

A shared approach

By Jane Viner

Communication is the key to team leadership and sharing of library management roles. The main focus of this article is to give you some ideas to empower your staff team, no matter how small, to assist you in leading your school library forwards in this decade of curriculum and workplace change.

Methodist Ladies College Libraries was built on an existing team structure prior to 2000. Since then, a number of integrated changes in services, personnel and teams have occurred, leading to the current library management structure under the MLC Libraries umbrella.

MLC Libraries

MLC Libraries comprises 20 staff (EFT 16.7) and encompasses two main libraries, special libraries, department libraries and specialised collections. These collections are housed in a variety of locations from Kew to Mallacoota.

MLC Libraries' diverse group of staff supports the information needs of the college community and provides a wide range of programs and services. We provide information services to MLC Kindle and the four schools, Tiddeman House, MLC Banksia and MLC Marshmead (see graphic).

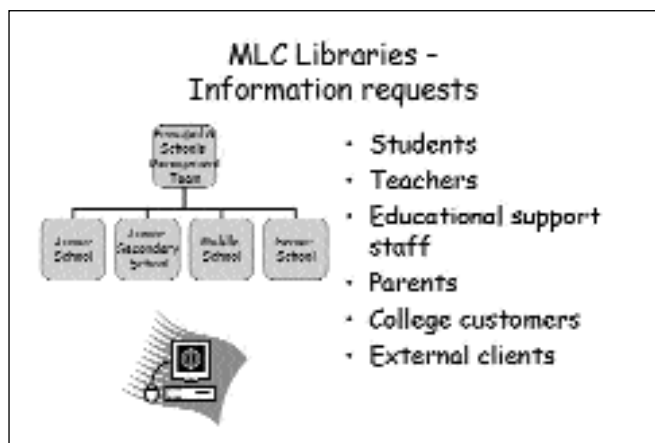
The MLC Libraries team members belong to a variety of teams within their professional roles at MLC including college staff, school team, curriculum team, department team, Junior Library, Walton Library, Audiovisual, Educational or Technical Services teams. Other roles are across teams or are based in the secondary

school such as the Curriculum Resources Co-ordinator or encompass a college responsibility role such as the Director, the Audiovisual Services Co-ordinator and the Librarian.

Mission statement

"MLC Libraries promotes the development of information literacy and nurtures an appreciation of literature in a supportive, creative and information-rich learning environment (© MLC Libraries, 2005). Our mission statement guides everyone in their daily tasks and responsibilities.

MLC Libraries as a name and entity was approved by the College management team in 2002 and now operate under this title. This collaborative structural change experienced some highs and lows during the changes. With the recent introduction in 2005 of the Performance Recognition and Development process for school assistants, the library staff appreciates the benefits of working under one umbrella with its



small internal team focus. The MLC Libraries team meets monthly and each team meets fortnightly. Minutes are made available to all MLC Libraries team members, the Vice Principal and the Director of Curriculum via email. Print copies are sent to Archives for college records.

Team structure

MLC Libraries encompasses a number of teams. There is the overall MLC Libraries or department team which is then divided into three main teams - Audiovisual Services, Educational Services and Technical Services. All staff fit into one of these teams. There are a number of team leaders: the Director of MLC Libraries, Junior School Library Co-ordinator, Audiovisual Services Co-ordinator, Educational Services Co-ordinator, Technical Services Co-ordinator, Curriculum Resources Co-ordinator, Literature Co-ordinator, Magazines Co-ordinator, Online Resources Co-ordinator and Library System Manager.

The Audiovisual Services and Technical Services Co-ordinator positions are held by school assistants and they make direct staff reports as well as being active participants in goal setting for the school assistants as part of the Performance Recognition Program. The Librarian is an educational support staff member and holds the positions of Online Resources Co-ordinator and Library System manager.

Within the college structure the MLC Libraries team consists of three main teams. Each of these teams has a team leader who co-ordinates the team members in consultation with the Director of MLC Libraries. One subset of these teams is the Junior School Library team consisting of a teacher-librarian and a library technician. Within the Educational Services team there are 3.2 secondary teacher librarians for approximately 1700 secondary students and 1.0 primary teacher-librarian for 400 students. We are very fortunate to have a significant number of educational support staff to assist the teacher-librarians deliver

information literacy and literature programs to our students.

The Audiovisual Services team consists of the Audiovisual Services Co-ordinator an audio visual technician and an audio visual library technician who provide a variety of technical support services for the College community. They support teachers and students in classrooms, library learning spaces, the editing suite and the TV studio. College venues are also supported by the AV services staff with technical support for events such as assemblies and House Music. They also provide audiovisual services for after hour school functions and events. A diverse range of other support services are offered including the asset register, cataloguing, dubbing, editing, equipment repairs, off-air recording, orientation, professional development and technical set-ups.

Educational Services team members provide information literacy and literature support for students and staff from Kindle to Year 12. These include a primary school library program, curriculum liaison for secondary subject departments, a student literature club, delivery of two information literacy programs – Year 7 Networkers and Year 9 Gateway and orientation sessions for all students and staff. The team presents essential skills workshops, resource discoveries and Talk about books for staff.

The extensive library intranet website available to the college community 24/7 with an information expert email service is managed by the librarian who is responsible for library technology including the library management system, intranet website and online resources. The Curriculum Resources Literature and Magazines Co-ordinators are positions all held by teacher-librarians.

Technical Services team members are all library technicians who provide a range of support services to assist the teacher-librarians with delivering information literacy and literature support for classroom teachers and students.

Acquisitions, administration support, cataloguing, magazines, newspapers, processing, repairs, shelving and stocktaking are all key roles within this team.

Management models

The diagram below illustrates a variety of management models:

- Diagram 1 – Subordinate
- Diagram 2 – Radial
- Diagram 3 – Venn diagram
- Diagram 4 – Pyramid

Within the MLC Libraries team at times we operate in a hierarchical manner illustrated by the first diagram with the leader and the branches below. Other times the focus will be the team leader approach in a radial pattern and any member of our team could be the team leader. An example of this would be when implementing a new procedure or acquiring a skill e.g. librarian introducing the team to a new Amlib function. The Venn diagram example shows how we operate when some of the areas overlap and an example of this would be the information desk.

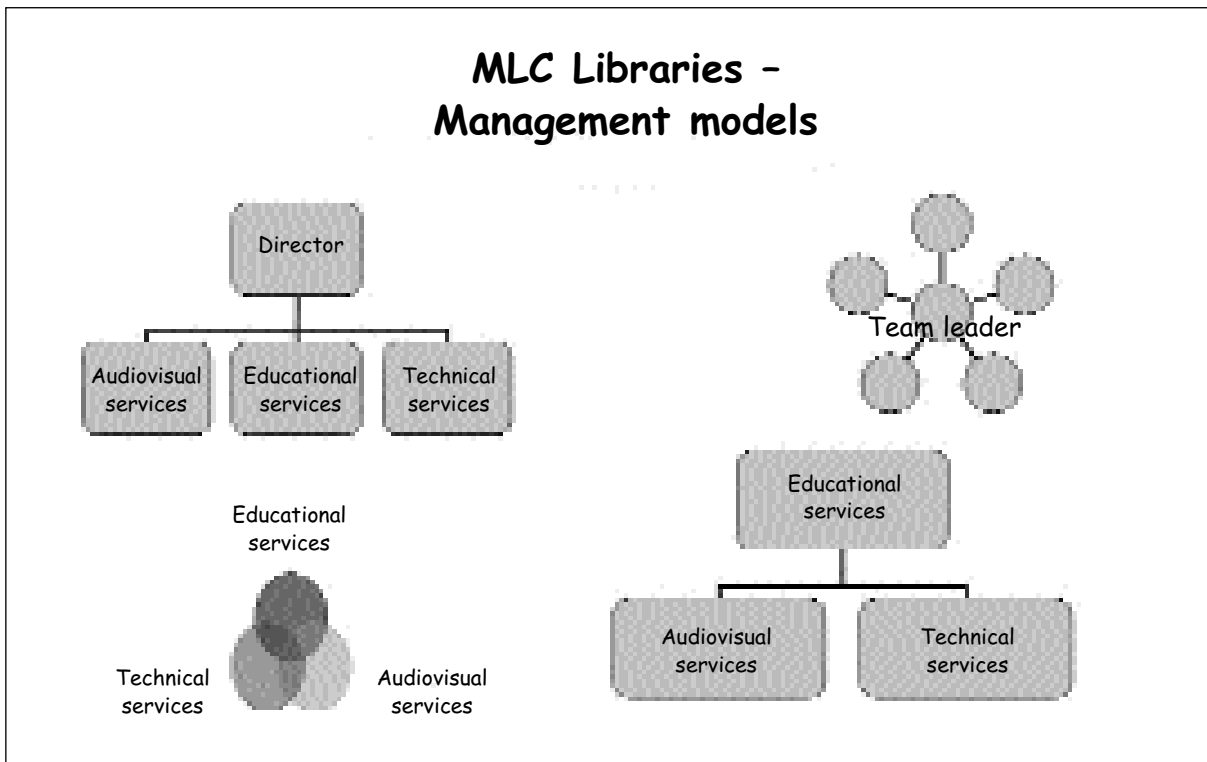
The pyramid diagram shows Educational Services as the curriculum leaders followed by Audiovisual and Technical Services staff who help to deliver these outcomes.

Teamwork

Information and audiovisual requests come to team members in a variety of ways from computer to telephone and include verbal and written requests. Some of these have simple “fix it on the spot” solutions whilst others require a complexity that may require liaison, meetings and learning of new skills to help achieve the outcome the person or group requires.

As a team, staff regularly respond and “step up” to the challenge. This requires diplomacy, patience, practice and persistence by all team members. At times, the lack of planning of others, either within or outside the team can cause unnecessary anxiety and pressure. This creates negative feelings and can be very demoralising if a staff member experiences that “no one listens to me” feeling.

Staff need to be encouraged to work within



their team, include the leader as part of the team and share the burden. Team members receive a sense of accomplishment when a challenge has been accepted and they have mastered the necessary skills required to deliver the outcome.

Communication is the key to a successful team and one must remember to communicate clearly and regularly with others. Sometimes we are the leader and other times we are the follower. Remember, we all have a part to play, no matter what our role. Collaboration also assists in ensuring the success of group objectives.

Together Everyone Achieves More = TEAM as there is no "I" in team. No matter what individual role we have it will impact on others in some way.

Successful leadership

My motto for successful leadership is to be informed and to put out any "spot fires" before they become "bushfires". Communication is a continual process and never goes away - letting communication slip off the agenda often leads to assumptions that "everyone knows". Assuming all members of the team have been informed can lead to disharmony and lack of cohesiveness and collaboration.

Over the last few years I have been using the 4P approach in a range of roles - from managing multiple deadlines at work and at home, in planning workshops, meetings and classes. These 4Ps are a wonderful management and leadership guide.

4 P approach

- Planning
- Preparation
- Practice
- Persistence

The 4Ps have enabled me both professionally and personally to achieve a diverse range of objectives. Four other vital factors that assist the 4Ps are:

- Communication
- Organisation

- Patience
- Sense of humour

School Assistants: PRD

Performance recognition and development (PRD) is the process of identifying, evaluating and developing the work performance of employees

In 2005 a performance recognition process was introduced by the college for educational support staff - school assistants, including audio visual and library technicians. It impacted on team management and re-organisation of responsibilities and tasks. This performance review process enabled managers and school assistants to plan their annual objectives and professional development goals. This process assists MLC Libraries staff to continue to provide excellent audio visual and information services to the college community.

Within the MLC Libraries team there are two staff performance systems operating with the teacher program still in draft format. PRD is an important component in the College's strategy to attract, support and retain outstanding staff. Effective PRD facilitates the achievement of organisational objectives. It also provides staff with recognition, feedback, skill development, career guidance and support.

Human Resources co-ordinated the introduction process and continues to receive all the documentation from the managers for personnel files. Recommendations for salary reviews are then passed onto the Principal for approval from the managers.

Meetings between school assistants and the managers are held in meeting rooms to minimise disruption by phone calls and other business. This has also sent a message to staff that these meetings are important and their time is valued.

The meetings occur twice a year for approximately 60 minutes to allow time to discuss the objectives and the professional development plan whilst ensuring there is time for discussion

about any issues that may have arisen. The school assistant staff meetings are conducted with their direct manager and the Director of MLC Libraries.

Objectives

SMART

- Specific
- Measurable
- Agreed
- Realistic
- Time bound

The objectives need to be SMART and cover the key activities that the staff member undertakes to ensure successful performance in their role. It is not a comprehensive list covering every activity the staff member undertakes or listed in their position description.

When defining the objectives, think of actions that will help plan the objective, measure its progress and clearly indicate what outcomes you want to achieve. Team goals will assist with this defining process as well as the individual's own skills and interests. Timelines need to be realistic, and if a regular activity then it needs to be listed as "ongoing". To gain maximum commitment and ownership both parties need to agree on the objectives which will be reviewed in 10 - 12 months.

MLC Libraries set their objectives and development plan in February at the start of the school year and these are reviewed in Term 4. This cycle then begins again the following school year. When the objectives are set in February these are discussed in consultation with other relevant team leaders.

An example is the Curriculum Resources Co-ordinator as the goals for collection development may input into the objectives for one of the acquisitions staff.

Key stages

Stage 1 - Set objectives and development plan early in Term 1

Stage 2 - Review performance and development plan in Term 4

- Select key activities from staff member's position description
- Define objectives (SMART) and actions
- Establish realistic timelines
- Outline professional development plan
- Manager and staff member to agree on objectives and pd plan ensuring maximum commitment
- Meet informally with direct manager throughout the year to discuss PRD
- Meet formally with Director twice per year – Stage 1 and Stage 2

This performance recognition process and development plan has enabled the MLC Libraries team to customise tasks, allow school assistants input into their goals and objectives and to plan for updating and consolidating their skill base via the professional development plan.

As a team leader it helps if you are excited and passionate about change. Change brings challenges but as a leader one needs to be open minded, reflect on your own successes and failures and go to your team with some positive and constructive ideas. Be informed so the challenges ahead for you and your team can be tackled with enthusiasm, harmony and knowledge.

Communicate, be patient, plan, organise, prepare, practice, be persistent and enthusiastic whilst you all have a good laugh along the way to achieve your goals.

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In Bed It's Terrific (developed by Jo Goodman) period and, as the person responsible for the fiction program in the school, Lynn had great fun reading and promoting lots of young adult fiction to the students.

She remained for nine years at Syndal. During this time she attended a two day conference and various workshops led by the Carol-Anne and Ken Haycock, a Canadian couple involved in teacher-librarianship education, which galvanised her into thinking about how school libraries should really work. She believed they should be interactive spaces with teacher-librarians working in teams with teachers to enhance student learning. She was soon on an evangelical kick. Unfortunately, other staff members were a little harder to convince.

Like many other teachers, in the early 90s Lynn was 'Jeffed'. Eventually she ended up at Lilydale High School where she remained for fourteen years, finally retiring in August 2006.

Lynn identifies many significant influences on her teaching. Gwen Gawith was one of the early, more inspirational people, with her research skills programs such as 'Information Alive' and 'Ripping into Research'. More recently she has been encouraged and enthused by people like Jamie McKenzie, Ross Todd and Tom March with his exciting WebQuests. She still feels that 'the question is the answer' and strongly believes we need to continue to encourage students to ask those essential questions.

Lynn's entire working life has been full of challenges. Taking on the editorship of *FYI* is the next one and it will be yet another big learning curve for her to follow. She relishes the fact that this new appointment will allow her to meet all those hardworking teacher-librarians who put 200% in to their schools to run exciting, innovative programs to enthuse their students.

We wish her luck and know she will enjoy the journey!

Betty Woblers is a member of the FYI editorial committee and profile writer extraordinaire.

Resources wanted

Overnewton Anglican Community College's project in Chibobo, Zambia requires literacy and numeracy materials suitable for early and emergent readers. If you have resources that you think are suitable for donation, please contact Joy Cutts
joy.cutts@overnewton.vic.edu.au



Using donated books, students at Chibobo enjoyed shared reading for the first time.

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