I am very happy that as a result of this last report, the Minister has asked for feedback from those concerned about the lack of reading and learning in our young people. I have been a Librarian for over thirty years, have worked in all aspects of Librarianship and for the last five years have worked as the Schools Librarian in Galway.

One thing that is very noticeable from my visits to schools every day, is the level of reading material that pupils are choosing. Sixth Class pupils are reading material that would be more age appropriate for 3rd and 4th class...this in itself is not a bad thing as they are reading but it shows a trend that needs to be stopped. I have also introduced a section of books which I call "speedy reads". These are a mixture of books by really good authors, published by Barrington Stokes and are some of the most popular books to be chosen and not just by pupils who are reluctant to read. From observing this and from talking to many of the teachers in the county, I realised that there was a worrying trend downwards with regard to reading and primary school children. I feel if children do not have the habit and the love of reading from an early age then one will not stimulate it in second level schools where the lack of vocabulary is shown up at a very early stage.

As a result of talks and observation I decided to look at the idea of doing reading projects in some schools to see if that would stimulate interest in our young people in books and reading. The feedback has been very positive from not only teachers but from pupils and parents alike. I think that short, well thought out reading projects presented and introduced by interested teachers will go a long way to stimulate and forge an interest and a love of reading in our young people.

Some of the Projects started with a collaboration between myself and some of the Home School Liaison teachers and were then introduced to other schools in the County. More and more schools are looking to have a reading project started in their School but unfortunately it is not possible without an injection of funds to provide the type of reading material that is necessary. The knowledge base that I have as a Librarian and my genuine interest in books should be utilised as much as possible...as should every librarian that has responsibility for Schools. The Departarment of Education needs to look outside the box and realise, that while teachers are trained to teach and they do their job as well as they can, given the depth of the curriculum that they have to teach, there are other professional that can help in this fight with literacy. There are school librarians at their disposal, who have a knowledge base second to none with regard to books and reading and speaking for myself, a huge interest in providing the right book at the right time to a child who wants to read...or not!

I would like to see discussions between interested parties like myself and dept. officials to see what way we can all change our perspective and use all our potential to help erase what is now becoming a big problem in our schools.

Reading Projects include:

Big Books Project
Reading Buddies Project
Reading Tree Project
The Big Wild Read
The Senior Picture Book Project
The Book Club
The Inter-Schools Book Club
The Class Novel
Should anybody be interested I have a booklet explaining the different reading Projects....suffice
to say that they are easy to implement...all one needs is the age appropriate reading material,
chosen with care and knowledge of the children the project is aimed at, an enthusiasm and
interest that can be transmitted to the children in order to stimulate their interest and curiosity,
and ultimately engender in them a love of reading and books. Mise le meas Jo. Vahey