Digital Evolution of Schools and School Libraries

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At a time when the Australian Government is espousing the importance of highly agile innovative organisations, the digital technology is transforming all manner of organisations and schools are moving at pace to a digital operational mode it is critical Australia's school libraries and teacher librarians take advantage of the opportunities opened. They need move quickly and proactively to ensure their contribution is central to the workings of rapidly evolving, increasingly integrated schools.

There is now a clear understanding in all organisations, including schools, that organisations have to go digital to remain viable (Lee, 2015). The efficiencies, economies, benefits and enhanced capability of the digital organisation far surpasses that of the traditional paper based operation.

Moreover there is the growing recognition that all digitally based organisations, as complex adaptive systems will continually evolve (Pascale, et. al. 2000), and will do so more rapidly, taking advantage of the digital convergence to become evermore integrated. They will abandon their old 'silo like', 'loosely coupled' (Weick, 1976) structures and discrete operations, and adopt an increasingly integrated and networked form.

The word 'critical' was chosen carefully.

'Silo like' school libraries that sit alone, operate largely autonomously, that are perceived to be paper focussed and removed from the core workings of the school can be readily dispensed with in the creation of more tightly integrated and productive school ecosystems.

To thrive and to continue making a significant contribution in any rapidly evolving digital organisation - be it a company, university or school - the library and librarian need play an integral and lead role in the organisation's workings and its on-going evolution.

Most schools have been slow to move to a digital operational mode but teacher librarians have only to talk with their colleagues within the pathfinder schools, business and the public sector to recognise the pattern of change.

School libraries and teacher librarians need to position themselves where their service is perceived by the principal and staff to be central to the school's vision, operations and growth, and where the role played grows and evolves naturally – and largely unwittingly – as the school's total ecosystem matures.

That is easy to say, but it is difficult to achieve, particularly when the principal lacks vision, digital acumen and the willingness to lead.

It is appreciated most teacher librarians now have as their focus the teaching, with little interest in the macro workings of the school.

However the stark reality in most schools and education authorities is that unless the teacher librarian looks after his/her own situation, has a sound appreciation of the macro workings of the school, its vision and its digital

evolution and is proactive and positions the information services at the centre of all operations no one else will do so.

Accept the folly of trying to defend the bastions against digital evolution.

Recognise that by being proactive you can assist in shaping the desired future, and lessen the risk of becoming a digital casualty.

The experience of the pathfinder schools suggests the following could assist that quest.

- **It is not personal**. It is natural to feel that. The Digital Revolution is simply impacting you.

- **Understand the macro workings of the school**. In tightly integrated school ecosystems it is vital all staff, teaching and professional support – and not just those atop the apex – understand the macro workings of the school, able to contribute as professionals to its growth (www.digitalevolutionofschools.net).

- **Appreciate the evolution of complex adaptive systems**. Those with a science background will already understand the importance, but all staff need to recognise the implications of working with seeming chaos and constant change, and the new order the disturbance creates.

- **Thrive on chaos.** Embrace and promote a culture of change and support all one's colleagues in their work, continued growth and evolution.

- **Adopt a digital and networked mindset**. Grasp the marked contrast between analogue and digital thinkers provided by Bhaduri and Fischer (2015). Then you'll appreciate why a pathfinder school in a networked society has chosen to 'outsource' its e-book services to the local library.

- **Integrate the school 'library' and ICT services**. Move to the centre of school operations. Look to the kind of iCentre model advocated by Hay (2010, 2015) and have it play a lead role in the digital workings and evolution of the school.

- **Support the principal's leadership**. Provide the principal, the staff and the wider school community the on-going support and information services they will need – as well as supporting the students.

- **Make your services indispensable**.

Conclusion

The Digital Revolution is daily occasioning immense on-going organisational transformation that could, unharnessed hurt many.

School libraries and teacher librarians are on trend to be hurt badly, unless each teacher librarian genuinely collaborates with his/her colleagues and the

school leadership in positioning the school library's programs and services at the centre of the school's digital evolution.

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