KBANZSL:
The Knowledge Bank of Australia and New Zealand School Libraries

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Abstract: *KBANZSL, the Knowledge Bank of Australia and New Zealand School Libraries, is an open access knowledge bank collating key documents, collections and other resources for and about Australian and New Zealand school libraries and teacher librarianship. The resource was created in response to recommendations from the Australian Parliament over a decade ago but still highly relevant in today's educational climate. KBANZSL holds strong potential in supporting advocacy, professional development, and research for school libraries and teacher librarianship in the Oceania region and beyond. This paper shares ways KBANZSL can be used for research and advocacy projects.*

Introduction

In 2011, the Australian Parliament conducted a Senate Enquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in response to calls from the field to examine how changing educational, technological and policy environments were affecting the operation of school libraries. The future of school libraries and the staffing by formally qualified teacher librarians was a major concern of this enquiry. The resultant report of the enquiry, *School Libraries and Teacher Librarians in 21st Century Australia* (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment, 2011) contained broad recommendations for the Commonwealth Government to consider. Some of these recommendations identified:

- A need for greater understanding of the relationship between school libraries and educational equity;

- Links between school libraries, qualified staff and improved educational outcomes for students;

- The role of skilled and suitably qualified teacher librarians in delivering key technological skills; and,

- The increasing importance of critical and informed digital literacy amongst students of all ages.

Statement of the Research Problem

While some states have undertaken the recommendations like the *School Libraries in South Australia: 2019 Census* (Dix et al., 2020), none of the Committee's 11 recommendations have been fully actioned at a national level. This paper reports on Stages One and Two of a project addressing the recommendation to provide a single location for critical resources about Australian and New Zealand teacher librarians and school libraries in order to build knowledge and research capacity in teacher librarianship in the Oceania region. This project is called the *Knowledge Bank of Australian and New Zealand School Libraries* (KBANZSL) (https://librariesresearchgroup.csu.domains/current-projects/knowledge-bank-of-australian-and-new-zealand-school-libraries/).

The purpose of KBANZSL is to offer an open resource to support researchers, practitioners and those advocating for school libraries in Australia and New Zealand. The open access knowledge bank brings together key documents, collections, and other resources for and

about Australian and New Zealand school libraries and teacher librarianship for practitioners, administrators, researchers, and others to advance knowledge and encourage further research this area. KBANZSL provides a collated memory of Australian and New Zealand school libraries and teacher librarianship and tells the story of school libraries and teacher-librarianship in Australia and New Zealand from 1900. Further, KBANZSL holds strong potential in supporting advocacy, professional development, and learning for school libraries and teacher librarianship in the two largest countries in the Oceania region. Given the current climate of school libraries and education in these areas, such a resource is critical.

Literature Review

Since the Senate Enquiry in 2011, the state of school libraries in Australia has become more dire with teacher shortages (Hudson, 2022) and yet the role of the teacher librarian is even more key given the Covid-19 pandemic and importance of online learning and resourcing. Of the eight state and territories in Australia, only one state department of education (New South Wales) mandates a qualified teacher librarian; otherwise, it is within the remit of the principal and administration to decide how to staff the school library. While many states like Victoria and Queensland still maintain a strong teacher librarian presence in their schools, teacher librarians in other states like Western Australia are being forced into the classroom given their dual qualifications (Merga & Mason, 2019).

In order to address the importance of school libraries and teacher librarians, groups have formed like *Students Need School Libraries* (https://studentsneedschoollibraries.org.au/) created by the strong teacher librarian community in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and the *School Libraries Transform Campaign* (https://www.schoollibrariestransform.org.nz/) developed by the School Library Association of New Zealand Aotearoa. These groups are gaining traction and instigating changes such as the new investment of the ACT Government to financially support teachers to become trained teacher librarians (Bar & Berry, 2021).

Methodology

KBANZSL was modelled after the *VET Knowledge Bank* (https://www.voced.edu.au/vet-knowledge-bank) created by the National Centre for Vocational Education and Research (NCVER) in Australia. The KBANZSL team met with the NCVER team and developed the following parameters to curate resources for KBANZSL:

- Australian and New Zealand scholarly and professional literature, data sets, books, reports, standards, guidelines, policy statements, white papers, audio-visual materials including film, video and photographs, and other resources related to government and non-government school libraries and teacher librarianship from 1900;
- International guidelines and policies which have influenced or had direct impact on, Australian and New Zealand school libraries and teacher librarianship for example from organisations such as UNESCO, IFLA, and IASL;
- Literature guides, thesauri and indexes relevant to Australian and New Zealand school libraries and teacher librarianship; and
- Organisations including professional associations, educational institutions and courses and peak bodies related to Australian and New Zealand school libraries and teacher librarianship.

While this work is based on the 2011 Australian Senate Enquiry, the KBANZSL research team also included New Zealand in the knowledge bank given its complementary work in school libraries and geographic proximity to Australia.

A research assistant experienced in Australian school libraries and academia collected the resources for the knowledge bank from a diverse range of websites, like the National Library of New Zealand, using a variety of strategies and search engines, including the National Library of Australia's Trove (https://trove.nla.gov.au/). KBANZSL is organised by geographic location including the countries of New Zealand and Australia, the eight states and territories of Australia, and international resources. The team also thought it was important to include a section with information on the Associations and Peak Bodies that work with school libraries and teacher librarians in the area, like the School Library Association of New Zealand Aotearoa/Te Puna Whare Mātauranga a Kura and the Australian Library and Information Association (KBANZSL, 2022, p. 6-7). Themes emerged from the searches and collection of resources for KBANZSL so the team used these six thematic topic nodes as subject headings for each resource. Some resources fall under more than one node; the nodes are described with resource examples and links in Table 1.

Table 1. Thematic Topic Nodes for KBANZSL

Node Title	Node Description	Resource Example with Year and Link
Historical perspectives	Resources that contextualise, highlight, and explore events and individuals who have shaped and influenced teacher librarianship as a profession and school libraries in general throughout Oceania	*An innovation in partnership: A report on the evaluation of the Graduate Diploma in Teacher-Librarianship course offered in Darwin, 1978* (http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/216894614)
Advocacy and Funding	Resources to help support activities related to advocacy including marketing, sustainability, and funding for Australia and New Zealand school libraries	*School libraries, teacher-librarians, and their contribution to student literacy development in Gold Coast schools: A research report* from 2013 (https://eprints.qut.edu.au/60260/)
Professional Practice	Resources associated with the practice of teacher librarians, including the school library curriculum, design and pedagogy	*Job skills for school assistants working in the library* from 1999 (http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/222489526)
Governance	Official governance and regulatory documents from all local, state, national and educational jurisdictions related to school libraries and teacher librarians in Australia and New Zealand	*Review of school community libraries: Future models of service delivery: Final report* from 2012 (https://onecard.network/custom/web/PLS/School_Community_Libraries_Review_2012.pdf)
Landmark documents	Critical documents related to school libraries and teacher librarianship in Australia and New Zealand which are considered by history and authoritative commentary to have influenced the development and/or led to significant change in the field	*Libraries in secondary schools: A report on the libraries of secondary schools in Victoria*, from 1945 (https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1007&context=information_management)
Research	Research-related resources focused on the context, history, development, education and practice for school libraries and teacher librarianship	*An analysis of the work performed by teacher-librarians in government primary and secondary schools in Canberra* from 1981 (http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/220176863)

Findings and Discussion

Resources within KBANZSL can be used for diverse purposes by a variety of audiences including librarians, teacher librarians, researchers, professional organisations and bodies, educational administrators, and policy makers globally. The following discussion goes into detail about these uses including examples from each thematic node in KBANZSL.

Using the historical perspectives of resources in the knowledge bank offers researchers outside of Oceania an international perspective and opportunity to do historical comparisons with their own regions. For example, the Fenwick papers by Sarah Innis Fenwick include the inaugural address of the School Library Association of New South Wales (SLANSW) delivered in July 1964 at Sydney Grammar School entitled "New trends in education and their implications for the school library." This is an important resource documenting the history of SLANSW as an organisation and school libraries in the state of NSW in general.

The resources will also be useful in promoting advocacy and funding projects for school library communities at a global level. For example, *Policy Statement- School Library Bill of Rights* from the Australian School Library Association (2018) lists important responsibilities of the school library like "To provide materials on opposing sides of controversial issues so that young citizens may develop under guidance the practice of critical reading and thinking", and "To provide materials representative of the many religious, ethnic and cultural groups and their contributions to our society and heritage" (p. 1). Practitioners can use this resource as rationale for their collections in facing challenges on materials.

As the school librarian role is not always held by a teacher, resources categorised under the professional practice node will support librarians and teacher librarians in diverse areas of the position like teaching information literacy. *Synergy,* the journal of the School Library Association of Victoria published twice annually, is a good example of a resource in the bank that bridges practice and research. Many articles in the journal are peer-reviewed research studies while others are examples of best practices in the school library written by practicing teacher librarians. Further, editorials and columns are produced by key figures in the field of school libraries within the state of Victoria, Australia, and beyond so an international audience will find value in this open access journal.

Governance documents from the various states and territories within Australia and New Zealand can give examples of different ways to run a school library. For example, in the state of South Australia, shared use libraries combining school and public libraries are quite common. The *Review of school community libraries: Future models of service delivery: Final report* (2012) published by the Government of South Australia and the State Library Public

Library Services details exemplary practices for regional towns that are unable to support a school library and a public library separately, so they combine forces. This collaborative model could help give ideas to similar small, rural communities outside of the Oceania region.

Another example is one of the oldest resources in the bank, the first book published in Australia about school libraries: *Libraries and Education* written by E. Morris Miller (1912) and published by George Robertson. This landmark document makes links between the importance of public libraries and school libraries in developing youth into productive citizens. Historians will find this resource significant, but it will also be useful for those doing research on the value of libraries to society in more contemporary settings.

As research is a key function for KBANZSL users, international researchers will be able to use the resources categorised under the research node for various projects and studies. One such resource, the *New Zealand School Library Report* is delivered by Softlink annually since 2010 in response to the 2011 Australian Senate Enquiry which also sparked the creation of KBANZSL. Researchers can use the most recent report published in 2021 to compare the state of school libraries in regions outside of Oceania as the report gives detailed information on staffing, budget, collections, challenges, and trends. Researchers can also use the KBANZSL research resources as a tool to exemplify other strategies and methods of research into school libraries in the region. More broadly, KBANZSL identifies the expert people and the long history of organisations in the school library field in the Oceania region, both historical and contemporary.

Implications and Conclusions

From the first to the second stage of KBANZSL, the resource developed from an excel spreadsheet to a pdf document posted on the Libraries Research Group website (https://librariesresearchgroup.csu.domains/current-projects/knowledge-bank-of-australian-and-new-zealand-school-libraries/). Stage Two is currently underway with plans to develop the resource into a web-based format with increased functionality to enhance access for researchers globally and encourage greater use of the tool. In this format, KBANZSL will be more much interactive with search and filter options according to node, geographic location, publication year and resource type. It will also be more visually appealing and engaging as researchers plan to include historical photos and videos that emerged in the initial resource collection phase in Stage 1. This format will enable KBANZSL to be edited and updated more easily as well.

KBANZSL was created in response to the need identified by the Australian Senate Enquiry in 2011 for greater information on teacher librarians and school libraries in Australia. An innovative resource like this has been a long time coming for researchers, practitioners, administrators, and other professionals who care about the history of school libraries as well as the presence. While its focus is on Australian and New Zealand school libraries, with increased exposure and creative planning, KBANZSL can offer support to those advocating for school libraries in Oceania and beyond.

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