

SOCIAL WORK  
in Libraries



An Ecosystem of Research

# Social Work in Libraries

- **Assoc Prof Karen Bell**
- Dr Sabine Wardle
- **Dr Monique Shephard**
- Dr Jane Garner
- Dr Kasey Garrison

*Supported by the Future of the Professions Research Group*

**Future of the Professions Research Group Conference**

**12noon Friday 17 February 2023**

# Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge ...

- the First Nations lands on which we are all located today and pay respect to Elders past, present and future;
- the Wiradyuri (Wiradjuri), Ngunawal (Ngunnawal), Gundungarra and Biripai (Biripi) people, who are the custodians of the unceded lands on which CSU's campuses are located;
- and pay our respects to Australian Indigenous and First Nations colleagues who are present today.

# Abstract

In response to communities' complex needs and social justice issues, libraries worldwide are increasingly drawing on social work expertise to provide direct psychosocial and crisis support to library users and systemic support to library staff.

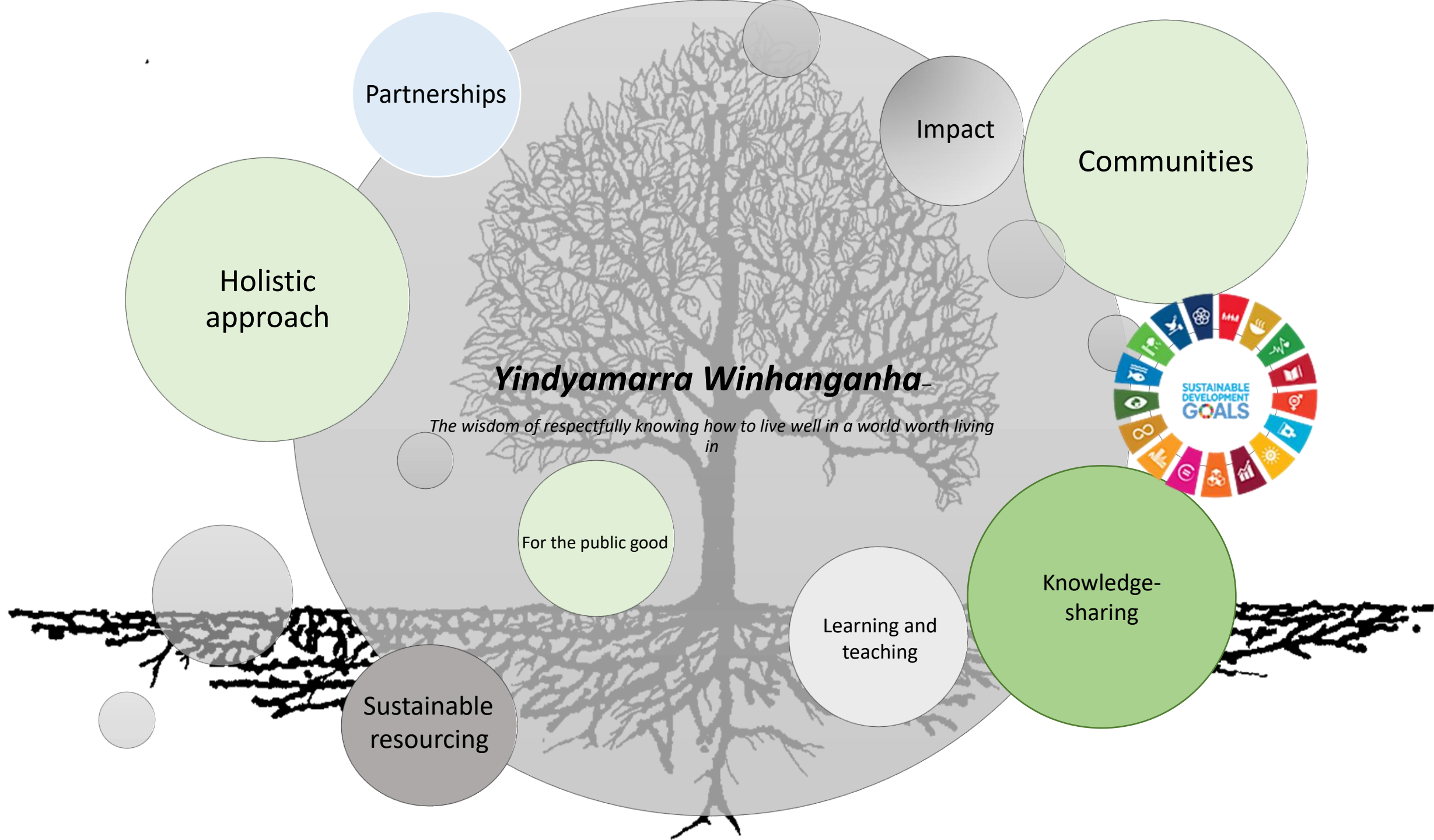
However, this form of inter-professional collaboration is still an emerging practice field in Australia, and further research is needed to assess its impacts and effectiveness.

This presentation explores the Social Work in Libraries (SWiL) program as an ecosystem of research and community engagement designed to address the central research question: *How can libraries in Australia extend their services through inter-professional collaboration with social work?*

We outline the findings from several SWiL research projects and publications, research engagement, pedagogy, dissemination strategies, and our developing local, national and international partnerships. Opportunities for sustaining the SWiL ecosystem of research are also considered.

# Overview of presentation

- Context
- Research team
- Development of the program of research
- Completed and current projects
- Nurturing the ecosystem of research
- Emerging projects, partnerships, and future directions



Partnerships

Impact

Communities

Holistic approach

# Yindyamarra Winhanganha

*The wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in*



For the public good

Learning and teaching

Knowledge-sharing

Sustainable resourcing



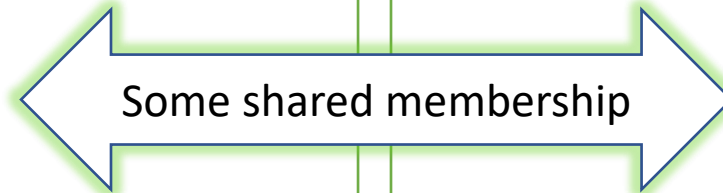
**Environmental and Social Justice Research Group  
(ESJ)**

Transformative social change  
Psychosocial wellbeing  
Community resilience  
Environmental justice  
Co-creation, knowledge-sharing, decolonising,  
action-based multidisciplinary approaches  
Interdisciplinary collaboration and partnerships

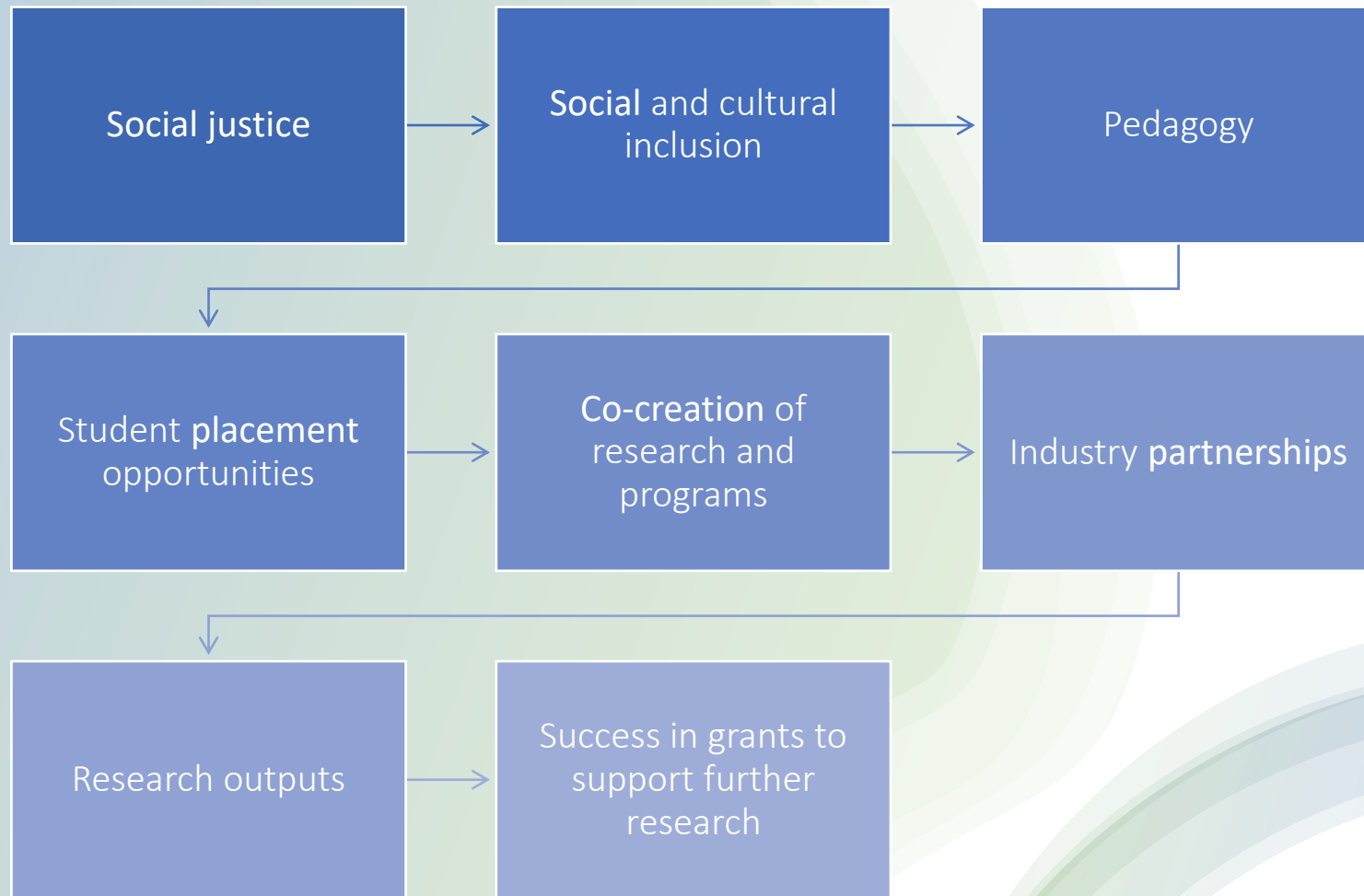


**Libraries Research Group  
(LRG)**

Multidisciplinary research  
Role of libraries in contemporary society  
Industry engagement  
Community engagement  
Real-world focus  
Integrative approaches



## Within the FotP RG, our aims are to improve...



PAPER

ESJ

LRG

FotP



From small things...

**The first output from the Social Work in Libraries group was an article in the journal *Public Library Quarterly*:**

Social Work in Australian Public Libraries: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Social Justice (Garner, Mitchell, Bell, Lockwood, & Wardle, 2021)



# Completed projects

- Social Work in Australian Public Libraries: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Social Justice (Garner, Mitchell, Bell, Lockwood, & Wardle, 2021) – **journal article**
- *Greening Libraries Report* (2022)
  - **Commissioned Report funded by ALIA and CAUL**
- Pilot project with the Punjabi Indian Community in the Riverina (2022)
  - **Funded by State Library NSW, commissioned report (2022)**
  - *Library Quarterly article (under review)* – **journal article**
- Social Work placement students in public libraries
  - Developed **Handbook** for placement students and supervisors
  - Primary data collection from a placement (future publication)
  - Created promotional **video** discussing the program
- **SWiL Symposium**, 1 December 2022 and **SWiL website**: [thinkspace.csu.edu.au/librarysocialwork](https://thinkspace.csu.edu.au/librarysocialwork)



Australian Library and  
Information Association



# Greening Libraries report



Authors: Garner, Garrison, Wardle, Bell, Redshaw

The overarching aim of the Greening Libraries research project is to underpin the Australian Library and Information Association's focus on sustainability, in line with its commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The report aims to highlight examples of **best practice** and inform the creation of a **toolkit** for libraries to help them support environmental action, further the greening libraries movement as well as exemplify sustainability practices that are consistent with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

<https://read.alia.org.au>



# Pilot project - Punjabi Indian Community in the Riverina

- **FotP research team** - Wardle, Garrison & Bell (2021-22)
- **Research phases**
  - Community needs assessment (online bilingual survey)
  - Planning and delivery (using survey data to inform resource acquisition)
  - Evaluation (online bilingual survey)
- **Research partnerships** – State Library NSW, Wagga Wagga City Library, Punjabi community/Wagga
- **Outcomes** – increased diversity in library resources and activities in response to Punjabi community's preferences, potential model for diversifying library services to other emerging groups in regional locations (interest already from Wagga African community).
- **Sharing knowledge** - Publication of commissioned report, community launch, local media, conference presentations, journal article under review.



Charles Sturt  
University

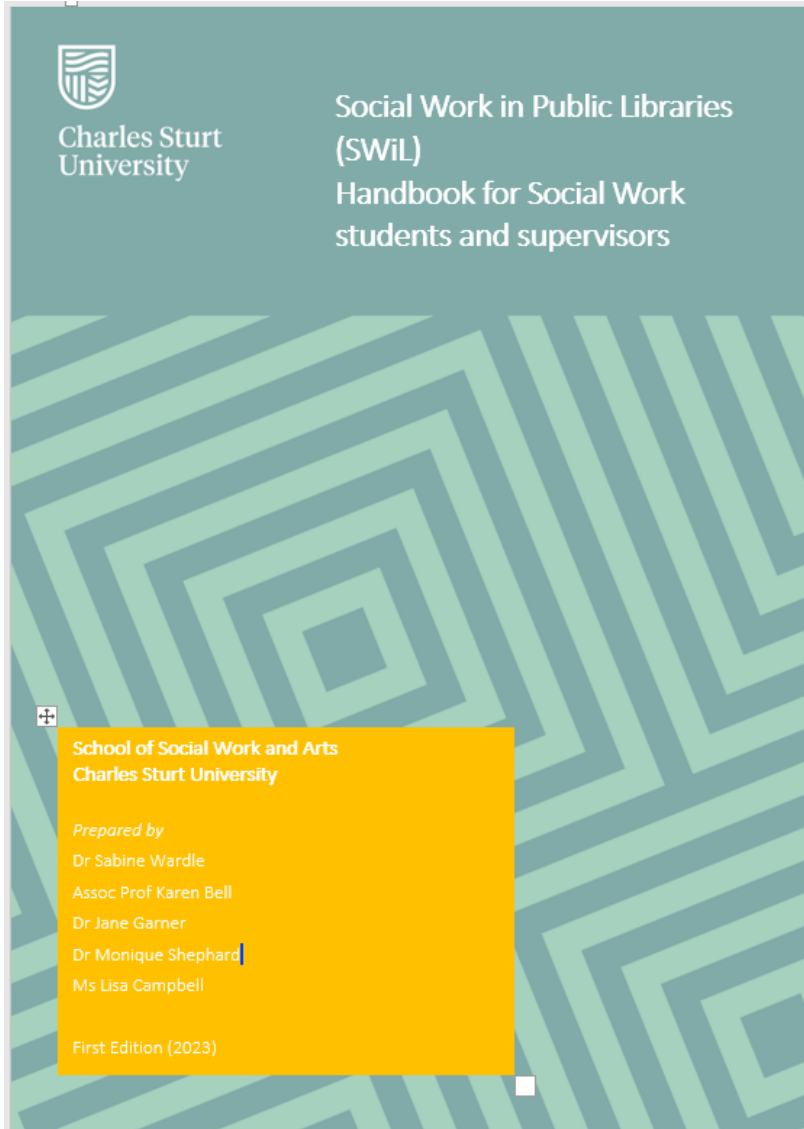
Embracing the cultural  
identity of burgeoning  
ethnic groups in regional  
public libraries: A pilot  
project with the Punjabi  
Indian Community in the  
Riverina

Dr Sabine Wardle  
*School of Social Work and Arts*  
Dr Kasey Garrison  
*School of Information & Communication  
Studies*  
Associate Professor Karen Bell  
*School of Social Work and Arts*

Charles Sturt University

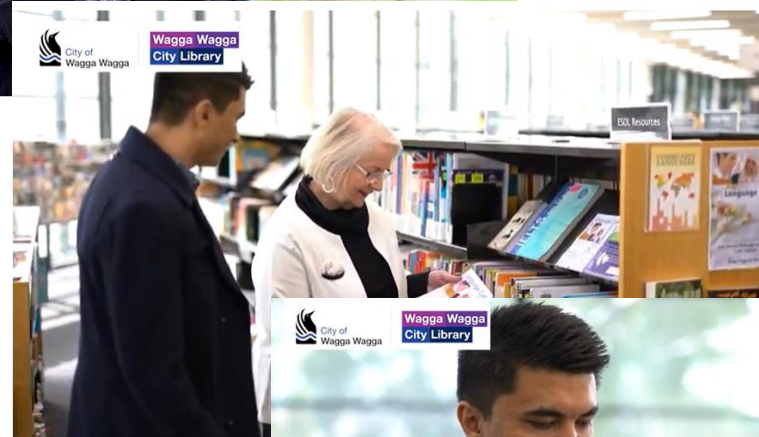
Charles Sturt University - TEQSA Provider Identification: PRV12018 (Australian University). CRICOS Provider: 00005F.

# Social Work student placements in public libraries



## Student placement 1 - Wagga Wagga City Library

HREC approved primary data collection to explore perceptions of SWiL



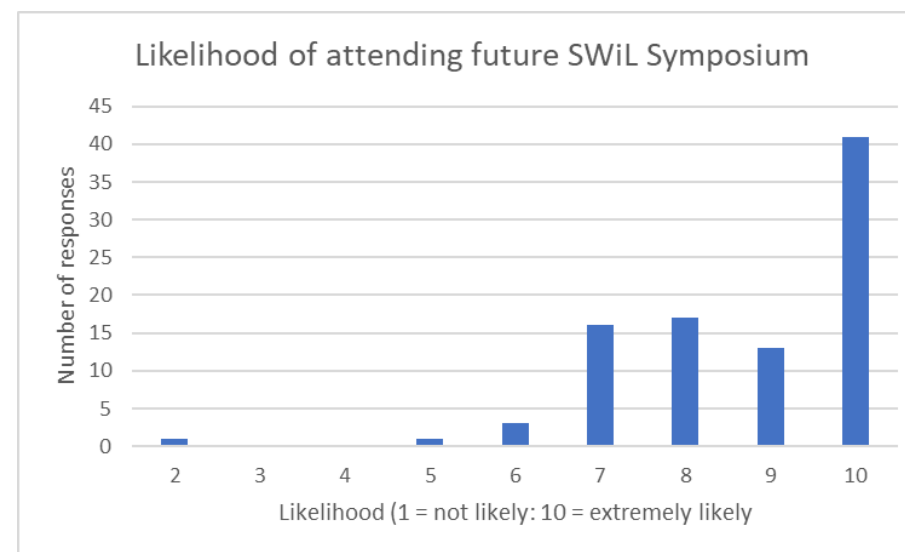
## Student placement 2 - Wagga Wagga City Library

# SWiL Symposium, 2022

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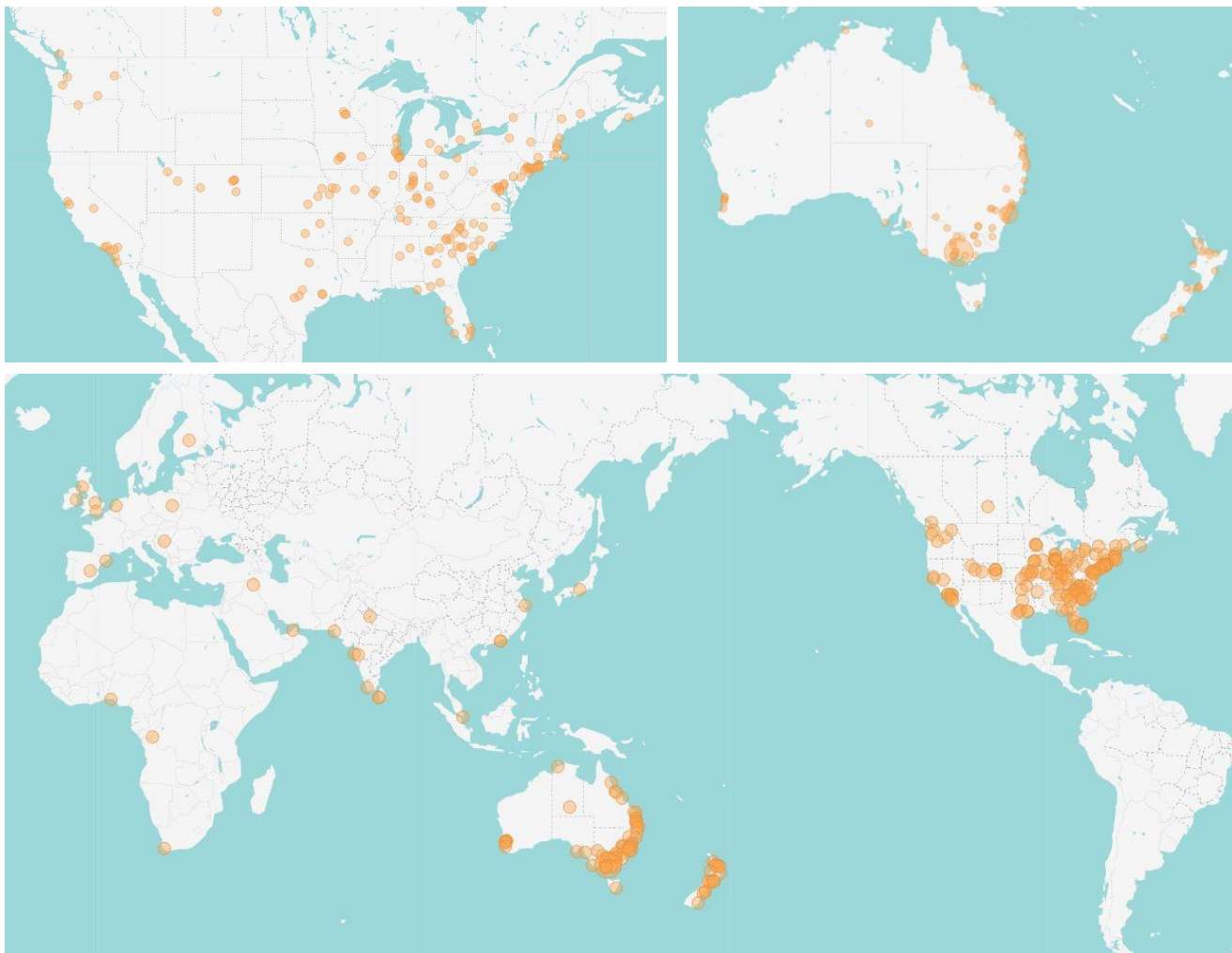


- 6 international and Australian speakers (Australia, NZ, USA)
- Panel discussion – social work placements in libraries
- 995 Eventbrite registrations from 255 locations across nearly 30 countries
- 251 live attendees at any one time: 342 unique visitors during the day (Australia, USA, NZ, Canada, Pakistan, Japan)
- Recordings accessed by between 38 and 104 viewers
- Super-positive responses from all attendees through the end-of-day survey (n = 94)



<https://thinkspace.csu.edu.au/librarysocialwork>





# SWiL registrations

# SWiL Symposium, 2022



“The content was superb - and who would have thought that a remote, online, conference attendance could be so amazing.”

“It was so refreshing to hear from like-minded people who inspired me.”

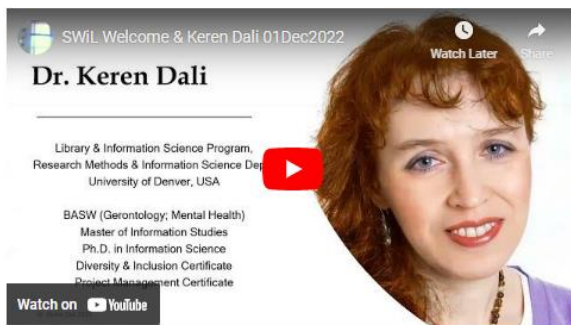
“Some presenters told stories of the impact or of the work - that was great.”

“The presenters and staff working this event were incredible and a joy to share the space with!”

“It was such an interesting and rigorous discussion.”



# SWiL Symposium Presentations



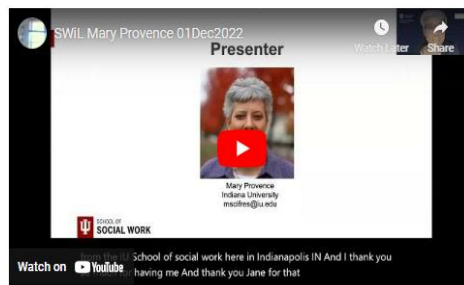
Dr Keren Dali (University of Denver)  
Keynote 1 – The Information Lives of Our Clients: Information Science for Social Workers  
78 views



Patrick Lloyd (University of Texas)  
Keynote 2 – A Light in the Dark: Courage, Protection, and the Public Library  
104 views



Dr Beth Wahler  
(University of North Carolina)  
Trauma-informed librarianship  
57 views



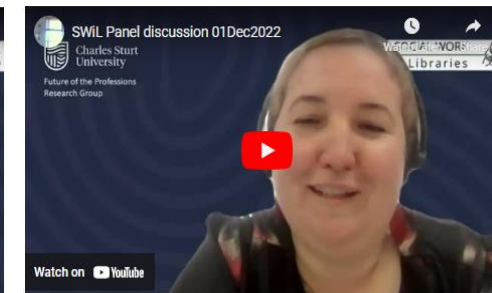
Mary Provence (Indiana University)  
3 Models: Impacts on the De-escalation Role of Library Social Workers when Patrons Experiencing Homelessness are in Crisis  
40 views



Anna Lockwood (Te Kaunihera o Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland Council)  
Shifting practices from 'the transactional' to 'the relational'  
45 views



Leanne Mitchell (CSU Churchill fellow)  
Can libraries end homelessness?  
Stories and reflections from a Churchill Fellowship  
46 views



Panel discussion:  
Anne-Marie Pfabe  
Chrissie Bolton  
Dr Sabine Wardle  
Erin McKeegan  
38 views



# SOCIAL WORK IN LIBRARIES

Charles Sturt University

[HOME](#)

[SYMPOSIUM SERIES](#)

[CALL FOR PAPERS](#)

[LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES](#)

[RESOURCES](#)

## *Home*



Libraries support their communities in many ways. Increasingly libraries are being called on to support users with high psycho-social needs through the provision of tailored resources, spaces and services. Social Workers working from libraries are in a unique position to provide such services to library users, and to assist library staff in working with their communities in these ways.

Charles Sturt University educates Social Work students, and Librarianship students and is involved in



Current projects

# What we are working on

*Journal of the Australian Library and Information Association* Special Issue highlighted at SWiL Symposium

Scoping Review – at data analysis stage

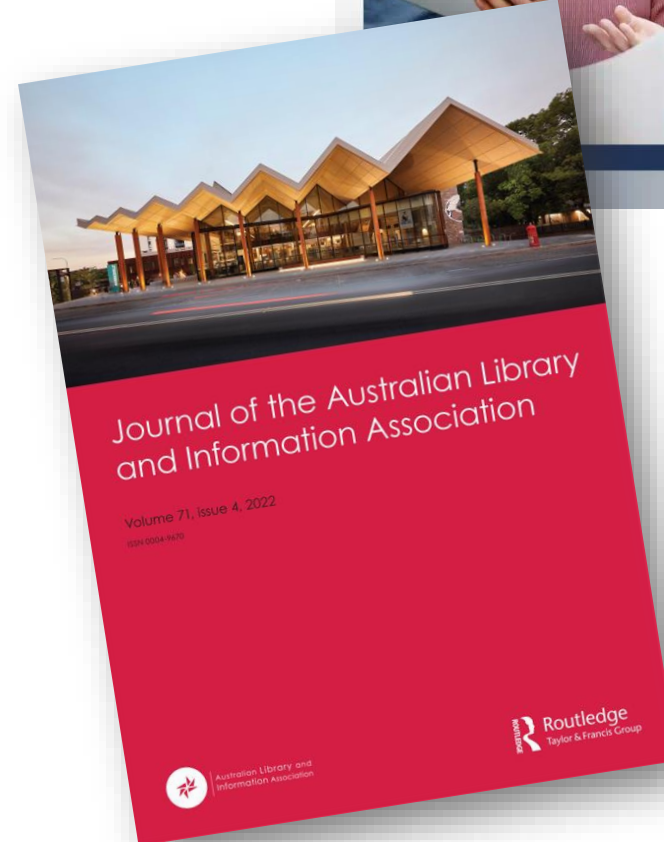
Social Work in Libraries Placement Handbook

Visiting Scholar, Beth Wahler from UNC-Charlotte

Edited book (2024)

# Current projects

- Scoping review SWiL – data analysis stage
- Journal article - *Embracing diversity*
- *Handbook SW placements in libraries* - release
- **Special issue of JALIA**
- **Visiting scholar – Beth Wahler, July 2023**
- HDR candidate (interdisciplinary topic/supervision - SSWA & SICS supervision)



## TRAUMA-INFORMED LIBRAI

- Understand how widespread trauma is
- Recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma
- Respond by integrating knowledge into practice
- Focus on being sensitive to the traumatic experiences of others
- View difficult behavior through a lens of "What happened to this person?" instead of "What's wrong with this person?"
- Attempt to reduce the negative impact of trauma on people using the library space and resist doing further harm
- Focus on both patrons and staff



Beth Wahler PhD, MSW  
School of Social Work  
Indiana University

# SOCIAL WORK in Libraries



## Publications

- *Social Work in Australian Public Libraries* (Garner et al., 2021)
- *Greening Libraries Report* (2022)
- *Embracing Diversity* (2022)

Journal - special issue 2023  
Scoping review article 2023  
Edited book 2024  
Co-publications with HDR candidate/s

## Research (with external funding)

- Pilot project – Punjabi community in the Riverina (SLNSW, 2022)
- Greening Libraries (ALIA, 2022)

Future funded projects – Linkage grant?

## Engagement

- SWiL symposium 2022
- Ongoing website
- Local media 2021-22
- SWiL placement video

Visiting scholar 2023 – Dr Beth Wahler (UNC – Charlotte)  
SWiL symposium 2023  
Further development of SWiL site

## Interprofessional collaboration & partnerships

Wagga City Library student placements x 2

Student placements 2023 & beyond  
SWiL placement handbook  
Short course via Open Learning/micro-credential  
Professional education

## Capacity building

One HDR commenced 2022

Supported HDR project/s  
PhD by publication?  
DSW candidate/s?

The background features a series of concentric, semi-transparent circles in shades of light blue and green, creating a ripple effect. The overall color palette transitions from a light blue on the left to a light green on the right.

Emerging projects, partnerships and  
future directions ...



## Where we're heading...

- **Education for the professions** – pedagogy - new content for existing Library & Social Work courses (or Graduate Certificate/s)
  - Professional development (micro credentials? Open Learning?) for practitioners:
    - for current/qualified professionals - library staff and social workers
  - Develop policy and best practice documents
  - Liaison with professional associations
- **Partnerships** - potential new projects/collaborations - NZ and USA?
- **External funding** – e.g., Linkage grant to support broader implementation of placements and embedding social workers in public libraries





## An ecosystem of research

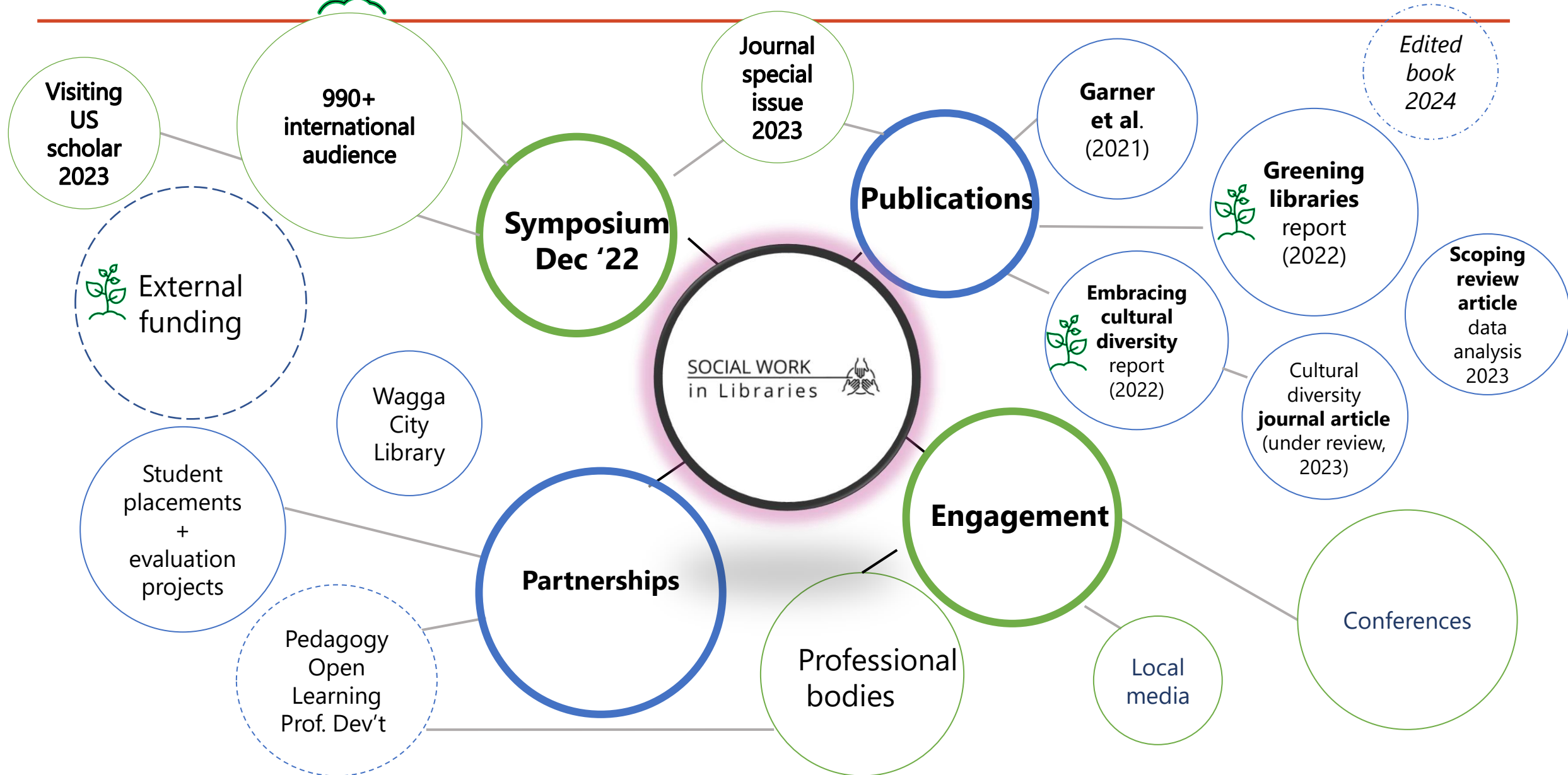
- Collective ...
  - Energy
  - Nurturance
- Collaborative partnerships
- Reciprocity and exchange
  - Researchers
  - Communities
  - Organisations
- Knowledge-sharing
- Permeable, interdisciplinary boundaries
- Balance – attention to ‘inputs’ as well as ‘outputs’

e.g., Pandey & Pattnaik (2015) - [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307678952\\_University\\_Research\\_Ecosystem\\_A\\_Conceptual\\_Understanding](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307678952_University_Research_Ecosystem_A_Conceptual_Understanding)





# Nurturing an ecosystem of research



**Any questions?**

# Thank you

## Social Work in Libraries researchers:

- Associate Professor Karen Bell – [kbell@csu.edu.au](mailto:kbell@csu.edu.au)
- Dr Sabine Wardle – [swardle@csu.edu.au](mailto:swardle@csu.edu.au)
- Dr Jane Garner – [jagarner@csu.edu.au](mailto:jagarner@csu.edu.au)
- Dr Kasey Garrison – [kgarrison@csu.edu.au](mailto:kgarrison@csu.edu.au)
- Dr Monique Shephard – [msheward@csu.edu.au](mailto:msheward@csu.edu.au)

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