

Leading Perspective

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SHARED VISION & VOICES: ONE RECIPE FOR A COHESIVE TEAM ENVIRONMENT

Today's school libraries hum with activity as we undertake the many and varied responsibilities that comprise our role. Successful management of our busy environments relies as much on relationships as resources: good working relationships both within the library team and between the team and the school community are vital in promoting library resources, skills and services.

Although schools differ, one recipe for developing a cohesive library team is suggested here:

Essential ingredients—

Shared Vision

- Shared understanding of purpose, goals and initiatives
- Appreciation of own and others' unique contributions to the whole

Communication

- Shared understanding of values and standards
- Sharing of ongoing team initiatives

Collaboration

- All voices heard and valued
- All ideas incorporated where possible

Professionalism

- Consistency in upholding values and standards
- Respect for each other's training, experience and interests
- Empathy for others' work and personal commitments

Method—

Blend all ingredients in generous amounts to create and maintain a common springboard for team interactions, harmony and trust.

ISSUE 2 2008 INCLUDES

- Wisdom of the crowd—management perspective
- What God of Management are you?
- Managing that blog
- Leadership and management
- Personal perspective of managing a school library

Leading Learning ... Literacy & Literature

15th May 2008

Panthers World of Entertainment, Penrith

Keynote - Associate Professor Rosemary Johnstone

Registration form can be downloaded at

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MANAGING DECISIONS: LISTEN TO THE CROWD

Di Laycock, joint winner of the 2008 Teacher Librarian of the Year (NSW), has been an invited keynote speaker both statewide and internationally on her work with graphic novels and Web 2.0. Co-coordinator of CAR-TL, Di has been a strong and consistent voice for evidence-based practice. Di is on the library team at Barker College, Sydney.

The message is everywhere—in research, in professional opinion and even in quotes from famous people—that decisions made by groups are often more effective than those made by individuals.

Yet how often do we ignore such advice in our schools and, more specifically, in our libraries where working together can be the exception rather than the norm? How often do we mistrust the potential of a diverse group of people to reach a successful solution or decision; instead preferring to think that *'the well-informed people will be outweighed by the poorly informed'* (Surowiecki 2005 p 274)?

What are the barriers hindering our acceptance of group decision-making as an effective strategy in the workplace?

And how often do we believe *'that valuable knowledge is concentrated in a very few hands [and] that the key to solving problems or making good decisions is finding that one right person who will have the answer'* (ibid p xv)?

What are the barriers hindering our acceptance of group decision-making as an effective strategy in the workplace?

Perhaps such obstacles are rooted in the notion that decisions within a group of diverse opinions can only be achieved through compromise; thus producing decisions characterised by mediocrity.

In our desire to achieve an outcome, do we let emotion colour and tame our decisions in an effort not to create waves or do we acquiesce to those who have the loudest and strongest voice—regardless of whether it is a voice of substance?

If this is the tack we take, then it is quite probable that *'the mass never comes up to the standard of its best member, but on the contrary degrades itself to a level with the lowest'* (Henry David Thoreau in Surowiecki p xv).

Contrary to those such as Thoreau who consider that groups tend to dumb down thinking, Surowiecki (p xiii) provides a compelling and convincing discourse, drawing on examples from a diverse range of disciplines, to suggest that *'under the right circumstances, groups are remarkably intelligent and are often smarter than the smartest people in them'*.

However, despite being surrounded by such evidence of what he terms **collective wisdom**, Surowiecki posits that we have a preoccupation with chasing the expert to assist us in effective decision-making.

Consider the notion of chasing the expert in a school context. How often do we invite experts into our schools to provide us with information

and strategies to assist in problem-solving and decision-making?

This is not to say that such people do not have valuable contributions to make. However, in doing so, do we overlook the potential of our colleagues to produce collectively the same information (no doubt at considerably less cost). We also ignore the fact that these colleagues have a sound knowledge of the context in which the solution or decision is sought and that they will still be around in another few weeks or months to assist with those decisions or solutions.

We should, according to Surowiecki (p xv), *'stop hunting [for the expert] and ask the crowd instead. Chances are it knows!'* To this end, he suggests that the collective wisdom of groups can be applied to three particular types of problems or decisions.

Cognition problems are those for which definite solutions can be reached.

For example, the problem of where to locate the fiction section in a school library is a problem for which there is an answer and it is highly likely that the best answer will be achieved not by bringing in an outside expert but by considering the opinions of the crowd or stakeholders who use and manage that particular collection.

Unlike the other types of problems discussed by Surowiecki, solutions to cognition problems tend to be definitive and able to be reached more expediently. As a result, '*many coordination problems require bottom-up, not top-down solutions*' (p 270). Whilst vested interests may prevent the reaching of clear, definitive solutions that are optimal for all parties, chances are that smart solutions will be achieved.

Coordination problems are those that involve finding the most effective way for members of a group to achieve a certain outcome. Take, for example, the classic issue of classes competing for time and space in the library. This issue might well be solved using the authority or coercion of those in charge of the library.

As Surowiecki (p 86) notes, '*an army goose-stepping in a parade is, after all, very well coordinated*'. But schools are not armies and such a response is likely to result in large numbers of dissatisfied library users and possibly lots of empty library spaces as these users vote with their feet.

The more appropriate solution to coordination problems, suggests Surowiecki (ibid), is to let people find a way, without being directed, to '*make their actions fit together in an efficient and orderly way*'. Whilst vested interests may prevent the reaching of clear, definitive solutions that are optimal for all parties, chances are that smart solutions will be achieved.

Cooperation problems, the third type of problem for which Surowiecki suggests that the wisdom of crowds can provide effective solutions, are perhaps the most demanding.

Such problems involve the challenge of getting all parties, including the disinterested or self-interested, on board to work for the common good.

...the crowd's judgement is going to give us the best chance of making the right decision... in the face of that knowledge, traditional notions of power and leadership [and management] should begin to pale.

Four conditions

According to Surowiecki, if a group can satisfy the four conditions that characterise wise crowds in its approach to the above types of problems, then it is likely that its judgments will be accurate.

Diversity of opinion and **independence** are paramount to the wise crowd. In stating that '*the best collective decisions are the product of disagreement and contest, not consensus or compromise*', Surowiecki (p xix) is not breaking new ground.

Michael Fullan (2004) for example, is a strong advocate of the need for creative dissonance in order to produce effective teams. The best decisions are the result of considering a range of interpretations, analyses and even intuition.

From this perspective, the best decision is not one where everyone modifies their thinking or actions so that everyone is happy (or at least willing to go along with the decision). Rather it is one that is the result of aggregated knowledge; one which does not necessarily reflect what any one person in the group thinks but rather '*in a sense, what they all think*' (Surowiecki p xix).

Hence, to cite an old adage *the whole is greater than the sum of the parts*.

In a group that is small and possibly socially connected, such as your library staff, there is a danger that the independence of thought, deemed so vital to a smart group will be

compromised. Surowiecki (p 42) posits that *'the more influence we exert on each other, the more likely it is that we will believe the same things and make the same mistakes'*.

He continues that in small groups in particular, bad decisions can be made because the influence of people in the group can be more direct and immediate; thus increasing the likelihood of judgments that are volatile and extreme.

Independent decision-making by group members, therefore, does not imply rationality or impartiality. What it does do is firstly prevent the correlation of mistakes by ensuring that errors are not systemic—that decisions are not made only using common agreed knowledge. Second, it ensures that new information is likely to be fed to the group.

So, whilst the decisions may be biased and irrational, says Surowiecki (ibid), *'as long as you're independent, you won't make the group any dumber'*.

Groups that exhibit the wise crowd condition of **decentralisation** foster specialisation (which in turn can make people more productive and efficient) and subsequently increase the diversity of opinions and information that influence decision-making (ibid p 71). Greater in-depth or local knowledge of a particular aspect of an issue often means that an individual is more likely to have an effective solution to it.

Decentralisation's great strength therefore, as a condition of a group, is to encourage specialisation and independence whilst simultaneously providing the opportunity for the conversion of tacit knowledge to the explicit.

Surowiecki's fourth and final condition for the enabling of smart decisions by groups is **aggregation**—provision of a mechanism that converts private judgment into a collective decision. He notes that:

Although a surprising number of groups ignore it, there is no point in making small groups part of a leadership structure if you do not give the group a method of aggregating the opinions of its members (ibid p190).

If groups are only established to advise on issues, rather than make a decision on those issues, then the *'true advantage that a team has, namely, collective wisdom'* is lost (ibid p 191).

Although Surowiecki gives little attention to educational issues in his many examples of smart groups and the wisdom of crowds, there is no denying the implications of his perspective for the way in which we manage and participate in decision-making in our school libraries and in the broader school community.

His message is simple and obvious.

Involve stakeholders in decisions that affect them by honouring their diversity of opinion and independence of thought. Give them the opportunity to voice and share these opinions, thus encouraging the development of solutions that are potentially more relevant and appropriate than those conceived by any individual.

As Surowiecki (p 282) concludes,

while trusting the collective judgement of a group may be difficult [if not alien]... in the long run, the crowd's judgement is going to give us the best chance of making the right decision... in the face of that knowledge, traditional notions of power and leadership [and management] should begin to pale.

DL

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THINKING OF MANAGING A BLOG?

Marita Thomson is a teacher librarian at The King's School, Parramatta. Marita is a keen blogger herself and loves the social technologies that provide great opportunities with which to engage her young male students in reading and discussion.

Starting a blog is like creating your own small universe. It doesn't have quite the freedom of those literary universes that writers create and not quite the restrictions of the actual universe of space. And like anything else it requires time and thus time management. Blog creation has its own pleasures and difficulties which begin in the many decisions to be made in setting one up.

Managing your blog means that, right from its inception, you need to start ordering your thoughts about what you really want this entity to be. Your purpose and who will use it (read and write it) will guide you in your choice of platform, protocols and parameters. Content then becomes paramount along with taking measures to get the thing out there.

How do you know if anyone is reading?

The only certain way is through comments, on the blog or otherwise. But many blog viewers never comment—or not much. So, some things to think about!

www.aslansw.org.au

Content

Unless your purpose is a purely private one, blogs are, at their heart, about news—about new entries [or posts]. The first thing a visitor sees is your latest post. If that post is months old (or years), then they are hardly encouraged to return. Try to add new material frequently. Short is good, as long as it is relevant.

The next most important thing is to make use of the medium it is in. Link to the sources of your content where possible. This can be time consuming but makes for much more dynamic content. A good set of links to sites in the same field is a useful addition.

There are lots of tools you can add as well, like social bookmarking, *LibraryThing*, custom search engines (perhaps your own) and other fun things that fit your theme. And don't forget the visual. Use your own pictures—student artwork scanned in can look great—or find creative commons photos at sites like *Flickr*.

Reaching an audience

Tell people about the blog. You may want to keep it quiet for awhile if you are still ironing out the creases but a message to friends and/or colleagues may get you some audience feedback. Make sure you are linked prominently in your own school. Being linked from a site which already has a good audience will boost interest. The sites which you list on your own blog may well reciprocate if you have common ground.

Keep an eye on your blog's usage through statistics. Some platforms, like *Wordpress*, have excellent built in statistics but you can also use free services like *Feedburner* or *Google Analytics*. Investigate your blog provider if you aren't sure.

These statistics will tell you how many people are visiting, what they are hitting, and what search terms they are using.

You can also put up a visitor map which registers hits from around the world. Make sure you have obvious RSS feed buttons so that those who want to keep an eye on your new content can.

Finally, have fun with your blog. Choose a presentation theme that you love to look at. Get others involved. Be passionate. Keep up with others doing similar things.

Enjoy yourself.

MT



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**TEACHER LIBRARIANS: A
REFLECTION ON LEADERSHIP &
MANAGEMENT**

Colleen Foley is Manager, School Libraries & Information Literacy Unit, Department of Education and Training, NSW. She offers this reflection on leading and managing as teacher librarians.

Teacher librarians often reflect on the vital, interrelated aspects of their role in schools. As teachers, we are passionate about being proactive collaborators with our colleagues. We seek ways to make a very real difference to teaching and learning.

As information managers, we aim to provide the best possible resourcing for the curriculum. In juggling the intricacies and dynamics of these dual responsibilities, leadership and management come under scrutiny.

Leading for learning

The leadership role, integrated with the management role, is core to our teaching. There are many examples of the ways in which teacher librarians can and do lead learning. We only have to peruse professional journals such as *Access*, *Synergy* and *Scan* for stories of great practise along with the research. We can be inspired by examples of teacher librarians influencing and supporting quality teaching and learning across a range of endeavours. This includes anything from creative ways of supporting multiliteracies through to harnessing Web 2.0 technologies to engage students in using emerging social and collaborative tools. Leadership also involves being active members of the curriculum and technology committees in schools.

Dr Ross Todd (2005) has noted some important issues related to the ways in which teacher librarians can lead learning through the school library. At the heart of such curriculum leadership is recognition of the transformative role of learning and a commitment to collaborative practices.

Collaboration and the nature of it, is more important than ever (Foley & Hay 2007). Dr Linda Gibson-Langford's research (2007, 2008) on aspects of collaboration makes

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APOLLO, ATHENA, ZEUS, DIONYSUS IN THE LAP OF THE GODS

Linda Gibson-Langford is on the library team at The King's School, Sydney. She has been an invited keynote speaker locally, nationally and internationally with a focus on her doctoral studies, which has at its core, learning communities and collaborative cultures. Along with Di Laycock, Linda coordinates the action research community, CAR-TL.

Is managing a school library *all Greek to you*? Do you find yourself battling with armour that is rusted, ill-fitting and maybe just a bit archaic in a wi-fi world of downloads and YouTube, Smartboards and flashdrives as well as a legal world of OHS and record keeping; where child protection and intellectual property somehow find their way into your dreams at night. So much responsibility, so much to balance and then there is the people factor!

Amongst all the other management aspects of your role, perhaps the more challenging is that which is presented to you on two feet. People management!

Depending on your management style and your perspective on leadership, personnel issues can take up either the bulk of your time or virtually, no time.

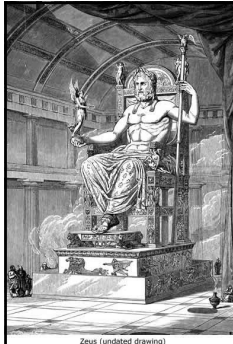
When discussing attributes of management, there is a common understanding that the manager can stifle or enrich the organisation. For example, controlling input and output, through power over or through empowerment, is dependent upon the purpose, aims or goals of the organisation or at a more granular level, the project at hand. Managers can promote a healthy organisation (a learning organisation) or in a worst case scenario, resolutely control the thinking—the creativity—until restriction becomes constriction, leading to organisational lethargy or perhaps atrophy.

Putting a management god into your life

Relationships, built around various styles of leadership, are indicators of how the organisation is managed, that is, leadership styles will determine management styles but management styles do not necessarily inform

leadership styles.

That the two are intrinsically related is cleverly articulated in Handy's *Gods of Management* (1995). Handy brings you squarely into the world of management and asks you to assess yourself in terms of your personality, skills and of course, your community. He leads you to a view of management from the perspective of a god culture, in fact, four god cultures—Zeus, Apollo, Athena and Dionysus.



Zeus Credit:
http://atheism.about.com/library/FAQs/religion/blgrk_zeus03.htm

Through a simple analogy, he invites you to reflect on your style of management and its impact on your students, your teachers, your community—and you. For a different perspective, consider the following management models.

Zeus and Apollo

In western society, management too often presents images of controlling or authoritarian figures, manipulative techniques and transmissive leadership.

Handy loosely attributes these management traits to both Zeus and Apollo.

He characterises **Zeus** as a leader who depends on the *old club tie*—power radiates throughout the organisation from the boss down. This type of management sees decisions being made swiftly. There are moments of nepotism, benevolent or charismatic power and irrational impulsiveness. Zeus managers understand power in terms of the club mentality and this means loyalty and empathy based on affinity and trust.



Apollo Credit:
www.dreamstime.com

Whilst **Apollo**, god of order and roles, stands staring fixedly at his strong pillars and unifying cross pediment, he knows that good management relies on roles, not personalities or personal traits. His motto is *This is the job... do it*. Apollonian culture works well in certainty—change is an anathema. This type of

management is stable and works for organisations whose goals are fixed on a single outcome.

Power is top down and top down ensures the safety, security and predictability of this culture. Influence building is not a concern for the people factor because the human is an interchangeable part—the occupant of a role (Handy 1995).

Apollonian management is strengthened by routines and quiet competency. This could be suicidal to a learning community if it is the only management structure that defines the organisation.

Athena and Dionysus

These gods, according to Handy, are the change agents, focussed on their team's growth in self-esteem, creativity and vision. Athena and Dionysus encourage their team members to articulate their ideas and to use their initiative. These gods rely on a management style that is transformative and/ or situational. Mandated control (power over) does not exist. It might follow that Apollo or Zeus would find working with Dionysus and Athena type people quite a challenge and vice versa.

Dionysus, the existentialist, acknowledges the professional community as individual leader stars. The Dionysus manager would step aside as the individuals got on with their job. The people factor becomes important as it is the organisation that exists for the people.

Dionysus culture rests on the talents or skills of the individual; these are the assets of the organisation. This management style belongs to a task culture where variety is celebrated and power belongs to the experts.



Dionysus Credit:
www.greekmythology.com

Athena manages through an environment that is task oriented; a management style often preferred by professionals, emphasising talent, creativity and team problem-solving. Athena, the task manager, brings in her professionals and says, *teams are everything... break into your units and solve the problem.*

Such a management culture recognises expertise as critical to power and influence. This culture sees leadership through the eyes of mutual respect and collegial assistance.



Athena Credit:
Profile.myspace.com

As evident from the forgoing snapshots of the gods of management, Zeus, Apollo, Athena and Dionysus are management paradigms formed from differing assumptions about how the organisation learns, what will drive the people factor, who influences whom and how power is dispersed.

These all build toward particular styles of management and can lead to hybrid styles according to how the team responds to the manager and more significantly, how leadership is interpreted.

GODS OF MANAGEMENT & THE TEACHER LIBRARIAN

How do these management cultures align with the role of the teacher librarian?

Certainly Dionysus management would ensure that the teacher librarian is free to lead within the learning advocate role of the learning community (Brian-Davis 2000). Dionysus would acknowledge that information is vital to learning and that learning is power and that those who hold the key to unlocking such power should indeed have considerable influence with those who need information. Dionysus management would respect and encourage the learning advocate.

As the expert in knowledge management, Athena, as manager, would bring the team together, discuss the problem to be solved/ the task to be achieved and entrust the team to carry out the tasks—the manager of a learning culture understands the importance placed on the people factor and of building community.

But what becomes of those teacher librarians or indeed the library team who struggle to make a difference in their organisations as they fight against Zeus' command or bow under the pressure of a more ruthless Apollonian non-people centred management?

How do teacher librarians work to create Todd's vision of a school library: a knowledge place where intellectual discontent and the messy work of playing in the sandpits of knowledge construction is hampered by a more orderly or bureaucratic style of management or one in which decisions come from top down and are made swiftly; where *control over* restricts creativity and risk taking?

How do teacher librarians within a controlled and rigid management structure respond to change without compromising their individual worth in such a dominating organisational culture?

Lofty ideal? Totally unattainable? The stuff of dreams?

Maybe not.

Leadership and management in school libraries through the blend of styles that promote the people factor can lead to a healthy organisation, one that is based on relationships as the key unit of analysis. It can lead to knowledge communities where the ideas at the grass roots level are as valuable and cherished as those from the management; where creativity and dissonance are encouraged and respected.

Leadership and management in school libraries, through the blend of styles that promote the people factor, can lead to a healthy organisation.

Zeus? Apollo? Athene? Dionysus?

Perhaps the answer lies in a combination of management styles. As the management structure will determine how the workplace responds to creating and recreating its future, a combination of styles may provide the balance between order and task delivery, creativity, team problem-solving and decision making.

Whether or not your school library enjoys a management philosophy that is flexible, the people factor is salient to the growth of the organisation (that is reaching the goals of the organisation and moving towards new ones) and to the happiness of the community.

Good management recognises this and provides pathways that develop each individual's influence and power. Good management does not permit power and influence to flow only from top down.

In closing

Handy's concept of management as god cultures is a challenging way to view effective management models.

Think on this. If work became, for each of us, something we look forward to and was a healthy outpouring of our energy, then the organisation would surely flourish—the people factor would be a force within the community.

But it requires conscious effort, shared and ever adjusting vision. It requires a true understanding and operationalising of a collaborative culture as well as continuous learning from each other and for each other (Gibson-Langford 2008).

Successful managers are those that are aware of the varying organisational cultures operating within their work environment. They are successful because they can liaise between the different cultures, bringing Dionysus in as necessary and, at times, employing a *dose of Zeus*.

They know that people are their most important resource, filled with creative and innovative ideas and they know that to make explicit their colleagues' knowledge will need the skill of sensitive management. **LGL**

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[continued from page 7]

stimulating and challenging reading, reflecting on some of the human dynamics.

The human dimension is very real in the skills we bring to our role as resource and information managers—we must practice the lessons of collaboration and be known for our integrity, empathy and clarity when we communicate our ideas or present/ implement our policies.

Managing for learning

Management is centred on both teaching and learning support as well as on our teaching role. In the busyness of day to day concerns, it is worth thinking about the key drivers for the management aspect of our role: teaching support and learning support! We bring this understanding to considering how we organise information to facilitate purposeful and timely use for learning which is articulated through how we manage the learning spaces under our influence.

The synergy between the Department of Education and Training NSW's policies and the ASLA/ALIA *Standards of professional practice* (2004) reinforce the importance for providing efficient systems for access to information in order to engage and challenge learners in a supportive environment. The standards indicate that such effective management entails:

- harnessing emerging technologies
- taking an evidence based practice approach to reporting the ways we ensure improved teaching and learning
- using this evidence to inform programs and services
- strategic planning and budgeting that is aligned to the school's plans and goals.

Thus developing and providing policy and frameworks for effective management and therein implementation of such activities and services requires a level of interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence.

The reflective manager is constantly thinking about the impact of decisions and directions made as a consequence of leading for learning and managing for learning.

Partners in transforming learning

The common element in any part of the above reflection is how we as collaborative teaching

partners, manage and lead in order to inspire and engage our teacher colleagues and our students.

Our quest is to provide a rich, creative, dynamic environment to support an enjoyable learning journey for our school community.

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MANAGEMENT—AN OVERVIEW

Anne Lockwood is Head of Information Services, Tara Anglican School for Girls. Teacher Librarian of the Year (NSW) 2007, Anne is also Treasurer of ASLA (NSW).

Management, at times, can be quite daunting. Our jobs cover so many areas and no matter how large or small the area is, they all need to be managed. However some of us struggle to manage within the limited time we have in which to cater for the budget, IT, collection, staff and of course students. Our job requires clever and well planned management!

At first impression, the word management generally refers to the collection. Buying, accessioning, cataloguing, covering, shelving ... all the parts of maintaining, usually a mainly print collection. In some schools with small numbers and minimal staffing, this can either take up the teacher librarian's valuable time or be done at home or farmed out to willing helpers, be it parent or otherwise (I have spent many evenings at home covering textbooks in front of TV so that the class could have them on the following day—thankfully this was quite a while ago, although I am still the fastest contactor in the west).

But that is the nitty gritty day to day work. Along with that comes consulting with staff on additions, extending the other than non-fiction collection and moving further into picture books, graphic novels, specialty collections, audio visuals and then comes the hardware part of the collection. Do you have lending sections of digital cameras, CD players, DVD players, voice recorders, video cameras? The list goes on. Then you have to organise them to be maintained as well. Don't forget all the parts that go with them—batteries, video tapes and those pesky cables.

And what about the on the audio visual section. Every time I turn around the AV is costing me more money or is it technology money? To Clickview or not? To tape on not? To 24/7 or not? Decisions, decisions. Part of your future vision and management strategy!

Oh and what about the budget for all of this? You have to write a budget that your Principal can't refuse too much of and then administer

and keep track of what you do spend, so that you know what they did take back.

All of this is covered by the multitudinal policy documents that you have to write or rework or borrow. One thing that we are good at is not reinventing the wheel. After the policies, don't forget the procedure manuals so that anyone (qualified of course!) can come into your library and do all of the above.

Our school also has an archival section. I tried to start an archive when first appointed to a school that was three years old. I saved everything: photos, programs for occasions, canteen lists, teaching programs and even attendance rolls. Everything went into a box with a year stencilled on it. I even saved uniforms and when they changed, the new one as well. By the end of five years, I had filled a cupboard. I didn't have a list of anything but it was there. Heaven help the poor lady who followed me.

I went back and checked a few job descriptions that I have come across in my time. Most of them have many major criteria. Some of them include:

Vision—the big picture we all would like to project, for example, the centre of learning in the school or cornerstone of the educational program. Through having a vision, we gain an underlying goal in our everyday work. Unfortunately, we lurch from day to day or period to period, trying to be all things to all people in our school. We often need to stop and look at the big picture to bring us back to focus.

Team Leadership—team, what's that? There's me and maybe one part time person through to up to eight staff. If you are lucky enough to have a couple of staff, it is usually because you have huge numbers of students or are open obscenely long hours to look after the students after school until their carers pick them up. If you are lucky enough to have some staff, it is your responsibility to make sure that they get some professional development. That is if you can access some PD money and have staff who are willing to go in their time or on a weekend. If not, you have to go anyway, otherwise how do you get your PD? Being a lone person in a school makes it all the more

important to attend other professional learning activities.

Staffing in a school library can be at the whim of the principal. At the slash of a pen it is gone. With DET, a librarian was never part of the staffing formula; it was always additional to establishment. Hopefully this has not changed but it is fully utilised with RFF in many schools.

Educational Leadership—now this is more like it! Leading the educational drive in your school. Hmm. More likely this is RFF and sometimes being lucky to be able to blend your work into the class work. It could also be watching classes come in to use the computer and going to Google to research their topic like *Find out about Rainbow Fish* in 30 minutes or less. Lots of pedagogy in that. In many schools, attending meetings of faculty heads comes under this. General staff meetings seem to fit somewhere else (where?). Oh, and we must always make the library conducive to reading and enjoyment by having it pretty with displays, comfy furniture, activities and smiling faces, although you haven't had a coffee since breakfast and three teachers want to see you about something vital to them. Or does this bit come under Library Management?

Technology— ah! To schools struggling with the move to thin client Oasis, this must ring loud bells. To some of us lucky enough to have other programs, this means large headaches. Does this cover the installation, hardware and networking ability plus external access to the website you developed in your spare time? Does it cover finding another mouse for the computer because one was stolen and now the computer is useless? Who would steal a mouse anyway? (I used to lose a lot of mouse balls in one of my previous schools but now I have optical ones, so they have to take the whole mouse. Cheaper to replace than just the ball, anyway.) Is that your library budget or someone else's?

Promotion of library services—isn't that the best part? Go out and spruik what you can do for them. Unfortunately you are open for students at recess and lunch, so that meeting them in the staff room is not an option. You have to grab them as they come through your door. Have you ever seen teachers skulking around trying to avoid the teacher librarian?

Getting them at RFF is an option, if they come to drop their class. Hopefully they can gasp at the great, huge displays you come in to do on the weekend.

Students—this is actually the best part of the job. Teaching students, working with teachers and their students is great. Although supervising Year 12 and Year 11 every period of the day doesn't quite fit this, you do get to know them a little better. Usually when they want something.

Networking—a great word; also known as PD. Teacher Librarians fit neatly into what some people see as a box. Usually with books and shelving. I don't see us this way. Get yourself involved. Join your associations, be it local, state, international and overseas. Pick an area that appeals and join their association as well. I know a TL who is in the ETA and another in the GTA and the CTA is a useful one for the technology minded of us. If you don't know what these acronyms mean, find out!

Your local network is a great place to start. Being a lone ranger in a school means you need the support and affirmation of your own kind to be able to charge up tomorrow and do it all again.

This is a huge one for you to organise as well. Get yourself involved. Get yourself on the IT committee at school. Get yourself on the Education committee. Be seen as involved. I say *Get yourself on...* as often this is the only way to do it. Volunteer. Try and have some input. Be seen as someone out of the box.

Time—The **big one** of the lot. If you can't manage your time, you can't do this wonderful job to the best of your ability. So speak to someone who often goes in for a couple of hours to catch up. But if I do that, I at least have the energy and enthusiasm to last without coffee for another long period of time.

If we start at step one, our *Standards of Professional Excellence* covers:

- Professional Knowledge
- Professional Learning
- Professional Commitment

Check out the small print and read carefully,

because if you can't see where you fit into this, you are not managing very well. Remember you do have another life. I strongly feel our whole job is management. Management of yourself, your time, your location (library/school), your life.

Be passionate about it—it's the best job to manage in the world. **AL**

It's about Time

a poem based on the collective wisdom of colleagues over the years...

We have all heard thoughtful sayings that might, for a moment, engage our imagination and our actions.

The following ideas on time management are gleaned over the past 20 years from colleagues who have moved on to other roles. Their collective wisdom still resonates for our web2.0 enhanced school libraries.

Time..

can't be purchased
can't be turned on and off
can't be replaced or stored.

We are allotted the same amount of time...
in an hour,
in a day,
in a month,
in a year.

Yet we cry,
I haven't got enough time.

Do you tell me how hard you have worked and not what you have done?

If nothing is ours except time
Then why do we lose it ?
Why do we squander it?
Ok, let's put a spin on this.

Think of time as your money; your wealth,
If you felt time was a worthwhile investment,
Wouldn't you manage it more wisely?

Why do we not understand the lesson that...

To lose an hour in the morning, we will spend all day hunting it.

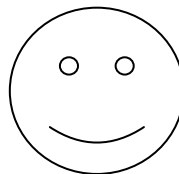
Timewasters

..some culprits



1. Doing more than one task at a time
2. Constant interruptions
3. Tasks not clear ...seek clarification
4. Not planning well enough in advance
5. Procrastination—seek out the real crux of the matter
6. Being unable to make decisions—analyse why
7. Cluttered environment
8. Poor communication or inadequate communication

Combatting timewasters



Accept that the major cause of time wasting is **YOU** and then ...

- Stop agonising and start organising
- Take care of yourself—mental and physical exhaustion lead to poor concentration, erratic work performance
- Don't jump into your day—plan intelligently
- Use your diary
- Make a list (all those list makers should be smiling but don't make it **too** long)
- Prioritise—make a quiet time—each day to set realistic priorities and deadlines.
- Learn to attack your list with **STRENGTH**, dealing with the more difficult ones over the easier ones
- Join teacherlibrarian.ning
- Reward yourself

Time is a precious commodity given to each and every one of us in equal shares.

How we manage it reflects the degree by which we value it.

*Author's note: I would like to thank Judi Fischer (formerly of SLAQ) who was the inspiration for the ideas above, got me to rethink my time management and agreed that brushing my teeth whilst in the shower was a start. :) **LGL***

REARVIEW MIRROR

Independent School Association South Africa Biennial Conference April 8-11 ... and we were there...

So often we are encouraged to publish papers, join other associations, share our ideas and give to others. Here is one experience of sharing...

In April, three Aussie teacher librarians went to Pietermaritzburg in KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa.

Overall, they prepared twelve presentations ranging in topics from thinking curriculum to Web 2.0, collaborative cultures to graphic novels, public image to evidence-based practice, conceptual changes in the role of the teacher librarian to advocacy and finally, reading engagement based on practitioner research.

Two of these presenters were from NSW (Di Laycock and Linda Gibson-Langford) and one from WA (Gary Green).

A note from the diary...



*Di Laycock, Gary Green, Linda Gibson-Langford,
Hilton College Library, Hilton,
KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*

'We chased the sun as we travelled west and found ourselves up for, more or less, over 30 hours... travelling from Johannesburg to Pietermaritzburg and finally to our destination, the Hilton College in the high veldt of KwaZulu-Natal.

Despite the chilly nights on the high veldt, we were cosy in our residence in the Headmaster's Guest House or in Gary's case, the Head Boy's

digs. Jetlag dogged us as we found ourselves up at 3.30am each morning but not to waste time, we went over our presentations and rewrote sections as a consequence of our networking and sharing of new knowledge from the local teacher librarian community.



Gary Green, Director of Library, PLC, Perth in new role as Head Boy, Hilton College, KwaZulu-Natal.

It was a rugged three days of keynotes and workshop presentations.

Technical hitches were met with humour and a *can do* without the YouTube or laughter as we watched well thought out slideshows disappear from the face of the data show or sound cards packing it in just at the critical moment.

What was essential was the craft knowledge of our work and the confidence that what we had to deliver, to speak about, to engage our audience in was more than the technical show.

The lesson for us (other than sleep whenever you can) is that sharing across other cultures is fantastic professional learning. It sharpens your perspective of how other countries view the issues that you feel you are up against, develops an empathetic understanding of the trial and tribulations of other education systems, opens your horizons to other worlds and other cultures and finally, encourages you to share your experiences, your knowledge, your passion within a keen sense of perspective'.

LGL

Got something to share?

Let
ASLA (NSW)'s
Publications' Officer
know.

Contact aslainfo@ozemail.com.au with the subject line **Publications' Officer**.



THINGS TO DO ! THINGS TO REMEMBER ! 2008

May 2-4		CBCA All the Wild Wonders Melbourne
May 5-26		ASLA Online III International Conference
May 15		<i>Leading Learning ... through Literacy & Literature</i> Penrith
May 19-26		Australian Library and Information Week
May 23		<i>Power Searching for Teacher Librarians</i> North Parramatta
August 3-6		IASL <i>World Class Learning and Literacy through School Libraries</i> University of California, Berkeley
August 10-15		74th IFLA General Conference and Council: <i>Libraries without borders: Navigating towards global understanding</i> Quebec, QC
August 16-22		CBCA Children's Book Week
August 29		Presentation of <i>Tips for Renovating School Libraries</i> plus tour of St Ignatius College, Riverview (new library)
September 2-5		ALIA Conference <i>Dreaming</i> Alice Springs
September 11		<i>Leading Learning ... through Collaboration</i> Homebush
September 20-October 2		<i>Australian Computers in Education Conference</i> Canberra
Nomination Deadline October 1		John Hirst Award John H Lee Memorial Award Teacher Librarian of the Year (NSW)
October 27		International School Library Day
November 1		<i>Leading Learning ... through Information, Communication and Learning Technologies</i> North Parramatta [includes AGM]



Something to think about

David Dunning, MSci (Sports and Therapy), Manchester, in his role as a practitioner and lecturer, offers this view on the importance of feedback in the manager's role.

feedback

Giving feedback is a tricky business and nearly 40% of feedback ... actually demotivate people. There is a skill to be learned here ... give feedback that's motivating, accurate and tactful ... give feedback that is concrete, as opposed to feedback that's about the person's character. You want to talk at the behavioural level. Feedback should not feel like a character attack but rather like a helpful suggestion.

The other thing is to not only point out the bad but point out the good, at a behavioural level ... give them feedback that's both positive and negative. If all the feedback is negative, negative, negative, they might develop some psychic calluses against that feedback.

... feedback becomes more risky and the consequences are higher if you receive it only rarely. Instead, to the extent that feedback is a small event that happens frequently, every piece of feedback carries less threat.