

Library storytellers shown to contribute to early literacy

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Professor Anne Goulding, from Victoria's School of Information Management, together with Dr Mary Jane Shuker and Dr John Dickie from the Faculty of Education, has been observing story-time sessions run by public libraries and talking to librarians about their experiences, to see what kind of impact the sessions are having.

According to Professor Goulding, children begin to develop [literacy skills](#) from an early age, with preschoolers as young as 18 months old learning to sit and listen, turn pages and engage with books.

She says there are six key skills of [literacy development](#) in children that help determine a child's readiness to learn to read and write. These are print motivation (being interested in and enjoying books), print awareness, letter knowledge, vocabulary, phonological awareness (developing understanding of how words are structured and being able to play with sounds) and narrative skills.

"We found that the librarians were especially good at print motivation—that is, encouraging a love of books and reading for pleasure. They did this by choosing exciting or interactive stories with good visuals, and telling the stories in an engaging way," says Professor Goulding.

"Many got the children involved in the story, by asking them questions about what was happening, which develops their narrative skills."

She says the only skill that librarians didn't cover extensively was letter knowledge. "When asked about this, some said they used ABC books at times, but it depended on the age of the children who turned up to the open sessions.

"There were really only two key areas where we identified room for improvement—that was in offering formal training to the storytellers, who tended to learn informally from other, more experienced [librarians](#), and considering how story time and other activities aimed at preschoolers might be aligned with the national early childhood curriculum, Te Whariki."

Provided by Victoria University

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