

AITSL Standards Through the Library Lens — a workshop series for teacher librarians

By Alison Mackenzie and Leonie McIlvenny


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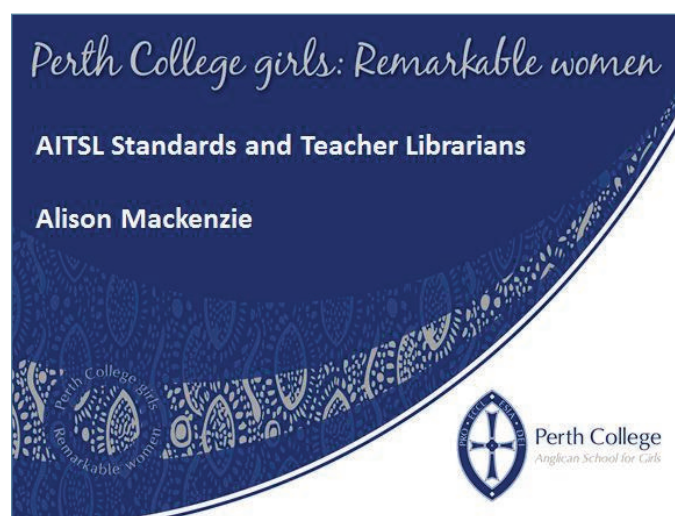
Biographies

Alison Mackenzie

Alison Mackenzie has taught both primary and secondary school students in both Scotland and Australia for the last 10 years. Currently working as the Junior and Senior School Teacher Librarian at Perth College Anglican Schools for Girls in Perth, Alison has a unique position, which allows her to track the progress of students with their information literacy skills from Kindergarten to Year 12. The integration of information technology and information literacy skills into the curriculum is one of Alison's key drivers.

Leonie McIlvenny

Leonie McIlvenny has been an educator for 30 years. A primary school teacher then secondary teacher librarian, Leonie has taught in the public and private sector in Western Australia. She has been a curriculum consultant, online course developer, library consultant and ICT project manager for the WA Education Department. Leonie is currently co-Director of the iCentre at Iona Presentation College and works part-time at the Curtin University School of Education as an instructional designer and lecturer. Her interest in information literacy was the catalyst for developing two study skills websites for secondary students — Studyvibe and the Research Safari.



Introduction

The AITSL (Australian Institute for Teaching and Learning) Professional Standards for Teachers are the key drivers being used by schools throughout Australia to gauge teacher competence. Since they were announced, teacher librarian (TL) professionals have been seeking clarification and direction in how to fulfil these professional standards, given the diverse and somewhat unique roles that teacher librarians play in different schools. There is also the issue that many TLs do not have a teaching role per se, therefore cannot readily address the standards that relate directly to classroom practice.

With this in mind, AISWA Libraries (Association of Independent Schools



Western Australia) decided to make this the focus for their professional development program in 2014. The program was a three-stage workshop model where participants, guided by the process described below, contributed ideas, exemplars, resources and more to help create what was to become a dynamic, collaborative online resource called *AITSL Through the Library Lens*. It was believed that the most effective way to engage TLs in the Standards was to have them commit to their ongoing interrogation to generate ideas and strategies to not only help them develop a personal response to the Standards but to also assist their professional colleagues to do the same.

The strength of this model was in the collaborative nature of the workshops (which motivated and empowered participants) and the resulting resources that have been made available to our association membership. It was believed that in order for the greatest number of people to get the maximum benefit from this project that all findings would be brought together on a website at the completion of the workshop series.

The workshop series comprised the following three stages:

Stage 1 — *Overview of the Standards*

Stage 2 — *Unpacking the Standards*

Stage 3 — *Review of resources*

Stage 1 — *Overview of the Standards*

Stage 1 involved an overview of the Standards in the library context. The resources below were gathered together for participants to peruse in their own time. All of these are available online and, with the exception of number 6, are also available on the AISWA Libraries website *AITSL Through the Library Lens* (<http://aitslforlibraries.weebly.com/>).

1. **AITSL Standards** — AITSL website — *An overview of the Standards for Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers (no specific examples of evidence given).*
2. **AISWA Certification Documentary Evidence Supplement** — AISWA website — *An overview of the Standards for Highly Accomplished teachers (with examples of evidence for teachers).*
3. **ALIA/AITSL Standards for Teacher Librarian Practice** — ASLA website — *An overview of Primary Proficient, Primary Highly Accomplished and Primary Lead teachers (with examples of evidence) along with an overview of Secondary Proficient, Secondary Highly Accomplished and Secondary Lead*



teachers (with examples of evidence) — all based around library practitioners.

4. **BOSTES Evidence Guide for the Proficient Teacher Standards** — Board of Studies Teaching and Educational Standards NSW — *provides information about the kinds of evidence that can demonstrate Proficient Teacher Standards.*
5. **ASLA/ALIA Standards for Professional Excellence for Teacher Librarians** — *describes the professional knowledge, skills and commitment demonstrated by teacher librarians working at a level of excellence. It represents the goals to which all Australian teacher librarians should aspire, and provides inspiration for quality teaching and ongoing professional practice.*
6. **ASLA Evidence Guide for Teacher Librarians in the Highly Accomplished Career Stage (Members Only)** — ASLA. *A particularly informative document, which gives a number of examples of evidence for each Standard solely based around teacher librarianship.*

Providing these resources gave people the starting point to access assistance, guidance and direction and, more importantly, real examples of evidence that could be used when addressing each standard.

Once an overview of the workshop series and intended outcomes had been presented, one teacher librarian, who had already begun the process, described the journey she had taken thus far and showed how she was collecting her evidence both as hard copy and digital examples. The group also looked at the AITSL app — *My Standards* — available for iPhone, iPad and Android and discussed ways in which it could be used as a tool to help gather, organise and annotate evidence.

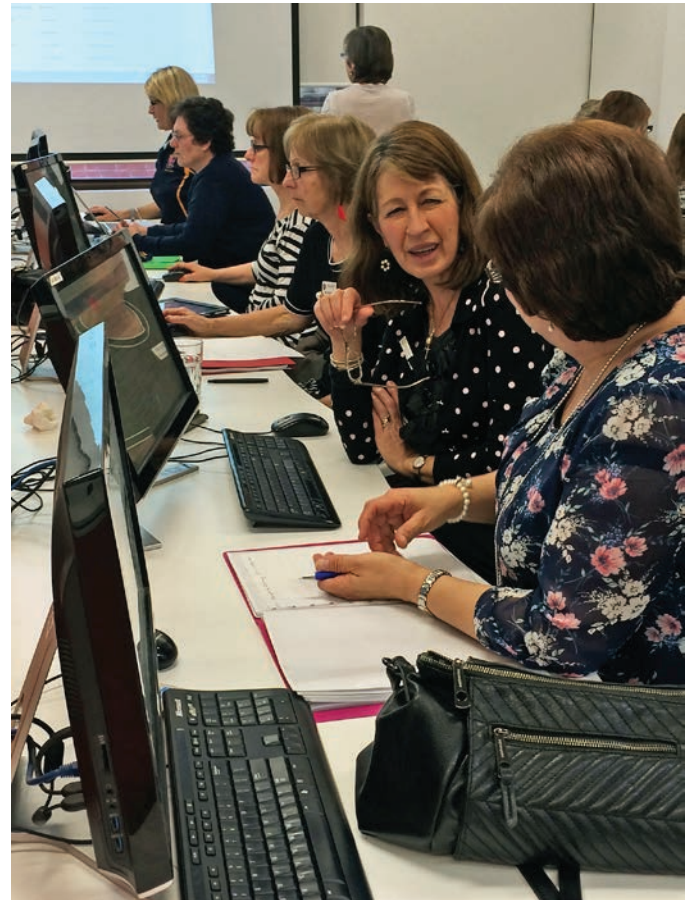
To ensure participation and collaboration in the process over the three workshops, each attendee was allocated a Standards 'group'. Each group was facilitated by an AISWA Libraries Committee member who co-ordinated discussion, and managed the allocation of sub-strands within their nominated standard. The expectation was that each group would, over the course of



four weeks, analyse their standard, research resources and contribute their findings in a blog created for each standard and also at the next meeting. The rationale for this was that by deconstructing each standard into the component parts (focus areas), it would be less overwhelming for everyone and as a group, we could then come together again in Workshop 2 (Stage 2) to collate all ideas into a valuable and practical resource for all teacher librarians to access.

Feedback from the first session indicated that many people had yet to commence the process of addressing the Standards, feeling somewhat overwhelmed by the seemingly vast job ahead of them. What also emerged was the different level of engagement, expectations and usage of the Standards across schools. A key concern highlighted was the fact that teacher librarians perform unique roles within schools and how this impacts on our ability to address the Standards. However, an overall positivity for the collaborative nature of the project was strong and the group as a whole saw this as an opportunity to work together towards a common goal for the profession. Initial feedback included:

- *'Interactivity of the workshop enhances understanding'*
- *'We are already doing many of these — affirming'*
- *'Workshop structure is good, making this so much more manageable'*
- *'Lots of resources available already and collectively it is our challenge as a profession'*
- *'This is achievable and not overwhelming if done collectively'*
- *'Standards can help improve your confidence as a TL'*



Stage 2 — Unpacking the Standards

This follow-up session approximately four weeks later involved the whole group meeting for a second time where the Standards would be 'unpacked'. The goal of this stage was to allow group members to feed back their ideas for 'evidence' to address each focus area. These ideas were discussed, expanded and collated for addition to the website. By the end of the afternoon the group had gathered evidence examples for each of the 37 focus areas. The key point the group took on board from this session was the need to get into the habit of keeping and organising evidence as it happens.

Examples of such evidence may include: emails from colleagues or parents; photographs; work samples; lesson observations; video clips; PD certificates; term plans; teaching programs; lesson

plans; collaborative meeting notes and many more. Also important is the organisation and storage of evidence to make it easy to access and to link to the appropriate standard/focus area, for example, when storing evidence electronically give each file a name which includes the focus area it corresponds to. The *AITSL Through the Library Lens* website gives examples of evidence for each focus area.

Feedback from the second session identified that a number of TLs have become the key drivers/leaders in their schools assisting colleagues in addressing the Standards as well as having a much greater understanding of the Standards themselves and what TLs will be expected to do to address them. TLs who attended the second sessions said:

It is great connecting at workshops with other TLs. Collaboration is what we do best! The focus of the workshop on Standards has been very useful in pointing me in the right direction to address this minefield. Carmen Hawkey (Lake Joondalup Baptist College).

The workshops that have been presented have given me a huge sense of relief. The Standards are now an integral part of our teaching and to be given a very straightforward, easy system to approach these standards has helped tremendously. I can also see a benefit for all teacher Librarians in the website that has been created. To be able to collaborate allows for the collection of the vast knowledge that each TL brings. The second session helped

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in gathering this information together and it was beneficial to receive feedback on our approach to each standard. Louise Koch (Tranby College).

Stage 3 — Review of the Resources

The last session involved participants coming together to review the website and look for areas that needed further additions. The level of engagement and animated conversation throughout the afternoon was testament to the professional way in which participants have embraced this challenge. This illustrated for the committee how powerful this strategy has been, to not only provide guidance and support to our association members, but how it could be used as a way to reinvigorate the profession in a positive collaborative way.

Thank you for organising these workshops. I have to admit that I found the whole concept rather daunting when I first enrolled, and also each time I drove to the workshops I was very nervous — fear of the unknown. The actual workshops were most worthwhile and interesting with the end result being a great success. Helen Willison (SIDE: School of Isolated and Distance Learning).

If you are looking for a dynamic, iterative process that combines collaboration, a sequenced professional learning structure and a sure-fire way to reinvigorate your TL community, then the workshop series *AITSL Through the Library Lens* and the associated website may provide some valuable resources to guide your planning. The website can be viewed publicly for a short time at <http://aitslforlibraries.weebly.com/>

References

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