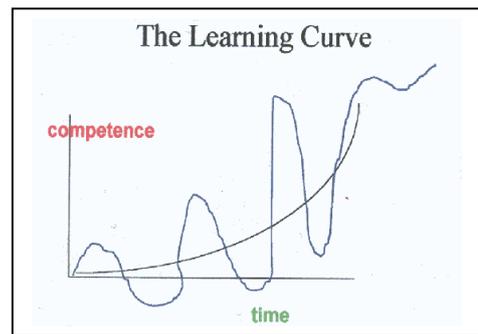


## ETL507 Reflective Portfolio

In 1990, I graduated from Macquarie University with a teaching degree, majoring in English. I taught high school English in either a part time or full time capacity for over twenty years and still loved the literature aspect of it but was looking for a change. As a wife and the mother of three reading children, I have always loved books, libraries and researching information so felt that a TL role would be a good fit. Although I have had the benefit of interacting with dynamic TL's in my teaching role, I have really enjoyed getting to know the different aspects of the TL job for myself. Completing this degree whilst adjusting to the new career has been both challenging, sometimes overwhelming and rewarding. At times my learning curve has felt like the one above, all over the place!



<http://davisdialogues.blogspot.com.au/2010/09/how-does-one-tame-computer.html>

### Subject review:

ETL401 was an introductory course that helped us to identify the old/existing culture in our libraries and consider the culture we wanted to create and ways to go about achieving it. We were introduced to the Information Skills Process (see right) and looked at emerging trends for future libraries. We looked at search strategies and critical reading strategies such as previewing and contextualizing. We looked at what Teacher Librarians 'do' – looking at professional role statements and the perspectives of leaders in the field like Joyce Valenza. We reflected on the value of professional networks and had an opportunity to look at or join many of these, including blogs and professional discussion lists. Other valuable professional tools we were introduced to included Pathfinders and resource lists, resources designed to support students in their search for information.

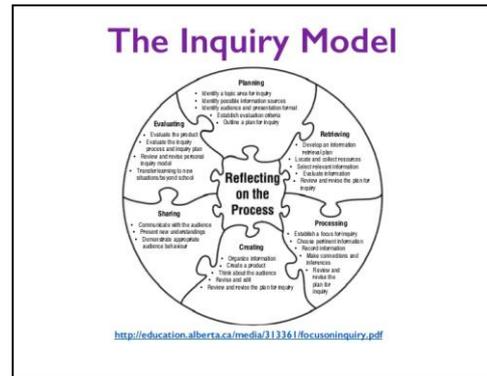


<http://firstfleetpathfinder.weebly.com/information-skills-process.html>

This subject also focused on the importance of building collaborative relationships with teachers and developing the respect and support of administration. There was also a significant focus on Inquiry Learning, looking at both the steps involved and the domains (affective, cognitive and physical) and how these are significant in the process.

The structure of Inquiry Learning makes the process very reasonable and logical and helps both teachers and students to see the process and understand where they are as they progress.

This was a subject with a distinct focus on the Teacher Librarian as a Learning Partner with both students and staff. It emphasized the professional aspects of the role, focusing on curriculum, learning design and making a significant contribution to the developmental learning journey of the students by teaching both structure and content.



In my recent working life as a secondary English teacher, I had been blessed to work with a number of dynamic and cooperative teacher librarians who were always willing to get on board and work with you. This subject emphasized the value of that aspect as well as the important role teacher librarians play in their formal teaching (in junior school) and in their informal interactions with students needing support and assistance.

This subject broadened my perspective on the TL role as well as giving me some professional tools and resources that I continue to utilise.

#### ETL402 – Literature Across the Curriculum

In this subject we looked at the evolution of children’s literature, particularly electronic texts, and their place in the modern world. We considered the trends in children’s literature (remember Little Golden Books?) and the development of genres such as comics, graphic novels and texts that have multi-media integrated in them.

It was interesting to note that while students have embraced electronic texts readily when reading for leisure, textbooks in electronic form have not been as readily embraced or implemented. Students are resisting the use of electronic textbooks and prefer to have paper copies, finding it easier to use for learning purposes. In this subject I learnt about ‘spatial instability’ and how students struggle to get a perspective on their physical position in electronic texts. The lack of a physical ‘paper book’ context and the constant scrolling on some eBooks had been a concept I had found irritating but had not paused to reflect on or understand. It also helped me to understand why electronic books have maintained the page / page turning format rather than the ‘scrolling’ down as it allows the reader to have a spatial awareness of where they are, relative to the whole text and maintains page stability.

Reading the research and thinking about the emerging trends in our own school library, it makes one cautious in response to the faculties calling for electronic textbooks. The implementation of electronic textbooks is an area that needs further research and discussion before proceeding automatically down that path. Our experience at school has shown that while students like the convenience of electronic textbooks stored on their computers, they actually prefer a paper copy to work from. Where students have been automatically issued with an electronic text, many have asked for a hard copy as well.

A lecture by Neil Gaiman emphasized the importance of libraries and reading for the development of empathy, and to learn the lessons of the past so as not to repeat them in the future. He also stressed

that personal literacy is now more important than it has ever been as so much of our world is now communicated online and that reading from an early age is vital to the development of literacy. Whilst literacy is an obvious concern for students born in the technological era we have now, the development of empathy was not something I had considered but it is vitally important in our increasingly narcissistic society.

ETL402 also looked at the way technology has had a significant effect on how people read and the importance of adapting reading instruction and technologies to maximize their effectiveness. 'Byte' sized reading is increasing while protracted reading is decreasing and we need to consider the impact of this information and other relevant research in our professional practice.

The course was also an excellent source of information about websites that review children's and YA literature. Sites/subscriptions that I have taken to using regularly include SCAN magazine, Literature Base and Magpies ([www.magpies.net.au](http://www.magpies.net.au)). We subscribe to all of these for our school library and they save us a lot of time.

#### EER500 – Introduction to Educational Research

This was a subject I had been dreading. The idea of doing educational research was a very daunting prospect, as mentally I associated it with utilising statistics, which feels like a foreign language to me. However the way this subject was organised made it a learning journey where you are actually aware of your own learning and progress. The two assignments in this subject were based on an area of personal interest and you learned the theory required as you stepped through the work outline and the interspersed steps of the assignment. The subject coordinator, Beverley Moriarty, was very approachable and reassuring, explaining difficult concepts using stories and analogies which helped them to make sense. The organization of the assignments also forced you to consider and reconsider your thoughts and ideas, adjusting and fine tuning as you went. It was good to understand the differences between quantitative and qualitative research and learn about the different paradigms and ways of thinking that underpin them. Whilst I would still not be in a hurry to conduct my own educational research, it has certainly allowed me to more fully understand the educational research I encounter in my own sphere. Furthermore, it has reminded me 'not to take evidence that you come across (in books, journals and so on) for granted' (Bryman, 2012, p.xxxi). It brought me to a greater understanding of the importance of research and how it can directly impact on the effectiveness of our teaching and learning.

#### ETL501 – Information Environment.

This subject helped develop knowledge in finding and evaluating information sources. In past decades, the teacher librarian would mainly focus on helping students to find information but technological developments and a far greater variety of information sources has meant that teacher librarians can now provide invaluable information on resources to staff as well, enhancing both the quality of teaching and the quality of the learning that takes place. Teacher Librarians first need to consider the teacher's purpose before they begin a search for resources as the resources must be suitable for the intended purpose and audience. If the resource is information rich but pitched at the wrong age or not applicable to the specified group, then it is of no benefit at all. Utilising website evaluation criteria allows teacher librarians, teaching staff and even students to make some objective judgments about the value of websites and whether the school community would benefit from their use.

Teacher Librarians also need to be experts in both teaching and employing search strategies. They need to be able to teach students skills in effective searching, such as using a Boolean search, trying

different search engines, rephrasing search terms, and using truncation. Making students aware of particularly relevant search engines, free of advertising and agendas, and demonstrating how to utilise online reference tools and links to broaden their searches are other ways teacher librarians can support their school communities.

A readability index is an excellent tool for teachers and teacher librarians to use to help to assess the suitability of a website. Other aspects to be considered include whether the material is relevant to the curriculum, and whether the social and cognitive levels are suitable for the students.

Developing information pathfinders is another excellent way of supporting the school community. Learning about Pathfinders and creating a Pathfinder for an assignment is an excellent way of coming to terms with new technology and makes the learning relevant.

### ETL503 – Resourcing the Curriculum

ETL503 was a very practical subject because it forced us to consider what our ideal collection would consist of and why. It equipped us with skills in choosing resources and looked at the acquisitions process and the steps involved. This was certainly an eye-opener for a novice librarian who has accidentally ordered the same books more than once because there was no logical system in place to avoid mistakes of this sort.

Weeding is another area I have struggled with in my short career as a TL because it seems somehow 'wrong' to throw out a perfectly good book just because it is old or hasn't been borrowed much! Debowski identified the benefits of regular (2001) weeding. This was followed by information on collection evaluation and ways to evaluate the collection and make decisions about what working well and what isn't. Larson's CREW guidelines (2012) were also very helpful in making decisions about what to remove from the collection and assisted us as we did a major cull before moving our school library management system from Oliver to AccessIt.

Other practical concepts in this course included the importance of a collection development policy that outlined policies and procedures for issues that may arise. One issue that has already arisen a few times in my own workplace is where parents challenge resources that have been included in the collection. Having an established procedure outlined in the collection development policy makes the whole challenge process more objective. A parent or interested party who challenges a resource has a number of steps to work through to officially lodge a challenge. In spite of a few parents who have raised issues, not one has yet pursued the complaint through the outlined process. So far they have been satisfied with our verbal explanations but it is reassuring to have a policy that makes the process objective and straightforward. The benefit of the process is that it forces objections to be considered logically and rationalised on paper, and few complainants are willing to pursue these lengths.

Mapping the collection was another concept of value introduced in this course. It was a worthwhile process because it identified weaknesses in the collection and allowed us to address them before the class projects brought the shortages to light.

'Patron driven acquisition' was another new concept introduced in this course and one which I would like to pursue further along the track. It makes sense to buy texts (whether digitised or on paper) that may satisfy user-requirements/demand. Setting up a system that responds to that demand (within reason) ensures money spent on resources is worthwhile rather than being based on an educated guess.

## ETL504 Teacher Librarian as Leader

In this subject we considered leadership styles, particularly transactional, transformational, instructional, situational and servant styles. We considered our own leadership qualities (my leadership style was democratic) and this naturally led to reflection on our current areas of strength and areas that could be improved on. We looked at the concept of change management and how we each play a role in managing (or not managing) change. Considering the roles of 'navigator' and 'critic' forced an evaluation of the role you play yourself, even changing roles depending on the situation. One concept in change management that I really related to was the idea of the 'learning dip' (Cameron and Green, 2004) where you feel incompetent as you adjust to a new role/system but understanding the transient nature of this was reassuring. This was something I related to strongly as a relative newcomer to the TL profession who was trying to learn about the role whilst implementing a new Library Management System.

## ETL507 Professional Experience and Portfolio

This subject has probably been the richest learning experience of my Master's Degree as it has given me a chance to see some of the ways people manage information in different institutions and cultural organisations. I spent my two week placement at Avondale College, a private Christian tertiary institution near Morisset. This is a college that is working towards achieving University status so there is a big focus on staff conducting research and publishing their studies. It was extremely interesting to attend meetings with the different faculties and the vice-president, to see how they want to work with the College library to embrace change and move forward. I was surprised by how particular each librarians' role was, each performing their individual tasks without a lot of cross-over. Each person spent most of the day isolated in their own office, with the occasional hour of cover on the main desk upstairs. Many of them have little or no actual regular contact with the students.

This is a huge contrast to how we operate in our school library, where we both have to know how to do all the library tasks and we deal with students ranging from Kindy to Year 12 on any given day. During the placement I also visited the SAN library in Sydney (primarily for nurses and medical students), the SAN museum (pictured right), and the archives centre in Wahrenonga for the Seventh-Day Adventist Church.



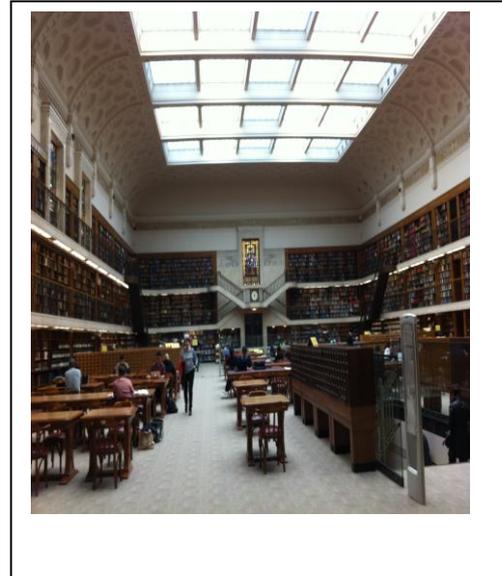
The SAN museum is a small but incredibly interesting collection of items and records detailing the SAN's long history. It has an extensive record of past trainees and employees and I found my mother and husband (both former SAN nurses) in their database. The SAN library is a very new, purpose built, state of the art facility with lots of windows and good lighting within the new clinical school (see right) on the SAN campus in Wahrenonga. It caters for the needs of trainee nurses at the SAN as well as medical students doing their placements there. The SDA Church archives were in the bowels of a building. There were no windows, it was freezing cold, musty and isolated from other people. I also spent time at their archive storage centre which is climate controlled and silent. It reinforced how lively and interesting my TL job and that archiving is not going to be a career priority for me!



The study days were good because they exposed us to a range of careers related to our study. It was interesting to see such a cross section of information venues, including a large university library and a large TAFE library, the grand State Library (see right), a smaller library at the Jewish Museum, the new AFTRS library and the Powerhouse library (which would have been interesting to explore on more depth). They helped us to identify personal areas of interest and see the variety of potential careers in this industry. (I grew up in Sydney but I learned more about public transport in Sydney in the 4 study days than I had learnt about it in the previous four decades!).



The subjects in the Master of Education (Teacher Librarianship) course have taught me many things. Overall though, it has become obvious that a good TL has the capacity to become an invaluable asset to both staff and students at their school. A teacher librarian has the capacity to both teach and support, to educate and inspire. They can demonstrate leadership and take an active role in the school's academic planning, programming and teaching. They can work to inspire and support staff and the student body by being resourceful, accommodating and friendly. They can seek to engage the students by choosing and promoting engaging resources and they can ensure the library is a friendly and 'safe' place for all. This is what I am trying to do each day.



This is my third year as a school TL. In that time I have learnt an enormous amount, both in the Masters course and on the job. However there is still so much left to learn. In the next few years my focus will be on developing my skills in utilising technology to engage students in my classes. I want to create lessons that will help students develop confidence in their own ability to find, evaluate and utilise information. I want to assist them in developing skills that help them to feel competent in their approach to secondary and tertiary studies. I want to assist them in planning and executing their information searches in a logical and methodical way.

The Master's Degree has been an exhausting but invigorating exercise. At times I have felt everything from overwhelmed and incompetent to inspired and eager. I am looking forward to the opportunity of slowing the academic pace and having the time to implement the changes that I feel will assist our students in their future academic careers. The degree has opened my eyes to the professionalism of the industry and motivated me to live up to it.

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