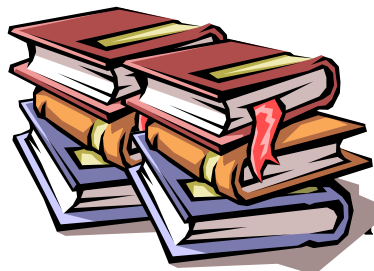


# **“Fear and loathing in the library” : Teachers, librarians and collaborative mythologies**



a research perspective by  
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# School libraries: adding value

*Literature / research supports hypotheses that:*

- A systematic approach to the research process will enhance outcomes for users
- School libraries add value to the research outcomes of students
- Collaboration between teachers and Teacher Librarians enhances students' research experience
- The most effective TLs are dual trained & qualified both as Teachers & as Librarians

**BUT ALSO PROSELYTISES FOLLOWING 'MYTHS':-**

- Librarians are 'well placed' to provide leadership
- Collaboration will naturally / inevitably occur

# Research questions

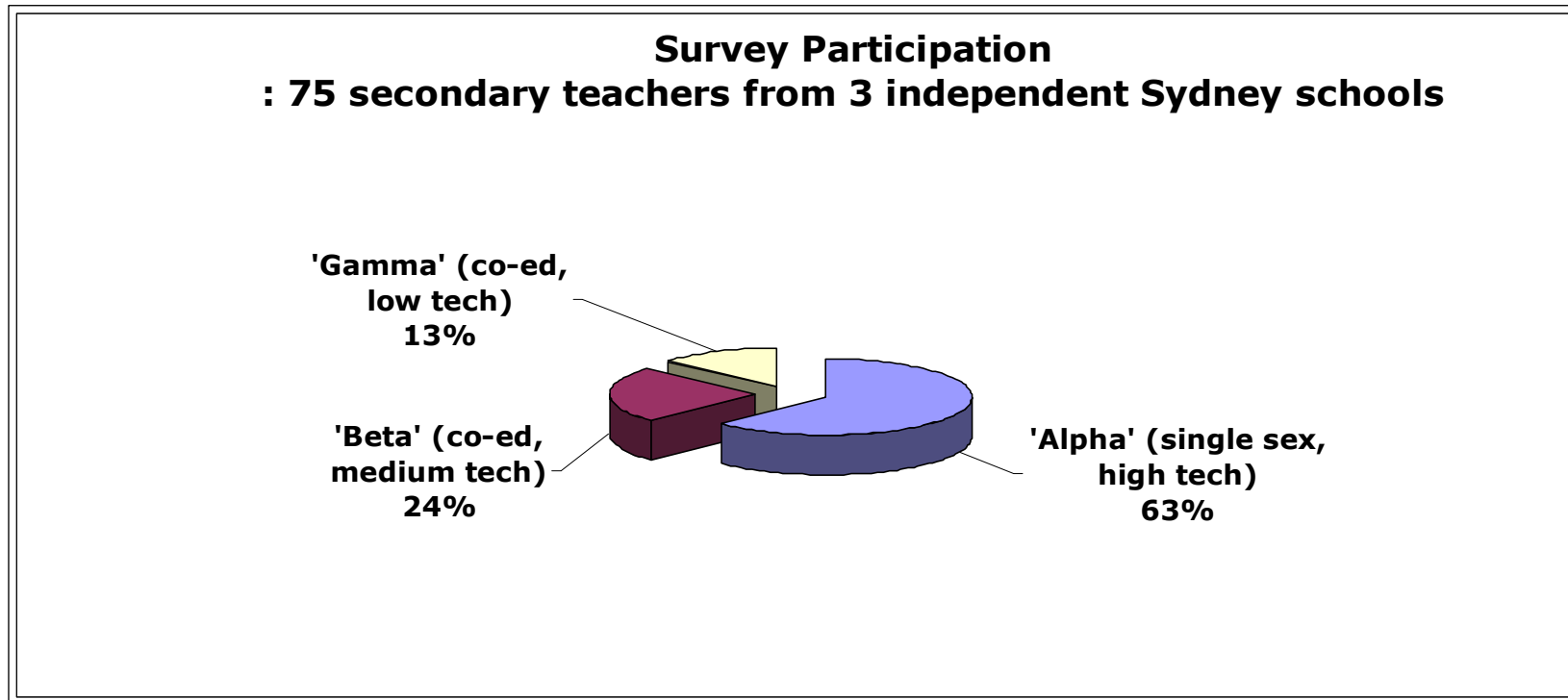
*(based on > 2 decades of professional experience  
both in business & secondary education)*

- We are familiar with the info. seeking habits of our users - but what about the non-users of our library or information professional services?
- Where do these clients prefer to go to seek out information, when they are not utilising our services or apparently using our resources?
- What motivates or demotivates teachers - or any clients - to exercise specific preferences when seeking information for research purposes?
- Can we detect patterns of information preference among different groups of users?
- What factors encourage/ discourage collaboration?

# PhD research project:

## *Information Seeking Preferences*

*of secondary school teachers*



Mixed methods approach:-

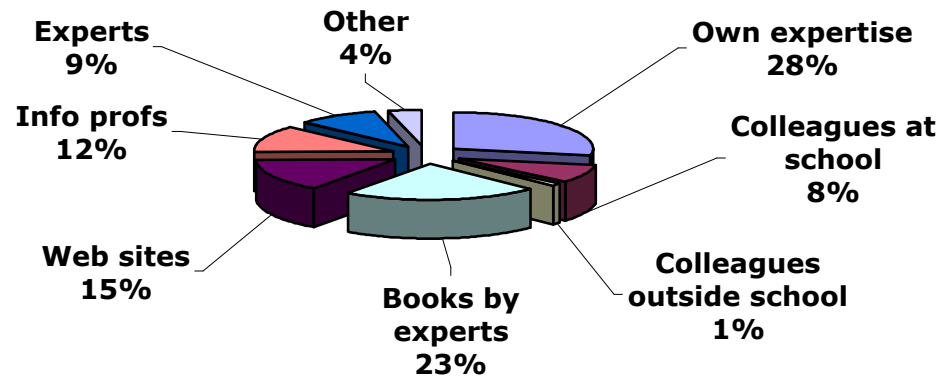
- Survey of preferred people, places & formats
- Plus 27 in depth interviews

# Profile of research population

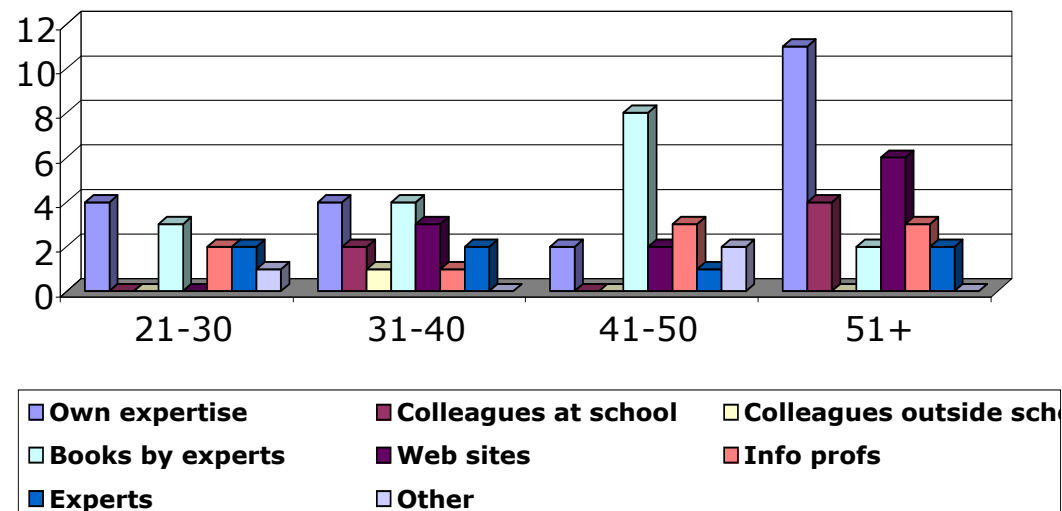
<i>School identifier</i>	<i>Alpha</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>Gamma</i>
<b>Location in Sydney</b>	<b>North Shore</b>	<b>Northern Beaches</b>	<b>South West</b>
<b>Student population (secondary school)</b>	<b>c. 1400 students – single sex (female)</b>	<b>c. 500 students – co-educational</b>	<b>c. 350 students – co-educational</b>
<b>Total no. of teachers (secondary)</b>	<b>c. 131 (both full &amp; part time)</b>	<b>c. 90 (both full &amp; part time)</b>	<b>c. 35 (both full &amp; part time)</b>
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>No. of qualified librarians employed by school in survey year</b>	<b>4 F/T (2 fully qualified TLs, 1 teacher commencing library training, 1 library trained only)</b>	<b>2 F/T (1 library trained only, 1 TL functioning as ICT coordinator)</b>	<b>.5 F/T, fully qualified TL</b>
<b>Approx. number of computers available for patron use, in library area</b>	<b>‘High tech’ school: &gt;150 laptop connection points</b>	<b>‘Medium tech’ school: 14 computers</b>	<b>‘Lower tech’ school: 3 computers</b>
<b>Laptop policy</b>	<b>Laptop program in 7th year at quantitative survey year 2001. Most teachers issued with laptop</b>	<b>No laptop policy. Expansion of ICT facilities &amp; support commenced in quantitative survey year 2002</b>	<b>No laptop policy. Limited computers. ICT expansion commencing in quantitative survey year 2004</b>

# Results snapshot : MOST preferred:-

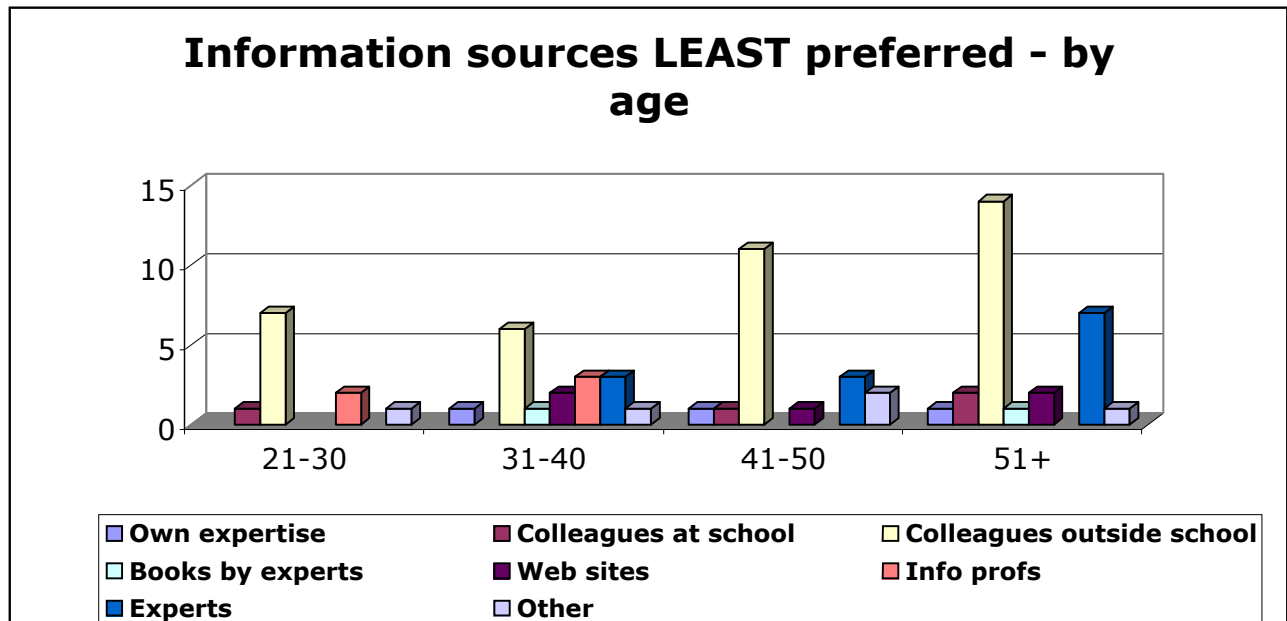
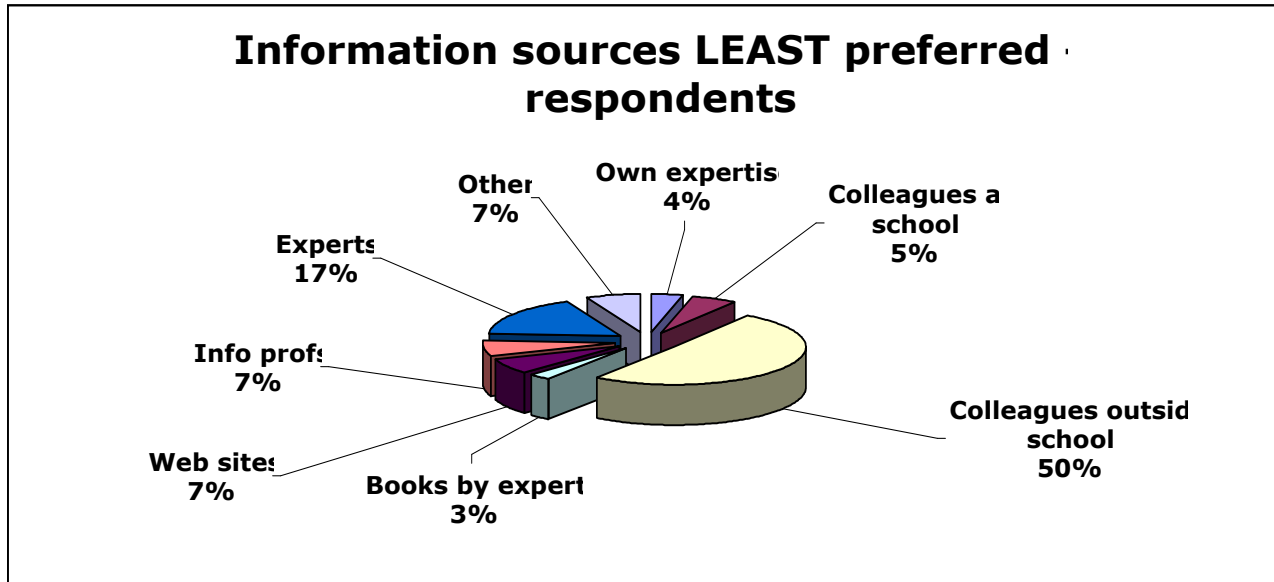
**Information sources most preferred - all respondents**



**Information sources MOST preferred - b**



# Results snapshot : LEAST preferred



# Where do other information users obtain their information?

	People			Places			Formats		
	Own resources	Colleagues - peers	Mediators - specialists	Own collection	Internet	Library	Texts /print	Electronic	Human
Physicians - Spain	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
Physicians - Oregon	X	X		X			X		X
Oncologists - Pittsburgh	X	X		X			X		X
Senior executives		X	X						X
MBA students					X	X	X	X	
Managers	X	X							X
Municipal officers			X	X			X		X
Lawyers	X			X			X		
Engineers	X	X		X			X		X
Dutch uni students			X		X	X	X	X	X
English adolescents			X				X		X
Secondary students - Canada			X				X		X

# Conclusions

- Some teachers prefer librarians as a first preference when seeking information, but the vast majority (88%) do not
- Patterns of preference are influenced by:-
  - perception of situational and cognitive aspects of service / mediation available
  - habituation: familiarity / frequency of positive &/or negative interactions with various resources & services
- Affect (*i.e. associated emotions*) features strongly in exercise of above preferences
- Different subject specialisation may influence exercise of preference for various groups

# Conclusions

## *Info preferences &/or collaboration:-*

Appear to be dependent on 3 sets of factors:

- Situational
  - E.g. availability of TIME, ease of access to resources or services, physical environment, the collection, etc.
- Cognitive
  - E.g. perception of usefulness, value (real or potential) and/or authority of collaborator, if seen as a peer, etc.
- Affective (positive or negative ‘feelings’)
  - E.g. personality issues, emotive issues, personal / political agendas, prior experiences with libraries / librarians, etc.

**NB. Assume nothing - evaluate / assess everything!**

# Situational

*factors influencing collaboration*

## Motivators

- Sufficient TIME
  - For client to visit
  - For TL to listen / chat / bond with client
  - Fast response time for requests
- Physical / virtual access
  - Ease of access
  - Convenience of access
  - Ambient surroundings
  - Attractive, clean, orderly
  - Rich collection of appropriate resources
  - Desirable facilities

## Demotivators

- Insufficient TIME
  - Client too busy
  - TL too busy for all but superficial requests
  - Unacceptable delay in filling requests
- Physical / virtual access
  - Impediments to access (times, modes of access)
  - Unappealing surroundings
  - Dusty, dirty, verminous, untidy, disorganised, gloomy
  - Inadequate, dated collection
  - Lacking helpful facilities

# Cognitive

*factors influencing collaboration*

## Motivators

- Status
  - Accepted as peer by teachers (talk the talk)
  - Accepted as ‘expert’ in Info strategies / literacies
- Role
  - Recognised as partner
  - Recognised ROI for user
- Function
  - Involved in all stages, from planning to evaluation
  - Perceived as critical to success of venture
  - Perceived as multi-talented / flexible

## Demotivators

- Status
  - Considered as menial / paraprofessional
  - Limited knowledge of ‘real’ teaching activities
- Role
  - Occupy valuable computer room space?
  - Something to do with ‘books’?
- Function
  - “Delicatessen librarian”
  - Childminding, ‘ssshhing’, videotaping, photocopying
  - Order/ cover/ tidy ‘books’
  - Computer wizard / ‘fixit’

# Affective

## *factors influencing collaboration*

### Motivators

- Users associate library / librarian interactions with positive emotions (confidence, competence, ‘in control’)
- Interactions enhance users’ sense of self esteem
- Using / exploring the collection seen as richly rewarding
- Using the facilities conveys positive emotions (useful, valuable, time saving)
- Library staff appear to welcome & have time for valued clients
- Library seen as a rewarding place in which to spend time

### Demotivators

- Users associate library / librarian interactions with negative emotions (lack of confidence, failure, futility)
- Interactions lower users’ sense of self esteem
- Visit to library/librarian seen as waste of time - “Only books there - nothing useful” / “prefer the internet at home”
- Library staff inept, brusque, rude or unwelcoming
- Librarian trespasses on teachers’ ‘patch’ - usurps teaching role when in library!
- Library seen as bolt hole for the neurotic, obsessive or paranoid

# The predominance of Affect

## *Fear & loathing in the library*

- My research findings
  - Most preferred options -----> positive emotions
  - Least preferred options -----> negative emotions
- Literature
  - “Library anxiety” phenomenon (*Mellon 1986*)
  - The “fear of feeling stupid” (*Radford & Radford 1997*)
  - The library as “panopticon” - Foucauldian avatars of power & control (*Foucault 1986*)
- Observation -----> **conflict, power & control**
  - ‘Discourse groups’ within school community
    - disparate jargon, educational agendas, ‘Weltanschauungen’
  - Competition for resources
    - Budgets & contested spaces - the power of the purse
    - Technology debate - information, technology & power

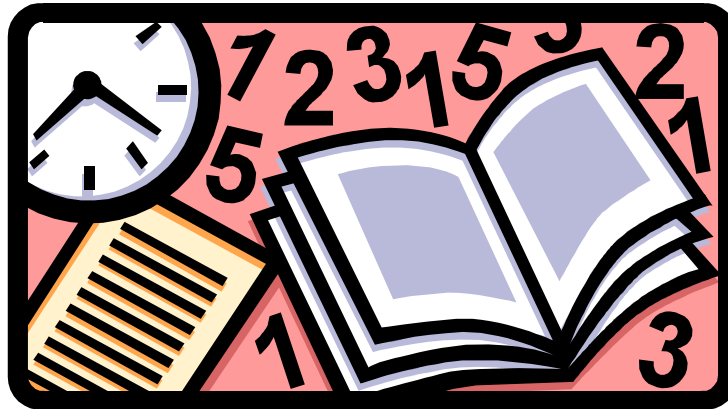
# 7 Significant Implications

## *for Information Professionals & their services*

1. Non-users will always outnumber users
2. Human communication &/or print still important
3. Personal resources & the internet are popular substitutes for library resources / services of TLs
4. Prior positive / negative experiences with libraries &/or librarians will strongly influence preferences
5. Strong indication in my interviews that such prior experiences can bias / predicate any potential collaboration with TLs or planned library use
6. Situational, cognitive & affective factors must all be considered (*situational easiest to rectify / improve*)
7. 'Assumed' collaboration is part of library mythology

**NB.** Assume nothing - you have to work for it

**Isn't it lucky that we all  
enjoy a challenge!**



**J. Bale, 2007**