen Nimon (1995) in writing commentary for the Australian School Library Association’s journal, Access, titled one of her recent discussions ‘Fiction in a world of information: has it a place?’ In this piece, Nimon argued strongly for a role for the teacher-librarian in the promotion of reading, fiction in particular, despite the ever-increasing demands made upon many libraries to be the centre of technological advancement for their schools. Nimon highlights the difficulty of the teacher-librarian role in a secondary school library, the apparent trend toward spreading oneself too thinly. With limited time and limited funds it is not always reading that is given a high priority.

In a commentary in the Wilson Library Bulletin in the United States, Linda Waddle discussed the changes to the profession and stated a case for the teacher-librarian to not ignore one of their crucial roles. Though this piece was written more than a decade ago, it describes change that has been affecting the profession for some time, and continues to do so. Waddle states:

Historically, libraries in schools provided a collection of books to support the curriculum. But, somewhere along the way, school libraries like corporations, have diversified. We now offer other kinds of materials as well. Historically, people joined our profession because they loved books and were readers, but now
people join who love cameras and film, computers and television, and are
producers and programmers. Lost in the shuffle during this process of
diversification has been the book, a forgotten medium. Isn’t it time to get back to
books, and help to sharpen the skills needed to create a more literate society?
(Waddle, 1987, p. 44).

Is there still a role for the teacher-librarian to play in creating a reading environment within their
school? Do we need to redefine terms such as pleasure reading?

In 1999 the American Association of School Librarians published *The Statement on the value of
independent reading in the school library media program*. The opening preamble of this statement
begins:

In an information age, literacy demands not only the ability to read and write, but
also the ability to process information and communicate effectively. Research
suggests that reading proficiency increases with the amount of time spent reading
voluntarily. Unfortunately, independent reading is often a casualty in our fast
paced, media-oriented society. Today’s students know how to read but have little
or no interest in doing so. They have failed to catch the love of reading; therefore,
they choose not to read. The adoption of Goals 2000 has made literacy an issue of
national importance; therefore, a primary goal of the school library media program
must be to create life-long readers. It is imperative that school library media
specialists work with teachers and parents to find ways to instil in students the joy
of reading while helping them build the reading habit (AASL, 1999b).

This statement certainly begs for recognition from amongst teacher-librarians (school library
media specialists) of their role in the promotion of reading for pleasure. The association links
pleasure reading to literacy achievement and encourages the library role in a whole school
program.

Similar international and national bodies still see a place for reading promotion within the role
description. The International Association of School librarianship, in its policy statement on school
libraries, says:

The school library promotes literacy through the development and encouragement
of reading for instruction and recreation (IASL, 1995).

There are other commentators in the field who appear to have no trouble reconciling many of the
possible roles of a teacher-librarian. Perhaps, to them, it is not an either/or situation. That is a
choice between many roles. In an article titled *Teacher librarian: identity crisis or multi skilled
professional*, discussing the skills involved in teacher-librarianship, Skrzeczynski states:

They (students of teacher librarianship) learn skills and processes of collection
development, cataloguing, resource management, budgeting and information
technology and acquire a wide knowledge and understanding of literature
(Skrzeczynski, 1995, p. 127).

O’Connell, in an article titled ‘From Scrolls to Scrolling: Where to with Reading now?’ argues for
the importance of reading in a technological age, claiming that the promotion of reading is even
more important now. She says:
Reading provides the mechanism for preserving language and culture, as well as the mechanism for reading in a digital environment (O’Connell, 1999, p. 30).

O’Connell goes on to say:

Technology is not going to make reading obsolete. Rather, it is increasing the range of reading skills and reading tasks that a student must learn to manage (O’Connell, 1999, p. 31).

O’Connell clearly sees a role for reading centre stage within any library program, arguing strongly that reading and the use of technology are interdependent literacies of the modern age that we cannot do without. O’Connell sees the two activities as two sides of the same coin (O’Connell, 1999).

The process of clarifying and defining the role of the teacher in terms of their work in reading promotion does not have to be an ‘us’ and ‘them’, or either/or, process. It appears that too many teacher-librarians have seen the problem as a choice rather than a chance to retain what is important of the old programs while embracing the new.

Ross Todd is an influential commentator in the area of the library profession and his views on the libraries of the future are recognised as being exciting and stimulating. In his view of the 21st century, there is a role for teacher-librarians to play in reading promotion and an effective reading environment is only part of a well-functioning, interesting library space catering for the needs of its users in many and varied ways.

Todd has said:

The hallmark of a school library in the 21st century is not its collections, its systems, its technology, its staffing, its buildings, BUT its actions and evidences that show that it makes a real difference to student learning, that it contributes in tangible and significant ways to the development of human understanding, meaning making and constructing knowledge (Todd, 2001a).

and

The creation of information ‘spaces’ out of information ‘places’ such as school libraries heralds an information environment that is no longer fixed, rigid, contained, stable and secure, to one that is complex and fluid, connective and interactive, diverse and unpredictable, and one no longer constrained by time and place (Todd, 2000, p. 105).

Of all of the statements by various associations on the purpose and role of the school library, the policy statement of the Ontario School Library Association appears to best combine the old and new roles of a 21st century teacher-librarian. In the ‘Statement of purpose for Ontario’s school library information centres’, after statements outlining the library as ‘the core of the life-long learning community’ and the importance of ‘collaboration’, point three reads:
In addition to incorporating the new and emerging technologies, the School Library Information Centre program continues to promote print literacy and the love of reading as integral parts of information literacy (OSLA, 2002).

Such a view, developed recently (2002), appears to align both the old and new roles of the teacher-librarian as interconnected, compatible and complementary activities for the teacher-librarian committed to life long learning as a goal for their students.

2.3 The school library and the reading environment

In education we are trendy and want to move from one idea to the next. But we need to add the new without giving up the old programs that work. 
(Pat Scales, Librarian of the Year 1997)
(Atkinson, 1997, p. 114)

In the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) statement on the value of independent reading there is a list of what students must have to become life long readers. The needs are as follows:

- access to current, quality, high interest, and extensive collections of books and other print materials in their library media centers, classrooms, and public libraries;
- contact with adults who read regularly and widely and who serve as positive reading role models;
- certified school library media specialists and classroom teachers who demonstrate their enthusiasm for reading by reading aloud and book talking;
- time during the school day dedicated to reading for pleasure, information, and exploration;
- opportunities specifically designed to engage young people in reading;
- schools that create an environment where independent reading is valued, promoted, and encouraged;
- opportunities that involve care givers, parents and other family members in reading (AASL, 1999b).

With this list the AASL is making a strong statement for an active, involved, well-resourced reading component to any school library.

In 1989, Ken Haycock reviewed ‘Research in teacher-librarianship: the implications for professional practice’ (Haycock, 1989). In the summary statements of current research he found:
Students in schools with well-equipped resource centers and professional teacher librarians will perform better on achievement tests for reading comprehension and basic research skills (Haycock, 1989, p. 9).

Lance, who has undertaken a number of major studies in various American states, investigating the state of libraries, has found strong evidence for the value of the library in relation to student performance. Lance states:

The school library is one of the few factors whose contribution to academic achievement has been documented empirically, and it is a contribution that cannot be explained away by other powerful influences on student performance (Lance, 2002, p. 6).

What does this mean for students? In a school context what is a reading environment? Is it more than a 'well equipped resource centre'? Does it need more than just resources to make it an active, vibrant place?

2.4 The reading environment

*If a school library has one thing that attracts students, it is an environment like the one they're used to – one that respects their tastes and interests.*

(Strasser, 1988, p. 59)

I have taken the initial concept of a reading environment from Aidan Chambers's text *The reading environment* (1991). In this, Chambers discusses the different factors that he feels contribute to an effective reading environment. He places particular emphasis on:

- the availability of books,
- the accessibility of these books to the reader,
- the necessary time to read,
- response and discussion with the assistance of an enabling adult - an interested, knowledgeable classroom teacher or parent.

The creation of an environment that is conducive to reading is, to some extent, an elusive concept. How does one create an ambience, a feeling, that makes students feel welcome and comfortable, an atmosphere that enables students to freely work with the teacher-librarian to access appropriate and interesting reading material and to return again for further reading experiences? In any created environment such as this, where there are a number of factors at play, the outcome is not the result of one influence; it is the result of the interplay between a variety of influences. Holland argues that motivating students to read is a whole community responsibility, and certainly if effective programs are to be initiated and sustained, whole school support is necessary. Holland says:

In order to motivate students to want to read and enjoy reading as a lifelong habit, they must have the encouragement and support of administrators, teachers,
parents, and the community. The school should provide a supportive physical, instructional, and cultural climate that nurtures an interest in reading and promotes reading achievement as well (Holland, 1994, p. 78).

A reading environment, for the purpose of this study, encompasses all aspects of the library, including the physical layout, its reading programs, display, collections, regulations and policy, the attitudes of the teacher-librarians and their relationships with staff and students. All of these factors affect the perceptions of the school community, and, in turn, also contribute to an overall awareness of whether the library is seen as a positive place that promotes recreational reading. Fein (1996), in an article entitled ‘Enticing the pre YA’s’, argued that how the school community perceived the library was crucial. Fein goes so far as to suggest that the welcoming, or not so welcoming, nature of the library itself can affect the likelihood of students wanting to read.

Now notice, I did not say reading, I said library. If kids don't like the library, they don't come in willingly. If they don't come in willingly, by association, they are less likely to want to read (Fein, 1996, p. 22).

2.4.1 Chambers’s reading circle

A good reader,
an active reader,
a creative reader,
is a re-reader.
(Gregorian, 2002, p. 5)

Chambers’s reading circle (see diagram one) is an important part of his explanation of the reading environment, his interpretation of how the process of reading works effectively for young children and the place in this process of the enabling adult. The children move their way around a continuum: selecting material to read, reading this material and then responding to what they have read. Once they have found this process fulfilling and effective, Chambers suggests that children will want to continue around the circle again with new material, thus developing the habit of ‘reading’. This process is facilitated at every step by the ‘enabling adult’: someone with the knowledge and training to help the child select material, respond to what the child has read and encourage the child to commence moving around the reading circle. For Chambers, the enabling adult is:

Diagram One
The Reading Circle

**SELECTION**
(Bookstock, availability, accessibility, presentation)

**ENABLING ADULT**

**READING**
(Time to read. Hearing it done. Doing it for yourself.)

**RESPONSE**
(“I want to enjoy it again” Formal talk. Book gossip.)

Chambers is by no means the only one with these views of the reading experience and the role of an enabling adult. Altman (1994), Brown (1987), Carlsen (1980), Clary (1991), Hale (1994), Hickman (1995), Protherough (1983), and Zancanella (1991) have written about similar models, emphasising the importance of access and the relationships between teachers and students. They discuss at length how, and why, we encourage and foster the reading process, the benefits to be found in encouraging reading, and the role a supportive, knowledgeable adult can play in this process.

Carlsen, for example, lists points that are very similar to those expressed by Chambers:

- Young adults who have a modicum of reading skill will continue to find books a vital part of their lives if the following conditions hold true:
  - They are surrounded with reading materials within their spectrum of reading interests
  - They read within a supportive, non-threatening situation.
  - They are given time to read.
  - They can share their reading experiences.
  - They have readily available reading matter

(Carlsen, 1980, p. 7).

Many other commentators also refer to similar checklists containing much the same ideas. Clary, in her list states that:

- Six possible strategies to get adolescents to read can be classified as follows: capitalize on interests, make reading material accessible, build a conducive environment, allow time to read in school, provide significant adult models, and use motivational techniques (Clary, 1991, p. 340).

The term ‘conducive environment’ would sit well with both Chambers’s views and those of many other commentators, as it encapsulates a space that is enabling of the reading process.

What is lacking in all of these descriptions is an analysis of the teacher-librarian’s role in creating a reading environment, and a detailed discussion of the factors that might influence that creation.

While Chambers’s description is valid, informative, and inspiring, it is limited if we intend to look specifically at the secondary teacher-librarian’s role. Chambers gives only passing mention to the teacher-librarian. Like most other writers in the field, he sees the teacher as the most influential enabling adult. Chambers’s is interested in the enabling adult as a general idea but does not construct a more detailed view of how this enabling adult operates or what influences impact upon his/her endeavours. For these reasons, his work is only partially useful to this research. What he has to say is inspirational, but much of the day-to-day reality of the working secondary school
teacher-librarian, the factors that impact upon and affect what they do is not explored in his discussion.

2.5 The enabling adult

*What is it that enabling adults, teachers especially, do? They provide, stimulate, demonstrate and respond.*
*(Chambers, 1991, p. 92)*

At the centre of Chambers’s reading circle is the enabling adult. His book, *The Reading Environment*, is written for a primary school teacher market. Published in Australia by PETA (Primary English Teacher’s Association), it bases discussion around the work of the primary classroom, the teacher is central to his reading circle model. The model, though, is perfectly transferable to a range of other adults who may interact with students in their lives and encourage travel around the reading circle, or through the reading experience. Parents, grandparents, relatives, friends or other mentors could all perform this role.

Many other commentators argue for the importance of this enabling adult to good, continuing relationships with reading and books. Young, in *Readers, Texts and Teachers* (Young, 1987), sees young people’s experiences of reading ‘facilitated, stimulated, supported, and shaped by those others who share them with us’. He sees this as continuing on from our very first experiences of reading that are, often, facilitated by those very close to us (Young, 1987, p. 7).

Others, particularly Conway (1995), argue for the ‘critical’ nature of this role and the incalculable positive effects on literacy that such a role can encourage.

Most critical, however is the presence of an adult who is sufficiently knowledgeable about books and reading and well-informed about the needs and interests of children and young people to ‘match’ particular resources and individual pupils. The dynamic between pupils and such a teacher, librarian or ancillary is often instrumental in encouraging the first and subsequent steps in reading for pleasure. The positive effects in terms of literacy are incalculable (Conway, 1995, p. 7).

Such arguments are strong advocacy for such a role taker in every school classroom, an enabling adult who has the knowledge and the skill to work with students.

Pertinently, commentators also highlight the importance of conscious thought in the process of being an enabling adult. It does not just happen, but is a role that takes time to establish and perform.

To create classrooms that nurture children’s responses to literature, successful teachers provide multiple avenues to reading and responding, and they do so consistently. And we can be sure it does not happen by chance (Hickman, 1995, p. 9).
Not only is it a conscious decision it is also something that takes great care and knowledge to perform well.

Teachers who are fellow readers with their students listen with care as children talk about books. They listen to children's ideas with the same kind of attention they expect for their own, modelling a standard for classroom conversation and getting important information about children's thinking in the process (Hickman, 1995, p. 8).

Jacobs puts it succinctly when describing an enabling adult as a 'leaven':

With good books in plentiful supply and reasonable conditions for a healthful physical, psychological and intellectual climate and eager zestful children what more is needed if young children are to enjoy literature? The leaven: a perceptive teacher who gives the treasure for the taking (Jacobs, 1965, p. 5).

It could be summarised, then, that the ideal enabling adult is:

- supportive
- perceptive
- a fellow reader
- knowledgeable about their collection
- knowledgeable of their students, their needs, and interests
- a good listener
- a good modeller of response and conversation
- a good facilitator

and allows free and constant access to materials and themselves.

2.6 The teacher-librarian as an enabling adult

*Offered the right books at the right time,*
*any teenager can discover the joys of reading.*
*Our job as librarians is to be there and be ready.*
*(Stripling, 1985, p. 378)*

It would seem that, as a candidate for the role of an enabling adult in the work of bringing young people and fiction together, the teacher-librarian is a prime choice within any school context. How, and to what extent, the teacher-librarian fulfils the role of an enabling adult is an integral part of how a reading environment is created within the school library.

Firstly, the teacher-librarian has primary access to the material; in the traditional sense they are the 'custodian' of the material. Therefore, they are in an influential decision-making position in terms of providing access to material in every sense - fund allocation, selection policies and everyday decisions over opening the library out of hours, are all decisions made, or carried out by, the teacher-librarian in most cases.
A study of libraries in Slovenia that also took into account data from international research found that:

Better reading test results are everywhere closely related to the existence of large school libraries, large classroom libraries, and regular effective lending of books. Availability of suitable books must be regarded as the key promoting factor for reading literacy; consequently, countries with high results in reading tests also have better facilities for providing pupils with books at home, in libraries, in bookshops, and in schools (Novljan, 1993, p. 99).

Novljan concluded:

The library is one of the possible objective resources instrumental for teaching reading and learning to read (Novljan, 1993, p. 101).

This is by no means an isolated finding. Lobban (1986) states that:

It would seem, from a consideration of this, and other studies, that school policy on libraries (including class libraries) can be a major determinant of students' reading patterns and hence an important area for student administrators to consider. This would be particularly important in less affluent or less 'reading conscious' areas where book ownership is less common (Lobban, 1986, p. 44).

Haycock (2001), in his summary of research findings from the field of teacher-librarianship, found that:

Print rich environments in classrooms and libraries are essential to reading achievement but only with teachers trained in connecting children and books (Haycock, 2001a).

There is certainly solid evidence that knowledgeable teachers or teacher-librarians, who read widely and can help students with selection of material, can have an impact on student interest in reading for pleasure.

Lack of proper assistance can mean the disappearance of any wider reading program. This is identified by Brown in an article titled 'Rendering literature accessible' in which she says:

A program of Silent Sustained Reading without support in aiding students' book selection from a wide variety of books will inevitably lead to continued frustration in those students who do not read (Brown, 1987, p. 97).

This facilitation of access relies on well stocked, carefully chosen, and well-maintained collections. The roles of collection builder and selection aid are traditionally those of teacher-librarians. The teacher-librarian's strength in these areas aligns this profession strongly with the selection, or access section, of Chambers's reading circle (Chambers, 1991).

Upon having found the right book, the reader moves to response (Chambers, 1991). Discussion of the role of the enabling adult also focuses on the importance of the ability to respond or interact
with the student, what Chambers terms "book gossip" - a personal ability to work with students and enthuse or encourage them in the reading process.

Carlsen sees it as matching the right book with a potential reader:

Knowing something about the psychology of the teenager is important for teachers and librarians - their guidance role of developing the avid reader. Such knowledge will help professionals, not to serve as therapists, but rather to find the right book for the right reader...books that will give him an experience that will keep him reading (Carlsen, 1980, p. 19).

For Conway, it is a dynamism of personality:

Undoubtedly the personality and the energy are as important as the training since young people need more than a well organized collection of resources, they need, as Stewart Robertson has said, the kind of inspiration that an enthusiastic, dynamic approach to its use can give (Conway, 1995, p. 7).

Leonhardt sees this enthusiastic enabler as a 'reading mentor' (1998, p. 6) while Nimon argues it is in this role of reading mentor, or enabler, that teacher-librarians are often accepted as, and perceived to be, an integral part of the reading process for students. Nimon states:

The reaction of my students, who are experienced teachers themselves, provides me with an annual reminder of how widely understood and accepted is that part of the teacher librarian's role which requires him or her to work both singly and with classroom teachers to stimulate children to read (Nimon, 1992, p. 223).

At the recent White House conference on school libraries, Dr Susan Neuman spoke of the work of what she termed 'excellent librarians' in libraries in urban Philadelphia. She said:

Librarians can make a difference... These libraries have similar access to books, computers and activities, but they had something more - excellent librarians. We observed these exceptional librarians over time, trying to understand why they seemed to make a difference. Several qualities stood out: Librarians made an effort to know the children....Librarians did not just point to materials, but they taught children how to use them.... These people were enablers (Neuman, 2002, p. 4).

Neuman goes on to say:

Children need libraries in their classrooms, schools and communities. But all children will not use the materials to their fullest extent without supportive adults and librarians (Neuman, 2002, p. 4).

Shanklin (2003) in an article titled 'Good School Libraries Boost Readers' agrees. These commentators argue for the role of good librarians as enablers in all areas of a child's education. They all mention the teacher-librarian's ability to resource and encourage the act of reading.

In a 1997 study in the United States titled the 'Perceptions of Roles and Relationships in the School Library: A National Survey of Teachers, Administrators, and Library Media specialists', Linda De Groff found that:
It is in the teacher role that the library media specialist promotes lifelong learning and an appreciation of reading and learning (De Groff, 1997, p. 3).

This is interesting as it aligns the enabling adult role played by the teacher-librarian with that of the classroom teacher: a promoter, enabler of reading and of learning for life. To be viewed as teachers is a right that many teacher-librarians have striven hard to have recognised. Many see the traditional role of custodian of books as outdated, and feel that, with the teaching of information literacy and cooperative curriculum planning, teacher-librarians have finally assumed a rightful place in the school hierarchy as a teaching member of the school staff. Perhaps, in embracing our role as an enabling adult and a creator of an effective reading environment within school communities, we are also truly working as teachers.

2.7 This research project

It is necessary to openly state that, of the commentators quoted in this review, very few are Australian. Of those who are, the only academic working on and investigating the role of the teacher-librarian in the area of reading promotion is Dr. Maureen Nimon. Nimon herself has drawn the attention of the International Association (IASL) to the fact that most research into the nature and importance of school libraries is American-based (Nimon, 1995). Nimon calls to others to conduct similar research in their own environments, thus improving the depth of international research available.

It is also clear that few recent-day commentators, that is, those researching in the past five years, are interested in focusing on the teacher-librarian's role in the area of creating a reading environment, and all that this entails. This is not necessarily a recent occurrence though. Haycock, in a 1989 review of current research in the field of teacher-librarianship, classifies research under a variety of headings summarizing the finding of over 30 studies (Haycock, 1989). He highlights nothing that is immediately concerned with the teacher-librarian's role in the creation of a reading environment or the promotion of wider reading in general. This trend continues throughout research material up until the present day. A review of most recent national and international journals and conferences shows a predominance of concern about the teacher-librarian's role in the provision of information through technology-based schemes and the teaching of information skills.

Both of these factors, a lack of Australian material, and a lack of focus on the teacher-librarian's role as part of the reading environment in current research, makes this research project of timely relevance to the profession.
3. Creating a reading environment

The term reading environment does not refer to a clearly marked physical space; it is not governed by a set of guidelines or rules. In terms of this discussion, the reading environment within a secondary school library is both a physical space and much more. In essence, a reading environment within a school library is the atmosphere that is created which encourages young people to read. An analysis of factors that impinge upon, or contribute to, the creation of an effective reading environment is crucial if we are to understand what is taking place in school libraries.

The factors that influence the reading environment have been identified through the literature review and the investigators personal experience in the profession. It is the interaction between all of these influences that is crucial to our understanding of what a reading environment is. In reality, the creation of any reading environment is the result of the interplay between a myriad of important, interconnected factors that must be juggled and understood by the key players. The remainder of this literature review will discuss the field of study using this list of influential factors as organisational headings. These factors are then diagrammatically displayed at the conclusion to this chapter as diagram two.

3.1 Attitude

*Children learn about literature from what the adults around them do about it.*
*(Zühleiter, 1985, p. 187)*

How teacher-librarians see themselves, their efforts to build their knowledge base, motivation, interest in encouraging reading, whether they see this as part of their role; all of these factors appear to influence what takes place within the school library.

Smart, reflecting on the literature in relation to the success of libraries, states it is ‘the people who staff the libraries who make them successful or otherwise’ (Smart, 1985, p. 66). Having reviewed current research Smart claims it is the people factor, the faces that greet the library users, that make or break the quality of the service. This is part of what is termed here as attitude.

The way in which a teacher-librarian perceives his/her own role and their function within the wider school community are major contributing factors that are affected by the attitudes of the teacher-librarian. It is these attitudes that will contribute to the success of the library and perhaps determine the type of library service that is created.
These attitudes and ideas, then, in conjunction with other influences, inform the decisions that are made about the administration of the library and the relationships that are formed with staff and students. Attitudes also directly impact on the reading environment itself, as the views of the teacher-librarian greatly influence what is ultimately created. In a review of current research that links the library to student achievement, Williams, Wavell and Coles found:

Studies which consider particular learning aspects of the school library often mention the experience and attitude, personality and commitment of the school librarian in relation to the activities and it is clear from the literature that this is of fundamental importance (Williams, Wavell and Coles, 2001, p. 25).

The report into public library services in Great Britain produced by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Profession found that:

There is still a need to provide an attractive, welcoming environment in the library for children and young people. Staff attitudes are an important part of the environment and appropriate recruitment and training practices should be put in place (CILIP, 2002, p. 44).

The report also stated: ‘The role of front line staff is vital. Their response makes a real difference to library use’ (CILIP, 2002, p. 44). This finding is based on public library research yet the same holds true for school libraries.

Scales, being interviewed on winning the 1997 Grolier Librarian of the Year award in America, argues that it is the attitude of the teacher-librarian towards reading that colours how he/she views the collection and student readers. Scales says:

We've got to free children to read and we do that by our attitudes toward reading. I've got 20,000 books in my library. Why would I want any one child to read any one book? (Atkinson, 1997, p. 112).

Historically the stereotypical perception of the librarian has been one of an isolated, difficult individual, not one who is concerned with welcoming and encouraging readers and library users in general. Fein (1996) reported on the perceptions of the librarian and the library by students:

..the major dislike was the quiet and having to be quiet and the second thing they disliked was the librarian, characterised as 'old', 'rude', 'mean', 'cranky', 'pushy', 'weird', etc. The telling quote, used - 'she thinks that the world revolves around her' library. It's mine, too' (Fein, 1996, p. 23).

It is, of course, a generalisation to assume that all library workers either act like this, or, are perceived in this way. Nevertheless, these views must be recognised as the possible perceptions of members of any school community. Librarians who stay a long time in one position can often feel a sense of ownership of 'their' library space a view that can impede good relationships between themselves and those whom they serve. Dressman said:

school and children's public librarians in particular, seem to be long-lived and tenacious people, who tend to sink deep roots into the places where they settle (Dressman, 1997, p. 16).
These ‘deep roots’ can lead to attitudes that are detrimental to good service.

A ‘good’ teacher-librarian is the antithesis of many of these descriptive phrases. Hartzell, in a discussion of how teacher-librarians must strive to influence others and encourage them to see the value of the work of teacher-librarians, argues:

If confidence is lost, we tend to attempt less. When we attempt less, we accomplish less (Hartzell, 1999).

Haycock reports from research that:

Teacher librarians who are less cautious and more extroverted tend to be more successful (Haycock, 1989, p. 9).

Dynamic, confident, interested and personable; these personal traits are important in any field of work where quality interpersonal relationships are necessary.

Hamilton (1992), in a discussion of the evolution of the school library, claims:

...the school library, like the school, will draw its energy and direction from the individuals who direct and nurture it (Hamilton, 1992, p. 67).

Others have also noted the importance of a positive attitude in any attempts to encourage and interest students in reading. Suzette Boyd (1995), in a conference paper titled ‘Libraries alive’, said:

enthusiasm for and commitment to literature are the essential tools needed to successfully promote our product (Boyd, 1995, p. 52).

Altman refers to this quality as ‘personal enthusiasm’ (Altman, 1994, p. 5).

Attitudes inform practice and support endeavours in all areas of any workplace’s operations. De Groff, in an American study titled ‘Perceptions of Roles and Relationships in the School Library: A National Survey of Teachers, Administrators, and Library Media Specialists’ (De Groff, 1997), found that:

the librarian’s knowledge, personality, and attitudes or interests were most important in supporting good working relationships (DeGroff, 1997, p. 15).

De Groff goes on to say:

Survey responses reveal that people are at the heart of successful working relationships. Funding, curricular mandates, building or individual policies were important, but less so than knowledgeable, personable people with appropriate attitudes and interests (DeGroff, 1997, p. 17).

Phillips said:
The three great intangibles of school librarianship are image, personality and atmosphere. The three are interrelated, but in probably no other profession are they so important. Image is elusive (Phillips, 1988, p. 25).

The teacher-librarian’s attitude to his or her work is an interactive factor within the framework of factors (see diagram two) that make up the school library workplace.

The attitude of the teacher-librarian is of prime importance to this study and a crucial factor in the framework that has been established. Hartzell see this as ‘dynamism’:

I worked for three years as a consultant in the national Library Power program, funded by the DeWitt Wallace Foundation. I saw a lot of innovative and powerful library programs all over the country, in small towns and big cities, and one of the common elements in everyone of them was a dynamic librarian (Hartzell, 2002c, p. 7).

Dressman also found in his own research that the views, or attitude of the participants that he studied were influential in the type of library that they created:

There was wide variance among the three school libraries I studied, and it stemmed not from differences in the textual organisation of the library or from librarians' focus on fiction but, ironically, from variations in how each librarian viewed the needs of her "customers" or student clientele and in the consequent ways that clientele responded to each program (Dressman, 1997, p. 33).

Patrick (1997) has taken his writing in this area further. In an article titled Ideal attitudes: a library for the millennium, he says:

Attitude is an essential element of a vibrant school library: that of the senior management, the teachers who use it (or don’t, as the case may be), the person in charge of it and, most importantly, the students (Patrick, 1997, p. 70).

He sees the attitudes of all involved as impacting upon the very essence of the library. While the attitudes of others to the library and its reading environment are of interest to this study, it is the attitude of teacher-librarians that is one of the main focus points. It is clear that their ideas, beliefs and perceptions have an impact that must be recognised and understood.

3.2 Relationships

Teacher librarians must work on building relationships as consciously as they work on building collections. (Hartzell, 1999)

The term ‘relationships’ encompasses all of the interconnecting professional relationships formed by teacher-librarians in attempts to carry out programs they have devised and to successfully manage their libraries. This area cannot be underplayed, as the role of the teacher-librarian, in all aspects of their work, depends enormously on the professional relationships that are formed with
teaching staff, library staff, and administration. Most important, also, is the relationship formed with students.

Todd describes a recent study undertaken in Sydney which sought to identify 'the core knowledge and skills librarians would need to possess in order to effectively undertake a knowledge management role' (2000).

These were found to include:

People skills, such as team work, ability to cooperate with other kinds of professionals, building trust relationships, alliances building, conflict resolutions and negotiation, motivation and perseverance (Todd, 2000, p. 106).

In this study, these skills, that Todd found necessary for a management role, are those that are necessary for creating good interpersonal relationships, as a foundation for the establishment of an effective reading environment. Todd's findings also stress the cooperative nature of any school leadership role. The position statement by the AASL titled Resource Based instruction: the role of the school media specialist in reading development makes it very clear that any reading environment is the result of cooperation between many areas of any school. Such a view stresses the importance of building good relationships between the teacher-librarian and all members of the school community. The statement says:

The responsibility for successful implementation of reading development is shared by the entire school community - teachers, library media specialists, and administrators working together (AASL, 1999a).

Hartzell's view is:

Well-managed relationships serve both participants (administrators and librarians), and they serve the school's clients by helping the adults do a better job (Hartzell, 1999).

Hartzell sees these 'well managed relationships' at the heart of any successful, functioning bureaucracy. It is out of these effective relationships that all parties may achieve success.

The reality is that opportunities are provided by others when they see value in the relationship -- and when they see that your success contributes to their own (Hartzell, 1999).

This interdependent nature of relationships is central to any understanding of the role of relationships in the creation of a reading environment. It is all kinds of relationships, cultivated in many ways, that are influential. From her nationwide research De Groff concluded that:

-Literacy professionals [teachers and administrators with an interest in reading and the language arts] report using casual rather than systematic ways to work together. Meeting together regularly for scheduled planning periods was not a regular practice.
-Literacy professionals believe that human qualities (knowledge, personality, and attitudes and interests) are most important for supporting good working relationships between teachers and librarians (De Groff, 1997, p. 18).

De Groff is reporting findings, and gives little analysis of what these findings indicate for practice. That positive qualities and informal discussion are important to good relationships between teachers and librarians is as one would expect. De Groff calls for more research in this area, particularly in modelling how we 'might forge strong working relationships' (De Groff, 1997, p.19).

A positive, welcoming relationship, between all members of the school community who interact with the school library, appears to be crucial if the teacher-librarian is going to, in any way, play a part in creating a reading environment conducive to reading and operating with Chambers's Reading Circle (see diagram one) at its heart.

Phillips states:

Communication is the name of the game! "Librarians must realise that they are in the communication industry not in the book supply industry", that leader of American marketing, Theodore Levitt, once wrote, and I feel most school librarians need to have this message printed in large letters, where they can see it daily (Phillips, 1988, p. 24).

To Phillips, communication is the essence of any relationship that teacher-librarians establish with other staff, administration or students. Unless needs, visions, or ideas are effectively communicated, establishing a relationship that works efficiently is unlikely. An inability to construct useful relationships might impede any program, or the construction of an effective reading environment.

There are many members of the school community with whom the teacher-librarian forms relationships to further his/her work.

3.2.1 Teachers

The relationship formed between teachers and the teacher-librarian is a complex pattern of both formal and informal interactions that, at its best, can be rewarding and, at its worst, very destructive. Worthy has said:

To remove the barriers to voluntary reading, it is vital that librarians and teachers pool their resources and expertise, the librarians sharing their knowledge about student interests and popular materials, teachers providing opportunities for students to follow their interests, and both groups working together to provide access (Worthy, 1996, p. 491).

Williams and Wavell say:
Creating a reading environment

Teacher and librarians need to develop a common language and understanding of their respective expertise and the roles each profession can play to provide effective support for students (Williams & Wavell, 2001, p. 69).

In an ideal environment, this picture of co-operation and sharing would be evident. The American Association of School Librarians, in their position statement on Resource based instruction, have as their sixth point:

Teachers and library media specialists share responsibility for reading and information literacy instruction. They plan and teach collaboratively based on the needs of the student (AASL, 1999a).

Statements such as this stress the collaborative nature of the role that must be played by both the teacher-librarian and the teacher if effective relationships are to be created that can aid the education program.

Baker recognises the myriad of problems that can beset good working relationships. He states:

Too often a school's library-media program and its reading program exist together in a more or less permanent state of discomfort. Whether the discomfort is acute or mild depends upon personalities, budgets, status, and 101 other things that make a school the anthill of activity that it is. Discussion about which program is more important is irrelevant. Both the reading teacher and the library media specialists have major responsibilities to assume in the implementation and supervision of a school's total reading program (Baker, 1980, p. 163).

The ‘discomfort’ that Baker alludes to can be very destructive of an effective reading environment in a school library.

3.2.2 Students

A positive, effective relationship between the teacher-librarian and students is central to a successful reading environment. Any reading environment is only successful if it manages to bring books and young people together. This relationship, in which books may be discussed, recommended and shared, both formally and informally, is often the most difficult and the hardest to establish. Scales, in her interview with Atkinson for the 1997 Grolier award, was asked to elaborate on her ideas about reading and promoting reading. She said:

I'm afraid we want formulas to get kids to read - and bells and whistles. It doesn't take that; it takes building a relationship with students, and it takes turning reading into an experience (Atkinson, 1997, p. 114).

Scales goes on to discuss her ideas for forming these relationships with students; trust and listening are of prime importance to her. She stresses 'really wanting to know them, engaging them in conversation' (Atkinson, 1997, p. 110).
Engaging students, bringing them in to Chambers’s Reading Circle, is a constant thread through the writing of those who have commented upon this relationship between teacher-librarian, or teacher, and student. A relationship formed on solid ground - trust, as Scales puts it - is deemed important. Young, in Corcoran and Evans (1987), says:

> From the beginning, our encounters with literature are facilitated, stimulated, supported, and shaped by those others who share them with us. Our first literary experiences are made possible by competent readers - parents, older siblings, relatives, and friends - who aid us in the realisation of the literary experience (Young, 1987, p. 7).


There is a role for the teacher-librarian to play here. Often, it is they who informal access to the students, with the knowledge and the books at hand. It can be an advantage to not be a classroom teacher hindered by curriculum requirements and assessment criteria, able to work at helping students connect with books in a more relaxed, assessment-free environment.

### 3.2.3 Administration

The relationship between the teacher-librarian and administration is vital to the existence of the library. Most libraries operate autonomously, but they are answerable to administration, in some form, in most schools, particularly for matters such as staffing and finances. Studies (Henri and Hay, 1996; Oberg, 1996) have analysed the relationship between administration, in particular the principal, and the teacher-librarian.

Hartzell argues that teacher-librarians often have difficulty achieving what they want to due to poor relationships with administration.

> Unless the library is forcibly brought to the attention of teachers and administrators, it’s likely to unnoticed and undervalued (Hartzell, 1997, p. 2).

Oberg (1996) in a study on Principal support of teacher-librarians found:

> Research shows that although teacher librarians generally view Principal support as critical to the success of the Library program (Haycock 92), they often have low expectations of Principal support (Lewis 91, Campbell 91) and rarely engage in the kind of activities that would increase the Principal’s understanding and support (Edwards 1989) (Oberg, 1996, p.109).

This understanding, referred to by Oberg, can best be established by building strong professional relationships between the teacher-librarian and administration. Oberg’s view of the research indicates, though, that this is one area where a great deal of work needs to be done on both sides of the potential relationship.
3.3 Library organisation

This term refers to all areas of the library’s operation that have written policy statements, and to decisions relating to the everyday operation of the library that affect the reading environment.

Organisation is crucial to all areas of the library’s operation. In relation to reading promotion and the creation of a conducive reading environment, how the library is organised, the types of reading promotion programs provided, and the efforts made to build adequate and appropriate collections all help to indicate the importance the teacher-librarian, and the wider school community, place on the role of the library as a reading environment.

3.3.1 Access

There is a great deal of evidence showing that children with more access to books read more. 
(Krashen, 2002, p. 2)

In a paper entitled ‘Building student learning through school libraries’ by Dr Kathleen Smith at the American Whitehouse conference on School Libraries in June 2002, Smith outlined the five essential elements she had identified as necessary to create a ‘community of scholars’ through the power of the library. Number one on her list was: ‘access’. Smith argued that, as part of the function of providing good access, libraries should be ‘available, warm, and welcoming places’ (Smith, 2002, p. 2).

Novijan argues that free access to books is ‘a basic requirement for reading’ (Novijan, 1993, p. 104). Certainly Chambers’s (1991) reading circle and the work of others in this area (Altmann 1994, Carleau, 1980, Hale 1994), emphasizes the importance of books that are available and accessible to students. Haycock, in his recent Canadian review found: ‘access to these (library) materials becomes critical. Further, the larger the library collection, the larger the impact on reading and achievement’ (Haycock, 2003, p. 28).

Dresang and Kotrla, in a research report detailing their work in poor schools in New York, USA discussed the importance of print rich environments, they found:

Two seminal studies by Elley (1983, 1992) provide substantial evidence that students with access to books (in home, community, school, and book stores) progress best in reading comprehension. Across cultures, Elley (1992) found that large school libraries, classroom libraries, access to books at home, silent reading and reading aloud by teachers made the difference between high-scoring and low-scoring countries (Dresang & Kotrla, 2003, p. 55)

No relationship can begin between reading material and young people unless they have access. Access is paramount. How is this facilitated by the actions of the teacher-librarian. What books are
bought and why? Are they kept where the students can get to them? Are students allowed to browse the collection out of class time? Can they borrow when and what they choose? These are crucial questions, influenced by the teacher-librarian’s attitude towards his or her readers and their needs and how they see the library as a source of reading material. Access is also affected by external factors such as funding.

Research by De La Pena Mc Cook has revealed that access can, and has been, improved in our modern libraries through the advent of technology. She states:

The most recent statistics showed library circulation soared by up to 15% from 1990 to 1991. New technologies do not replace old. They co-exist and sustain each other. Librarians asked why circulation had increased noted that automation gave better access and thus enhanced the process of borrowing (De la Pena Mc Cook, 1993, p. 627).

Teacher-librarians have the means at their fingertips for making reading material accessible. It is a matter of decision-making, informed by policy that ultimately determines what types of access students will have to what they hope to find. These decisions are made, often in isolation, by the teacher-librarian and are informed by their attitudes.

### 3.3.1.1 The advisory role of the teacher-librarian

*The teacher librarian has the specialised knowledge of reading material which classroom teachers may lack and can offer the guidance that teachers often do not.*

(Moloney, 2000, p. 102)

Carter argued:

In order to become lifelong readers, children must have access to books - and lots of them. They must also have some help in selecting them. Librarians call that help readers' advisory, and it's an art (Carter, 2000, p. 3).

Carter goes on to stress the importance of this role, a role that is deserving of recognition as a professional activity (Carter, 2000, p. 3). Haycock found that: 'the role of the teacher-librarian, connecting young people with books that interest them, has been underestimated' (Haycock, 2003, p. 27).

The 2000 study initiated by the ACYL into the reading habits of Australian teenagers indicated the importance of the role the teacher-librarian plays in enabling this access to reading material through the school library (ACYL, 2001, p. 29). As to the teacher-librarian the study showed that:

The school librarian is the second most mentioned source of advice on good books to read (ACYL, 2001, p. 28).
This means a substantial number of students rely on the school librarian for advice. The most mentioned source of advice was peers. If we consider that the library, as part of its reading environment, can offer ways and time for students to talk about books with their peers, this sees the influence over access held by the teacher-librarian as even more crucial. The library itself as a source, and the teacher-librarian as enabler, are important parts of the access equation for secondary school age students.

3.3.1.1.1 The knowledge base of the teacher-librarian

Readers are made by readers.
(Chambers, 1991, p. 87)

This factor is related to both the attitude of the teacher-librarian and the access they provide. Teacher-librarians who have a positive attitude towards their advisory role in reading promotion follow through with efforts to maintain a knowledge base that will allow them to work at recommending reading material to young people. Such a knowledge is not something acquired overnight. It requires constant reading, professional development and continuing efforts to remain aware of current literature. Chambers, in his discussion of the enabling adult, says:

In the end they (learners) depend on knowledgeable grownups because there are some things about every craft and every art – reading is both art and craft – that you only know from experience and can only be passed on by those who've learned them by experience. (Chambers, 1991, p. 15).

Chambers is talking predominantly about sharing and assisting in the reading process, certainly a role for teacher-librarians and teachers, but he is also alluding to the skill of matching the child with the right book, enabling the child to find material that is appropriate and enjoyable.

Other commentators recognise the need for a sound knowledge base but note the necessity of this being linked to enthusiastic marketing and dispersion of that knowledge. Suzette Boyd states:

I cannot stress enough the importance of marketing. It's no use having a good knowledge of children's literature if you don't share it, nor is the library going to be 'alive' if you don't market it and encourage others to take advantage of all it has to offer (Boyd, 1995, p. 55).

Haycock claims in one of his summaries of recent research that:

Print rich environments in classrooms and libraries are essential to reading achievement but only with teachers trained in connecting children and books (Haycock, 2001a).

Haycock emphasizes the need for 'trained' assistance, to assist in bringing the reading materials and students together.
An appropriate knowledge base will allow the teacher-librarian to provide students with good access to the reading materials they need. A knowledgeable teacher-librarian knows what to buy, what to promote and how to build a good, broad representative collection that will cater for the majority of the needs of their students, thus giving them access to the kinds of reading materials they want and need. This is part of the role of an enabling adult.

3.3.1.2 Policy

*Books are for use.*  
*Books are for all; or,*  
*Every reader his book.*  
*Every book the reader.*

The first three laws of library science from  
S. R. Ranganathan Five laws of library science, 1931.

The teacher-librarian establishes many of the policies that affect access directly. When will the library open? For how long? What will the teacher-librarian provide? Will materials be easy to find? The decisions made that govern the answers to these questions are sometimes school-wide decisions. Often, though, on a purely practical level, they are the domain of the teacher-librarian.

Policy, then, in a very fundamental way, governs access. To some extent, the policy decisions made by the teacher-librarian that govern access give the outsider an insight as to the views, and attitudes, of that person. The importance placed on reading promotion, the collection which is made available, and when and how the students are allowed access, all enable us to see attitudes played out through formal policy.

The Australian School Library Association recognises the importance of planning and implementing policy to the functioning of a school library, their reference work *Learning for the future* (2001) states:

Policy development is undertaken within the context of a whole school strategy, and involves a collaborative process of consultation with key internal and external stakeholders. Policies are not static, but need to be regularly adjusted to reflect ongoing changes in government or school strategy and evolving relationships and needs (ASLA, 2001, p. 76).

3.3.1.3 Collection management

*First and foremost teachers who want students to be responsive readers provide access to books.*  
*(Hickman, 1995, p. 4)*
Many factors contribute to how a library is organised. The organisation of the collection is a primary role for any library and decisions made by the teacher-librarian directly affect the size, scope and forms to be found. The collection of books and other reading materials is one of the basic, essential factors in the creation of a reading environment. Carter has said:

Adolescents, like the rest of us, read what is available (Carter, 1987, p. 187).

How the collection is maintained, expanded and weeded has a primary effect on what is provided. The area of collection management is a vital component of access.

The Australian School Library Association, in its *School Library Bill of Rights*, states that it is:

The responsibility of the school library:
To provide materials that will enrich and support the curriculum, taking into consideration the varied interests, abilities and maturity levels of the pupils served (ASLA, n.d.).

How far this provision of materials extends beyond what is provided directly to support the curriculum is a matter for debate. Most buy first and foremost for the curriculum assuming that much of what is bought in this way will also be read for pleasure. What is of support to the curriculum can be a subjective evaluation. At times, though, it has not been seen as a school library’s place to provide extensive collections for pleasure, but as the domain of the public library or family. While these institutions certainly do provide pleasure reading material for young people, there are some who have no access to a public library and little reading material at home. Often these students rely solely on the school library as a source of material. This would suggest school libraries have a place in providing equitable access to a variety of materials as well as a curriculum support role.

Others argue that there is a place for the school to provide recreational reading materials that are not primarily curriculum based. Diaz states:

The librarian should be the fount of knowledge over the nature of reading material available to support all areas of curriculum, as well as promoting the provision of a range of recreational reading material for students of all abilities (Diaz, 1992, p. 13).

Carter and Abrahamson also see it as part of the school role. In their argument, the library plays a part in a much wider role of helping create ‘lifetime readers’. They say:

First, they discover what individual readers profess to like, and they help feed those interests through books. Second, they challenge and entice those same readers by introducing new and different kinds of books and topics. They do this in two ways, each as important as the other: they know their books and they know their students and patrons (Carter & Abrahamson, 1994, p. 13).

Oberg recently summarised the results of six American state-based studies. These studies looked at library programs, size and staffing and their effect on student achievement. Oberg found:
A long line of research, beginning in the 1960s has revealed the positive relationship between student achievement, as measured by test scores, and school libraries stocked with rich and relevant collections and staffed with qualified teacher-librarians. (Oberg, 2001, p. 43).

‘Rich and relevant collections’ is perhaps a somewhat subjective statement. Oberg describes the collections as needing to be ‘rich,’ implying diversity, breadth and depth. If one assumes Oberg’s descriptor ‘relevant’ means relevant to the students, the possibilities of what might, and should, be provided are endless.

3.3.1.4 Library Reading Programs

Books + teachers/teacher librarian intervention = reading achievement.
(Haycock, 2001)

The most recent research into the nature of school library operations in Victoria was undertaken by RMIT researchers in 2001. The findings stated:

62% of schools offered enrichment programs or activities. These included books clubs, reading groups and ‘meet the author’ or similar talks. (Welch & Braybrook, 2002, p. 6).

This research did not ask questions in relation to specific wider reading programs, but the fact that a number of schools are running reading promotion activities such as book clubs and reading groups indicates there is activity being undertaken. The figure of 62% includes both primary and secondary schools, so it is difficult to ascertain particular rates of activity in secondary school libraries alone. Nevertheless, there are obviously programs in action, though certainly not in every school.

Buckingham, writing about research undertaken in two secondary schools in Great Britain, found that special events were ‘a powerful tool’ (Buckingham, 2002, p. 13). Buckingham claimed, like Boyd (1995), that marketing of all aspects of the library service, but particularly special events, was an effective way of creating interest in, and thus stimulating use of the library resources. These views are supported by websites such as ‘Reading Connects’ produced by the National Literacy Trust in Great Britain. This site (NLT, 2003) showcases best practice in programs that promote and encourage reading through special events or programs. Such events can be an integral component of a wider reading program. Buckingham found:

The evidence confirms that pupils do enjoy, and gain from, special events and therefore encouragement from all parties can only increase literacy levels and develop reading habits. LRC’s (Library Resource Centres) can continue to lift their profile and purge any preconceptions that LRC’s are uninspiring. Ultimately, LRC managers should contemplate that ‘Readers who don’t can only be persuaded by those who do’ (Buckingham, 2002, p. 13).

In most schools a wider reading program is a joint Library / English faculty initiative. In most cases junior classes come to the library on a regular basis. During this time they have access to
collections and may be spoken to by library or English staff about new or suitable reading materials. The structure and nature of the wider reading program varies from school to school but most crucial is the time to browse, read, hear and talk about books and about reading for pleasure. In some cases, this is part of assessment. Students may be required to read a certain number of books and, on occasion, what they may select from is prescribed. Written assessment tasks have also been linked to wider reading programs.

Despite the constraints that assessment, or the ‘rules’ of the program may have, a wider reading program has an impact upon the reading environment. As an important avenue for access to reading material and book ‘talk’ (Chambers, 1993), the wider reading program can often play a crucial part in defining the reading environment within a school library. In many cases it is the only way, either in the library or in the classroom, that a teacher-librarian may have access to a whole class, to talk with students and interact with them and reading material in a structured time slot. Without some form of structured program, the teacher-librarian will only consistently see those students who come to the library freely in their own time. For this reason, a structured program is often a crucial way for library staff to begin forming positive, useful relationships with both students and teaching staff.

A structured reading program may also provide the only ‘browsing’ time a student may experience; that is, time to just look at books. For secondary school students who do not come to the library out of class time, have no books at home, or access to a public library, browsing through the collection in their school library may be the only exposure to voluntary reading material. Time to browse is seen as essential by Chambers (1991, p. 35).

As with browsing, a structured reading program may also be an avenue for one of the other areas or prime importance to Chambers, book talk (1993). While not every wider reading program does facilitate talk about books the scope is there for them to do so. To Chambers this is a crucial component of the reading circle – providing opportunities for students to ‘gossip’ about books, to talk amongst themselves and with enabling adults, to further encourage their reading habit. Chambers says:

Reading is a social activity. And it is at its most social when we share our reading by talking about it, in a kind of profoundly important book gossip (Chambers, 1991, p. 83).

and

What needs to be said here is that our talk about books, more than anything else, enlarges and deepens us as readers (Chambers, 1991, p. 84).

While a wider reading program centred on the library and its collections can be an integral part of an effective reading environment, it is not essential. Though a formal wider reading program, as
discussed above, can be a gateway to providing access and building relationships, it is only one aspect of a wider reading environment within the school library.

Recent research has argued that perhaps it is the very nature of structured wider reading programs that is counter-productive. The ACYL initiated research into the reading habits of young Australians (ACYL, 2001) found that what young people wanted was more unstructured time or ‘free’ reading. One of the research-based findings from the study was:

Free reading time in secondary schools needs to be brought closer to resembling free reading time in primary school, by making it an experience that students enjoy and share (ACYL, 2001, p. 9).

The suggestion was that structured programs, or those with an assessment base, were not appreciated by students – more free interaction, talk and exposure to materials they like was preferred by students. These are all areas in which the library could very well play a constructive role as part of an effective reading environment.

### 3.3.2 Ambience

*Change the environment and the spirit of the message of your library changes with it.*  
(*Wilson, 2003, p. 19*)

Todd Strasser, an author who has travelled to many libraries as a visiting speaker, lists the most important items that lend a good ambience to a library as - comfortable couches, round tables, visual imagery, paperback books and background music. Strasser said:

I began to notice differences in the libraries: some seemed cheerful and busy, others seemed remote and unused. Some invited students to “come in, sit at my tables, use my reference facilities, read my books. Then there are those that said “Keep out!”” (*Strasser, 1988, p. 59*).

This ambience, as Strasser terms it, or atmosphere, describes the feeling of the library space. Not created by just one component, it is the result of conscious thought being put into how best to use the architecture, how to utilise furniture, lighting, colour, display materials, signage and various forms of decoration.

Haycock in his major review of the Canadian School Library system identifies this ambience as an ‘invitational atmosphere’ (*Haycock, 2003, p. 35*). He finds that:

The physical ambience of the school library is a relevant factor in terms of the library program’s overall impact on student achievement and literacy. (*Haycock, 2003, p. 30*).
He noted the need for ‘comfort and quiet’, (Haycock, 2003, p. 30) seeing these factors as crucial in the creation of an inviting, welcoming environment. With other non-tangible factors, ambience is difficult to quantify or record, nevertheless, the feel of a space is influential in how that space is perceived and used by the school community.

Fein recognises the need for the library to be a ‘liked’ place (1996, p. 22). If students are to use it ‘willingly’.

Doll, who discusses the library as a ‘human environment’ stresses flexibility and goes on to say:

Most important, the library media center should be a comfortable, welcoming place for students (Doll, 1992, p. 225).

Doll also identifies the need to allow the students a feeling of ‘ownership’ of the library (1992, p 227).

A recent CILIP report: Start with the Child: Report of the CILIP Working Group on Library Provision for Children and Young People, looked at public library services in Great Britain. It found a strong need among young people to have a sense of ownership of library spaces if the libraries were to be effective in reaching this target audience (2002, p. 53).

Doll, in her discussion of space and how it is used, goes on to outline the following observation of both researchers and practitioners:

Many library media specialists report that children find hidden corners, nooks, and crannies for quiet reading when allowed to do so (Doll, 1992, p. 227).

This feeling of ownership, or belonging, is an important part of the ambience of a library. To make the physical space their own, students need to feel comfortable and that they may use the library, within guidelines, as they wish.

At a recent conference titled ‘The inside story: a library interiors forum’ convened by the State Library of Victoria (SLV, 2002) many of the speakers stressed similar concerns in relation to public library spaces. They share the same need to create a welcoming ambience.

Kugler stressed the importance of ‘functionality and flexibility’. She saw public libraries as the new community living room, so the emphasis should be in creating liveable environments, that appeal to all senses not just the psyche (Kugler, 2002).

These ideas were presented in a discussion on how to make inviting, interesting spaces within public libraries, yet they are universal in their application. School libraries interested in creating effective spaces would do well to look carefully at what they are creating with the ideal of ‘liveable environments’ uppermost in their minds.
3.3.2.1 Layout

*There is then some evidence to indicate that children also seek to define and defend a territory for themselves.*  
*(Doll, 1992, p. 226)*

Studies undertaken on the aesthetics of a library environment - what furniture, where and how it is placed, how the library’s ‘face’ is presented to its public, are all facets of library layout that must be considered when spaces are defined and created. The brightness of the library space, the decorative additions to the walls, and the need for comfortable, accessible seating are all areas of concern to student populations.

Chambers talks of the ‘value’ given to an activity by giving it a designated space. Many libraries do just this with reading areas or story pits. In libraries where other collections have impacted on wider reading spaces, to the extent that reading areas have been swallowed up, the lack of value placed on these spaces is clear. Chambers says:

> Reading areas also signify value. You don’t devote a place solely to one special activity unless you believe it to be enormously important (Chambers, 1991, p. 30).

Doll (1992), in *School library media centers: the human environment*, reported that librarians should be aware of a number of factors concerning the need for private space, and the effects of colour and seating layout when designing library spaces. (1992, p. 226). Doll reports on how colour, carpeting, seating and the use of space can affect the way a library is used and perceived. Doll also argues that spaces can affect behaviour and that how a space is to be used should be taken into consideration during the design process. She states:

> ...students, faculty, and staff act, interact, and react within that area. Since the consideration of the facilities should not be isolated from the people who spend time there, human behaviour within that physical space becomes important and should be of interest to school library media specialists (Doll, 1992, p. 225).

and

Environmental psychologists have identified several factors that can influence the way people conduct themselves in a physical location. These include personal space, territoriality, the search for privacy, and preference for a quiet or more stimulating study environment (Doll, 1992, p. 225).

Much of how libraries use layout, furniture, lighting and colour is perhaps reactive. Spaces evolve in line with the needs of the school community and the views and attitudes of the teacher-librarian. Boyce, in a discussion of library spaces found that libraries are the result of a ‘personal agenda’ (Boyce, 2003, p. 23) and ultimately reflect the views of those who organise them.
Often very little forward planning takes place when libraries evolve – items are moved and changed as needs arise. This can result in a confused arrangement and areas that are not particularly conducive to the functions that they are meant for. An overall plan for what the library is to be, and how it should be used, is rarely thought through carefully. Despite this, there is agreement over the need for welcoming spaces that function effectively. Truett, in a 1994 study titled: *A survey of school and public children's library facilities*, found that those who work in libraries valued:

...spaciousness or large size; openness; a good central location; and a light, sunny, bright facility with windows (Truett, 1994, p. 96).

There is agreement from commentators, anecdotally and within the case studies, as to the types of environments libraries should be if they are to be effective spaces for reading and all other areas of library operations. In a broader educational context the value of healthy, positive environments is noted. Gunn claims:

Creating a healthy school environment takes time, energy, resourcefulness and at times, additional spending. The outcome is well worth the effort as teachers will feel better walking into their workplace in the morning, will feel more valued and be able to cope better with the significant demands placed upon them (Gunn, 2003, p. 2)

What is lacking in relation to school libraries is more detailed analysis of how these ideals can be achieved, particularly within sites lacking funds and space.

### 3.3.2.2 Display

*We shape our world as it shapes us.*

*(Karlsson, 2003, p. 2)*

A cheaper way to create a stimulating library environment is to use display. Often student or classroom teacher initiated, display in the library can not only brighten the space but assist in a sense of ownership (as Doll recognises in the previous section – Layout) of the library by those whose work or ideas are featured. Chambers devoted a chapter to displays in his book *The Reading Environment* and had this to say:

Book displays make books prominent. They stimulate interest. They are decorative. They deeply influence the mental set of people who see them. Displays are, therefore, essential in an effective reading environment (Chambers, 1991, p. 23).

Chambers goes on to argue that along with good book stock, he sees good display, or the lack thereof, as an indicator of the value placed on reading and books within a particular school (Chambers, 1991, p. 28).
Crisp, in a 2003 article for *Australian Bookseller and Publisher* encouraging librarians to see the importance of this underrated area of the libraries promotional program said that ‘vibrant displays help to create vibrant libraries’ (2003a). She went on to say:

Research undertaken by the North American Library Research Service found that book displays increased the circulation of fiction titles by over 90% and of non-fiction titles by 25% (Crisp, 2003a, p. 30).

This is strong evidence that the relevance of display cannot be overrated, yet it is often overlooked. Haycock, in his recent review of Canadian school libraries, also noted the influential nature of display, in creating the vivid and interesting environment that he feels we should aspire to. He found:

Teacher-librarians, in turn, need to develop an orderly, inviting environment with relevant displays, discard antiquated and ragged-looking materials...All this requires adequate resources. (Crisp, 2003, p. 30).

Writing in a book entitled *Books up front: investing in the value of reading*, Kate Hart, an artist and consultant in the area of Visual Arts Education, said of library display:

The importance of vibrant, inviting display in libraries should not be underestimated. The ways in which we decorate space indicate the value we place upon those spaces (Hart, 2001, p. 49).

Hart goes on to detail the ability of display to make the community comfortable in the library space, to encourage a sense of ownership. She then says:

Such displays also encourage the view that the library is an integral part of, and support for, the learning that takes place in the classroom (Hart, 2001, p. 49).

The creative, imaginative nature of display, its ability to draw people in and create ever changing spaces, makes it a valuable component of any reading environment.

### 3.4 External factors

*Schools are bureaucracies – and no one in a bureaucracy can be successful alone.*

(*Hartcell, 1999*)

All of the decisions and attitudes of the teacher-librarian may be shaped by, and interact with, the impact of external factors. These factors are often the result of decisions made by administrators, or teachers, outside of the library, with no input from the teacher-librarian. The extent to which teacher-librarians play a part in this decision making process varies, and is often reliant on how much influence they hold, how proactive they are in establishing a forum for their own views. The extent to which the library is perceived as effective, responsive to needs, and relevant, can play a part in the amount of influence the teacher-librarian has over various external factors.
External factors may not be limiting if the library is proactive and working at its best. Suzette Boyd has said:

If the school library program is seen as being innovative, effective, risk-taking, entrepreneurial and responsive to user needs, funding and staffing cease to become hurdles (Boyd, 1995, p. 56).

For many, though, external factors can be constraining for reasons that are often particular to each individual school environment. External factors can have great impact upon the reading environment that is created. The limitations of unsympathetic structural architecture, for example, features heavily within a number of the case study schools as a major limiting factor for these libraries. Decisions made by administrators, with little input from the teacher-librarian, in relation to funding and staffing can affect the library program.

3.4.1 Budget

*The investment in school libraries is a good one because the return is good.*

*(Hartzell, 2002c, p. 6)*

Obviously, the funds that are available for any given project can be a limiting factor for the success of that project. The extent to which the administration sees value in a library's service can dictate how much they are willing to allocate from an overall school budget towards the library. There is very little research in this area, and certainly no specific research on how funds are administered within a library. Shannon, in a literature review focusing on American school libraries found interesting links that stress the interrelated nature of factors such as budget with relationships and support from administration. Shannon found that the:

> frequency of communication between school principals and school library media specialists concerning budget correlated with the number of dollars allocated for the library materials (Shannon, 2001, p. 8).

The most recent Victorian study shows that actual funds directed towards libraries differ markedly. Welch and Braybrook in the initial report on their 2001 research into Victorian school libraries found:

> In 2000 Secondary School Libraries spent on average $29.00 per student on resources. However, the amount ranged from $2.00 to $105.00. Annual budgets ranged from $1400 to $70,000, with the median being $15,000 (Welch & Braybrook, 2002, p.5).

Within a library's overall budget, how much is spent on areas that impact on the reading environment of the library will often be a decision made by the teacher-librarian. It is here that attitude comes into play – how much is allocated to the provision of wider reading collections and promotion as opposed to other areas of the library can greatly impact upon what is created.
As an external influence beyond the control of the teacher-librarian, budget is crucial, both in terms of the overall allocation of funds to the library, and also in cases where how the money is to be spent within the library is stipulated by administration. Hartzell states:

The library and its staff are often early casualties in budget cuts, scheduling changes, and the assignment of extra duties (Hartzell, 2002c, p. 4).

As the library can, at times, be seen as an adjunct to the teaching program, an extra 'frill', administration can indeed wield the axe in this area with often devastating results. It is this form of external interference, or control, that is often beyond the teacher-librarian's influence. In many cases, it is the teacher-librarian's ability to make and foster good relations with the power brokers within the school system that can save the library from budget cuts. How well a teacher-librarian can show the value of the library service and demonstrate its indispensable nature can influence the attitudes of administration and consequently, the resulting funding allocations. The association between factors such as budget, administrative support, relationships and the attitudes of everyone involved serves to best display the interconnectedness of all of these factors.

3.4.2 Staffing

*Teacher librarians affect student achievement in reading, particularly if they are qualified, supported by an aide and play a vital instructional role.* (Haycock, 1999)

How the library is staffed is often a decision that remains in the hands of the school administration. Faced with having to staff a number of classroom and specialist areas within a school, difficult decisions must sometimes be made and, by necessity, the library is not always staffed with professionally trained teacher-librarians. The survey conducted in 2001 into the state of Victorian school libraries gave an insight into staffing amongst a number of other issues. The preliminary report into the findings states:

It was found that 88% of Victorian Secondary School Libraries have a qualified Teacher Librarian managing the library. This level can be compared to the 13% of Victorian Primary School Libraries that have a qualified Teacher Librarian in charge (Reynolds and Carroll, 2001) (Welch & Braybrook, 2002, p. 5).

and

The ASLA (Australian School Library Association of Australia)(2001) minimum standards for staffing that calculate the number of teacher librarians and support staff linked to the number of teaching staff in the school is a useful starting point for looking at staff numbers. In this survey 20% of schools were staffed at a level equal or above the standard and 80% were below the staffing standard (Welch & Braybrook, 2002, p. 4).
Such statistics make it clear that there are many schools without trained teacher-librarians, particularly primary schools, and though secondary schools fare better, the number of teacher-librarians is inadequate. These facts have an impact on the type of programs provided. They are matters, though, well beyond the control of the library staff themselves. Library staff may strive to increase their staffing numbers by attempting to influence administrative decisions. They may also attempt to extend their own qualifications to improve the knowledge base of the library staff but, ultimately, the final decision as to staffing is often not theirs to make.

The ACYL study of reading habits among young Australian people conducted in 2000, had relevant findings in its executive summary that relate to school libraries and how they operate in these areas.

In order to return to school libraries some of the focus that young people feel is absent in secondary school, additional resources and funding would be necessary. Teacher Librarians spoken to in the research indicated that both staffing and funding resources currently available were insufficient to allow them to undertake activities which are specifically designed to increase usage of the library as a resource for reading for pleasure (ACYL, 2001, p. 9).

These remarks imply that there is a willingness to undertake more in the promotion of pleasure reading but that it is funding and staffing constraints that hold present teacher-librarians back. What is not discussed is what tasks these teacher-librarians now undertake if it is not working at promoting reading.

The results of the case studies have shown that many teacher-librarians identify themselves as either information skills or technology experts. Though trained teacher-librarians, they are specialists within the broader field. The decision as to what ‘type’ of teacher-librarian to employ for a position is often that of administration and will be made in line with their perception of the library. Only if administration sees the establishment of a reading environment as valuable will they employ a teacher-librarian with skills, and an interest, in this area.

3.4.3 Support from school administration

The quality of communication between the teacher-librarian and the principal is vital.
(Henri & Hay, 1996, p. 9)

A large factor in the supportiveness of the administration within a school for the school library is the relationship that has been fostered between the teacher-librarian and members of administration. Much of the literature already discussed in the section Relationships — Administration is also of relevance to this category — Support from School Administration.
In the literature review prepared in 2001 by Williams, Wavell and Cole they outline a research project from the 1990's that evaluated library service and discussed the key elements necessary for successful school libraries, these include:

...administrative commitment and support in terms of physical facilities, finance, staffing and inclusion on the curriculum processes (Williams et al., 2001, p. 25).

Henri and Hay say:

There is unanimous agreement that Teacher Librarians and their programs thrive upon the leadership of energetic, supportive, visionary administrators (Henri & Hay, 1996, p. 9).

Hartzell agrees:

We have enough research on the principal's role to know that the principal is a key player, perhaps the key player, in library media programs that make a difference (Hartzell, 2002c, p. 7).

The positive support of administration is at the heart of many of the external influences operating upon the creation of a reading environment. Each of the factors grouped under the heading external factors – budget, staffing, curriculum needs and architectural limitations - is often out of the immediate control of the teacher-librarian. The areas are all dictated either totally, or partially, by administration. It is for this reason that Henri and Hartzell note how the support of administration is crucial to successful library programs. It has already been highlighted above how the views and decisions of administration can affect areas such as staffing and budgets.

Oberg in an overview discussion of the support of Principals found teacher-librarians, 'often have low expectations of Principal support (Lewis, 1991; Campbell, 1991)' (Oberg, 1996, p. 109).

Oberg recognises that, though teacher-librarians understand the importance of administrative support, they are reluctant to initiate or seek out support and endorsement. This attitude works against the development of good library programs. Hartzell argues that this situation leads to the undervaluing of libraries and their programs and is a result of teacher-librarians being often 'invisible' (Hartzell, 1997) and (Wilson, 1998) to those they work for, and with. Hartzell states:

So unless the library is forcibly brought to the attention of teachers and administrators, it's likely to go unnoticed and undervalued (Hartzell, 1997).

Johnson, in a 1999 article titled 'Challenges facing schools and school leadership,' draws on the work of Rogers to look at the types of support needed to encourage positive relationships:

Rogers (1995) connects supportive school cultures to positive collegial relationships, which in turn rely on the following three frames of support each with appropriate protocols in place:

moral support
professional support

structural support

(Johnson, 1999, p. 3).

It is these forms of support that must be given by administration, and encouraged and sought out by teacher-librarians, if a library reading environment is to be developed and sustained.

3.4.4 Curriculum needs and demands

*Secondary school resource centers are more effective when designed according to the needs of the instructional program and of the student population.*

(Haycock, 1989, p. 9)

In 2001 the Australian School Library Association published a revision of their 1993 publication *Learning for the future: developing information services in schools* (ASLA, 2001). In the overview, they say:

The staff of the school information services team must collaborate with teachers and school management to:

provide students with learning contexts, processes and skills as well as opportunities for wide reading, personal growth and fulfilment;

provide teachers with the support they need to develop information-literate students;

provide resources to meet curriculum needs;

provide the services and technologies needed to gain maximum access to information;

provide functional facilities and a congenial environment to support the school’s wide range of information needs.

(ASLA, 2001, p. 4)

This is a wide-ranging list covering a variety of services. How can one teacher-librarian be all things to all members of the school community? This pressure has led to specialisation within the field.

Within a large school, with a number of teacher-librarians fulfilling various roles, this pressure to be an expert in many different areas is not as visible. Within an average-sized school, with perhaps only one teacher-librarian, the demands of curriculum and the expectations of staff and students to be an expert in many areas, often places the teacher-librarian in a difficult position. This can be a limiting factor on the teacher-librarian’s efforts to create a reading environment in a school, particularly in a school where administration or staff might feel the library’s efforts should be placed elsewhere.
3.4.5 Architectural limitations

*The principles of good design begin within each of us.*
*(Wilson, 2003, p. 17)*

Architectural limitations are major, often uncontrollable, limiting factors on what the teacher-librarian can do to create a welcoming and functional space within his/her library to facilitate the reading experience. Lack of space and the competing options for the use of space, are major factors affecting any welcoming, open reading space.

Structural limitations that exist due to the nature of the permanent walls and fixtures within the library are factors beyond the control of the teacher-librarian as, except for the rare case where a new building is commissioned, the library is usually unable to expand or change its space to any large extent. The teacher-librarian then must work within the constraints of whatever already exists.

Bradley, writing in *The Age* newspaper in 2002, discussed the possible impact of architecture and the design of learning spaces on the education process, he said:

> Experts say there is no empirical evidence that pleasant surroundings can help students achieve high results, but many believe that the built environment is a key factor in academic success (Bradley, 2002, p. 4).

School libraries are certainly part of this ongoing debate. Libraries that are trying to house large numbers of computers in buildings that were not designed with this use in mind have had to make difficult decisions as to how all areas of the library will be utilised.

Lack of space also affects the type of reading environment provided. While it is acknowledged, in both published research (see ambience), that open bright spaces and comfortable furniture are important additions to a welcoming reading environment, many libraries have room only for shelves and little else. Haycock, in a summary of recent American research into teacher-librarianship in 1989, found that:

> Secondary school resource centers are more effective when designed according to the needs of the instructional program and of the student population (Haycock, 1989, p. 9).

This statement, though appearing obvious, has relevance to the reality of library design as so few spaces are designed specifically with needs in mind. Rather, they grow as a reaction to immediate problems with, often, no forward planning or consideration for use. Chambers argues:

> because setting can change a set of mind, swaying it for or against an activity, it is important to consider how each feature of the reading environment may affect the set of the people it is intended to support (Chambers, 1991, p. 17).
So few educational spaces are constructed with this view in mind. Certainly those, that is most, that have grown piecemeal often have little thought given to aesthetics and the feeling that the space is trying to create.

### 3.5 Professional context

*There is no properly functioning individual whose mode of existence is not moderated or mediated (if not determined) by the social.*

(Misson, 1997, p. 5)

We are all affected by the various environments that operate around us. There is no doubt that the developments, changes and ideas that have permeated school libraries, and given direction to how they have developed, have often been filtered through the context and discussion within the wider educational community and the profession of teacher-librarianship.

Welch and Braybrook reporting on their Victoria-wide study on the state of school libraries during 2001, suggest a ‘paradigm shift’ is taking place (Welch & Braybrook, 2002, p. 7). This is a profession in a state of flux. For some this shift has been to a focus on electronic sources of information, an education wide revolution that has definitely affected the operation of school libraries.

Haycock and Moore, in his review of library trends in Canada from 1994 to 1999 said:

Nowhere is the 'interface' of Internet hype and library services more evident than in schools (Haycock & Moore, 1999, p. 4).

A similar American review by Shannon in 2001 found that:

The role of school library media specialists and the competencies they need in order to succeed have changed and expanded over many years (Shannon, 2001, p. 1)

This state of change in library service is certainly international in scope, as is the professional debate. In terms of the school library and its relationship to the new electronic sources of information, particularly the Internet, Haycock has this to say:

Libraries and librarians are unanimous on the need to get the word out that libraries should exist hand in hand with the Internet. This is a constant battle as decision makers seem to believe that the entire sum of the world's knowledge is on the Internet (Haycock & Moore, 1999, p. 5).

In a formal overview of library trends for the end of the nineties, this is a fairly strong statement. Language such as 'battle' implies a strong and powerful debate is raging around what libraries are, and should be, for now, and in to the future.
Recent articles in Access, the journal of the Australian School Library Association, highlight the concern of the profession for the changing nature of the role of the teacher-librarian. An article by Mitchell (2002) was titled: ‘Teacher librarians: What are we? What should we be?: Professional development from the inside’ and the commentary in the same issue was titled ‘A profession or a specialization?’. The titles alone of these two pieces show the questioning nature of the current debate as to the role of a teacher-librarian within a school. Mitchell said:

So why has the identity issue risen again? Why do we still have a problem with others understanding who we are? Do music teachers have this difficulty? Do they struggle to be recognised as musicians and teachers, or do they seek to establish a distinct profession as ‘music teacher’? (Mitchell, 2002, p. 8).

The suggestion is that the profession suffers through lack of identity, an issue that has plagued the profession since the inception of teacher-librarians during the 1970s in Australia. Teacher or Librarian, or somehow both? It appears that this continuing debate has been heightened in recent years with the questioning of the teacher-librarian’s role in relation to the powerful communications technologies that have certainly revolutionized the way libraries access and provide information.

Horton, in her Access article, deals more closely with this issue of technology and its impact, she said:

The increasing thrust by new technologies in our world and our schools has changed the way we run our school libraries. There has been a transformation in the role of teacher librarians because of the changing nature of the ecology of the school library. Where once school librarians dealt with card catalogues and print materials now most have to manage and use library automation systems and information technology instead (Horton, 2002, p. 31).

Shannon, in the American review, found:

School library media specialists are devoting a substantial proportion of their workday to activities related to the diffusion of information technology (Shannon, 2001, p.5).

The move within libraries to take up new technologies to assist students in their studies is an important and valuable task that should be undertaken by the library and its staff. Unfortunately, it has become an either/or situation in many school environments. Rather than retaining roles in reading promotion and incorporating new approaches into library programs, many institutions have found they do not have the time, the staff, or perhaps the interest, to do both. Often areas such as reading promotion have fallen by the wayside as new mantles have been taken up.

In a 1997 book titled the Indispensable Librarian, Johnson argues that our future is as virtual librarians. He suggests the book as an entity is with us to stay, just in different forms and that print itself is a technology constantly in a state of change (Johnson, 1997). Johnson claims any role for
media specialist, or teacher-librarian, in reading promotion is no longer relevant, gone the way of other traditional roles such as cataloguing, he says:

I believe many of our traditional roles are diminishing...Good whole language teachers are doing a fine job introducing quality literature to children (Johnson, 1997, p. 2).

A whole language teacher is a primary school teacher with a particular view as to how reading should be taught and structured with young children. It uses trade children's material rather than structured readers. While this might promote wider reading experiences in primary schools, an equivalent teaching role does not exist in secondary schooling, save that role as it might be performed by a teacher-librarian or an English teacher.

The 2001 ACYL study, said of school libraries:

the library is presented to students (and in fact seen by some school librarians) as primarily a study resource, a place to find materials for essays and assignments and therefore not associated with leisure, or reading for pleasure (ACYL, 2001, p. 31).

and

A lot of communication from school libraries to pupils is about the Internet and online resources, which further distances the library from being seen as a place to find books to enjoy (ACYL, 2001, p. 31).

The manager of the ACYL, Agnes Nieuwenhuizen, in a recent editorial in the book review section of The Age, argued for the recognition of the central role of reading in life if we are to have a functioning society. She sees the responsibility lying not only with schools:

At long last is has been recognised that the focus on literacy must stretch beyond the early school years, must translate into creative community action and must be cooperatively supported by book professionals and a range of organisations. Another light has gone on about the need for people to be confident, enthusiastic readers in order to function effectively in society (Nieuwenhuizen, 2002, p. 7).

These attitudes and considerations are all part of what is, at present, a very fluid professional debate that has crucial ramifications for the role and profession of teacher-librarians.

3.6 Diagram two – framework of influential factors

The reading circle, the reading environment and the school library environment.

Diagram two attempts to diagrammatically illustrate how all of the factors discussed in this chapter impact upon, and interact with, and assist in the creation of, the reading environment. The diagram is an attempt to map the interconnecting nature of the factors that appear to influence the role of
the teacher-librarian in creating a reading environment. In this reassessment of Chambers’s ideas, his reading circle is placed within the context of a wider reading environment. This reading environment is constructed by, and impacted upon, all of the factors identified.

This diagram is informed by my knowledge of practice and the survey of the literature undertaken in this and the previous chapter. It informs the organisation and analysis of the six case studies.

The reading environment is not an isolated, unconnected territory - floating, devoid of interaction. The reading environment is part of any working library that is providing a vast array of different resources and services. In any library the encouragement of reading can only be one facet of the teacher-librarian’s role. In every instance, any efforts made are impacted upon by a number of factors. Diagram two is an illustration of this.
Diagram 2
- Framework of influential factors.
4. Setting up the study

The aim of this research is to describe and analyse the role of the teacher-librarian in creating a reading environment within a secondary school and to map, and explore, the interconnecting factors that impact upon this role. These factors were identified through the collection of background and contextual data in the form of the two literature reviews outlined in chapter two – ‘Reading and the teacher-librarian’ and chapter three – Creating a reading environment. These reviews resulted in the construction of diagram two (see 3.6). This diagram highlights the interconnected nature of the impacting factors that have been identified as worthy of further investigation. It is the need to investigate these factors that has driven the choice of research method and the project’s design.

Bundy in a discussion on the importance of libraries to the community argued the need for:

...more qualitative assessment of what libraries mean to individuals and different communities (Bundy, 2000, p. 6).

At the 2003 ASLA/ CBC conference in Hobart, the visiting keynote speaker, Keith Curry Lance, called for ‘...more qualitative research into what really makes it (school libraries) all work?’ (2003).

Such analysis will lead to a better understanding of the complexity of the role of the teacher-librarian in creating an effective reading environment and indicate ways in which work practices may be improved.

Important factors such as attitude and relationships necessitate the exploration of people’s feelings and perceptions. To determine the attitudes that teacher-librarians hold towards reading and their reading environment, data needed to be collected that reflected their beliefs and ideas about themselves professionally and the role that they played within their school community. Given the verbal nature of this data, a qualitative approach best suited this exploration. Mason suggests that qualitative research ‘engages us with things that matter, in ways that matter’ (2002, p.1), that it is:

...grounded in a philosophical position which is broadly ‘interpretivist’ in the sense that it is concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced, produced or constituted (Mason, 2002, p. 3)

Denzin and Lincoln agree with this, stating that qualitative researchers are interested in the ‘interpretive understanding of human experience’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

As is suggested in these statements this project analyses various participants’ perceptions of the role of the teacher-librarian, and the views of teacher-librarians themselves, on the creation of a
reading environment. In so doing, it attempts to better understand and explore the role, and the factors that impact upon that role.

Due to the nature of the questions being asked of participants, which necessitated their elaborating on causes, effects and perceptions, a case study approach was utilised. This is the research method that best meets the project's needs. As Yin says:

In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin, 1984, p. 13).

Rather than a single case study, a multi-case approach has been chosen to enable a range of views, attitudes and impacting factors to be explored. As Yin says:

The evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as more robust (Yin, 1984, p.48).

A multi-case design of a qualitative nature best suits the stated aim of exploring the impacting factors as identified by the literature reviews and outlined in diagram two. Factors such as attitude, relationships, and library organisation are best explored through the analysis of the everyday workplace of the secondary school library through qualitative non-invasive means.

4.1 Research design

Denzin and Lincoln, in defining qualitative research, said:

Qualitative research is inherently multi-method in focus (Flick, 1998, p 229). However, the use of multiple methods, or triangulations, reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. Objective reality can never be captured. We can know a thing only through its representations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 5).

Mason suggests that the multi-method approach, or triangulation, can be achieved through approaching the research questions from 'different angles':

At its best, I think the concept of triangulation - conceived as multiple methods - encourages the researcher to approach their research questions from different angles, and to explore their intellectual puzzles in a rounded and multi-faceted way. This does enhance validity, in the sense that it suggests that social phenomena are a little more than one dimensional, and that your study has accordingly managed to grasp more than one of these dimensions (Mason, 2002, p. 190).

The varied perspectives developed in this study offer a variety of dimensions. They also offer a check, or marker, for the opinions and attitudes expressed by the main respondent – the teacher-librarian.

58
In order to develop a multi-method focus, this study uses three forms of data collection – interview, observation and photographs in an effort to ‘know’ as much as can be discerned about each case study school.

### 4.2 Interviews

The interview data provides the primary data for the study, with the other two methods offering supplementary support. Within the interview data, a multiplicity of focus was also sought. If the teacher-librarian alone had been interviewed this would have provided only a single perspective on what influenced and facilitated their actions. Involving a varied range of members from the school community – teachers, administrators, library staff members and students – allows for other views, or dimensions of the same reality, to be explored, and for corroboration of facts to occur. This approach, seeking a range or perspectives, ensures Denzin’s ‘in-depth understanding’. Most importantly, this range of respondents were crucial to an exploration of the factors identified by the literature reviews in chapters two and three and the resulting framework outlined in diagram two.

Mason, in defining qualitative research, has noted that such research is:

...based on methods of analysis, explanation and argument building which involves understandings of complexity, detail and context (Mason, 2002, p. 3).

Interviewing a broad range of school community members from each case study school allows this study to draw a complex and detailed picture of what may, or may not, be taking place within each school library in relation to the creation of a reading environment. The gathering of material from a representative group of people, who both use the library as a resource and influence library policy, develops the range of diverse reactions and interpretations. Each group brings a different perspective about library usage and their vision of the library service. These different perspectives about varied aspects of the library service provide a wealth of material for analysis. They enable the various factors that have been identified in the literature reviews as impacting upon the role of the teacher-librarian in creating a reading environment to be explored form a variety of perspectives. As Yin has said:

The use of multiple sources of evidence in case studies allows an investigator to address a broader range of historical, attitudinal, and observational issues.(Yin, 1984, p. 91)

One of the central factors to be explored, as indicated by the framework of influential factors (diagram two), was the relationship between various members of the school community and the teacher-librarian and how this impacted upon the type of reading environment that was created. To investigate this factor effectively interviewing a range of school community members was essential.
Other identified factors were also explored with the interview respondents, other than the teacher-librarian, in an effort to explore their views on these factors and to provide another perspective that would either support or qualify what the teacher-librarian had described as practice.

Administrators’ views were sought, particularly in the area of external factors as identified in diagram two, due to the fact that they, in many cases, were part of the decision making process that affected these factors - staffing, budget, curriculum needs and the level of support they offered to the teacher-librarian - all areas that were explored to identify how these factors impacted upon the reading environment and the role that each administrator could and did play.

Library staff offered an additional, insiders’ view of the library’s reading programs, the access the library provided and the process of collection management. In many cases, they were an excellent source of information on how the reading environment in their school library operated and were witnesses to the teacher-librarian facilitating its creation.

Students were interviewed to gain a perspective on the library reading environment from the point of view of the end user and intended beneficiary of the environment. As the primary aim of the reading environment is to encourage and facilitate the act of reading, how the students utilise the library space and perceive the efforts of the teacher-librarian to create this space are fundamental indicators of its effectiveness, vital to a complete exploration of each case study school reading environment.

Interviews were chosen as the primary source of data collection as they allowed for participants to respond freely in a non-threatening environment. As interviews were taped, conversation could move along in an uninterrupted manner allowing for spontaneous responses. More formal means of data collection, such as a written questionnaire, would have both restricted such responses and allowed respondents to reflect upon their answers in terms of what they expected was a correct response. This would not have been conducive to the spontaneity being sought.

Interviews were semi-structured to allow for exploration of each of the identified factors from within the framework of analysis. The unstructured nature of the interviews allowed for areas of particular interest to be explored as the interview progressed. This approach is complementary to Mason’s definition of qualitative research that it is

...based on methods of data generation which are both flexible and sensitive to the social context in which data are produced (Mason, 2002, p. 3).

Any new factors identified through this process were added in to the framework of impacting factors previously identified by the literature review.
The data collected from the respondents in the case study schools allowed for a comparison of the practices both within the schools, and amongst the respondents to be made. This method allows for a better understanding of the nature of what is taking place through the cross-referencing of responses to help identify commonalities as well as differential factors.

The largest pool of data to be analysed was the transcribed records of the interviews. In consideration of this, Silverman states that:

Interviews share with any account an involvement in moral realities. They offer a rich source of data which provides access to how people account for both their troubles and good fortune (Silverman, 1993, p.114).

The interviews conducted in each of the case study schools supported Silverman’s contention and offered a wealth of rich data detailing the ‘troubles and good fortunes’ of each school in their attempts to create a reading environment.

Collected interview data was collated and organised with the assistance of the computer software package NUD*IST, to assist in the categorisation and handling of the large number of interview transcripts. All material was organised using the framework for analysis, outlined in diagram two, as a guide.

4.3 Field notes

Field notes were taken during observation in each case study school library. On the day that was spent in each school, mainly in the time between interviews. As this waiting time was legitimate it allowed for unacknowledged, and generally unnoticed observation of the library and its users. Notes were recorded on the layout of the library space, particularly the area specifically designated for reading. Notes were also recorded on how the library space was experienced by the researcher, that is, the ambience of the space. The use of display within the library was noted, as were the interactions of the teacher-librarian with students, both as a class and individually, and with the teaching and library staff.

Recorded observations serve to reinforce material collected through the interview process, identifying how the library was being used, in general, by the school community and, specifically, for the promotion of reading. The observation provided an additional perspective on each case study school in light of Mason’s ‘social context’ (Mason, 2002, p. 3). The field notes also throw further light on the factors identified in the framework of analysis (see diagram two); in particular – library layout, ambience, display and the relationships created and maintained by the teacher-librarian.
4.4 Photographic evidence

The photographs were taken during the periods of observation. No member of the school community was photographed for ethical reasons.

Photographic evidence served as a reminder to the researcher of the general layout of each school library as well as complementing, and supporting, the interviews and observations. A photograph was taken of the area within each library that was designated for reading and the overall layout of the library where possible, or part thereof. These images also assisted in additional analysis of some of the factors identified in the framework for analysis diagram, particularly the layout of the library area, the limits of the architectural design, and the ambience of each space.

4.5 Sites and participants

The selected case study schools for the project were chosen to provide a geographic and socio-economic range of schools across the metropolitan area of Melbourne, and to ensure a range of school types in the study. Involved in the study are two government schools: Meadow Valley and Yarra, two independent schools: Green Hills and Canterbury and two Catholic schools: St Peter's and St Brigid's (see table one). The gender mix is one all-boys' school, two all-girls' schools and three co-educational schools. All of the schools and participants in the study have been given pseudonyms for the purpose of anonymity in the reporting of findings.

Amongst the participating school libraries, there are a range of library sizes, from unusually small through to large, in the context of Victorian schools. The number of staff in each library also vary from small to large, and the years in operation, from relatively few to long practised. Though the study has been limited to the Melbourne metropolitan area, attempts have been made to involve as varied a range of schools as possible within this single constraint. Amongst the six schools involved there are a wide range of experiences and practices, allowing for valuable comparisons to be made across a range of operational styles. Student populations and, consequently, the physical size of the schools and the libraries themselves were varied. The range of experiences in relation to the socio-economic group that each school caters for, with each drawing students from a different socio-economic base, was also a variable that was considered as offering value in its diversity.

While the primary source of data is the teacher-librarian in each school, the teaching staff (English faculty), library staff, members of the administration and students are also included as part of the interview process. It is considered that these additional groups provided a rich source of varied perspectives.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>System</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Metropolitan Area</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St Peter’s</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>boys</td>
<td>Inner</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Hills</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>co-ed</td>
<td>North Eastern</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meadow Valley</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>co-ed</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yarra</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>co-ed</td>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Brigid’s</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>girls</td>
<td>Inner North</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canterbury</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>girls</td>
<td>Outer Eastern</td>
<td>870</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table one - Schools
The teacher-librarians in each school agreed to be subjects of the study after being approached by
the investigator. They were chosen to allow for comparison between the varied contexts in which
they work and the different styles of library operation they administer. In seeking appropriate
teacher-librarians for the study, attempts were also made to source people with different views
about the nature of library service and, ultimately, different library environments. Selections were
based on the investigator’s knowledge of the teacher-librarians gained through a variety of
sources. They were known to the researcher either anecdotally through professional contacts, or
they had been identified through forums such as professional development, network meetings or
material in professional publications. A range of profiles was sought; two of the participants have
a high profile within the profession, while the others do not. In summary, a range of styles and
experiences was sought to enable, as far as possible, the collection of a range of perspectives.

Within each school, volunteers from each of the groups required - library staff, teachers,
administration and students - were sought (see table two). As the teacher-librarian was the main
contact in each school, they assisted in obtaining the volunteers for the study. Despite these
additional participants being nominated by the teacher-librarian, surprisingly frank, critical and
insightful answers were obtained during the interview process.

Interviews with the respective participants were conducted in private, audio-taped and then
transcribed.

Initially, a pilot study that involved two of the selected schools was undertaken to ensure that the
planned procedures and questions proved effective in collecting relevant data. When the pilot
resulted in rich data that reflected many of the factors under investigation, the material from the
study was included in the main research project and the other four case study schools were
completed using the same format.

Within each category of interviewees the particular position of individuals vary. All participating
teachers taught some English classes, and some taught in other Key Learning Areas as well. As
areas such as reading promotion and wider reading programs were to be investigated the
involvement of teachers of English who had some involvement with the library in there functions
was important to the study.

Within the category of administrator there was a range of roles held by the participants, ranging
from Head of Department or sub school to Vice Principal. All of the administration members
interviewed held some influence over important factors identified for investigation - e.g. budget,
staffing or curriculum needs and demands. Of particular interest was the relationship between the
member from administration and the teacher-librarian as this had been identified as an important
influencing factor on the role that the teacher-librarian fulfilled.
Additional library staff interviewed held one of three roles within the library structure - Head of Library, Library Technician or Library Assistant. All of these library staff members worked very closely with the teacher-librarian, mostly everyday in the confines of the library space. Therefore, the library staff are ideally placed to give a perspective of how they see the role of the teacher-librarian in relation to the creation of a reading environment. As some of the respondents had been in their roles for some time they were also able to give their own views on the change that they had witnessed. This particular set of interviewees offered a very valuable check on the data collected from the teacher-librarian, either reinforcing or countering the teacher-librarian's own views as to how the library operated to create, or not create, a reading environment for the school community.

The students for the study were chosen by the teacher-librarian in each case study school through their contacts with classroom teachers. A range of year levels were sought as were students from both genders in the three co-educational case study schools. Across the six case study schools students from years seven to twelve were represented amongst the interviewees. In some cases, the selection of the person interviewed was dependent on availability, particularly in the smaller schools where the numbers of available staff were few. Since there was to be no close comparative analysis of the attitudes of the student groups across schools the diversity in their constitution did not affect the validity of the study in any way.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>System</th>
<th>Teacher-Librarian</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Member of Administration</th>
<th>Library Staff Member</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| St Peters    | Catholic | Bernadette McNaughton | Brian Melissa | Robert - Vice Principal  | Miriam - Library Assistant | Student one – yr seven male  
|              |        |                   |               |                          |                      | Student two – yr seven male  
|              |        |                   |               |                          |                      | Student three – yr nine male  
|              |        |                   |               |                          |                      | Student four – yr ten male  
|              |        |                   |               |                          |                      | Student five – yr eight male |
| Green Hills  | Independent | Andrew Walters | Chris Luke | Angela - Head of Middle School | Elaine - Library Technician | Student one – yr seven female  
|              |        |                   |               |                          |                      | Student two – yr ten female  
|              |        |                   |               |                          |                      | Student three – yr eight male |
| Meadow Valley | Government | Cathy Dalton | Louise Patricia | Jane - Vice Principal | Christine - Library Technician | Student one – yr eight male  
|              |        |                   |               |                          |                      | Student two – yr twelve female  
|              |        |                   |               |                          |                      | Student three – yr eight female |
| Yarra        | Government | Mary Liston | Paul Rosemary | George - Acting Assistant Principal | Lucy - Teacher-Librarian | Student one – yr nine female  
|              |        |                   |               |                          |                      | Student two – yr ten male  
|              |        |                   |               |                          |                      | Student three – yr twelve male  
|              |        |                   |               |                          |                      | Student four – year eight male |
| St Brigid’s  | Catholic | Anna Righton | Connie Jenny | Jenny - Head of English | Sian - Head of Library | Student one – yr eight female  
|              |        |                   |               |                          |                      | Student two – yr eight female  
|              |        |                   |               |                          |                      | Student three – yr eight female  
|              |        |                   |               |                          |                      | Student four – year eight female |
| Canterbury   | Independent | Donna Welch | Laurel Janet | Iris - Year Seven Coordinator | Janice - Head of Library | Student one – yr nine female  
|              |        |                   |               |                          |                      | Student two – yr eight female  
|              |        |                   |               |                          |                      | Student three – yr nine female  
|              |        |                   |               |                          |                      | Student four – yr ten female |

Table two - Participants
4.6 Limitations of the research design

As with any case study research that relies primarily on interviews for the gathering of data, ensuring that the interviewer is an objective participant is difficult.

Once interviewees have read the plain language statement they gain an awareness of the main concerns of the thesis. This is necessary, but can also lead them to make an assumption about the form and type of responses that the interviewer is interested in collecting. In an effort to provide the types of response they may believe the interviewer is predisposed to seek, the interviewee may then say what they feel the interviewer wants to hear. Once they know the topic of the research they might also focus on this aspect alone rather than reflecting on the areas of their own library service that truly concern and interest them.

I am also aware that, through my work for the state’s professional association of teacher-librarians (SLAV), I have a personal profile within the profession that might influence respondents, as many are aware of my particular interests and concerns through my work in the field both at conferences and through publications. While this concern was undeniably a potential limitation, every effort was made to minimise its influence on the interview process. Interview respondents were encouraged to speak freely and openly.

There is a recognisable difficulty in distancing oneself from the questioning process, particularly when you have a professional interest in what is being discussed, and would like to interject, add to, or argue against, statements being made. I was aware of this difficulty and made every attempt to remain as objective, amiable and interested as possible during the interview process in an effort to put the interviewee at their ease.

As with any case study research there is the often-stated limitation that such research does not result in findings that can be generalised. While this may be true, this study hopes to offer material for discussion, in an effort to explore, and better understand the role of the teacher-librarian in the creation of a reading environment and the factors that impact upon this role. While the findings for each case study are not transferable to other school contexts they are representative of the trends and issues at large within the profession.
4.7. Introduction to the six case study schools

The data collected at each of the case study schools is discussed in the following six chapters – part B. Each school is discussed in isolation. The chapters are:

5 Enthusiasm: St Peter’s College
6 ‘Technology Road’: Green Hills College
7 Patchwork: Meadow Valley College
8 Service: Yarra High School
9 Opportunity: St Brigid’s College
10 Icing: Canterbury College

Each school chapter is arranged in relation to the framework of influential factors and is structured around the following major headings:

- The school
- The teacher-librarian
- The library
- The attitudes of the teacher-librarian
- Relationships
- Library organisation
- Access
- Ambience
- External factors
- In summary
Part B – Case Studies

5. Enthusiasm: St Peter’s College

5.1 The school

St Peter’s College is a years seven to ten boys’ Catholic school in an inner city suburb of Melbourne. At the time of the interviews it had an enrolment of only 178 students. It has an uncertain future. Being a small, single sex school not offering VCE, it has some difficulty attracting a wide variety of students in an area not likely to be favoured with much growth in the youth population. The students come from a vast variety of ethnic groups, the majority being from less affluent families.

The small size of the school limits funds in all areas. This has resulted in a school with a library, as with other school buildings, that looks sad and tired. Limitations to staff numbers have meant the current teacher-librarian is called on to do much more than would be expected in a larger more affluent school. She does not have the time or the funds to implement new ideas or programs. There is certainly a culture of survival, and the school attempts, in most decisions, to simply remain afloat. Coupled with this are the challenges of a school population that, in many cases, require extra assistance; a high proportion of students with ESL backgrounds and a variety of other issues, both attitudinal and behavioural, make this a challenging school in which to work.

5.2 The teacher-librarian

The teacher-librarian at this school, Bernadette Mc Naughton, holds a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Librarianship and a Graduate Diploma in Education. She has also completed a Graduate Diploma in Children’s Literature. While Bernadette has held positions as a teacher-librarian in country schools, since moving to Melbourne she has been unable to find a position as a teacher-librarian and has worked as a library technician and now librarian. This is her first position in charge of a library in Melbourne. At the time of the study Bernadette was two thirds of the way through her first year in this role.
5.3 The library

The library space is a simple rectangular-shaped room. It has the feeling of a large hall.

With the circulations desk and office/storage at one end, the library is dominated by the rows of tables placed in the centre of the space. In photograph one a view of most of the library is given. The fiction collection of the library runs flat along the far wall in the photograph, while the non-fiction is situated in rows directly in from of these. Various other smaller collections are dotted along the long side walls with a couple of computers for student use to be found in carrels closer to the front, or the office end, of the library.

Both photographs illustrate the compact nature of this library, the lack of materials and display space and the general tiredness of the décor. The rather bold, 1970’s style material on the blinds at the rear of the library is representative of this library’s stage of development and present style of operation. Very few innovations have been made to the space in recent times. The new carpet has brightened the room slightly, yet this only serves to illustrate how much more needs to be done in order to markedly improve this space aesthetically.

Photograph one – The view of the library at St Peter’s from the circulations desk.
5.4 The attitudes of the teacher-librarian

*Pleasure reading constitutes a variety of things,*
*I think it begins with the atmosphere.*
*And that comes about from the librarian herself.*
*(Melissa - Teacher)*

The teacher-librarian in this school, Bernadette, has a very flexible approach to what she sees as pleasure reading. She is very aware of the limitations that the reading ability of many of the students places on what they are able to cope with, due to her own wide reading and study of the types of pleasure reading that is popular amongst the students. Her own views appear to be in line with that of her students; she is open to opportunity and difference from whatever quarter it may come. In describing her own attitudes to the form her students' reading takes, Bernadette said:

*Anything is pleasure reading to me, depending upon what subjects they are interested in. I do provide magazines, picture storybooks of all descriptions for the students. I'm just developing a collection of those which we didn't have before. Certainly newspapers and that sort of thing. With their classroom reading they have to read novels, but we provide the other for their own pleasure.*

In response to both her students' apparent needs and tastes, and in line with her own knowledge of what is available and appropriate to her aims, Bernadette, in the short time she has been in this position, has provided a variety of reading formats with varied levels of difficulty for the students. Due to her own knowledge of many of the books in the collection, she has also been able to recommend texts from the shelves that students will enjoy, as well as buying in new material to suit their needs.
Though she has only been in the school a short time, she is very aware of the difficulty some of the students have with the formalized assessment in English that does not recognise strongly enough, in her opinion, the varied reading abilities of the students. Because of this, she has gained a certain respect and trust from those students she has worked with as well as some of the teaching staff who have seen her intervention and help as an improvement. Melissa, one of the English teachers explains:

At our school, a student must read three novels. Bernadette has allowed students to get two points for a book of a lower level if this is the level that they are at. This has never happened before as the policy was, no, no, no, under all circumstances they must read three novels no matter, who they are or, how they are coping.

Bernadette’s obvious interest in her students as readers is apparent. She has worked hard to improve the students’ reading experiences both in their informal pleasure reading and what is required reading for English assessment. All of her efforts are embedded in her belief in positive, enthusiastic role models and the power of the reading experience. Bernadette treats the students as fellow readers, sharing with them her own reading experiences in a very informal and inviting manner. She says of her own efforts to share books with the students:

I have a book that I write down everything I read in. The kids ask for it, they seem to like it. I’ve started up a stand of good books to read and they know that that is a constant reference point for them for books that I have liked.

In these actions, she is providing two good ways for students to access material. They are both very personal ways of opening up her own reading experiences and views to her students. In sharing her writing and storing ‘good’ reads in an accessible place, she is establishing a dialogue with her students that must be the basis of the building of good book-talk relationships, as recommended by Chambers (1993). Ultimately, this may lead to good book-related experiences for her students. This very personal sharing, in such an open and positive way, is an expression of Bernadette’s positive attitude about the value of reading and the importance she places upon the interactive personal nature of her relationship with her students as readers.

Beyond this personal, one-on-one role of interacting with students and their reading, Bernadette’s role in reading promotion on a school-wide basis, that is, her involvement in any structured program, is more clouded due to the nature of the school and her employment. Though Bernadette is not recognized formally as such, in practice she often fulfils the role of a qualified teacher-librarian. She attends Curriculum and English meetings and has a valued say in planning decisions, particularly in the area of text selection and the development of the wider reading program. As part of this program, Bernadette plays a major role in the planning and conducting of the lessons. Her support and ideas are sought by the English teachers, particularly by Melissa, the young, enthusiastic teacher interviewed for this study. A great deal of Bernadette’s time is also spent with classes aiding the students in their wider reading selections. Melissa said:
I trust, or know, that she has got training that I haven’t got. I respect, and trust that, and I want her to be able to express that. I’m happy to come with questions and bounce ideas off her.

Changes have been made to the wider reading program that certainly reflects the more positive, interactive views of Bernadette. As previously noted, she has gone some way toward tailoring the reading level of books to be read for English assessment requirements to the ability of the students. This has made an obvious improvement in the attitude of all concerned, as the process is no longer a struggle for the students as readers, or the English staff as teachers and assessors of the program. A competitive game, based on small inducements and rewards, has also been introduced into the program to encourage the students to read. This fun and novel approach was instigated by Bernadette in an attempt to free up what, otherwise, appears to be a fairly rigid, rule-based scheme lacking in colour and fun.

As this library is so small, with only one full time staff member, Bernadette’s attitude toward her overall role as a teacher-librarian has had to be flexible. The library functions in an unorthodox manner. Any delineation of duties between management/professional tasks and clerical tasks is an impossibility. Bernadette must perform all library-based tasks, as well as being asked to fill in elsewhere within the school. This necessity to call on the teacher-librarian to supervise classes and act, on occasion, as a replacement teacher jeopardises any chance for the library to formulate and conduct effective strategies to further cultivate a reading environment. When the teacher-librarian is required elsewhere, the library is generally closed. Bernadette is acutely aware of the needs of the school:

It is a small school. I had to mind a class yesterday because there just weren’t enough teachers.

Management of the library is, therefore, more an issue of time management rather than an issue of staff management. While library classes must be supervised and assisted – buying, processing, cataloguing, shelving etc., must be fitted into the day as well. Student monitors, or helpers, are utilised where possible. Bernadette’s frustration at not being able to give her time only to the students is apparent:

I try to give priority to the boys because that is what I am here for, but, sometimes, I just have to do other things – orders, payments, answer the intercom.

While Bernadette aims to use her time as constructively as possible with the students the nature of the position means she is often elsewhere, or attempting to do more than one thing at a time. When asked what she most likes about her present work routine she said:

Spending time with the boys, helping them with whatever they wish whether it be pleasure reading or research, because at the moment I can’t do that as much as I would like.

In terms of technology and how this impacts upon Bernadette’s role and her own attitudes toward that role, this school is unusual in having very little. The library itself has no access to
computerized searching facilities (the Internet is available in an adjacent classroom). This means that the role of the teacher-librarian is, in some ways, rather ‘old fashioned’. The demands of technological development have not been an issue in this workplace. Bernadette is aware this is unfortunate in an age when Internet and database searching is opening up school libraries to amazing possibilities. She sees her role differently due to her school’s constraints, though she is somewhat wistful about changes that are taking place elsewhere in other schools:

For me, reading is still the prime role of the position. Technology that is impacting on others (other school libraries) is not relevant to my job. I go to meetings where technology is the prime role (discussed).

Though teaching staff recognise that Bernadette is not being paid as a teacher-librarian they are still aware of what the role of a properly resourced teacher-librarian should be. Brian, a teacher at St Peter’s, said:

We are in an unusual setting because there is only one teacher librarian, no resource staff and she is not even recognised as a teacher librarian. She has a twofold sort of job: encouragement of reading and reference. The teacher-librarian needs to be up to date with the Internet and those sorts of things and be able to provide assistance and be able to direct the students on the path they need.

Bernadette’s attitude towards this situation, her library and her work, is complex and dependent on a number of variables. Most difficult is the variation between her training and her job description. It is apparent the school needs and wants a trained teacher-librarian but does not wish, or cannot afford, to pay for this. As Bernadette is a trained teacher-librarian, this often makes what she chooses to do a difficult and frustrating experience. Despite this difficulty, Bernadette’s attitude is generally both positive and philosophical in regards to both her students and her role. She is very keen to make the library a pleasant, welcoming environment despite the constraints of funding, space and staffing. She is also very keen to expand and extend her students as readers and is always happy to talk with them and aid in book selection. Her attempts, and her enthusiastic attitude have been viewed very positively by those interviewed; for example this comment by the Vice Principal, Robert:

For that (the library) to be a fun place to go to, it all boils down to the person in charge being that fun type of person that allows students to go in there without feeling inhibited about ‘don’t touch this’. They can go in there and play chess, read some books, go and ask Bernadette about a novel or something they need to find...it’s got to be an environment that’s exciting, interesting and challenging...So, if she can break down the barriers, which she has done, I think it then opens up so many more avenues for the students.

5.5 Relationships

The relationships within this school are supportive and flexible. With such a small staff this is understandable, as there appears to be a culture of everyone ‘mucking in’ to enable the school to
keep functioning. Bernadette has a positive relationship with teaching staff, her knowledge and
everhusiasm are acknowledged and appreciated by the English staff in particular. The young
enthusiastic English teacher, Melissa, appears to both enjoy and recognise Bernadette’s talents.
She said of their relationship:

Yes, [I have] a good relationship with Bernadette. I trust, or know, that she has got
training that I haven’t got - I respect and trust that and I want her to be able to
express that. I think we have built up a relationship where we can discuss the
work. I like to give her responsibility because that is her area of expertise, more so
than it is mine. I’m happy to come with questions and bounce ideas off her.

This relationship is personally fulfilling for them both and advantageous to their students who
must benefit from the ability of Bernadette and Melissa to share and assist each other.

As to her relationship with the library staff Bernadette has little to concern her, as any assistance
she receives is both fleeting and unstructured. A clerical assistant, Miriam, from the office staff is
freed up to help supervise the library circulation desk at lunch times. Miriam also gives some aid
in the processing of books and materials for the library shelves. In reality this assistance is only
forthcoming if Miriam can be spared from office duties. This is often not the case. Miriam appears
supportive, and even protective, of the work Bernadette is doing and clearly sees, despite her lack
of library training, that Bernadette is creating positive experiences for the students. She says of
Bernadette’s impact:

What Bernadette has been providing though, the boys are reading - because boys
are asking her for books and she gets them in for them. She seems to know what
the boys like.

Her protectiveness is evident in her concern over Bernadette’s heavy load. Her concern stems from
her own perception that in my role as interviewer I may be suggesting Bernadette is not doing
enough: ‘What she is doing is fine but she shouldn’t do any more. She is too busy.’ Her concern
and admiration are evidence of Bernadette’s ability to build a rapport with staff whom she has
worked with for less than a year. It is also clear that Miriam is appreciative of the level of
Bernadette’s knowledge of both the students and the library collections. She compares this
knowledge level very favourably to that of other teaching staff, an indication of her respect for
Bernadette’s abilities. She said:

She (Bernadette) knows more about the books than anyone else. I think the boys
look up to her to give them advice. She knows their levels - a very important
person in this.

A vastly different relationship has formed between Bernadette and the Vice Principal, Robert, the
member of administration whom Bernadette deals with most. This is a complicated interaction.
While the whole administration is very happy with what Bernadette is attempting to achieve and
they wish her to continue with her efforts, they are not prepared to employ her on the correct pay
scale for the role she is fulfilling. Bernadette feels the administration team, and Robert specifically,
does not truly understand the difficulties she faces. She is aware of the advances made by other
libraries in what they can offer their school communities and sees her present workplace falling behind in these terms. While Robert would like to follow this road of expansion and the creation of a larger and better resourced library, funding is always the primary issue. A school of this size, without different funding structures, cannot provide the resources available in other, much larger and better staffed, school libraries.

Robert claimed to be supportive of Bernadette's efforts as a professionally trained teacher yet their employing her at a lower scale does not reflect a concern for appropriate library staffing. This decision is indicative of the school's need to carefully allocate sparse funding. While the Vice Principal appears to support Bernadette's efforts, her perception of his support, or at least her knowledge of his perceptions of her efforts, is clouded. Though Bernadette has not been there long she already perceives Robert as being unaware of the pressures she faces and feels he is somewhat unsupportive of her. Bernadette said:

The Vice Principal is the only one who has no idea of the pressures that I face.

Though their relationship is on the surface positive – they all have a common goal of a well used, pleasant, inviting library space - Bernadette feels that the administration, and particularly Robert, is unaware of the day-to-day reality of her job. Yet, the interview with Robert found him very supportive of Bernadette's efforts and interested in the whole concept of encouraging the students to be life long readers.

I really think that between years seven and ten, it's a make or break situation as regards a library. We have the public library just across the road. If you don't have them going (to the public library) off their own bat, we have lost it by year eleven.

and

Well, I think Bernadette has got a good handle on what pleasure reading is for the students. As I know, she's very keen on allowing them to read any piece of literature of their choice. I'm very conscious that that should also not be offensive in any way...I'm very conscious we need to break that barrier that seems to be out there. We are concentrating with this age, twelve to sixteen, on making sure that what they do read is pleasurable. Otherwise, as a group, you will have them not reading at all.

This disparity between how Bernadette perceives Robert and his own views on her efforts suggests that either the reality of their interaction is different from what he has reported, or his ability to communicate his positive views to the teacher-librarian is limited. Such a failure on both their parts may lead to future misunderstandings between them.

Despite any difficulty or misconceived perceptions that might mar the relationship between Bernadette and her administration, her relationship with the students is both healthy and productive. Bernadette already has made inroads into creating positive relationships with the students, despite her short time at the school. The relationship between the school community and
the previous teacher-librarian was apparently not always harmonious and all of those interviewed expressed appreciation for the change. Nevertheless, change is taking time, as it is a culture, or attitude, that needs to be reinvented. Students are beginning to see the library as a welcoming, helpful place that they may use for recreational reading as well as for research.

Bernadette is liked by the students and perceived as approachable and helpful, as indicated in the following statements from students:

The library does provide books but I need help because it takes too long to look. Miss knows what I like. [student three]

She’s really kind. She’ll talk to you, and ask you what you like. That’s important. [student four]

Just this year Miss Mc Naughton started getting some decent stuff in.

Before, it was just too old. I don’t even have to go down the shelves. I just come up here. (library desk and workroom) [student four]

Bernadette is seen as able to

‘...give the kids confidence, help them, talk to them and help. She’s really kind. She’ll talk to you and ask you what you like. That’s important. [student three]

Bernadette’s proactive efforts to create a better relationship between the library and the students through her own enthusiasm for, and interest in, reading has been recognised by other members of the school community. The Vice Principal, Robert, said:

She seems to be the first librarian that I have come across that is inviting students to go with her to a YABBA performance and things like that. This is great because there is a hard-core of students that are interested. It’s great to think that Bernadette would take the time to take them with her to meet authors...Initiatives like that are great.

The English teacher, Melissa, also recognises Bernadette’s different approach:

She sits with them as opposed to just being out the back.

She sees Bernadette’s approach as more personal, more interactive, as opposed to the stereotypical view of the librarian who sits cataloguing behind closed doors.

5.6 Library organisation

The library is small by comparison with the facilities in many other secondary schools. The organisation of the library is, of necessity, haphazard. With only one staff member there can be no delineation of tasks between staff. Hours of opening are also a problem. If Bernadette must be elsewhere, the library must be closed, severely limiting access. Policy planning and similar, big picture type planning, is often neglected as the everyday running of the library does not allow for
‘off-duty’ time for Bernadette. That is, she is always accountable to the needs of staff and students in the library as there is no one else to assist, except for a few irregular hours. This ‘time off’ only allows Bernadette the occasional lunch break out of the library and an extra pair of hands when the library is full and busy during lunch breaks.

5.6.1 Access

Bernadette has worked hard during her short time in this position to improve access through a variety of avenues. Making books physically more accessible to the students has been a priority. As we have already seen she:

...started up a stand of good books to read and they know that that is a constant reference point for them for books that I have liked.

Bernadette is aware that access is a continuing issue. She has attempted to move different collections around the library but is very aware of the isolated nature of the collections, with most shelves down one end of the library beyond a classroom seating area (see photograph one). The limitations of physical space, and lack of extra funding, mean this arrangement will not be easily overcome. The issue of access, to the library itself and its various collections, is recognised by other College staff as important. Previous teacher-librarians have not always been welcoming to student usage of materials. One of the English teachers, Melissa, said:

The students don't have to ask, they can just look. That sometimes can be intimidating. Easy access, books not stuck down the back like ours might be.

Providing access to materials goes beyond the physical availability of items. The knowledge base and subsequent advisory role of the teacher-librarian can facilitate access for students by allowing them to easily find what best suits their needs.

Bernadette has consciously shared her knowledge of materials, their story lines, levels and readability, with both staff and students. She is aware that teaching staff now defer to her as someone knowledgeable in the area of reading materials available for the secondary market. Already, after only a few months in the position, there is some evidence of Bernadette’s relaxed and open attitude confronting a more constrained classroom style. Bernadette is also very aware of the lack of reading role models. She said:

No one reads adolescent material, they defer to me and they act like I might know. They would never consider reading in class. No role models in class, their role is to keep them quiet.

Bernadette is offering an alternative view of both the library and possible interactions with books. This is proving popular with both students and staff as one that is more relaxed than the structured, silent approach to reading that presently operates within the English classroom. The efforts by Bernadette, outlined in the earlier discussion of her attitude to reading, such as sharing her own
reading diary and forming relationships with students that foster reading talk, are providing the students with more positive reading models than they find within the English classroom. Having only recently inherited the collection Bernadette is consciously working to familiarize herself with what is held in the library, while noting what areas need to be improved. The recent installation of a new carpet has necessitated moving the collection, enabling Bernadette to weed and assess materials as part of the process. This has been seen as valuable by all concerned. The Vice Principal, Robert, observed:

Bernadette has been forced to look at, and consider, every book and item in the library and consider "should we put it back?". She has also had to work with Heads of the KLAs (Key Learning Area) over material. She has been forced to go through this process, which has worked out well. It will give her a better feel, being new.

The extensive knowledge base held by Bernadette (due to her interests and studies in the area) has enabled her to see ways of improving the collection. She is aware of its limitations already. She said:

I'm trying to go through the collection. There seem to be things that you think should be there that aren't. I think of something for a boy and go to the shelves and we don't have it. Gaps, always gaps.

This ability to assess a collection effectively, in terms of its user's needs, is an indication of the extent of the knowledge base of this particular teacher-librarian. Without this ability she would find it very difficult to improve her library at all in terms of its reading environment. The inroads Bernadette has already made towards buying more wisely for the needs and interests of the students has already been recognised by them. Student four said during his interview: 'she's got a better set of books.'

The structured reading program in this school is part of the English curriculum and offers another forum for students to access library materials and also have productive interaction with the teacher-librarian.

Each English class attends the library on a regular basis once a week, as part of this wider reading program. There is, though, an undercurrent of antagonism towards this structured approach. The program is obviously a directive from administration that is not embraced by all staff. Melissa said:

It's school policy that the students come once a week. We don't have a say about that. It's part of the assessment here. It's not up for discussion.

While the class is in the library, Bernadette usually gives a very brief book talk about new titles or books she thinks might interest the students. This is sometimes linked to their classroom text. Bernadette is then involved with the conferencing of students in conjunction with the teacher. This involves talking to the student about the book that they have read, establishing their knowledge of
the book and discussing interesting aspects of the novel with them. Bernadette also uses this process to get to know the student’s tastes and reading ability in an effort to better recommend future reading material. To further encourage this system, in what is otherwise a rather dry and structured approach to wide reading, Bernadette has constructed a points system:

I have also initiated points for what they read and how well they conference, linked to reading level, because I found good readers were reading easy things and strugglers were trying but getting nowhere. Points are cool and they can earn bonus marks – they get book prizes at the end of term.

This system appears to encourage the junior students, particularly year seven. Bernadette has constructed a game board to make the program a lot more fun for all concerned:

We also have a game (and for) every novel that they read and conference they get a game coupon. They can play with this, answer literary based questions, if they answer correctly, they get prizes: photocopies, canteen vouchers, fine paid vouchers and lucky dips.

Bernadette has very wisely worked to make her time in the library more constructive and interesting. She has worked effectively to change the program from within. A great deal of the problem with the program appears to have been the directive that each student must read three novels a term, a policy some of the less able readers have had difficulty with. Bernadette has worked hard to buy and promote books the students like, and can read. In the past, students were left to find material for themselves; difficult for those already discouraged due to their lack of ability. Bernadette’s initiatives have made the whole process a better experience for all concerned.

In conjunction with this wider reading encouragement, Bernadette is also a valued member of the English team. She said:

English is my other method. I go to all meetings and I have an equal say about what they study.

Though she is relatively new to the job, it is apparent that her input has had a positive impact and been valued by both staff and students. Student three, from year nine, recognises Bernadette’s ability to assist his fellow students:

They encourage us. Like for the kids that don’t read so well, she gets little books and gives them the same points as the harder ones. When you get conferenced, she gives you points on how well you can explain it. Like a raffle, you get prizes. I don’t do it, I get bored of it. For kids in year seven or eight – it’s a good idea.

All of Bernadette’s efforts are directly related to her own positive attitudes towards reading and her students as readers. Her personal interaction and enthusiasm have been carried over into all of her efforts to rejuvenate the wider reading program for the English Department and improve the students’ access to the library’s collections through all possible avenues.
5.6.2 Ambience

*It's got to be a place where kids want to go.*
*(Robert – Vice Principal)*

The library has a relaxed feel. Bernadette has been in the position for not yet a year so students and staff are gradually becoming accustomed to her approach and attitude towards the library, its usage and the students. She described her efforts, sometimes difficult, to change perceptions:

> We are also trying to change the environment. They weren’t able to use this as a place of pleasure reading or for other activities – we are trying to change this, so they don’t actually come in and get yelled at. This is taking some time. I’m hoping they might soon come in to read. At the moment at lunchtime we wouldn’t get anyone coming in to read.

A number of students who used the library while I was present appeared happy with, and enthusiastic about, the library and what it had to offer them. They appeared comfortable with the atmosphere that Bernadette is trying to create and aware that they could get help from her if they needed it.

Both staff and students compared this to their experience of the previous teacher-librarian. The Vice Principal, Robert, particularly, appeared very aware of the power of the attitude or personality of the teacher-librarian and how this affected the ambience of the library. It appeared to have been part of the criteria they considered when recently filling the position. He spoke at some length on this feeling that is created by the personality of the person in charge of the library:

> ...this (the library) is a vibrant, interesting place. It’s not just a stagnant place where the books are out of date and the librarian is an old bag that the students cannot relate to. That’s important, because we have had those in the past, your “dragon lady”...I think it is disappointing because they (the students) see the library as a place they don’t want to go because of the person in charge.

and

> I would hope, and I believe it’s being done, that the library is seen as being a fun place to go to. For that to be a fun place to go to it all boils down to the person in charge being that fun type of person that allows students to go in there without feeling inhibited about “don’t touch this.” They can go in there and play chess, read some books, go and ask Bernadette about a novel.

Melissa, one of the English teachers, was also very strongly committed to the view that Bernadette had done a great deal to change the feel of the library. She said:

> I have seen kids sitting there (in the library) recently who, in the four years here, have probably never been in the library, outside of being forced. Bernadette has created an environment where there is reading material but they don’t have to read, but they can, they aren’t going to be marked on it.

and
She can aim books at different students and tends to informally discuss books with students. I think that that is important for another reason as well - it creates that atmosphere, its got to be a comfortable place...away from the classroom, a positive atmosphere - so that reading’s not a punishment. We are not going to tie you down to the chair and make you do it. It’s a positive thing.

These comments strongly reflect Bernadette’s earlier discussed attitude towards the students as readers and library users, and to the students as learners. They are a result of her relaxed attitude towards her relationship and interaction with them. This more welcoming attitude is backed up by, and reinforced through, her knowledge of books and ability to convey her knowledge and enthusiasm to her students.

While Bernadette has been able to modify some of what the perception of the library is through her own markedly different attitude, other areas of the library’s organisation are not so easily changed. The library space itself is small and somewhat shabby (see photographs one and two). It is a rectangular space with workrooms and circulations desk at one end, arranged with tables in a structured grid pattern. The bookshelves run down either wall, with the majority of the collection to be found in the rows of bookshelves at the far end of the library (see photograph one). Bernadette is aware of the restrictions of the space, architecturally, but also lays some of the blame for the library’s constrained layout with the behaviour of the students and the school’s strategies for dealing with this behaviour.

There aren’t any areas for casual reading and that is what I don’t like, but we are required by the behaviour of the students to have the tables set up that way (evenly spaced rows – see photograph one). That is the only way. We have got to have places where some boys can be separated.

Though Bernadette appears concerned with this approach and is keen to change perceptions and explore other ways of working with the students, she is limited at present by the behaviour itself, and the established policies for handling the behaviour. There is a feeling of survival first. In order to improve the feel within the library space, a change to the seating arrangements would need to be made.

The walls are plain and, though the space is tidy and well used, it could not be described as overly warm or inviting. Some attempts have been made to rectify this with a number of displays, though these are limited to the pin boards and posters on walls. In making attempts to alleviate this atmosphere and improve the surroundings, Bernadette is markedly different from the previous teacher-librarian. She explained:

I was told by previous staff that doing display was wasting my time. I gather from this attitude that display was unrelated to books – I have been trying to do author stuff that hasn’t been done before.

Bernadette’s efforts to construct displays related to, and using, student work has not gone unnoticed. This indicates that, despite an outward appearance of not ‘seeing’ their surroundings
students are very aware of the efforts made to improve a space. Many noticed that changes for the better had been made. Student four said:

In the past there hasn't been much done. Lately, like especially this year, there has been advertising around the school, posters in the library.

It is evident that Bernadette is attempting to change the ambience of the library, and the consequent educational outcomes through changes to layout and organisation. Her efforts, though, are minimal and limited, as the funds are not there for major work of any kind. Nevertheless, at this point, she is prepared to try what she can. It is clear that even these small changes are improvements that are working to alter both staff and students' perceptions. Bernadette said:

I'm also trying to create little areas which haven't existed before like picture story and magazines, sports and computers which they haven't had before.

and

The fiction is also lost against the wall (see photograph one). Ideally, I would like to move it but I'm not sure where.

and

I did move the picture books out to a more prominent area and they are now looked at constantly.

Despite the limitations of the library layout, Bernadette, new to the appointment, remains positive and able to see the strengths of the space. She said:

I like the fact that it is open, and well lit - I can see everywhere from the desk. With often no other staff, and the fact that I supervise the computer room (off to one side of the library) at lunchtime, I have to be able to see easily.

This positive attitude must be considered important. Despite massive restrictions the ability to remain positive must affect all areas of work and enable one to continue to be innovative despite the odds. A negative view of the situation would impact on the attitude of all involved to the detriment of the service.

5.7 External factors

The lack of funds at St Peter's is an obvious limiting factor for the entire school program. Perhaps due to both her positive attitude and her recent appointment to the position Bernadette's first reaction to any question about the budget is a positive one. She said:

I think its pretty good - it could be better. I suppose we would all like to have more money. There are gaps that will need to be filled in the next few years that will take a special injection of funds. The principal has said that he is willing to listen.
At other moments in the interview, in relation to specific needs, Bernadette is less enthusiastic and very aware that the size of the school, and subsequent lack of funds, limits the programs and resources that she is able to provide. She said:

   We have to work with what we have - there is no extra money.

and

   We are behind the times - Internet etc. - no funding.

This lack of funds is a major limiting factor in every sense and will continue to be so unless major changes occur for this particular school.

Staffing is a very difficult issue in this workplace. Bernadette is justly annoyed that her qualifications are needed, yet not recognised in any monetary sense. As previously outlined, Bernadette is paid as a librarian, yet often finds herself ‘teaching’ students in various roles. The difference in pay between a librarian and a teacher-librarian is quite significant.

It is apparent that this issue is one that may eventually lead Bernadette to seek work elsewhere in a position that recognises her qualifications. For the moment her current enthusiasm for this new position has led her to prioritise carefully, to use her time as best she can in light of the school’s needs. Bernadette explained:

   I try to give priority to the boys because that is what I’m here for but, sometimes, I just have to do the other things - orders, payments, answer the intercom.

At present, the school decision to employ a qualified person in a lesser position while still expecting them to, or hoping they will, perform the duties that they have been trained for, is working to the school’s advantage. How long Bernadette can find such a situation rewarding and interesting remains to be seen.

Bernadette’s perceptions of the level of support she receives from members of the administration differ between the Vice Principal and the Principal. This has been partially discussed in the section on relationships. Bernadette sees the two members of administration as vastly different. She said:

   The Principal is really good. He gives me whatever I need because he knows if I ask I really need it. He’s very good. He knows I am different and trying to change things. The Vice Principal is the only one who has no idea of the pressures that I face.

Bernadette perceives the Vice Principal as generally unsupportive, or unaware, of her efforts. In the interview he appears accommodating and supportive. He said:

   I’d like to think I’m supportive of what she does without being dictatorial. My door is always open and Bernadette knows that. I back up problems of a mundane nature, chasing up of boys, accountability.
It is difficult to ascertain what exactly has caused this difference of view but it is obvious that Bernadette may find it difficult to work constructively with the Vice Principal in the future if she continues to view him as unsympathetic to the library and its needs. Hartzell, an American commentator in this area, has said:

It's important to keep in mind that legislators, board members, and administrators - like the rest of us - make decisions on the basis of perceptions (2002b).

Ultimately, any support of the library and Bernadette's efforts is only superficial if the school fails to recognise her qualifications and the needs of the job they are asking her to perform, upgrading her status and pay accordingly.

5.8 In summary

_They have had a teacher librarian in the past, now they employ me as a librarian - it all comes down to money._

_It is a small school. I had to mind a class yesterday because there just weren’t enough teachers._

(Bernadette – teacher-librarian)

Bernadette is enthusiastic, interested in, and knowledgeable about the reading experiences of her students. In terms of Chambers's views of the reading environment, there is evidence that Bernadette sees a role for herself as an 'enabling adult' (Chambers, 1991) and is consciously constructing this role. At the time that the interviews took place, she had not yet been at the school for a full year and was, consequently, still finding her place. Yet the interviews and observation definitely revealed that she was having an impact on the way staff and students perceived the library. Her impact was positive and encouraging. Bernadette had certainly made attempts to create an environment within the library that was more conducive to reading and generally more welcoming as a whole. Her concern, to make the library collections more accessible for the students, and her desire to create a welcoming space, sit well with Chambers's view. Despite the limitations of poor library layout, low funding levels and patchy support, Bernadette is an enabling adult. Chambers sees the primary role of an enabling adult, actively creating a reading environment in their school, as central to his own argument on how to create better reading experiences for students (Chambers, 1991). The major area of concern that Bernadette has been able to influence and alter is access. As we have seen in chapter three, this factor is identified by many major commentators as one of the most crucially important influences on the effective interactions between students and books.

Chambers has said 'readers are made by readers' (1991, p 87), and in this particular school we have a conscious reader of young adult fiction in Bernadette, someone who is keen to pass on her own knowledge to her students and fellow teachers. Her sharing of her own reading diary with
students is a very personal and effective example of how she has attempted to share her own knowledge in an effort to benefit her students. Her knowledge of young adult literature in all of its forms and her ability to share this knowledge, is well recognised by her teaching colleagues and has helped to create positive and affirming relationships with her fellow teachers.

As part of the creation of a better library service for this school, Bernadette is very aware of the attitudinal problems that surrounded the previous teacher-librarian. She has consciously attempted to present a different face for the library through her own positive and enthusiastic outlook. Her aim has been to attract students to the library rather than drive them away, while previous library workers have appeared ‘crabby’ and unwelcoming.

Many attempts have also been made to form lasting relationships based on this new attitude. While bonds have been built with teaching staff through her interest in sharing her expertise, other similarly strong bonds have already been developed with students. Teaching staff, administration and students have all commented on her willingness to be available, helpful and welcoming leading to a greatly improved relationship between the library and the students that it serves. Gains such as these affect all areas of the library’s operation. Young (1987) noted that it is these strong relations that facilitate, stimulate and support young people’s interactions with books.

These attempts to create an environment through positive attitudes, a good knowledge base, relationships, and improvements in the accessibility of the collection, are all markers of a good ‘enabling adult’. Bernadette appears prepared to do the work to create something that she sees as worthwhile. Her approach is reminiscent of the views of Pat Scales, winner of the American Librarian of the Year award in 1997, who stated in an interview:

I’m afraid we want formulas to get kids to read - and bells and whistles. It doesn’t take that; it takes building a relationship with students, and it takes turning reading into an experience (Scales in Atkinson, 1997, p 114).

While it is clear that Bernadette has done a great deal in a short time to begin creating a vibrant reading environment, all of her efforts are hampered, to some degree, by the limitations facing this particular school.

The majority of Bernadette’s problems and challenges stem from the school’s lack of size and subsequent lack of necessary funds. A secondary school of less than two hundred students must find it difficult to offer the full complement of expected facilities and programs that would be offered at an average secondary school. As commentators such as Hartzell (1997, 1999) have noted, in times of budget cuts, it is often the library program that is hit first and, often, the hardest. This particular school library is an example of this, though it is apparent that the entire school has been coping with financial difficulties for some time. The most extreme example of this is the school’s flouting of any moral obligation to pay its employees in line with their qualifications and experience.
Though the incumbent is a qualified teacher-librarian, she is employed as a librarian on lower wages and required to play an emergency replacement role as a teacher within the wider school when needed. As she is not paid as such, Bernadette is not required to teach classes in research skills or work on promoting reading in any more than a supportive model. Of her own volition, though, she often goes beyond this role and fulfills the role of teacher-librarian. This staffing arrangement means this school fits into the 88% of Victorian secondary school libraries that are being run by a qualified teacher-librarian (Welch & Braybrook, 2002). This certainly calls for more investigation of the true nature of who is staffing libraries and whether they are being paid in accordance with their qualifications and experience.

The lack of funding permeates all areas of the library’s operation, translating into both a lack of materials and a lack of time. Collection management, furniture layout, display, wider reading programs and support of the general curriculum are all affected by the lack of funds.

Interestingly, the lack of funds has caused this library to remain concentrated on reading promotion as its central role. Funding is not available for anything more than basic computer resources within the library. Consequently, Bernadette has not felt any pressure or need to emphasize the technology related aspect of the library’s role within the school and is under no pressure, unlike other larger institutions, to expand and investigate online, and other, database searching beyond a minimal level.

There is no doubt that the teacher-librarian at St Peter’s is attempting to create a warm, inviting environment. Bernadette has begun to form good, positive relationships with all members of the school community. Students and staff see her as a facilitator. Students seek out her advice for their reading experiences, and she has the knowledge base and skills to convey her own enthusiasm for reading and improve the students’ access to the books that they need. It is the external factors of budget allocations and the very small size of the school that hold Bernadette back from doing anything large scale to alleviate the inherent problems of her situation.
6. ‘Technology road’: Green Hills College

6.1 The school

Green Hills College is an independent, co-educational secondary school in the outer north eastern suburbs of Melbourne. The school caters for 800 students in year’s seven to twelve, most of whom come from the suburbs immediately surrounding the school. Some students do attend from further away, predominantly the north eastern section of Melbourne. There is also a primary school component of the college that has its own separate library. This library is under the direction of the Head of Library, yet operates autonomously.

6.2 The teacher-librarian

The teacher-librarian at Green Hills, Andrew Walters, has only just commenced his time at this school; having been there for less than a year at the time the interviews took place. He has an interesting educational background. With his original degree in primary teaching as well as a Bachelor of Arts (honours), he also holds two PhD’s, one in history the other in library science. Andrew is a practiced professional of some experience; this is not his first position in charge of a library service. Andrew has a personal passion for technology and how it can assist in the development of libraries and education in general. His most recent post-graduate study for a PhD in Library Science looked at libraries of the future, particularly the future use of technology.

6.3 The library

The library is relatively large and modern, with a pleasant blue colour scheme and relatively new furniture. It is obvious, though, that with the need to fit more tables and computer benches the space has been squeezed outwards, with shelves and book stands being pushed further back as more space is needed for seating. Though open and airy, the library does have a somewhat cramped feel (see photograph four). An extension to the space has been promised for the future and this would vastly improve the layout.

The reading area, shown in photograph three, though visually appealing, has not been found to be functional. Students seated in this space tend to be easily distracted by those around them. Library staff have also found that the display boards on the wall behind these seats are severely limited in their use as seated students interfere with displayed items, either by accident, or on purpose. Shelving around the top of this unit, designed to be used for display, is for the same reason, not
often used. This space is only conducive to reading for very small numbers of students that can spread out and ‘lounge’ on this style of bench. The space does not often get used in such a way, as space is at a premium in this library.

Photograph four illustrates how this library has grown in an unorganised fashion, leading to tables and benches placed in any open space. Off to the left from this view are more benches for computers, AV storage and viewing rooms, to the right is more seating for research classes and the non-fiction shelving. The most spacious area is a very large and open entrance ramp leading up to the circulation desk from a lower level outside. This ramp, and its open spacious feel, illustrate how this library was probably first designed to look some years ago. The library is certainly in need of expansion and desperately in need of a new vision for layout that would incorporate all of the facets of the library’s operation.
6.4 The attitudes of the teacher-librarian

Andrew is a positive, interesting and flamboyant character. Within his field of interest and expertise, he brings to this school library a passion and colour that are sought after.

However, Andrew's attitude to the library's role as a reading environment is unclear. He claims to see a role for the library in reading promotion but, in practice, it is not something he wishes to undertake himself. He lays the responsibility for having no structured program with the English Department, yet he appears to have no intention of playing an active part in improving this. He has also relegated the role of reading promotion to the library technician. This both undervalues the role and gives it to a staff member who already has a full workload and no apparent training or expertise in the area. Andrew is aware of the library technician's reluctance and the inadequacy of this plan, but is not, at present, able to see any other solution.

The library's role in creating a reading environment is not a high priority for Andrew. He is aware of the historical importance of the role, both at his own school and in the history of the profession of teacher-librarianship, but his actions illustrate that he sees the future of libraries belonging elsewhere.

Andrew's attitude is coloured by his own views on the future role of the teacher-librarian as his own research towards a PhD explored the role of the teacher-librarian in the year 2010. He stresses the importance of technology and the research component of the role of the teacher-librarian in both his research results and his own personal attitudes. He sees himself as fulfilling the role of
future teacher-librarians now, believing himself to be ahead of his time in his skill levels and mastery of the available technology.

When asked about reading and his role in encouraging it, Andrew immediately spoke of the function of reading and interpreting information on a web site. He said:

I think that we still have a big role to play in reading. Technology has made it very easy to say I want to know everything about seals, go to a web site on seals and print it and then that's it, and quite frankly they'll do that and not even read it. By making them go through our home web page I'm attempting to make them read and then guide them to sites that will be useful.

His primary goal within the library is the improvement of reading for understanding through his own abilities in the area of constructing useful intranet guides, doubtless a valuable role. Yet he also recognises the need for other forms of reading to be encouraged and claims to be active in encouraging boys in their pleasure reading. This encouragement, while possibly happening, is on a small scale, amongst selected individuals, certainly not part of any formally structured program. Andrew said:

In fiction there is fairly active encouragement of boys reading, targeted by me. It's a concern of the middle school coordinator and I have taken it on board as something I should do. A couple of the English teachers are now getting involved. It's a worry. Angela's (head of middle school) figures showed we only had about 20% of boys doing any sort of reading at all. That's not enough for them to have any sort of guaranteed success later on. Reading is crucial to any success.

He identifies a 'crucial' need, yet is prepared to do very little in a concrete sense to alleviate the problem. His active encouragement has taken the form of one-on-one talks with students already in the library. Such efforts will have minimal whole school impact. Andrew's main answer is to recognise the need in his library for another teacher-librarian, one who concentrates on the promotion of reading. Andrew says:

The problem with library roles, as I see it, is that we are not really dropping any roles we are just adding to it.

He is not suggesting that the role of reading encouragement be 'dropped', he sees this role as 'crucial', yet it is not a role that he sees for himself.

Despite the lack of library involvement, the junior students still have a timetabled period in the library for wide reading. Andrew is very aware that many members of the English Department would like greater involvement from the library in this program. Many recall previous teacher-librarians working constructively with the students. Andrew is reluctant to take on this role, a fact which has led to apparent tensions between himself and some English staff. In describing what takes place now, Andrew said:

The junior levels have a compulsory reading class every cycle - the way that works is that they come in and they are meant to be involved with the
environment, select a book, sit down and read it. The coordinator likes them to be uninterrupted and just get in here, get a book, and sit down. Some teachers would be happy to have library staff take their whole class for them, others would be happy if we spent five minute introducing new books. So it doesn’t necessarily work out the way the department expects.

One of the English teachers, Liam, described the situation in the following way:

The previous librarian was more involved in the English classes, Andrew hasn’t this year. She (the previous teacher librarian) would take the kids and talk. It’s been a bone of contention amongst the library staff it seems - it doesn’t worry me too much. The library staff have stood back (other library staff), it’s really something that would have been Andrew’s role, and it’s not something that he’s really interested in. His predecessor certainly spent five minutes or so introducing new books. It might be in part political - as to who will read all of the books and prepare.

When this same English teacher was asked about what he had seen the library do to promote reading the first thing he did was laugh, then said:

Andrew himself is very interested in IT, fiction is not really his cup of tea. He’s encouraging kids in that area (the area of Information Technology, particularly the world wide web). I don’t necessarily agree with everything he is trying to do. We have differences, but that is his area and that’s fine.

In an answer to a question about whether he felt that the library had a major role to play in the promotion of reading Andrew answered:

It’s very hard, I’ve only been here 12 months and there are 800 students. I think there is an impact but I don’t know as I’d go so far as to say a major role. And the English faculty might argue black and blue that I don’t even exist.

His answer appears, at first, cautious, knowing that his attempts have been ad hoc, certainly not noteworthy in their impact. He is very aware of the English Department’s concerns and needs, but is not motivated to do anything to alleviate the situation, other than encourage the untrained, uninterested, library staff member to take up the role that the English Department sees as his. His usage of the phrase ‘argue black and blue’ implies he is aware of the strong, heartfelt opinions held by the English staff.

In answer to a question about the ideal role of the teacher-librarian Andrew said:

I see the modern Teacher Librarian as spending a lot more time alongside individual students - encouraging them to read, and find information. A lot of the non-fiction is to come from non-print sources, a lot of time dealing with technology. I think the primary function of the teacher-librarian, as I see it, is to, in the background, make the material available that will be most used and, on the surface, encourage and help students to locate and evaluate the material that they are using, be it a novel, or technology based. Very much a personal relationship with students, sitting right next to them saying ‘what are you getting?’ ‘Is it reliable?’ ‘Is it worth reading?’ ‘Is it what you will want to read to the end?’ ‘Are you getting what you want?’ And, ‘how could you streamline the process?’
This role sees the teacher-librarian as a one-on-one aid to the research process. Andrew at no time expresses any interest in working with students on a whole class basis, either in his area of expertise with IT, or in literature enhancement. Whilst this individual attention is valuable and necessary, as a whole school approach, it is somewhat naive. With one teacher-librarian and 800 students his ability to reach many students in this way is severely restricted.

Andrew’s primary drive as a teacher-librarian stems from his own views as to the importance of ICT for the library of the future. He said:

Technology is going to play a bigger and bigger part, but I see that as non-fiction. Fiction and magazines etc, will be around for a long time yet.

Despite his claims that he sees a future for media such as fiction or magazines, Andrew is not prepared in taking a leading role in programs that might provide support for wider reading. Though he sees the provision of technology as crucial, it is for research and not for pleasure. Throughout the interview process, it appeared that statements such as ‘Fiction. will be around for a long time yet’ were tacked on to the end of his statements simply to placate me as a fellow teacher–librarian with a stated research interest in the area.

Andrew sees his role tied very closely to the World Wide Web. He said:

...technology changes have forced us to (greater use of technology). There are far more non-fiction electronic sources so you spend more time looking at them spending time getting familiar with them. I would spend a lot more time looking at the Internet checking for good sites than I did before and, we have got to.

The provision of assistance to staff and students in finding and interpreting what they see on the Internet and library databases is uppermost in Andrew’s view of the library, its purpose and operations. Interestingly, his prime focus is finding the material for teachers and students, not teaching them how to find it for themselves.

In terms of the library’s active role in reading promotion, the loss of what has gone before is recognised by other members of staff. Somewhat wistfully the library technician, Elaine, whom Andrew hopes will take on board literature promotion, said:

We have to move down that technology road here and, ultimately, I think reading will suffer.

6.5 Relationships

Andrew said of his relationship with teachers:
That's fairly sound and improving, particularly though in non-fiction areas, which are my strength - I'm more of a research librarian. But in the fiction areas we are at the moment sitting down with English and asking 'what do you want?' Until they get themselves organized we are a little at a loss.

Andrew's views on the reading program, or reading promotion, shine through this statement. Any program, or organisation, is the responsibility of the English Department. He will not take the lead. There are differing views within this important relationship as to what is expected and what will be forthcoming.

Andrew goes on to lay responsibility at the door of the English Department for any lack of organisation and any evident shortcomings in what is being offered by the school. Despite his ability to shift blame, in his own interpretation of the situation he appears also somewhat contrite, or at least aware, that he does not fulfil the expectations of all of the school's staff as to what he could, and should, provide. In a later statement, he interprets these differing views, in this case those of the library staff, as the views of those wishing to stick with 'tradition'. In this way he seems to set himself up as the technologically aware, forward-thinking model of the teacher-librarian of the future, perhaps even dragging these 'backward' educators into the 21st century, but he is careful not to say such things in an openly forthright manner. The closest he comes is a statement such as:

I think there is that perception, certainly amongst the staff that I have inherited, they had a very traditional Head of Library before me one who specifically was print material orientated, wasn't technology orientated in any shape or form and so a lot of those more traditional things were encouraged.

Despite Andrew suggesting that the two teachers that took part in these interviews were established working colleagues, the relationship between them does not appear to be necessarily close, or overwhelmingly positive. The English teacher, Liam, when asked how they relate to or interact with Andrew in terms of reading promotion said:

There is not a great deal. I get books from other staff, publishers, VATE. The library is still one source of books. There is an avenue open, despite it not being very rich, it's still there.

Asked about the role of the teacher-librarian in regards to reading promotion there was clear evidence that the English teacher, Calvin, saw reading as the English teachers' domain, not in terms of pleasure, or wider reading, but more as analysis of text. He said:

Reading classes are seen as the domain of the English teacher. Working with a whole class, for reading is not really seen as part of their (the library staff) role. There are introductory lectures about the use of technology but that's it. Guidance should come from the teachers, as teachers themselves are supposed to be the readers - Librarians can't be expected to read every text that comes out for every age limit that's catered for by the school.

and
I think the role of the English teacher is to develop an understanding of how texts work and how to construct meanings. That’s not really the librarian’s domain.

Consequently the relationship between the library and the English staff is not strong. The library was a source of material and a sometimes utilised space. Any relationship between Andrew and particular English staff was based primarily on the provision of resources and the use of technology.

The library technician, Elaine, when asked about the reading environment in the school, was forthright, opinionated and passionate. She used the interview to talk about a number of issues that were obviously disturbing her. Elaine’s interview was long and detailed, giving her the chance to verbalise about events that had obviously given her reason to question what the library had been and become. When asked about her views on the library as a reading environment, Elaine detailed the history of the library and its evolution. This long section from her interview serves to illustrate her own relationship with each of the teacher-librarians and the changes that she has seen.

I’ve worked here with three teacher-librarian’s ranging from the very first who was of the old school, with a love of literature - it was a pleasure to watch her work - she had a wonderful memory. She remembered all of the students’ names and what they had read. It was a real experience for me - she loved literature. It was a real experience to watch her work. She was able to spread her love of literature and encourage students. And also English Lit. was still taught as a subject here - I’m talking fifteen years ago. The next teacher-librarian we had came from a junior school - she was quite good in that she took the reading classes and she would introduce books and talk to them...she did have sort of a junior school approach, but, as the years went on we got more into it. I guess she encouraged the students to read and she read a bit herself. Our current teacher-librarian is here, I guess for his love of where we are going not where we have been - and that’s technology. And while he is prepared to provide the resources, we can go out and buy what we want, as long as the money is there.

You can’t help but compare the way it’s gone. Our current teacher-librarian, if he has a love of literature, he certainly, uh, it isn’t obvious. But he has a love of technology and that’s important. That’s, I’m only comparing the two, I’m not putting one of them down.

I think you get so bound up in the day-to-day and where we are going - I mean, today, schools are businesses and to attract the clientele you need to be up with the latest in technology.

The first teacher-librarian is ‘a pleasure’ to watch work, one can sense the enjoyment and passion that obviously was part of this library environment at this time. Elaine’s second experience was less fruitful but they appear to have grown together. The current experience is likened to a ‘business’, no pleasure, the library, and Elaine’s relationship to it, appears to operate on the basis of what ‘has to be done’ to ‘attract clientele’. Her relationship with Andrew is purely professional and somewhat limited. Though she is aware of the necessity of the current direction of the library, there is a somewhat nostalgic, or sentimental, attraction for Elaine to the type of service the library once offered. She does not appear to entertain the idea that the previous, more literature centred,
focus could perhaps sit quite well, in a complementary relationship, with the newer, more
technologically based, form of library service.

The relationship between the school administration and Andrew is strong. It is primarily based on
his skills in the development of technology-based resources, particularly access to the world wide
web for the school community. There is no doubt that the library’s direction is driven by the
administration’s view that this is the ‘road’ to travel in order to remain competitive in the
educational marketplace.

During discussion of the reading environment within the school library, the administration
member interviewed, Angela (Head of Middle School), was aware of the shift away from the
promotion of pleasure reading in its various forms, through English classes etc., to the present lack
of any promotion. She was of the view that any such promotion, or encouragement, was outdated
in this new computer orientated world. She said:

But how do you define a reading environment? For people of my generation we
have to make some quantum leaps, I grew up in an environment where reading
was a quiet, personal time - passive and private. I suspect for a lot of the kids there
is a shift there, it is different...Being able to read complicated manuals etc., is
really a higher order skill, we need to be aware of the other forms of text, not just a
book.

As does Andrew, Angela identifies new ways of reading and new formats to be read. She does not
see a place for a program to promote reading for pleasure in all formats. Although, the world wide
web, and ‘complicated manuals’ are mentioned, they are seen only as reference tools. Reading is
for information collection.

Angela has communicated to Andrew concern for the low reading scores of their students,
especially boys, yet no link is made to the need for a program to support and encourage pleasure
reading of any kind. The only answer at present has been the one-on-one targeting of boys who
linger in the library already.

In his relationship with the students, Andrew again stresses his role in finding web resources to
support them:

My big priority is the go-between from student to teacher. I spend time ferreting
out information and helping. Setting up pages on the web with a start for the class
linking web sites, the library collection videos etc., - I spend a lot of time doing
this.

This is a resource-based, service role not a proactive teaching role. Historically, rather than teach
students how to find the right material within non-fiction collections, teacher-librarians who
avoided this teaching role found it easier to collect the books together for classes in book boxes.
This saved students messing up the shelves and meant they never learnt how to find material for
themselves. Andrew is fulfilling the same role through only collecting and caching material from
the World Wide Web for students, never showing them how, except perhaps in one-on-one circumstances, to find the material themselves.

The students view the library and its staff as supportive though not overly interactive. Student three said:

They're not really going out saying, "read this it's wonderful, you'll like it". They're always there though and they will give you information on books if you want.

Comments such as this reflect the general view of the library staff held by the students who were interviewed. The library staff will help you if you ask - a service rather than a proactive, teaching-orientated view. The library is not seen as innovative in the reading life of students and this view is played out in the statements made by the teaching staff and other library personnel. The library technician, Elaine, said in relation to the student's reading and use of the library collections:

...very few would borrow outside of these class times. It (student reading experiences) certainly doesn't depend on the library or the library staff.

The library / reading relationship experienced by the students is varied. Some see the library as a source of reading material, others do not. Some students see the library as a source of electronic reading material. In none of these interactions is Andrew viewed as a guiding force, or of particular assistance. They said:

(I get) fiction from here, and we have got a case full at home that belong to everyone. Its easier to get them from here than go to a public library, they have good stuff here. [student one]

I read a lot of the stuff from home and I go the Eastdale public library. Once again I don't have much time to come in here and choose a book. Not much from here for pleasure reading. [student two]

I like reading on the Internet. [student three]

When asked about library involvement in reading, student one said:

No it's mostly just English teachers, and that, we had to complete the fantasy book for wider reading. Not library. If you are looking for a book they will help you find them, all of them help.

When asked – "Is the school library a source of reading material?" Student three said:

I go to the public library and I have the Internet at home. Some novels from here. Mum goes down to the public library a lot so I'm there too.

I find what I want most. But, I did want Stephen King, I was looking for IT and they didn't have it, I don't think they (school librarians) like it.
6.6 Library organisation

6.6.1 Access

In this particular school it is Elaine, the library technician, who appears to be reading the majority of adolescent material as part of her role. She said:

I read a lot of adolescent material now. Mainly because I have got limited time and I see that as part of my job.

Andrew encourages this reading by Elaine. He is aware that someone needs to have appropriate knowledge of what is available, popular and accessible if the library is to provide properly for its clientele. Delegating the task to Elaine, though, may not be a solution. Though Elaine is keen and happy to read the books, her interaction with the students in the role of enabling adult is minimal. If she is approached she is open to helping students in personal selection, or helping with the basic task of finding a particular title, but her involvement with the students stops here. Though Andrew hopes she will take a more active role, it appears she is reluctant to step into the role of working with classes or speaking with students in a formal setting. This reluctance is understandable, as it is not part of the job of a library technician.

Andrew's encouragement of Elaine to take on the role of reading promotion is an acknowledgement of the importance of this role. However it is not seen as important enough that he will take up the role himself or find a better solution than the one he has engineered at present. He has acknowledged that what is really needed is a teacher-librarian with a reading promotion background to complement the research and technology focus that he fosters. He has recognised, that in terms of reading adolescent fiction, his experience is minimal and somewhat lacking. When asked if he read adolescent fiction, he responded:

Yes, but not as much as I probably need to.

This lack of a trained, interested, proactive member of the library staff to encourage reading and assist students in their selection must limit the access students have to knowledgeable help and thus limit their overall access. It also denies them a knowledgeable and enthusiastic adult with whom they can discuss their reading experiences.

The lack of an enabling adult to work with students also flows through to some areas of the library's collection management. While Andrew sees himself predominantly as a manager of non-print resources, there is no one, except for interested support staff such as Elaine, to buy constructively for the collection. Elaine's keenness to read adolescent fiction is a great help but, as she does not intentionally interact and discuss reading with the students, her knowledge of their reading tastes and views must be somewhat limited.

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Andrew's management priorities are clear, he sees himself as a facilitator – between subject teachers and students and between the community and technology-based resources. As the Head of the Library this view gives direction to the overall library service and follows the aims of the college as stated by administration. All of the respondents reacted positively to Andrew's stated role in bringing technology to the library and the wider school community it is here that he is improving and extending access.

The opposite can be said for Andrew's input into reading programs, or reading promotion. It is obvious this library offers little in the area, and it is difficult to see how this will change. Though Andrew knew my questions were about his school as a reading environment, he was not able to make available to me any interviewee that had a positive thing to say about his role in this area. Elaine, when asked what the library has done to promote reading, said;

Nothing! Am I sounding a bit harsh.

As noted earlier, the English Department has expected more from Andrew; the relationship is certainly strained. Though access is provided by bringing classes to the library, the resulting interaction between the students and the library collection is limited as no one owns the role of enabling adult.

At present each English class at the junior level (7-10) is timetabled in to the library once per fortnight. Each English teacher uses the time as he/she sees fit. Some concentrate on wider reading, others use the time for research. The library provides the space, and the collection, but very little interaction appears to take place between the library staff and the students, or the teachers, in relation to wider reading promotion. Elaine describes the program and her involvement:

There is no structure, not all of the teachers use that (timetabled English period) some of them come and use it for other things. I'm free as a staff member to go over and help them and recommend books, it isn't part of my job though, as there is no time allocation, so I don't always do it. There is no time to develop a plan or strategy.

6.6.2 Ambience

Andrew has not been in the position of Head of the Library long. He claims to be interested in:

Providing comfortable spots – beanbags, a quiet atmosphere, a positive and friendly welcome.

His work in creating a relationship with the students and a welcoming atmosphere is based around his interaction with the students and their use of the computers, particularly the support he provides through the library intranet. Andrew has a friendly, welcoming demeanour and this has
facilitated the view of the library as an inviting learning space. In terms of the library as a reading environment, though, not a great deal is being undertaken. Angela, the Head of Middle School, commenting on what she has seen done in the library to contribute to a better reading environment, said:

I think that the appearance of magazines and the changes in the subscriptions of magazines that are more electronics based and better displayed is definitely an encouragement to boys. I think there have been conscious moves to attract people that would not normally be seen in the library. I think that moves like learning Internet at lunchtime have been really good. In Andrew’s particular case, I think moving his desk out into the library so that he is visible and not hidden - he is a presence - is good. He is flamboyant, which is good for some kids, there is more of a liveliness, and there is more chatter and engagement, on the occasions that I pass through, instead of the more hushed traditional environment.

Of the library feel, or ambience, one of the English teachers, Calvin, commented:

The difficulty with a library environment is that you can’t make it relaxed and comfortable as you would at home. Most people associate pleasure reading with home and comfort.

This teacher does not see the library as either a pleasurable or a comfortable place for reading – for him it is not working as a reading environment. He said:

The classes are bought to the library because that is where the books are.

The view of the library is certainly not as a pleasant welcoming place. It is purely a storage area offering little, certainly not a favourable alternative to the classroom space. The second teacher, Liam, is similarly unenthusiastic:

They have the reading area but that is too small, cramped, noisy.

Whilst respondents commented on furniture and space and their obvious limitations when questioned about the ambience of the library, they failed to recognise the extent to which staff can alter the ambience. Ambience is more than just physical layout. This may be due to the fact that little is being done in this particular library to encourage or promote reading, or the library as a reading space, by the library staff. Rather than openly comment upon this, respondents are happier to focus on furniture but it is unlikely that the reading environment would change markedly with changes to the space and furniture only.

In terms of physical area this library must have once been spacious and inviting, but time has changed that. The entrance to the library is up a long sweeping ramp that gives the illusion of space. It is only the entrance, though, that is open and uncluttered. The physical layout of the library is somewhat cramped and lacks order. Areas of the library have been added and changed over time with little adherence to the overall smooth running and clean lines necessary for an efficient use of space. This issue was explored in the initial description of the library at the beginning of the chapter and is best illustrated by photograph two. Andrew is aware of this
limitation and has put plans in train to remedy the space issues. He claims plans are already underway for an extension with new furniture and ‘drastic alteration’ to the layout.

Display is a problem, Andrew said:

We have got practically no area. There is a tiny stand out there but there isn’t room for it. When we get five classes in maximum they knock anything over.

Like many older libraries that have attempted to incorporate new technology into already crowded spaces this school library is feeling the strain. The student population has grown, as has the need to incorporate ICT into the library environment. Compared to other libraries though, even some in this study, this library is comparatively well off in terms of space and furniture. More could be done to rearrange present furniture, remove clutter and create more display space on blank walls. The impression given is that all spare dollars and spare minutes are given to achieving in the area of developing ICT.

6.7 External factors

External factors are many and various, but in most instances financial considerations are at the root of any issue. Lack of funds affects any school, and Green Hills is no exception. Lack of funds obviously affects the library service in relation to both staffing and collection development. When asked about budget allocations, Andrew replied:

Only just adequate and falling.

Elaine, touching on this topic, saw the predominance of technology in the library as a demon necessity: ‘We have to go this way.’ In her view, a lack of money meant any literary or book emphasis was bound to face a lack of support. It is apparent that the large outlays on new and expensive technologies can drain resources from other areas unless large levels of adequate funding are accessible. As in any institution, when this happens cuts must be made and programs will fall by the wayside. In this particular school, lack of funds has largely contributed to the lack of a vibrant reading environment. This has come about through a lack of funding for specialist staff. This is not to say that this school library is deprived in any sense, as it is not. It is just that decisions made on the allocation of funds have seen some areas depleted in favour of the expansion of ICT.

Andrew is aware of his lack of both expertise and interest in the promotion of reading and is conscious of the need for another teacher-librarian to fill this need. He said:

Good but needs one more - specialty literature.

and
if I had my dream come true I’d have another Teacher Librarian in here whose specialty was literature. That would complement the system. It's very necessary to get that additional teaching capacity going - 800 students and only one teacher in the library - you can't be everything.

Though the school is keen to expand its ICT involvement and sees the library as a focal point of this expansion, they have not allowed adequate funds for the library's traditional involvements to continue. Something must always deteriorate in such an exchange and, in this case, it is the reading environment. Andrew's attempt at a solution - to encourage the library technician, Elaine, to take an active role, is not working. Unless more appropriate staffing levels are reinstated only the most basic of service will continue to be offered in this library.

Funding levels and staffing allocations are set by administration. The administration member interviewed for Green Hills, Angela, opened her statements on the whole idea of pleasure reading and what it meant to her in a school context by saying:

I think it really comes back to what you think the function of a school library actually is. I do not believe that it is a primary function of a school library to provide extensive pleasure reading for kids. I think that actually that function is taken up quite well by community libraries.

Her immediate bias is apparent. Such a strong attitude must affect decision making in relation to staffing, funding and general resource allocation. Angela was very supportive of the technology emphasis within the school as a whole and openly dismissive of the role of the school library in the encouragement of reading. She went on to say:

To have a passion for reading and things written is really important … Teachers in secondary schools themselves have really varied backgrounds in terms of their own appreciation of the written word, and their ability to use the written word, and encourage their students to improve their general literacy. I think, that is then, a very important area for the teacher librarian to be able to equip the students (in) and if that means that some of the staff who might not really pick up a book might discover the library that’s a very great thing. But I think to facilitate the students learning, and to help them to use the resources well and efficiently is important. And to be able to recommend wider reading, and the ability to supplement, it really is a support service isn't it?

This was a fascinating response to record. After first dismissing reading for pleasure as a public library preoccupation, she went on to espouse the power of books and the reading experience. In some regard I think the interview process gave this particular respondent a great deal to contemplate in terms of what the school was doing and why.
6.8 In summary

*We have to move down that technology road here and ultimately I think reading will suffer.*

(Elaine - Library Technician)

Andrew is operating in a generally well-resourced, well-staffed environment. Funds are forthcoming and projects that meet the charter and vision of the school - technology related enhancement of the curriculum - are taken on-board enthusiastically. A major refurbishment of the library space is planned. Andrew is the only qualified teacher-librarian on staff and he has been employed specifically because of his experience with, and interest in, the development of electronic resources. There is a strong feeling that the emphasis on technology is administration driven. The views of administrators and their potential support is vital to what takes place within any library, as noted by both Henri and Hay (1996) and Hartzell (1999). Administration chooses those who will work in their library, where funds are spent and, ultimately, give direction, and the overall sense of purpose to the library. The library is one area of the school that is often viewed as a very important showcase of the school’s philosophy. All of these factors seem to play a part in the make-up of this particular library and there is no doubt that, with the recent appointment to the position of Head of Library of Andrew, the administration has sought to appoint someone who has a similar vision, and can assist them in achieving their aims.

As a new member of staff, Andrew is still feeling his way. It is evident that there is support and encouragement for his vision and ideas for a library-supported intranet providing resources to support the curriculum. Whilst this is a valuable aim for any school library, in this particular instance it appears to be at the cost of other library programs that operated in this school previously.

Andrew’s passion for technology and its applications has enthused a number of students who have an interest in this area and many of these students can be seen using the library computers and seeking his assistance. In this way, Andrew is an enabler, an enabler of the use of electronic resources, and, as such, is encouraging one form of reading. Unfortunately, this does not appear to carry through to other areas of the library’s operations. He is not an enabler of student’s interest in, or access to, more traditional reading formats. With only a limited number of computers for student access any effort to promote reading in this format can only be limited in its ability to provide for the student population.

The budget for book buying in this library is healthy and new fiction is purchased regularly. The library support staff undertakes most of the selection, with Andrew taking only a supervisory role. While Andrew has expressed a knowledge that his staffing and library program could benefit from the instigation of a greater involvement in reading promotion within the school, he has chosen to
head in other directions. He is encouraging Elaine to take up the mantle of reading promotion and, though she is a keen reader, any more than a cursory interaction with the students is unlikely.

This school is an example of those schools in the wider community who appear to have an either/or attitude towards technology and historical areas that were emphasized within the curriculum. As discussed in the professional context section of chapter three the profession of teacher-librarianship as a whole is in a state of flux, undergoing, as Welch has termed it, a ‘paradigm shift’ (Welch & Braybrook, 2002). Decisions are made constantly in libraries as to what form of service they will offer to their communities. Faced with new and exciting options, many are choosing to emphasize particular aspects of library service. In this library, rather than continuing with previous approaches to reading promotion and extending these, as well as moving into new areas, certain factors have led to the library taking a very technology-based direction at the expense of other programs. At Green Hills, Andrew has expressed recognition of the need for another teacher-librarian with expertise in the promotion of young adult literature to even up the balance and help the library offer a fuller and more comprehensive program. Funding at this school is generous, but no pot is bottomless. Such limitations make such a complementary appointment unlikely.
7. Patchwork - Meadow Valley Secondary College

7.1 The school

Meadow Valley Secondary College is a co-educational, government secondary school catering for students in years seven to twelve. It is located in the North Western suburbs of Melbourne, and has an enrolment of approximately 550 students. Catering for students from a low socio-economic base and a variety of ethnic backgrounds, this school has various ongoing problems; difficult behaviour, lack of application to studies, and poor retention rates in the later years of schooling. Despite this, the school has benefited from extra funding and the provision of special programs to assist with its diverse population. The grounds are spacious and the buildings pleasant and well maintained.

7.2 The teacher-librarian

The teacher-librarian in charge of this library, Cathy Dalton, has a varied educational past. She holds a Law degree as well as a Bachelor of Arts, a Diploma of Education and a Graduate Diploma in Librarianship. This is her first position back in a school after ten years working elsewhere and on family duties. During her time away she completed the Law degree. Cathy is well settled here and has been in the role of Head of Library for a few years.

7.3 The Library

Though it is not easily seen in the photographs, the library layout at Meadow Valley, as with others in this study, has changed in response to the need for expansion of the computer facilities. Space for purpose-built tables and more computers has impinged upon open spaces and various library collections. Photograph five shows the fiction collection, which runs along the wall. Beyond the tables for class use is a cramped area of non-fiction shelving that has been pushed further and further back to accommodate a large rectangular arrangement of at least a dozen computers. This computer area dominates the library space, with many of the other sections appearing as after-thoughts. Like the larger, more affluent private school, Green Hills, Meadow Valley would also benefit from a redesigned library space with more thought given to how each section of the library is situated. Meadow Valley could do a great deal to improve the space they have through better arrangement of furniture and facilities. Such a plan was not mentioned by anyone.
Photograph five – The fiction collection at Meadow Valley. It runs flat against the wall with tables directly in front for class research.

Photograph six – The Reading Rainbow created by the junior students at Meadow Valley. This hangs in the centre of the open space near the entrance doors and the circulation desk.
7.4 The attitudes of the teacher-librarian

Cathy sees her students as readers with a limited range of preferences and reading abilities, not interested in ‘respectable’ literature. Though she does not appear to value their own choices, she does try to provide the types of books they want to read. Unfortunately, access to this material is often a problem as, due to theft, much of it is kept on closed access, particularly the magazines. Cathy’s attitude towards her readers and their needs is expressed in these two statements:

But the kinds of books that we get that are respectable adolescent literature – very few of our students would ever pick them up.

and

You see the thing about the kinds of things we are getting (popular magazines) - they are so hot we have to guard them carefully. We have a problem that things will get pinched or bits ripped out. If we’ve got the stuff that’s hot enough to read, we have to lock it away and handle it carefully. We have newspapers but there is not a great demand for them. The lack of recourse to printed material for information or entertainment is so low.

Cathy definitely does not see her students as readers she expresses little hope for them ever becoming more interested or competent in this area. She makes a comparison between her students and her own son’s development:

But now he can read fluently and is fine. Many of the students here haven’t reached that point and never will.

Cathy does not encourage wider reading in any organised fashion and has made nothing more than a token effort, as she feels it would be a waste of her time to encourage something the students don’t do. She said:

One of the things I really notice here is that, in fact, this school has very few readers at all. In fact, the print culture does not exist. Uh, there are the exceptions but, generally speaking, there are very small things that have happened that clearly indicated to me that people do not read. This is not getting a book to read, this is not the newspaper, this is nothing.

And when asked about reading patterns:

Frankly they didn’t read before and they don’t now. Well, they do a bit.

There is an undercurrent of belief amongst the interviewees that the acquiring of skills in relation to new technologies is vastly more important and useful to their students than reading. The use of technology is also a personal interest of Cathy:

It’s partly my inclination. I am more interested in information than literature.
This view, or attitude, informs all of Cathy’s decision making, and her views come across in her handout to teachers about the reading rainbow project (see photograph six), a project that she instigated. At the end of the handout there is a section headed ‘Associated promotion’ it reads:

This year I am making no rash promises. We will try to organize displays and lists to make selection of reading material easier...There are some book chat opportunities for students on the Net. If any teacher is brave enough to try I will set it up. (from the Reading rainbow handout October, 1998)

The language here clearly indicates Cathy’s reluctance to put much effort into activities: ‘no rash promises’, ‘we will try’. Her preconception is that any efforts will be either a waste of time, or a possible disaster: ‘if any teacher is brave enough to try’. She introduces the concept of the Reading Rainbow at the top of the handout as a ‘fast and flashy way to promote reading’. It is obvious that something fast is all she is prepared to put time into and, in her mind, it must be ‘flashy’ to succeed.

Through handouts such as this, Cathy clearly communicates her lack of interest in the promotion of wider reading based on books. To her, working with the students and the computer facilities is a much more beneficial way of spending her time in attempting to assist the improvement, and encouragement of, information retrieval skills amongst the students. She said:

What I am doing is what I am trying to do most of the time. Information literacy is what I am on about. Promoting reading is, for me, a secondary thing.

And when asked directly about reading encouragement, she said:

Uh, I think it gets left a bit...I mean there could be, uh, there are only so many hours in a day, and the nature of our clientele is such that promotion of reading is at a very low, uh, its not analysing the depiction of characters in this fine work, you know, how it encapsulates human values, you know, it’s actually about being able to read and ABC. And when they are struggling to look up something on the computers they are doing that more thoroughly... because they have a need to read that. Whereas you have to start to persuade them to read if you are doing that with literature.

Cathy justifies her attitude and approach by linking her view to the educational needs of the students. She appears to associate the reading of books, particularly fiction, with a much more ‘highbrow’ or complicated notion of text whereas she sees reading text from computer-based sources as having a lower level of difficulty. She also suggests that the intrinsic interest students have in working with computers encourages them to read from the screen, thus increasing their understanding and improving their literacy abilities. She fails to recognise ‘book reading’ as having a place also in this equation. Her effort in reading promotion, subsequently, is somewhat narrow in its approach.

Others within the school community also espouse the same attitudes towards technology as shown by Cathy, seeing this emphasis as the way forward, the way of the future. The library technician, Christine, commented:
Technology is very important as that is the way that everything is going.

Others on staff are not so convinced. In a response to a question on pleasure reading, the concept of reading from a screen as a form of reading was discussed. The classroom teacher, Patricia, who is also a teacher-librarian, expressed conflicting views as to the effective role of reading from a screen as a replacement for traditional print literacy:

...it is a form of reading (from a screen) but I just don’t think kids are reading it. They are happy to print it out. They’re just not reading it for meaning. Their purpose is to get it off the computer and into an assignment. Some of them are just getting it and cutting and pasting it they’re not reading it, and learning. It is my concern and the concern of the teacher-librarian. When I see my own students they just aren’t reading, they just won’t even start reading the text, it’s a real concern. Yeh, they say where is the information, they just don’t even know how to skim or scan what is in front of them. I worry they just don’t seem to be interested in even reading an interesting text for enjoyment. The computers just aren’t teaching the kids those literacy skills they need to have. They are no replacement.

Such a first hand account as this questions whether reliance on any one format is correct. Again, as at Green Hills, we have an either/or approach in place, linked to the particular interests of the teacher-librarian. Cathy is most interested in computer screen based communication and stresses this in her library program. This approach operates to the detriment of providing variety in format for students and also appears to be at odds with the creation of a pleasurable reading environment within library space dominated by computer terminals.

In relation to her wider role, Cathy recognises that the field of teacher-librarianship and education in general is in a ‘time of great change’. How we respond to new demands, particularly in relation to the utilisation of technology, is changing the style of library service offered in schools. Cathy has thought through what she is doing, and why, and believes she is making choices that allow her to best serve her school community’s needs with the skills she can offer. She explained:

We’re not in an ideal world though. We are actually in a time of great change. We are still adjusting. I don’t know what the ideal world looks like. But I think we are doing a pretty good job. You access everybody’s information, you try and build up your own as best you can, but make no pretence that you have covered all of the bases at all.

and

I was a teacher-librarian 10 years ago and then I came back. The big change has been the need to get on top of the technology and use the technology for information skills. We’d already started that at our school. When I left we were well on the track in doing other things that schools elsewhere were just starting.

Cathy appears to have a genuine interest in the form of librarianship she is cultivating and the type of service she is offering. Unlike Andrew at Green Hills, Cathy’s passion is based on giving her students the skills to interact with technology rather than her finding the resources for them. Her personal interest is evident in statements such as:
So I have, sort of, come into my own because you can’t pretend to teach people where you are going now you have to all muddle along together and work it out together and I’m happy to spend time at conferences on the weekend on computers trying to find out what people are doing. It’s very interesting – I love it.

Cathy’s view of the profession and its overall role is coloured by her love of technology. There is a little of an ‘us and them’ mentality in her statements about ‘library disease’:

I go along to different things and still find people suffering from library disease who don’t want to have a bar of it (technology).

While she has chosen to focus on technology and is disparaging of those in the profession who are afraid of it, her own minimal effort in reading promotion, and failed attempts to find a program to suit the schools needs, indicate she is aware that all of her efforts cannot be solely centred on this one aspect of her role. However each attempt to create a more vibrant, effective reading environment founders through lack of dedicated interest, lack of support and lack of knowledge.

7.5 Relationships

The relationship between the teacher-librarian and the English staff interviewed is positive and supportive. It is obvious, from interview responses and observation, that Cathy is approachable and easy-going in her organisation of the library and is very willing to work with others. She has very grounded egalitarian views in regard to her role, her relationship, and interaction with classroom teaching staff.

When asked a direct question about the relationship between herself and teaching staff, Cathy replied:

Those empirical questions...of one being seen as more relevant that the other don’t apply here.

Though any suggestion of an imbalance in equality was not implied, or sought, this was Cathy’s immediate reaction – to repudiate that any imbalance exists. Working on past experience, of inequality between library and teaching staff, she perhaps assumed this was what the interview question was suggesting. Her emphatic denial is interesting as it is obvious from her response, and my own observation of her at work, that she works hard to create good, professional relationships and is keen not to be seen as a ‘second rate’ teacher.

Teaching staff appear happy with Cathy’s approach to the students and find her welcoming and helpful. Those interviewed concurred with her view of the students as non-readers with a need for particular types of reading opportunities. The English teacher Louise said:
Cathy, she’s very aware of the limitations of a lot of our students and she’s tried to accommodate that. I think that’s very important. Uh, sometimes you have very-staid-in-their-ways (librarian who say) ‘well, if you can’t read a big book, uh, that’s no good.’...Cathy is of the opinion that if we can get them to read anything, we have got a big plus there. I totally agree with that.

The other teacher interviewed for the case study holds senior positions within the school. She is also a teacher-librarian with a number of periods of her time timetabled in the library. She appears to express reservation about Cathy’s style in the promotional work she has carried out. In a response discussing the Reading Rainbow initiative Patricia said:

"...Cathy has really gone ahead with the reading program though I would love a few more people on board with it, teachers and teacher-librarian. I think if you need to start something, you need to let other people assist with it. Sometimes that can be a let down for a program if you are the only one leading it, and sort of involved.

and

I think the Reading Rainbow that Cathy has implemented has a visual impact and I think the kids really saw that as fun. It was meant to be ongoing but it has died off, and that goes back to my point of letting other people on board.

Though she was hesitant to say it outright, and appeared to choose her words carefully, Patricia seemed to be implying that Cathy had not allowed others to be involved in projects she had initiated. In Patricia’s view, this may have led to the end of the program as it had, or was allowed, no collegiate support. As to why Cathy would not encourage others to take up the mantle she so obviously does not want herself, the motives are unclear. Perhaps Cathy wishes to direct the library’s focus herself and does not wish to set up a scenario where she may see someone working in ‘opposition’ to her aims.

Though the English teacher, Louise, is supportive of the emphasis on technology in the library program, she is also saddened by the thought that reading for pleasure is no longer a part of her students’ lives. She appears to see this as being in direct conflict with technology and its applications. Her perception of the school’s library is as non-book orientated, with a large investment in all forms of technology. She said:

Unfortunately, too many kids see it as a chore, uh, reading, and it should be a pleasurable pastime. Increasingly with all of this multi-media stuff now, books tend to be a bit lost in it all, and I think that’s really sad.

and

I think with the technology we have now in libraries, I think, as a classroom teacher you just don’t have the ability to know the various things. And I think librarians are, you know, their skill level has to have increased enormously over recent years.
Louise perceives Cathy’s efforts, in regard to the promotion of reading, as positive and affirming. Careful selection of the appropriate texts is high on her list of important, relevant activities. She explained:

Cathy has been very aware of that (selection) and has purchased a lot of books that she thought would interest students; the skinny types of books, and we are very conscious of that here. So we are looking to books that are really going to engage their interests. It could even be...things connected with footy, things connected with computers...and also science fiction or funny types of things.

Louise sees the environmental factors of difficult background, or home issues, as a reason for the lack of readers within the school community:

I think that in their life time, and their family environment, I think they have never really been encouraged to do a lot of reading at home ...so it’s really something they just don’t have, not something instilled from the home environment.

The other problem, as she sees it, is how reading is perceived within the school community, or the student community. Though she does admit that they do have avid readers, these are not the ‘cool’ kids and, therefore, an interest in reading as a pleasurable activity is not easily spread. She explains:

But you know it really is a very difficult process. You know it’s not seen as cool to be a good reader. You know the uncool ones are those that sit in here and do have a love of reading, and that’s really sad.

So you do have some them?

Oh yes! Some are avid readers, but they’re in the minority.

The relationship between the library technician, Christine and Cathy was strong and supportive. Christine carries out the clerical activities involved in keeping the library functioning and is also involved in the supervision of students at busy times. She interacts readily with the students and is interested in what they are reading and learning. Christine feels that she has a good working relationship with Cathy and knows that her opinions are listened to. She said:

We say to Cathy what we think we need in particular areas. We do work as a team and she listens to us.

and

I think the most important thing is making the library a place where kids feel they can go and read a magazine and not feel they have to read a book. They’ll read a skinny book, but they are still reading and that’s good. Technology is very important, as that is the way that everything is going. Cathy is very good at looking at what the kids are doing and what they are using. She knows what they want and what they will access. That’s very much a part of their job (the teacher librarians), to know the students.

Again, we have the perception from a library technician, as with Green Hills, that technology ‘is the way we are all going’. No, or little, questioning of what this might mean or what might be lost
is apparent. In this school, as in others, it is the reading programs and the overall reading
environment that has suffered. Though this is recognised by some, it is rarely questioned. The idea
that “it is the way we are all going” implies lack of choice or option, with very little clear
understanding of the purpose for the changes being made. It cannot be expected that the library
technician should be aware of the educational implications of decisions. Most likely, as with
the library technician at Green Hills, Christine repeats the phrase, ‘the way everything is going,’
parroting something she has been told in relation to change. It suggests a situation that cannot be
questioned or challenged.

The relationship between the teacher-librarian and administration appears to be relaxed and
productive, the library operating with little interference, setting its own agenda. Expenditure on
technology is supported and encouraged. Interaction is based on discussion of financial concerns,
timetabling and occasional disciplinary support. The Assistant Principal, Jenny, explains the level
of her interaction with the library:

Being supporting and putting forward ideas of the library...I also handle the
incidents, assisting Cathy with the tone in the library at times, kicking kids out if
necessary. Setting the staffing to ensure Cathy has enough time to do what she has
to, teaching periods, etc. So all administration, but still necessary.

Jenny, when interviewed, seemed vaguely aware of the library's activities though it was obvious
she was only aware of library initiatives from a distance.

In response to a question about what she had seen initiated by the library to promote reading she
said:

Oh, well, Cathy had her, uh, now what was it called, her book reading session,
where she had kids reading books and she was putting things up on top of the
library when they had. It had a name, uh, they were all hanging up from the roof—it
got them reading. I'm not in the library a great deal, I am well aware that
Encarta is a very popular resource, it gets the children in.

Jenny did express similar concerns to the English teacher, Louise, acknowledging the importance
of technology but wondering about the future of book reading as a pleasurable activity. When
asked about the most important component of the teacher-librarian's role she said:

Certainly keeping abreast of all of the new forms of research. I firmly believe that,
and I think the librarian has to be up with technology.

She then went on to say:

I think that the computers shouldn't take over from reading. I certainly believe that
the book is important. You can't curl up with a laptop. You wonder about the
future.

Rather than directing policy, Jenny appears to have trusted to the expertise of the teacher-librarian,
expecting Cathy to decide on the direction of the library and facilitate this decision. She said:
But they need to be aware and then push to get in what they see as useful. I know our library here is fairly progressive in that with computers.

Similarly, Cathy’s relationship with the students is positive. She is helpful and, generally, easy going, prepared to bend rules to assist and encourage students. Student two said:

Well, Miss Dalton is doing it (encouraging reading) for me at the moment. If I have a book overdue and I want something and I say, yeh, I know that’s at home she’ll still let me borrow. That’s really encouraging; I can still take books home to read.

In regard to the promotion of reading, though, the students don’t readily see an involvement of the library staff. The English staff are mentioned as having some input but, from their point of view, little encouragement comes from the teacher-librarian or the library in general. The following student comments highlight this view:

I reckon they make these projects to make us enjoy reading, like the class activities and the class reading, or in English week, when we read and write or put up displays about the books we have read.

**What about in the library? Do they recommend books to you?**

Not really. My English teacher tells me what to read sometimes and tells me things sometimes. [student three]

and

They’ve had competitions and stuff, encouraging people to come into the library and stuff. Prizes work good for that. I can’t think of anything they did when I was young. I was reading in Primary school and I was always a very good reader. I can’t think of anything in particular that they did. [student two]

The perception of the library as first and foremost, a computer based facility is a perception expressed by the students interviewed:

It’s not really that kind of library, but the computers have seemed to take over, it used to be a reading place. [student two]

It’s really sad how they just come and play the computers. The computers should be in a separate room. They are distracting, kids race across just to see what’s on. [student two]

The library is seen as providing what the students need to support the curriculum, though many use the public library as well.

Sometimes I get it from here and sometimes I get it from the Mobile library. [student three]

The collection is seen to be outdated by some but good by others. Perhaps a result of personal tastes more than sound analysis of the collection.

The basics are here, they just provide the basics for your research, for every class the information that they need. Referring to leisure, they’ve got a really wide
range, except most of them are a bit old, so updating them more. Yeh, books mainly about just people, books that interest people, which is every kind, I suppose. [student two]

and

...they've got the Guinness book of the 20th century and they get most of the new books, even when they just come out. They even have the Star Wars books. Good books. [student one]

7.6 Library organisation

7.6.1 Access

Alternative methods of accessing materials are being thought through in this library. Efforts are being made to think of the best way to make material available so that students will find what they need easily. Cathy explains:

That would be really good (books arranged thematically). It would assist the students to find stuff. We are also looking at cardboard containers with books in them on different themes to make them easier to find. So, I think we could make our fiction more accessible by displaying it differently, doing some pre-sorting. Things like shelving become a problem, those rather tedious jobs need quick and dirty solutions to eliminate them.

These ideas are inventive and constructive ways of approaching the perceived problem but, as yet, nothing concrete has been decided, and no action taken. This often appears to be the issue in this library because no one is specifically responsible for improving the situation. Good ideas may come and go without implementation and programs that are begun often dwindle away due to lack of support.

As with other libraries in this study (St Peter's, Yarra and St Brigid's), the library staff at Meadow Valley is helpful within the limits of their abilities. As they do not read a great deal themselves, they are unable to work very effectively with students, recommending and advising on good reading material. In this sense, they are not enabling adults. They have an excellent service mentality and are happy to assist students with the task of locating a book, yet they are, in most cases, not in the position to either discuss a text with the students, or recommend further associated reading.

In response to a question regarding the state of the book collection, Cathy is frank about the areas where they have been unable to spend time. Weeding of the collection has been sporadic and encouraging the reading of the majority of the collection has been limited. The only books that
have received any promotion are the skinny, or easy to read, titles that have been collected together on display stands. The area of more serious, literary fiction does not interest Cathy. She goes out of her way to mention this section of the library throughout the interview. She feels the need, though, to have such a collection for when “they come rushing up” for the books:

I think we are able to get a bit of it (new YA fiction). It could be nice if we could get a whole lot more. It would be nice if we went through the collection and weeded out a lot of the old stuff. The stuff we get in the serious adolescent fiction just sits on the shelf and that’s the last anyone ever sees of it. Nobody ever takes any notice of it. I think we’ve got to have all that stuff anyway because the new courses come out and they come rushing up for the books.

Cathy is much more interested in providing “skinny”, interest-based material, as she sees this as being more widely picked up and read. Louise explains:

Cathy has been very aware of that (the issue of relevant and suitable reading material) and has purchased a lot of books that she thought would interest students - the skinny types of books and we are very conscious of that here. So we are looking to books that are really going to engage their interests.

Cathy is aware of what she sees as a history of good collection building by previous teacher-librarians.

I think they have had extremely good teacher-librarians for a very long time (at Meadow Valley) and so they have had a beautiful collection and beautifully arranged, skills booklets and orientation etc. And all I thought I could do was mess it up.

She is obviously not comfortable with a similar role of building a ‘beautiful’ collection. In a way, she is a little disparaging, or dismissive, of such attempts. She appears to have very little confidence in her own ability, or any interest, in continuing such work. This may have contributed to her energy with the computers and her lack of interest in the promotion of reading for pleasure. Her suggestion that she could only ‘mess it up’ and her avoidance of any attempt to promote reading for pleasure appear to be in direct opposition to the obvious need.

The lack of notice paid to creating a comprehensive collection that is well promoted and maintained is noted by the students. Student two said:

Newer copies of books, just new books in general – maybe a couple of picture books, more of a range than we have. Even have LOTE books because a lot of people don’t talk. You know, have them laying around. Make them feel comfortable to read what they want to read.

Cathy appears to justify the lack of a structured program by continually blaming the low levels of literacy. Her claim is that it would be a waste of resources to spend time on the promotion of reading, as so few students are interested. She also believes that students with limited ability, that still need help with basic literacy, would not be helped by a reading promotion program. Her view of what a reading program can, and should be, appears to be fairly elitist. She sees work with the computers as a more effective way of helping the students, given they are keen to use computers.
Despite this lack of interest in promoting reading with the students, Cathy recognises the successes that have been achieved in the past and sees that an interest in reading can be kindled in the students. Describing a successful author visit she said:

The English staff gets in speakers and they have been very successful. They have often created a constant demand for his books. Once the kids have met the person they want to read their books.

While this success is recognized, there are no plans in place, or any suggestion, that a concentrated program of author visits, supported by library promotion, might stimulate interest and encourage the non-readers.

When classes do come to the library, reading promotion is up to the teacher and any involvement from the library staff is sporadic and unplanned. Though it is recognized by Cathy that efforts are appreciated by teaching staff, her lack of interest is apparent in statements such as:

Some teachers bring their classes in, others don’t. Most anything anyone does to advance the cause is well accepted. Classes come regularly but we don’t do anything.

Reading promotion is the responsibility of the teachers; some take this up and others do not. Louise, an English teacher, explained that she does provide the structure for her students, but with no specialist knowledge or enthusiastic support, the program is basic in its operation:

Once a fortnight my classes are timetabled into the library. They are required to read and they must complete a set activity on that book. They must have a novel and, towards the end of term, I might allow them to read a newspaper or magazine. So I do provide that structure and, as a bit of a reward towards the end of term I get them to read anything else.

A number of programs have been initiated over the years to give some structure to reading promotion. Some of the initiative for these has come from the library, on other occasions the English faculty has backed a particular program. The school now has a series of lapsed initiatives none of which is presently operational. The English teacher and teacher-librarian, Patricia, said:

We have also had an action program here, reading levels with activities, but the library was only involved housing the books. Those books have coloured dots and are on the library shelves now, too!

and

That ended up dying too, as there was no curriculum attached. Some tried, but there was nothing structured.

The lapsed programs appear to have failed for a number of reasons. Firstly, no one person owned and promoted each program. Alternatively, one person initiated the program but failed to involve and encourage other members of staff. In other cases, the program is bought but not linked effectively to curriculum aims and objectives and, therefore, enthusiasm for its use dies. In some instances, the person who is most enthusiastic about the program leaves the school. All of these
problems appear to have occurred at this school. Many thousands of dollars have been spent on failed programs and the book material to support them. The library is full of material displaying a variety of colour and shape coded stickers, each the result of a different lapsed initiative.

Patricia addressed these issues and attempted to analyse why these program failures have occurred. Her responses indicated a wider, big picture view of the problem that was lacking in some of the other interview respondents:

There is no structured literacy strategy right across the curriculum – it’s in science and everything else, not just English. Things change with whim of government policy and viewpoint.

and

You need vision, goals, long-term action plans, to understand responsibilities, in order to make any program work. We have a problem here in thinking throwing money is enough. We have had a number of changes to faculty head of English, two in the last three years – no follow through. It’s changing. I don’t think we have an intellectually vigorous faculty and the work is (in the hands of) a small number of people. There is also the view that if you can read and write, you can teach English. So perhaps there is a lack of commitment to the subject.

Despite these past failures Cathy is keen to investigate another structured program that she feels will better suit the style of promotion she is happy to encourage. She said:

...one of the teachers here has come from another school (and spoken to us about)...one of those programs where the students are encouraged to read from different genres...That would really fit in very well with our information-based philosophy because it’s not just reading about the psychological state of someone, it’s reading how to build a cupboard – reading for different purposes.

Again, Cathy’s view of other reading programs as ‘elitist’ or unapproachable, is apparent. She sees fiction reading as introspective, psychological analysis, something she deems her students incapable of. She has a very narrow view of what reading can be and does not seem prepared to broaden her views. At no time does Cathy contemplate a promotional effort linked to either the library’s computer resources or library collections other than fiction. A trained professional, working in a reasonably well-stocked library should be able to create something appropriate to meet both the student needs and the educational aims of the school from the resources available. Rather, this library has looked for the quick fix in externally prepared models that cost a considerable amount of money and that, it appears from the school’s previous experiences, ultimately fail.

7.6.2 Ambience

The ambience within this library is positive and welcoming, easygoing and unstructured. This appears to emanate from Cathy’s own personal attitudes towards others and her working style. Due
to her personal interest in technology, any interaction and positive feel within the library centres around computer usage. Cathy stated:

This is a very formal school and quite old fashioned in its structures and its discipline and things like that... you know, 'provide the ambience and they will do it.' I don’t think it would work here, I think. I haven’t tried.

Cathy concedes that she has not attempted to create a more positive reading atmosphere. In this quotation she is referring to the idea that if you create a conducive environment students will participate. Cathy does not think her students would, or could, be interested, regardless of what anyone does - so she does little. Cathy admits she has not tried, as she does not think any efforts would be rewarded with success.

Cathy’s efforts have been put into providing, and learning, the new technologies available for research. She is interested in creating a welcoming environment, but she sees a greater possibility of success if this is based around this provision of computer related access to resources.

Throughout the interview, Cathy was quite forthright on the lack of a reading culture within the school. She is aware of the view that the creation of a reading environment could be encouraged through a vibrant, book-centred library, yet she was not interested in pursuing this path, as she claims it would not work. Her attitude towards the reading abilities and interests of her students is self-defeating. She does not attempt to encourage reading as there is no interest in reading.

This does not mean, however, that this is not a welcoming and active library. It is simply narrowly centred around the provision of computer resources to the detriment of structured proactive programs to promote wider reading. This is recognised, with some regret, by the English teacher Louise:

It has got to be a nurturing environment that the kids really feel comfortable (in). A relaxed sort of environment that is for them to enjoy. Unfortunately, too many kids see it (reading) as a chore.

The physical layout of the library is an important component of the overall ambience of any library. Again, as with other factors, this library’s layout is computer focused. The library is approached through wide open corridors and has a small display case area outside the entrance. Inside, it is open and traditionally arranged, with little display on the walls except for a few posters on pin boards. The ‘reading rainbow’ (see photograph six) display is prominently situated near the entrance and is an effective eye-catching display effort that definitely brightens up the space. This display is constructed from student reviews written on various different coloured papers suspended from the ceiling.

The presence of this display was commented on by one of the older students in their interview:
The thing hanging from the ceiling, the book reports hanging up in the different colours – that’s good, but that’s the little kids. I don’t remember doing anything like that when I was younger. [student two]

The student went on to mention the positive aspects of displaying student work:

It’s good to see your stuff on display. We do that in one class, put work on posters and hang them up and it always makes you feel good to see your work up. No matter if someone else’s is better, yours is still up there too. [student two]

It is obvious from such comments, that the rainbow display was successful. It is also apparent, though, that this is a one-off idea resulting from a moment’s enthusiasm with little follow up, not part of a structured effort. Photograph five shows the fiction collection on the side wall, as well as the wide expanse of brick wall with its lone poster tacked up near the corner. This is certainly a space crying out for some creative effort to make it brighter and attractive. Such a space is an opportunity under-utilised.

Cathy identified the other teacher-librarian on staff as talented in display and admits it is not how she prefers to spend her time. Lack of time again is the reason, yet it is obvious from her remarks that it is not an area of library promotion that she relishes:

We are limited by time and, uh, I suppose it comes fairly low on my priorities. I know that it would be good but some things you are not good at and, where time is short, you put the time where you think you will get more of a result.

The main focus of the area, for both staff and students, appears to be the large area of computers clustered together immediately adjacent to the library workrooms.

The library appears to have a reasonable book stock, though perhaps more non-fiction volumes might be expected in a secondary school library of this size. Staff openly stated that the priority in recent years has been expenditure on technology and electronic based resources. The fiction collection is housed along one wall, with a few paperback stands dotted through the open space, it borders an area of chairs and tables designated for classroom-style usage.

The most vibrant area of the library is the computer area. This was apparent during observation. The tables housing the computers appear to dominate the library. Closest to the library workrooms, they appear the main focus of the library staff. Students entering the library also gravitated immediately to this area. Cathy recognised that space for leisure reading was fast disappearing as the needs of the computers took precedence:

We don’t have that nice little lounge room bit, we can’t put it in, and the bit we have is disappearing as we put more computers in....We need to spread them (the computers) out and we still need to fit one class.

The small number of lounge chairs that are provided are seen as unnecessary by Cathy in the face of all of the other demands on library space that she has to juggle. This is another example of a
school library that is just not big enough to fulfil the growing demands placed upon it. In an attempt to identify a place for reading, Cathy notes, though she acknowledges it as an excuse, that reading does take place elsewhere in the library despite the lack of comfortable seating.

I find in general, this is probably just making excuses, but the readers do seem to sit up at the tables, the big tables. The people that sit at the rudimentary lounge we do have, generally speaking, aren’t reading, they are just chatting. Some kind of social thing.

7.7 External Factors

When considering budget allocations, Cathy openly admits a planned bias:

Our focus the last couple of years, frankly, has been technology.

There does not appear to be a shortage of funds and, at present, Cathy is able to provide the services that she would like to. In some regards, the computer facilities are ahead of other schools of the same size in terms of what is provided and how it is utilised. The administration is supportive of the library and any request for funding. The assistant principal said:

Well, being the school council treasurer and being on the finance committee, I see a role there where I would look favourably on requests for finances for the library.

In this particular school, it appears that ideas and direction coming from the library are supported by the administration. There does not appear to be a general school mission directing library policy.

The staffing of the library has not been an issue that has overly affected the library’s operations at this school. A number of qualified staff pick up the majority of the allotted time, while a few teachers cover the odd period to make up for being under-allotted in their teaching duties. Though not the ideal, it has not hampered the library operations, though, perhaps, the piecemeal approach to staffing the library may contribute to the lack of ownership of programs, particularly in regard to reading promotion.

Cathy is very aware that problems amongst staff can lead to conflict and an unsettled environment. She works hard to avoid this, she said:

(In) over half of the libraries I have been in, there have been problems that have made working there very difficult. Working on top of each other, you need to be happy with what each other is doing.

Cathy does trust in her staff and appears very happy with them:

I would like the same staff with more time, not necessarily more staff.
Cathy's generally easy-going attitude and the good relationships amongst the library staff members have facilitated a stable working environment with relatively few surprises or upsets.

Comments by the teacher, who is also a teacher-librarian, Patricia, regarding Cathy's lack of attempts to involve others in new initiatives, highlights an issue that could lead to tension among the staff. Cathy, when asked to comment about staffing, did recognise the very different working styles of herself and Patricia:

"I work in a totally different way - Patricia's very organised, extremely good, gets through enormous amounts in the time. I just take whatever time is available and waffle on and don't really get through... we have got excellent staff, all qualified, and we all get on....We do things differently, but it's just style. Though I think I irritate Patricia, she has never really said, or bitten my head off, yet."

This library's emphasis on computers and the teaching of the skills needed to operate particular programs and databases, is a vital support to the overall school curriculum. Library staff see their role as offering the service of support to what is happening in the classroom. This is identified by Patricia in describing the role of the library:

"Facilitator of the curriculum, I suppose, and of skills taught in the curriculum. I see them as crucial, especially with the computers. I see them as being right in there with those classes transferring those skills and showing teachers and students. How to select relevant information, how to sift through what they find, how to cite relevant information. It is really important to be able to teach these skills and support the curriculum in that way."

Patricia also sees an important role for the library in providing and storing resources for teachers and making them aware of what is available, in an effort to reduce waste, something that appears to be a long-running issue in this school:

"It should be a partnership - just for saving of resources."

In this school, it happens. Someone decides to run a reading program (and) buys resources duplicating what we already have in the library. Waste. And then the reading program folds after a few years and we have a large amount of waste. I think that a teacher-librarian needs to support teachers in coming up with curriculum ideas, you know, saying we have six copies of this, here is a unit you might want to do with your class, that sort of thing. Teachers often don't think ahead, they are too concerned with the program in front of them.

A lack of overall policy in regard to curriculum is seen by Patricia as part of the library's lack of direction, particularly in regards to reading promotion. She sees this lack of policy as contributing to the school's inability to follow through on any of the many previous, lapsed reading programs:

"There is no structured literacy strategy right across the curriculum."

"And"

"You need vision, goals, a long-term action plan."
Patricia recognises the issues of concern in this school library and has thought through solutions, yet she is not in a position to implement these ideas. Her allotment in the library is small and, though her opinions are listened to, the decisions are not hers to make.

7.8 In summary

One of the things I really notice here is that, in fact, this school has very few readers at all. In fact, the print culture does not exist.

Cathy – teacher librarian

The Meadow Valley library has a welcoming reputation within the school community, with an easygoing atmosphere. Good relationships have been developed between library staff and the rest of the school community based around the provision of a variety of up-to-date and relevant electronic materials. The library is reasonably well resourced. Most recently, the majority of the funding has been directed towards expanding the technology-based resources offered. There is no doubt that this direction is driven by the passion of the current head of the library, Cathy, a teacher-librarian who sees access to information, and the utilization of technology for its delivery, as her most important role.

Compounding this facet of Cathy’s outlook, is her attitude towards her students as readers:

Frankly they didn’t read before and they don’t now. Well they do a bit.

Her views are decidedly negative, a factor that colours, and certainly affects, decisions she makes for the library as a whole. Many commentators have drawn attention to the importance attitude plays in all decisions. Hamilton (1992) argued that the school library ‘will draw its energy and direction from the individuals who direct and nurture it’ (p. 67). Boyd argued that an ‘enthusiasm for, and commitment to, literature are the essential tools needed to successfully promote our product’ (Boyd, 1995, p 52). In Meadow Valley’s case, the library does draw its direction from the individual who nurtures it, in this case, Cathy. But her ‘enthusiasm’ is not for reading promotion but for technology. Unfortunately this enthusiasm is to the exclusion of all else.

The teacher-librarian’s attitude is a major factor in understanding why this school has no structured reading program, but it is not simply this alone. Historically, the library and the English Department have approached any promotion in an ad hoc manner. Short-term projects and quick fix answers have attracted large amounts of funding, yet, from this, no sustained effort has emerged. A tour around the library finds many books labelled with different coloured stickers, each sticker type a reminder of a program that no longer exists. The combined outlay on each of these separate initiatives would involve tens of thousands of dollars.

In part, this can be put down to a general lack of interest in ownership of the role of reading promotion and a lack of full school support due to constant staff turn over and an absence of a
central focus. As has previously been noted this focus is crucial. The American Association of School Librarians note this when they say:

The responsibility for successful implementation of reading development is shared by the entire school community - teachers, library media specialists, and administrators working together. (AASL, 1999a)

A strong, cooperative relationship, in terms of reading promotion, is not evident in this school. Cooperative and successful programs, however, have been created around the development and expansion of research activities based strongly on the use of computer technology. This reinforces the importance of attitude and its effect on the style of library service. The teacher-librarian at Meadow Valley is passionate about using technology to improve the information literacy skills of her students, thus projects weighted towards this goal are more likely to succeed. The effort given to make them succeed is to be found in abundance. Historically at the school, reading promotion programs and efforts to create a reading environment in the library, have been haphazard and discontinuous due to the lack of a central leader with the necessary expertise and interest. Those whose attitude directs them to see a program as valuable will work towards its success and be happy to claim ownership of it. At Meadow Valley, this has not happened for reading programs, or reading promotion in a consistent, organised manner.
8. Service: Yarra High School

8.1 The school

Yarra High school is a co-educational, government secondary college in the Eastern suburbs of Melbourne catering for students in years seven to twelve. At the time of data collection the school had an enrolment of approximately 950 students and appears to be in a pattern of increasing growth.

The school caters for a wide variety of students from differing ethnic backgrounds, most coming from the surrounding Eastern suburbs. It has a reputation as a state school of standing. With little space, and ageing buildings, the school caters for more students than its rooms were originally meant to house. A recently announced building project at the school may help to alleviate some of the space constraints, though this building program will not directly benefit the library.

8.2 The teacher-librarian

The teacher-librarian, Mary Liston, has a background as a classroom teacher with over 15 years classroom teaching experience in a variety of schools. She completed a Graduate degree in teacher-librarianship and moved into school libraries as a teacher-librarian nine years ago. Head of the Library is considered a special responsibility position, this means it is a position of authority that results in extra wages for the incumbent. Mary has held this role for a few years now. She is settled, having had time to redesign the layout of the library and think critically about her role to some extent. During recent years, she has had some change in qualified staff due to staff movement out of the library into the classroom, and on to other schools.

8.3 The library

Photograph seven is taken some way into the library past a large bank of computers with the circulations desk to the rear of the image. To the right of this photo, past the centrally located bay of computer terminals, is the non-fiction collection and various other collections: teacher reference, LOTE, magazines, etc. This is a relatively large, spacious library with areas of open space that give it a pleasant feel. The school has grown steadily for some time, though, with close to 1000 students it will not appear spacious as it may be necessary to add more seating or computer terminals.
With the use of tables and shelves, the staff here have attempted to create a clearly defined reading space. This space is used by classes coming to the library for wider reading and selection. The library space is clean and bright, yet not overly endowed with display, though there is some display of student work in other areas of the library, particularly in the foyer.

Photograph seven – The rear end of the library at Yarra, with the fiction collection running along the back two walls

Photograph eight – The students use these tables if they come as a class to read and select material at Yarra High School.
8.4 The attitudes of the teacher-librarian

The staff at Yarra appear to take a positive, though not overly proactive, position towards reading for pleasure and providing a variety of reading formats. Mary sees a place for providing magazines and comics for leisure reading and is also interested in providing material in the first language of students who have English as their second language. While the library staff do read young adult material to aid their work with students, they seem reluctant to take this any further and have not instigated or provided more than limited support for a wider reading program. Mary discussed the issue of who will read young adult material and work with the students:

That's a problem at this school. The teachers don't read adolescent fiction. It depends on the makeup of your staff. At Heatherdale (Mary's former school) we didn't have a qualified TL but someone that reads heaps. It depends on your role and what you have ownership of.

Mary does not see a formal role in reading promotion as her own. She appears happy to read, provide a collection and assist students on a one-to-one basis, but any more is not part of her perception of herself as a teacher-librarian.

Mary's views of the students at Yarra is unconstrained, this appears to be the source of some minor conflict between the library and the English staff. Mary sees all forms of text as valid reading experiences, a view that is not shared by the English Department. Her views seem to be based partially in her experiences with her own children and their difficulty in reading due to learning difficulties. She found problems in sourcing reading material that was accessible and interesting for them and found mainstream classroom texts discouraging. These personal experiences have made Mary acutely aware of the need to provide a broad range of materials for students.

As well as providing a well-stocked fiction collection, Mary sees a place for other formats as well. She says in response to a question about what she makes available in the library:

Here again I'm at conflict with the English Department. Prior to me coming here they basically owned the library. I think reading for pleasure means any sort of reading.

Well, we do have magazines which I do think have their place. We don't let them read them during class time but we do other times. We have Dolly and that sort of thing, and they are well used by students. I think that it is a valid form of resource to provide. Some of the students like to read the newspapers, the major daily newspapers. Some of the teachers don't think they should be reading them during English classes but I think it is quite acceptable.

Though Mary is interested in providing variety, she is not interested in proactively promoting these collections. Her role, or her perception of her role, is one of support and service. She sees a
number of factors affecting the ability of library staff to undertake anything more constructive in terms of reading promotion. Foremost in her mind is the changed emphasis on the library role. In talking about a library role in reading promotion she said:

It seems to be something that is pushed in the background within the library system.

*Why?*

With the change over to technology and research, and all that type of thing.

Mary also recognises the need for ownership by one person of any effort if it is to succeed. This ownership, Mary suggests, should be based on a passion and enthusiasm for the task, a phenomenon she has seen amongst previous library staff:

There is usually one person that takes that on (reading promotion), so they find that niche and that's when you will find somebody that's really pushing the literature.

The other factor affecting library involvement, as identified by Mary, is the tension between the English Department and the library staff in regard to appropriate roles. The apparent conflict, particularly with long-standing English staff, has certainly led to a difficult working relationship.

Mary describes her role and how she perceives the breakdown of responsibility:

We do wander over and talk to the kids when the classes are here.

*Do you talk to classes?*

I don't want to be seen as the one responsible. It's part of the curriculum, so I feel the English teachers have a responsibility to own it.

Despite their lack of full commitment, the library staff has attempted to remain involved in decision making and to be informed about current practice and recommendations through professional forums. They have also formed a discussion group to encourage the interest of all teaching staff. Mary explained:

We subscribe to *Magpies, Literature Base* and we get standing orders and *Viewpoint* and material from CBC and we talk to teachers a lot, promoting. We've worked with English and ESL trying to change the set novels.

We've started up the teacher book club, we have only had two meetings so far, we have got about twenty people. We do lots of talking.

Mary is keen to support a reading program but seems most reluctant to take on a role that places her in front of a class, or to agree to take ultimate responsibility.
When asked directly about the role that they play, Mary appears fully aware of what they are not doing, but seems to feel that they are at their limit. Time constraints, friction between English and Library, and a lack of ownership of the responsibility by any one member of the library team indicates that the status quo is likely to remain unless a major change occurs. Mary said in response to a question about the role the library plays in the promotion of reading:

No, I don't think anybody plays a role. Probably within the school we do provide something. We do talk to the kids and read the books, and buy well. But not enough kids, and no structured program.

Within this school, technology is mentioned as having a large, detrimental impact on what the library staff do with their time. With only so many hours in a day, priority must be given to one role above another. When asked about whether or not teacher-librarians in general played a role in reading promotion, Mary answered:

Not in secondary. I think it is the impact of technology. It's like encyclopaedias. Technology is meant to solve all of the problems.

Despite the importance of technology to the role, as she perceives it, technology appears to make Mary somewhat nervous:

There was very little in my course about computers, other than automated systems, and that's only nine years ago. I resent, in a way, the impact of technology, and I am not happy with it. I feel that I should be doing more with it but I'm not. But it is out of my comfort zone so I'm avoiding it.

Despite the teacher-librarian’s apparent ‘fear’ of technology, she claims to be most interested in the research component of her role, though to her it appears to be traditional research not an interest in research using technology:

I came into libraries in 1990 with Valerie Highton as my boss. She showed me the importance of our research role. Without her I would have been a purely service and reading type librarian. I was affected by her style. I was in the classroom for 15 years before then but always wanted to be a TL.

and

Well, I think we are torn between the two areas of information literacy and literacy or literature and it’s difficult to do as much as you would like in both areas at the same time. We’ve probably gone to the information literacy side of it rather than literature because the English teachers, ah, are probably working in that area. They also could probably do more than they do.

This statement that the English teachers are ‘working in that area’ is a clear indication that Mary is attempting to place the responsibility of reading promotion elsewhere. As she states earlier, she sees any reading program as a curriculum responsibility and therefore part of the English Department charter. She readily admits, though, that English ‘could probably do more’ and earlier stated that no staff in the school read adolescent fiction. During a discussion of how teacher-librarians are perceived, the following statement was made by Mary:
...some still see us as the person who reads a lot. Therefore they take away the responsibility from themselves.

Mary feels the English staff identify her with ‘reading a lot’ and then feel, therefore, that they don’t have to. Consequently, no one at the school is doing anything constructive toward establishing anything of lasting benefit. Each lays responsibility at the feet of the other.

At Yarra, Mary is, at least, clear as to how she sees her role and is aware of its evolution. She sees the role as fourfold and rates the promotion of reading highly amongst the roles of service provider, curriculum support and teaching the research process:

The ideal I suppose would be to have the support to fulfil all of those roles. The first role is as a service provider. We have to provide a service that is wanted, and if that means standing at a desk stamping books and giving out change, so be it. The other one is curriculum support. I would like to see more of that. I don’t think we get time to do much, not much opportunity. Communication is difficult. Also, in terms of cross curriculum resources we don’t do enough. Provide more materials. I would also like to see us far more active in the research process. Too many kids get into the senior years and they don’t have the foundation. I would also like more time to do it myself. The last area, but it is not last, as I think they are all equal is, I really think we should take on promoting reading as a recreation, a recreational and pleasurable thing, because too many kids just want to go straightaway and work on a computer. There is just this drift always to the machines. They don’t enjoy reading. They’re surfing, emailing. I’m sure there is a whole group missing out. They still need to be able to read, you still need to be able to make decisions, follow fairly logical pathways in order to get a result.

Mary recognises the multifaceted nature of the teacher-librarian. As in other schools, the management of time and the acquisition of good, interested staff with expertise in each of the identified areas is a key issue. Mary expresses an interest in fulfilling all of her stated roles, though it is clear she is not, she feels hamstrung by day-to-day reality:

It is a time problem but it’s also part of our role to be service provider and, often, to provide service immediately, even if it’s not really our responsibility. The bigger things often don’t get touched because all of the phone calls and administrative matters get in the way. It’s everything, it’s time but it’s not budget, at least not for books. Staff is what we need, particularly with the computers.

8.5 Relationships

There appears to be a divergence of ideas on a number of fronts between the English Department and the library staff. Previous teacher-librarians had been more heavily involved in the promotion of reading and there is some friction due to the present library staff’s lack of interest in this role. Any promotion is ad hoc and depends on the particular relationship between library staff and individual teachers. But even with those where the relationship is positive, as it is with some of the newer English teachers, Mary and Lucy will do no more than assist students and recommend titles.
on an individual basis. As at Green Hills, there is a tendency here to say the area is someone else’s, knowing full well that no one is picking it up. Lucy explains:

It’s only when a teacher asks us that we work with the classes we don’t have a regular program of talking to the classes, we don’t unless we are asked. Perhaps it’s something we should do, but perhaps with time constraints we would be biting off more than we could chew.

Mary feels strongly that the responsibility for reading promotion lies with the English Department. She sees any failure of the program as a consequence of the department’s inability to organise themselves due to internal dispute and lack of interest in their timetabled periods in the library:

We have a lot of contract teachers and have had about ten new staff each year. The English staff are mainly staff who have been here for some time. The department has been divided for some time due to disputes within it. I was horrified that there were timetabled classes for English when I arrived...It’s very hard sometimes, to be not critical, when you watch some of the things they are doing. You know, when they are reading the Dolly magazine when their kids are running around. They might be doing their marking. We’ve had some teachers who sit at the other end of the library while the kids are supposedly reading. So, being in the library, you’re in a difficult situation sometimes because you see some terrible things happening. You do see good things happening too.

...and you’ve got that conflict. The English Department want that quiet reading period and you’ve got a research class on the computers and they’re not quiet. And they come to you and say they are so noisy can’t you do something about it? You know, that whole diplomacy thing. Being diplomatic with both sides, seeing that both sides have the right to be working in here, really does make it difficult.

Mary implies that the relationship issues stem from a long history that is based on ‘ownership’ of the space and the programs that operate within it.

Despite her hesitation and obvious difficulties, Mary still sees her relationship with the English Department as strong:

I think that Lucy and I get on really well with the staff here. We have tried to. We go to English KLA meetings, we join in English week, we have often combined this with Book Week. We ask people to recommend reading materials, we talk to them.

Mary has strongly held beliefs about her role, she sees herself as offering good service, a supportive colleague for curriculum initiatives that come from teaching staff. In practice, though, she admits that the English Department appears to have little idea or direction and certainly only basic commitment to encouraging their students as readers and fostering an environment that is conducive to reading. As stated earlier, Mary disagrees with the view of some English staff as to what students should be reading. She also queries how they see reading in the library space:

One of the things we did was an appraisal of the set up, and we looked at the curriculum requirements, which was that every English class from year seven to
ten actually has one period timetabled in the library. We also took note of the fact that the teachers wanted a silent reading area. This is very much silent reading, there’s to be no discussion, which also begs the question of what it is that they want to achieve.

Mary’s remarks indicate a history of conflict and a difference of opinion over what should be read, how reading should take place, and the library’s role in this program.

While Mary sees her role as being supportive, building a collection, providing a space, and working individually with students and staff on request, some English staff appear to have worked with a more pro-active approach in the past and miss a teacher-librarian who either instigates, or personally teaches, a wider reading promotional program. Though some efforts are being made to smooth over past disagreements, it seems that a more concerted effort from both sides will be needed to get the relationship on a better footing.

Mary, through some of her remarks, does, at times, appear bitter as to the way she is perceived:

To some, we are just the library lady who stamps the books and tells us what to read and others use us extensively to find resources and teach the students about researching.

One of the English teachers, Paul, views the teacher-librarian as a one-on-one resource person, not working with a whole class, a fairly traditional view of resource provider and assistant to the individual. This is the function that this library performs best. Paul stresses the teacher-librarian role as service provider:

What do you see as the most important aspects of the role of the teacher-librarian in a school?

Probably as a contact person for the resources the library has got, probably that’s the main one...I see it as a one-on-one thing. Sometimes with year seven, they take a more direct teaching role – orientation. Probably that happens here. I’ve seen it in other schools. Probably I don’t think that would be appropriate. I don’t think it would be appropriate for them to have their own class for example, I mean, mainly because it takes a lot of time in planning and correction that go along with having a class. I would imagine that TL’s have got more than enough to do with being a more essential resource, I suppose.

Paul went on to compare this school library to a public library:

I think for a school library to be much the same as a municipal library makes a lot of sense because a lot of these kids, ah, this is their only experience of a library.

The current teacher-librarian appears to emphasize her service provision role and play down the role of teacher, particularly with a whole class, and gives the impression of a library operating more like a public library. Paul is accepting of this, and accepting of how the library staff choose to support him in his teaching. Paul is new to the school, though, and on a short-term contract. He is not part of the old guard of English teachers who remember a different type of library involvement in their wider reading program.
Mary’s relationship with the administration has suffered due to a difficult conflict over how the library space will be used. Due to space constraints within the school, the library has been used as a regular English classroom, is closed for senior exams at the end of the school year and for staff meetings. This raises issues of access and proper usage of the library space within the school environment. Mary is particularly disappointed that administration then denies her request to close the library when library staff wish to attend Professional Development:

The interesting thing is, though, as soon as we want to go out on PD all of the hands go up in the air – “oh no you can’t close the library”. So they are prepared to close the library for exams and things like that but not for us to go on PD.

Relationships with students appear constructive and positive, particularly one-to-one interactions:

Well the other thing we do is that we talk. Because Lucy and I both read, we, and the library tech, we talk a lot with the older kids, we share what we have read. We set up displays of new books and we talk about our new purchases in the newsletter.

The remarks from students also highlight the role the library staff plays. They are seen as helpful:

They kind of like help you, like when you are hanging around in the library. They ask you what you have read and help you. Most of the books are like you know. When I come with English I look around the library for books that I like but mainly there is none. I kind of like fantasy and stuff too. [student one]

Does the teacher recommend reading?

Generally, not just for me. Library staff perhaps, when we were in year seven, not now. [student two]

At least the students do see the role of reading promotion as demanding, perhaps difficult!

If this was your job to recommend books to young people, to get them to read. What would you do?

I’d quit. [student two]

8.6 Library organisation

8.6.1 Access

In this school, access to the physical space of the library is a crucial issue. As described earlier, this school has a space problem; with two hundred more students on the site than the school
buildings are designed to cater for. The result of this is that regular English classes are timetabled into the library, not because a reading or research program has been established that warrants this, but due to the lack of classrooms available. Some teachers, when bringing their class for this period, do use the facilities of the library, taking full advantage of both the book and computer facilities. Others choose to treat the library as a large classroom and conduct their time in such a way that it is obvious they need not be in this space. This, and the closing of the library for use as an exam space, are things the library staff have no control over. The situation is not likely to be remedied in the near future, Mary said:

It is a two-way thing. Physically we have to accept the fact that there is just not enough space so we have to share the burden.

While Mary appears resigned to this problem, as it is not likely to be easily resolved soon, the space issue has caused problems both with access to the library collections and with the nature of the relationship between the library and the school administration.

Mary's attitudes towards censorship and collection management are two other factors that affect the nature of the library collection and access to it. Mary is happy to point out where they make efforts to bring information about the collection to staff and students but then goes on to explain that they do not allow the students to borrow material over the longer Christmas break, in an effort to curb loss. They feel items would go missing if such borrowing were allowed. Lucy explains:

We publish for teachers a list of holiday reading for them and they come in and borrow the books. We haven't done anything like that for the kids, but we don't let them borrow over the Christmas break. We don't want to be too restrictive, its difficult, but we do have to look after the collection.

The issue of access to material is constant. Mary claims she is 'looking after' the collection. This custodial occupation is part of the makeup of the traditional librarian, perhaps one that has been challenged in more recent times by an interest in creating accessible collections housed in welcoming spaces. In defence of this library's view, the teacher-librarian is charged with being responsible for a collection of resources that, in monetary terms, is very valuable and must therefore be cared for and administered correctly.

The issue of censorship is a concern that was mentioned in this school. As an issue, it is one that has been part of all collection building since the beginning of libraries. Whether to buy material that is questionable for any number of very diverse reasons is a difficult problem for many schools. How this is handled, though, does dictate the nature of the type of collection any particular school will provide. At Yarra, there is consultation, and decisions are not made arbitrarily but on an individual basis.

Some good attempts have been made to broaden the collection to incorporate material in the native languages of Yarra students. This readily identifies the need for students to have material they are
comfortable and familiar with, and indicates that Mary is trying to address this through her buying policies:

We have a population here of 54% non-English speaking background and we have no books in other languages. We have just bought some books in Chinese, because I also feel that if it's reading for recreation they have to be comfortable reading in that language, not fighting to understand it.

The library does make a minimal effort to create promotional activities to interest the students in the library's collections. There is however an undertone of hesitation. They appear, at times, embarrassed by their efforts as if they feel they should be doing more. As seen earlier Mary admits that they have no 'structured program' and that what they do provide is probably 'not enough'.

Despite Mary's recognition of their shortcomings she, with her staff, have made a number of documented good attempts, and appear to offer a genuinely good basic service. Attempts to remain aware of the field have been made, as the following statements show. Lucy outlines some of the activities the library has run:

Well, we've had a few quizzes. And we put up a little trivial pursuit type thing with prizes. We've done things like that. Last year we ah, purchased a number of copies of the books on the short list for the book of the year award and we uh, and we did a bit of promotion and we did some displays, competitions and talked to the kids about them. We might do something like that again this year.

The promotion of reading is not a formalised program at Yarra and cooperation between the library and English Department does appear strained. This stumbling block is partly a result of Mary's divergent views as to what they should be allowing the students to read:

People here recognise that getting adolescent boys to read is a very difficult task yet they refuse to allow them to read non-fiction books, they refuse to allow them to read magazines, they refuse to allow them to read picture books.

Who are 'they'?

Members of the English teaching staff, particularly long standing members of the staff. What we have done here is put some of the true stories into fiction, stuff that in a library sense shouldn't be there. The other thing, magazines, is a bone of contention. They're not allowed here during class time at any level, they're only available at lunchtime or after school. We have a very limited range too. Very little is done with picture books.

Despite these strongly held views over what the English teacher should be allowing their students to read, Mary is still adamant that she will not take a more leading role in assisting and directing these wider reading timetabled periods.

As with other libraries in this study, (Green Hills and St Brigid's) this school has used a computer-based, commercially available, wider-reading program at the instigation of a particular staff member. This appears a common reaction to a perceived problem. Staff see a need for a wider promotion of reading amongst their students. In answer to this need they purchase a computer-
based program that is meant to guide the students through reading from various genres and present activities for them to complete. Perhaps a custom built program such as this for each particular school might have more success than a standard package. The failure of this package in a number of the case study schools appears to lie with the need for an enthusiastic staff member leading the way, and also perhaps, someone with a knowledge of the book material to help assist the students in selection to properly support the computerised program – an enabling adult. At Yarra, the computer package appears to have not succeeded due to difficulty with access to machines, the lukewarm reaction of some, both staff and students, to the content, and the fact that the driving force behind the purchase of the program has left the school:

We have also tried BookZone, Heinemann thing, we started that last year. We got it in but the teacher who was right behind it has now left... they need access to computers so we needed to be sure in our design that they had access from the fiction area. We are very disappointed with it. (BookZone), it’s a very old fashioned style of book report. I’ve heard about wonderful things being done with it but what I have seen has not impressed me. It’s now there for the teachers but now that person who bought it has gone, I don’t know.

8.6.2 Ambience

The library staff, in redesigning the library space, have recognized the need to create a warm ambience to welcome students and staff to the library. They do see conflict, though, between this and the emphasis on the library as a place of study, they believe that the atmosphere can be too encouraging:

...we used to have those easy chairs but we got rid of those. They were supposed to be relaxing but the kids relaxed when they were supposed to be working.

This library is welcoming, bright and spacious, the type built in some numbers a few decades ago. Referred to as Commonwealth libraries, these were built in the 1970’s with government funding. Generally they were simple box shapes that were placed adjacent to school buildings, with small office areas. They were otherwise large open spaces. Considered new and exciting at the time, they are now often tired and in need of refurbishment.

This particular library is a large rectangle in shape. As is the case with many older library buildings, it was designed with book storage in mind. The new innovations in the field of information retrieval and storage have placed great demands on libraries such as this; consequently they struggle to find appropriate spaces for computer terminals.

Mary and Lucy, together, have recently re-thought the design of the library space following a recent review. They have given specific consideration to the provision of a reading space amidst the fiction collection. Mary explains the procedure they followed:
We watched for three terms and we then planned the layout of the library so that the reading area, or the English fiction area, would be discrete area and we actually try to, not totally close it off, but try and make it feel like it’s fairly contained, the idea being, also, that if they didn’t want to sit at the tables and chairs, which a lot of kids don’t like, if they were lying on the floor, it wasn’t going to have an impact on what was happening on the other side of the shelves. We also wanted some wall space so that we could display work or posters and any type of promotional material that we had. The design we have at the moment is what we came up with.

The space then allocated for pleasure reading and the use of English classes comes as close as possible to meeting the needs as perceived by the teacher-librarians. Lucy is slightly hesitant in claiming their efforts as a great success. She emphasizes their attempts as ‘trying’ to create a space and is unsure about what they have achieved. This attitude was constant throughout many of their responses:

I suppose we have tried to create that separate area at the back of the library with the fiction collection where a reading class could feel they had space. We’ve tried to do displays and stuff to make it look a bit more interesting.

Lucy does not present a confident front in relation to their initiatives. There is a sense that she sees them only as tinkering at the edges, attempting minor changes that she is aware will not have a major impact. Despite this, the attempts they have made are positive and constructive.

When asked what the library had done to promote reading, it was apparent that one of the English teachers, Paul, had certainly noticed the efforts of the library to create a space for pleasure reading. The teacher-librarians have planned the changes carefully and thoughtfully. Using the resources they had on hand they have attempted to create a positive reading environment and to give fiction a designated space within their library. Paul said:

The corner of the library set aside for wide reading is there. Kids come in and use that at lunch. They have created a space using the furniture. On the walls are reviews from kids, which gives the kids a resource, and posters.

8.7 External factors

Budget allocations appear to allow for the library to provide a reasonably well-stocked collection and a sufficient number of student-use computers. The library also benefits from the work of other faculties in acquiring resources as these are then housed in the library for general use. Mary describes how the budget works:

In terms of money the English Department, KLA, has been able to get quite a bit of money for extra resources. They set up this literature program at (years) nine and ten – mini sets. They pay for that. We try to have one copy in the general collection. We support it. A good proportion of my money is spent on fiction.
With the move towards the technology I would be more likely to spend funds on a fiction book rather than buy a non-fiction book.

As with other case-study schools, Mary indicates she has the freedom to spend her budget as she sees fit in support of the curriculum. This allows her, and similar teacher-librarians, a substantial amount of influence over how the collection will look.

All library staff point towards the staffing allocations as being tight. This factor is blamed for their lack of input into reading promotion as Lucy particularly thinks they would do more if they had the time:

It seems like you have to make a choice with the limited staffing and resources that you have got. I still think that the literature side of things, the reading side of things, is still important. It shouldn’t be ignored. We probably aren’t doing as much in that area as we would like – we’d need more resources. It’s a time factor.

Mary has indicated her own views of her role limit her involvement in reading promotion, yet she also claims staffing is a limiting factor:

We, we might (talk to English classes) depending on how busy we are. Our staffing is not that generous...We have just found that with the volume of work that we have to do we just didn’t want to be seen as the ones responsible for the literature program. If we had more staff we would be more involved. With the move to technology, the importance of research, there just aren’t enough hours.

There is an obvious difference of opinion as to how the library should be used by the school community. Issues of access are compounded by the administration’s decision to use the library as a classroom and also as an exam space. This school has serious space issues and the administration faces very difficult decisions. This compromises the effectiveness of the library’s operation. Mary explains:

I think it’s admin’s response to requests by the English dept that they be timetabled into the library one session per cycle. I inherited that culture and requested that it not be so and it was restricted last year to seven to nine. This year it is 7 to 10 because there is not enough room in the school to have all of the classes so they have decided to add year 10. They are using us as a room. It’s also interesting that the year 10 curriculum doesn’t include this sort of reading scenario. Classes come in for the reading area but they are doing other things. There is a conflict there.

Mary is upset and disappointed at the attitude of administration in, as she sees it, siding with English to timetable them regularly into the library against her wishes. It is unfortunate that, in terms of effective reading promotion, she does not see this as an opportunity for the library to be involved in English wider reading promotional efforts.
8.8 In summary

_We don't have a regular program of talking to the classes, we don't unless we are asked._
*Lucy – teacher-librarian*

This school library is service focused. Interested in creating a welcoming and warm reading environment, they have spent time on redesigning the library layout to allow an area to be allocated as a reading space. Efforts have been made to encourage the use of this space and funds have been allocated to buy new materials of interest to the students. Interaction between the students and the teacher-librarians is a one-to-one experience. The service model of the library is stressed, bringing to mind a more public library style of operation. Though interested and keen readers, the library staff do not see themselves as in the position to offer any more than individual help to interested students.

Mary, the Head of the Library sees the role of reading promotion, beyond one-to-one interaction with students, as structured firmly within the English Department’s brief. Though previous teacher-librarians have taken classes and interacted more closely with wider reading programs, the current staff has resisted this approach. Lucy, the other teacher-librarian on staff, plays a more integral role in incorporating technology into the curriculum.

The timetabling of English classes into the library is an administration and English Department decision that has been taken to alleviate the pressure on classroom space. It has not been made for curriculum reasons and is not based around a solid, engaging wider reading program. A more proactive role in these timetabled classes would allow Mary the chance to influence the views of English teachers, ensure the time was used more constructively and establish a role for herself as an integral part of the teaching team and enabler of a reading environment in her school. Mary’s reluctance to do this appears to stem from her own views of her role and her indignation that the structure of English in the library has been thrust upon her. Rather than see this timetabling problem as an opportunity, she has chosen to view it as an imposition.

This attitude towards the library involvement in reading programs has led to strained relations between the library and some of the more long-standing English staff. De Groff’s 1997 research findings (p. 18), that highlight the importance of informal communication between teachers and teacher-librarians and indicate the power of personality in good working relationships, are worthy of note here. At Yarra High the interaction between the Library and the English Department is almost non-existent, particularly between Mary and the Head of English, with no personal interaction of a pleasant nature. De Groff’s (1997) research would indicate the chances of a productive and rewarding relationship forming in this school between English and Library are almost nil.
9. Opportunity: St Brigid’s College

9.1 The school

St Brigid’s College is a Catholic Secondary College originally founded by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan in 1904. It is a girls’ school, catering for students in years seven to twelve with an enrolment of over 900. The students come predominantly from the feeder parish primary schools in the surrounding area. The school is situated in an inner northern suburb of Melbourne.

During the period of the case study there were changes to the staffing, housing and library facilities that affected the responses given in the interviews. When first approached to be a part of this study, the respondent, Anna, who is interviewed as the main teacher-librarian in this study, was in charge of the library facilities for the college and running two libraries at either end of the school with a variety of support staff. Anna had been in this position for a number of years.

In between the time of being asked to participate and the commencement of the interviews, a new person had been brought in from outside the school to be the new Head of Library Services. The previous Head, Anna, had been relegated to a role within the new structure as a teacher-librarian without any leadership role. A new, purpose-built library building was finished under the supervision of the new Head of the Library, Sian, and all library staff from the two libraries were brought together under her leadership.

Sian agreed to be part of the interview process and was interviewed as the additional library staff member in the study. Anna remains the main respondent in the interview process, though her role is vastly different than what it was when she was approached to participate. Anna appears happy with her new role. She did not wish to take up the challenge of Head of Library in the new facility, and so the college made the external appointment. Working relationships appear healthy and productive and the new facility is a leading example in the field. This is a vast jump from the style and extent of library services that were offered only a short time ago.

The interviews straddled both library types. Some took place in the old libraries; others, the students in particular, took place in the new library not long after it was completed. Photographs were taken of the old library space and observation was carried out in both spaces.
9.2 The teacher-librarian

The interviewed teacher-librarian, Anna Righton, holds a four-year teacher-librarianship degree and has been working in various roles at this particular school for many years.

The new Head of Library, Sian, is well qualified, with Bachelor Degrees in both Arts and Education and a Masters in Library and Information Studies. She has had a varied career, having held both in-charge positions at other school libraries, and other positions of responsibility. She is active in one of the professional associations formed to further the interests of librarians.

9.3 The library

This photograph (photograph nine) is of the old senior library; small, cramped and unattractive. As already explained, the new library was under construction during the period in which the data was being collected. As all thoughts and efforts were on the new library under construction, very little was being done, in every sense of the word, to improve the old library facilities. The title of this chapter is “opportunity” as there is no doubt that this school library is at the point in its history where it has every opportunity to become an excellent library in every sense. The challenge for this staff is to make this possibility become a reality. To what extent an effective reading environment is part of the library’s new structure is open to conjecture.
9.4 The attitudes of the teacher-librarian

Anna has, until recently, had the role of purchasing for the library collection. She is open in stating she buys for pleasure as well as for the support of curriculum.

Well, largely, in purchasing fiction, I think of it as for pleasure, as the English program here, we did have wide reading and they did allow fairly wide choices. So anything other than that, I saw as pleasure. Now they have opened it up to anything from the collection. They do have to get that approved by the teachers. So, something that is bought for pleasure may end up being something that they have to read.
As to purchasing other forms of material to support an interest in reading for pleasure she is less supportive. In response to a question about other varied formats, Anna said:

Very few. Newspapers, some picture books, no magazines and very few comics.
Boys are probably more into those.

Her theory that comics and magazines are more popular with boys could be questioned on the basis of the extraordinary popularity of magazines amongst young women. Cost must also play a part as the budget has not been, historically, overly generous, though Anna seems reluctant to state this, perhaps as the school is spending a great deal on new library facilities. This fact seems to make her uncomfortable about complaining of past injustices.

Teachers on staff see a place in the school library for pleasure reading and the provision of alternative forms of style and text. The Head of English, Jenny, has fairly open views on censorship, allowing for novels on the shelves that have been removed from the shelves of similar schools:

I see pleasure reading as essential. I suppose my view has always been that the library should be the hub of the school. In the past there has been a little bit of tension between myself and the teacher-librarian about what sort of texts should go on the shelves, I don’t have a problem with *Sleeping dogs, Dear Miffy* on the shelves but I think, as teachers, we have a responsibility to be reading that material...I like to see, particularly in a girls’ school...many females as authors and females as protagonists and I think students, particularly girls, need to have access to non-fiction...whether they be biographies or how-to books. Poetry is important, picture books are important. It depends on the magazine. I think that libraries should have arm chairs because that’s what they have at home and, I think, to an extent, that magazines should be available, you know, *Girlfriend*, and that, that maintain the stereotypes. But I think there’s got to be a balance of other material as well.

and

I think as much as you can get in the library, as big a range as you can. I probably don’t subscribe to the theory that kids should always read novels. I subscribe to the theory that kids should read what kids are interested in at the time and my role is trying to get them to read to start with and then perhaps to get them to read a variety. So not always the romance novels. I don’t mind if they read a little bit of that but I try to develop them further. And I suppose kids that are non-readers, or reluctant readers, I often find it easier, or it sometimes helps, to get them to read if you get them to read something that’s not a novel. Follow an interest. Kids who read will read anything anyway, they’re not the ones you have to worry about. Sometimes it’s dragging the book out of their hands.

The other teacher interviewed, Connie, has an alternative view to her colleague on the issue of magazines. In her mind the popular material should be sourced elsewhere and not necessarily provided by the school. She said:

I think, perhaps, in a school library, not the focus. Perhaps it’s not the place in a school library to provide all of that popular stuff like *Dolly* at the expense of other things.

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The following statement was made by Sian, the teacher-librarian who is the new Head of Library, in answer to a question about what is being done in the library to encourage reading:

...matching the kid with the book. I would see that as the best promotional thing that you can do. So how you relate to the girls in terms of your fairness in a range of situations, and then how well you are able to advise them, and that needs to be very firmly on a knowledge basis, and those are the kinds of things I would be working towards. But all I can say, at the moment, is that we are working very hard to get BookZone supported. But compared to what I could do, it hasn't been a priority frankly.

Sian continually stresses the terms 'fairness' and 'firmness'. All of her dealings with students and the wider school community appear governed by this terminology. She is very conscious of establishing structure and boundaries and, in all of her dealings with the students, these terms are evident. She appears keen to match the right book to the right student, yet there is little sense of a personal relationship, or a sharing of experience. There is some implication that she may see some of this as the role of the other library staff; her role is that of administrator – the overseer of the establishment of best practice. It is for this role, and her ability in this role, that she was appointed the new Head of the Library.

The establishment of a more effective reading environment is something both Anna and Sian see as important, but as this interview took place in the old library during the planning stages for the new building, thoughts were obviously elsewhere. Past interaction and promotion has been minimal. Students have seen little beyond a superficial role in reading promotion for the library:

The library just puts up signs, you know, "reading is fun." Well, they did in the old library. But not here yet, they don't seem to encourage it as much... like they don't talk to us or anything. Just research and stuff and where things are. [student one]

This statement was made in the new building, a place that, in the minds of the staff, holds great promise, yet the student implies that there was more evidence of an interest in reading promotion in the old library, however minimal that may have been.

Anna did make a minimal effort before the recent changes – display, some collection building, support for English initiatives but very little else. There is a sense of guilt in the responses of the teacher-librarian. In answer to a question as to whether she plays a major role in reading promotion within her school, Anna said:

No, unfortunately.

and

Promoting fiction is one thing that has suffered but time just didn't allow. I have felt a little bit guilty about it, but just felt there was nothing I could do about it with what I had.
Sian, the new Head of Library, sees the most important factor as ‘matching the kid with the book’. She sees this coming about by ‘getting the staff here to read’. As in other case study examples, this teacher-librarian is keen to espouse the importance of this role in reading promotion but sees it as being performed by others, not herself.

She is a ‘resource’, providing a collection, but it is not her that will be doing the work with students - perhaps other library, or English, staff are cast in this role in her mind. She said:

But I think, in the long run, it will be things like how much I can get the staff here to read and to be there as a resource. I would see that as very important.

In a consideration of the role of the teacher-librarian, Jenny, a teacher, and Head of English, does not mention any role in the promotion of literature or reading, reflecting the apparent lack of this practice within this particular school. Resource management and the provision of a collection is high on the list for this administrator. As Head of English, Jenny buys most of the library’s fiction collection and is, therefore, intimately aware of this task. Interestingly, unlike others within this study, Jenny stresses the teaching and co-operative facets of the teacher-librarian’s role in her own view of the role:

Well, I think they should be teachers. I think that they’ve got to engender interest in all sorts of texts. I think they’ve got to be like teachers, a walking resource. They’ve probably got to be disciplinarians. They’ve got to love what they do. And I think they’ve got to work closely with other coordinators and teachers, so, I think they’re buyers. In a way, they’re not much different to an English coordinator. They have to buy resources, they’ve got to encourage students to love what they’re on about, and that’s the library or the English classroom or whatever. Work with other people in teams and, I think, there is a whole area of information stuff that I don’t have to do as much in terms of Internet and such.

Anna, at times, seems to see the impact of technology on her job as almost insurmountable. She feels its impact has caused her to drop other areas of her role. She appears overwhelmed by the demands necessary to keep the systems running. It was suggested that the new library will bring all of the library staff on to one site and allow for a much more structured approach to job allocation, thus enabling Anna to work more effectively as part of a team. Only time will tell whether this does happen but, at the time of the interviews, Anna was concerned:

Well time really is the big thing. It’s not really money I think. It’s time. I think we are sort of managing to meet the demands on the technology side of things but the other has gone by the way. Its been incredible; the change, the impact. Maybe one person can’t do both. (handle the impact of technology and traditional library duties).

and

I think in responding to the demands, it happens (roles are neglected) I would spend most of my time assisting with computers.

Anna also said:
...there have been such incredible changes and the library is seen differently now. I'm interested in what's happening in primary school as well and fiction and reading books seem to be going by the by.

She suggests a lack of interest by her own library, and also primary schools, in reading as an activity. She is resentful of this attitude but feels powerless to change or modify what is taking place around her. In discussion as to why technology is consuming her time, she said:

I think its, uh, partly me too. Saying I have to get that computer going again today if there is a problem. Maybe you don't! I don't know. I haven't dared to try that. Forced to give that priority, not that I want to.

Despite having opinions as to what her role should be, Anna is reluctant to be proactive. Rather, she is inclined to fulfil the role imposed upon her. Her various mentions of ‘getting computers going’ implies her role has developed into that of technician rather than trained educator.

Anna appears overwhelmed with the impact of technology on her work place. Technological advancements within libraries arrived for her at a time of unrest and dissatisfaction with the library by the college community. Her unfamiliarity with technological advances and her general unease may have led to her decision to seek a position of lesser responsibility. For her, this emphasis on technology is not only a factor in her own personal workplace, but a change she sees in the profession as a whole. In discussion of the changing role, Anna said:

If you want a job in a library, study in technology is the way to go.

9.5 Relationships

The English faculty Head purchases the majority of the fiction collection in the library. This policy has caused problems. There are differences of opinion as to what should be provided. As the library does not have control over this aspect of the budget, yet must process, house, and promote, books that are bought by someone else, conflicts have arisen. Perhaps this process might work well if both parties had similar views but it is apparent that there is some difference of opinion as to what should be purchased. The Head of English said:

...in the past there has been a little bit of tension between myself and the teacher-librarian about what sort of texts should go on the shelves.

The new Head of the library is full of plans for co-operation for the future:

I have endeavoured to work with the English Department in setting up something for Book Week, which hasn't happened of course. And I suppose, at the moment, I'm seeing us in a support role, providing the resources for BookZone. We also support them with any competitions they might run. There is a relationship there to be fostered and developed, I feel.
It remains to be seen how successful this will be. There is no doubt that there is little being done now to forge any effective partnerships between the English Department and the library program. Sian appears to see her role as supportive, not proactive, with the lead coming from the English Department. The phrase ‘of course’ tacked on to the end of her comment about the English Department’s lack of action indicates she is already not happy with either their attitude, or work ethic, in regard to the role of reading promotion. She expects little from them.

Anna sees the failure to establish good relationships with English staff as a result of her lack of time and, therefore, inability to meet with and talk to teachers. While some classes do come to the library, it is on an irregular basis and library involvement is limited, Anna explained:

I think it's again time. I feel like I don't have enough contact with the teaching staff, with the library open at lunchtime and that sort of thing. I would like more opportunity to have contact because it's amazing how much comes out in lunch discussion.

Though the English teacher, Connie, gives a positive view of the library, she is unable to indicate any programs or initiatives undertaken by the library to support the promotion of reading, except for the positive welcoming approach she sees in the teacher-librarian’s interaction with students. There is an obvious friendship between Anna and Connie. Connie appears to resent Anna’s treatment by administration even more so than Anna does herself. She is very defensive of what she sees as Anna’s strengths, yet admits she can find few concrete examples of Anna’s activity.

‘They do have things at lunchtime and stuff, you know, Library Week. I guess in terms of regular activities and such, there’s not much.

and

But I think even the senior kids are happy to work with Anna. The kids are positive. Sometimes the kids can have a negative response; there are ways of saying things perhaps. But I think in terms of displaying work, talking to girls when they come in ... I have always found the library staff very helpful.

The relationship between the teacher-librarian, Anna, the new Head of Library, Sian, and the existing support staff within the library is still in a state of transition. With the move to the new library, work is of a very practical and physical nature. New roles within the future library building are still being determined. The difficulty of having a new Head, who came in as an external appointment, with the previous Head of Library still on staff, is a problem being explored carefully by all concerned. The new Head is strong and opinionated and it is very clear the previous staff have all taken a back seat to her leadership and drive. There are plans to employ another teacher-librarian with the move to the new building, a much-needed extra staff member that was unable to be secured by Anna. How well working relationships will be established and maintained by all concerned, only time will tell.
The relationship between the library and the Head of English is complicated by the policy of fiction buying being the responsibility of English. Though no one was specific in their statements, issues relating to what is purchased have been alluded to. This difficulty appears to have flowed on to other areas, spoiling their working relationship. Only a perfunctory working relationship appears to be in existence. When asked about her interaction with Anna, Jenny said:

No. Not as a teacher. Well just in terms of talking about... well there are some real problems here. For example, it's my role to buy fiction, not the library's role.

When asked about the library as a source of ideas, Jenny, the Head of English, said:

Actually, most of ideas come through a friend of mine, who is in to the distribution of books, who is brilliant. I don't rely on here, no.

With little input, the library may feel like the storehouse for what is an English Department collection bought and used without their support and expertise, yet processed and stored in the library. Such a system might work if relationships were healthy and interactive but, in this school, that is not the case.

The teacher, Connie, appeared to feel that Anna, when still in charge of the library facilities, was somewhat hindered by administration, though no specific instances were outlined:

Anna was hamstrung by others having their say about the library. I think it was her domain, she should have been allowed to run it as she chose.

Before the new library facilities were built and Sian appointed, Anna had endeavoured to improve library staffing but the administration was not forthcoming. With the new regime, a new teacher-librarian is to be appointed. Hearsay has suggested that administration were keen to replace Anna as Head of the library service and were not prepared to allow her more money and responsibility as their plan was to change leadership. This has coloured any recent relationship between administration and library staff.

Jenny, the Head of English, perceives the library role as being a support to the teachers' endeavours to promote and encourage reading. She said in response to a question about creating a reading environment:

I think I see that as part of the teachers' role with students that are coming in.

She does not see a proactive role for the library. Despite the fact that she sees it as a teacher's role, there is little evidence that the teachers are picking up this role beyond a superficial level. They may bring their classes to the library but, as they are not reading the books themselves, recommending titles to students, or developing other complementary promotional programs, the extent of the reading encouragement stops at providing basic access.

Connie has a positive view of the relationship between Anna and the students:
I guess it’s a bit hard. You don’t want to talk about personalities. The person I dealt with was Anna. I always found her to be a positive element. If I sent kids to the library, my experience was that, when they get Anna, they went with the expectation that they would be helped. They go with the sense they will get what they are looking for, welcomed, and isn’t in their words ‘crabby’. Because I have had kids say they don’t want to go, that they will be yelled at or told they are in the wrong place.

Connie appears to be contrasting Anna’s positive relationship with students with interactions between students and other library staff. It is unclear to whom she is referring when she talks of the ‘crabby’ librarian, though there is a suggestion that she finds Sian, the new Head of Library, less approachable and welcoming of the students. This perception is, perhaps, an isolated view, as it is not mentioned by any of the other interviewees.

Connie does dwell on this, though, repeating again her comparison of the welcoming and the crabby librarian.

..to create a place that the kids feel comfortable in and want to come to – to feel that it’s a place of learning for them. I think to help the kids with whatever they’re looking for. I guess I’m a bit coloured by what the kids tell me. …they say ‘yeh she was really helpful; she’s really nice; I feel I can go and ask her.’ Sometimes they’ll say ‘I’m not going over there, they’re just crabby.’

She is very conscious of the student perception that library staff can be unhelpful and difficult. This perception colours her view of the library.

The students interviewed could point to little besides providing a collection to encourage reading initiated by the library. A number of the students were, nevertheless, keen readers, even library users, with the public library well used by some. Purchasing their own and borrowing books from friends, were also popular sources of reading material. The following answers represent their views:

What does your school, its teachers and library staff, do to create an environment that encourages students to read?

I don’t know. I can’t think of anything. They take us here. (the library) [student two]

Is the school library a source of reading materials for you? Why or why not?

No, not really, I go to Dixon library (public). It’s the closest one to me. I buy books too, I’m in a book club. Probably from Mum, most of my books, she borrows them, and buys them, and then I read them.

Why not here (the school library)?

It’s a bit limited, I feel like I have to read it too quick and return it. [student four]

I borrow from Dixon library (public) but I have a big fine there at the moment. I buy them, too. I have a big book shelf – I’m hoping to get down to (the local shopping centre) on the weekend and see what is new. [student one]
The students are obviously keen readers and keen buyers and borrowers of books, yet the school library does not play a large or important role in this process.

When asked what they would do to encourage reading in their school if it was their job, these students pointed to very basic needs that they do not feel are being fulfilled for them now – talking about books, buying what they want to read and coming to the library more often:

I’d like, ask them (the students) what kind of books they would want and I’d get them. [student four]

I guess I’d be here more often, bring them (fellow students) here, because you lose interest if you don’t read a lot. So bring them here more often. [student two]

9.6 Library organisation

9.6.1 Access

Access to the new library facility is strictly controlled. I observed the library open during the school lunch break. On the sounding of the bell signifying the commencement of lunchtime staff placed a collection of coloured tags on the circulation desk closest to the entrance. As students entered, they took a tag and proceeded to use whatever area of the library they wished. The number of tags related to how many students the teacher-librarian felt the library could hold comfortably. Once all of the tags were gone the library was considered full. Any student wishing to use the library without a tag being available for them had to come back later when someone had left and an entrance tag was now available. This structured access system typifies Sian’s approach to her role. Sian firmly believes in setting limits and giving structure, in the view that students work best within limits.

For Sian, the first priority has been her commitment to planning the new library space being built. After this she has seen of prime importance her role in establishing a better collection. She clearly states her views:

the new building and b) just the collection – you need to get the collection in order and looking good.

Sian is very clear as to why this is a priority:

You give a message about your expectations. For example, the fiction collection needs to be weeded at the moment, we are saying “we don’t care, girls, what it looks like,” and that’s just not good enough.
This has meant a great deal of weeding of old and tattered material and a beginning made in assessing gaps in the collection and immediate needs. Upon the collection being moved in to the new building, the collection looked small and inadequate on the new shelving. With room planned for expansion, the limitations of the old collection are very apparent.

Anna said, in a response to a query about the book collections:

I haven’t, we don’t have, a great budget, but I haven’t felt it’s inadequate. Probably one of the problems has been, until this year, we haven’t had security, so the complaint is often that the good books disappear. They don’t last long, so that has been a problem.

The new building has been equipped with a security system, so theft should be reduced. The library team is aware that a great deal of collection building will need to take place to ensure the standard of the collection rises to meet the expectations created by the new library space.

The impact of the new library has meant that little has been done in relation to structured reading promotion. Anna said when asked about reading promotion:

The new library has taken priority lately but I hope that, once we are in the new library, that we can do something about it. I am keen.

It is apparent that not a great deal was being done within the structure of the old libraries either. Though staff appeared interested, promotion appears to have been minimal. One contributing factor was that with two libraries and limited staff, just keeping the libraries open and offering basic service was a difficult first priority. The new building, with all services on one site, should free up staff time to work with teachers and perhaps offer more. It also seems that the appointment of a new Head of the Library was, in part, an answer to a perceived need for a more dynamic and proactive personality that would, perhaps, create more interaction between the library and the classroom.

In response to a query about whether the library had initiated programs, Jenny said:

Not a lot really.

Her role has been to introduce BookZone to the College, an initiative that has not, by her own admission, been very successful:

I think we have been thwarted by the computer system at the moment. I bought it (BookZone) in my previous school, where it worked well. I think it has worked less well here because of the (pause), we have six classes using it and I think they don’t get on to the third level stuff, the creative input.

Library input into the reading experiences of the students is minimal beyond provision of a collection and a space when required:
To encourage us to read, well they bring us to the library to have reading periods. Yeah, they've got a wide variety of books. Nothing else. [student four]

Our teacher tries to get us to read at least half an hour each night and a lot of the kids don't, they just say, "How is she going to know?" The library just puts up a sign, you know, "reading is fun." Well, they did in the old library. But not here yet. They don't seem to encourage it as much, like they don't talk to us or anything. Just research and stuff and where things are. [student one]

Jenny, the Head of English said:

And creating a reading environment is not just about talking about books, it's also modelling and all sorts of things.

Though she articulated a view that a reading environment is initiated and encouraged through efforts to model and "all sorts of things", there is little evidence of any established program to support this, beyond BookZone and a silent reading period within the library. In terms of Chambers's enabling adult, the staff in this school are doing little more than providing basic access.

9.6.2 Ambience

Comments from amongst the interviewees make it clear that efforts were made in the old library to create a welcoming space, despite the limitations. Teachers' talk positively about Anna's efforts, Connie commented, when asked what the library has done:

Look, I think, trying to create a warm environment, displaying books perhaps, displaying kid's work, you know things the kids have made that draws kids to the place to start with.

and

Perhaps display. Anna, over the years, has made the best of what she had.

Anna saw difficulties with this lack of space but, for her, it was more an issue of time and the pressures of other priorities. She explained:

...there's a physical difficulty. We don't have a display area or space. In the new library, yes. And it's a matter of time. Other things scream at you.

In terms of the new library space, Sian has firm ideas about what she is trying to do:

The things that are important to me are that a) it is attractive, that you would want to be there, that it has an open feeling to it. And this library (old library building) has none of it. I have created a special space that is discrete and separate (for reading).

and

I have had to struggle with the colours, because of the architects before I had started... because I said that colour was very important in this very open,
welcoming, warm sort of environment which really contributes to the way people then behave. You give a message about your expectations.

Sian is aware of the ability to create spaces, or rooms, with careful furniture layout. Colour is very important to her. The end result is certainly a welcoming library space, very open and inviting, with a very subdued and restful colour scheme. As to student reaction and how effective the physical environment is at assisting the creation of a reading environment, at present the responses are not overwhelming.

Due to the construction of new facilities it had been difficult to justify spending any time or money on the older library facilities. Minor efforts had been made:

Well, early on we tried the furnishings I suppose, in terms of physical comfort. It has been difficult to try and get anything for a while as you don’t want to buy anything when you are moving.

At this point, with the new facility due to open there is no doubt that, in terms of physical layout, the old libraries were looking tired and worn out. Both libraries were only small, with drab colours and old furniture. They certainly had very little to offer in terms of a bright, functional, inviting library space. No money had been spent on them for some time.

The new library was being approached with enthusiasm, as it was hoped this space would solve all of the problems that were inherent in the old facilities. Though the new building was purpose-built the Head of Library had input into the architectural design, the space still had its constraints. Due to cost, restricted land space, and the needs of other subject areas, the library size and shape were predetermined. On entry, the library appears large, but Sian would have preferred more:

We are still operating on limited space. If I had my druthers this would have been bigger again. We are basically getting only 90 seats, so we have exactly the same seating as we have across the two libraries now, but a new library, so a much nicer space.

9.7 External factors

Anna’s views are coloured by the change to her role within the library structure. She was reluctant to elaborate on how she saw the budget. The new Head of Library, Sian, thought the budget woefully inadequate, yet Anna said:

I haven’t really had a problem (with the budget levels). Other people think differently.
In terms of budget allocation, it is time, which equates to staffing, that Anna has always felt was definitely inadequate and her main issue of concern. With two libraries to spread staff over, this has always been an issue for her:

Well, time really is the big thing. It’s not really money I think. And staffing, definitely an issue. I think we are not on very generous staffing. Most people would probably say that, I suppose. With the change this year, it’s been a great help to get an extra librarian in. We have no extra staff, though, we have just rearranged. We have been a little bit unbalanced with qualified people. We had two teacher librarians but, when the other left on maternity leave some time ago, she was not replaced at all. Promoting fiction is one thing that has suffered.

It was this lack of staff that led to Anna’s inability to establish any form of effective reading promotion. With the new building and the relieving of this problem, only time will show whether future efforts are made. Perhaps, though, there is an indication that this is not the only reason for Anna’s lack of achievement. Perhaps Anna’s lack of initiative, or lack of ability to read the political landscape, may have also contributed to the understaffed library facilities at the college.

It appears that the school administration and Anna have been working at cross purposes. While Anna has attempted to maintain a library service and provide for its growth and future, it appears the administration has planned a new direction for the library with a new and different leadership direction. Anna explained her feelings after administration failed to recognise her staffing needs:

They basically looked around at other schools and thought that we were well staffed. But, given the two library situation, that was difficult. Just covering desk is an issue. I failed, perhaps, to make enough noise. I was a little bit stunned, I suppose I thought it would just happen.

In this scenario, Anna admits to not being proactive, or forceful enough, to make her opinions heard.

The administration of the college appear to have been clear about the direction they saw for the library and they did not see Anna as part of the leadership of the new facility. It is unclear about how the process was worked through but Anna had come to the same conclusion. During this process, there appears to have been periods where Anna’s leadership was certainly not supported or consulted. The college administration sought a proactive, strong leader for a valuable new facility. In the best interests of the college library service, the changes to the library staffing structure may have been justified.

Anna is very aware that she has not initiated any major program to promote reading. There is a sense of guilt in all of her statements on the topic. Set library times and the BookZone program have been English Department ideas and what has been established is minimal and certainly not enough to have established reading as a high priority. Anna said:

A few years ago, they (the English Department) requested set times in the library which, I suppose, are silent reading times, once a fortnight. We might have input if
we are asked. There was the person prior to me who did a quite a bit of that - book
 talks and the like - and I know some teachers are missing that. And fair enough.

9.8 In summary

I failed, perhaps, to make enough noise. I was a little bit stunned,
I suppose I thought it would just happen.
Anna – teacher-librarian

This library has undergone momentous change. During the period of the interviews it moved from
small, cramped, unattractive quarters to an aesthetically pleasing, purpose-built, fully equipped
building with extra staff. The potential is there for growth and expansion in all areas of the
library’s operation.

The fact that the administration has employed new, proactive staff and invested a considerable
amount of money in a new library building suggests they see the importance of the library to the
overall school program. Henri and Hay recognise the importance of the influence of
administration, noting that ‘teacher-librarians and their programs thrive upon the leadership of
energetic, supportive, visionary administrators’ (Henri & Hay, 1996, p.9). This support and vision
has been realised in this particular school with a spacious, state-of-the-art library building. Yet the
focus of these new initiatives sees the library as a technology-based learning centre. The place of
the library as a reading environment is, perhaps, of minor importance.

Any previous attempt to foster or encourage a reading environment has been undeveloped. The
commercially produced reading program purchased as part of the English program was
unsuccessful and no other initiatives of note have replaced, or supported, this. As with other
schools within this study, St Brigid’s has attempted short-term, easy fixes to a need that requires
more for any long-term benefit to be evidenced. Simmons notes

Making readers of students takes a certain amount of luck, great perception and
understanding of a child’s needs, an understanding of the obstacles to reading and
a great deal of time, thought and skill (1994, p. 17).

Those schools who attempt to fix the perceived need using a computer program without proper
support and the relevant expertise can expect such band aid measures to fail, as they have done in
at least two of the six schools that participated in this study.

The historical development of the library in this college has been unusual. With two separate
library spaces, both small and under-resourced, the library has found it difficult to move ahead.
The Head of the English Department, Jenny, is responsible for the library’s fiction buying budget
and, though this might change with a new Head of Library, historically it has meant a very
disjointed and unsatisfactory approach to library collection building.

The changes to library staff at this college are likely to have some effect on relationships amongst
the library staff. Though she appears happy with the arrangement, Anna may feel some resentment
about having a new person appointed above her at a time when the library is finally in a much
more influential and pleasant position after years of want and struggle. Many commentators (De
Groff, 1997; Hartzell, 1999; Phillips, 1988; Todd, 2000) have noted the importance of strong
relationships within the close working environment of the library. The success or failure of this
new library facility rests in part on the relationship between library staff remaining a productive
one.

On a positive note, Anna is now in a position to follow through on her stated ‘keen’ attitude
towards promoting and improving the reading environment. They questions are, will she be able to
improve on history, and will she be supported in her endeavours?
10. Icing: Canterbury College

10.1 The school

Canterbury College is a church-established, independent, girls' school running classes from Prep to year Twelve. The secondary and primary components of the library service operate independently yet have a good, cooperative relationship. The college has an enrolment of 1250 students with approximately 870 of those being in the secondary sector. The school is situated in the outer Eastern suburbs of Melbourne and caters for students in the surrounding suburbs and also for a number of students who travel some distance to attend, predominantly from the eastern area of Melbourne.

10.2 The teacher-librarian

Donna Welch is a well regarded leader within the profession of teacher-librarianship. Her appointment to Canterbury was considered a prestigious career move as she replaced another high profile member of the profession who continues to be influential. Donna holds the title of Information Research Coordinator at the College, a title that was created for her in recognition of the role she has carved out for herself. She works very closely with teaching staff at the college and reading promotion is part of her brief, as is the promotion of research skills and the use of information technology. Though Donna is not head of this library service, she was chosen to be part of this study because of her high profile within the profession. The Head of the Library at Canterbury, Janice, was interviewed for the study as the other member of library staff. She is well established at Canterbury having been in the position for some time.

10.3 The library

Both of the photographs illustrate well the tight and cramped nature of this school library. The collection owned by this school is substantial and this, combined with the added pressure of research classes and a large number of computer terminals, puts great pressure on the space in the library. A new library, or an extension to the present building, has been promised but it is certainly nowhere in the immediate future. Both photographs show the fiction collection in the background of the shot. Wedged in a back area of the library, it is dark and unwelcoming. There is no seating, save the class research area nearby, and there is definitely no display space. Revolving paperback stands, the picture book collection, the magazine collection and the talking book collection, all quite large, are at different ends of the library. It is obvious that the main factor considered when
laying out the library is the maximum use of the available space, not aesthetics or comfort. Though there is no doubt that budget allocations are more than adequate in every regard, this generosity cannot be properly utilised in such a confined area.

There is an arrangement in this college that is markedly different from the other five case study schools, that is, the reading rooms spread throughout the college that are administered by the English Department. These rooms are used during English classes and contain a wide range of fiction with multiple copies of several titles. Students obtain books from these rooms to read that are part of their assessed English course and they also may select from these collections for wider reading. The books are paid for, and organised by, the English Department but processed by the library. The English Department choose what they will buy yet they do appear to defer to the expertise of the library staff to some extent.
10.4 The attitudes of the teacher-librarian

Canterbury has a large collection of picture books provided for the secondary school library users and has a history of purchasing original picture book artwork. Some of this artwork is on display. Despite limited space, they also provide a small collection of popular magazine titles for the recreational reading of students. Additionally, there is an accepted culture of providing a collection of pleasure reading materials for teachers.

A wide-ranging view in regard to appropriate reading material appears to exist within the college. Staff are interested in current material, and books that have been viewed as questionable elsewhere are not dismissed out of hand. The staff share opinions about adolescent fiction and many appear to read widely for pleasure, both within the area of adolescent fiction as well as adult publications. Donna describes her own reading:

I like to compare these (adolescent writers) with adult writers. I don't often read what everyone tells me I should, the award winners etc. I often prefer to read the adolescent things instead. Sometimes the hype surrounding the adult material just doesn't happen with the adolescent material, and that's a good thing for me.

This view assists in giving adolescent material a respected place within the college environment. Seeing their teachers reading and discussing the books they read themselves must be encouraging.
for students as they see their own reading tastes being taken seriously. Many within the school community take this form of modelling seriously.

At Canterbury, unlike other case study schools, the English teachers were adamant about how they saw themselves as readers. Reading appeared to be integral to themselves as people and central to their role as English teachers. Their positive views of the reading experience affected how they saw their role in relation to teaching English and the provision of the reading room and its collections. They appeared to share and encourage an interest in the reading materials of their students. In response to the question 'Do you consider yourself a reader?' English teacher Lesley replied:

Oh, it would be a tragedy if I wasn’t. If I said no would I lose my job! Yes absolutely.

And her colleague, Julie, said:

Oh absolutely, like addicted.

Donna was quite open in her responses, detailing her view of what the college had been like in the past, or, at least, the views of a previous college librarian.

It was interesting when I came here I was told by the then Head of Library that the girls were all really good readers and that the library, ah, English looked after sort of the reading scheme stuff, and that the library really was just for recreation, and that you really had to do nothing to promote reading because the girls read. Except for this Kingfisher literature club, which I inherited from Sonia, uh well it is true that lots and lots of girls read, lots of them are passionate readers, but there are a lot that don’t read. It’s interesting, it’s the culture in this place, not just the culture in the library, that to read isn’t something that’s seen to be daggy or not to be done. People do read, and a wide range of stuff.

What is of most interest here, and a fact that contrasts markedly with the other case study schools, is the overall view of the school as a community of readers. It is evident in this institution that the library does not play a solo role as a reading environment within this school. The role of creating the reading environment is one embraced by the whole school community. Whilst there are exceptions, the staff and students generally see themselves as readers and reading as a positive pastime. Is this a view that stems from the more affluent socio-economic background of the student’s families, or other external influences, or is it something the school can take sole responsibility for? Certainly, the school can take responsibility for their ability to continue encouraging this view and maintaining it as part of the college makeup.

Whilst the Head of the library, Janice, sees the impact of technology on staff time as immense there is less of a focus on the debilitating role it may play. This may be due to the fact that this library is very well staffed and generously funded, making dealing with new innovations easier than in schools with a lesser ability to argue for more funding or staff or less support form the administration. Janice is strongly supportive of the library’s role in the reading environment. When
asked, she saw it as a ‘really important focus’ for the teacher-librarians in her charge. In terms of the library’s role, the curriculum was seen as the force behind decision making. In a discussion of the conflicts within the role of the teacher-librarian Janice said:

I think, generally, it’s a matter of time, staff, money. The technology is a whole new dimension and just part of what you do, physically and with staffing and money... the curriculum is sort of leading a lot of what you do. Although we have got a very big wide reading scheme here in English with their own collection.

There was the implication that, within this college, money could always be found to support curriculum initiatives. Therefore, the library has a strong focus on justifying itself through value adding to classroom practice. In this way, technology, reading promotion or research skills are measured by how much they support and extend the curriculum.

Donna appears very comfortable with the role she plays in reading promotion. She came from a school in which she played a larger role but obviously sees strong benefits to her different role within this college. Her focus is to support the curriculum and teaching and learning initiatives. She ranges widely, assisting teachers in whatever seems appropriate. In this school she offers support, and assistance, or ‘icing’ as she terms it, to a staff that are very proactive in reading promotion themselves:

So the culture within the school supports that (pleasure reading) but at the same time (there is an) established culture that English is responsible for reading in terms of set novels and the teaching of literature. There is really quite a distinction, and the library is seen as an additional thing that could be added on, a little bit of icing that can be added on when we have time. So it was quite different to my last school where we had a RIBIT (Read In Bed It’s Terrific) reading scheme and the library was the engine. It’s a different sort of relationship.

And in answer to a question about the scope of the collection in the English Department:

...you can really feel you are incidental to the promotion of literature, but having said that, I am so actively involved with the English teachers talking about books that, it’s just a different way. That’s why the reading group is so important – keeping the spark alive for us as people who all enjoy reading. I often do book spruiks and show bag talks in the classroom as the library is often too full with research classes.

Donna appears to have in mind, as do others on staff, a whole school view rather than a department or library view. There is a sense here that decisions have been made about what they are trying to create and that people are prepared to wear responsibility to make that happen. Funding for initiative is available. This is in contrast with other case study schools where ownership of the issue of reading promotion is not apparent, with both library and English reluctant to take responsibility.

There is also a sense, particularly in the next extract from Donna’s responses, that she has thought through what she is trying to do, and how best she can achieve that. Donna has made decisions about her role rather than letting change impact upon her. There is also an evolution to her thought
- in recent times she has moved into a role that deals more closely with information technology and its application in research. The following piece appears in some ways to be a justification of this moving on, but it also seems that Donna has found herself in a school with a different model for promoting reading, a model that she perceives to be working and that therefore dictates that she must modify her own role:

Years ago I read somewhere, I read some research that was done in the States, that looked at who were the people that had the greatest impact on children’s choices of reading. And there were about, I don’t know, a lot of categories, but a teacher-librarian didn’t even score in the top five. The people that had the most impact were other readers, it went on and on and on and the classroom teacher was before the teacher-librarian. Now that was a very, it wasn’t humiliating, but it was very, ah, ‘let’s keep yourself in perspective, Donna, about this’. So, I’ve never felt that we had the most major role to play and so I suppose that is why I was always really involved with RIBIT because I felt that it was through the classroom that we could get the children to read. So I have never been lumbered down with that. However, I think we have a role to play in promoting it, and promoting the idea that reading is, is something that is worthwhile and why don’t we listen to one another, why don’t we talk? I don’t mean an adult listening to a child but Susie telling Johnny and Johnny telling Freddie the sorts of things they are reading.

Donna has, through reading and thought, come to believe that the promotion of reading is best done through a proactive classroom. The library is a support for an enthusiastic English team. At Canterbury, she finds herself in just such a school.

When asked if she felt she played a major role in promoting reading within her school, Donna said:

I think I play a role, but not a major role

This response is indicative of her view of herself as a supporting member of a much wider program. Donna is an enabler, but not alone, she is part of an enabling team.

Despite this, there is no doubt that due to this library staff’s overall role within the school, and the impact of technology, the promotion of literature within the overall library program is of major importance.

Janice, the Head of the library, outlined the role of the teacher-librarian:

Teaching and learning particularly, just working with information, helping teachers help students work through information and the information skills, those sort of things. Having appropriate systems for being able to locate, manage, find, order, all of those sorts of things to keep things in place.

And by Donna:

the teaching of information skills, I wouldn’t change that. Someone who can help people access information in all of its forms, and literature is one of those forms....making sure that girls are able to make those choices about information

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and to be able to put some critical analysis on to it. To be able to understand what it's about, how useful it is, and how they are going to use it.

Donna has some regret at the minor role literature sometime plays in her role, but it is not guilt. She is aware that the students are well catered for, if not predominantly by the library. For her, literature is another form of information to be accessed.

So if there is any regret from my point of view it's just that I get so busy in the (other roles) that literature doesn't have a high enough profile...I think literature has a huge role to play in that (accessing information) because it provides us with other ways of seeing, of standing in other people's shoes, that can inform our decisions about the factual stuff. So it's a bit messy I guess.

The nature of the staffing within this school allows Donna to focus solely on the task at hand without the distraction of clerical or administrative tasks. Her brief is to support and extend the curriculum through her many skills and the resources of the library. She need not concern herself with processing, accounts or shelving. A factor she recognises as positive, having come from a vastly different school. In her description of her role she appears to tack literature on as an afterthought, despite her knowledge that this is the major interest of the study.

I'd have to say that I was very fortunate here in that I came into the job as the Teacher-librarian in charge of information and research skills and to promote literature. So I haven't been weighed down with a huge amount of 'I have to accession and process this material, I have to cover etc.', I don't have the administrative function of Head of Library so I have been able to just focus in on those things. So when I say that what I do is similar to my ideal, it is true. I am very fortunate.

Technology, and its application to curriculum, is the major focus for Donna in her everyday work. She is, in fact, 'seen to a bit of a guru' by classroom teachers. The year seven coordinator describes how she sees Donna's role:

...certainly with the introduction of technology she's been a guiding light as part of the library goes, and teaching skills. She works a lot with the technology side of things, teaching research skills through teaching them how to use the Internet. She's part of the team that does that, so she does a huge amount of skill work with them...There's also the research skills that she has put together. So that the girls can see you do this and this and then you do this. She's done that as well. And all of these things have changed even in the time that Donna has been here. It's a role that seems to be just expanding. There doesn't seem to be an end to it.

What appears to be different at Canterbury is the impact the introduction of technology has had on the library service and how they have justified and handled their involvement. In Donna's case, her involvement with technology is in utilizing it as a teaching tool. Her time is taken up with planning and working with teachers to have the best outcomes for their students. Technology is seen as only another aspect of the research component of the library service. This emphasis is supported by technical staff within the college who ensure the library staff here are not burdened with 'fixing' machines. This is in vast contrast to staff in other case study schools who often have to spend time in technical support of systems, leading to less time being spent on planning and teaching. It is this aspect of the introduction of technology that has been blamed, in other studies, for the lack of time
to work with reading promotion. Here, support is present and the teacher-librarian’s attention is more student-focused on good educational outcomes. Donna explains:

Well, I think that the technology has certainly impacted upon my role but, in fact, it has just added another dimension - dare I mention the word ‘enriching’ - to the teaching program. So I think that doing so much of that hasn’t caused me to … because it was already happening so much of it is dealt with by other support staff - it hasn’t changed the time I give to things, it’s just added another dimension to the role that I already had. In fact, it has made teachers go back and value the other stuff that they already know.

Technology is a well-utilised tool in this environment rather than an imposition or a major focus without real curriculum application.

10.5 Relationships

The relationships between Donna and the teaching staff appear extremely positive. There is no doubt that these positive relationships are the backbone of the reading program and its successful operation. Donna has analysed the importance of her relationship with teaching staff and understands this to be crucial for her success in all areas of library endeavour. As with other aspects of her work she has logically thought out aims and outcomes in an attempt to fulfil her role. Good supportive relationships with teaching staff have been seen by her as important, and, in the cooperative, vibrant environment at Canterbury, they are easily achieved.

Well the relationships you have with teachers is very crucial to whatever you do. So if I had to give priority to any one thing that I do it would have to be my support for teachers and what they do. It could be literature, it could be research, but I will work with them. So that’s where my priority is because I find that, in the long run, that pays the greatest dividend.

and

Well from my point of view at Canterbury there is an expectation from the teaching staff that you will be involved and interact with them. It’s not hard to work with the staff here. They expect it and value it. Not ‘expect’ as in “That’s your job well do it!” They value your contributions and listen to your suggestions. It’s never been difficult to work with staff here. The other thing is that the English staff probably have more interaction with us in teaching information skills, research activities, debates - we work with them for those sort of things, not just literature.

The English teachers appear equally cooperative and interested in a team approach. Those interviewed seem aware that many classroom programs work best with all parties contributing. There is very little language within their responses that would indicate a feeling of overall ownership or control of the promotion of reading, rather a strong sense of community effort. Both Laurel and Janet, the English teachers, reinforced these views when asked about their interaction with the library:
We interact and generate ideas. We are very lucky.

As I said before, it (the library) can do its best to promote reading but if the English Department isn’t there, then it’s a lesser program.... I’m not saying there wouldn’t be something, but without the other it would be a lesser program. What we have is very rich, I think.

The teaching staff as a whole are very positive about their own role in the promotion of reading. They continually emphasize the team approach to working with students both in the library and the classroom. It is evident that there is also a good deal of planning and contact outside of these areas as well. Their overall perception of the library staff is as helpful, supportive and very useful to the program they are trying to create for their students. There is also a perception that the reading environment within the college is their responsibility, with the library taking a support role. Laurel, one of the English teachers, in response to a question about how she saw the role of the teacher-librarian, illustrates how she sees Donna’s role as important, but support; not as the initiator:

Well I find her (Donna), and my experiences with the others too, is that they have been invaluable in looking for new titles, generating enthusiasm for reading and she will come in any time that we ask and we can bring girls to the library and she will do a show-and-tell for us...She was great, we took two lessons, showing the girls the sorts of elements of the library that would be valuable to them and bibliographic requirements. So that’s really, really crucial.

Laurel’s view of her own role in the creation of a reading environment shows a leading, proactive approach, when asked about her own role in the creation of a reading environment she said:

Oh essential. I suppose the aim of my reading and recommending is to promote a love of reading. It can bring new ideas as well as increase literacy ability. Most English teachers here are committed to the literature approach to our teaching.

The other English teacher, Janet, saw Donna and her role in much the same way. Donna’s role for Janet is varied and continually supportive. Interestingly, she sees Donna in her classroom, not the library, in a team-teaching arrangement, where Donna brings to her class her varied expertise - computer-based research and literature enhancement.

I think that she (Donna) is a good representative of a teacher-librarian in that she is willing to come into my class and work with me if that’s what I want. We tend to work in a partnership role. There’s also another aspect in that she is my computer mentor. We have that area as well. The role of the teacher-librarian, I think, is to help teachers educate girls how to access material, how to know what’s there and also the critical literacy skills. Donna’s a great person, a great reader, so I do ask her from time to time to do a session with my sevens on good reads, new reads. She has a wonderful way of talking about books and we’ll bounce off each other because I will read some of them but she really takes the lead in that. I guess it’s that partnership that’s most important.

and on the library’s role in creating a reading environment:
I don’t just think it’s a library role, I think its an English Department thing as well. They can set up displays and have things accessible and appealing in terms of the way the library is advertised. Running things as we do with the Kingfisher afternoon teas, bringing writers in, having those sorts of events are all really important. I think it’s providing a focus. But if that’s all, and there is no back up from English, then that’s going to be it. It’s going to catch some, but probably wont catch as many.

Though the administration member interviewed, Iris, sees no direct impact of her own role on Donna’s work, there is, in her response, a further indication of the team-teaching, cooperative approach evident amongst all of the interactions on the staff. Iris said:

No, as coordinator my role doesn’t impact, but, perhaps, Donna and I toss ideas around and work well together.

Iris is very positive about the role Donna plays.

It is very broad and I think I will have to talk about what Donna does because I think that what she does is exactly what a teacher-librarian should be doing. (laughter) Obviously encouraging reading in so many ways, she works at a class level, and individually, it doesn’t matter when you ask, what you ask, or who asks, she helps you. She will come up with half a dozen books. Her love of reading, but, much more than that, certainly with the introduction of technology, she’s been a guiding light as part of the library goes and teaching skills. She works a lot with the technology side of things teaching research skills through teaching them how to use the Internet. She’s part of the team that does that. So she does a huge amount of skill work with them.

Again we see the mention of a team. In all of Donna’s attempts she is part of a team striving for the same outcomes. This makes for a supportive and successful learning environment that encompasses a vibrant, school-wide reading environment. In comparison to other case study schools particularly Green Hills, Meadow Valley and Yarra where no staff member wanted ‘ownership’ of reading promotion, here at Canterbury it appears that everyone involved is willing to take some responsibility for what is a team effort.

Interestingly, though, while some students comment on the richness of what is on offer for them there are few positive comments about the particular involvement of library staff in reading promotion. It is often the English Department that is identified as proactive:

The English teachers are great, they really encourage kids to read, but they can’t do more than suggest really good books. They get the tubs along and show books that they have read. But really they can’t do more that that. You can’t make them do it.

Anything else?

No not really.

Afternoon teas?

I honestly wouldn’t know much about that. But I do know that they sometimes have them. There is a Kingfisher literature club, I just prefer to read on my own, I don’t find it a social thing, its more private.
Library involvement?

We don’t really see the library staff much, we just pick up the book and they stamp it out. Maybe in year seven you might see them more. [student three]

Is the school library a source of reading material for you? Why, or why not?

If I get a book for school...it comes from the English collection.

Linked to work?

Usually.

Do you borrow from there for yourself to read?

Maybe but usually that would be from the library. Yeh, I do but sometimes I can’t find what I want and I get it from my local library. [student one]

They have special days here. An author or editor are coming and they sound pretty good. It’s about three times a year after school. I guess the assignments we get are encouraging reading. I’d like more choice though, we all have to read the same thing.

In the library?

Not that much. [student one]

But usually it’s either buying books or getting them from here. I probably get most of them from the wider reading rooms (English collections) because they have, you know, because they have basically just taken the books that we would get in here and put them in to our age categories and that’s a lot easier to work with. Most of the time it’s good. Sometimes the selection isn’t very good. I come down here (library) too, though. [student three]

Can you find what you want in the library?

Sometimes, the material is a bit old and...it would be better if they got in some new stocks, some best sellers, but they’re pretty good. But sometimes you find you’re not finding what you want. [student three]

Is the school library a source of reading material for you? Why, or why not?

Yeh I get things from here, and the public library, and also next door, the girl next door. She buys a lot of books, she gets the new ones. ...Sometimes it’s a bit hard but I can usually find what I want, if not here, (library) from English. [student two]

Despite the healthy budget, a number of students commented on their inability to find the books they would most like to read in the library collection. This is a drawback of having various collections around the school. The book the student wants may actually be within the school but not in the library for the student to easily access. Also, having a number of people buying material, despite their good communication, might lead to certain titles being missed. Perhaps the English Department criteria are more study-focused, thus leading to collections that are not pleasure reading-based. The library collection, though supposedly pleasure-focused, must be accessed by
students in their own time. This lack of regular access to the library collection is an issue of concern.

The following comments from students, when asked what they would do to enhance the promotion of reading, do not show a library that is proactive and interesting – at least from the student's perspective:

I'd probably make it more popular. Sometimes students don't want to be seen with books. More books that the students like, maybe there should be a different section for books that are just for pleasure. Maybe some kind of meeting that could be held in the library. I'd probably get more students to advertise books rather than the teachers, announce it at assembly. [student one]

What do you think your library could do to encourage students to read?

I might choose some books that everyone would enjoy, that would make them want to read a bit more, things like that relate to everyone. Perhaps a list of books that they could try out, and have what they would like and kind of direct them to the books.

Who should do this?

Probably the librarian to convince them to read more and, ‘cause some people who hate reading and won't read a book and, you know, the books studied in English aren't always successful. [student two]

Despite this being a school that places an emphasis on its positive reading environment, student comments such as these indicate they would find worthwhile a number of basic promotional ideas that are not at present being carried out. There is also a perception that reading is not seen in as positive a light by the students as it is by Donna and the English teachers. Why, is difficult to ascertain. Possibly the teachers paint a more positive, rosy picture of the reading environment than actually exists in an effort to better represent their achievements. Or perhaps the students were reluctant to be overly positive in their interviews due to a reluctance to be appear to ‘into’ reading.

10.6 Library organisation

10.6.1 Access

One of the English teachers interviewed, Janet, appears to limit access to material in her own classroom through the process of selecting material to promote with her students. For her, books that may be questioned as to their suitability by any member of the school community should be available through the general library collection but not openly promoted through the classroom.

Now as for the censorship thing, that's very interesting. My personal position would be to have most stuff on the shelves. As an English Department I would be
concerned if we picked up some material and promoted it directly in the classroom. So there is a difference between it being there in the broad collection where kids might find it and that's fine. There is a difference between that and me actively promoting it.

As the majority of students appear to borrow mainly from the English Department collections - they may only use the library collection in their own time - there must be some question here about limiting access. Though the English Department collections are extensive, they consist predominantly of multiple copies of accepted material. It is by no means a broad collection. Students wishing to borrow outside this recommended selection must make a trip to the school library, or source books outside the school in their own time. The students at Canterbury have no access, except for perhaps five minutes at the end of another subject lesson if time allows, to access the library collection during class time, particularly since not all students would be able to access the collection before or after school due to transport issues. This severely limits their ability to utilise the library collection.

There are no regular wide-reading periods for English classes in the library. This has evolved for two reasons. Firstly, the library is heavily booked for research classes and cannot find space for any regular English class bookings. Secondly, the staff do not feel it is necessary as they see the English Department collections as sufficient and even generous.

In discussing the nature of the book collection both library and English staff it became apparent that they had thought about what they were trying to create though their buying practices. They felt it was important to provide a wide range of material and to also provide reading material for staff within the library collection. Janice, the Head of the library, explains their approach:

I guess we do try to have a fairly eclectic range of material just looking at the fiction areas. ...we read reviews and Donna has input into it as the person that really oversees that fiction collection. I guess we try to keep up with classics as well as you know the tried and true, as well as the recent ones... So we try to keep up a broad range of materials, because staff are really avid readers here so I think providing material for them is really important. We have a very active group of avid readers in our staff book club. We are not hoping to compete with a public library at all.

Donna gives her own views on the scope and strengths of the collection:

So our collection is a recreational reading one. We cover the whole gamut of what might be considered very young things right through to adult because... we have a very generous budget and our collection does cover a fair bit of adult material for the staff. So the staff do quite a bit of reading. There are picture books and we've just started a talking books collection. We have the difficulty of knowing where to house those and all the difficulties associated with it but this year we just decided to bite the bullet and buy them and then solve the problem afterwards... We have quite a large biography collection within the non-fiction collection, quite an extensive collection of cookery books in the non-fiction. The collection is very diverse, but I would argue that sort of recreational reading isn't sought out like it is in other places I've been in.
The most important aspect of this particular fiction collection is that its primary focus is as a recreational reading collection for the whole school community. A very large component of the school's overall collection is housed within the English Department reading rooms and is purchased by the English Department. While the English Department collections are predominantly to support the curriculum, these books are also borrowed by the students for recreational reading and are often promoted by English teachers as such. The library staff have worked closely with the English staff in the provision of this program. Library staff, predominantly Donna, have suggested materials for purchase, process the collection and also assist in the promotion of wider reading using this collection. This promotion often necessitates Donna working with the class in the classroom, thus reinforcing the whole school approach to a reading environment that is classroom-based rather than a library focused model. Donna said:

"We share material that we have read with the English staff, things we think are good, and then a half a dozen will appear in the English room. So there is this huge pool of material from which they work outside of the library collection. ...you can really feel you are incidental to the promotion of literature but, having said that, I am so actively involved with the English teachers talking about books that it's just a different way."

This program is well funded and well supported by English staff and has proved very successful. It does mean that the library does not appear to be the central focus for the reading environment within the school, and the fiction collection housed in the library is certainly not the only source, or even the best source, of reading material for students within the college.

This school is working with a model based very heavily on the enthusiasm of the English Department. There is a strong feeling that this is the way to provide the best for the students in their care. In comparison to other case study schools, where the blame for unsuccessful, non-existent programs, is pushed between the English Department and the library in this school there is a strong sense of ownership and a belief in the importance of what they are doing. It is very much a team effort supported by all concerned. An interest in reading promotion survives through committed, dedicated staff and the provision of generous funds from administration (partially through levies). This has led to a reading environment that is whole school based rather than library-focused. The following response from Laurel describes both the functioning of the program and the philosophy that underpins it:

"We have been lucky in that the library have had mothers in and they help us manage the collection and tidy the shelves and we have a very old computer to lend them out because we have lost thousands over time. Everyone has input into what has been chosen. The collection includes class sets and mini sets and there is a levy of $10 on students to cover all of this, they don't have to buy many books. The use of the room (reading room) varies with each teacher. I've found that with the year sevens, if I get a box of books and do a bit of show and tell, I've chosen many of them, that generates a lot of enthusiasm. A lot of reluctant readers are unable to choose a book, that is a way into it, a bit of individual attention."

Despite the emphasis on material through the English program the library has not fully discharged its responsibility for the promotion of reading. It is clear that the role the library has chosen is
supportive. The library staff run very few classes to expose the students to the library's collections; they run very little that is not English-focused or initiated. This leads to the reading environment being centred elsewhere, beyond the library, thereby limiting access to the library collections, the library staff, other than Donna, and the library itself, as a physical space. The following response is Donna outlining their efforts:

We do put displays up. I have, in the past, done bibliographies for the teachers, so when I know what the class novel is going to be, I'll do a supporting bibliography. In our library newsletter that gets published once a term, that only goes to staff, there will be certain books that will be promoted. There is a staff reading club run by one of the other staff. It's all kinds of material. We take books up to the staff room and they can choose something to read for the holidays. The staff really like that.

The library also offers a book-centred afternoon tea once a term that grew out of the student book club run by a previous staff member. These regular afternoon teas are run after school, and feature themes, or guest speakers. They are open to staff, students and parents. Donna explains:

We changed focus a little and decided to run special events like the afternoon teas. So for the last two years or so we've had three afternoon teas a year and we have made it open to all students, staff and parents. Depends on the author, we get upwards to sixty girls. We start after school, 4.05 with food and drink perhaps booksellers etc., and the author. In conjunction with that we have set up a parents' reading group, reading adolescent material — it includes teachers, parents and a teacher-librarian. I provide them with reading lists and we talk about what we read. It is a very interesting group. That's been a way of promoting, keeping the profile of literature up in the school.

It appears that it has become increasingly difficult to attract students to these afternoon forums. The change in focus was due to a lack of attendance at lunchtime student gatherings. Whilst the changed format worked for a while, interest is again lagging. Competing interests and busy schedules are blamed. Perhaps the library is not seen as a focus for such activities? Historically, the first lunchtime book club was well known and had been run by a dynamic, strong library staff member who made it her own. She was replaced by Donna who inherited the club, and its style.

Others on staff recognise the importance of maintaining a role in reading promotion for the library. Janice, Head of Library, comments:

And we have very strong book week activities too - an assembly, competitions, and that sends a strong message that books and reading are important too.

Interestingly, the students interviewed were less positive about activities such as the afternoon tea group and the various celebrations. There is definitely a view that the library's involvement in these activities is minimal; their low profile in this regard is recognised by the students.

Oh, well, we have the book week. I don't generally get very involved in that, but they have like, quiz things and, like, we have wider reading with English and so they encourage us to read books and that's sort of it. They have a box of books that they go through.
Is the library involved in this?

Not really.

Do they do anything else?

We have the literary afternoon teas where authors come in and they’re quite good.

Have you been to them?

Yep, but then I think I was the only girl in year nine or one of the only so there’s not very much. I think it’s really only the girls who read a lot and come into contact. I mean, it’s in the newsletter, but I don’t think it’s really considered as something to do. [student two]

Perhaps the apparent decline in the book club and now the afternoon teas indicates the importance of an enthusiastic guiding hand in such endeavours. The staff member who has since left, established this group as her own and her moving on has resulted in a loss of momentum. A similar result can be found with other promotional, and even curriculum centred programs, for example the BookZone experience at Meadow Valley and Yarra.

10.6.2 Ambience

The lack of physical space within this library is a major limiting factor to all aspects of the library program. What the staff have been able to achieve in their efforts to create a welcoming space has been hindered by both the size and the layout of the library. This library is predominantly a research space with a cramped fiction collection housed at the back of the library, hidden from view. Display space is limited and there are very few comfortable seats. This is recognised by a number of the respondents.

Given the space we have, we try and do what we can with the space we have. We bought some really nice spin stands to try and put books on. We are a little limited in space. We do put displays up. Display is a real problem - a problem for actually displaying books and other articles to make a display. We have a very big display board across our computers, very huge, and because of that it’s very hard to work with... It’s been very difficult to do... because of its design it’s just not challenging, its almost impossible.

One of the teachers interviewed, Lesley, identifies that, while it may not be ideal now, it is better than it was. Whilst there is a strong feeling that the library is not the centre of reading promotion, it is nevertheless part of a team, highly regarded, and integral to the research process being promoted. As an offshoot from this role, the library does appear to be a pleasant and welcoming place, particularly for staff who feel well supported.

Sometimes I think a lot of librarians, it’s the old fashioned thing, you know like Sir Humphrey, the best libraries don’t have any students in them, and I can never forget when I first came here, twelve years ago the librarian who was here then, a very nice lady, but quite intimidating... People like Donna have sort of changed that whole role.
For a large, well-funded, well-used library the immediate observation is that the library is lacking in open space with a crowded book collection and very little recreational space.

We are very limited with what we can do. It would be nice to have a reading pit and a special place for reading and fiction. It’s (the fiction collection) in between other areas. The fiction is right down the end - that doesn’t seem to affect how they browse through it. There really is a lack of space, there is a lack of quietness.

The fiction area appears a little like an afterthought, tacked on at the back of everything else. The physical space is recognised by both Donna and Janice as inadequate. The library staff appear to be reasonably comfortable with the situation as, in many other regards, they are very fortunate. Generous staffing and healthy budgets do certainly make conditions more bearable and there is talk of extending the buildings, though no set plans as yet. The provision of a well-stocked reading room in the school certainly relieves the pressure on the library’s space issues. There appears to be the belief that though the space is small and cramped, a great deal is still being done. The member of the administration interviewed, Iris, perceives the space to be welcoming and the students comfortable with using the facility despite its physical limitations.

The space is inadequate but we have so many people to help us that sort of outweighs it. We are doing the best with what we have got, and it's a very welcoming place.

10.7 External factors

Donna, having come from a quite different school, recognises that the budget allocated to the library is more than adequate. She describes it as ‘healthy and generous’. This budget enables the library to run programs as they would wish, and gives them time to effectively work with staff and students. Due to generous staffing provisions Donna is able to spend a great deal of her time in the classrooms, and in planning with teachers, as there is sufficient staff to run the library more than adequately in her absence. Donna described the appointment of a new staff member that would further strengthen Canterbury’s wider reading efforts:

Well, it’s interesting isn’t it, we have just advertised for a new library tech, where we have put as part of the job description an interest in, and knowledge of, children’s literature because over the seven years, we have a really professional staff but none of them have that passion for literature, except for me, and it’s very hard to sustain the promotion of it when there is just one of you and you are doing so many other things...So another person may improve the situation, as I firmly believe you work better if you have someone working with you, even if it’s just discussing.

This staffing appointment appears to be an extra staff member above and beyond the library’s usual allocation, not a replacement appointment. This would imply that the administration is aware of the need to continue to support the teacher-librarian’s teaching efforts by providing more library staff support. This staff member is to have an interest in children’s literature, indicating a
recognition that this is an area in which they are lacking, at least in enthusiasm and knowledge base, across the staff.

There is a strong recognition within this school of the power of positive publicity. The afternoon teas and reading groups that involve parents and interested parties are seen as part of the school's overall policy of a positive public face. The impression is given that if the library put forward a program that was well justified and of benefit to the student body, funds would be found. There is certainly a feeling held by library staff that their efforts are supported and approved of:

Without the funds that we know are available there to help advertise afternoon teas (we could not run them as we do). They (administration) are happy and encourage our spread into the school community.

Canterbury certainly has a focus on curriculum outcomes and all efforts appear to be curriculum driven. All staff are encouraged to see ways in which they can support and enhance the teaching program. The library perceives a place for themselves in this role.

The curriculum is sort of leading a lot of what you are doing...of course you are going to put aside something that is not part of curricula, or curricula critical I suppose.

Due to the lack of space within the library, and perhaps because of their own self sufficiency, English classes do not use the library as often as might be expected. Due to the difficulty in getting a booking, students are not exposed to the pleasure reading collection within the library unless they seek it out. Donna said:

Teachers need to book three or four weeks in advance to get a space for holiday reading promotion at the end of term.

10.8 In summary

*I am so actively involved with the English teachers talking about books that, it's just a different way.*
*Donna - teacher-librarian*

The strength of this school's endeavours to create a reading environment stem from its proactive, interested English Department. As a group, they have very positive views of themselves as readers and as enabling adults for their students. As Boyd (1995, p. 52) notes 'enthusiasm and commitment' are the keys to the promotion of reading and these traits are to be found in both Donna and the English Department staff at Canterbury. This interest and enthusiasm is a strength in terms of the school's offering of a supportive reading environment but highlights the lack of a leading role played by the library. Nevertheless, the library team is certainly an active partner in the construction of Canterbury's reading environment.
Generous funding and the subsequent good staffing levels translate into ready access for students to a wide range of books via the English reading room/book collections throughout the school, though access to the library collection is somewhat limited. In comparison to the figures outlined by Welch and Braybrook (2002), in their study of the state of Victorian school libraries at the end of 2001, this school library and its associated programs are generously funded. Good staffing levels in the library also mean that Donna is able to play a much more active role in the classroom as a facilitator and enabling adult for both students and staff. In a less well-staffed school she might not be able to leave the library so often.

It is clear from the data shown for this school that the positive reading culture stems from an overall positive attitude towards reading throughout the school. To be a reader is to be part of the mainstream culture of the school and, as such, reading as a pastime is also encouraged and supported by all areas - library, classroom and administration. Interestingly, though, the united front put forward by the library and the teaching staff is not reflected by the students. Most do not report a matching positive, enthusiastic attitude. Perhaps this is just teenage reluctance to be effusive about school programs, or perhaps, from their view the reading environment is not as supportive as they would like. There is a possibility that as the reading promotion is most closely linked to English classroom teaching that it is also linked strongly to assessment. If this is so, it loses some of its freedom. It is not possible to come to any conclusion from the data collected.

Though this school boasts an active reading environment, it is, by no means library-centred. Much can be said to highlight the service and support offered by the library staff but little of a positive note can be said of the library-based facilities for reading. For a school of its size and type, the library, and particularly the reading collections and reading spaces, are small, cramped and somewhat uninviting. Perhaps this lack of space and ambience has further enhanced the place of the classroom as the reading environment of note. Certainly a great deal would need to be done to make the library areas more conducive to extended use. The fiction collection itself (see photographs ten and eleven) is tucked towards the back of the library with few comfortable areas available for quiet reading. As classes do not come to the library for wider reading, a need may not have been found to increase, promote, or improve this space. This inadequacy strengthens what the English staff can provide through the reading room and classrooms and reinforces the library’s support, or service role at Canterbury.

Haycock in his report on the status of Canadian school library systems said that ‘classroom collections should not be seen as a substitute for centralised school libraries’ (2003, p. 29). Such a finding is contrary to the constructive impact that this system is having at Canterbury. Perhaps, though, this is ultimately detrimental to the library as a reading environment of note and import within the school.
Though the students interviewed were recognised as readers by the staff they did not appear as enthusiastic about the role of the school, or the library, in their own reading experiences. Their school reading experience is English, rather than library, focused. With no timetabled classes in the library for wider reading, access to the library collection must be sought by the students outside of class time. This severely limits their access to this collection and, subsequently, any interaction with library staff in terms of facilitating the selection process.

Dressman in his analysis of three school libraries found that:

The cultural rule remains, despite the philosophy or creativity of an individual teacher or the rigidity or fussiness of an individual librarian, that classrooms are fundamentally spaces devoted to literacy as work, and libraries are fundamentally spaces devoted to literacy as the pursuit of personal desire (1997, p. 161).

Whether literature at Canterbury is more ‘literacy as work’ is difficult to ascertain. Answers might be found with further investigation into classroom practices. There is a possibility though that such a view might explain the reluctance of the students interviewed to appear interested in the library as a reading environment – for them it was not their primary source of reading material and not an area devoted to ‘the pursuit of personal desire’, but, a space primarily supporting the English curriculum.
Part C - Analysis

We need to know how to create a reading environment that enables them.
(Chambers, 1991, p. 7)

A reading environment is created and sustained through a combination of interconnected factors. At the end of chapter three, where the research relating to each of these factors was discussed, the framework for this discussion was represented diagrammatically (see diagram two). I intend to discuss here the factors that make up this framework in relation to the data from the six case study schools.

The outer circle of diagram two, titled Professional context, will be discussed in the following chapter. The focus there will be on the impact of the changes to the profession of teacher-librarianship and the continuing debate over the nature of the profession. How this current debate has ultimately affected what many do in relation to a reading environment in their own libraries will be considered. The changing role of the teacher-librarian is both a result of, and shaper of, the attitude of the teacher-librarian.
11 Creating a reading environment

11.1 Attitude

*The world in which a man lives is largely shaped by the way he looks at it.*
*(Parkin quotes Schopenhauer, 2003, p. 2)*

Attitude is crucial. How teacher-librarians perceive themselves as creators of a reading environment and how they perceive this in relation to the wider role of the library within the school community are important factors that impact upon what is attempted and what is created. The Head of a Library has great individual power in choosing where to place resources – staffing, time and funding will be allocated to the area/s that the teacher-librarian sees as of most benefit for a variety of reasons. It is here that the power of their attitudes towards their role come markedly into play. Attitudes are many and varied and though some may be positive attitudes about other functions of a school library it is the attitudes that impact on the reading environment that are of particular interest in this study.

Smart recognised the people factor. Having reviewed current research, she claimed it is the faces that greet the library users that make or break the quality of the service (1985, p. 66), whether these faces are welcoming and friendly or scream ‘stay away’. This is part of what is termed here attitude. By choosing to place greater emphasis on certain areas of the library service, teacher-librarians not only create the library that they choose, they also indicate their own views to the staff and students who use that library. This in turn affects the staff and students’ attitudes and informs how they use the library.

Positive teacher-librarians, who are interested in creating a welcoming reading environment within their libraries, display an appreciation of their students as reading individuals and an interest in sharing reading experiences with them. At St Peter’s, Bernadette described her own very personal efforts:

I have a book that I write down everything I read in. The kids ask for it; they seem to like it. I’ve started up a stand of good books to read and they know that that is a constant reference point for them for books that I have liked.

And at Canterbury College, Donna promoted the need for communication:

I think we have a role to play in promoting it (reading) and promoting the idea that reading is, is something that is worthwhile, and why don’t we listen to one another, why don’t we talk.
These teacher-librarians encourage personal interaction between themselves and the students with whom they work. They also value the responses and opinions of these students and see working with them as a dialogue of shared interactions.

Responses from schools that display a lack of interest in, or concern about, creating a reading environment within their libraries show an attitude that is at times a reflection of a wider whole school policy. The library technician from Green Hills College showed in her interview that her views were shaped by the whole-school focus on technology. While she saw this as problematic for the promotion of reading she appeared ultimately resolved to follow this school agenda, an agenda that was represented very strongly in this school’s case by the Head of Library through his own beliefs and skills. The technician, Brenda, said:

We have to move down that technology road here and ultimately I think reading will suffer.

A negative attitude towards the library as a reading environment is also apparent. This school agenda has informed the attitudes of those who work there, influencing their views and playing a part in new staff appointments. Often reading promotion is seen as the role of someone else within the school or even beyond the school. Consequently the library staff spend little time fostering a productive reading environment. Ownership of, and responsibility for, any reading promotion program are at issue in environments where the attitudes are not overly positive. At Canterbury College, paradoxically, Donna’s predecessors felt no need to work with reading because the students were already readers. Donna described this view:

I was told by the then Head of Library that the girls were all really good readers and that English looked after sort of the reading scheme stuff, and that the library really was just for recreation, and that you really had to do nothing to promote reading because the girls read.

This advice also reflects the view currently held in the school that reading promotion is the responsibility of the English Department. Though Donna was happy to play a successful, supportive, and complementary role, the impetus and direction for the program came from the English Department.

At Yarra, Mary was happy to place all responsibility with the English Department:

I don’t want to be seen as the one responsible. It’s part of the curriculum, so I feel the English teachers have a responsibility to own it.

Yet in this case, unlike at Canterbury, it was very clear that the English Department was not really taking this responsibility seriously, with very little structure or enthusiasm evident in their efforts.

Like Mary at Yarra, Chris at Meadow Valley did not want to wholeheartedly claim responsibility for reading promotion. In this case though, the decision is driven by an attitude, or belief, that this
is either not the role to be performed by a teacher-librarian or that efforts are better placed elsewhere.

Information literacy is what I am on about. Promoting reading is for me a secondary thing.

Chris prefers working with technology as opposed to promoting reading. It is her attitude towards her overall role and her own personal preferences that have informed the role her library plays.

The attitude of indifference to their students as readers is in opposition to the creation of an active reading environment and ultimately destructive. Those teacher-librarians who displayed a negative attitude towards their students as readers were often reluctant to establish the library as a reading environment for their students. Cathy from Meadow Valley was particularly negative about the role reading played in the lives of her students:

Frankly they didn’t read before and they don’t now. Well they do a bit.

Cathy saw her students as non-readers and rather than seeing this as a challenge that should be addressed she chose to see this as an argument for doing little. She felt her efforts were better placed working with the students and the computer network. Attitudes such as these inevitably lead to little effort, except for isolated one-off ideas fuelled by guilt. In these cases the teacher-librarians feel that any more constructive, long-lasting effort would be a waste of time. A particularly good example of this is the one-off programs run at Meadow Valley - the reading rainbow and even the computerised reading program BookZone. Each of these programs was not linked to any ongoing structure or part of any long-term curriculum plan. Though each started with a burst of apparent enthusiasm and interest, the lack of structure and planning saw these efforts disappear quickly with little long-term benefit to students.

Phillips highlighted the fact that the ‘three great intangibles of school librarianship are image, personality and atmosphere’ (Phillips, 1988, p. 25). All three are linked to attitude, another ‘intangible’ factor. While a teacher-librarian cannot drastically alter their personality, they can to some extent alter the way they and the library are perceived by their actions. It is their actions that create the image and atmosphere of the library and these appear to be greatly influenced by the predominant attitudes held by the teacher-librarians towards their role, and their perception of it.

A ‘good’ teacher-librarian, with positive attitudes, is the antithesis of the stereotypical view of the cranky and mean librarian outlined by Fein (1996, p. 23) the librarian no one would dare to cross, let alone engage with. A ‘good’ teacher-librarian is dynamic, confident, interested and personable, attitudinal traits that are important in any field of work where quality interpersonal relationships are necessary. There is no doubt that personality plays a part in attitude and that attitude is a factor in the creation of a reading environment. As Melissa, the teacher from St Peter’s, said in describing what she saw as necessary for a positive, enabling reading environment:
I think it begins with the atmosphere. And that comes about from the librarian herself.

The various characteristics identified in the research: confidence (Hartzell, 1999), extroversion (Haycock, 1989, p. 9) good knowledge base (De Groof, 1997, p. 17) and enthusiasm (Altman, 1994, p. 5) are all traits found in those who are creating vibrant reading environments within their libraries. These traits are not confined to creating good reading environments though but are the bedrock of any good institution where the basis for effective work is the interaction of people.

11.2 Relationships

*Teacher librarians must work on building relationships as consciously as they work on building collections.*

*(Hartzell, 1999)*

The term ‘relationships’ encompasses all of the interconnecting professional relationships formed by teacher-librarians in attempts to carry out programs they have devised and to successfully manage libraries. This area cannot be underplayed, as the role of the teacher-librarian, in all aspects of their work, depends enormously on the professional relationships that they form with teaching staff, library staff, and administration. Most important is the relationship formed with students.

Todd describes a recent study undertaken in Sydney which sought to identify ‘the core knowledge and skills librarians would need to possess in order to effectively undertake a knowledge management role’ (Todd, 2000).

These were found to include:

People skills, such as team work, ability to cooperate with other kinds of professionals, building trust relationships, alliances building, conflict resolutions and negotiation, motivation and perseverance (Todd, 2000, p. 106).

How the teacher-librarian cultivates and uses these skills in their attempts to forge good relationships with all member of the school community can be a major factor impacting upon the resulting reading environment.

11.2.1 Teachers

The relationship formed between teachers and the teacher-librarian is a complex pattern of both formal and informal interactions that at its best can be rewarding and at its worst very destructive. The data illustrated a variety of relationships, some positive and productive, others damaging.
Baker recognises the myriad problems that can beset working relationships:

Too often a school's library-media program and its reading program exist together in a more or less permanent state of discomfort. Whether the discomfort is acute or mild depends upon personalities, budgets, status, and 101 other things that make a school the ant hill of activity that it is (Baker, 1980, p. 163).

The 'discomfort' that Baker alludes to can be very destructive of an effective reading environment in a school library. Within many of the case study schools there was a very obvious problem with the relationship between the teacher-librarian and English teachers to varying degrees. This tension often emanated from different attitudes as to who was responsible for reading promotion within the school and did lead to a lack of cooperation between library and English staff in regard to reading promotion. Comments such as:

In the fiction areas we are at the moment sitting down with English and asking 'what do you want?' Until they get themselves organized, we are a little at a loss.

from Andrew at Green Hills College display the level of antagonism that can exist between the two parties. The conflict though was from both sides of the fence with one of the English teachers at Green Hills, Liam, strongly against the teacher-librarian having a role in reading promotion:

Reading classes are seen as the domain of the English teacher; working with a whole class for reading is not really seen as part of their (the teacher-librarian's) role. There are introductory lectures about the use of technology but that's it. Guidance should come from the teachers, as teachers themselves are supposed to be the readers.

Despite statements such as this there was very little evidence that either he, or the other English teachers, were reading extensively or working hard at reading promotion. Destructive situations such as this were marked by both the library staff and members of the English Department attempting to claim reading promotion was the other party's responsibility. The libraries of Green Hills, Yarra, and to some extent St Brigid's, are examples of this in operation.

Good relationships, however, were based on mutual respect and a willingness to work together. In schools where positive relationships were in evidence there was an obvious respect for each other's professional abilities and a willingness to work together to create a positive reading environment. Donna from Canterbury College says:

Well the relationships you have with teachers is very crucial to whatever you do. So if I had to give priority to any one thing that I do it would have to be my support for teachers and what they do. It could be literature it could be research but I will work with them. So that's where my priority is because I find that in the long run that pays the greatest dividend.

The respect, at its best, is mutual as this statement from Melissa, one of the teachers at St Peter's College illustrates:
I trust or know that she (the teacher-librarian) has got training that I haven’t got—I respect and trust that and I want her to be able to express that...I’m happy to come with questions and bounce ideas off her.

Worthy has said:

To remove the barriers to voluntary reading, it is vital that librarians and teachers pool their resources and expertise, the librarians sharing their knowledge...both groups working together to provide access (Worthy, 1996, p. 491).

In an ideal environment this picture of co-operation and sharing would be evident. Schools such as St Peter’s have such a group of professionals, willing to ‘work together to provide access’. They have begun to remove the barriers. But relationships between teacher-librarians and teachers is only one of a myriad of factors that affect the creation of a reading environment and, though a vital factor, this alone cannot sustain a productive environment.

11.2 2 Students

A positive, effective relationship between the teacher-librarian and students is central to a successful reading environment. Any reading environment is only successful if it manages to bring books and young people together. This relationship, in which books may be discussed, recommended and shared, both formally and informally, is often the most difficult and the hardest to establish. Within the case studies, relationships ranged from good to non-existent and stemmed from the primary attitude of the teacher-librarian towards their students as readers and their own role as an enabling adult.

Good relationships within the case study schools were displayed where students felt confident to interact with the teacher-librarian. At St Peter’s, Bernadette, was generous with her time to her students, she saw them as readers and discussed with them what they read, helping them to find books that they would perhaps enjoy. Her efforts were evident in the comments from her students; one said that what the teacher-librarian did for them was:

Give the kids confidence (with their reading and selection), help them, talk to them and help. She’s really kind. She’ll talk to you and ask you what you like. That’s important.

Bernadette has worked hard at forming and sustaining her relationship with her students and their comments indicate that this has worked in relation to their ability to interact with her and therefore their access to reading material. They are comfortable asking her for advice and know that she will give weight to their own views. Bernadette has put effort into this relationship building through making herself and her knowledge of reading material available to students and making changes to the library environment to make it more welcoming and accessible.
Scales, in her interview with Atkinson, for the 1997 Grolier award, was asked to elaborate on her ideas about reading and promoting reading, she said:

I’m afraid we want formulas to get kids to read - and bells and whistles. It doesn’t take that; it takes building a relationship with students, and it takes turning reading into an experience (Scales in Atkinson, 1997, p. 114).

Scales highlights the effort required to form good relationships and subsequent good reading experiences for students, a lesson that Bernadette, one of the few positive examples of this from the case study schools, appears to have mastered.

Negative relationships, or at least non-existent relationships, were in evidence in schools where there was little interaction between the staff and students. In these instances the library was not always considered a place of assistance by students. For example, a student from Canterbury College said:

We don’t really see the library staff much, we just pick up the book and they stamp it out. Maybe in year seven you might see them more.

Engaging students, bringing them in to Chambers’s reading circle, is a constant thread through the writing of those who have commented upon this relationship between teacher-librarian, or teacher, and student. Many other commentators agree, seeing relationship building between adult and student as crucial (Carter, 1987, p.187; Holland, 1994, p. 81; Leonhardt, 1998, p 4). Often, it is the teacher-librarian, busy, but without a classroom based structured timetable of teaching responsibilities, who has the time to develop this relationship, the teacher-librarian who has the knowledge and the books at hand. It can be an advantage to not be a classroom teacher hindered by curriculum requirements and assessment criteria and able to work at helping students connect with books in a more relaxed, assessment free environment.

11.2.3 Administration

The relationship between the teacher-librarian and administration is an important factor, particularly in relation to all aspects of funding and support. Most teacher-librarians operate autonomously, but they are answerable to administration, in some form, in most schools, particularly for matters such as staffing, and finances. Hartzell argues that teacher-librarians often have difficulty achieving what they want to due to poor relationships with administration (Hartzell, 1997, p. 2).

Within the case study schools there is a range of different relationships evident between teacher-librarians and members of administration. At times the teacher-librarians do feel misunderstood, this can lead to a poor professional relationship. The teacher-librarian at St Peter’s said of support from administration:
The Vice Principal is the only one who has no idea of the pressures that I face.

Perception plays a part here though, since the Vice Principal in this school saw herself as supportive and spoke highly of all of the teacher-librarian's efforts. He appeared to value her approach and style and saw positive results from her changes to the library program. Such a variance of view highlights the power of perception to colour our actions in professional relationships. It suggests care must be taken when assuming how we are perceived by those we work with.

Oberg, in a study on Principal support of teacher-librarians, found:

Research shows that although teacher librarians generally view Principal support as critical to the success of the Library program (Haycock 92), they often have low expectations of Principal support (Lewis 91, Campbell 91) and rarely engage in the kind of activities that would increase the Principal's understanding and support (Edwards 1989) (Oberg, 1996, p. 109).

This understanding, can best be established by building strong professional relationships between the teacher-librarian and administration. The research Oberg refers to indicates that this is one area where a great deal of work needs to be done on both sides of the potential relationship before an effective working relationship can be achieved.

Through the choice of staff and the allocation of budgets, administration can affect the style of the library and the programs that operate. In more than one of the case study schools the whole school agenda did affect the library program. At Green Hills where the teacher-librarian was a recent appointment the view of the Middle School co-ordinator on the place of reading within the library program was of note:

I think it really comes back to what you think the function of a school library actually is. I do not believe that it is a primary function of a school library to provide extensive pleasure reading for kids. I think that actually that function is taken up quite well by community libraries.

This administrator was involved in the choice of the new Head of Library and perhaps it is not surprising that the new appointment has extensive expertise in the area of technology and little personal interest in working to establish a reading program within the Green Hills College Library.
11.3 Library organisation

11.3.1 Access

...if she can break down the barriers, which she has done,
I think it then opens up so many more avenues for the students.
Robert, Vice Principal, St Peter’s

Access is a constant issue in any library. Teacher-librarians often experience a contradiction between their need to protect resources and their desire to make them available. This contradiction can lead to various problems over access, as Cathy from Meadow Valley found:

We have a problem that things will get pinched or bits ripped out. If we’ve got the stuff that’s hot enough to read we have to lock it away and handle it carefully.

In a scenario such as this we find that the material that is wanted most is under the greatest restriction. It is a Catch-22 situation: denying access is apparently necessary if theft is to be avoided so as to allow the greatest access by more students. Decisions that restrict access are often made by teacher-librarians with what might seem to be the best of intentions. But such decisions do plague teacher-librarians in that they perpetuate the stereotypical image of a difficult librarian guarding resources against use.

In a paper entitled ‘Building student learning through school libraries’ given at the American Whitehouse conference on School Libraries in June 2002, Dr Kathleen Smith outlined the five essential elements she had identified as needed to create a ‘community of scholars’ through the power of the library. Number one on her list was access. Smith argued that, as part of the function of providing good access, libraries should be ‘available, warm, and welcoming places’ (Smith, 2002, p. 2). The balancing act for teacher-librarians is to create this warm and welcoming atmosphere, this environment conducive to student use of the library and its resources, while maintaining adequate control of the collection to prevent loss and damage. Teacher-librarians must be aware when considering access that for some students the school library may be the only source of reading material. Not all have other options. A student from St Peter’s said:

This is the only library (the school library) I have access to. Mum won’t sign me up to borrow at the public library.

For this student, free and constant access to a good school library collection is one of the few ways he has of finding reading material he might enjoy.

Novijan argues that free access to books is ‘a basic requirement for reading’ (Novijan, 1993, p. 104). Certainly Chambers’s (1991) reading circle and the work of others in this area (Altmann 1994, Carl森, 1980, Hale 1994), emphasizes the importance of books that are available and
accessible to students. Commentators also identify the need for not just any reading material but the reading material that the students want to read. This brings into discussion the teacher-librarian's selection guidelines and processes - what books do they buy and why? Are they kept where the students can get to them? Are students allowed to browse the collection out of class time? Can they borrow when and what they choose? These are crucial questions, influenced by the teacher-librarian's attitude towards his or her readers and the collection, and also by external factors such as funding. This highlights the importance of the many interconnected factors, identified in diagram two, that affect areas such as collection management and ultimately how they relate to the created reading environment. Different teacher-librarians approach the issue of access in varied ways. Chris at Meadow Valley expressed creative ideas in response to the issue, but they are ideas that have yet to be implemented:

(books arranged thematically) would assist the students to find stuff. We are also looking at cardboard containers with books in them on different themes to make them easier to find. So I think we could make our fiction more accessible by displaying it differently, doing some pre-sorting.

On the other hand, Lucy at Yarra described their inability to reconcile the need for access with the need to control and guard the collection:

We publish for teachers a list of holiday reading for them and they come in and borrow the books. We haven't done anything like that for the kids but we don't let them borrow over the Christmas break. We don't want to be too restrictive. It's difficult, but we do have to look after the collection.

Teacher-librarians have the means at their fingertips for making reading material accessible. It is a matter of decision making, informed by policy that is based on their attitudes about what a library should be, that ultimately determines what types of access students will have to the reading material that they seek.

11.3.1.1 The advisory role of the teacher-librarian

Readers advisory involves knowing books and knowing children... It requires knowledge and skill. And it's why librarians who do so are called professionals.
(Carter, 2000, p. 3)

All of the teacher-librarians in the study recognised the importance of their role as advisor, yet not all were willing to fully take on this mantle. This advisory role is central to the concept of an enabling adult. Those who saw it as part of their role relished it, and the benefits it brought to their students. Bernadette at St Peter's College is a good example of a teacher-librarian who fully embraced this role; this was recognised by one of the English teachers, Melissa:

She can aim books at different students and tends to informally discuss books with students. I think that that is important for another reason as well, it creates that atmosphere. It's got to be a comfortable place.
Melissa recognises that this powerful advisory role undertaken by Bernadette adds to, in a very positive way, the ambience of the library as a reading environment.

More negative responses were given by those teacher-librarians who felt that reading promotion was not their role. They consequently did not want to own the role of ‘advisor’, as with Mary at Yarra High:

> We don’t have a regular program of talking to the classes, we don’t unless we are asked. Perhaps it’s something we should do, but perhaps with time constraints we would be biting off more than we could chew. …We do wander over and talk to the kids when the classes are here.

> ‘Do you talk to classes?’

> I don’t want to be seen as the one responsible.

A study in 2001 by Williams and Wavell investigated:

reading promotion instigated by a secondary school librarian in one of their case study schools and found that intervention from initiatives introduced by the librarian increased motivation to try a variety of different genres and authors (Williams and Wavell, 2001, p. 14).

This report confirmed that positive action by the teacher-librarian in encouraging and promoting reading did have positive outcomes in improving student interest.

The Australian Centre for Youth Literature’s 2000 study into the reading habits of Australian teenagers indicated an importance for the role the teacher-librarian plays in enabling access to reading material. The study found:

> The school librarian is the second most mentioned source of advice on good books to read (ACYL, 2001, p. 28).

This study indicated that a substantial number of students rely on the school librarian for advice. The most mentioned source of advice was peers. If we consider that the library, as part of its reading environment, can offer ways, and time, for students to talk about books with their peers, this sees the influence over access held by the teacher-librarian as even more crucial. The library itself as a source, and the teacher-librarian as an enabler, are an important part of the access equation for secondary school age students.

11.3.1.1.1 The knowledge base of the teacher-librarian

An interested, knowledgeable teacher-librarian who chooses to communicate with his or her students can make a difference to the levels of access students will have to the materials that they want to read. Those observing the work of the teacher-librarian in each of the case study schools - subject teachers, library staff and administration members notice efforts made by the teacher-
librarian to facilitate students’ access to books through their own knowledge of the material available. A level of expertise, a good knowledge base held by the teacher-librarian, is appreciated by all concerned as an effective tool in facilitating access for students. The Library assistant at St Peter’s recognised, and appreciated this skill in the teacher-librarian, Bernadette:

What Bernadette has been providing though, the boys are reading - because boys are asking her for books and she gets them in for them. She seems to know what the boys like...She knows more about the books than anyone else. I think the boys look up to her to give them advice.

Unfortunately only a few of the teacher-librarians actually took the time to maintain their knowledge of Young Adult literature to enable them to work effectively with students. Those who neglected this knowledge base were understandably those who did not see reading promotion as part of their role and failed to appreciate their students as readers.

Those teacher-librarians who have a positive attitude towards their role in reading promotion often follow through with efforts to maintain a knowledge base that will allow them to work at recommending reading material to young people. Such a knowledge is not something acquired overnight. It requires constant reading, professional development and continuing efforts to remain aware of current literature and reviews. Chambers claims that ‘readers are made by readers’ (Chambers, 1991, p. 87). This is true as effective interaction with staff and students to promote their reading interests cannot be undertaken without a sound knowledge of the material available.

The two English teachers from Canterbury, Lesley and Julie, are positive examples of an interest in maintaining a good level of reading knowledge of adolescent material. When asked if they were readers of Young Adult Literature Lesley said:

Oh, it would be a tragedy if I wasn’t. If I said no would I lose my job! Yes absolutely.

and Julie said:

Oh absolutely, like addicted.

Lesley and Julie are maintaining the level of experience that Chambers alerted us to in his discussion of the enabling adult:

In the end they (learners) depend on knowledgeable grownups because there are some things about every craft and every art – reading is both art and craft – that you only know from experience and can only be passed on by those who’ve learned them by experience (Chambers, 1991, p. 15).

This knowledge, or experience, as Chambers sees it is both valuable in assisting students with their choices, facilitating access, and in book discussion - book talk, that assists the student in their enjoyment and facilitates continued reading experiences. Such book discussion between teacher
and librarian and student is at its best when the teacher-librarian has an adequate knowledge base of the field upon which to draw.

11.3.1.2 Policy and Collection Management

The teacher-librarian establishes many of the policies that affect access directly. When will the library open and for how long? What will the teacher-librarian provide? Will materials be easy to find? The decisions made that govern the answers to these questions are sometimes school wide decisions but often, on a purely practical level, they are the domain of the teacher-librarian. Patricia, from Meadow Valley, draws attention to the importance of planning:

You need vision, goals, long-term action plan, to understand responsibilities. In order to make any program work. We have a problem here in thinking that throwing money is enough.

Patricia was disappointed at the amount of wasted time and money spent on programs that failed to have long-term benefits or install any sense of ownership within her colleagues. Her views stress the importance of planned programs that are informed by policy.

Policy, then, in a very fundamental way, governs access. To some extent the policy decisions made by the teacher-librarian that impact upon access give the outsider an insight into the views of a particular teacher-librarian. The importance placed on reading promotion, how the collection is made available, when and how the students are allowed access, are all affected by policy decisions and are all indicators that enable us to see the attitudes of the teacher-librarian played out in the day-to-day operation of the library space.

Many factors contribute to how a library is organised. The organisation of the library’s collections is a primary factor in the success of any library. Decisions made by the teacher-librarian directly affect the size, scope and type of materials to be found in library collections. The collection of books and other reading materials is one of the basic, essential factors that contribute to the creation of a reading environment. Carter has said:

Adolescents, like the rest of us, read what is available (Carter, 1987, p. 187).

As such a view is blatantly obvious there is no doubt that the area of collection management is a vital component of access.

Hickman said; ‘first and foremost teachers who want students to be responsive readers provide access to books’ (1995, p. 4). Managing a collection is about how we provide that access. Should this be access to any books, or a selection of what is available, a selection made by discerning adults? This question - the teacher-librarian as censor, choosing what the students will have access to - plagues all school libraries at one time or another. Personal and professional views over what
belongs in a library collection can become hotbeds of debate. At St Brigid’s, the Head of English said:

.. in the past there has been a little bit of tension between myself and the teacher-librarian about what sort of texts should go on the shelves.

Such differences of opinion are not easily solved and often end in uneasy truce.

Constructing a collection calls on the teacher-librarian to chose what they think is the most appropriate, for a variety of reasons. The various library users do not always view this in the same way. One of the students from Meadow Valley felt that their library’s collection was perhaps outdated. They wanted ‘every kind’ of book, to suit all interests, to be made available:

Referring to leisure, they’ve got a really wide range, except most of them are a bit old, so updating them more, yeh, books mainly about just people, books that interest people, which is every kind, I suppose.

11.3.1.3 Library Reading Programs

We all read ourselves and the world around us
in order to glimpse what and where we are.
(Manguel, 1996, p. 7)

11.3.1.3.1 Structured reading programs

...effective learning cannot take place without effective reading.
(Machet, 2001, p. 17)

In most schools a wider reading program is a joint Library / English initiative. In most cases junior classes come to the library on a regular basis. During this time they have access to library collections and may be spoken to by library or English staff about new or suitable reading materials. For some the program is part of assessment in English. The structure and nature of the wider reading program varies from school to school but most crucial, in terms of a reading environment, is the time to browse, read, hear about, and talk about, books and reading for pleasure. Within the case study schools the teacher-librarians and English teachers were often at odds over who was to take responsibility for any form of wider reading program. The extent of the teacher-librarian’s involvement related most strongly to their attitude toward their role in reading promotion and the strength of their relationships with English staff.

The library technician at Green Hills, Elaine, who is being encouraged by the teacher-librarian to see reading promotion as part of her role, is very aware that what is being offered in their library is far from ideal:
There is no structure. Not all of the teachers use that (timetabled English period). Some of them come and use it for other things. I'm free as a staff member to go over and help them and recommend books. It isn't part of my job though, as there is no time allocation, so I don't always do it. There is no time to develop a plan or strategy.

Together with the lack of interest and initiative at Green Hills, at Meadow Valley a sense of ownership of, or interest in, any wider reading program is non-existent. Cathy, the teacher-librarian said:

Classes come regularly but we don't do anything.

A structured reading program may provide the only ‘browsing’ time a student will experience, that is, time to just look at books. For secondary school students who do not come to the library out of class time, have no books at home, or access to a public library, browsing through the collection in their school library may be their only exposure to reading material. Time to browse is seen as essential by Chambers (1991, p. 25).

As with browsing, a structured reading program may also be an avenue for one of the other areas or prime importance to Chambers, that is book talk (Chambers, 1993). While not every wider reading program does facilitate talk about books, the scope is there for them to do so. To Chambers this is a crucial component of the reading circle – providing opportunities for students to ‘gossip’ about books, to talk amongst themselves and with enabling adults, to further encourage their reading habit. A student from St Peter's, in describing how Bernadette works with the class to encourage his friends and himself stressed the ‘talk’ that Bernadette provides time for and facilitates. This is obviously viewed by him as a rewarding part of his interaction with the library and the reading program. As Chambers describes it ‘reading is a social activity.’ We need to share ‘book gossip’ (Chambers, 1991, p. 83). This talk 'deepens us as readers' (Chambers, 1991, p. 84).

11.3.1.3.2 Promotional activities

*Once the kids have met the person they want to read their books.*

*Cathy, teacher-librarian – Meadow Valley*

Buckingham, writing about research in two secondary schools in Great Britain found that special events such as author visits, festivals and clubs, were 'a powerful tool' (Buckingham, 2002, p. 13) in encouraging reading.

Special events do have a certain power to lift the profile of any school-based activity. Throughout the case study schools, author visits (Meadow Valley and Canterbury), afternoon teas (Canterbury) and book week activities (Yarra and Canterbury) had been held with great success. The skill appears to be in taking advantage of this new enthusiasm, making it part of the ongoing structured program – that is, using these special promotional activities to best advantage. Cathy from Meadow Valley recognised the power of author visits that had been organised for the students:
The English staff gets in speakers and they have been very successful, they have often created a constant demand for his books. Once the kids have met the person they want to read their books.

Though these visits obviously created a great deal of enthusiasm there was very little follow through despite obvious interest from the students. Patricia, also from Meadow Valley noted the need for those who initiate programs to bring others onboard, particularly if the program is to succeed for anything more than short term:

I think if you need to start something you need to let other people assist with it...I think the Reading Rainbow that Cathy has implemented has a visual impact and I think the kids really saw that as fun. It was meant to be ongoing but it has died off and that goes back to my point of letting other people on board.

11.3.1.3.3 Computerised and ‘shop bought’ Reading Support programs

*BookZone challenges you to test your knowledge of some of today's most popular books.*
*For each book there are three games.*
*BookZone package introduction (Adams, 1997)*

Within the six case study schools three had tried commercial packages to assist and support reading promotion. Yarra had run the computerised program *BookZone*, as had St Brigid’s. Meadow Valley had tried *BookZone* as well as a number of other commercially available programs. In all cases the programs had failed after the initial high interest period. Various reasons were put forward for this.

At Yarra, Mary found that the program needed the advocacy of an enthusiastic staff member to continually support and encourage its use. It also required access to the computers, a need that became an issue due to the computers often being utilized for research by another class when the reading class also wanted to use them. As well as these issues Mary indicated other areas that she saw as lacking in the program:

We are very disappointed with it, *(BookZone)*, it’s a very old fashioned style of book report. I’ve heard about wonderful things being done with it but what I have seen has not impressed me. It’s new there for the teachers but now that person who bought it has gone, I don’t know.

At Meadow Valley and St Brigid’s it was a similar story with staff interest being identified as essential for the program’s success. Patricia from Meadow Valley joked about having a library full of books with different coloured dot labels – each coloured dot a different, failed program. In attempting to analyse why, she said:

That ended up dying too as there was no curriculum attached. Some tried but there was nothing structured.
At St Brigid's it is the current head of English, Jenny, who has introduced *BookZone* to the college. The introduction has not been successful. Jenny explained:

I think we have been thwarted by the computer system at the moment. I bought it (*BookZone*) in my previous school where it worked well. I think it has worked less well here because of the (pause), we have six classes using it and I think they don't get on to the third level stuff, the creative input.

Like any structured school-created reading program, a special event or a free reading program, a computerised reading program requires supportive structures if it is to survive. Any program that is supported by staff interest, integrated in to the structure of the curriculum, supported with resources and that meets the needs of the students has a good chance of survival. A new program lacking any of these factors will have difficulty lasting the distance as *BookZone* has been unable to do in the case study schools.

11.3.1.3.4 Free reading time

*Independent reading is the kind students choose to do on their own; it is not assigned or assessed, but it has a positive effect on learning and school achievement.*

*(Cullinan, 2000, p. 8)*

A wider reading program centred on the library and its collections can be an integral part of an effective reading environment. It is, however, not essential. Within the structure of a busy secondary school, perhaps a structured reading class comes closest to providing that necessary access and opportunity for talk about books but it is not the only option. Recent research has argued that perhaps it is the very nature of structured wider reading programs that is counter-productive. The Australian Centre for Youth Literature initiated research found that what young people wanted was more unstructured time:

Free reading time in secondary schools needs to be brought closer to resembling free reading time in primary school, by making it an experience that students enjoy and share *(ACYL, 2001, p. 9).*

Throughout the case study schools a number of the students in particular commented on the need for talk about good books, unhindered access and free choice. At Canterbury:

I'd like more choice though; we all have to read the same thing.

Donna, the teacher-librarian at Canterbury, made it clear that access at their library is not particularly easy to organise:

Teachers need to book three or four weeks in advance to get a space for holiday reading promotion at the end of term.

Students from Yarra and Green Hills commented on the need for time to select material, this was a common thread:
I try to borrow from here but I don’t always get time. (Yarra)
I don’t have much time to come in here and choose a book. Not much from here for pleasure reading. (Green Hills)
I’d probably encourage teachers to give time at the end of class for you to borrow. It used to happen when we were younger but not now that we are older. (Yarra)

As well as having access to materials and time to utilise that access, the issue of the library as a place to read is integral to how the library is seen as an enabler of reading. Across the case study schools the library was not seen as a place to read, at least, not ideally, or for long periods of time. At Meadow Valley:

*Is the library a place for you to read?*

It’s not really that kind of library, but the computers have seemed to take over. It used to be a reading place.

A student at St Peter’s, though feeling welcome in the library, commented that:

It is more comfortable to read in your own house.

Another student at Canterbury made it clear that reading was for them an activity to be done alone:

I don’t find it is a social thing, it’s more private.

Students across the case study schools stress the need for access to the material they want to read and the time to browse and select. This appears to be more important to them than the library as a place to read. More free interaction, talk and exposure to materials they like are all areas in which the library could very well play a constructive role as part of an effective reading environment. As a place to read, the responses indicate a quieter more private place needs to be provided. Possibly reading rooms within the library or elsewhere in the school, that take into account the need for comfort would better answer the apparent need.

### 11.3.2 Ambience

*We are doing the best with what we have got, and it’s a very welcoming place.*  
*Donna, teacher-librarian - Canterbury*

Fein recognises the need for the library to be a ‘liked’ place;

Now notice, I did not say reading, I said library. If kids don’t like the library, they don’t come in willingly. If they don’t come in willingly, by association, they are less likely to want to read (Fein, 1996, p. 22).
Strasser, sees the need for - comfortable couches, round tables, visual imagery, paperback books and background music - if a library is to create a pleasant, welcoming ambience (Strasser, 1988, p. 59).

This ambience, or atmosphere, is the feel of the library space. The result of conscious thought being put into how best to use the architecture, how to utilise furniture, lighting, colour, display materials, signage and various forms of decoration, as well as the manner, or attitudes, of the library staff. All of these factors combine to create a physical space that is home to the reading environment that the teacher-librarian is trying to create.

The various teacher-librarians freely recognised the importance of ambience and were very aware of the factors that might create change, though not all were interested in working to alter the ambience. As we have seen at Meadow Valley a student recognised the impact of computers on the ambience describing them as having 'taken over' what was once a 'reading place'. Cathy, the teacher-librarian, made her own opinions about the effect of ambience on her students very clear, and openly stated her lack of attempts in this area:

'Provide the ambience and they will do it' I don't think it would work here. I think. I haven't tried.

Donna, at Canterbury College, recognised the impact of negative views on the students as users:

Sometimes I think a lot of librarians, it's the old fashioned thing, you know like Sir Humphrey, the best libraries don't have any students in them.

Unlike the staff at Meadow Valley though, Donna, with her colleagues at Canterbury, did work actively to counter such views of the library and the staff, and to create a warm and welcoming environment. Donna had thought consciously of the feeling they were trying to create and worked to achieve the ambience they sought. Too often most teacher-librarians were reactive rather than proactive in the planning of their library spaces, as we have seen with Cathy, who admitted to not having even tried to affect the ambience of her library in any conscious way. With this approach the library grows and changes in an ad hoc manner as each new piece of equipment or furniture is accommodated with no forward, conscious plan or aim as to what is ultimately being created.

Some of the participants in the case study schools recognised the importance of ambience in providing better service for their school communities and celebrated the efforts of their staff to improve situations. The Vice Principal at St Peter's recognised the work done by their teacher-librarian, Bernadette, to improve the ambience and thus improve access and service:

....it's got to be an environment that's exciting, interesting and challenging... So if she can break down the barriers, which she has done, I think it then opens up so many more avenues for the students.
Doll, who discusses the library as a ‘human environment’ stresses flexibility and the need for the library to be ‘a comfortable, welcoming place for students’ (Doll, 1992, p. 225), a place they feel they have some ownership of (p. 227). This feeling of ownership, or belonging, is an important part of the ambience of a library. To make the physical space their own, students need to feel comfortable and that they may use the library, within guidelines, as they wish.

Melissa from St Peter’s recognised this need in her description of the changes being made by Bernadette:

...there was always a comfortable chair seating arrangement that wasn’t able to be used during class time but for other times. I have seen kids sitting there recently who in the four years here have probably never been in the library, outside of being forced.

Remarks such as these indicate that Bernadette is creating a space that the students feel is more their own, a space they can use in their own way within guidelines, a space that they feel comfortable in.

11.3.2.1 Layout

*We used to have those easy chairs but we got rid of those."
*They were supposed to be relaxing but the kids relaxed when they were supposed to be working."

*teacher-librarian - Yarra*

Space, and the use of that space, is always an issue in any school, and this is an integral part of the physical component of a welcoming reading environment. Many of the case study respondents felt quite strongly that the physical environment played a part in their reading enjoyment. Unfortunately even in the most active school libraries, comments about the physical space were predominantly negative. Even libraries with good reading environments felt the physical space could be improved. All participants from Green Hills recognised the constraints they were working under with comments such as the following being common:

They have the reading area but that is too small, cramped, noisy.

Bernadette at St Peter’s commented upon the constraining nature of the room layout, a layout that was both imposed upon them and self imposed:

There aren’t any areas for casual reading and that is what I don’t like, but we are required by the behaviour of the students to have the tables set up that way (evenly spaced rows), that is the only way. We have got to have places where some boys can be separated.

At Meadow Valley Cathy recognised that decisions regarding the way the library is to be used affect layout as layout affects use:
We don’t have that nice little lounge room bit – we can’t put it in and the bit we have is disappearing as we put in more computers.

Studies undertaken on the aesthetics of a library environment show that what furniture, where, and how, it is placed, how the library’s ‘face’ is presented to its public, are all facets of layout that must be considered when library spaces are defined and created. The brightness of the library space, the decorative additions to the walls, and the need for comfortable, accessible seating are all areas of concern to student populations.

Chambers talks of the ‘value’ given to an activity by giving it a designated space (1991, p. 30). Many libraries do just this with reading areas or story pits, clearly designated reading spaces that indicate the importance of this activity to the overall library and school program. In libraries where other collections have impacted on wider reading spaces, to the extent that reading areas have been swallowed up, the lack of value placed on the activity of reading promotion is clear. Teacher-librarians within the study do recognise this but are either constrained by architecture or the choices they have made about how spaces are to be used. Cathy, at Meadow Valley, justifies their loss of reading space due to her own decisions to expand computer usage. With only limited space, decisions must be made as to how it will be used when there are conflicting needs and demands.

Donna at Canterbury is aware of their quite extreme space limitations but still makes an effort:

Given the space we have, we try and do what we can with the space we have. We bought some really nice spin stands to try and put books on.

Doll argues that librarians should be aware of a number of factors concerning the need for private space (Doll, 1992, p. 226). Colour, carpeting, seating and the use of floor space can affect the way a library is used and perceived. Doll also argues that spaces can affect behaviour and that how a space is to be used should be taken into consideration during the design process (Doll, 1992, p. 225). This is seen at St Peter’s where they layout of the library class space is dictated by student behaviour according to Bernadette, as previously noted, causing them to arrange the desks in a rigid row formation.

Unfortunately, much of how libraries use layout, furniture, lighting and colour is reactive, that is, spaces evolve in reaction to the immediate needs of the school community and the often unconscious unexplored attitudes of the teacher-librarian. Very little forward planning takes place – items are moved and changed as needs arise. This can result in a confused arrangement and areas that are not particularly conducive to the functions that they are meant to facilitate. An overall plan for what the library is to be, and how it should be used, is rarely thought through carefully. Despite this there is agreement over the need for welcoming spaces that function effectively.
11.3.2.2 Display

*Book displays make books prominent.*
*They stimulate interest.*
*(Chambers, 1991, p. 23)*

Display can complement, and ‘dress up’, the physical space. Display can assist in creating a stimulating ambience in any library space. Whilst it is recognised in current research as important, display often appears to be one of the first things left aside when time constraints bite. The teacher-librarian at St Peter’s when asked about display said:

I was told by previous staff that doing display was wasting my time.

Though Bernadette did not agree with this assessment of the importance of display, such views can be destructive. This statement indicated the low value placed by her predecessor on creating warm and inviting spaces and highlights the obvious changes that she needed to make. Encouragingly Bernadette’s subsequent efforts to create more display and brighten the library were commented upon by staff and students positively, indicating that any effort was actually not a waste of time. Cathy at Meadow Valley said of display:

We are limited by time...I suppose it comes fairly low on my priorities. I know that it would be good, but some things you are not good at, and where time is short you put the time where you think you will get more of a result.

As she does with general reading promotion Cathy openly states a lack of interest in, or inability to, attempt the creation of display as a promotional activity. She does not appear to contemplate delegating the role to other staff or even students.

Often student or classroom teacher initiated display in the library can not only brighten the space but assist in a sense of ownership of the library by those whose work or ideas are featured. Students particularly seem to value the library space being seen as a forum for their own work, as one student from Meadow Valley said:

It’s good to see your stuff on display.

Such display may help the students to identify with the library as a space that is welcoming to, and interested in, them. Chambers devoted a chapter to displays in his book *The Reading Environment* (Chambers, 1991). For him display ‘deeply influence(s) the mental set of people who see them’ (p. 23). Chambers goes on to argue that with good book stock he sees good display, or the lack thereof, as an indicator of the value placed on reading and books within a particular school (p. 28). The creative, imaginative nature of display, its ability to draw people in and create ever-changing spaces make it a valuable component of any reading environment.
11.3.3 External factors

All of the decisions made, and attitudes held, by the teacher-librarian may be subject to the impact of external factors. In some libraries external decision-making plays a major role in determining the face and style of the library.

At Green Hills, St Peter's and St Brigid's we find new teacher-librarians who have been employed by their administration to implement the type of library service that the administration is interested in fostering. In these schools the choice of administration to emphasise certain skills in the applicant of their choice is a major factor in the eventual style of the library itself.

Many of the external factors to be discussed involve issues, or areas of decision-making, where the teacher-librarian often has limited say over the outcome for a variety of reasons. Administrators, teachers, school boards or representative committees may make decisions that affect the day-to-day operations of the library on both a small and large scale with little input from the teacher-librarian. Factors such as staffing, budget, architecture or curriculum decisions are areas that are often decided without library input.

The extent to which teacher-librarians play a part in this decision making process varies, and is often reliant on how much influence they hold, and how proactive they have been in establishing a forum for their own views. Ultimately it is the extent to which the teacher-librarian has been able to maximise their influence over those in power around them that will affect the decisions made by others.

Hartzell, in his article titled 'The invisible school librarian: why other educators are blind to your value', argues this strongly:

...unless the library is forcibly brought to the attention of teachers and administrators, it's likely to go unnoticed and undervalued (Hartzell, 1997, p. 2).

Commentators tend to agree that teacher-librarians may avoid going 'unnoticed' through ensuring they are part of the decision making process. Leaders in this field, such as Hartzell, suggest teacher-librarians must participate on relevant committees and decision-making bodies and work hard to ensure that programs and services they offer are effective. Programs that are seen to be supportive of, and relevant to, the curriculum and the school community are usually valued and thus retained.
11.3.3.1 Budget

*I suppose we would all like to have more money.*

*Bernadette, teacher-librarian – St Peter’s*

Hartzell recognised that the library is often the first to face cuts if budgetary needs are tight (2002c, p. 4). The library can at times be seen as an adjunct to the teaching program, an extra ‘frill’ that is easily trimmed. It is here again that the influence and advocacy work of the teacher-librarian comes to the fore. If they have made their library an integral part of the school’s programs they will have little trouble defending their existence and will consequently find support. Anna, from St Brigid’s, displays by her own failure to act how important a high profile can be for the survival of a library service. In answering questions about the library’s issues with low staffing numbers she said:

> Just covering desk is an issue. I failed perhaps to make enough noise. I was a little bit stunned, I suppose I thought it would just happen.

Anna, through her own admission, failed to act and suffered the consequences. She assumed those in administration above her recognised and understood her situation and would act in her favour with little effort on her part. Such a lack of action shows a poor understanding of the day-to-day politics that are necessary in any institution where constant decisions on money allocation may pass you by if your voice is not heard.

The smallest school within the study, St Peter’s, showed a lack of funds could be debilitating despite the vibrant nature of this particular school’s reading environment. Bernadette noted that:

> We have to work with what we have - there is no extra money.

This school has only one full time staff member with a few hours a week extra help. With fewer than 200 students they cannot hope for more. This lack of funds severely limits the library program to the barest of essentials. Despite this, Bernadette does work constructively with English teachers to foster a reading environment.

In comparison Donna from Canterbury notes that they have a ‘very generous budget’ a budget that allows for a large collection and a big library staff. They also foster a reading environment, yet it is on a much larger scale dealing with hundreds of students and supported heavily by the English Department with both staff enthusiasm and funding for large collections of reading materials.

Although funding constraints may be limiting to what can ultimately be provided, the example of Bernadette at St Peter’s highlights the fact that constructive efforts can still be made with little money, though perhaps the road is a harder one to travel.

Patricia at Meadow Valley notes that money is not in itself necessarily the answer:
You need vision, goals, long-term action plan, to understand responsibilities, in order to make any program work. We have a problem here in thinking throwing money is enough. We have a number of changes to faculty head of English, two in the last three years, no follow through.

In Meadow Valley's case, money has been 'thrown' at quick fix possibilities with no resulting long-term recognisable gain. Ultimately any funds are of little use unless used wisely, with an understanding of future objectives and the full, ongoing support of all of those involved.

Anna from St Brigid's, when asked about the problem of sufficient funding, refers to the issue of time:

Well time really is the big thing, it's not really money, I think.

While this is perhaps true in one sense, what Anna appears to not recognise is that to allow more time for library staffing money must be found within the school budget. Lucy from Yarra, however, notes that the two are more interconnected:

It seems like you have to make a choice with the limited staffing and resources that you have got... we'd need more resources. It's a time factor.

As the saying goes 'time is money', and certainly those in schools must recognise this as a factor affecting what they can do and achieve.

11.3.3.2 Staffing

If we had more staff we would be more involved.
Mary, teacher-librarian  Yarra

In the recent ACYI research teacher-librarians interviewed indicated that the:

staffing and funding resources currently available were insufficient to allow them to undertake activities which are specifically designed to increase usage of the library as a resource for reading for pleasure (ACYI, 2001, p. 9).

This is certainly the case in many of the case study schools but, the reasons are more complex than just lack of staffing. It is the lack of qualified or interested staff that is highlighted as more important by this study. Mary from Yarra High says:

We, we might (talk to English classes) depending on how busy we are. Our staffing is not that generous...We have just found that with the volume of work that we have to do we just didn't want to be seen as the ones responsible for the literature program...With the move to technology, the importance of research, there just aren't enough hours.

For Mary, they have chosen not to use their staff for the promotion of reading. In fact, they do not want to be seen as 'responsible'. They lay the blame for this with the lack of staffing which they identify as 'not generous' and the need they perceive to concentrate on 'the importance of
research’. Though the blame is placed on external decisions such as staffing levels, it is apparent that decisions have been greatly affected by the teacher-librarians’ own views or attitudes, as to what their role should be. Their own lack of interest in having ownership of any literature promotion is strongly behind the decisions that they have made to not seek ownership of this role. As with small budgets to some extent, lack of staffing seems an easy excuse for what is ultimately a decision made between conflicting priorities informed by the attitudes of those involved.

Despite this, there is no doubt that extra staffing, extra funding, can help when there are decisions to be made over how different roles are to be prioritised. At Canterbury they are adding an extra member to the staff:

Well, it’s interesting isn’t it? We have just advertised for a new library technician, where we have put as part of the job description an interest in, and knowledge of, children’s literature, because over the seven years, we have a really professional staff but none of them have that passion for literature except for me and its very hard to sustain the promotion of it when there is just one of you and you are doing so many other things.

While such an appointment is dependent on funding, and would be impossible for some of the smaller and less affluent schools within this study, there is no doubt Canterbury could also have chosen to employ a new staff member with vastly different skills and interests. Though they may have the resources, they also have a positive attitude toward creating, and supporting, a reading environment in their school, an environment that this appointment indicates they see as having an intrinsic value worthy of fostering.

Andrew, at Green Hills, claims he would value such an appointment in his own school:

If I had my dream come true I’d have another teacher-librarian in here whose specially was literature. That would complement the system. It’s very necessary to get that additional teaching capacity going, eight hundred students and only one teacher in the library, you can’t be everything.

He sees such an appointment as ‘complementing’ his own style and focus. Yet such an appointment seems unlikely in his situation. He is correct though in saying you cannot be ‘everything’. He is aware of the fact that he does very little to foster reading beyond one-on-one involvement with a very small percentage of his school’s population.

Staffing is a complex and important issue in any workplace. A library staff works closely together in one work space for the majority of the day. Tensions can cause disruption. Cathy from Meadow Valley commented:

Over half of the libraries I have been in, there have been problems that have made working there very difficult. Working on top of each other, you need to be happy with what each other is doing.
In this regard staffing is linked to relationships within the framework of factors involved in the creation of a reading environment. Library staff must work at stable, productive relationships amongst their own staff as well as with other educators if they are to produce a welcoming environment that will encourage student use. Cathy, from Meadow Valley, feels she is now working with a good group of people with whom she has a positive working relationship. She does not want to see this balance altered. In response to the suggestion of extra staffing, she said:

I would like the same staff with more time, not necessarily more staff.

The staffing of a library, particularly the role of head of the library, is a factor that is greatly affected by external influences. The decision as to what ‘type’ of teacher-librarian to employ for a position is often that of administration and will be made in line with their perception of the library. Only if administration sees the establishment of a reading environment as valuable will they employ a teacher-librarian with skills, and an interest, in this area. The administration at Green Hills, St Peter’s and St Brigid’s, had all made recent appointments to Head of Library positions in line with their own views of what they thought the library should be in relation to their whole school agenda and their perception of a present day school library.

11.3.3.3 Support from School Administration

*The quality of communication between the teacher librarian and the principal is vital.*
*(Henri & Hay, 1996, p. 9)*

The supportiveness of administration for the library program is influenced by many of the other interconnected factors that construct our understanding of what is taking place within any school library and ultimately its reading environment. Relationships and attitudes particularly are important here and much of the relevant material discussed in previous sections is applicable to any discussion of the supportiveness of administration and its ramifications.

As we have already seen Oberg in her overview discussion of the support of Principals, or administration, highlights research that indicates teacher-librarians recognise the importance of principal support yet expect little and do little to encourage it (Oberg, 1996, p.109). This research finding sits comfortably with the results from the case study schools. While the level of support from administration ranged from non-existent to very aware and active, a proactive attitude from the teacher-librarians was almost non-existent. As a group they appeared to accept the level and type of support they received and saw very little need or perhaps very little point for efforts to be made to influence greatly the views held by their respective administrations. Mary from Yarra said of the support she experienced:

Sometimes we feel they are supportive. They don’t stop us but they do have particular ideas about what we are to be used for.
Mary is referring here to the use of the school library as a site for examinations and meetings, often resulting in the library being closed or inaccessible for long periods. While she is upset about this, the idea of influencing this decision through lobbying or discussion is seen as either too hard or a waste of time.

Donna, at Canterbury, and her library staff, appeared to feel that they worked with a supportive and interested school administration. Donna describes the support they receive:

They (administration) are happy (with the library’s efforts to promote reading), and encourage, our spread into the school community.

There is a strong feeling within this school that the administration is keen to support, in any way possible, efforts made by staff to support the curriculum and further the aims of the school. Such support must be helpful, as Henri and Hay (1988) identified:

There is unanimous agreement that teacher librarians and their programs thrive upon the leadership of energetic, supportive, visionary administrators (Henri & Hay, 1996, p. 9).

Hartzell agrees:

We have enough research on the principal’s role to know that the principal is a key player, perhaps the key player, in library media programs that make a difference (Hartzell, 2002c, p. 7).

Perception also plays apart in how supportive an administration is, or may appear to be. Bernadette at St Peter’s sees her Principal as understanding and feels misunderstood by the Vice Principal. She describes the relationships:

The Principal is really good. He gives me whatever I need because he knows if I ask I really need it. He’s very good, he knows I am different and trying to change things. The Vice Principal is the only one who has no idea of the pressures that I face.

In his interview the Vice Principal seemed very aware of Bernadette’s efforts and appreciative of her style and knowledge. They both appear to share aims and objectives for the library service that if put into practice could bring lasting benefit. Unfortunately while Bernadette continues to perceive the Vice Principal as unsupportive it is unlikely that they will work constructively together for any extended period of time.

The positive support of administration is at the heart of many of the external influences operating upon the creation of a reading environment. Each of the factors grouped under the heading “External Factors” – budget, staffing, curriculum needs and architectural limitations - are areas often out of the immediate control of the teacher-librarian. The areas are all dictated either totally, or partially, by administration. It is for this reason that Henri and Hartzell note how the support of administration is crucial to successful library programs. It has already been highlighted above how the views and decisions of administration can affect areas such as staffing and budgets.
Hartzell argues that poor communication leads to the undervaluing of libraries and their programs and is a result of teacher-librarians being often 'invisible' (1997) to those they work for and with. Hartzell states:

So unless the library is forcibly brought to the attention of teachers and administrators, it's likely to go unnoticed and undervalued (Hartzell, 1997).

Hartzell finds that while this is the partially the fault of teacher-librarians who remain 'invisible', he also recognises that it is a result of a lack of knowledge on the part of administration:

Any review of administrator training reveals a stunning lack of attention to the library and its potential....Aspiring administrators are not made aware of the library's potential and don't recognize themselves as important players in maximizing the librarian's potential to contribute to school quality (Hartzell, 2002c, p. 3).

A contributing, knowledgeable, interested administrator can give immeasurable support and encouragement to teacher-librarians in their efforts to create a positive reading environment within their school library.

11.3.3.4 Curriculum needs and demands

…the curriculum is sort of leading a lot of what you do.
Donna, teacher-librarian – Canterbury

Various mission statements and outlines of objectives for professional associations that support teacher-librarianship stress the importance of the library program as a support for classroom practice. The overview of the educational context for the seminal publication *Learning for the Future* in 2001 said:

*Learning for the Future* identifies the pivotal role of the school information services, and specialist teachers such as teacher librarians as key factors in the delivery of agreed curriculum outcomes and attainment of the goals of education (ASLA, 2001, p. 3).

The needs and demands of the classroom, and wider school curriculum should, and do, drive the activity of most school libraries. Both teacher-librarians from Canterbury, Donna and the head of the library Janice, commented upon the importance of the curriculum in focusing their decision making:

the curriculum is sort of leading a lot of what you are doing...of course you are going to put aside something that is not part of curricula, or curricula critical I suppose.

Donna saw the English Department collections of books held around the school at Canterbury as primarily a curriculum support:
the English Department has a collection housed separately that supports their program, ...small sets that support the curriculum. There is whole class sets of books housed in the faculty that cater for that classroom thing.

These collections have evolved to be used by students in the classroom as a necessity as access to the library is limited. Rather than not support wider reading, in this school, the decision was made, based on curriculum need, to provide these collections for the students outside of the library. This is a response primarily led by the keen English staff though strongly supported by the library with work done by both professional and clerical library staff.

All of the case study schools see the library as having a role in supporting the needs and demands of the curriculum to varying extents. This is a traditional role for a school library. One of the teachers from Meadow Valley who also works in the library, Patricia, described the teacher-librarians as ‘facilitator(s) of the curriculum.’ She saw them as supporting the curriculum in both teaching skills and disseminating relevant information. One of the teachers at St Peter’s, Brian, saw the teacher-librarian as ‘providing assistance’, the library as ‘resource centre’. Mary, the teacher-librarian at Yarra, felt that ‘The first role (of the library) is as a service provider’. She saw ‘curriculum support’ as another role altogether and seemed to link the phrase with the role of the teacher-librarian in cooperative planning.

Interestingly all participants linked the concept of curriculum support with roles such as the teaching of research skills and the provision of resources. Despite the fact that the research project’s focus was the reading environment, and despite the enormous amount of research linking wider reading and free voluntary reading to student achievement the link was not made seeing the reading environment in their libraries as supportive of curriculum. Canterbury and St Brigid’s saw their work in reading promotion as supportive, an ancillary to curriculum. But, no one argued strongly for the relevance of reading promotion to their student’s abilities and achievements in literacy across all areas of the curriculum in line with current and ongoing research in this area.

11.3.3.5 Architectural limitations

*We are still operating on limited space.*  
*If I had my druthers this would have been bigger again.*  
*Sian, Head of Library*  
*St Brigid’s*

Architectural limitations are amongst the most crucial limiting factors affecting the creation of a welcoming and functional space for the support and encouragement of reading. As architectural design is often literally set in concrete, the teacher-librarian can often do little to improve upon major drawbacks of layout and design. All of the case study schools experienced some form of drawback related to the design of the building within which their library operated. At St Brigid’s the future held the promise of a new purpose-built building, but at the time of the majority of the interviews they were operating from two small libraries with limited space and facilities.
Canterbury, Meadow Valley and Green Hills all mentioned planned future extensions to the library, though none had got to the stage of drawings or start dates. Haycock in a summary of recent American research into teacher-librarianship in 1989 found that:

Secondary school resource centers are more effective when designed according to the needs of the instructional program and of the student population (Haycock, 1989, p. 9).

Haycock's findings point to the obvious drawback of most of the case study schools: that is, though the programs offered by the library to support the curriculum have moved forward with the advent of computer access to the world wide web and data base research assistance, library spaces have not grown to facilitate these changes. In each of the case study schools, except St Peter's, large numbers of computers have had to be housed in spaces that were not designed for such use. The layout of the libraries has responded to the demand for change, in most cases, to the detriment of other library areas, and often the space set aside for reading has been jeopardised. Cathy from Meadow Valley explained:

we don't have that nice little lounge room bit – we can't put it in and the bit we have is disappearing as we put more computers in as we need to spread them out and we still need to fit one class.

In Cathy's view of her library the reading area is being slowly eaten away but to her this is justified as the computers take precedence.

Chambers said of the setting for the reading environment:

...because setting can change a set of mind, swaying it for or against an activity, it is important to consider how each feature of the reading environment may affect the set of the people it is intended to support (Chambers, 1991, p. 17).

This 'setting' is also bound by the physical spaces. Though it is partly ambience (discussed earlier), it is also either limited or improved by the space it is allocated and the feel of that space. Donna from Canterbury recognises the limitations of the space they have, but feels they compensate in other ways:

The space is inadequate but we have so many people to help us that sort of outweighs it – we are doing the best with what we have got and it's a very welcoming place.

While Donna's attitude is not a long-term, permanent solution to their space problem the Canterbury staff have at least approached their limitations in a constructive manner and tried to do the best they can. Bernadette from St Peter's has also tried to make the most of what is otherwise a small and rather drab physical space. As with other areas looked at in this study, the use of the space is affected by the attitude of those who use it. Some from the case study schools, such as Andrew from Green Hills or Cathy from Meadow Valley, see space constraints as another reason why they do little to support reading in their school, whereas Bernadette from St Peter's and
Donna from Canterbury attempt to do the best within the limits of the architecture because they believe efforts to create a library reading space are part of their role.

The factors explored in this chapter give a framework for discussion of how the role of the teacher-librarian operates with a secondary school library. The interconnected nature of these factors, the way they interact and relate, illustrates the complex nature of the role of the teacher-librarian particularly in relation to the reading environment they might choose to create. The diagram that illustrates the framework of factors identified for discussion (see diagram two) includes an outer circle that draws to our attention the professional context within which all of the other identified factors operate, it is this professional context that will be explored in the following chapter.
12 The context of professional change

The creation of information 'spaces' out of information 'places' such as school libraries heralds an information environment that is no longer fixed, rigid, contained, stable and secure, but one that is complex and fluid, connective and interactive, diverse and unpredictable, and one no longer constrained by time and place. (Todd, 2000, p.105)

Many factors inform current educational practice. Within any school there is a diversity of views impacting upon the decision making process. In the wider professional community opinion extends to either end of the spectrum on any educational issue. All of these ideas, all of this discussion and debate, make up the professional context within which the teacher-librarian operates. This context either supports or doesn’t support the decisions made by the teacher-librarian within their own library and consequently has an impact, sometimes immediate, sometimes distant, on the reading environment within the school library.

The educational objectives and aims of a particular school contribute enormously to the context within which the teacher-librarian makes decisions. As has been seen in the case study schools the attitudes and beliefs about the directions of education can impact upon the budget, the staffing and the overall program of the library itself. The views of those around them and the mission statement of their particular school also alter workplace decisions made by the teacher-librarian.

Current debate within the profession of teacher-librarianship reflects the tensions found within the professional context. This debate is a major influence on the views and attitudes of the teacher-librarian. It can be found in professional journals, courses of study, professional development and both formal and informal networks and discussion groups of the profession. All of these forums provide a stage upon which the debate and discussion can be enacted, viewed and considered. The extent to which the teacher-librarian immerses themselves in this professional world beyond the walls of their school is a decision they must make. Even those with limited contact though are no doubt aware of major changes and shifts in the profession. Bernadette, from St Peter’s said:

Technology that is impacting on others (other school libraries) is not relevant to my job. I go to meetings where technology is the prime role (discussed).

Even though this debate has not affected her workplace she is constantly aware that it is impacting upon others through its predominance at professional network meetings and possibly other professional development activities.

These areas, the professional context within the school and the wider network beyond, work on different levels, both to some extent influencing each other. Their relevance and level of importance varies from situation to situation depending on the school and a variety of other variables. These two areas can, and do, influence all of the other factors previously discussed in relation to the creation of a reading environment in chapter eleven and ultimately impact upon
what the teacher-librarian does in relation to reading promotion to varying degrees. Diagram two describes the web of interconnected influences that impact upon the teacher-librarian and highlights the encircling nature of factors such as professional context.

The most difficult aspect of the current professional context within which the teacher-librarian find themselves is the rapid pace of change. New ideas and approaches linked to the advent of new technologies have caused rapid change in both big picture views of education and at the grass roots level of classroom delivery and, most certainly, in the operation of the library.

12.1 The wider professional debate

*So why has the identity issue risen again? Why do we still have a problem with others understanding who we are? (Mitchell, 2002, p. 8)*

Firstly I would like to consider the debate within the profession of teacher-librarianship and how the rapid changes to this profession have affected the role of the teacher-librarian in the creation of a reading environment.

We are all affected by the various environments that operate around us. There is no doubt that the developments, changes and ideas that have permeated school libraries, and given direction to how they have developed, have often been filtered through debate and discussion within the wider educational community and the profession of teacher-librarianship.

In the earlier literature review in chapter two, in discussion of the role of the teacher-librarian, reference was made to the large number of roles outlined as being part of the role of the library. One of the most recent publications of the Australian School Library Association (ASLA), Learning for the future, considered the work of the profession. Their guidelines state:

The staff of the school information services team must collaborate with teachers and school management to:

provide students with learning contexts, processes and skills as well as opportunities for wide reading, personal growth and fulfilment;

provide teachers with the support they need to develop information-literate students;

provide resources to meet curriculum needs;

provide the services and technologies needed to gain maximum access to information;

provide functional facilities and a congenial environment to support the school's wide range of information needs. (ASLA, 2001, p. 4).
This is obviously a broad and comprehensive list that is perhaps becoming more and more difficult to fulfil well and completely.

Teacher-librarianship, by its very nature, is a multifaceted profession. The major professional discussion has often been about how the profession balances the roles of being both teacher and librarian. How this dual role is incorporated into a school's program, what the dual role offers, and how these offerings can be implemented, have dominated professional literature and professional development. As a teacher and a librarian the areas in which the teacher-librarian can be involved are many and varied. Rather than solving this dilemma, the advent of information technologies has only added to the vast array of areas which a teacher-librarian must be expert in. In order to run a basic service incorporating IT, a teacher-librarian must be everything from a computer technician to an information literacy expert. Lonsdale, in a recent review of library research for the Australian School Library Association made mention of this:

While the school librarian's job today, at a fundamental level, remains the same in that it is still about facilitating access to information, it has also become more complex and demanding (Lonsdale, 2003, p. 11).

Other recent research projects agree. A study titled: Performing Hybridity: Impact of New technologies on the Role of the Teacher-librarian, conducted in 2000, in their list of key findings said:

The study revealed that the knowledge-based nature of the teacher-librarian's role has dramatically changed over the years with many teacher-librarians commenting that new technologies continually demand different knowledges, skills and practices (Mallan et.al., 2000, p. 2).

Teacher-librarians within the study identified with such findings, and were keen to comment. Andrew from Green Hills, noted:

The problem with library roles, as I see it, is that we are not really dropping any roles, we are just adding to it.

while Lucy from Yarra saw a destructive friction between roles:

Well, I think we are torn between the two areas of information literacy and literacy or literature and it's difficult to do as much as you would like in both areas at the same time.

In a very short space of time we have had a multiplication in the number of roles that a teacher-librarian has had to carry out within their day-to-day job. Welch and Braybrock (2002) referred to a 'paradigm shift', or a change in the pattern of work for teacher-librarians. A crisis of identity is suggested by the titles of some recent articles: "Teacher-librarians: What are we? What should we be?" (Horton, 2002), "A profession or a specialization?" (Mitchell, 2002), "Teacher-librarians...Who Are You?" (Harvey, 2001) and "Teacher-Librarian: Identity crisis or multi skilled professional?" (Skrzeczynski, 1995). The recent book by White: Librarianship - Quo Vadis?: opportunities and dangers as we face the new millennium (White, 2000) also addresses similar
issue. All of these titles suggest that the profession suffers a crisis of identity, or at the very least, is in a state of questioning over its own identity.

Once the quandary was - teacher, librarian, or somehow both? In relation to this research the debate appears to now be - What type of teacher-librarian do we want to be? Information/Research specialists, Wider reading/Literature specialists – are we both? Can we be both? Or are we moving into an age of specialization. Anna, the teacher-librarian at St Brigid’s considering the demands placed on her by the new technologies and her inability to fulfil many of her other duties says ‘Maybe one person can’t do both’.

In those schools with limited funds and consequently limited staffing these questions are crucial to an understanding of the type of library the teacher-librarian ultimately creates and inevitably impact upon the reading environment in each school as well as all other areas of the library’s operation. Marian Lees, in an article analysing the teacher-librarian’s role in relation to the Internet said:

Many teacher-librarians work alone or with one library technician and are responsible for all aspects of running a school library. It’s becoming obvious that the teacher-librarian has to specialize. One teacher-librarian cannot do all of the work anymore. Many schools are opting for part-time ‘literature experts’ or ‘systems managers’, while others are employing technicians to maintain the technology throughout the school. The teacher-librarian has had to become a technology expert and is often used as a computer technician or trainer rather than an information specialist. The teacher-librarian must keep up with the technology while using it to expand and enhance the role of information specialist, rather than enter into demarcation disputes with school technicians or information technology teachers (Lees, 1999, p. 3).

There is no question that the move within libraries to take up new technologies to assist students in their studies is an important and valuable task that should be undertaken by the library and its staff. The question remains - how are these changes affecting the creation of a reading environment and the role of the teacher-librarian as an enabling adult?

A small research exercise undertaken by Professor Ross Todd from Rutgers University illustrated very well the level of unrest and angst within the professional community over the impact of technologies on library service. Todd asked teacher-librarians on two Australian list-servs to email him their thoughts on what were the key challenges facing teacher-librarians at the present time (Todd, 2001b). The most strongly held concern, by over 18% of respondents, was the ‘impact of information technology on the library and the role of teacher-librarian’. Listed in the detail of the responses were the particular problems caused by the advent of technology:

the problem of responsibility, the pressure to take on more and more roles – web master, network administrator, mentor etc.: with no extra staff provided nor time allowance to cope with the load. The pace just keeps hotting up; some days the descent into chaos is positively scary (Todd, 2001b, p. 4).
The responses from some of the case study schools contained similar views. Anna, from St Brigid’s, talks of roles being neglected because of the need to ‘respond to the demands’. She talks of being ‘forced’ to give computers priority within an ever increasing workload. Mary, at Yarra, feels untrained for, and unsure about, her own role in technology:

I resent, in a way, the impact of technology and I am not happy with it. I feel that I should be doing more with it but I’m not.

At Canterbury where staffing is more generous, the impact of technology has been less extreme. Technology is viewed as a supplementary support to the curriculum, a new, exciting teaching tool with great promise, rather than another burden. Donna, the teacher-librarian at Canterbury said:

Well, I think that the technology has certainly impacted upon my role but, in fact, it has just added another dimension - dare I mention the word ‘enriching’ - to the teaching program.

Like the teacher-librarians at Green Hills and Meadow Valley, Donna is inspired by the possibilities, but unlike most other schools she has the funds and the support to fully utilise what is available.

A report published this year, commissioned by the Australian School Library Association (ASLA) and prepared by ACER, notes the enormous changes that have taken place:

The context in which school librarians and teacher-librarians operate has changed noticeably in recent years, with consequent implications for student learning. In particular, the following trends suggest the need for a closer look at the potential role of school librarians in relation to student achievement in Australian schools: an apparent decline in the numbers of qualified teacher-librarians employed in school libraries in public schools in Australia; an explosion in information production and the development of increasingly sophisticated information communication technologies (ICT’s); changes in educational philosophy and practice, including a greater focus on learning outcomes, evidence-based practice and school accountability; and changes in the nature and role of the teacher-librarian as a result of the above trend and developments (Lonsdale, 2003, p. 5).

Advances in technology, changes in educational practice and the lack of trained staff have all impacted upon the profession of teacher-librarianship as part of the context within which the profession operates. These changes to the broader context have affected, sometimes in a very large way, the attitudes of teacher-librarians within this study. Lonsdale’s summary indicates the extent of the changes that have impacted upon the role of the teacher-librarian in recent years. Though this report does not make the link, it is clear that all of these identified factors in this ASLA review of the research have also had an impact upon the reading environment created by teacher-librarians in secondary school libraries.

Unfortunately many teacher-librarians appear to have been faced with an either/or situation, having to make a decision about how to best utilise their time. It is not a straightforward competition, as there are many other roles for the teacher-librarian to perform, but to some it is a
matter of either placing their efforts into new technologies or the creation of a reading environment and all that this entails. In many school environments these choices have led to difficult decisions for some library staff. Often areas such as reading promotion have fallen by the wayside as new mantles have been taken up. For some this has been a choice forced upon them, for others it has been a choice eagerly embraced. This change is certainly evident in the case study schools, except those where enough funding exists to provide for all needs and demands. At Meadow Valley, Yarra, Green Hills and St Brigid's, staff all feel the pressure of meeting the demands on their time to provide database and Internet access to a constant stream of classes and research students. In all of these schools it was clear that these pressures were partly responsible for a lack of effort by library staff in the promotion of reading as a role for their library service. Canterbury College and St Peter's stand out as varying from this situation but for markedly different reasons.

St Peter's has not found itself affected yet by the need to move strongly into online access due to its very small size. Students have computer access in a lab style situation and it is unlikely that more will be offered through the library due to lack of funds -- in a secondary school of only 175 students this is perhaps understandable. Bernadette, the teacher-librarian at St Peter's, is unusual in concentrating her efforts on reading promotion and basic research skills to the exclusion of most else.

Canterbury, has both a very active program of computer and research support as well as an active reading program. The library is extensively involved in both. This is possible due to generous staffing and funding that allows for a reading room and collections of support materials throughout the college. The reading program is also heavily supported, encouraged, and led by the English faculty. Donna, one of the teacher-librarians at Canterbury, plays an integral, yet supportive role in all of these programs. Canterbury College appears keen to bolster and enrich the curriculum on offer through library support. There appears to be a strong recognition that generous funding is essential in order to support programs effectively.

The four other schools, Meadow Valley, Yarra, Green Hills and St Brigid's, seem to be struggling with inadequate staffing to cover all of the roles that a teacher-librarian might take on. Consequently the teacher-librarians at these schools have tended to specialise. Their choice as to where to specialise has depended greatly on their own personal attitude toward their role -- what they perceive as the most important facet of their role, as discussed in the previous chapter. The professional context within which they find themselves, fed both by priorities within their school and by the debate within the wider professional community, can also affect their ultimate decision.

Meadow Valley and Green Hills particularly have chosen to focus on the provision of information technology to meet the needs of their students. Both teacher-librarians, Andrew and Cathy, have a personally stated interest in information literacy and the use of technology. This is for them the way forward. Creating a place for the library as central to the development of technology within
their schools, offers them a position of influence and knowledge, vastly more money to spend, and
gives an emphasis within their own sphere of influence to an area of education that they
themselves are passionate about.

Elaine, the library technician at Green Hills, describes Andrew and his interest:

Our current teacher-librarian is here, I guess, for his love of where we are going,
not where we have been - and that’s technology.

Andrew’s ‘love’ of technology is part of why he has been appointed to Green Hills. His passion
sits well with the school’s overall push to move down that ‘technology road’. For Chris at
Meadow Valley technology is tied closely to information literacy, something that she is ‘on
about’: it is what she sees as the focus of her role. Though she does not have the strong overall
school mission behind her that there is at Green Hills, there is a definite feeling within her school
that emphasis on technology, to prepare students for the workplace particularly, is a crucial role for
schools.

At Green Hills and Meadow Valley, this interest, this specialisation, is at the cost of reading
promotion, a fact openly recognised by both Andrew and Cathy. At Yarra, as at St Brigid’s, we
have schools that appear to be still attempting to juggle all roles expected of them though both
schools have teacher-librarians who appear to be minimally involved in the creation of a reading
environment while other facets of the job take them further and further away from this role.

Gary Hartzell has entered this debate, stressing strongly the need for the profession to see a
difference between technology for its own sake and technology for a constructive purpose within
the framework of real learning:

We talk about the information explosion, and librarians call themselves
information managers. We laud information technology, and we pride ourselves
on being able to deliver information anywhere, anytime. But schools and school
libraries are not really in the information business. They’re in the learning
business. It’s important to distinguish between the two, and to promote libraries as
instruments of learning, rather than as centres of information (Hartzell, 2002a).

Hartzell is a well-known international commentator. In recent years he has spoken in a number of
forums particularly on how teacher-librarians should better utilise influence to their advantage and
how to improve their relevance in relation to the role of the teacher-librarian and the wider school
community. Hartzell’s views contribute to the professional context within which teacher-librarians
find themselves.

This discussion, of the place of computers in our schools, is not limited to schools alone. Maker,
in a recent article on the role of technology in public libraries said:

What is causing debate is exactly what changes will be effected and the influence
they (technologies) will have on the future of public institutions such as
libraries...technology is not the be all and end all of the future and an
indiscriminate, all-embracing acceptance is just as dangerous as ignoring it in the vain hope that it will go away (Maker, 2003, p. 24).

Obviously it is not only school libraries that face the difficulties of change and adjustment to new technologies. Perhaps as other professions face similar issues a debate beyond the profession is timely and one that school libraries need to be a part of.

12.2 The context of the school

...today, schools are businesses
*Cathy, Library technician – Green Hills*

Just as important, and in some cases vastly more influential, are the wider objectives of the school itself. Whole school objectives have a very immediate effect on the context within which the teacher-librarian finds themselves. They influence decisions made by the teacher-librarian and those decisions made by administrators that affect the library’s future development and direction. Change within a school can either be led from within or it may come about in reaction to wider changes within the community and educational practice on a large scale.

Obviously the factors that can affect what takes place within any school are wide and varied, and any list of factors would alter depending on the focus and interest of the author. Some factors though are invasive and far reaching: the utilization of technology within education is one such factor. The impact of this force for change on the mind-set of each of the schools within this study has been large. The daily operations of five of the six schools’ libraries have been directly affected by changes to the whole school focus. (Only St Peter’s due to its small size and lack of funds appears largely unaffected). This enormous change has centred predominantly around the advent of technology – how it is utilised, controlled and accessed.

Most schools are in a constant struggle to stay in touch with curriculum change. Though each school system, State, Independent and Catholic, has different aspirations and goals, all schools are part of a very competitive market place striving to attract students to their institution. Andrew Rule discusses this in his 1999 *Age* article on the educator David Loader and the place of laptop computers in education:

In the middle are many parents and teachers - well-meaning, but confused and wondering if they might be pawns in a game that is as much about commerce and competition as about education (Rule, 1999, p. 2).

In an article titled ‘The Computer Delusion’ Porter states:

Parents, school boards and the reporters want to see only razzle-dazzle state-of-the-art (Porter in Oppenheimer, 1997, p. 14).

The library technician at Green Hills, Elaine recognised this in her own school saying:
...today, schools are businesses and to attract the clientele you need to be up with the latest in technology.

It is this same technician who spoke of the technology road that she felt her school was on. Another library technician, Christine, from Meadow Valley noted something similar about her school's direction, or perhaps the direction of education in general:

Technology is very important as that is the way that everything is going.

Mallan, Lundin and Burns, discussing the corporate image and the role of the library said:

...The impacts of technology on this corporate image and subsequent marketing strategies are not to be dismissed. Many schools realise the importance of promoting to parents and the community the view that their school is leading the way with technology or at least working towards that goal. The push to increase computer use is coming from advances in the technology in relation to information access and production, curriculum changes, and from parents who want the best for their children in an increasingly technological world (Mallan, Lundin, & Burns, 2001, p. 31).

All school systems pride themselves on being at the cutting edge in terms of best practice and innovation. Many spend vast amounts of money trying to remain at the forefront of change. In recent years there has been a strong push for schools of all kinds to be increasingly aware of various areas of educational reform in regards to current research and policy. One of the most pervasive and powerful pushes by various commentators and policy makers has been the educational uses possible for information technology.

Larry Cuban in his book *Oversold and underused: computers in the classroom* (2001), argues that:

Since the early 1980's a loosely tied national coalition of public officials, corporate executives, vendors, policy makers and parents have included in their reform agendas the common goal of creating more access to new technologies in schools (Cuban, 2001, p. 12).

Cuban sees each of these parties working at competing agendas in their attempts to bring technology into the education system in the United States. He questions the consequences of such hard fought competition. In Australia schools have responded positively to community and workplace need by integrating computer usage into all facets of the education system, and at all levels. This change in emphasis has been rapid, and change continues as technological advances continue. These changes to education in general have had an enormous impact on many areas of curriculum and support, not least of all the library. As the first computerised area within most schools with automated catalogue systems in the 1970's and 1980's, libraries have not only been part of the technological impact upon schools, they have often been at the forefront of such change. This push, or emphasis was certainly present within the case study schools.

As has been noted, Cathy, the library technician at Green Hills, is conscious of the school's emphasis on technology to enhance the school's future. While this is not unusual, and certainly
necessary, in terms of the school's reading environment, it can have a detrimental effect. The professional, or educational, context that this college was embracing appears to have had a decidedly destructive impact on their school library as a reading environment. Teacher-librarians, library technicians and teachers from this school all reported that the school's concentration on technology, at the expense of other library programs, was leading to an unproductive, uninteresting reading environment within their school library. Funding obviously plays a part in such a decision as there are not always enough funds to introduce new expensive innovation while retaining previous practice.

Other schools, Yarra, Meadow Hills and St Brigid's saw technology as an impacting factor on the type and extent of the reading environment they provided for their students. While this was in part due to overall school initiatives and attitudes towards the role of technology, it was also part of the view of the wider professional environment of education and teacher-librarianship in particular discussed in the previous section.

Though the library in most schools often appears to operate fairly autonomously from many external influences it is clear that decisions or views that affect the whole school future plan for growth and change can affect even what has become a small area of a library's operation - its reading environment. Whole school plans influence staffing appointments, funding and budget. The link between such plans and the reality of day-to-day operations must be made and understood by teacher-librarians. As seen in the preceding chapter, one cannot underestimate the importance of factors such as budget and staffing.

The extent to which the context of professional debate and change has impacted on the reading environments in each case study school is varied, and also difficult to evaluate. No reading environment or teacher-librarian operates in a vacuum however, and ultimately, either consciously or unconsciously, professional debate, changes in educational practice and whole school agendas, can and do affect those who work within them. The decisions and attitudes of teacher-librarians are influenced by the wider world around them, and professional debate and the context within which everyone operates does affect the creation of welcoming reading environments.
13. Conclusions and implications for further research

This research has analysed the various factors that impact upon the creation of a reading environment by the teacher-librarian in a secondary school library. Through the analysis of the libraries within six case study schools a picture has been built up of an interconnected web of factors that can, and do, affect the type of reading environment that a teacher-librarian might attempt to establish. Though the factors vary in relative importance depending upon the particular case, each plays a part in the final outcome. The interconnectedness of these factors must be stressed. The powerful role of teacher-librarians in directing, through their own attitudes and decisions, the nature of the reading environment has been identified. Despite this important role of the teacher-librarian, the research also indicates a crucial role for administrators, teachers and the wider school community in influencing the reading environment both directly and indirectly.

Through this analysis a series of issues relating to the nature of libraries and reading, the role of Information and Communication Technologies, and the role of the teacher-librarian has come to the fore. Each of these areas has been investigated by this research project and in turn each would be worthy of further, more specific, research.

13.1 The library space

All of the case study schools, even those that have generous funding, have issues with the utilisation of space. At the time of the study, St Brigid's was moving into a new library facility, Green Hills and Canterbury hope for the promised extensions to their space, and the others - St Peter's, Meadow Valley and Yarra - struggle along with what they have. All, even St Brigid's, would like more space. As all of the libraries struggle with how to integrate Information and Communication Technologies into their libraries the issue of how spaces are used, and perceived, becomes paramount. Green Hills, Yarra, Meadow Valley and Canterbury all found the hardware necessary to operate ICT's in their libraries impacted upon the space dramatically. How do teacher-librarians create libraries that balance all of the needs of the school community?

The case study schools and anecdotal evidence from within the profession appear to indicate that reading spaces, their collections, display area and comfortable seating areas are slowly being swallowed up or dismantled altogether to make room for other needs, particularly, pods of computers. Is this a conscious response to a considered view that pleasure reading is no longer a function of a school library? Or is this occurring in a haphazard manner in response to the pressing need to house new technologies without real thought for what is being set aside? Or more fairly, is it a response to an ever increasing number of demands placed on the library to provide spaces for many and varied, though all valid, educational needs? Perhaps, in a world of networks and online
information available in many and various ways the nature of the library as a physical space requires a great deal of research and careful thought.

13.2 The nature of reading

Young in The game of reading: not just books anymore argues that reading for pleasure now takes in all formats and if we, and our students, are going to read for pleasure in the future we need to recognise this (Young, 2002). O’Connell, in an article entitled ‘From Scrolls to Scrolling: Where to with Reading Now?’ says:

... wherever text is read, it is the cognitive processes that determine how the text is used. This is the currency for the future. The coin and flip coin are literacy and information literacy - different sides of the same reading thing! (O’Connell, 1999, p. 32).

White in a discussion of the challenges that face the profession for the new millennium argues that:

...libraries always vary in content and methodology. They are not defined by format (White, 2000, p. 391).

If so, have our libraries modified to meet this challenge? Are different formats valued? In all of the case study schools, pleasure reading was generally assumed to refer to the reading of fiction in standard hardcopy book format. This view is paramount in much of the literature as well. Though some schools have created new collections in other formats – picture books, magazines, newspapers and talking books, there is still a tendency to see these formats as adjuncts or sides, not of importance within the reading community. Non-fiction collections have also been seen, every now and then, as sources of pleasure reading for students, but generally this is not promoted or encouraged regularly. This is changing, as publishers recognise a market and produce good quality material of popular interest and educators realize the need to cater for the vast array of learning styles to be found in any one classroom. If we are to take different learning and thinking styles seriously, we must cater for such differences with varied formats.

Electronic sources have a vital place within education for information retrieval and organisation. What is their place in relation to reading for pleasure? A repositioning of electronic formats as possible recreational texts by the community, would, and does, challenge attitudes. The crucial point is this - if our task remains to encourage reading to improve understanding, to bolster the teaching of literacy through experience of text, and to encourage our students as life long learners through reading, then a redefinition of how, and what we read, and how teacher-librarians promote reading for pleasure, is timely.

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13.3 The role of Information and Communication Technologies

Each of the case study schools has handled and exploited the new technologies that they find themselves juggling in different ways. Some teacher-librarians have appeared frightened, unsure and overwhelmed (Mary at Yarra and Angela at St Brigid's), others have embraced the possibilities (Andrew at Green Hills and Cathy at Meadow Valley). Suffice to say that while some appear to be applying technology to learning, using the technology as tools, others are perhaps a little tied up in computers as bright lights and 'games' to get the kids in. The most obvious comparison is linked to resources and their application. At Canterbury Donna's job is evolving away from that of reading promotion into a role centred on assisting teachers in better utilising the technology to support and enhance the curriculum. Canterbury appears to look for any means to support their educational objectives. Instead of letting the tool drive the objectives of the class they find the right tool to achieve their aims and sometimes this is technology. On the other hand, Cathy at Meadow Valley sees the computers as a 'motivating' tool, using a database or an online site because the students are more motivated to search for information in this format, not because it is the best format to use for the particular task. This is computer usage as an answer in itself rather than the result of a considered decision that these are the right tools to support and enhance curriculum objectives.

As has been suggested in the previous section electronic forms of text have been overlooked as a source of pleasure reading for the community. As ICT’s move into all areas of the community – education, workplace and home – an analysis of their possible role in learning is vital. This is particularly an area of interest to those working to create reading environments in school libraries. In an introduction to an article by Catherine Beavis titled 'Good Game: Text and community in multiplayer computer games', Susan Boyce claims:

In relation to computer use and communications, students do not make such clear distinctions between their 'in-school' and 'out-of-school' communications liaisons and literacy experiences. Given the intensity of their involvement in these activities, who is to say what players are, or are not, learning – or whether such entertainment activity is, or is not, educational? Or even, alternatively, whether there is an overlap between each domain. In view of the potential of communications networks for education and curriculum, and the high level of student interest in online, multiplayer computer games, perhaps it is timely to examine the possibilities for how all of these might intersect (Boyce & Beavis, 2003, p. 10).

Such statements indicate that research is being considered into the role of different forms of online materials in the reading lives of young people. Even amongst those case study schools where ICT's dominated the library program and were seen as the way of the future, these new forms of text were not being explored or promoted as pleasure reading.
In a paper titled ‘eBooks for kids – blessing or blasphemy?’ given at the ASLA/CBCA national conference in 2003 it was stated that one Internet source for eBooks had 682 children’s and young adults titles available for download (Saunders, 2003, p. 1). Whether this is the way of the future or not it is clear that not only are varied styles and presentation to be available in the future but also various ways of reading traditional text. Where is the teacher-librarian as collection builder, as the facilitator of access, as enabling adult, in this debate?

It is clear teacher-librarians need to be aware of the many and varied possibilities available in an effort to better serve the communities of today and the future in relation to their pleasure reading needs and the creation of an appropriate reading environment.

13.4 The role of the teacher-librarian

In the same way that we might seek to redefine what reading is and continue to define the uses of various technologies, so too must we continue to redefine the role of teacher-librarians if they are to have a relevant future in relation to reading for pleasure.

What we struggle with is a redefinition of the many varied terms and roles that are expected of a teacher-librarian. In an age when more is being asked of the profession rather than less, we are in danger of sacrificing areas of expertise in order to maintain integrity and control of our place within the workplace. As we integrate new and constantly changing technologies into our already crowded libraries and schools, the profession must consider what this means for what is considered one of our traditional roles - reading promotion. Many commentators recognise this need for redefinition, though they do approach the issue from different perspectives. Mallan, Lundin and Burns in the final recommendations from an article titled ‘Exploring the Impact of New Technologies on the Role of Teacher Librarians’ said that:

...education authorities, both government and non-government, in consultation with school library associations and practicing teacher librarians, (should) review and redefine the role of teacher librarians in the light of current expectations associated with new technologies (Mallan, Lundin and Burns, 2001, p. 31).

Perhaps, as has been suggested, we are entering an age of specialization within the field where, in everything other than the smallest schools, a number of teacher-librarians work as a team each carrying out specific components of the role of a teacher-librarian. Such specialization would end the debate about whether this role or that role is most central and significant and enable a library to operate fully all roles that are expected of it. Andrew, the teacher-librarian at Green Hills thought the staffing in his library needed ‘one more (teacher-librarian) - specialty literature.’ He recognised his own area of expertise and felt another specialist would help provide a richer library program. Such a solution is workable in an environment where funding is adequate. For schools that are too small, or too poor, to afford a number of specialist staff on a library team, the problem still exists
of which roles, from amongst the many possible, they choose with only limited time at their disposal? How many roles can any one professional perform effectively before all areas begin to suffer due to lack of appropriate application?

Chambers is quite scathing about those who would discount their role in reading promotion in favour of other aspects of the evolving role of the teacher-librarian:

Because of the intrinsic, fundamental, human-making nature of Story, no one can afford to ignore or neglect it - least of all educators and librarians, even if they try to avoid their duty by renaming themselves 'information retrieval specialists' or some such gobbledygook. To do so is to deny your own humanity - to commit cultural suicide; and worse, it is to deny humanity to others for whom you have accepted paid responsibility. The first is simply foolish and self-defeating, but the second is social theft and morally criminal (Chambers, 1983, p. 340).

Chambers strongly places his emphasis for the librarian on the role of reading facilitator; the enabling adult for him is the most important role of all since it brings books and young people together. Perhaps it is not so straight-forward. To see the argument as a choice between conflicting roles is to both simplify a role that is larger than just these two roles and to necessitate an impossible choice of one above the other. The role teacher-librarians have to play in helping students find, interpret and understand the masses of information available to them in this technological age is valuable and should not be discounted, just as our traditional roles of service provider, collection manager, research skills expert and promoter of reading should not be discounted either. The profession is in a time of redefinition. But this has always been the case, the profession of teacher-librarianship is a relatively new one and as such has spent the majority of its existence trying to define and own a role. The challenge is to work through this particular period of redefinition and evaluation without sacrificing any of the profession's valuable roles, both new and old.
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