

# **Dargaville Pūtoi Rito**

# **Communities of Readers**

## **Research report**

**Sue McDowall**

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2024



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# 1. Background to the research

This report presents the findings of a research project carried out by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) for National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa (National Library) in 2023 and 2024. The research focused on a Pūtoi Rito Communities of Readers project carried out in Dargaville during this period.

Pūtoi Rito is a National Library initiative that works with communities to design, develop, and deliver support for reading engagement among children and young people. Pūtoi Rito began in mid-2019 with four communities as part of phase 1: South Dunedin (Woodley, 2021); Canterbury—Kingslea School working with government and community support agencies in the region (Woodley, 2023); West Auckland—five primary schools in Kāhui Ako o Tiriwa (Harrington et al., 2021); and Huntly College (Boyask et al., 2021).

Phase 2 began in September 2021. It includes the continuation of the South Dunedin and Canterbury projects along with two new projects. One is in Dargaville and the other in the Waikato.

## Pūtoi Rito in Dargaville

### Project scope and vision

The Pūtoi Rito project in Dargaville focused on young people during their primary and intermediate school years. It also focused on whānau as part of school communities and other community settings.

The project ran during school Terms 2–4 in 2023 and in Terms 1–2 in 2024. National Library continues to support partner schools through its Services to Schools, as does the public library.

The project vision established by the Partners Group was “Reading with our children to promote wellbeing and to strengthen connections in our community”. The project focused on five key areas, also agreed upon by the Partners Group. These were to:

- raise community awareness of the project and the value of reading for pleasure and wellbeing
- raise the capability of school staff around reading for pleasure and wellbeing and building reading communities
- provide books for homes and encourage borrowing from libraries, library membership, and engagement with library programmes and services
- strengthen the network of library services (school, public, and national) that support young people in Dargaville
- develop research to gather insights that can be shared with other communities.

These goals were seen as particularly important given the geographic isolation of Dargaville and its lack of a bookstore.

## The Partners Group

The project was led by the Dargaville Pūtoi Rito Partners Group (the Partners Group). This group was responsible for deciding the project vision, priorities, and activities. It consisted of:

- four members of the National Reading Initiatives (NRI) team
- two National Library Capability Facilitators
- two staff from the Kaipara District public library
- representatives from the three partner schools and associate schools
- a researcher from NZCER.

National Library was responsible for providing books selected for each school and community setting; engaging whānau, educators, and young people with reading for pleasure; and programme management.

The project also funded a public library staff member to work part-time for 12 months as a Project Co-ordinator to support the project. This involved collaborating with schools, businesses, community organisations, marae, and National Library to create better book access for children and their whānau, raise awareness of the project, build relationships, and extend project reach.

## Project activities

### Engaging the community

The project provided new and near-new books for children and their whānau across the Dargaville community to keep or share. A National Library collections specialist selected the books specifically for the Dargaville community. The books were available in a range of community settings, including: 14 local marae, a meat works, a kūmara processing packhouse, government and community agencies, and local shops and cafes. The books were displayed in bookshelves or housed in Little Libraries funded by the project. Many of the bookshelves were constructed and decorated by students from the project schools or by the Dargaville Menzshed. Figure 1 shows Pūtoi Rito bookshelves located in two community settings.

FIGURE 1 Pūtoi Rito bookshelves located in two community settings





Members of the Partners Group also attended community and school events to promote the project and provide books for community members to keep or share. Participating in these events provided opportunities to have informal conversations with whānau and the wider community about the project, and about reading for pleasure and wellbeing.

The project developed a set of key messages to be used with various community audiences. There was also a communication strategy to engage the Dargaville community through the media, and through school and public library channels. Communication initiatives also included labelling project books with a green Pūtoi Rito sticker; providing posters, bookmarks, and brochures about the project; and designing project t-shirts and a project planner to use at events.

### **Supporting partner schools in building communities of readers**

The project provided partner schools and associate schools with books to keep as well as loans from their lending collection (a service free to all New Zealand schools) and bookstands to display them. National Library replenished the books on loan each term.

A National Library Capability Facilitator supported the partner schools to strengthen their school library environments, collections, and services. She worked with the library staff from each school to identify their strengths and opportunities, to weed out old or unused books, to refresh and relaunch their libraries, and to explore the role students might play in running the school library.

At the project launch, National Library staff presented a session for the partner schools on the benefits of reading for pleasure, factors that underpin a reading community, and a “book talk” showcasing a selection of children’s and young adults’ books.

The National Library Capability Facilitator and the Project Co-ordinator subsequently ran several sessions on school reading culture with two or three teachers from each of the project schools and shared resources to support their work. The resources they shared included the Primary School Reading Culture Review tool and the Teachers Creating Readers Framework. In addition, the Project Co-ordinator met with students from the partner schools to talk about the project and get their ideas and feedback to share with the Partners Group.

The project also funded school membership of the ReadNZ Writers in Schools scheme. Over the course of the project, several writers and the current Reading Ambassador visited project schools to talk about themselves as readers and writers.

### **Supporting networks of libraries (school, public, national)**

The project provided opportunities to extend existing connections between the public library, National Library, and school libraries. The main way it did this was by establishing and funding the Project Co-ordinator role and building shared understanding of services and expertise.

FIGURE 2 Promotional material supporting reading for pleasure and wellbeing



## Research design

The main purpose of the research on Pūtoi Rito in Dargaville was to gather insights to share with other communities. This case study design (Patton, 2002; Yin, 1994) focused on participants' experiences of the project and its perceived impact.

The research questions were:

- What is the perceived impact of Pūtoi Rito in Dargaville on the partner schools, the community, and networks of library services (school, public, and national) in supporting reading for pleasure and wellbeing?
- What enables the project to meet its goals, and what are the challenges?
- How sustainable are the project initiatives?

There were two main forms of data collection. The first was researcher observations at monthly Partners Group hui held between February 2023 and April 2024. The second was semi-structured interviews held in March and April of 2024. People involved in the interviews included:

- five school staff (including leaders, teachers, and staff with library responsibilities)
- four community partner staff (representing two businesses and one organisation that housed project bookshelves)
- two public library staff
- two National Library staff.

The interview questions focused on:

- participants' involvement in the project, including reasons for taking part, and aspirations
- any benefits participants observed for themselves, their organisation, or the community
- any challenges participants faced or recommendations they might have
- participants' views on the likelihood of positive changes being sustained
- participants' ideas of how to further support reading for pleasure and wellbeing in Dargaville.

Data analysis involved a grounded approach that began by looking for themes in the data and coding against these. As new themes emerged data was recoded against these using an iterative approach.

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## 2. Impact

### Building reading communities in schools

One of the goals of the project was to support schools in building reading communities. Overall, research participants observed an increase in teachers reading and talking about books with each other and children, acting as reading role models, and providing children with opportunities to read for pleasure. Research participants also observed an increase in children reading, talking about books, and using the library. The extent of these positive shifts varied both within and between schools.

#### Teachers reading and talking about books together

Dargaville has no bookstores so it can be difficult for teachers to keep up to date with new reading material for children.

We come from a small town. We don't actually have a bookshop. We have a Warehouse, but the only way we can access books is through the town library or through schools. (School staff member)

Research participants described the positive impact that having easy access to new books had on staff.

Generally, there is more excitement with the teachers since the project started—a lot more buy-in. We have a staff library now. [The National Library Capability Facilitator] comes in and updates that once a term. I've noticed more teachers taking books from there. (School staff)

Individual teachers talked about the impact that accessible books had on them as readers.

It was the first time in years that I'd actually made the time to sit down and read something that wasn't work-related. Yeah, seriously! And I read that story where the boy gets in trouble in Gisborne, and they go up to Waikaremoana for the camp. And there he has an encounter with a giant eel and the whole story unfolds from there. What a wonderful book, wonderful. And you see it rekindled my passion. (School staff)

I know personally I have taken a book from that shelf, and I have read it. I just read the *Mission Girl* story by Fleur Beale. I was really interested in that story because we're doing Aotearoa New Zealand histories. (School staff)

The provision of new books also resulted in more school staff talking about books and the pedagogy of reading for pleasure.

It's been really good to hear teachers talking about the books on the bookshelf. So, you kind of sit there in your lunchtime and you read them. And you go, 'Actually, this would be really good for Room 1. They'd enjoy this book.' Or someone would say, 'Oh yeah, but have you seen this book?' or, 'That one's got a cool cover.' Things like that. (School staff)

We were talking about when you read to them, and someone said, 'I read to them before we go home,' and someone else said, 'Have you thought about reading straight after lunch because then it just settles the kids down?' That sort of thing. She was a newish teacher, and she went, 'I hadn't thought of that.' (School staff)

## Teachers reading and talking about books with children

Teachers described how the PLD provided by librarians from National Library and the public library reminded teachers about the value of reading to children and talking about books purely for fun.

I think it's the teacher focus on reading to their kids [that has increased]. I read to my kids every afternoon after lunch. Some teachers weren't ... So, I think it was a reminder for us that it's a really powerful thing reading to kids. It makes them discerning. It makes them go, 'That was a good book,' or 'Let's read another one by that person.' (School staff)

Teachers also responded to book recommendations provided by librarians from National Library and the public library.

We'd finished reading all the David Walliams ones, and someone from National Library recommended the Andy Griffiths books. So, we read all those and they just tore them apart. They were, 'Oh my gosh, better read the next one,' and, 'You didn't read us this today.' (School staff)

There were many stories about the positive impact of reading to children including one about a non-verbal child who spoke for the first time.

I have one story that always stays with me and it's involving a school that I gave a box of books to. And they have a child at the school who's non-verbal and they must have been reading the books in class or just somewhere in the school. And there was a dog in the book and the kid pointed and said, 'dog'. This non-verbal student doesn't talk at all. And I was like, 'Well see it's like something so simple, so powerful from a book'. When the principal told me that I was like, 'Oh my gosh, wow!' (Public library staff)

## Opportunities for children to read for pleasure

Research participants commented on the opportunities teachers provided for children to read for pleasure themselves—both in classroom time and during visits to the library.

I think the kids did more reading. All of our classes have sustained silent reading. Having new books made silent reading so much more pleasurable—having something decent. (School staff)

The project also served as a reminder to teachers about the importance of being a reading role model, especially during class reading time.

Teachers would say 'Hey it's USSR [uninterrupted sustained silent reading] time' and then our teachers may have been straight on their computer to do some administration work. Perhaps now they have got a good book and are modelling it more. (School staff)

It came to USSR time, and I had my head down and nose in this book and these kids were laughing at me. I said, 'Never mind your laughing. We'll see who gets the book after I'm finished with it'. Anyway, it took a couple of weeks and then one of our boys got the book. But it did, it sparked something for me. And then from there, I won't say it sparked a mass reading, but it certainly increased engagement in our kids. Yeah, it was cool. (School staff)

Other teachers described using suggestions from National Library librarians about ways teachers could model being readers themselves.

They [National Library staff] had some great ideas about promoting the love of reading and breaking down the barriers to access ... some suggestions of what staff could do like put up a 'What I've been reading' in their rooms. That was one thing I did—put up a picture of myself with a book on the wall saying I've been reading this and my reactions or what I thought. (School staff)

Visits from the Reading Ambassador and visiting authors also contributed to a growing interest in books and reading.

And Des Hunt when he came in and talked to the kids. There was a lot of talks about just the science part of him, but also, a few of the boys went looking for books that he'd written. They were probably a little bit above where they were, reading wise, but that's someone that they remember. (School staff)

We had that Samoan guy in to talk to them and that was really cool for some of those kids who perhaps are into that style of things—cartoons and anime—and don't necessarily fit the usual mode. (School staff)

Alan Dingley, he came to school and talked to the kids. He was the librarian person, and I think the kids were a little bit bemused by him. And then he started talking and they realised, 'This guy's actually similar to us'. And just some of the kids' responses to him when he started talking about how books that you like can lead to other books. There was a couple of boys who actually said, 'We hadn't thought about that.' I read those 200 Minutes of Adventure [books] or whatever, and they didn't realise that there were 300 Minutes, 400 Minutes [books], and they went, 'Right, we're going to and find them.' (School staff)

## Communities of readers

School staff observed increased student agency resulting from access to new books, teacher enthusiasm, being read to more often, and opportunities to read for pleasure themselves. Some described a collective excitement and momentum around reading and talking about books that often typifies flourishing communities of readers.

I think that excitement about books is what we want kids to have. We want them when they're 30 to go, 'Do you remember that story that teacher read us about the boys, the terrible stories, the treehouse one?'. (School staff)

There was also evidence that some of the enthusiasm for reading and talking about books was spilling out into homes.

I had one mum, I met her in the supermarket, and we'd been reading a David Walliams book, I think *Awful Aunty*. And we were chatting away, and she said, 'I'd better go and see what Lady Lilly's been up to today'. And I was like, 'Okay, who the heck's Lady Lilly?' I had not a clue who she was talking about. Lady Lilly of something or other manor? And I was going, 'Gosh, okay'. And then I got home, and I was like, 'I know who she's talking about, she's talking about the character in my book', the book that we'd been reading at school. And her son had gone home every day and would tell her word for word what had happened in the book that day. So, I think a lot of the parents, the kids are going home and talking about their books a lot more. (School staff)

## Awareness and use of the school library

Research participants described the impact of Pūtoi Rito on the school library. Weeding out old books and improving the display of those remaining made the quality books that the school owned more visible. School staff also described the efforts they were making to enable greater access to the school library for students.

I have made sure that all the staff have access to the Assistant program in order to scan books ... I want to have a roster for every class to go in the library, and I'm managing that. It's a bit of a work in progress still, but I'm determined to have it happen. (School staff)

I will be going into the library at lunch times and making the library available for children to get books at that time, especially if they're not necessarily doing that within their classroom time. (School staff)

She (school staff with library responsibilities) works in Room One, which is our new entrant room, and so she's getting everybody to visit the library now. (School staff)

Another way of raising awareness and use of the school libraries was enlisting students as school librarians. The National Library Capability Facilitator worked with the Project Co-ordinator to run a half-day session for Dargaville primary and intermediate school students who wanted to become library assistants. Fifty students attended, and this was so popular that there are plans to run a second session.

### Engaging the community

#### Community access to books

An immediate impact of the project was increased access to quality books throughout the Dargaville community. The sheer number of books taken by community members (over 6,000) is evidence of the reach of the project.

The thing that comes through is that we're constantly sending more books up there on an ongoing basis ... They are just churning through the books because people want more of them. They want more and more, and so that alone is a good sign. And we know that they're not just going to the same families because the diverse range of outlets for those books means that they're reaching enough of those people that might not ordinarily have access. (National Library staff)

#### Community members reading and talking about books

Comments from some research participants suggest that more reading was happening in the wider community—both by staff in the businesses and organisations housing the bookshelves, and by their customers.

I have read some of them. I think [my colleague] has read all of the books. (Business/organisation)

I do actually have some workers who—they'll come, and they'll sit, because I have a couch. So they come in and they'll actually look through the book to see if it's appropriate for their child or grandchild. And I say to them, 'See, this is promoting reading for you also'. (Business/organisation)

So, there was one book here and someone was sitting there reading it and they were like, 'Is this appropriate [reading at work]?' And I said, 'I put the books there and I expect you to read them before you take one so ten points to you'. (Business/organisation)

#### Reaching all parts of the Dargaville community: Small stories of impact

There were many stories of the positive impact the books had on individuals and their families. The selection shown below provides a sense of the wide range of people accessing the books and the ways they used them. Some of the stories also illustrate how the simple act of taking a book led to the start of new relationships across the community.

Further stories can be found in the cream boxes spread intermittently through the remainder of the report.

We had a mum walk by before Christmas, and she said, 'How much?' And I said, 'They're free'. And she said she's got two children at home and could she take two of them to wrap up as Christmas presents. And that had been her saviour because she was looking for a couple of cheap stocking fillers and here were brand new books. (Business/organisation)

There's a couple of kids who come in with their dads at the weekend. And I suspect they're probably kids that only see their dad at weekends. So, they come in and have pancakes and read a book. Which is really nice. (Business/organisation)



We have a very big group of adults with learning disabilities in Dargaville. We make a lot of handmade soaps. They wrap our handmade soap, and we give them gift vouchers. They began coming in weekly to get books. So, they all got to choose a book, take it away, read it and then bring it back again. That was lovely. They all sort of lined up and took it in turns to choose their book. (Business/organisation)

I had a young gentleman last week who's going through a hard time at school. He was diagnosed with autism and dyslexia. But he does like to read. I said, 'We've got all these books here'. And he couldn't decide between two. So, I said, 'Look do me a favour. Take the second one—it was *A Hunt for the Killer*—and come back and tell me if you found the killer. It was just last week, and he waved as he went past today. His Mum said he's reading it, but he hasn't finished yet. She said 'No spoilers'. (Business/organisation)

### Community awareness of the project messages

The project aimed not only to put books into the community, but also to share messages about the value of reading. This goal was supported through a social media campaign; branded material such as stickers, bookmarks, and posters; and a presence at community events. Interview data suggests that in general the communication campaign was effective. Nearly all of those interviewed had stories of friends or family who had seen the branding, got books, or heard project messages.

I mean, my moko, my grandson, ended up coming home with a book the other day with our sticker on it. I laughed and said, 'Where did you get this, boy?' 'Mummy.' I said, 'Oh, ok.' (School staff)

One of the events that provided the most reach for the project was the Dargaville Field Days. The project stand sat alongside the District Council stand, and so there were ample opportunities to share messages about the project with the District Council. The Project Co-ordinator had designed a game using one of the robots that was part of the public library's collection, and this attracted people to the stand to play or watch the game. Once there, visitors could look at the books, chat with the librarians about the project and take a book to keep or share.

FIGURE 3 The Pūtoi Rito stand at the Dargaville Field Days



From left to right are: Molly Molving-Lilo, Katarina Allely, Daisy Foster, Anne Dickson.



It was crazy successful. I think we gave out over 800 books, and we kōreroed with a lot of grandparents, a lot of families—and a lot of teenagers, surprisingly. It was great for multiple reasons. One was everyone was excited to get a free book, so we were pushing that getting books into homes part of the project. But we were also talking about, 'Hey have you heard of the project?' A lot of people said, 'Oh I've seen these books in town'. I said, 'You know you can take them?' (Public library staff)

A lot of people who hadn't heard about the project now know about the project and where they can get more books. One person didn't even know where our library was in town. She now knows so even if there was no one else who was impacted I know that person was because now they know where it is! (Public library staff)

That team of young librarians, what a team! And [the National Library Capability Facilitator]! You know they are all honestly just so enthusiastic, they really engaged with people, they had that brilliant game using the robot ball that they had got from the public library that attracted people to the stand. (National Library staff)

### Raising awareness and use of the public library

The project aimed to encourage borrowing from libraries, library membership, and engagement with library programmes and services. The librarians from the public library wanted more people to experience first-hand what a modern library is about and the many services (such as use of wifi) and resources (such as robots and telescopes) it provides for free. To help meet this aim, the public library ran events that brought children in. For example, at Halloween children could come into the library to get a "treat" of a free project book.

There is some evidence to suggest that project initiatives were beginning to have an impact on awareness and use of the library. For example, school staff had observed that children were beginning to make more use of the public library.

I think there's a lot more kids have gone home and said, 'We need to go down to the library'. I don't know whether they've had an uptake in kids going down there, but a lot more of my kids, go down there. They're saying, 'They've got these Discovery Boxes down there', and 'I went down and got some new library books from the library today.' So, it's not a whole lot of kids, but there's a few more realising that the town library is actually for books, not just for wifi. (School staff)

One of the public library staff said she had noticed "new regulars" at the library who she had met previously either through her engagement with schools or at community events promoting the project.

I have noticed new people in our library. We have new regulars of kids. And they all come up to me and say, 'Hi Miss', because I have been in their schools. And last year [the National Library Capability Facilitator] ran a student librarians' day and now most of those kids come into our library. And I had never seen them before. We also ran a book or treat Pūtoi event which brought in a lot of families and a few of those families have joined the library. And they're now regular users 'cos they realise, 'Oh libraries aren't just about books anymore'. There're kids who come after school and go on the computers or just hang out with their friends or borrow something from our Discovery Collection. (Public library staff)

## Strengthening networks of library services

The public library and National Library staff considered that the project had “fast tracked” and “ramped up” their business-as-usual work with schools to strengthen networks of library services.

We have done this in the past before the project started, but now it's kind of like ramped up so we are much more proactive about doing it, and that includes the team at Dargaville Library as well. (National Library staff)

My cousin is involved in one of the businesses in town that ended up with one of the bookshelves and she's had really positive responses. She was telling me about this grandma who had picked up this kids *First Words in Te Reo* book and was like, 'I'd quite like to take this one so I can learn some words and teach my moko'. I thought, that's really cool. So, there's been a lot of reward in the community. (Business/organisation)

The main way the project had ramped up the networks of services was by providing time and opportunities for staff from National Library, the public library, and school libraries to work together.

What the project has done is given us the mandate and the capacity to focus on it and fast track the creation and maintenance of the relationships. (National Library staff)

It's [the Project Co-ordinator] going into those schools. She's got the energy and the time [funded by the project]. It's a small team and there is not [usually] a lot of opportunity to make these kinds of connections. (Public library staff)

Having “the mandate and the capacity” was important because of how busy schools have become.

Principals don't [usually] have time to make those connections, so it has been really neat. (Public library staff)

It is very hard to have connections with the local schools. The libraries used to have more staff and more hours, and they used to be able to come along to things. Now they don't. (Public library staff)

At the time of the interviews, school staff were at different stages in using networks of library services. This was mainly to do with how established their relationships with the public library and National Library staff had been prior to the project.

Some staff were just becoming aware of the public library and National Library resources and services for the first time.

We can certainly promote the public library within our school. And my next thing is to actually go to the public library find the time to do that, to look at what's in there now and promote that back here with the children so that they know the times the library is open, and what's available to them if they go in there ... So it's knowing that it's there, and that they could do it in their own time. It's just alluding the families to the potential of going to the public library. (School staff)

Others had already established relationships with staff from these libraries and were able to strengthen these during the project.

We have a really good relationship with the public library. A couple of classes walked there last year ... I join our children up to the public library with digital membership when I'm enrolling them into our library system. The Dargaville Library has quite a few platforms, gaming, eBooks. It doesn't cost anything to join and there are no overdue costs. I get the public library to come in and talk about their platforms. [The Project Co-ordinator] has been a lovely friendly face. She has been up here a number of times ... The manager of the public library was a school librarian. She knows what it's like in schools. (School staff)

There was evidence of growing awareness across the Dargaville schools of the ways in which they could make use of the public library and National Library services in a networked way. One example is when a teacher from a partner school got a new job as a principal at another local school where there "were no books". She then contacted the Project Co-ordinator who, being local, was able to respond immediately by delivering a set of books to loan from the public library. The Project Co-ordinator then put the principal in touch with the National Library Capability Facilitator who was able to set the principal up with a more sustainable solution by joining her school up to National Library's Loans to Schools service.

### A vignette—bookshelves in marae

This chapter ends with a vignette that illustrates how one project initiative reached many parts of the Dargaville community and involved many different groups including teachers, students, whānau, and iwi. The small stories of impact presented earlier provide a sense of the *range* of people impacted by the project. The vignette below provides a sense of the *depth* of just one of the project initiatives. It also illustrates how one project event pulled together different parts of the community and enabled the public library, National Library, schools, whānau, community organisations, and iwi to connect and build relationships around a shared goal.

#### **Giftng bookshelves to 14 local marae**

One of the most successful project initiatives involved giftng bookshelves and books to each of the 14 local marae. Several members of the Partners Group had close connections with some of these marae and saw the value in having shelves of books available for children and their whānau to use.

It was just one of those moments where you go, 'This will work!'. We've got the ideal opportunity where we have gatherings of adults and children over long periods of time where actually having some kind of reading resource whether it be in English or in Te Reo, would be of real benefit. (School staff)

There's a lot of downtime during hui for children, and quite often they're just outside playing and having fun with their cousins, which is the whole purpose. But there's opportunity there too. When kids are tired or when it's wet, it would be a wonderful opportunity for them to start engaging with some great literacy. (School staff)

After dinner, it would be the ideal opportunity for one of the nans, one of the mums or dads to be able to grab a book and grab a couple of the kids and say, come on, let's have a story. (School staff)

The Dargaville Menzshed were responsible for building many of the community bookshelves and Little Libraries. But the local Intermediate school took responsibility for making the bookshelves for the marae, and their involvement in the process was an important factor in the success of the initiative—for them, their whānau, and their iwi. The technology teacher at the Intermediate school came up with a design for the bookshelves and, after a bit of planning and modification, "did a trial run". The teacher then used some of her non-teaching periods to call in children from different rooms who "had shown a bit of aptitude" or "were keen to be part of the project", to help with the construction.

The technology teacher then selected students to decorate the bookshelves. They first discussed as a group where the bookshelves were going, and what sort of images would be appropriate. They also looked at picture books to get ideas about different art styles. Most students chose to decorate the bookshelf that was going to their own marae.

Those designs the children chose. A lot of those children would choose their own marae. They said, 'Well, I'm going to do mine because that's where I'm from'. And so they chose what design they would like to go on theirs ... We had a kingfisher, we had a tūi, we had a pekapeka, we had the stingray, we had a shark. (School staff)

There was a lot of ownership because they knew the purpose and they knew where the shelving was going to go. Particularly when they were picking out the artwork for a bookshelf that was going to go to their marae: 'We want this one to go to such and such because that's my Aunty's marae'. Even the kids who were not necessarily connected to local iwi were engaged because they had friends or relatives that were. (School staff)

The students who had built and decorated the bookshelves also helped choose which books would go to each marae. They took great care in the selection process, considering the nature and location of each marae. For example, because one of the marae was located in the bush they chose books about native flora and fauna. They also chose books with the people at the marae in mind.

There was one funny little story where a kid picked up a Bluey book and he said 'Oh this one has got to go to Ōtūrei because my cousin loves Bluey. It's gotta go in that pile. I'll get to pick that out and read it to him'. (School staff)

The project partners then invited representatives from the 14 marae to an event for gifting the books, attended by the partner schools and members of the Partners Group. The event was an evening held at the Intermediate school that included performances by the school kapa haka group and the school rock band. There was "a great turnout" and representatives from all 14 marae attended.

There were a few people from every marae we were giving a shelf to, and they all stood up and said something—who they were, where they're from and that they're just grateful for the bookshelf. And they were like touched and shocked about all the kind of Māori books that there are available these days and that they were getting them for free for their whānau. And all the books were picked by local tamariki, and the bookshelves were built by local tamariki and given by the public library and National Library. So yeah, that was quite cool. (Public library staff)

It was a fantastic event really well organised by the schools so there was really good participation. I have never been in a place where all the local marae were there representing themselves. There was a lot of pride. It was huge. (Public library staff)

The success of the evening was due in part to the involvement and sense of ownership of many different parts of the Dargaville community.

I think there's a few aspects [for its success]. One, anything with tamariki involvement, whānau will come. Because they are proud of their kids or their mokopuna or whatever. The other thing is being honoured because these kids made something specifically for them. So, iwi and marae always end up being approached because they *have* to be approached. Whereas this scenario was that they were thought of, and they got something made especially for them. And then they got told, 'Hey our kids made you guys a bookshelf, the project has given you books. Would you guys like to come to this night, this hui and they will present them to you?' So, it was like, 'Wow I guess we were thought of. And our kids made something to gift to us—or their own whānau in our own local area'. So, I think it was you know, pretty special. (Public library staff)

There was evidence that the marae not only valued the books but made regular use of them.

Te Houhanga Marae which is the local marae in Dargaville township, they had a wānanga the weekend after the bookshelf was given and one of my colleagues from council she is from the marae. And she said that all the books were out of the bookshelf. It was great. (Public library staff)

Just the other day I was talking to a new staff member who had recently been at a tangi who said just how awesome it was to have those books there ... Some people were completely blown away that you could remove a book from the shelf to take home. Like they were really seen as taonga—as treasures. (School staff)

And another marae, they had a family thing up there a couple of weeks after the bookshelves were given. And she said it was cool because all the kids had books out and were reading at night. They were playing, and you know had their showers or had their swim or whatever they were all out reading in the books, so it was really cool. (Public library staff)

FIGURE 4 Bookshelves created for local marae



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## 3. Enablers

This section presents participant reflections on project enablers; that is, factors that contributed to the success of the project.

### Roles and relationships

The success of the project was, in part, due to the strong relationship between the public library and National Library which existed prior to the project. The manager of the public library worked closely with National Library staff and was committed to supporting networks of library services. She was also committed to supporting schools.

[The manager of the public library] was previously a school librarian and she has always encouraged her staff to be involved [in schools]. Not all public libraries are like that. Some public libraries engage more than others. (National Library staff)

Having a funded role dedicated to organising the logistics of the project and maintaining connections between libraries, and having the right person in this role was also important. Many research participants considered that the Project Co-ordinator played a large role in project successes.

I think the selection of your Project Co-ordinator is fairly critical and I think that [Manager of Public Library] was very sensible and mindful with her selection there. Having that young and vibrant person to be able to take it and run with the footy. So that would be my recommendation. Choose wisely. Choose a people person that's able to walk in a multitude of spaces, because it's that multitude of spaces that you need to be able to truly access your community, not just little small snippets, or facets. You don't want someone that's working just with one Clique. You need someone that can walk in all cliques and yeah that'd be my recommendation. (School staff)

### A strong yet flexible project design

The success experienced in Dargaville was also due to a project design which had been through multiple iterations in previous Pūtoi Rito projects and refined each time it was used. What was learned in one project could then be incorporated into the next. For example, unlike previous Pūtoi Rito projects, the Dargaville project included school leaders in the Partners Group. This made it easier for everyone to “stay on the same page” and build a sense of project ownership.

Another strength of the project design was that, while it had some basic tenets that were the same across all projects, it had flexibility to be adapted to meet the needs of different communities. The Project Co-ordinator was a local who had grown up in Dargaville and had deep knowledge of the community, including local schools, marae, and businesses. She used this knowledge and her existing relationships to design approaches that worked well for the community.

She was coming up with great ideas and having the opportunity to trial them and that's what the project has enabled as well. You know to find out what works. So it does enable that ability to find out what's really going to work for this community. (National Library staff)



Consequently schools, businesses, and organisations experienced the project as easy and enjoyable to be involved.

I think that it was so easy—the process of doing it—the communication was just great—it was easy to get involved—even to how much room you’ve got for what shelf you’d get. (Business/community)

There was a big cookery book for children and so off that went—and then the next week, little treats that they had made out of the book came back to the shop—so that was lovely. (Business/organisation)

## Quality, relevant, and accessible books

Pūtoi Rito gave over 6,000 new or near-new books to the Dargaville community either through bookshelves located in the community or at community events. Research participants considered that this generosity and the quality, relevance, and accessibility of the books all contributed to the success of the project.

### Books to keep

Many community members first became aware of the project by being offered a book—and not just any book, but a book they could choose for themselves, and one that they could keep.

A lot of the kids in our area—their parents can’t afford school uniforms let alone books, so although they can go to the library, it was so nice to have something that they could *keep*. They don’t get lots of treats necessarily, so it was great. I know at Christmas time a lot of them were used as extra little Christmas presents that parents could not necessarily buy. And what better gift? (Business/organisation)

Books can sometimes be seen as very expensive, and not very accessible and quite precious things. And I think the idea that, ‘Wow this is something I could have, I’m allowed to have these’ ... making books accessible, attainable—that is something I think I have observed already. It is a good starting place. (School staff)

### Quality books

The books on offer were not only free, but they were also high quality which made people feel valued. Many research participants commented on the quality of the books on offer and the positive impact this had.

If you’re getting something for free, particularly a book, you’re expecting it to be on newsprint and kind of a bit shabby, but you’re not expecting beautiful books, well-written, crafted, and glossy. And you get the new book smell. It’s like the new car smell. You don’t often get it, not very often in your life. (School staff)

People love to get free books. And there’s something fantastic about giving kids really *good* books, like *The Bad Guys*. Something that they know—that excites them. With the project they were getting books they would really like. They were excited and the quality and selection of the books were very good. (Public library staff)

It is the quality of the books. They are not just two-dollar paperbacks that you would throw away. (Business/organisation)

## Relevance and range of books

A National Library selection specialist purposefully chose the books for Dargaville based on community demographics and knowledge fed back from the Partners Group about what was popular in different parts of the community. This increased the likelihood of the books being of interest. In general, research participants considered that the books on offer were interesting and relevant to the community. Most people could find a book they *wanted* to read.

The wide selection of books representing Māori language and culture was an important factor because people felt their language and identity was valued.

From a te ao Māori perspective I think we've done a great job, like when I've been out at events and just out in the community people are very shocked like Māori people are very shocked that we have full immersion te ao Māori books and bilingual te ao Māori books, and books about Māori culture. But books also that are just normal books but in the language. So, it's like normalising our culture and normalising our language in the mainstream world. (Public library staff)

We're getting our community members and parents and grandparents to be able to sit and they've got a decent resource, a beautiful new book, most of them reflecting our people, our country, our culture. It's a beautiful thing. (School staff)

I certainly think the ones relating to Māori topics are really relevant to our community. So the New Zealand stories, I think are what our tamariki really value. (School staff)

There were also books representing the other main cultures and languages of the Dargaville community.

Even the books we gave to the marae, they were not just Māori. They were Samoan and Tongan bilingual ones which was really nice because a lot of our families are multicultural. (School staff)

[Teachers were] surprised that there were so many good quality bilingual books—that people could find something to read in their native tongue. (School staff)

A lot of people don't have happy memories of schooling or did not have good literacy role modelling. It can be a hard sell. But if we have something that's contemporary and reflects us as a people, us as a nation, in all its diversity, that's really, really, positive. (School staff)

The different types of books available meant that most people could find something that matched their needs and interests.

There was a broad range, a good range of age interest from first word or cartoony type of books to graphic novels, factual, fiction. (School staff)

I think it's very inclusive. There was really quite a *range* of books. The range of topics, some were just young fun books, some of them were quite educational, some of the illustrations—they were like gift books—not bog-standard books. A fantastic range of books—and lots of ages. (Business/organisation)

## Accessibility of books

The books were easily accessible. They were taken into the community rather than the community having to come to them. There were bookshelves in businesses, shops, cafes, community organisations, and marae, and at community events. These locations and events were strategically selected to ensure project reach into all parts of the community, including the places where the people who most need books go.



Having access to books in everyday places like shops, as opposed to institutions such as schools or libraries may also have made the books more accessible and attractive for some people.

And I don't know why but even though our library is very, very good I think sometimes kids associate the library with school. And so it was almost an opportunity to sneak books into their life without them necessarily noticing it. (Business/organisation)

## Community ownership of the project

The project enlisted groups from different parts of the community to contribute in various ways, including designing, building, decorating, and hosting the bookshelves and Little Libraries. For example, the Menzshed built some of the Little Libraries and these were then decorated by different groups in the community including children from the Early Years Hub. This community involvement helped develop a shared sense of ownership for the project.

FIGURE 5 One of the Little Libraries ready for painting

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As illustrated in the quotes below, the bookshelf hosts took pride in maintaining the bookshelves and pleasure in encouraging visitors to come and take a book.

And what I do is on the bottom shelves I put the younger books for the under-5s 'cos it's at their eye level. So, I take a lot of care and pride in doing our bookstand each week. And updating it. 'Cos there's nothing worse than going by and seeing the same books so I move them around. (Business/organisation)

When people come by, I go outside and say, 'Would you like a book?' And children sitting in the car while they wait for their parents at the laundromat—I'll wait until their parents get back and then go and offer them one. (Business/organisation)

It's all been positive. If I see kids passing by, I'll ask them—because it takes 2 seconds out of your day to make someone's day better. And it's an opportunity that we've been given. And I love it. (Business/organisation)

[Promoting the books] is really important because you can't have them sitting there, you've got to be handing them out and promoting it and sharing. 'Cos sharing is caring. (Business/organisation)

Some of the people hosting bookshelves took their role further by becoming reading champions or role models. They promoted the project messages by encouraging visitors to read, talk about books, and visit the library because they were invested in the project goals.

I recommend that they come to the library and check out the books there because they might have a different selection. (Business/organisation)

If they come and I see the thirst there I'll recommend they go to the Hospice shop because the Hospice shop has five books for a dollar. There's the library there but a lot are frightened to use the library in case they wreck the books and that's in the back of a lot of minds. (Business/organisation)

I've just had a thought—I should actually get from the library information about enrolment ... I'm just writing a note to myself about that now. (Business/organisation)

The Project Co-ordinator knew how important reading champions are and so had purposefully selected business owners who enjoyed reading to host bookshelves.

When it sits there as a take a free book it's different from when there's people in the shop talking and reading and you've got a place to sit down and read a book ... They get excited, they're engaging. (Public library staff)

So, like there's even a granddad who works here and he took some books home for his grandkids. Then I got this note. It says, 'Thanks for the books and the other book from my dad's work'. So that was from—I think she's 5 or 6. And I don't think he would've thought of getting a book for his girl. (Local business/organisation)

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## 4. Challenges

As would be expected, the Partners Group faced challenges both during the project and as it came to an end. This section presents these challenges along with suggested solutions and recommendations.

### Challenges for schools

#### Capacity for involvement

One of the challenges observed by several research participants was school capacity to be involved in the project.

It's about making sure that we've got enough buy-in from the people, because we did have one or two schools that were really invested. But then some of the other schools that we really wanted there, sort of pulled the pin early on. (National Library staff)

A solution was for these schools to become associates, enabling them to keep in touch with and attend events, when possible, without officially being part of the project. This open-door policy was successful as a way of retaining contact. Over the course of the project additional schools opted in as associates, demonstrating a growing interest in the project.

Even those schools participating fully in the project struggled with competing priorities and the leaders from these schools were not always able to attend project hui or events.

This goes to the reality of schools, and it's not unique to this project. It's quite difficult sometimes to find time to meet where everyone can sort of be there. (National Library staff)

This challenge was exacerbated by staff turnover during the project, especially when the staff member leaving was in a leadership position. School leaders from all the partner schools changed during the project which slowed momentum while new leaders got up to speed. Consequently, there was not as much traction as expected, especially at the start.

#### Embedding a culture of reading across the whole school

Changes in school leadership and the competing demands on teachers' time meant that it took longer than expected for the project to be embedded across the whole school.

I felt slightly disappointed at the fact that when you go into schools, some teachers wonder why you're there ... so I don't exactly know how embedded it is. (National Library staff)

Schools are very hard. Teachers move on. Principals change. They agree to do things and then they don't have time. (Public library staff)

One member of the Partners Group considered that having more opportunities to engage directly with the teachers in each school may have helped to better embed the project.

We haven't had much access to the teachers. It's been great chatting to the principals, but we know they've got a lot [of other things] to talk about with their staff in the mornings. (Public library staff)

Other members of the Partners Group highlighted the importance of having teachers as project champions. This approach would enable the responsibility to be shared across more than one or two people and help spread project messages across all levels of the schools.

My learning for the project is probably not going to the principal—get the principal to agree to the project and then to assign *two* champion people from the school and they can support each other with the project in the school. It's the *champion* teacher—the school librarian, the English teacher, the teacher that just loves books. 'Cos, they love that thing, they're going to go above and beyond for it. (Public library staff)

It does reinforce the importance of a team you know. Having a team in a school that's responsible. (National Library staff)

One Partners Group member suggested that in future the project could possibly provide a small amount of funding for partner schools to use to reimburse champion teachers for their time and to show that they were valued and appreciated.

### Engaging with whānau

One of the goals of the project was for schools to engage whānau in reading with their children. However, because it took some time for the partner schools to get traction, this had not happened to any great extent by the time the interviews took place. Staff at some schools had this goal in sight.

We could certainly invite our parents and grandparents in to read to our children and our children, to read to them. That sort of thing would be a really great day to organise. I realise some of our whānau may not be readers and I'm not there to make them feel whakamā about their life experience. But I think it could be a way of enthusing the community and them understanding the project a little bit more as well. (School staff)

Other staff were hesitant about putting time and energy into an event they were not convinced would be well attended.

Sometimes you sort of come across this in schools ... just anecdotal comments or things that are said about families, like 'I don't know if families would be interested in coming to that'. (National Library staff)

The question of how schools could better engage whānau in the project and its goals was also a topic that came up frequently in the Partners Group hui. One suggestion was to hold an event for whānau at the pool given that lots of children went there after school. However, as one of the librarians from the public library observed, "Books and water don't go together that well".

### Challenges for businesses and organisations

One of the main challenges for the businesses and organisations housing the bookshelves was keeping up with demand.

Our first lot of books went within 48 hours ... we had trouble keeping up with the books. We were always asking for more books. (Business/organisation)

I do get a lot of staff—you know, [asking] 'Have you got any more books in?' They'll come up and ask. (Business/organisation)

A related challenge was providing the types of books that matched the interests of their visitors, customers, or staff. One research participant felt they had “too many older books” while “the books for under-5s go like crazy”, and one observed that there were, “too many books for boys”. Some wanted to see more variety, while others wanted more of a particular type of book.

There isn't variety—There are a lot about sharks. (Business/organisation)

We've got three books on learning how to speak Samoan, but we are an extremely high ratio of Tongan, and there's no Tongan books. (Business/organisation)

We need more on hunting and fishing. We had a couple, and they were really popular. (Business/organisation)

Over time feedback loops developed whereby businesses and organisations communicated their needs to National Library staff via the Project Co-ordinator, and there was evidence this was working successfully during the Partners Group hui.

### Challenges for libraries

Librarians from both National Library and the public library commented on the time it took to build a shared vision across the Partners Group and get the project up and running.

I think we were a little bit hamstrung. I think the project got off to a little bit of a slow start. I'm not sure how clear the expectations were about what we wanted to achieve and what the project was going to look like. It seemed to take an awfully long time for that to be nailed down, and I'm not even sure still, whether everybody's on the same page. (National Library staff)

One reason was the time it took for members of the Partners Group to “get up to speed” with the project, especially if they hadn't been involved from the start.

I love the fact that it's a public library librarian who's on the ground [in the Project Co-ordinator role]. That's a key thing. But that person definitely has to be in the talks from the start—even if it's just listening until things are figured out, and then having input. (Public library staff)

I wish I was brought in earlier for those conversations because I felt I was playing catch up for 3 or 4 months. And I could have been doing stuff in the community instead of doing logistics stuff behind the scenes. (Public library staff)

Another reason for the slow start to the project was that organising the logistics of the project sometimes took time away from engaging with schools.

Having the space ready to go, the branding stuff ready to go, the books ready to go—everything ready to go from day one so that we could make the most of the time. If logistics aren't smooth, it makes things harder and more time consuming. (Public library staff)

Because I am not employed by the National Library, I can't purchase things or design things without lots of emails. Even something as simple as having a car to use to go to the schools [would have helped]. (Public library staff)

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## 5. Sustainability

One of the challenges for initiatives such as Pūtoi Rito is finding ways to sustain the positive changes made once the funding comes to an end. This section considers the extent to which the Pūtoi Rito initiative in Dargaville might be sustained and how.

There were three main reasons research participants considered that positive shifts in Dargaville might be sustained. The first was that the key library staff “weren’t going anywhere”. The second was that the three partner schools and three associate schools had established relationships with these librarians and were all using the National Library lending service. The third was that most of the people from the community or business organisations responsible for bookshelves had an interest in books and reading, and so were invested in keeping them going.

### Library staff who “weren’t going anywhere”

Librarians from National Library and the public library described how they had kept sustainability in mind right from the start of the project. They saw the project as “a kick start to an ongoing relationship”.

[The Project Co-ordinator] and I talked at the start about how it needed to be something that wasn’t just us coming and then going away again. It needed to be kick starting something that could be sustained. (National Library staff)

Key players in the project—the National Library Capability Facilitators and the librarians from the public library—worked in Dargaville and with Dargaville schools prior to the project. This meant that, unlike some PLD initiatives, they wouldn’t just “disappear” when the project funding ended. Research participants saw this as a key strength in terms of sustainability.

In Dargaville it’s going to be okay. The project’s over, but we’re still here. And we can do this a different way. (National Library staff)

Our work with the school doesn’t stop. I mean [the National Library Capability Facilitator] has got a relationship with those schools in Dargaville and this project has strengthened some of those relationships, I think. And she will have an ongoing relationship with those schools in Dargaville. We don’t just suddenly stop. That’s part of our BAU you know, with the schools. And our lending service and loans to schools will always be there. Facilitator work is ongoing. It just enabled it to be a bit more intensive probably through the project. (National Library staff)

Library staff considered that positive changes made during the project could be sustained using books from National Library and the Public library.

We have until June with the new books but then there is Dargaville library and school libraries to carry on the practices started with the new books. (Public library staff)

And these staff considered that relationships built during the project would enable them to sustain and build on the initiatives put in place.

We have until June when the project ends but what can we do in the meantime? Build relationships, hoping they will be more likely to walk through our doors. Hopefully they will continue that with the public library or the school library. (Public library staff)

The project has allowed us to put a little more time into pushing those messages so that when the official project ends that's all set in place and it's a really good foundation for sustainability. It is a huge strength of this project. (National Library staff)

Staff from the public library were aware that when the funding for the Project Co-ordinator role ended it would be harder for the public library to find time to maintain the connections with National Library, and with schools. They had started planning towards this time.

We are working on a sustainability plan and my suggestion to her was to work on a goal of engaging with one school a month, 'cos she's got to go back to her other work ... We've started this and we want to keep it going. (Public library staff)

Before Christmas like there was one lady who was heavily pregnant right, with like six kids ranging from 13 down to 4. And it's the beginning of the school holidays, and they're all jumping up and down. So, I got around from my counter and then I went, 'Excuse me would your children like a book?' And then they all chose a book. And she said, 'Is this really for real? Is this really free?' She stood out because she was at her wits' end. She was due to have the baby over Christmas. And the kids were so excited. And she said, 'Well at least now I'll have some peace!'. (Business/organisation)

### Schools with a focus on books and reading

School staff considered that the relationships they had developed with National Library and the public library staff would help sustain the positive gains made.

I think our links between school and the public library, we've got good build there. And those need to be maintained. I believe that they will be because [the manager of the public library] has always been proactive. And now we've got the next generation [of librarians] coming on coupled with the positivity that the schools have seen, and the good outcomes. I think we've got a recipe for an ongoing relationship that will continue. (School staff)

School staff considered that once the project ended, one of the main ways of sustaining student engagement in reading would be to have an enticing library collection. All the partner schools had worked with National Library and public library staff to refresh their libraries and had plans to maintain their library collections and spaces.

Probably purchasing more books, but we have to take that on board within our budget. That we actually allow some funds to ensure we can keep buying good quality books for our library. (School staff)

We're really lucky here, we have a really good school library. We're part of the Duffy Books in Homes programme, so we do get those books coming in. (School staff)

These staff saw the National Library lending service as a way of keeping their collection "alive".

For us [sustaining the gains of the project] means using the National Library to keep the collection alive. It doesn't take long for kids to want new books. When they're brand new they all come in and take the books, but it doesn't take long for that to stop. (School staff)

School staff also considered teachers' ongoing passion for books and reading to be an important factor in sustaining the gains made during the project.

I think it's got to come from the teachers anyway. As much as it's nice to have visiting authors and have the free books and stuff, I think it's got to come from the teachers ... If we do what we do in school I hope that it will get carried through for the kids, but also to their homes. That's all you can ask for. (School staff)



I think you've got to model it. You've got to be passionate about books yourself I suppose. I've always loved books and I've always read to kids ... Some people are scared of reading, and I get that, but I think our teachers are the ones that have got to really. [*That's interesting to hear you say that, that it's the teacher that makes a big difference.*] Yeah. I think it does. That's how you get the kids passionate about it, and by making it part of your everyday. (School staff)

## Reading champions in the community

Research participants from the businesses and organisations hosting bookshelves were highly invested in the project and wanted to see community and whānau engagement in reading sustained. Many had ideas about how this could be achieved once the funding came to an end. One of the marae had set in place a system for turning their bookshelf into a book exchange and were asking for donations to support it.

My brother-in-law is on the board of Ōtūrei Marae and he was being asked to bring books along to the marae because they wanted to make sure that there would always be books there. They were doing a call out for books from home. They're making it like a book exchange. (School staff)

One of the businesses planned to start their own workplace library in which employees brought books from home for others at the workplace to borrow and return.

Some of the ladies said we could do a swap—like have books in there, or take books that we've read and bring back ... We could do it, but I've got to make sure I have space. (Business/organisation)

Another business had already started refilling the bookshelves themselves with books donated by the hospice that could be borrowed and then returned for others to read.

We're receiving donations of books now—and the hospice shop regularly brings in a stack of children's books for us and we're still giving them away ... We'll certainly keep giving books away. (Business/organisation)

However, the business owner was concerned about her ability to determine what sort of books would be appropriate to include in terms of content and readability. She was aware that the selection of books provided by National Library was curated and that they were “good” books. As a keen reader, she knew the books from her own childhood but felt she needed librarian advice when it came to selecting books for the shelves displayed by her business.

The only issue I can see is that they were a curated collection and now it's not and I'm not sure they're always the best books. We've got lots of books that I remember from being a kid like the Mr Men books, but I'm not sure what the feeling is about children's books now. So, I think it is important for there to be some moderation ... I'm not a librarian by any stretch and we could certainly do with the backing of an educational curator. (Business/organisation)

She also observed that the new books from National Library had an appeal that would be hard to replicate with second-hand books.

The only downside is that all our books are second hand, and the other books were new before, and to give a kid something new that they can keep is—especially in our area.

National Library staff raised similar concerns.

I think one of the important things about the project is that when the books look amazing, when they're sort of up to date, they're relevant, they're appealing, you're much more likely to get kids wanting to read them. (National Library staff)



Staff from the public library were committed to supporting businesses and organisations wanting to refill their bookshelves by providing old library books, but again expressed concern about these books being less appealing than the brand-new project books.

In the businesses if there is someone enthusiastic in those places people will start bringing in their old books. And we will help them. We do discard books. But as [colleague] said, she doesn't like to give old books to kids. They get so excited with something new. (Public library staff)

Librarians from the public library had also been considering how the Little Libraries might be sustained through promoting a "bring and borrow" message and by finding someone to take responsibility for them.

Anything like this takes a person. In a traditional Little Library, there is a guardian of it. We need to have a guardian for each of those. I've been encouraging that because it has to be handed on to someone who will look after it. (Public library staff)

Another option to ensure sustainability was for one of the public library librarians to check the Little Libraries themselves to "weed out the crusty books" and to add "top up" books. But again, this would require time in the budget.

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## 6. Summing up

Like other Pūtoi Rito projects, the Dargaville project provided books for homes. It aimed to raise community awareness about the value of reading for pleasure and wellbeing. And it aimed to raise the capability of school staff around building reading communities. There was evidence that the project had made good progress towards achieving these three aims.

In addition, the Dargaville project had a particular focus on libraries. The project aimed to strengthen the network of library services across school libraries, the public library, and National Library. And it aimed to encourage borrowing from libraries, library membership, and engagement with library programmes and services. These goals were seen as particularly important given the geographic isolation of Dargaville and its lack of a bookstore.

Prior to the project, the manager of the public library had an existing relationship with National Library staff, and a commitment to school library services. She had herself previously worked as a school librarian and understood schools deeply. There was, therefore, already a strong foundation in place for strengthening the network of library services.

The project funded one of the public library staff to work part time as a Project Co-ordinator responsible for liaising with National Library, schools, and local businesses and organisations. The project also enabled the National Library Capability Facilitator to work more intensively with the public library and the partner schools than would normally be possible. And unlike previous Pūtoi Rito projects, a leader from each of the partner schools was part of the Partners Group and so there were opportunities to connect across organisations. National Library and public library staff were able to “kick start” relationships and activities across organisations that could be sustained once the project funding came to an end.

The school and library staff interviewed were positive about the likelihood of sustaining and building on project gains once the funding ended, largely because the key players were locals who would continue the work that was started as part of their jobs at the public library and National Library. As one of them said, “We’re not going anywhere”.

School staff experienced the benefits of a network of library services during the project and were committed to using these networks once the funding ended. However, they were quick to point out that government funding of library services and resources is always a worthwhile investment in supporting reading—not just for pleasure but also for wellbeing. As one school staff member observed:

I personally think that it would be a wonderful idea if successive Governments could see fit to keep funding the project. And I say this because yes, once the books are gone, they’re gone. And will we be able to sustain it? Will our libraries be able to capitalise on the gains that are made. I would say we’re possibly going to look at a 60 to 70 percent retention rate. That would be wonderful. It really would. But if we can get that gift of literacy to *all* our people and more important it’s that gift of spending some quality time together. Yes, the literacy is a win, my goodness yes, but it’s having that one-on-one time together. It’s a twofold win. And if we’re looking at reading for pleasure, increased mental wellness,

yeah, I think it's a sure-fire winner. When we share a story together, we co-construct it together. We build it together. And the words are a conduit. And upon that, we bring our shared experiences and form our own interpretation of the words. That is the build. That is the win. Because it's the discussion that comes around from it. Yeah, I think it would be a very astute investment. (School staff)

Pūtoi Rito was successful in meeting its aims to raise awareness and build capability around reading for pleasure and wellbeing in the Dargaville community. Bringing together a wide range of people with local community knowledge, relevant expertise, and a passion for reading was key to the project's success and potential sustainability.

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