Student literacy is a perennial concern in and across nations, with measurement and accountability continually ramped up at both individual student and school levels. Debates about literacy and how it can best be improved are never far from media headlines. However, relatively little consideration is given to the role that school libraries and their staff play in building and maintaining student literacy, despite research linking school libraries and qualified staff to student literacy gains. With the number of students who struggle with basic literacy skills increasing in many nations, school libraries can play an important role in improving the academic, vocational and social outcomes for these young people, thereby increasing their opportunities. Fostering student wellbeing is also a key priority for schools given the challenges young people face in current times.

This book seeks to promote greater understanding of the links between reading, literacy and wellbeing that could help students cope with these challenges, and the role of the school library in leading this approach. It explores the current role of school library professionals and highlights how literacy and wellbeing education and support sit within this, paying specific attention to how school library professionals build reading engagement and promote student wellbeing through various approaches, such as fostering health literacy and creating nurturing environments.

Readers will be empowered to build a case for the importance of their role and library, and audit their current literacy and wellbeing offerings, and adjust or extend them where applicable based on best practice. The book also explores some of the many challenges facing school libraries and their professional staff that may need to be mitigated to ensure that they can reach their full potential for supporting student literacy and wellbeing.
1. What do school library professionals contribute to student learning and support? A focus on Australia and the UK
2. School libraries and reading engagement for literacy
3. Librarians supporting struggling literacy learners beyond the early years
4. School libraries and reading engagement for student wellbeing
5. School libraries, health resourcing and information literacy
6. Librarians creating environments for reading and wellbeing
7. Challenges to visibility and advocacy for school libraries and staff
8. Conclusions and directions for future research

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Dr Merga has previously consulted with schools, professional associations, research entities and government departments on a range of literacy and library initiatives, such as the Department of Education Western Australia’s Never Stop Reading initiative. Since 2012, she has led or been involved in 18 research projects on libraries, literacy, higher education communication and/or workforce issues. She has shared findings from her research in invited keynotes and conference papers at virtual conferences all over the world, and has published more than 85 peer-reviewed journal articles and three research-informed books.