

# AUT

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI  
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU



# LitPlus Pānui

## VOLUME 2, ISSUE 2, SEPTEMBER 2026

### LitPlus in the world

LitPlus researchers have enjoyed the opportunity to take LitPlus research out and about in recent months. We'll tell you a bit about our local and international travels in this issue of our newsletter, as well as current work we're doing in LitPlus.

To the right, you'll see the first page of an article John Milne and I wrote for NZLA's Literacy Forum at the invitation of our friends from Auckland Literacy Association. It summarises our main projects and findings, including our view that literacies are situated, active and collective practices. We read, kōrero, or write when the environment is set up in ways that invite these activities. When the things or people that invite our participation in literacy are removed or changed, literacies change too.

We learn a lot from meeting and talking with other people who are involved in organisations, initiatives and research projects related to our work. The LitPlus community ethos places a lot of importance on connections, sharing knowledge and collaboration. Follow the links throughout this newsletter to learn from these people too.

*Ruth Boyask, Director LitPlus*

LITERACY FORUM NZ

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### LitPlus:

### Extending literacy education into communities, cultures and material worlds

Ruth Boyask and John Milne  
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Ruth Boyask is an associate professor at the school of education at AUT. Ruth's work focuses on the systemic reform of education for children and young people, especially in ways that supports their community participation and enhances their material conditions. She has a strong commitment to making research matter. She publishes widely on topics in education policy, governance, leadership, pedagogies, professional learning, school reform, social justice and since 2020, children's reading. She leads the LitPlus research and professional learning community at AUT, where through collaborative research and community engagement projects she advocates for a community-based approach to literacy education.

John Milne is a senior lecturer in the School of Education and co-director of the LitPlus Research and Professional Learning Community at the Auckland University of Technology (AUT). He mostly teaches on Initial Teacher Education programmes. As well as involvement in a number of LitPlus projects relating to enjoyment of reading, his research interests relate to children's experience of reading and individual reading styles. He is also currently involved in a project investigating teachers' attitudes and actions in relation to reading aloud, from ECE to secondary school contexts.



**Key words:** *reading for pleasure, literacies*

LitPlus is a research and professional learning community based at and extending beyond Auckland University of Technology (AUT). We advocate for a place-and community-based approach to literacy education that is centred on social justice across cultures and communities. Most of our work concerns reading, but it has implications for other literacies too including writing, oratory, digital literacies, cultural literacies and multi-modal literacies.

The "plus" in our name represents our desire to make visible and work with the elements of children's lives that contribute importantly to their literacies beyond individual traits or classroom-bound explanations. The name LitPlus refers to a concept of extended literacy, or literacy that extends into a personally satisfying, communal way of being and pleasurable, ethical engagement with the material world.

**Read more in Literacy Forum, Vol 41, No 2, 2026**

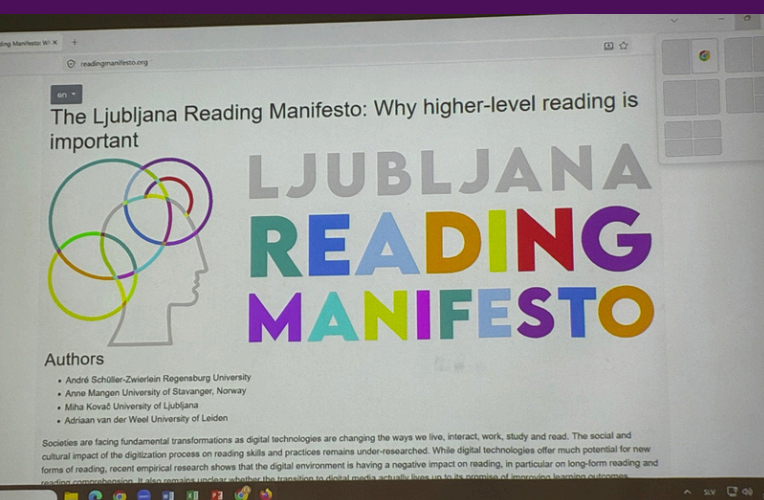


# LitPlus International

## SINGAPORE

In June, Ruth met Associate Professor Loh Chin Ee at NIE in Singapore to talk about material environments that support reading. Chin Ee has done some awesome work on school libraries, thinking about how they can be redesigned to support more reading engagement. She is also interested in social engagement in reading supported through book clubs, and is currently working on a large-scale longitudinal project looking at the future of reading by comparing print and digital reading practices. Find out about her extensive work on her [website](#) - including her [videos](#), [publications](#) and [podcasts](#).

While in Singapore, Ruth also met Dr Christine Xavier, who [advocates](#) for teaching grammar through a lens of meaning-making, emphasising to learners how grammar aids comprehension. Christine had organised a symposium with some colleagues from UCL, England. Professor Rachel Levy researches reading together with young children. Young children benefit more from reading for pleasure, such as through social connection or enhanced cognition, when it is a pleasurable experience for everyone involved. She's recently been exploring [these ideas in China](#). Professor Sam Duncan's focus is adult reading, and in Singapore she was talking about her study of [adult oral reading practices in Britain](#).



## SCOTLAND

The UKLA conference is held every year in different parts of Britain. This year it was in Glasgow. Here Ruth met with Professor Teresa Cremin who is a long-standing critical friend to LitPlus. Teresa's work on Reading for Pleasure (RfP) at the Open University, England, is phenomenal, and she has been instrumental in keeping RfP on the agenda for teachers, researchers and politicians throughout the UK. This year she was called as an [expert witness](#) to the Westminster Education Committee inquiry into RfP, prompted by reports of long-term declines in reading. The [evidence and reports](#) from the inquiry all make interesting reading. We hope the government in ANZ elected this year will take heed of the need to stem declines in reading enjoyment, also seen in our country.



## SLOVENIA

Both Ruth and John attended the European Conference on Literacy in Ljubljana, a UNESCO City of Literature. One of the highlights was meeting Associate Professor Ana Vogrinčič Čepič from the University of Ljubljana and learning about the [Pathways to MoRe Reading for Pleasure](#) project she led with colleagues from Finland and Italy on supporting primary school children's reading for pleasure through the use of trained reading motivators. Ana is interested in others trialling and using their resources to train motivators.

Slovenia was a fascinating country for literacy researchers. It is compulsory for every school to have a school library. Another interesting initiative is the [Ljubljana Reading Manifesto](#), which is a statement informed by research evidence that the digital environment is having a negative effect on long-form reading and comprehension. It was also interesting to see the manifesto at work in higher education in a project that evaluated participation in [Reading Seminars](#), non-instrumental, extra-curricular reading for pleasure for university students to promote higher-order reading.

Read the manifesto [here](#)



## LitPlus in Aotearoa

**LitPlus researchers** are busy with projects co-designed with national literacy organisations. Ross Bernay and John Milne are extending work with Storylines Trust on *How author talks engage students in reading and writing*. You'll remember that in 2024 Ross and John with student researchers **evaluated** the impact of a Storylines Story Tour through talking to teachers. Now they are surveying children and young people immediately after an author talk and then six months later. We'll let you know what the results have to say. Ruth Boyask, Rebecca Hopkins, Mihaela Enache and Jo Pascoe are investigating the different systemic support mechanisms, people and environments for reading within one local area on the Mapping Community Support for Children's Reading project. This project has been set up in consultation with ALA, SLANZA, PLNz and the National Library. We're close to starting data collection using socio-ecological mapping, interviews, and surveys. John Milne, Jayne Jackson, Esther Graham and Jo Bishop are working on a study called *Teachers Reading Aloud*. They have been reviewing literature. LitPlus researcher Tafili Utumapu-McBride has been working with her colleagues on an expanded, Pacific notion of phonemic awareness for early childhood education for the Ministry of Education.

**Tea with LitPlus** Ruth has been meeting with other researchers working in literacy education. Professor Janet Gaffney discussed her new work that centres "the child and their whānau" in affecting educational systems. Fa'alogo Aganoa Dr Jacoba Matapo discussed embodied, Pacific literacies for early years. Discussions with Professor Rebecca Jesson were on the state of literacy education in Aotearoa New Zealand and her upcoming book on research partnerships. We aim to extend these conversations to understand what a future literacy education for Aotearoa should look like. Keep reading!

## Reading in the news

**RNZ** What the 'recent invention' of reading does to our brains

**The Spinoff** 'Sustained under-investment': the dire state of school libraries and the years-long cry for help

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## LitPlus is listening to



Our book reviewer Kate de Goldi is in now - but for a kōrero of a different kind. She's the Te Awhi Rito Reading Ambassador and in that mahi has started to ponder more deeply the future of reading and literature. Up against the challenges of increasingly fragile publishing and bookselling prospects due to the threats of AI - and waning reading rates, she spoke to Susie about the big picture.



Kate de Goldi Photo: supplied

If you haven't already, we recommend listening to Te Awhi Rito Reading Ambassador, Kate de Goldi on the big picture for reading.

**Listen to Kate de Goldi here**



## LitPlus is reading

**In Europe** we met Professor Alyson Smith from the University of Sydney. She's done some fascinating work on children's book awards for supporting volitional reading. See **this article** about the Australian K.O.A.L.A. Choosing your own books is important for motivating reading.

**In the same issue** of **Literacy Forum** as Ruth and John's piece on LitPlus (41(2)), Professor Rebecca Jesson from the University of Auckland has written on the value of Research Practice Partnerships. Rebecca reminds us of the importance of dialogue, coming to agreed understanding together and recognising that context affects the quality of reading education.

**We also like** this **piece** from Barbara Sahakian and her colleagues in the UK on the evidence of the health and cognitive benefits of reading (mihi to both Stuart McNaughton and Selena Meiklejohn-Whiu for sharing this with us). And this **one** from Australian academic Mellie Green on a Deweyan-inspired pedagogical framework for reading for enjoyment.