

# The life of an itinerant teacher-librarian

Lesley See, Toowoomba Catholic Education

Until this year I have been a city dweller, living in Brisbane and working as teacher and teacher-librarian in Catholic schools. At the end of 1999, in search of a new direction for my life, I accepted a teacher-librarian position within Toowoomba Catholic Education.

Teacher-librarian placement in schools is a new venture for the Toowoomba diocese and at present there are four of us. Three are based in Toowoomba and travel to cover all Catholic schools in and around Toowoomba, as far as Chinchilla. My base is St Mary's school, Charleville, in the southwest corner of Queensland.

Rarely having been west of Toowoomba or so far away from my family, it was with some trepidation and a sense of adventure that I began the journey to my new home in Charleville. I had not seen the house I was to live in or met any colleagues and I had no idea of what Charleville was going to be like, although I had been told that it was a friendly and welcoming place.

Well, I have been here for six months now and have loved every minute of it! I have made lifelong friends and have fallen in love with the countryside, the people and the lifestyle.

My role as teacher-librarian for this western cluster of schools involves sharing my time among five schools located in Charleville, Quilpie, St George, Cunnamulla and Mitchell. In almost six months I have clocked up 20 000km of driving, my farthestmost destination being four hours away (five if it has been raining!) Although it is tiring, I enjoy the driving and have not yet hit a 'roo, emu, pig or fox.

Each resource centre within which I work is as different as the last, yet all schools are dedicated to providing the best resource and learning facilities that their situation will allow for their students.

Our goal as teacher-librarians in the Toowoomba diocese is to work towards the development of information literacy within each of our school com-

munities. We support and advise resource centre staff and all staff members and work with school personnel to design and implement policies and practices that will promote information literacy outcomes. A 'typical' week's work for me could incorporate curriculum planning with teachers; library housekeeping; team teaching or modelling; providing assistance in use of technology; assisting in the creation of a stimulating and helpful environment in which children and teachers can utilise information and services effectively and enjoyably and; consultation with the principal and others regarding policy development.

Of course all these things happen within school environments, which are as varied as they are unique, and the importance of immersing myself in the life of each school has been a vital component of my work. In doing so I have come to value the dedication of the principals and staff, and to love the no-nonsense, down-to-earth children whose enthusiasm for life and learning is exceptional.

Each school I support exists within a unique township, and close ties are developed between the school and the local community. It has been a great pleasure for me to befriend people in all the places I visit and to become involved in local events and activities.

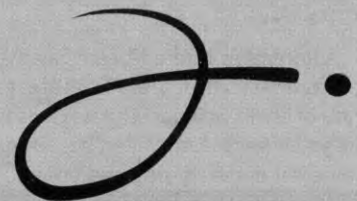
For principals and teachers, including myself, isolation is an issue. Not so much geographically, but professionally, we miss the networking and supportiveness of others outside our particular school community. The professional and personal friendships that develop and opportunities to get together with other outback schools are extremely important. I try to meet with my Toowoomba teacher-librarian colleagues at least twice a term and find their support to be invaluable.

In all, my professional and personal life in the Queensland South-West is great. Each day offers new experiences and situations and I am learning about myself and the wonderful people and life out here constantly. Come and visit sometime. You will be more than welcome! ■

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