

# BRIEF TO THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON EDUCATION

from the British Columbia Teacher-Librarians' Association

Historically, libraries have been society's information storehouses. The first school libraries were extensions of that tradition, but today's school library resource centres have the potential to become much more. That potential is linked to the increased utilization and importance of the "people" resources of the school library, and is attached to their educational function rather than to a traditional library function. This shift in function to an educational emphasis has resulted in a changing role perception for teacher-librarians and their colleagues which relates specifically to curriculum development and implementation. It is a shift which is still in process.

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** That the Royal Commission on Education recommend the development of a comprehensive policy statement on the roles of the teacher-librarian and resource-based learning in preparing students for today's information age, such a policy to be developed in consultation with the field, including the British Columbia Teacher-Librarians' Association.

The educational role of the teacher-librarian has undergone enormous change in the past fifteen years. That change has been the result of many factors which have not yet been fully examined. New instructional emphases, improved facilities and collections due to school board decisions and better materials funding from 1970 to the early 1980's, better qualified and more numerous teacher-librarians, expectations by business and higher education institutions for improved student performance in information handling, and the increased emphasis on accountability in education are some of the probable factors behind this change. The change itself has been a gradual one and uneven in its effects throughout the province. It has been a change which has depended upon developments from the field, since there has been little direction given by the Ministry of Education.

Indeed, in 1978, despite strong signals to the contrary from reaction panels of teacher-librarians, the revised library manual, Sources and Resources, included little comment on the curricular role of the teacher-librarian. A very brief policy section at the beginning of the document gave some initial hope to teacher-librarians. However, to add to the confusion, a short time after the publication of this document a disclaimer was issued in the form of School Department Circular (80.03.26), which stated that the "Ministerial Policy Statement" in Sources and Resources was not really a policy, but merely a guideline. Support for the changed educational role of the teacher-librarian and the library resource centre program has definitely not been one of the Ministry's priorities.

RECOMMENDATION 2: That the Royal Commission on Education recommend that information skills, including both research and study skills, be integrated with content in all curriculum documents, and that the model of resource-based learning through cooperatively planned units of study developed by teachers and teacher-librarians be one of the strategies emphasized in such curriculum documents, including curriculum guides.

An examination of the policy role of the Ministry as currently expressed in curriculum documents may be useful at this point, since it is a longstanding topic of hot discussion among teacher-librarians. One might deduce from Ministry inaction in this area that it sees no curricular function for the library resource centre program or for the teacher-librarian. After all, the usual manifestation of governmental policy is a curriculum guide. There is none in the area of instruction in information skills. Some people may argue that lack of a specific curriculum guide for the area does not preclude there being an information skills curriculum since the library resource centre serves all subject and grade levels and policies relating to this inter-relationship *must be* found in the curriculum guides of these subjects and grades.

Reality does not support this rather comforting viewpoint, at least not in any substantive fashion. In an as yet unpublished study of all the curriculum guides in use in Vancouver, a team of teacher-librarians examined the guides for entry points which specified even a minimal involvement of the teacher-librarian and/or an information skills focus. (Harper, et al, 1987) The following table extracts a representative sample in summary format.

SUBJECT	NO. OF ENTRY POINTS	SAMPLE ENTRY POINT
Art 8-12	numerous	"Research literature concerning work of local artists."
Composition 11	4	"Formal techniques for generating information (i.e. heuristics and library research)
Computers into the Classroom	numerous	"Students research the planets and insert facts into the database by group."
Consumer Ed. 9 / 10	6	"Ask students to select an item they would like to purchase and use consumer publications to research that item."
English 8 Resource Book	several	"Once the students have mastered the use of the index in a textbook, have them practice using an encyclopedia index."
Engl Lit 12	none	
Enrichment/ Gifted	none	
History 12	none	
Mathematics 1 - 12	none	

Science 1 - 7	numerous	Library Research and Reporting Skills are to be taught "in context" & are listed in guide.
Science Jr. Sec.	numerous	"Have students do a research report or poster on the sun's importance as a source in the water cycle."
Science & Tech. 11	4	"Teach research skills that enable students to locate, interpret, and evaluate resource materials"

NOTE: In the table above, several equals 11 to 20 and numerous means over 20. Sample entry points were chosen for their overall representativeness.

Several things can be deduced from this examination of curriculum guides. The most obvious is that if the definition of curriculum includes intent, planning and sequencing, then there is no curriculum of research and study skills, or information skills, built into the present set of curriculum guides. Furthermore, the entry points which were selected in the study and which include anything which might be remotely relevant, are a curious hodgepodge of objectives, learning outcomes and activities, even within the same guide and certainly across the guides. Information skills and knowledge are not a clearly defined element in the vast majority of the guides. Even in guides with "numerous" entry points there are no apparent overall goals or plans for teaching these information concepts and skills in a way that makes it likely that students will master them.

Only the new elementary science and social studies guides demonstrate some real consideration of the information needs of students, and of the developmental process of acquiring these skills. Some of the other guides provide the astute teacher-librarian with opportunities to develop resource-based units with teachers, but they do not provide the organizational structure of an information curriculum, nor do they supply a satisfactory listing of the necessary elements of such a curriculum. Teacher-librarians can only conclude that seeking an answer to our curriculum conundrum through subject curriculum guides is a puzzle beyond our capabilities. We can also hope that the pattern provided by the new elementary science and social studies guides will be replicated in other guides. If teachers saw these skills and concepts included in a guide, then they would consider them important enough to include in their daily programs.

A consensus has developed among teacher-librarians that their real curriculum responsibility lies in developing resource-based programs that will ensure that all children in our schools have the opportunity to learn those skills which will enable them to become skillful users of information in an information era. Such a program includes: 1) a sequential, developmental instruction in and practice of those skills which are essential to the successful completion of assignments, such skills to be integrated into subject content 2) the development of those information skills essential to life-long learning and successful citizenship, and 3) the more traditional library service of an individualized reading advisory service.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:** That the Royal Commission on Education recommend that the Ministry of Education establish a policy that will ensure that qualified teacher-librarians are placed in charge of school library resource centres.

RECOMMENDATION 4: That the Royal Commission on Education recommend that the Ministry of Education provide increased levels of funding for teacher-librarian time in order to support the development of resource-based programs which integrate content and information skills.

A growing concern and consensus over this issue resulted in 1977-78 in the formation of a small committee of British Columbia teacher-librarians under the chairpersonship of Ken Haycock, who was then the Coordinator of Library Services in School District 39 (Vancouver). This committee produced The Qualifications For School Librarianship report, which was vetted nationally by many professionals, then adopted, and finally published by the Canadian School Library Association in 1979. While the report covered a wide range of teacher-librarian competencies, two sections in particular relate to the curricular role of the teacher-librarian:

**8. Competency: Cooperative Program Planning and Teaching**

Cooperative program planning and teaching include the ability to participate as a teaching partner in the accomplishment of identified learning objectives through a knowledge of recommended resources and appropriate teaching/learning strategies.

Indicators of Competence:

The teacher-librarian is able to:

- 1) Develop cooperatively with teachers a sequential list of media, research and study skills for cross-grade and cross-subject implementation.
- 2) Plan and develop units of work with teachers from the setting of objectives to evaluation.
- 3) Integrate media, research and study skills with classroom instruction for independent and continued learning.
- 4) Pre-plan with teachers and teach skills integrated with classroom instruction to large and small groups and individuals.
- 5) Integrate the planned use of learning resources with the educational program.
- 6) Provide leadership to develop programs which integrate the promotion of reading with the total school program and with individual teacher programs.
- 7) Initiate specific teaching units to encourage the acquisition of skills and the effective use of learning resources.
- 8) Provide curriculum-related book and nonbook media talks and celebrations.
- 9) Compile bibliographies, resource lists and book and nonbook media lists as needed.

**9. Competency: Professionalism and Leadership**

Professionalism and leadership include the ability to develop and promote the use of the human and material resources of the school resource centre and its facilities through cooperative professional activities.

- 1) Develop a strong team approach with other teachers.
- 2) Lead in-service education program on: the effective use of the resource centre; criteria for selection of materials; designing resource-based units of study; using audio-visual equipment; promoting voluntary reading, media, research and study skill development; cooperative teaching; community resources.
- 3) Share techniques and strategies for using learning resources.
- 4) Involve students and staff in establishing learning resources policy and service guidelines.
- 5) Plan strategies for developing, presenting and securing support for learning resources services.
- 6) Serve on local and district curriculum committees.
- 7) Keep abreast of current developments in school librarianship, library and information science, media services and related fields.
- 8) Participate in the school's educational program by serving on advisory groups and committees and working with the student extracurricular program.

(Haycock, 1979, p. 23)

The competency-based model gave the teacher-librarian a role description of the ideal which could be applied to the task of self-assessment. It also moved the library resource centre program towards involvement with curricula, and away from the concept of a centre for free reading / storage for materials / holding tank for students which had become the hallmark of library use in the province. It meant that the teacher-librarian became an active partner in the planning and teaching of resource-based units, from the setting of objectives to the evaluation of the learner's achievement and the unit itself. It meant as well that teacher-librarians had to lead school staffs in the development of a plan for teaching skills in context. Over the years, many have developed research and study skills continuums which are models of sequencing, and which relate directly to the needs of the students in their schools and to the overall educational goals and programs in the individual school. Some have taken the idea one step farther and modified and combined their lists into a Kindergarten to grade twelve listing which provides an articulated elementary and secondary program of research and study skills.

Unfortunately, the restraint years have had a tremendous impact on the professionals who staff library resource centers in our province. Surveys conducted by the BCTLA have revealed that some school districts have replaced their teacher-librarians with clerical workers, while other school districts have significantly reduced the amount of time that is given to professional staffing. Teacher-librarians report that it is impossible for them to fulfill all aspects of their roles in the amount of time that is available to them. For a complete role description, please refer to the Appendix in the handout, Fuel For Change.

At this point in time it is essential that the Ministry of Education support the very real advances that have been made over the past ten years. One of the most effective ways of providing this support would be to ensure that those individuals who are in charge of school library resource centres are indeed trained to do the job; this requires dual teacher and librarian training as well as successful classroom teaching experience. Another way would be to provide sufficient funding for professional staffing so that there would be adequate time to accomplish the task that the competency statement for teacher-librarians defines so thoroughly.

**RECOMMENDATION 5:** That the Royal Commission recommend to the Ministry of Education that implementation programs be established to assist teachers and teacher-librarians to understand and apply the concepts and strategies of cooperatively planning and teaching resource-based units of study.

This educational innovation has resulted in many stressful moments for teacher-librarians as they sought to define their own role. It also implied but did not clearly articulate a substantive role change for classroom teachers. This role change was not as great a shift as that facing teacher-librarians, but it did require a shift in beliefs. Fullan tells us that "Changes in beliefs are yet more difficult: they challenge the core values held by individuals regarding the purposes of education; moreover, beliefs are often not explicit, discussed, or understood, but rather are buried at the level of unstated assumptions." (1982, p. 35) The unstated philosophical and pedagogical assumptions and beliefs which underlie the concept of teacher-librarians working with teachers to achieve curriculum goals are:

- 1) If as a society we agree that students ought to become life-long learners and competent adult users of information, and we accept that there are necessary skills which can be taught, then we must agree that these skills ought to be taught.

- 2) Since we know that students learn best when they are actively involved, and since using materials in a research project is an active involvement situation, then students ought to be using materials in research project activities.
- 3) Since classroom teachers are experts in the curriculum content and their students' capabilities, and teacher-librarians are experts in locating and extracting information from a wide variety of media, then the teaching dyad of classroom teacher and teacher-librarian is a logical partnership for cooperative program planning and teaching.
- 4) Because of the range and variety of materials housed there, the library resource centre is a good learning laboratory for materials use and for the application of information related skills.
- 5) An incremental, sequential list of research and study skills applicable to all grade levels and all content areas is the curricular focus of the library resource centre's educational role in the school program.
- 6) The teacher-librarian is the logical person within a school to perform the vital task of coordinating the development and delivery of research and study skills instruction.

These beliefs and assumptions are not earth-shattering news to educators, with the possible exception of number six which places the teacher-librarian in a role which was not common in the past. The actual application in a systematic fashion of these beliefs and assumptions is a problem area in that it necessitates significant role changes on the part of participants. The consequence of these beliefs and assumptions is to move the people involved from a situation where they operate in relative isolation, with minimal communication, to a situation where they must operate as a team in the fullest sense, articulating and communicating their goals and objectives and reaching a consensus on methods of achieving those goals and objectives. In order to do this effectively, they must develop the professional interpersonal skills necessary in any teaming situation. In summary, both classroom teachers and teacher-librarians must modify their beliefs and assumptions extensively.

The concept of library-based cooperative program planning and teaching of curricular units also involves changes in structure, teaching approaches and beliefs for both classroom teachers and for teacher-librarians. The degree of change needed to implement the innovation is therefore substantial for both groups. (Fullan, 1983, p. 217) It is our belief that this change is worthwhile, and that it should be supported through inservice and adequate funding.

**RECOMMENDATION 6:** That the Royal Commission on Education recommend that the Ministry of Education, as part of the development of a Ministerial policy statement on the educational role of the teacher-librarian and resource-based learning, establish a committee to plan an evaluation of library resource centre operations as they currently exist in the province. This committee should include representatives of the British Columbia Teacher-Librarians' Association

The current status of implementation of cooperative planning and teaching has not been evaluated in any systematic fashion. Data and comments from BCTLA's annual Working and Learning Conditions surveys seem to point to a connection between the degree of implementation and district level support in terms of teacher-librarian time and clerical time. This possibility needs to be critically examined.

Other questions must also be answered. For example, is there a sound educational rationale for this changed role? Research studies have indirectly addressed some aspects of this question in other locales. A major problem with the research is that little has been done that specifically matches what Canadian teacher-librarians mean by cooperative planning and teaching, or integration of skills and content into resource-based units of study. Therefore, one is extrapolating somewhat whenever American studies are cited.

Didier, in an examination of the relationships between student achievement in reading and library programs and personnel, evaluated 94 school districts. Of several possible contributing factors assessed, the data findings indicated that *achievement correlated significantly with qualified personnel and with the curricular role of library media personnel.* (Didier, 1982) The curricular role of the library media personnel does not completely parallel the role as outlined by the Canadian School Library Association document, and only achievement in reading was examined.

Scott examined student perceptions of high school library programs in six comprehensive schools in Anchorage, Alaska over a period of three years. One finding was that *planned instruction in library use occurred at schools highly rated by students.* (Scott, 1982) Charter profiled the strengths and weaknesses of six high school media programs selected from seventeen nominated as exemplary by experts. One of the nine factors identified as having an influence on exemplary programs was the *acceptance of an instructional development role for the media specialist.* (Charter, 1982)

A Canadian study done in Calgary by Yvonne Hodges investigated the question of whether or not the school board was getting dollar value from its school resource centres. One of the program elements *rated as exemplary was consultation between teachers and teacher-librarians.* Library resource centre expenditure was highly correlated with this program element. Further, *there was direct correlation with student skills and attitudes when programs included consultation between teachers and teacher-librarians.* (Hodges, 1983)

Mary J. Gilliland, in a long term study in one school in San Diego, California, found that a change from an "orientation to the library" approach which taught library skills in isolation, to an approach which placed instruction and review within the context of content area assignments, *improved student performance* on the California Assessment Program. (Gilliland, 1986)

Although the existing research is by no means exhaustive, it does seem to indicate a connection between the curricular role of the teacher-librarian, cooperative planning with teachers, and student learning. Many topics for research remain to be investigated. Cooperative planning and teaching is now in use in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario, and it is time that a thorough examination be undertaken.

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The Ontario Ministry of Education has developed a policy statement which succinctly outlines the responsibilities of the principal, the teacher, and the teacher-librarian in the integration of information and study skills into the content curriculum. The policy statement is clear and definite in its approach to the topic. It states: "Resource-based learning is an ideal means of fulfilling the goals of education for Ontario." (Partners In Action, 1982, p. 6) The 52 page document includes a plan for transition to this mode of operation, a sample K - 12 skills chart, a summary of essential district services, and an extensive seven page bibliography. The latter covers: (1) General Materials (2) Resource Centre Programs (3) Guides to Library Resource Centre Development (3) Management of the Library Resource Centre (5) Teacher Use of the Library Resource Centre (6) The Role of the Teacher-Librarian (7) The Use of Media in Learning Programs (8) Learning Skills (9) Curriculum Design (10) A Selected List of Ministry Documents, and (11) Some Canadian Periodicals Relevant to Librarianship. Without going to the extent of writing a curriculum guide, the Ontario Ministry has in fact assessed the developments in the field -- as is obvious from an examination of their bibliography; it has established a comprehensive policy statement on the questions raised by the discussions and developments which have occurred in the past ten years; and it has provided a great deal of guidance on how the policy can be achieved at the school level. The Ontario Ministry has provided support in the form of implementation workshops, and has encouraged school districts to provide adequate staffing.

Suffice it to say that Alberta and Manitoba have also implemented policy statements related to the curricular role of the teacher-librarian as defined by the publications and practice of British Columbia teacher-librarians. Copies of the Alberta and Ontario documents are included with this brief as examples of government policies. Two states in Australia have done so as well. Universities have changed their school library education programs to include cooperative planning and teaching in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and in Queensland, Australia. Teacher-librarians from British Columbia have addressed the International Association of School Librarians, and have been asked to teach library resource centre program planning in locales as far away as Newfoundland.

Recent developments which should assist in further implementation of the concept include the 1986 publication of a handbook, Fuel For Change: Cooperative Program Planning and Teaching and an accompanying videotape set which was co-developed by the British Columbia Teacher-Librarians' Association and the Field Development Office of the University of British Columbia's Faculty of Education (1987). Copies of the handbook and of the videos are included for your consideration with this brief.

The Bookmark, the journal of the British Columbia Teacher-Librarians' Association, has been abstracted for Library Literature, the most prestigious of library publications and one which asks few school library journals to submit their issues. Subscribers from all over North America read this journal because it is one of few in the field which focuses on the curricular role of the teacher-librarian. Why then are we unable to reach our own Ministry of Education with the message that we have developed something unique and worthwhile, something that benefits students and is necessary to them?

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The above is not a cry of despair, but frustration. The fact that teacher-librarians have persevered speaks for the strength of the concept of curricular involvement, of teachers and teacher-librarian planning together for the education of students. At this point in time, although there have been some minor but positive developments such as the inclusion of teacher-librarians on some curriculum revision committees, there is no curricular policy statement related directly to libraries or to comprehensive planning for information skills teaching and learning. Nor does it appear that there will be one in the near future. Should none appear teacher-librarians will continue to do what they have been doing for the past decade. They will continue to develop an information curriculum that impacts on the education of students, and they will continue the process of redefining their own professional role. Through commitment, experimentation, sharing, and politicization the teacher-librarians in this province have changed the very nature of their specialty area. It is time for the Ministry of Education to offer support to a group of dedicated professionals who are committed to the preparation of our youth for the demands of the twenty-first century. We speak in favour of long term goal development that will ensure that our young people have the necessary skills to successfully find, evaluate, organize and utilize information for their own purposes and needs, as well as for the larger needs of society. We seek your support in incorporating our message into the findings of the Royal Commission on Education.

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