

## UNIVERSITY LIBRARY INTRODUCES BIBLIOTHERAPY FOR STUDENT WELLBEING

**A**t least one in three people will struggle with their mental health at some point in their lives but reading can help bring relief, explains LAURA ENNIS.

Information is many things. Books, films, audio recordings, and media of all kinds help us to do our jobs, learn new skills, and even relax of an evening. They can also help us to be happier and healthier. Reading, watching, or listening to advice and personal stories can help us overcome experiences, thoughts, and feelings that can be stressful or uncomfortable.

Bibliotherapy is the use of the written or spoken word as a therapeutic treatment. This might include shared reading, spoken-word events, books-on-prescription, and self-help reading. At Edinburgh Napier University Library in Scotland, we recently developed a bibliotherapy collection, delightfully christened Shelf Help ([bit.ly/2rsqnDf](http://bit.ly/2rsqnDf)). The project was developed in collaboration with our Student Wellbeing and Inclusion team, which includes counsellors and professionals with a background in assisting those with disabilities and specific learning disabilities. Sadly, it can be a couple of weeks between a student requesting to see a member of staff and their actual appointment. The self-help reading is a good 'stop-gap' in the meantime.

It was important that the collection of items included not only self-help reading, but also works of fiction, graphic novels, music, podcasts, films, documentaries, and even apps. A lot of the existing material in our collection that deals with mental health is written from a practitioner perspective, which isn't appropriate for individuals. So fiction and autobiographies needed to be represented in our recommended reading as well. While we had plenty on depression, stress and anxiety, I was somewhat saddened to discover that our collection had almost nothing on bullying, AD(H)D, or LGBT+ identity for example. With recommendations chosen in consultations with students, the Student Wellbeing and Inclusion team, and colleagues, this was quickly remedied. 🌟

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## THE GOLDILOCKS EXPERIMENT

**A**LISA HOWLETT looks at how the University of Southern Queensland included students in choosing seat options for the new Springfield Library.

This year, students at the University of Southern Queensland will have a brand new library at the Springfield campus. A feedback activity was undertaken in the first semester to include students in choosing chairs for the space. It was affectionately known as 'the Goldilocks experiment'.

The activity involved using sample chairs, a whiteboard with markers, Post-Its and an ample supply of Freddo frogs. Students tested and voted for the chairs they were most and least likely to use. At closing time each day, a library officer took photos of the whiteboard and sent them to me for analysis and reporting.

Our experience was that students loved the opportunity to have their say on what might be the only place available to do their study. We found that students cared about their own wellbeing, and that offering them these seating options sent a strong message that the library cared about them. Feedback resulted in a new line-up of seating options, which has since proved to be 'just right'.



Reaching out to USQ students for feedback on new library seating on Carnival Day at Springfield.

The feedback activity represents evidence-based practice in action by seeking to understand the client experience and preferences, and to include students in the decision-making process. We cannot wait to unveil and show off the new features and comforts the Springfield Library will bring to the student learning experience. 🌟

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