Through the Looking Glass… into Wonderland and Beyond!: Transforming Your School Library into an Innovative, Inspiring, Relevant, and Engaging Learning Space

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Abstract
For school libraries to thrive they need to be reimaged often and well. Without vision we walk in darkness and eventually our libraries will become irrelevant and die. With a strong vision, careful planning, hard work, passion, perseverance and determination we can all transform our libraries into exciting learning places now and for the future … and we can do it on a shoestring! This presentation follows the transformational journey of one school library, outlines the steps taken and shares the impact this has had on the positive, engaging learning culture of the school.

Introduction
The Importance of Reimaging a School Library
According to the latest research, businesses need to be reimaged every two to three years to survive. '*The Titanic Syndrome* is a corporate disease in which organizations create their own downfall through arrogance, excessive attachment to the past, or an inability to recognize the new and emerging reality' (Zhexembayeva, 2018). School libraries too, must be continually transformed or they will become disconnected, irrelevant and eventually die. To maintain their relevance in the 21st Century our libraries must become and continue to be places that buzz with energy as students use relevant books, online resources and technology to inquire, explore, wonder and discover. If it's so important to reimage our libraries on a regular basis then how do we do it? Since arriving at the College in 2018, the Teacher Librarian and her library team have transformed the library which now plays a vital role in student learning and wellbeing. This is their story!
Guidelines on how to transform a school library
    1. **Know your library and its users**
Find out what has shaped your library in the past
Ask people who know the history; those who have worked in the school for a long time; local community members; alumni, parents, staff and students. Look through archival records, find photos and information and discover the treasures! We found the first book ever accessioned in the Library, 0001. Learn the

stories behind the library. We discovered the library collection had been relocated for a period of time to allow for much needed building renovations to take place. The collection was housed in a temporary building and unfortunately the building flooded. As a result, many of the books were affected by direct water damage or dampness. When the collection returned to the current premises, some of the affected books remained, and the mould began to spread silently through the collection. It was also during this time, the staff and students became disconnected from the library and stopped using it effectively.

Use your knowledge of the past to position your library well for the future
Acknowledge the contribution to the library of past staff and members of the community. We discovered, not long after I arrived, that it was the 30th Anniversary Birthday of our library. We seized the opportunity to celebrate in style! We celebrated with staff and students and then invited all past Teacher Librarians and members of the community to a special birthday celebration. We provided opportunity for them to reminisce and enjoyed listening to their 'library stories'. We acknowledged them publicly and had archives on display. We learned some fascinating information about the history of the library. This information gave us an overview of the library and its journey over the years. Having this understanding allowed us to move forward and plan changes with confidence.

Focus on the strengths and build on them
As a new team we started by sharing our strengths and what we enjoyed about our roles. Our team consisted of two Teacher Librarians, a Library Technician and a Library Assistant. Two were newly appointed and two had worked in the library for many years and knew the College well. Our perfectly balanced team of fresh new ideas combined with important knowledge of the history, culture and College community was and continues to be invaluable.

We identified the things we valued that were worth keeping, protecting and preserving in the library. We didn't want to change anything that didn't need changing. Instead we decided to build on the good that had been established. Our library was well positioned right in the centre of the College with easy access for all staff and students. The building, single storey with disabled access, had adequate natural light and excellent recently installed air conditioning. The views through the garden and across the green playing fields from the windows were very pleasant. The carpet and shelving, although slightly dated, was in good condition. Some new furniture had been purchased in the last two years. A new height adjustable mobile interactive whiteboard had been purchased recently and could be easily relocated throughout the library for teaching and learning. A quiet study room was available for senior students and a seminar room was being used for meetings and study groups. We discovered the library was regarded as the 'leading light' in Christian School libraries in Australia in its early days and library staff at the time assisted many other schools to establish their libraries. Excellent records were kept during this period.

Carry out a complete analysis of the library
Look carefully at the space, the resources, the function and use of the library and its current role in the school. As Teacher Librarians, we are not only the managers of buildings and resources, we are entrusted with people's lives and their learning. Our students are our responsibility and our legacy. The following questions should be considered:
Is your library a welcoming space where students and staff want to be?
Is it a place where they enjoy coming, feel comfortable and are able to relax?
Do their visits to the library improve and enhance their well-being?
When they enter the library, are they filled with curiosity and wonder?
Are they determined to investigate and discover?

Is the library the hub of teaching and learning in the school?

The current state of the library needs to be examined closely. Be very aware of things below the surface. Our library didn't look too bad at first glance but when we started to investigate further, it was a very different story. A culture of fear had developed in our library and had been present for many years. In our library, there was a priority of systems over people. Low levels of library usage by staff and students had resulted from the strong emphasis on strict adherence to rules, harsh overdue procedures, unrealistic restrictions in borrowing and lack of encouragement shown to library users. The library had become disconnected from potential users. Traditionally, due to staffing, the library had developed a 'small school' focus. We are a large Kindergarten to Year 12 school, but the focus had moved away from the Secondary School staff and students.

Our library space was characterised by rows of tall linear shelves that were 'packed with books' restricting air flow, blocking light and visibility out of the windows. There was a traditional classroom arrangement of tables, a huge old interactive white board that no longer worked and multiple individual study carrels.

The print and online resources were greatly out of balance and needed to be levelled. There was a huge integrated print collection for Kindergarten to Year 12 students, with shelves tightly packed and limited appropriate signage in place. This made it very frustrating and confusing for library users. There were very few online resources with no access to educational databases. There was limited communication between the library and the College community and little connection with the world beyond the College. The library was lacking vision. The library budget was limited and didn't meet the needs of the users. Information, research and study skills needed to be taught in a systematic way from Kindergarten to Year 12. Students needed to use correct or consistent citation in their assignments. Students were unsure how to use the library and were unfamiliar with the resources it contained. Instead they were 'googling' to locate information and staff were providing the information needed for them to complete assignments. Much of the collection was over ten years old, dusty, mouldy and irrelevant for the current curriculum needs. It became clear changes needed to be made for the library to function properly in the school. It was more like a museum containing every resource donated or collected over the years. Little had been weeded since the start of the school!

After initial assessment, we decided we actually had a very 'sick' library. Environmentally we were in a terrible state! The presence of the mould, the dust and the chemicals were all around us and we had been living with this for at least 30 years! We were living in an environment with very poor air quality! When we first started, we couldn't walk down an aisle of shelves without experiencing upper respiratory irritation and breathing difficulties. Mould is a type of fungi that lives on plant and animal matter... and on books! Mould grows best in damp and poorly ventilated areas and reproduces by making spores. Airborne mould spores are commonly found in both indoor and outdoor environments. Mould is not always easy to recognise. It often looks like 'fuzz' or appears to be a stain, smudge or discoloration. The most common moulds are black, green or white. We had them all! Black mould is considered highly toxic mould and poses terrible health risks. Mould spores can be inhaled and are very harmful to the human body. By not removing mould from your books you and those who use your library could suffer respiratory problems, infections, and skin and eye irritation.

We could remove the mould which was creeping through the collection like a 'book cancer' and get the dust under control but it became obvious we needed to freshen and clean the air and improve the quality

of the environment for everybody using the library. According to Safework SA (2019), living and working in places rife with air contaminants and lacking decent ventilation can cause 'sick building syndrome' which not only leads to respiratory problems but also lethargy, tiredness and poor concentration. Over the years we had turned away from natural ventilation such as opening windows and installed air conditioners. Whilst this is wonderful in regulating the temperature of the library we were actually living and working in an artificially controlled environment and were trapping the pollutants in the air. It became very clear we needed to get rid of the dust and the mould and then take steps to improve the ventilation and air quality of the library!

Listen to your staff and students
Talk to your users, survey them, ask for their recommendations and follow their advice. This shows you appreciate their ideas and highly value their input. Students need to feel they have a voice. In our initial survey, we asked all staff and students one question: How can we make the library a better place for you? Their ideas confirmed the changes we needed to make. They wanted comfortable chairs, cushions, rugs and lounge areas, good books to read, magazines, games and puzzles. They wanted quiet study areas and places where they could collaborate. They wanted access to resources that would help them in their learning. They wanted to be taught how to study and research, so they could find the information they needed. They had great ideas for displays. Staff wanted a professional collection and to be supported in their teaching and parents were keen to have a section that supported healthy family life and positive parenting. The Principal had excellent ideas on how we could successfully make minor adjustments to the building, the Executive guided us wisely with suggestions for print and online resources and the students were keen to recommend books they really wanted to read.

2. Have a Very Clear Vision of Where Your Library Needs to Go and Why
Be well informed about the importance and changing role of school libraries
Read widely, constantly seeking the current research from articles and books. Talk to other Teacher Librarians who are implementing change and learn from them. Be an active member of your local, state, national and international Teacher Librarian Associations. Network with other library professionals in your nation and across the globe.

Your vision must support the Strategic Plan of your school
As a library team, look at your school's Strategic Plan carefully then from it form your own Vision and Strategic Plan for the library. Know what is important and document it in your Policy. Document procedures as you develop them. This should form a longer procedures document that can be modified as needed. The IFLA School Library Guidelines 2nd edition (2015) states that, 'A school library should be managed within a clearly structured policy framework that recognises the library as a core resource and centre for reading and inquiry. A school library policy should be devised bearing in mind the overarching policies and needs of the school and should reflect the ethos, mission, aims and objectives as well as the reality of the school.'

Everything we do in our libraries should be research and evidence based
According to Ross Todd (2009), in his holistic framework of Evidence-based Practice for School Libraries, we need to do this in three ways.
Evidence FOR Practice:
Existing formal research that provides the essential building blocks for professional practice including;
        i. Research in reading and the importance of books
        ii. Research in how school libraries make a difference to student achievement

iii. Research in preparing students for lifelong learning

Evidence IN Practice:

Data generated locally meshed with research-based evidence to provide a dynamic decision-making environment. This includes:

    i. Observation of engagement in learning of all students using the library both in programmed classes and small collaborative groups, during study periods and during breaks.

    ii. Staff use of the library, engagement with their own professional learning and the teaching and learning of their students

    iii. Parent engagement with the library resources and activities

Evidence OF Practice:

User-reported evidence that shows the learner has changed as a result of inputs, interventions, activities and processes. This includes:

    i. Observation of changed learning culture in the school – students, staff and parentsii. Data analysis on borrowing and usage statistics

    iii. Infographics from our system records

    iv. Student, staff and parent feedback – written and oral

3. Build Your Team

Plan together

'It is impossible to lead a team without establishing a shared vision of common beliefs and understandings' (Sharratt, 2019. p.15). This vision must be articulated, discussed and revisited at every opportunity. Tracey Ezard (2017) reminds us, that to strengthen people's engagement and sense of purpose we need to give them a voice. 'When we give people a voice in the direction and desired future, commitment and engagement grow' (Ezard, 2017).

Communicate your vision

Spend a lot of time initially focusing on the team, celebrating their strengths, discussing your vision, working on it together. Spend time together dreaming, collaborating, reaffirming and planning. 'Using meeting times for professional learning builds library staff and leader collective capacity and develops a common language across all learning areas' (Sharratt, 2019 p.19). Lift your presence and profile within the school – share your vision in assemblies, in communication with parents, when sharing ideas in staff meetings. Move forward and make decisions together. Everyone's thoughts are important. Celebrate the good, review and then plan again.

Support and care for your team

Whenever we meet we share the good things that are happening around us. As the opportunity arises ask your team members: What do you love about your job? What things do you really enjoy doing? What would you like to do that you have never had the opportunity to do before? What is your dream for the library? Identify their strengths, affirm them and work with them. Monitor their efforts and energy levels. Change is exhausting. According to Dennis Perkins (2012), the best leaders forge strong team bonds. They are sensitive to the emotions of their team members and consciously intervene when the morale drops. Regular team bonding and team building experiences are essential; celebrate the changes, enjoy meals together. Look for funny things, laugh together and laugh often. According to Vanessa King (2016), positive emotions such as humour have power and help us face stressful and difficult circumstances. Laughing at the situation helps us lift our gloom and feelings of despair, reduces stress and increases resilience. Acknowledge staff achievements and what they do well. It takes very little to thank

people. Benefits are increased self-worth, value as a person, acknowledgement of and highlighting individual differences of team members.

4. Set About Implementing Change

Build relationships and trust

We realised we needed to change the mindset of our staff and students toward the library. To do this successfully we needed to build relationships and trust so that learning could occur in a place where it was safe, a positive place where students could make mistakes and learn from others. Trust and collaboration are also essential for real innovation to flourish (Ezard, 2017). We needed to change the negative environment into a positive one and we needed to do it quickly. According to John Hattie & Klaus Zierer (2018), we should keep the following aspects in mind whenever we interact with our staff and students: our general demeanor, our posture, our gestures and facial expressions, our tone of voice, our smile and our eye contact. A recent study has shown that 'greeting your students at the door helps set a positive tone for the rest of the day, promoting their sense of belonging, boosting their academic engagement, and reducing disruptive behavior' (Cook, C.R., Fiat, A. & Larson, M., 2018).

Put plans into action!

We thoroughly researched the latest thought on library design and ensured we were well informed. We looked at our meagre budget and decided to be both thrifty and creative. It became a challenge to see how much we could change for the least expense. We decided that all furniture needed to be the highest quality affordable and as simple and versatile as possible. We culled heavily and separated the Primary and Secondary collections for ease of use. We sank the collection against the walls by retaining the same shelving but replacing all T posts with L posts, removed the desktop computers and benches no longer required and created a huge open plan, flexible learning space. We discarded the old study carrels and replaced them with modern high benches built by our maintenance team. We purchased a new 'campfire' seating arrangement for our Secondary students with high back stools. With careful thought, imagination and much team collaboration we moved existing furniture to create innovative learning areas that promoted open communication, catered for personalised teaching and learning styles and encouraged collaboration between students.

A study by NASA (1989), found that indoor plants detoxify the environment and can significantly reduce the cancer-causing compounds like formaldehyde and benzene, trichloroethylene, xylene, and ammonia in the air. Some plants actively improve air quality by 80 per cent overnight. NASA published a list of the top 50 most effective indoor plants. As well as cleaning the air, research shows that plants actually make people feel better. Having plants around helps people relax and keeps them more alert and productive (Grinde, B. & Patil, G.G., 2009). We purchased plants to improve the air in the library and created an indoor reading garden for our students to use. We should all have indoor living plants in our libraries!

White pots, white book tubs, white display cubes and white shelf ends were purchased to 'lift' and 'lighten' and 'freshen' the existing colours. Learning engagement and connectedness to the real world became a top priority. The library has gradually become the 'living room' of the College for our students.

Take every opportunity to display student work

Display of student work increases their sense of ownership of a given space, pride in achievement, enhances their learning and also assists in creating a sense of community. Recently, we welcomed the opportunity to display all the large posters from individual Year 10 Science Projects. They looked amazing and were thoroughly enjoyed by staff, students and parents. According to Lyn Sharratt (2019),

visible learning is the third teacher and we had members of our community 'walking the walls' looking at the projects and attempting to discover and then follow the students' thinking. The walls of the library became interactive learning spaces! For the first time our library space became a strategic tool in promoting creativity, originality, perseverance, problem solving and critical thinking.

Form good relationships with influential people
Identify the influential people in your school and spend time updating them on what you are doing and why. Budget carefully for the future. Decide what you really need. Look for clever ways of resourcing the library using freebies, competitions, trials, state and national libraries and through associations such as IASL. Bargain and negotiate with suppliers. Don't just accept the first price. Justify every purchase against your vision and strategic plan.

Have a strength-based approach
'Have a strength-based approach to all you do and a growth mindset. Do what you are good at and do it well.' (Dweck, 2012) Do it with GRIT! (Duckworth, 2017). Angela Duckworth (2017) shows how many people achieve remarkable things not just by relying on innate natural talent, but by practising grit. Her 'Grit Formula' offers help for anyone wanting to become more gritty. The six key factors are: hope, effort, precision, passion, ritual and prioritisation.

If you don't know how to do something, then find out or enlist someone who can help you or do it for you. We are all lifelong learners. Look for the strengths in your team and in your library users. Martin Seligman (2017), suggests that to maximise work satisfaction we need to use our signature strengths in our jobs, every day. When everyone is doing what they are good at and doing it well, then amazing things can be accomplished! As educators our core business is teaching and learning. 'A growth mindset has a key role to play in helping *us* fulfil our mission and helping *them* fulfil their potential.' (Dwerk, 2012 p.221)

Document the journey
Keep a journal in words and photos. Save inspiring comments by the students, staff and parents. Record comments about the things for which you are grateful. Keep records of communication and promotion of the library with the wider community. Provide regular verbal and written reports to the Principal and members of the Executive. Share what you are doing with people of significance and with those you trust.

5. Ensure Access to Relevant, High Quality Resources.
The right access to the right resources is the beating heart of your library
A dynamic school library collection informs, educates, entertains and enriches students at all levels. It supports the current curriculum and enables the students to access, select and use appropriately, the information that is meaningful to them. An effective school library builds capacity for student learning when resources are accessible 24/7 both onsite and remotely; a wide range of high quality resources are available that reflect the diversity of the curriculum, the interests of the students and the needs of the local school community; each resource is reviewed and assessed on a regular basis by qualified Teacher Librarians to determine its relevancy and then culled if necessary; new resources are added throughout the year to keep the collection dynamic; resources and services support and encourage the professional learning and teaching needs of staff; resources support positive parenting, individual wellbeing and healthy family life.

Level the print, online and human libraries

Only keep what is linked to the curriculum today or is valuable for recreational reading of your users. We weeded our entire print collection six times before we were happy with the resources. Localise your collection and highlight subject headings on signage that are appropriate for you. Think very carefully about your collection development. Only buy relevant, good quality resources. Hunt for discounts and compare costs carefully. We access a wide range of educational databases for free through our state and national libraries. Teach the students how to use your library system so they can locate and use the resources they need both in print and online. Teach them how to respect, value and gain knowledge and insight from living books. Everyone has a story and we can learn so much from listening to people's stories. It's a wonderful way to learn, be inspired, build empathy with others and connect with members of your community.

Prepare students for the whole of life
Explicit teaching of information skills and critical thinking is essential. There needs to be a scope and sequence for information, study and research skills implemented for K-12. Students don't just learn these skills by osmosis! We need to prepare them for life after school and for the rest of their lives.

Have a global perspective
Our libraries need to be set in the local, state, national and international scene. Introducing local authors to students, building partnerships with local, state and national libraries, attending conferences at home and abroad and sharing what you learn with staff and students will inspire them, broaden their perspective and provide a worldview. Interacting with schools and collaborating with students across the globe through projects such as the IASL GiggleIT Project and International School Library Month captivate and enthuse student's imagination, encourage the exchange and sharing of information and make learning enjoyable.

6. Look After Your Wellbeing
Build a support network of positive people
When you are making significant changes, you need to surround yourself with the people who understand what you are doing, why you are doing it and who are interested in the effect. They will support you and encourage you. They are positive, life giving people. Find some 'Knowledgeable Others' (Sharratt, 2019 p.16) from whom you can learn professionally. Be inspired and energised by them. 'Professional collegiate relationships are greatly enhanced when we believe we can learn from each other' (Ezard, 2015). Everyone can develop skills, thinking, a growth mindset and positive attitudes. Listen to the people who matter, not the ones that drag you down.

Be kind to yourself
Know when you need to stop and have a break to be kind to yourself. Take time to refresh. Practice self-compassion. According to Kristen Neff (2011), self-compassion fosters positive mind-states such as happiness and optimism. It allows us to flourish, appreciate the beauty and richness of life, gives us a sense of calm, even when times are tough. Take a pleasure walk and appreciate the good things. Keep a gratitude journal. Reflect on your journey of transforming the library and be thankful for the opportunity to make positive changes that impact others for good. What a legacy you are leaving for the students both now and in the future!

Be adaptable
Lyn Sharratt (2019), identifies the new sixth dimension of strong Leadership as Adapt-Ability. Strong leaders 'know how to manage change, when to re-charge, reenergise and renew to experience the

elegance of success. They fail fast, know where to go for help, and are not too proud to ask. They are passionate people who possess a sense of urgency for the vision and are part of the solution by creating space to solve problems collaboratively.' (Sharratt, 2019 p.306) We need to focus on the good in our lives and turn the kickbacks into opportunities to grow. Bounce back and find ways to turn the negatives into positives. There's more than one way to achieve success. Remain focussed on the big picture and jump over the hurdles along the way.

Conclusion
The Impact of a Transformed Library on the Learning Culture of a School
Our College Library is now a beautifully appointed learning space in the centre of the College with a dynamic collection of resources reflecting the interests of our students and the diversity of the curriculum today. It is a place our students love to come to, where they are fully engaged in learning. Our senior students are now modelling how to use the library appropriately. It is now a safe haven, a place that welcomes and assists all library users and promotes wellbeing. It is a clean, healthy environment, free of dust and mould and irritants that zap student's energy and concentration. It is a place that buzzes with energy as students start to use books and technology to inquire, explore, wonder and discover. There are puppets, games, puzzles and fun things to do. Our students are becoming familiar with how to use the library and locate and select the resources and information they need. Newly created flexible learning spaces throughout our library provide for whole class, small group, collaborative and individual learning needs. Our reading garden encourages quiet reflection and is a welcoming, relaxing space for our students to curl up and read a good book. Primary students love the new book buddies! Indoor plants throughout the library continually improve the air quality. Primary classes now have a regular library lesson for literature appreciation, borrowing, information skills and inquiry-based learning. Secondary English staff now bring their wide reading classes for regular lessons to borrow and read. Secondary teachers are booking their classes into the library for explicit teaching of research and study skills, the use of appropriate resources and correct use of citation for assessment tasks. We now have a dynamic print, digital and human library. Literature is promoted through staff and student recommendations, digital signage and exciting author visits. Through access to relevant resources in a wide range of formats, as well as visible learning through our library themes, projects and student displays, we are now not only connecting with our community but with others across the globe.

The impact of a transformed school library can be far reaching on the culture of teaching and learning in a school. When the right environment is created in the library and it becomes a space, students love to visit and spend time in, a positive culture is created, and students become motivated to learn. As a result, students will be enthusiastic, and you will be developing readers who are not only motivated to read books but love to be curious, inquire, investigate, discover and learn. You will be engaging even the most reluctant student. The atmosphere, the physical layout, placement of furniture and bookshelves, use of technology, not only needs to be conducive to learning but inspiring. Intriguing displays captivate student's imagination and exciting programs motivate students. A warm, calm, welcoming feel will then permeate through the library and visible learning will to be on display everywhere! Libraries with thriving learning environments are great places to hang out!

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