

Training the information handlers

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A recent paper published by the Department of Education and Children's Services in South Australia, entitled *Creating the Information society*, is a very pertinent discussion of how the current computer technology revolution is changing the nature of teaching and learning. It talks about the need for urgent and ongoing training and development for teachers and educators. Surprisingly, the school library is mentioned nowhere in the paper as a key area for information services delivery, but neither is any other teaching area.

As teacher-librarians we now have an opportunity to identify the school library as a focus area where this important educational need may be addressed. The library should already be regarded as a key area for the provision of electronic information services because it provides good access to a majority of users; it offers support to users unfamiliar with applications; also, electronic information naturally complements information from traditional sources, so its integration with the curriculum can happen naturally in the context of resource-based learning activities in the library.

Training and development will be vital if teachers are to integrate the use of computer technology into the curriculum. Much of the training will be more effective if done in-house, using equipment actually in the workplace.

Training and development programs may include seminars for individual faculties, where teachers have a chance to have hands-on experience with applications relevant to their subject area and where they may consider strategies for incorporation of electronic information into specific curriculum offerings. There should also be workshops for library staff, so that all staff members become familiar and confident with new technologies. One approach may be that each staff member selects several applications to study and practise, then during a workshop day share their knowledge with others. The teacher-librarian is in an ideal position to sponsor such initiatives. We are already used to working with teachers on curriculum design. We are several jumps ahead of most teachers in our technological skills. We need to reinforce the notion that the library is an appropriate centre for delivery of electronic infor-

mation services. We can make the distinction that the library is where *information searches* are carried out mostly on an individual or small-group basis; the school computer rooms are ideal situations for the use of *applications*, such as word processing, or where a whole class may receive tuition and practise skills.

Even with a modest budget, information technology is now within the reach of every school library in the shape of automated library catalogues, on-line services, and access to CD-ROMs. All of these may be acquired relatively inexpensively and introduced in stages. Larger budgets will see fuller networking and more computers per student, thus further integrating technology into the daily learning of students. As technology burgeons there will be an on-going need for training, much of which may be usefully offered, and even designed, by the school library. As teacher-librarians our rôle in the considered selection and interpretation of information sources is uniquely important, and so we must identify ourselves as agents in the emerging need for training and development activities.

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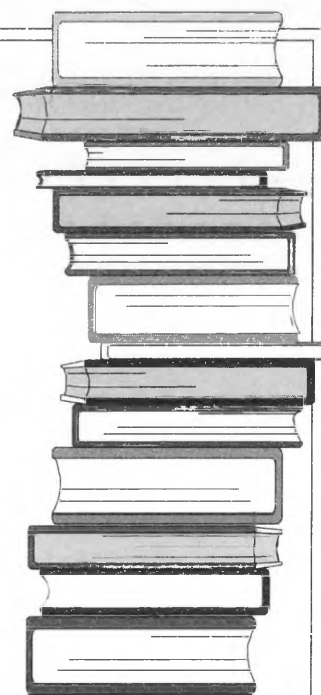
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