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Teacher Librarian 2.0: Implementing Digital Literacy across the Curriculum

Catherine Graham-Smith

St John’s College Woodlawn

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Introduction

Digital literacy has been recognised in the most recent *Horizon Report* as a core skill set for students in their learning in the 21st century (Johnson, L, et.al). In this context, digital literacy is understood to encompass ICT literacy, information literacy, and critical literacy.

Students have become increasingly mobile and connected given the ubiquitous nature of technology. The proliferation of the Internet and social technology has influenced how students connect, interact and learn. These digital technologies have given rise to different types of information and knowledge production that require students to attain more critical and reflexive information skills. This “Net-Gen” group require new pedagogies as the movement from an industrial economy to an information services economy makes the practices of an industrial age model of teaching outmoded (Selwyn, 2010 and Kapitzke, 2001) Online evaluation and collaboration, and digital participation and citizenship are the fundamental skills of successful contemporary learners. Whitby (2011) takes this notion further, arguing that the Cloud requires educators to rethink their overall approach to learning – one where learning is not only synchronous but asynchronous. Overall, the emphasis is on a new paradigm of education where the learner is the focus in a technology-enhanced learning environment and space is more than just geographical.

A national digital literacy focus within the Australian National Curriculum will enable progressive development of individual skills to a higher level of thinking, creativity and innovation. In this context, explicit instruction in digital literacy is paramount and new pedagogies need to be considered for this to occur.

The “walls” have been removed from education and students from rural and remote communities are exposed to these exciting and new technologies *but* they require the necessary skills to become engaged, inquiring life-long learners. The importance of opening up schools, both literally and figuratively, is certainly recognised in MCEETYA’s *Learning Spaces Framework* (2008) and is supported by current digital learning theory and pedagogical practice. By breaking down the barriers between the local and global, spatial and temporal, schools, led by their teacher librarians, will be able to meet the needs of their 21st century learners.

The Focus of the Study

Primary focus:

* + I would be able to examine the role of school libraries and information resource centres in adapting and modifying the curriculum and teaching practices to meet learners’ emerging digital literacy needs

Secondary foci:

* + I would also be able to examine best practice in the integration of technology led by teacher librarians and gauge how it is used to teach and learn digital literacy
  + I would be able to understand how schools have responded to the teaching and learning of digital literacy and the impact on the teaching staff and students

Professional Learning

**Google Apps for Education Summit Hong Kong**

I attended a highly intensive two-day conference on Google Apps at Hong Kong International School with teachers from all over Asia. There are over 25 million Google Apps and the purpose of the summit was to expose participants to as many as possible so that they could deploy, integrate and use these to teach learners in secondary schools.

The two keynote presentations were impressive. Yeo Suan who introduced the summit, advocated that we teach **with** technology not **how** to use it. Yet, he added that we must teach howto use it, rather than ban its use. He also asked us to consider if we were educating our students for **their future** or for our past.

Molly Schroeder was another dynamic speaker who emphasised that technology must be embedded in teaching and learning. She stressed that questions are important in learning. Students should not be passive users but creators. If they don't know the answer, how do they find it? How do they know how to find it? We need to create opportunities for students to *not* know so they have the desire to find out, to create new questions, to question what they find. Much of what Schroeder detailed could have been aimed solely at teacher librarians because the use of questions is at the core of our practice. Her speech resonated with me and the concept of “questions” became a recurrent theme on the whole study tour.

The event offered many hands-on and extremely engaging workshops covering Google Docs, Google Sites, Digital Writing with Google Docs and the Web, getting organised with Google Apps, the Flipped Classroom with Google Apps, Google Blogger, Google Apps and Pedagogy. By the end of the weekend, I had reached saturation point, well-armed with many a tool to use with all KLAs in my school. Very ’appy, indeed!

**Librarians as Teachers 2013: Engaging Learners in the Digital Age -   
CILIP Workshop Warwick University, Coventry, UK**

This workshop was well attended by librarians in schools, local libraries and universities from all around Coventry.

The first keynote address:*The ways in which people seek, use, consume and trust information in today’s digital world* was presented by Professor David Nicholas, Director of CIBER Research, who introduced the workshop warning that people on the net are “promiscuous, bouncy, reading lite and digital consumers”. He stressed that we are only now beginning to realise the extent of change in how people search for information and that there are serious information literacy issues that librarians need to address so that learners can fully benefit from the digital revolution.

Jane Secker, Copyright and Digital Literacy Advisor, LSE & Emma Coonan, Research Skills and Development Librarian, Cambridge University delivered the second keynote address: [*Rethinking information literacy: Collaboration, coordination and consolidation.*](http://www.slideshare.net/LibrarianGoddess/librarians-as-teachers) They focused on the learner as the centre and the need to develop life-long learners and critical thinkers. I enjoyed their emphasis on inquiry learning as key to information literacy.

Other speakers presented their thoughts and practices on students as researchers, evaluation of websites and films and tools for evaluation. In all, the workshop was highly informative and interesting. What I liked most was that the teaching of digital literacy didn’t cease in the secondary school but is addressed in universities as well. The practice of producing life-long learners was definitely occurring in the UK.

**School Librarian Association Annual Conference –   
Reaching Out: New Ways to Engage – Belfast, UK**

The 2013 SLA weekend training course took place from 21 - 23 June 2013 at the Hilton Hotel in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Presenters included Stephen Abram, Gale-Cengage; Niall de Búrca, storyteller; Dr Maria Garvey-Curtin, Trinity College Dublin; Dr Mel Gibson, Northumbria University; Chris Judge; Gill Lewis; Liz Pichon; Ali Sparkes; Anne-Marie Tarter.

The theme of the weekend focused on new ways to engage students in our libraries. [Stephen Abram](http://www.slideshare.net/stephenabram1/belfast-sla-june-2013?ref=http://www.sla.org.uk/weekend-course-2013.php) set the pace by challenging us to be change agents within our schools. He emphasised that the core skill of libraries is not in delivering information but *in improving the question and the experience of learning*. There was that word again; “question” and it kept popping up all weekend in the context of active engagement of the learner with a clear link to technology.

Many different ways to engage learners were presented. While reading was one of the topics of the weekend, it was how ideas were presented that was the focus. There were workshops on e-books, guest authors speaking a new ways to engage their readers and apps to enhance the reading experience. Other sessions included using iPads in teaching and learning, co-operative learning strategies and kindle programs used to improve literacy across the curriculum.

The weekend was highly satisfying as I was able to mix with colleagues with whom I had been engaging online for three years. Making new connections was also rewarding and was a further reminder that the “walls” of education were well and truly down. These associations would continue long after I had left the UK via Twitter, Facebook, Nings, Google+, etc. My students were not only going to become more digitally literate through what I have gleaned from this tour – so will I!

**School Librarian Association training day –   
The E-Reading Revolution – Addlestone, Surrey, UK**

This workshop, hosted by St George’s College, Weybridge, was well attended by many primary and secondary school librarians of varying expertise and experience with e-readers and e-books. Bev Humphrey, an affable and knowledgeable Literacy and Technology consultant, discussed the positives and negatives of several e-readers, informed us about different e-book platforms, demonstrated some uses for learning and teaching as well as showcasing apps that could encourage young people to read for pleasure and information. My favourite apps included [*War Horse*](http://www.touchpress.com/titles/warhorse/), [*Shakespeare in Bits*](https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/shakespeare-in-bits/id373763461?mt=8) and [*Anne Frank*](https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/anne-frank/id562909244?mt=8) but the use of [*Imaginatron*](https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/imaginatron/id461008071?mt=8) made Morris Lessamore’s picture book an amazing augmented reality experience! I finished the day feeling much better equipped to make informed choices about entering the digital reading world in my school library.

Meeting Bev had another positive - an invitation to join an annual online writing program she initiated Bev five years ago. The program, [*WritePath*](http://writepath.ning.com) will enable students to write creatively and interact with others across the UK and internationally. Students will also be able to interact via Skype. This program presents another way that rural and remote students can have access to students around the world, synchronously and asynchronously.

School Visits:

**Andrea Walker, Renaissance College, Hong Kong and Dianne McKenzie,   
Discovery College, Hong Kong**

Both teacher librarians are part of the middle management in their respective schools. In the new school year they will be working together at Renaissance College with Walker as Head of Library and McKenzie as teacher librarian with a digital literacy focus.

Di Mackenzie saw herself as a leader of digital literacy in her secondary school and wrote a blog for teachers, often sending weekly emails to staff to inform them of new tools to use. She was a vibrant example of how a teacher librarian could teach teachers as well as students. For example, she taught [*EasyBib*](http://www.easybib.com/_) to classes with the Digital Literacy Co-ordinator, training students and teachers alike. The next time the class used *EasyBib* the teacher taught it and the TL and the DL co-ordinator were there for support.

Andrea Walker, teacher librarian, is a vital part of a committee in her school called *Vision 2014* that focuses on annually renewing software and hardware. They are trying to decide on whether they would introduce iPads or continue with their one-to-one laptop policy. She noted the difficulty of up-skilling staff “as you offer many things but they are often not taken up.”

Renaissance College has an ICT Scope and Sequence embedded in the primary school curriculum and is working on one for the secondary school. Walker is part of the ICT Steering Committee that discusses these changes and the school has invested a great deal of resources into employing three staff to be “Technology Coaches” in 2014.

We talked about their introduction of e-books and their exploration of digital-comics and picture books such as Morris Lessamore’s. The e-book area was one that McKenzie would develop as her new role at Renaissance. I noted our excitement as we discussed this and Walker commented that this was our (TLs’) role – “one of excitement, so dynamic and so relevant, being right there with the kids and supporting the teachers.”

Both teacher librarians exemplify best practice in terms of digital literacy and library advocacy.

**Ginette Doyle, Cheltenham College Cheltenham, UK**

Ginette Doyle is a past UK School Librarian of the Year, previous President of the School Librarian Association UK and currently Head of the Chatfield-Roberts Library that marries the contemporary with the traditional exceptionally well. It is embedded throughout with wifi access, electronic whiteboards and workstations. There are even mobile bookcases and iPads to access the library catalogue.

Doyle works with students offering them access to the library 24/7. She teaches using various technologies such as QR Codes, alternative search engines and citation apps. She and the Junior School Librarian work with the Director of ICT, Alex Isaachsen. One project that was being worked on was a writing project with Year 5 using iPads. Isaachsen told me, “At College, ICT is part of everything we do, this is why we focus on using ICT in the classroom and in other activities, rather than teaching ICT as a separate subject.”

**Sharon Hodges, Wycliffe College, Stonehouse, UK**

Hodges runs information skills sessions and research sessions with classes and individuals. Twitter is in use in the library and the latest information is conveyed via the library’s Web OPAC. This gives students and staff access to the library catalogue and other online subscriptions, recommending websites via their Diigo account. YouTube, Facebook and Twitter are available throughout the school. QR codes are used to promote books and films in the library and the school has now started to allow students to use their Smart Phones for work. Hodges is still exploring the minefield of e-books.

**Caroline Roche, Eltham College, UK**

[Roche](http://www.slideshare.net/carolineroche/a-guerrilla-librarian-1336399) has a female Guerrilla fighter as her online avatar and that is exactly who she is. She is a dynamic, hardworking advocate for school libraries and has a well-known online presence. Running, [The Heart of the School](file:///C:\Documents%20and%20Settings\cmaclaurin\Local%20Settings\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.Outlook\UW5QSCN2\heartoftheschool.edublogs.org) blog, Roche celebrates and showcases the wonderful work being done by school librarians in the UK. She is a confident user of Web 2 tools and uses social media to promote teaching and learning in libraries. Roche had only been in the school for a year and has a huge job ahead of her. Only the library has WI-FI! Just recently, Roche has been working with apps such [*cramberry*](https://www.cramberry.net/%E2%80%8E), a revision aid, mind mapping tools such as [*mindmeister*](http://www.mindmeister.com)and [*bubbleus*](https://bubbl.us/%E2%80%8E) as well as [*evernote*](http://www.evernote.com) and [*diigo*](http://www.diigo.com) for collating information.

It was not what Roche was doing in this particular school but her whole library experience that was attractive to me. She understands the need to prepare students as digitally literate members of society and she is determined to make her new library 24/7.

**Dr Edmond Hui, Teddington School, UK**

My connection here was Head of ICT not a librarian. Hui generously showcased his very modern (in lay-out as well as educational thinking and practice) school in a couple of hours. The library itself is literally open to the whole school as it is the centre of the three storey building. The librarian did work with some classes but her leadership role had quite diminished over the last few years. While ICT is embedded in all subjects, the students did not have their own laptops as there were many banks of laptops that were continually being moved from classroom to classroom. Interestingly, the school management believed that technology should be used purposefully rather than as a mere substitute for pen and paper. The Apple Macs in the Music and Art departments were very impressive and I observed an exemplary Music teacher and his Year 9 class using the Macs in a lesson on the history of "Glam Rock". I also observed two IT teachers using Macs teaching a lesson on Avatars and safety online.

**Ingrid Hopson, George Abbot School, Guildford, UK**

Ingrid Hopson, Head of Library sees her role as teacher/facilitator, information specialist, children's literature specialist, and administrator/manager. Hopson believes so much in digital literacy that she has recently obtained a Learning Technology degree, much of the research for which has been applied to good effect in the library. Hopson uses technology with classes in all KLAs for note-taking and internet search skills. She teaches History and English classes, reading and plagiarism classes. Hopson is also busy researching e-readers and attended the same Bev Humphrey’s workshop as me. She is a passionate librarian who has embraced technology as a means of engaging students in her library and within the classrooms around the school.

**Sarah Pavey, Box Hill School, Dorking, UK**

Sarah Pavey is librarian part-time, consultant the other. She is an intelligent, energetic, tech-savvy librarian that inspired me with all that she did. Pavey is passionate about her role in the school and obviously she sees herself as an “e-facilitator”. How she sees her role is evident on the school website: “I enjoy teaching people about new technology and watching them develop its use for their own studies.” Just one look at Pavey’s shelves as you enter the library tells you just how involved she is – there were plastic containers for classes such as Year 10 –Energy and Power and Year 12 Chemistry. Pavey actually goes into classrooms and teaches! Pavey is a leader in her field with technology using it to engage students in their given subjects. She believes her library is flexible, has book stock that complements her e-resources, uses mobile apps to allow her students access 24/7, and encourages use of new media and critical use of the internet. What impressed me most was that she was very much interested in pedagogy and technology. She questioned why we were using such tools and what the benefits were for students.

**Nicola McNee, Kingswood School Bath**

McNee is another tech-savvy librarian who has a strong online presence and has embraced technology in her library which mixes modern and traditional. There are many print resources that students can utilise while there are kobo readers, *Overdrive* for e-books and a variety of apps for learning. McNee uses a wide range of social media tools to teach study and e-safety skills to secondary school students. Her personal blog and twitter network reflect her commitment to innovative online learning.

Conclusion

As a result of my overseas study tour, I was able to determine the role of school libraries and information resource centres in adapting and modifying the curriculum and teaching practices to meet learners’ emerging digital literacy needs. Libraries still remain the *hub* of the school. They are “flexible, dynamic, high tech 21C learning centres”[[1]](#footnote-1) (Hay & Todd, 2010). The libraries I visited had been renovated into innovative learning environments in which students could be creative and critical learners. The library staff was working diligently to identify and use a range of web apps and tools with a range of classes across the curriculum. The librarians held key management roles in the schools and were strong advocates for the library both within the school and online.

Moreover, I was able to observe best practice in the integration of technology led by teacher librarians, and gauge how it is used to teach and learn digital literacy. Participation in professional development such as CILIP workshop and the SLA Weekend enabled me to meet key leaders in school libraries. Librarians **are** the change agents that schools need to prepare students for lifelong learning in this information age. The practitioners I met were certainly active leaders and facilitators of digital literacy albeit at levels varying with school resources and management support. They saw themselves as the information specialists whose role in school was to teach learners to be inquisitive, discerning users and creators of unlimited resources via the Internet, anytime, anywhere. They were also the curators and mediators, keeping engaging and creative  physical and virtual collections. They used social networking tools, blogs and moodles to provide access to their students despite time or place. An interest in and an adoption of current and emerging media such as e-readers were also noted to encourage students’ engagement and develop their literacy skills.

However, I found that while the librarians were excellent teachers of information literacy, using many technological resources, only a minority questioned the pedagogical purpose of these. They could teach students *how* to use the tools but not *why* they were being used. This may be due to their librarian status rather than the *teacher* librarian role in Australia. However, the best practitioners were those who did exactly this! Both teachers and learners need to be given a purpose for employing technology in their study.

Finally, I have some understanding of how schools have responded to the teaching and learning of digital literacy and the impact on the teaching staff and students. The cognitive aspect of learning was discussed but I would have liked to explore the affective side of this. What affective outcomes would we expect of a digitally literate learner? Just how does working with technology affect learners and teachers? Can technology impede learning/teaching? What is the emotional impact? The focus has been on the “effectiveness” now I would like to examine the emotionally charged world of our digitally literate learners.

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