More than a space, a way of thinking...

Rosalind Kentwell, curriculum resources co-ordinator, Melbourne High School Library

Melbourne High School is a selective-entry government school catering for boys from years 9 to 12. There are 1350 students and about 130 staff. Melbourne High School Library is not just a space, but a way of thinking. Of course this is not literally true, but if the students only take with them the memory of a hospitable environment when they leave, then the library will not have fulfilled its primary goal. The library recognises in its mission statement that it has a significant part to play in developing and resourcing the school as a learning community: a place where the skills of information literacy are recognised and developed, and where the ability and desire to learn are fostered amongst all members of the school community.

The library collection is well established, having been adequately funded over a number of years, and includes materials that support the school curriculum as well as resources for extra curricula and recreational needs. Unusually for a school, it has an extensive and well used periodical collection, enhanced, in recent years, by the provision of on-line indexes. This has provided a significant resource for the teaching of information literacy skills.

Automation of the library catalogue was commenced in 1989 with the purchase of Dynix Scholar. The school's Parents and Friends Association has been instrumental in purchasing and up-grading the catalogue over the years and this has provided an important link into the parent community. Parents also make up the fifty or so volunteers who attend the library once a month to assist with shelving and covering. The development of this relationship has been important as it has increased parent's understanding of the work of the library.

The library is staffed by two library technicians and four teacher-librarians, one of whom is part-time. This staffing reflects the emphasis placed on the teaching and learning role of the library and has enabled a range of initiatives that have established the library as central in the life of the school.

Teacher-librarians are involved in running professional development for class teachers (and other teacher-librarians) presenting courses such as 'Computers across the secondary curriculum' and 'Learning with the internet', both of which are initiatives of the Victorian Education Department. This helps to give credibility to the professional knowledge and skills of teacher librarians amongst their classroom colleagues.

The Global Learning Centre is a recent development. This is an enclosed section of the library, which can accommodate a class of twenty-eight students at fourteen computers. Teacher-librarians work with class teachers to introduce students to on-line resources and to help them to develop the skills to integrate information from a range of resources into appropriate responses to research tasks.

The library has a web site (http://www.mhs.vic.edu.au/home/library/library.htm) developed by the teacher-librarians and this includes a 'Guide to the research process' and 'Melbourne High School referencing guidelines' as well as links to selected curriculum related resources. This is maintained in co-operation with the school web co-ordinator. This teacher also manages a general-purpose computer lab which provides additional access to the library's networked information resources and catalogue and to the internet.

Teacher-librarians are also responsible for Year Twelve private study. This, though originally perceived as an imposition, has become an important part of the library's interaction with the senior stu-

The library has a comprehensive collection of periodicals on display

dents. Teacher-librarians have their own classes of about seventy students and make a point of getting to know the students, the subjects they are studying, their resource needs and the problems they are having. Twelve additional personal computers are available for these students.

Working with subject areas and faculties is another important aspect of the library. All information resources are centrally purchased and catalogued, which involves understanding the needs of the class teachers. Library staff develop links with specific faculties and alert them to new material or undertake information searches for them. Promotion of reading is emphasised in conjunction with the English faculty, and as well as developing and promoting wider reading selections, a literature festival for the students and an evening for parents about boys' reading are part of this year's program.

In keeping with the library's position as an integral part of the teaching and learning within the school, the teacher-librarian in charge of the library holds a position on the Local Curriculum Committee, is convenor of the Curriculum Resources Development Group, and is an elected member of the School Council. Involvement with these school-wide groups helps to keep the library relevant to the school needs and also enables the library to play a leading role in the development of curriculum and the pursuit of educational excellence. ∎

Online and print resources reside side-by-side