

Collaboration or competition? — school and public libraries

Michelle Dowling, president, Children's and Youth Services Section (New South Wales)

For years we have all read articles on the ideal situation where the local public library and the school libraries share a close working relationship with the joint goal of serving their shared client group with the best possible library services. This ideal should still remain a goal, but what is the relationship between school and public libraries in Australia today? This is a complex question and the answer will differ greatly from one local government area to another. In most cases we can only imagine a world where school and public librarians work together in conjunction with teachers to ensure research assignments are staged so as to enable optimum access to resources, where collection development policies are developed in consultation to avoid duplication, where services offered are designed to be complimentary, and strategic planning is a joint venture. As funding opportunities become scarcer and the expectations of students become more sophisticated,

cooperation between institutions should be embraced as an opportunity to secure the future of both the school and public library. While the two remain in 'competition' or simply continue on in isolation there are at least three possible scenarios:

- if they are well funded they may duplicate their resources and services to the extent that one becomes 'redundant';
- if the budget is tighter they may both waste valuable funding duplicating services and resources to produce two mediocre libraries; or
- if they exist in isolation they run the risk of becoming so insular that they lose their relevancy to their clients.

None of these outcomes is desirable. So where does the Children's and Youth Services Section (CYSS) fit into this picture? CYSS has a responsibility to its members to provide training, guidance and professional advice on

all issues affecting or impacting on library services to children. As we approach the twenty-first century many of the issues confronting teacher-librarians are the same as those confronting children's librarians. The rapidly changing technology, copyright, the introduction of the Internet into school and public libraries and the associated censorship issues are just some of the issues which all librarians working with children are currently confronting.

CYSS maintains a watching brief on issues affecting education practice and policies, and has a close association with the School Libraries Section. The section has helped to foster and nurture the relationship between teacher- and children's-librarians.

School and public libraries play an important part in the education, leisure and development of every child in Australia and it is essential that the two work together if this vision is to become a reality. ■

UNICORN from SIRSI

Serving five hundred academic, public and special libraries throughout North America and Europe the UNICORN automated collection management system is now available in Australia.

UNICORN for UNIX®
UNICORN for Client/Server
UNICORN for Open Systems Compliance
UNICORN for MS Windows™, Macintosh, X Windows
UNICORN from SIRSI

Sirsi Australia Pty Ltd
832 High Street, Kew East, Victoria 3102

phone (03) 9810 9565 fax (03) 9859 7062 internet: robyn.w@admin.sirsi.com

Windows™ is a registered Trademark of Microsoft® UNIX® is a registered Trademark of UNIX Systems Laboratories