

Students at the Centre of Learning - A Library Design Panel

By Anne Whisken (compiler)

In August the School Library Association of Victoria presented its main conference for the year, titled: *Students at the Centre of Learning: 'It's a Digital World'*. Part of that day was a Library Design Panel of four teacher-librarians who presented the stories of their library design journeys, discussed key ideas and responded to audience questions. This Learning Landscape presents those stories.

SLAV Library Design Panelists

- Anne Whisken – Carey Grammar School - Panel Leader (Secondary)
- Barbara Roach – Caroline Chisholm Catholic College (Secondary)
- Haifa Atatreh – Islamic College of Melbourne (P-9)
- Catherine James – Middle Kinglake Primary School (Primary)

Library as Learning Space

Anne Whisken – Carey Baptist Grammar School (Secondary)

This presentation covered key elements followed to design a new library that will sit at the heart of Carey Baptist Grammar School's new Centre for Learning and Innovation.

About

Anne Whisken has been a librarian and teacher and teacher-librarian in secondary schools from the 1980s onwards in Victoria and Queensland. Each library required transformation in some way: sometimes digital, in others it was programs and services, and usually it involved re-organisation of spaces and collections. Her current project is a new library space inside Carey Baptist Grammar School's Centre for Learning and Innovation building currently under construction. Informing that design has been four years of constant research. At the same time, PhD study provides for reflection about how to arrange spaces and collections to provide for best learning.

Library Design Profile

Mellor Library at Carey Baptist Grammar School in its current building began in 1970, changing over the decades to bring in light and meet expanded programs and needs. Several years of experimenting with different configurations of tables, study areas and 'genrification' of collections informed designs for the new library learning space that will open in 2016. The new design provides for Wide Reading (2 rooms), Research classes (2 rooms), Year 12 Study Centre, private study (50), group study (50), seminar rooms (5), Harkness Room (1), Archives, reading lounge, middle school lounge, café bar, service foyer, Information Commons, eLearning support, ICT Sandpit.

From storage places to learning spaces

The key idea followed in thinking about our new library was to change from thinking about libraries as storage spaces to school libraries as learning spaces. It puts one question at the front of all decisions:

What learning takes place?

- *as teachers & students*
- *as we use these spaces & resources*
- *for learning?*

Influential thinking

Influential in that thinking were:

- Vygotsky (1978) *Zones of Proximal Development*: applied to library spaces gave rise to consideration about how can physical zones of interaction enhance learning?
- Thornburg (1999) *Campfires in Cyberspace*: gave archetypes for learning and spaces which was particularly influential in explaining library learning ideas to architects:
 - o Watering Hole (meeting & exchanging)
 - o Campfire (instructive, co-operative planning)
 - o Cave (reflective, sustained silent reading & thinking)
 - o Mountain Top (celebrating, presenting)
- Bruce (2008) *Informed Learning*: provides a pedagogy for information literacy education, a thinking which extended to physical spaces would emphasise their careful design as places to experience using information to learn in various ways.
- Hay (2010 >) *iCentre thinking*: stresses the need for design that matches form (spaces) to function (learning to take place).
- *The Third Teacher* (2010): explores the critical link between physical environment and learning.
- Sullivan (2013) *Library Spaces for 21st-Century Learners: A Planning Guide for creating New School Library Concepts* provides a design scaffold for library teams to examine existing and future learning and resource needs as they design and arrange spaces and collections.

Using Sullivan's Planning Guide

Sullivan's book provided an opportunity for looking at our design process through a different set of lens, finding some things familiar and others new and challenging. For example, Chapter One: 'Developing a Durable Mutation' asks: 'What should your new library include?'

New school libraries need to evolve and mutate into something new that will be enduring for a new generation of learners . . . (but) . . . the library evolutionary process must be noticeably faster than a traditional metamorphosis . . . students do not have time to wait for theories to be tested . . . Every school library must start moving down a path to enrich its students' learning experiences (Sullivan, 2015, p. 5).

Using the ideas explored in that chapter, I have analysed how we developed a 'durable mutation'. The design process for Carey Baptist Grammar School's new library space has drawn the library team closely into the planning, and the points detailed in Sullivan's first chapter describe well the process we followed.

Learn from everyone: look for good ideas in shops, clinics, museums and galleries

Our research journey has taken four years, with constant searching for ideas around the world and in Australia, much of that documented in previous Learning Landscapes articles, and in the Library Learning Spaces Scoop-It. The process of gathering, writing and online curating has been a good way to bring together emerging thoughts about the new learning spaces.

Watch for patterns of changes to come: curriculum, pedagogies, goals

As much as pedagogies and school goals have stressed the idea of spaces to provide for large and small group learning, other research and evidence in our own practice points to the need also for areas where students can engage in quiet, reflective learning so essential for innovation and creating new knowledge, and for the sustained engagement in narrative so important for learning how to read both fiction and non-fiction.

Mutations come in many forms: what to include for the short term & what for longer term

We could see that service and support styles familiar to school libraries are changing, so it is important to move away from the idea of a large 'reception and circulation' desk, with library staff on one side and library users on the other. Accordingly, the new space provides for self-loans, and staff stand side by side with library

users at particular service points. The library staff assist and show how – they are guides in using information to learn.

As advised by Hay's iCentre concept, change in service and support can extend to blending some aspects of library, ICT and eLearning into a cohesive support group. The needs of the school in those areas can be analysed in terms of 'facility' support: the 'how' to use and find information resources, ICT and eLearning software and hardware; and the 'deeper' support required for research, diagnosing and repairing hardware, designing curriculum to include information literacy education and eLearning software and other pedagogies and learning strategies.

A team can provide the 'facility' support and refer the deeper teaching and learning support to specialists in each area. In the case of the library and eLearning, that is usually the teacher-librarians and eLearning teachers, while the ICT support would be referred to specialist technicians. We would see the facility support happening in the high traffic area of the library and the deeper support happening in suitable spaces further into the library or ICT.

Zone planning: *what arrangements of spaces, furniture and collections provide best for promotion, engagement, traffic, assistance?*

Library collections are moving to include more digital and less paper-based resources, but the latter will continue for quite some time yet, so we looked at different collection arrangements that would provide for these evolving collection styles. For example, we will move from the tradition of stacks to walls of books that are 'friendlier' and more engaging. Large parts of the fiction and non-fiction collections are being re-arranged into 'genre' subsections to provide both for a more 'bookstore' feel as well as to reflect more closely the curriculum information needs. Dewey arrangement is being followed within the non-fiction sub-sections, and author alphabetical in the fiction genre sections.

The library is deliberately organised into noise and traffic zones, so that the quiet zones required for individual study and for whole class wide reading and individual fiction focus sit deeper into the library away from high traffic areas and the noisier group work zones.

Large digital screens at the approaches to the library and good display furniture will promote online and paper-based resources, with QR codes directing learners from shelves to online, and the library system referring learners to both.

Mapping a learning process: *what space arrangements work best for a learning process, e.g., the eight steps of inquiry learning?*

Spaces in the library have been deliberately designed to provide for the physicality of learning where whole class, small and large group, and individual activities are followed in a learning process, as well as the opportunity to learn surrounded by the relevant collections of books and screens directing learners to relevant online collection

Inspiring School Leadership Knows the Value of Libraries Barbara Roach – Caroline Chisholm Catholic College (Secondary)

This presentation covered the leadership and processes followed at Caroline Chisholm Catholic College to rebuild a library service and space in the aftermath of a near-closure of both.

About

Barbara Roach had been teaching for twenty years in Catholic secondary schools and the TAFE sector in Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales before being drawn to the potential excitement and opportunities available in the role of the teacher-librarian. She completed a Masters of Education, Teacher-librarianship from CSU, Wagga Wagga. Her present role, Information Service Centre Coordinator at Caroline Chisholm Catholic College, is the third school library she has led. The opportunity to rebuild the library service, the

physical space, the collection, a team of staff and a culture embracing lifelong learning, a love of literature and research drew her to this position.

Library Design Profile

Bouchard Information Services Centre (BISC) at Caroline Chisholm Catholic College, Braybrook. The transformation of the BISC from a drab, 'run down' study hall into a vibrant contemporary library was my challenge when I was appointed in 2013. Design started with the building floor plan, site visits and discussions with staff. Then I drew, researched, tested ideas and developed a concept for presentation to the Principal. I was determined that some improvements to the physical space would be evident when staff and students returned for the new school year. Shelving, chairs, tables and couches were the obvious choices but also books and technologies. Change had begun, delighting students, staff, parents and guardians.



The downside of library downsizing

The Bouchard Information Services Centre (BISC), the focus of this article, is the larger of two campus libraries of Caroline Chisholm Catholic College, Braybrook. Under the previous Principal's leadership, the College invested heavily into Information and Communication Technologies, required infrastructure, the provision of the 1:1 notebooks and employment of ICT staff.

At the same time, the direction was that the library services were no longer an essential part of the school community. The collection was significantly downsized and moved into a room to be managed by security gates and self-checking kiosks. Staffing was less than minimal with teachers being rostered for supervision during the breaks and support staff required to re-shelve books. Acquisitions were practically non-existent, and processing was outsourced. The large, rundown space was used for year level assemblies and timeout.

Leadership for change

When Marco DiCesare began as Principal in 2012 one of his priorities was the re-establishment of the Information Services. He put aside some funds to employ a teacher-librarian to be the Information Services Coordinator from 2013, to purchase furniture, resources and technologies. He also challenged the staff to think about their Information Services differently; he began a change process, demonstrating his commitment to school libraries, their programs, services and resources. He was awarded the 2014 SLAV Leadership Award, recognising this commitment to school libraries at both Caroline Chisholm Catholic College and Lavalla Catholic College, his previous school.

New directions

As the appointed Information Services Coordinator, I was charged with the responsibility of bringing the Information Services back.

Tasks were many and varied including:

- develop and communicate a design concept through discussions with stakeholders, research and investigation
- practical decisions, designing the space and furniture selection
- purchase and processing of print resources
- updating neglected software
- learning how to use a new library management system, deciding whether to change this or keep it, seeking training, working with the provider to improve functionality
- implementing an eBook collection
- evaluating database and newspaper subscriptions
- evaluating and developing the Information Services Virtual space
- creating quality displays with a gallery feel
- driving innovations, mobile devices and makerspaces
- participation in the staffing decisions for the Information Services
- building relationships with teaching staff
- building the reading program with the English teachers.

Library as the heart of a learning community

An essential part of this story is the impact on the school community of what in reality was the closure of the library. While yes, the doors were open and teachers could bring their classes to the space, it was no longer a vibrant school library. It was a repository of books, they were certainly safe in a secure room with minimal interaction from students or staff. I heard many stories from staff and students about what had happened to their library. People would seek me out to tell me how pleased they were to see books coming back into the space. They told stories of the skip-loads of books which were removed. They talked about their sense of loss, and there was a genuine sadness for many people about losing their library.



Concern was expressed for the students and what they were missing out on. There was outrage at the removal of valuable resources and the expense of setting up this new operation. The loss of resources, services and staff had been keenly felt. I think this is what we need to remember and to understand from this story.

When school leaders talk about reducing the library, cutting back on services, staff or resources they run the risk of repeating this devastation and replicating this sense of loss.

School libraries have an educational purpose but also a communal function. They need to be energetic, relevant, alive, and accessible. They need staff that understand schools and libraries. Teacher-librarians are well placed to do that.

‘Future-proofing’ school libraries

Teacher-librarians are needed to link curriculum and resources to students and staff. The school library and teacher-librarians must pay attention to the AITSL standards of:

- knowing our students and how they learn
- knowing content and how to teach it
- planning and implementing effective teaching and learning
- creating and maintaining supportive and safe learning environments
- assessing, providing feedback and reporting on student learning.

This is what will future proof school libraries as 21st Century Teaching and Learning spaces.

So, while this report doesn’t list all of the decisions made or the processes undergone in the re-development of this library, it paints a picture of how important the library is to the function of a school community, and to the people who live within that community.

People do love libraries, they need them, they use them and they want them.

Rising From the Ashes at Middle Kinglake Primary School

Catherine James – Middle Kinglake Primary School (Primary)

This presentation explored the process that enabled the library at Middle Kinglake Primary School (MKPS) to first form itself as a library service, and then rise from the ashes of Black Saturday.

About

Catherine brings 30 years' experience as a teacher and teacher-librarian to her dual position of the Music and Library teacher at Middle Kinglake Primary School.

Library Design Profile

Middle Kinglake Primary School Library has built itself as a functioning space and program twice – before Black Saturday fires, and again afterwards. This belief in the importance of a good library for successful learning lies behind the determination of the Principal and staff to bring this about – that, and confidence in Catherine as the person to make it happen.



From a collection of books to a library

While on Family Leave I was working as a CRT at schools local to home. While doing a stint of CRT work at MKPS, the Principal learned I was a trained librarian and I was offered the job as the school librarian.

The library was a collection of books that had been added to and organised over the years by parent volunteers. It had been set up well. But with parents moving on and the volunteer base changing, the skill level fell and the library was disorganised and not functioning well. The principal had a vision to have a strong vibrant library with a dedicated staff member to service the school community.

The library was in a storeroom next to the staff room. I was to move the library out of the storeroom into the new community multi-purpose room. There was more space but with finite school resources it meant the library had to share a space with the before and after school care program.

I was given a lot of time and support including a volunteer parent who was a trained library technician.

Weeding of the original collection had never taken place so I had some 'interesting' and awful books to cull. Some of the books were so old I did create an archive section of Biggles books from the 1930s, Beano books from the 1950s and some earlier books that could be considered historical. But then there were the tatty books, books from the 1970s that had gone yellow; cheap and nasty supermarket books; and some that were just plainly not for our time, being racist and sexist. Culling took place in the 'dead of night' because people don't want you to throw out books. So I culled well after school hours and on the weekends, and the culled books were thrown into the skip and covered with other rubbish so they were not rescued. It took a year of work, and in February 2009 the library was fully established, catalogued and computerised.

The school had 26 preps enrolled that year, healthy numbers for a small school. We were ready and raring to go for another year.

Falling to ashes

The first week of school that February was a hot, hot week.

On February 7th Black Saturday arrived. Our school was hit by three fire fronts – it didn't stand a chance.

In the inferno, a family that had fled from their home in nearby Strathewen had sheltered in the school. As each building burned they moved from building to building seeking protection from the radiant heat. With the last of the school's buildings catching alight the family sought refuge on the adjacent oval and survived.

The fire completely destroyed the school. After hurried organisation the school community moved, split between Epping Views Primary School and Kinglake Primary School.

In the aftermath and recovery, the donations started to arrive. Many of the donations were for the library and for my other job at the school, music. Donations would take up a huge part of my life for the next few years.

A temporary school was established by the beginning of second term. It was a series of portables linked together with covered decking on the Kinglake Oval carpark. We were back together within sight of the old school and able to view the site where the new school would be built.

The library was now many boxes of donations in a space shared with Grade 5 and 6, the before and after school care program, and my music program. The room was crowded and highly timetabled to meet its competing demands.

I had an office next to the room to begin the long task of shifting through the donations and cataloging the books. The volunteer library technician who helped in the last library was now a paid employee. Karen Pitman began the task of cataloging thousands of books and did an amazing job. She now works as the library technician at Whittlesea Secondary College.

The children were allowed to borrow at this stage using a rough, named 'borrowing system', but as books were catalogued and boxed ready for the new library in the future new school the catalogued books were withdrawn from borrowing and the temporary library. We could not afford to lose these books. The input of cataloguing made them too valuable to risk losing in a non-controlled borrowing system going to often transient homes.

Running a working library and cataloguing the new stock was a difficult process in the restricted space with high demands from competing groups. Karen and I catalogued approximately 100 books a week.

Ominous signs

The new school was to be built a couple of hundred metres away. A local farmer had generously donated land. We were so eager to have a proper school. But when it came time to see the department standard new school plans, there appeared to be no provision for a library. A library does not feature at all. There is a storeroom and the builder said they don't put in libraries; they build schools with storerooms.

Not only that, there had been a drop in the numbers of children attending the school. One third of the school population lost their homes. Many of them moved on, rather than build again. The numbers of the school dropped from around 150 children pre-bushfire to 100 or under moving into the new school. At these numbers could the school afford a library? The numbers had dropped so much the school was now eligible to have the MARC van. I was wondering if another primary school library was to disappear and its resources go to waste.

Rising from the ashes

Two things happened. Firstly, my colleagues, without me knowing, decided that they would support the library staying and would not accept the MARC van. Secondly, the principal insisted that the new school should have a purpose-built library, that it have a properly resourced office and the storeroom on the plans would be where this new library space would be situated.

It was a great affirmation of the role of librarian and for me personally, which has stayed with me.



As it came nearer to moving to the new school, a grant to each of the three destroyed schools were made – \$17,000 was received from the Freemasons to establish the new library.

RAECO came to the new school as it was being prepared. They took measurements of the proposed space, book numbers and dimensions, and prepared bespoke shelving to maximise the space we had set aside for the library. The features I particularly like are the mini-circulation desk and the shelves that are a great height for primary school kids.

Softlink updated our library software system from Alice to Oliver Junior for free and Karen and I received one-on-one training sessions about how to operate the system.

We received many donations from schools and organisations from all over Australia. In particular, support from Queensland was notable, and it should be noted that Queensland has a strong commitment to school libraries. Grants and donations from RAECO, the Freemasons and Oxford University Press were very helpful.

Donations are fantastic and we needed them. But everyone must also realise it takes resources to manage and process donations. There was a shipping container of donations to be sorted, much of which was done in my own time. Sorting fatigue set in, but the bulk of the books are now where they should be.

At the same time I was going through the same process for the music program: running a program, sorting through donations and establishing a new music space in the new school. It was an extraordinary time.

Enthusiasm and Hard Work can Create a Vibrant Library Learning Program: 'Think outside the box, our ICOM Library rocks!' Haifa Atatreh – Islamic College of Melbourne (P-9)

This presentation explained the process followed to build a library service and space at the Islamic College of Melbourne.

About

Haifa Atatreh has finally found her dream job. From Year 9 Haifa wanted to be a teacher and she was accepted into the Bachelor of Education after completing the Diploma of Library and Information Services. Her first job was as a Student Rover helping students in the library. This made her more passionate about working in a library and teaching students at the same time. Haifa started as a Prep teacher in 2010 and after a break she did Casual Relief Teaching and customer service at a shop and revitalised her love of teaching. She recommenced teaching in 2012 and in 2013 joined the Islamic College of Melbourne to do two roles – teach grade 4 plus setting up the school library from scratch. As well as working fulltime, Haifa is also studying the Masters of Education (Teacher-librarianship) course.

Library Design Profile

Planning began by observing other school libraries and public libraries across Victoria as well as receiving feedback from everyone to ensure the space catered for everyone in the school. There was quite a lot of trial and error. To date, 17,000 books and resources have been catalogued with the help and support of teachers, students, parents, volunteers from the community and the management of the school. It has been fantastic progress. The library is still growing to become an effective library for students from years Prep to Year 12.



History of ICOM library

The library started its development in 2013 with many uncatalogued books in a small room. We were provided with a portable building, in which we have created a computer space, a class space with an interactive whiteboard, a reading corner, library shelving and recently we have added new green 'wavey' shelves for display. Two years later, there is grass around the building, and it houses a collection of 17,000 catalogued items, an achievement made possible by the support from teachers, support teachers, parents and volunteers. I do all the cataloguing and operation of the library. The library provides lots of different activities including Book Clubs and Book Fairs that are organised and held in the library.



Collections

We have built collections of:

- Take Home and Guided Readers
- Non-fiction and Fiction, Picture Books and Big Books
- Arabic and Islamic books
- Teacher reference books and Teacher resources (literacy, numeracy, Arabic)

- Class sets of Atlases
- AV materials including Posters, CDs, DVDs

Library programs

I have established a program of Library Lessons, with students bringing their 'library bags' for borrowed books and diaries to note due dates. We open at lunchtimes for secondary students, and after school for teachers.



The Take Home Readers program is very busy, run by teachers in their classrooms with collections provided by the library. The importance of reading every day is emphasised, and students change their books daily. I help teachers set up systems to maintain borrowing records in their classrooms.

Future plans

We are still developing, in two to three years' time hope to have a new library building, and we are also expanding our collection. The catalogue will soon be ready for use by staff and students, and it has engaging aspects for them such as the image of the book and provision for adding recommendations.

I am enjoying my job every second and minute of the day. It is amazing studying and working at the same time, because you can learn things at university and adapt it in your workplace. Tip: If you believe you want to become something, you can do it. Yes, we go through challenges and hardships along the way, but the key is to be patient and always remember the final goal. And remember, you are not doing it for the money, you are doing it for your patrons: and in a school library, they are the students and staff/teachers. Push yourself and you will accomplish your goal. Trust me –all your hard work will be recognised at the end, if not today, then in the future (Haifa Atatreh).

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