Pathways to research at QUT

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As an elective unit, students in the Graduate Diploma in Education (Teacher-Librarianship) can undertake what is termed a directed study for 12 credit points, the equivalent of one unit out of the eight required to graduate. They may pursue study or research on a topic touched on in coursework or on a topic that can be demonstrated to have value for the work of the teacher–librarian. Though few of these projects constitute research of any great substance, students develop skills essential for higher degree work, such as:

- formulating a proposal and negotiating with potential supervisors;

- conducting a thorough search of related literature;

- writing a thesis-style literature review;

- beginning to understand case study and action research methodologies;

- working independently; and

- identifying, through case studies and pilot studies, topics for further investigation.

Some recent examples of research undertaken may be of interest to practitioners.

- *Students' use of computers for recreational and educational purposes in the library environment* by Patricia Battista

Working in the library where a bank of computers is housed, Ms Battista recorded her observations of children's recreational and educational usage. In her role as computer co-ordinator, she planned and implemented management strategies for equitable access and lessons for information and communications technology skill development. Her report exemplifies ways in which the skills and positive attitudes students have developed through their recreational use of computers can give an impetus to instruction in the less

entertaining but necessary tasks such as word processing and spreadsheets. Ms Battista explored practices at other schools in the local network, undertook professional development to enhance her information and communication technology skills, and read professional literature on the design and implementation of the technological components of information literacy programs. Her report demonstrates her synthesis and application of ideas from all of these sources.

- *Report on workplace health and safety issues in a school resource centre with proposals for minor alterations toward workroom and library comfort and safety* by Carolyn Noakes

Appropriate guidelines and standards for occupational health and safety were carefully studied and applied to a particular library and workroom. Ms Noakes also surveyed staff, consulted the school administration and an architect in order to recommend practicable alterations. Cross-references to plans and photographs in the appendices ensure that readers can visualise what she is writing about. Precise measurements and comparisons with recommended standards ensure objectivity. Knowledge of school libraries — their goals and the range of activities that characteristically take place in them — underpins the project and report. Alterations suggested for the library and workroom are linked to their effective and efficient function.

- *The development of school library policies* by Tania Ramke

Most aspects of collection management and related policy development are covered at a basic level in coursework. Many students use the directed study elective to explore the issues and processes more thoroughly in the literature and undertake policy writing or revision in the library where they work. Some of the resulting stud-

ies, such as Tania Ramke's, go beyond simple application to illuminate the process.

Tania Ramke's review of literature on school library policies includes the most significant documents from the fields of education and librarianship at state and national levels. Critical discussion of the focus school's resource management practices is based on recommendations and criteria from these authoritative documents and other professional literature. The process for formulating and implementing policies is developed logically from analysis of the existing situation and grounded in sound theoretical and professional principles. The three policies are consistent with the design and principles espoused in Tania's paper on the development of and rationale for school library policies, with appropriate fine-tuning for the specific school community.

- *What makes a visually stimulating library environment* by Sue Busch

In the unit 'Visual literacy and resource design', students apply the methodology of synergetic focus group discussion to gather data to inform the design of a visually-based resource for classroom use. Sue Busch used the same methodology to research clients' perceptions of what makes a visually stimulating library environment. In addition to reading in the area of visual literacy, she explored interior design and considered appropriate layout features. The final physical and visual transformation of her library came about with input from research conducted with her library users.

These four directed studies are fairly representative of the ten to twenty such studies completed in a given year. It is planned to offer studies in Teacher-Librarianship at Masters level at QUT, which will ensure further progress along the research path. ∎

Internet tips and tricks #3

These days, it is easier than ever to access e-mail from remote locations around the world (through internet cafes, or even from your local library), especially now that web-based e-mail is on offer from businesses such as yahoo.com and hotmail.com — but if you are accessing your e-mail via a web-browser, you may want to be sure that no-one else can access your mail after you have finished your session. To do this, having logged out of your 'session', return the browser window to the predefined home page for that machine, open up the preferences file from the drop-down menus and delete both the history activity AND the cache files that were stored. Having completed this, quit/exit out of the browser altogether, and make sure that no attachments or downloaded files are stored on the desktop or in normal default locations.

Having completed these simple steps, you severely reduce the opportunity for someone to merely browse backwards through the session in order to read the windows that were created by your own mail session. ∎