

Breaking Down Barriers

An Enabling Adult: The Teacher Librarian And The Reading Environment

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This report is an analysis of the role of the teacher librarian, as an enabling adult, in creating a reading environment within a secondary school library. It will briefly discuss the major factors that impact upon this role. The identified factors are:

- *Attitude*
- *Relationships*
- *Library Organisation*
- *Access*
- *Ambience*
- *Professional debate*

The study

The concept of the reading environment, as it is created in a secondary school library by the teacher librarian, is fundamental to this study. This is an elusive idea though; 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 essence a reading environment within a school library is the atmosphere that is created that encourages young people to read. Aidan Chambers discusses the term in his book *The Reading Environment*:

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 a secondary school library a reading environment is this and much more. An analysis of factors that impinge upon, or contribute to, the creation of an effective reading environment form the major focus of this research.

The crucial factors are:

- The attitudes of the teacher librarian
 - towards reading and their students as readers
 - to reading promotion as part of the library program
- The relationships between the teacher librarian and all members of the school community, teachers and students
- Library organization
 - access
 - advisory role
 - the knowledge base

- policy
- collection management
- library reading programs
- ambience
- library layout
- display
- External constraints
 - budget allocations
 - support from school administration
 - staffing
 - the architecture of the library
 - the pressures of the curriculum
- Professional debate

To enable analysis of these factors data was collected from six schools of varied types, though all suburban, predominantly through interviews. The primary source of data was the teacher librarian in each school.

As space is an issue in this report I have chosen to discuss only some of the major factors in relation to the relevant literature using small samples of the collected data as illustration.

The Secondary School Library Reading Environment

It is the interaction between all 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.

Attitudes

“Children learn about literature from what the adults around them do about it” (Zahnleiter, 1985, p. 187).

How teacher-librarians see themselves, 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 “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 attitude.

How teacher librarians perceive their own role as a teacher librarian. How teacher librarian perceive their function within the wider school community, and their attitude towards the different roles that the library may fulfill in relation to reading promotion. How they see their students as readers. It is these attitudes that will contribute to the success of the library and perhaps determine the type of library service. The research data shows various attitudes from welcoming and interested to preoccupied and disinclined.

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.

School One – Teacher Librarian

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.

School Six – Teacher Librarian

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.

School Six – Teacher Librarian

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

School Two - Library Technician

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.

School Two – Vice Principal

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

School Three – Teacher Librarian

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.

School Three – Teacher Librarian

Attitudes directly impact on the reading environment itself, as the views of the teacher-librarian greatly influence what they ultimately create. 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. In an article by Fein (1996) the following was said of the library and the librarian:

... 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. Such views can impact upon the way in which teacher librarians view themselves, and perhaps, affect attitudes.

A 'good' teacher librarian is the antithesis of many of these descriptive phrases. Dynamic, confident, interested and personable, these attitudinal traits are important in any field of work where quality interpersonal relationships are necessary. Hartzell (1999), discussing how teacher librarians must strive to influence others, looks at the need for confidence in ourselves. Haycock reports from research that "Teacher librarians who are less cautious and more extroverted tend to be more successful" (Haycock, 1989, p. 9). Altmann refers to this quality as "personal enthusiasm" (1994, p 5).

Attitudes inform practice and support endeavours in all areas of any workplace's operations. DeGroff in a national American survey found that: "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" (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" (1988, p. 25)

The attitude of the teacher librarian is of prime importance to this study and a crucial factor in the framework for analysis (see diagram at the end of paper).

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 are formed with teaching staff, library staff, and administration. Most important, also, is the relationship formed with students.

Todd (2000) 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" (p.106)

Relationships with 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 rewarding, others destructive. There was a marked problem in many of the schools with a lack of cooperation between library and English in regard to reading promotion. Some representative pieces:

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.
School Six – Teacher Librarian

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.
School One – Teacher

...it (the library) can do its best to promote reading but if the English department isn't there then it's a lesser program, and it works the other way, I'm not saying there wouldn't be something but without the other but it would be a lesser program.
School Six – Teacher

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.
School Two – Teacher Librarian

Good relationships were based on mutual respect and a willingness to work together. Destructive examples, of which there were more, were marked by all parties attempting to claim reading promotion was the other parties responsibility.

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" (1996, p. 491).

In an ideal environment this picture of co-operation and sharing would be evident. 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. (1980, p. 163)

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

Relationships with 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 study scales 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.

These statements illustrate either end of the spectrum:

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.

School One - Student

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.

School Six - Student

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).

Engaging students, bringing them into Chambers' 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 (see, e.g., Carter, 1987, p. 187; Holland, 1994, p. 81; Leonhardt, 1998, p. 4). There is a role for the teacher librarian to play here. Often, it is the teacher librarian 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.

Relationships with Administration

The relationship between the teacher librarian and administration is important. 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 (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, 1992), they often have low expectations of Principal support (Lewis, 1991, Campbell 1991) 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 before an effective working relationship can be achieved.

Library Organisation

Access

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

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.

School Three – Teacher Librarian

In a paper entitled 'Building student learning through school libraries' at the American White House Conference on School Libraries in June 2002, 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"(2002, p. 2).

Novljan argues that free access to books is 'a basic requirement for reading' (1993, p. 104). Certainly Chambers' (1991) reading circle and the work of others in this area (Altmann, 1994) emphasize the importance of books that are available and accessible to students. This brings into discussion the teacher librarian's selection guidelines and process - what books does he or she 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.

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 of what a library should be, that ultimately determines what types of access students will have to what they hope to find.

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).

All research respondents recognised the importance of their role as advisor yet not all were willing to fully wear this mantle. Those who saw it as part of their role relished the role to the benefit of their students.

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.

School One - Teacher

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.

School Four – Teacher Librarian

Matching the kid with the book. I would see that as the best promotional thing that you can do.

School Five – Teacher Librarian

The 2000 study initiated by the ACYL into the reading habits of Australian teenagers indicated the importance of the role of the teacher librarian in enabling this 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 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 an important part of the access equation for secondary school age students.

The knowledge base of the teacher librarian

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

An interested, knowledgeable teacher librarian who wants to communicate with her students can make a difference. Those observing notice, and this expertise is appreciated by all concerned as these remarks illustrate.

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.

School One - Library Assistant

She (the teacher librarian) knows more about the books than anyone else. I think the boys look up to her to give them advice.

School One – Library Assistant

Unfortunately only a few of the respondents actually took the time to maintain their knowledge to enable them to work effectively with students. Those who neglected this role also did not see reading promotion as their role and failed to appreciate their students as readers.

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 over night. It requires constant reading, professional development and continuing efforts to remain aware of current literature and reviews. 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. (1991, p. 15)

Policy

Um, 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.

School Three - Teacher

The teacher librarian establishes many of the policies that effect 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 but often, 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 of a particular teacher librarian. The importance they placed on reading promotion, the collection made available, when and how the students are allowed access enable us to see their attitudes played out through their policies.

Collection management

“First and foremost teachers who want students to be responsive readers provide access to books”
(Hickman, 1995, p. 4).

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.

School Three - Student

.. 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.

School Five - Teacher

Many factors contribute to how a library is organised. The organisation of the library's collections is a primary role for any library. Decisions made by the teacher librarian directly affect the size, scope and forms to be found in library collections. The collection of books and other reading materials is one of the basic, essential factors in the creation of a reading environment. Carter (1987, p.18) has said: “Adolescents, like the rest of us, read what is available.”

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” (2002).

Library Reading Programs

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

Buckingham (2002, p. 13), 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’ in encouraging reading.

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 and hear and talk about books and reading for pleasure. The research data showed teacher librarians and English teachers often at odds over who was to take responsibility for such classes. The extent of the teacher librarians involvement related most strongly to their attitude toward their role in reading promotion and the strength of their relationships with English staff.

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 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.

School Two - Teacher

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...

School Two - Library Technician

Classes come regularly but we don't do anything.

School Three – Teacher Librarian

A structured reading program may 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 their only exposure to 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 of prime importance to Chambers (1993), that is book talk. Whilst 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. As Chambers (1991) describes it, 'Reading is a social activity.' We need to share 'book gossip' (p. 83). Book talk 'deepens us as readers' (p. 84).

Whilst 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. Recent research has argued that perhaps it is the very nature of structured wider reading programs that is counter productive. The ACYL initiated research (ACYL, 2001) 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). More free interaction, talk and exposure to materials they like were preferred by students. All these are areas in which the library could very well play a constructive role as part of an effective reading environment.

Ambience

"Reading is not a duty, and has consequently no business to be made disagreeable (Augustine Birrell. *The Office of Literature*, 1887).

Todd Strasser [1988, p. 59], 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. 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, as well as the manner of the library staff. All combine to create a physical space that is home to the reading environment that the teacher librarian is trying to create. 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" (1996, p. 22)

The research respondents freely recognised the importance of ambience and were very aware of the various factors creating change.

It's not really that kind of library, but the computers have seemed to take over, it used to be a reading place.

School Three - Student

'Provide the ambience and they will do it' I don't think it would work here. I think. I haven't tried.

School Three – Teacher Librarian

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.

School Six - Teacher

....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.

School One – Vice Principal

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', a place they feel they have some ownership of (1992, p. 225; 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.

Layout

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

Space and the use of that space is always an issue, and an integral part of what is a welcoming reading environment.

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.

School One – Teacher Librarian

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

School Two - Teacher

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.

School Three – Teacher Librarian

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 - reveal what facets of library layout 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 (1991, p. 30). 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.

Doll reports that librarians should be aware of a number of factors concerning the need for private space (1992, p. 226). 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.

Unfortunately, much of how libraries use layout, furniture, lighting and colour is perhaps reactive, that is, spaces evolve in line with the needs of the school community and the views and 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 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.

Display

Another way to create a stimulating library environment is to use display. Whilst it is recognised in the research as of importance it often appears to be the first things left when time constraints bite.

I was told by previous staff that doing display was wasting my time.

School One – Teacher Librarian

Its good to see your stuff on display.

School Three - Student

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.

School Three – Teacher Librarian

Often displays initiated by student or classroom teacher can not only brighten the space but assist in a sense of ownership of the library by those whose work or ideas are featured. Chambers devotes a chapter to displays in his book *The Reading Environment*. For him display “deeply influence(s) the mental set of people who see them” (1991, p. 23). He 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.

External Factors

“Schools are bureaucracies – and no one in a bureaucracy can be successful alone” (Hartzell, 1999).

All of the decisions and attitudes of the teacher librarian may be subject to the impact of external factors. All of these factors may often be decided 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, and on how proactive they are in establishing a forum for their own views. The identified external factors are:

- budget
- staffing
- support from School Administration
- curriculum needs and demands
- architectural limitations

Due to space limitations these will not be discussed in this paper.

Professional Debate

There is no properly functioning individual whose mode of existence is not moderated or mediated (if not determined) by the social (Misson, 2000, p. 5).

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

School Two – Teacher Librarian

Well, um, I think we are torn between the two areas of information literacy and literacy or literature and its difficult to do as much as you would like in both areas at the same time.

School Four – Teacher Librarian

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.

Welch and Braybrook, reporting on their Victorian wide study on the state of school libraries during 2001, suggest a “paradigm shift (in the profession of teacher librarianship) from collection focused practice to outcomes focus and a concentration on information literacy practice” (2002, p. 7). The paradigm shift or change in pattern marks a profession in a state of flux.

Recent articles in Access, the journal of the Australian School Library Association titled: ‘Teacher librarians: What are we? What should we be?’ and ‘A profession or a specialization?’ suggest that the profession suffers through lack of identity. Once the quandary was - Teacher, Librarian, or somehow both? In relation to this research the debate appears to be - What type of teacher librarian do we want to be? Information/Research specialists or wider reading/ Literature specialists? Are we to be both? Can we be both? Or are we moving into an age of specialization?

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. That is, 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.

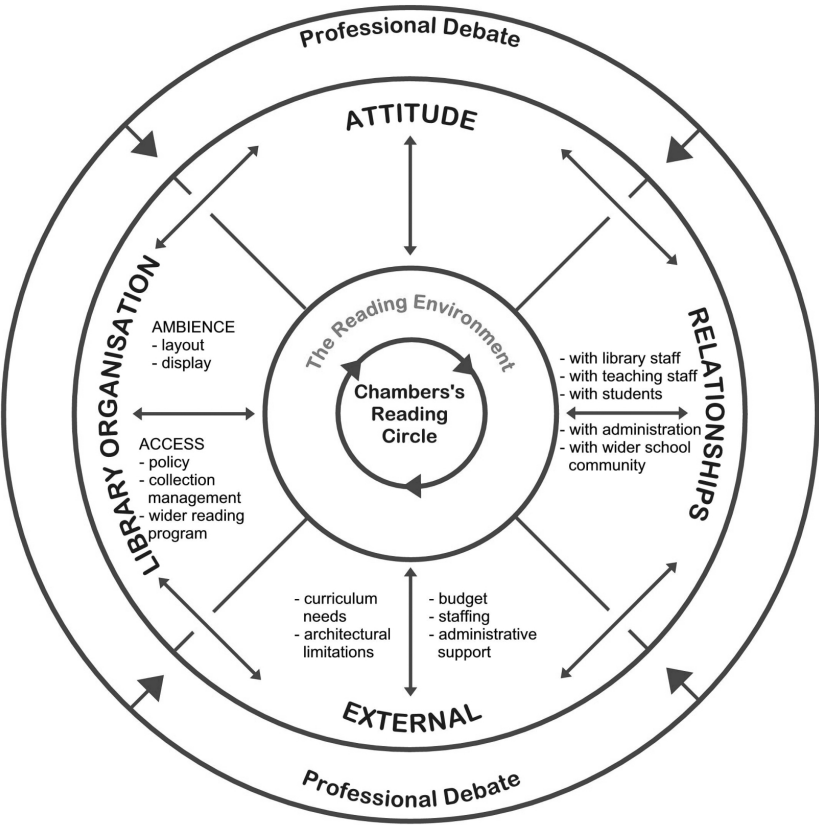
Young (2002) argues that reading for pleasure now takes in all formats and if we, and our students, are going to read for pleasure in the future we need to recognise this. Perhaps, some of what we struggle with is a redefinition of terms and roles as we integrate new and constantly changing technologies into our already crowded libraries.

The varied attitudes presented throughout this paper are all part of what is at present a very fluid professional debate. A debate that has crucial ramifications for the role and profession of teacher librarians, now and into the future.

The Reading Circle And The Reading Environment

The following diagram attempts to diagrammatically illustrate how all of the above mentioned factors impact upon, and interact with, the reading environment. In this reassessment of Chambers’ ideas, his reading circle is placed within the context of a wider reading environment. This reading environment is constructed by, and impacted upon, by all of the factors identified. This diagram is an attempt to illustrate and better understand this interaction.

Diagram 1: Framework for Analysis



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