

## **To the Principal**

The Western Australian School Library Association(WASLA), the Australian School Library Association (ASLA) and the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) were delighted to see the commitment by the Labor government to ensure “digital schools” provide a 21<sup>st</sup> century education system. Funding national secondary school computers has the potential to significantly improve the education outcomes for Australian students.

We seek to raise two important issues with you that are essential to the successful implementation of a digital education program. The first is the need for access to quality electronic resources. You will be aware that the information on the Internet is of variable quality and reliability. Australian libraries, including school libraries, have together selected quality electronic resources covering general reference (including encyclopaedias), Australian news and business information and health information through a national consortium (<http://era.nla.gov.au>). These products have been selected through a tender process and represent sources to which all schools should have access. We would recommend that your digital education program consider purchase of these resources to support quality outcomes for students and teachers.

Secondly, Western Australian students need support from qualified teacher librarians to enable them to gain on-line research skills to use the computers which will be available through secondary schools. It has been shown in the past through independent surveys that having the school library staffed by qualified teacher librarians has a positive impact on student learning. The role of the teacher librarian has changed significantly in recent times, particularly where information communication technologies are concerned. Teacher librarians contribute significantly to student technology and information literacies.

Please find attached a “Standards of professional excellence for teacher librarians” document which highlights the professional knowledge, skills and commitment demonstrated by teacher librarians working at a level of excellence. This document was put forward as an exemplar in the “National professional standards for Advanced Teaching and School Leadership” consultation paper in March, 2007.

WASLA provides numerous opportunities for professional development for staff in school libraries throughout Western Australia. Your staff may like to attend our Library Officer/Technician’s Seminar held on Friday 10 October, 2008 at SIDE. From 29<sup>th</sup> September to 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2009, WASLA will host the ASLA XXI Biennial Conference at the Perth Convention Centre which provides a showcase of the contribution that school libraries make to education in Australia. Details of these and other professional development opportunities can be found on the WASLA website, on WATLNET and in the WASLA newsletter.

Should you have any queries about how teacher librarians can support and implement effective library and information services and programs in your school, please contact our Association.

Yours sincerely,

Jenny Dickman  
President.