

## **Student Wellness and Academic Libraries: Case Studies and Activities for Promoting Health and Success, edited by Sara Holder and Amber Lannon**

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Volume 7, 2021

Special Focus on Refusing Crisis Narratives

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1082235ar>  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33137/cjal-rcbu.v7.37240>

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### Publisher(s)

Canadian Association of Professional Academic Librarians / Association  
Canadienne des Bibliothécaires en Enseignement Supérieur

### ISSN

2369-937X (digital)

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### Cite this review

Fagiolo, S. (2021). Review of [Student Wellness and Academic Libraries: Case Studies and Activities for Promoting Health and Success, edited by Sara Holder and Amber Lannon]. *Canadian Journal of Academic Librarianship / Revue canadienne de bibliothéconomie universitaire*, 7, 1–3.  
<https://doi.org/10.33137/cjal-rcbu.v7.37240>

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## **Book Review: *Student Wellness and Academic Libraries: Case Studies and Activities for Promoting Health and Success***

Holder, Sara, and Amber Lannon, eds. (2020). *Student Wellness and Academic Libraries: Case Studies and Activities for Promoting Health and Success*. Chicago: ACRL Press, 292pp, \$86.00 USD.

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**Keywords:** *academic libraries · students · wellness*

In response to a dramatic increase in student depression and anxiety over the last decade, colleges and universities have expanded various well-being initiatives in multiple campus units. Supporting students' academic success has always been one of the missions of academic libraries, so libraries are well situated to play a key role in promoting and fostering student wellness, particularly at the time when stress and anxiety around exams, final projects, and term papers are high.

*Student Wellness and Academic Libraries* is a valuable read about the topic, as it provides a wide overview of the current state of student wellness initiatives implemented by academic libraries. The editors, Sara Holder and Amber Lannon, have gathered together a thoughtful and comprehensive collection of research studies and wellness programs from various university libraries. Holder is an associate professor and Head of Research and Information Services at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library, while Lannon is a librarian at Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario.

Composed of fourteen chapters, the book provides several case studies from academic libraries in Canada and the United States. Each chapter ends with an extensive bibliography and a list of further readings. Very helpful are some appendices that offer suggestions for events and outreach activities. The 29 authors of the chapters include health educators, directors, and academic librarians, representing a variety of educational institutions. Multiple perspectives and approaches for enhancing student wellness are covered, ranging from library



outreach events, library spaces, physical activity initiatives, therapy animals, educational programs, and collaborative projects with students. The wide array of different topics presented in these chapters is one on the strengths of *Student Wellness and Academic Libraries*. By reading the experiences described in this collection, librarians will find many ideas that they can adapt in their own services and programming to support student wellness.

The first chapter provides an overview of how Canadian and US academic libraries are promoting student wellness, giving specific examples of initiatives, programs, and services offered by and at the libraries. Since this chapter develops a big-picture view, with activities grouped by theme, it serves as an introduction of the chapters that follow. The following chapters illustrate numerous ways in which academic libraries can address student wellness issues. There is no need to use large budgets. In fact, libraries can offer wellness initiatives by using and adapting already existing resources. Also, an excellent way for libraries to enrich their role in supporting students is represented by peer-led, small-group sessions designed by senior students. This is the case of the Peer Assisted Study Session (PASS) piloted at the University of British Columbia, discussed in Chapter 2. Because students have an active role instead of merely attending the intervention, PASS programs differentiate themselves from traditional tutoring programs. Chapter 3 examines how reference librarians can directly support student wellness, by building relationships and making emotional connections. Empathy is critical to engaging with students. The unique role librarians can play in supporting student wellbeing is also discussed in Chapter 7, with a focus on resources and techniques used by library student supervisors.

The volume explores broadly the multiple dimensions of wellbeing (physical, social, environmental, psychological, and spiritual) with some chapters that discuss innovative wellness services. A good example is offered by Chapter 8, which provides a study for the creation of meditation rooms, not just for prayer or meditation, but also for quiet contemplation and self-regulation. This chapter is particularly interesting, as there is a trend at universities and colleges across North America to provide these types of rooms. In regards to library spaces, Chapter 6 focuses on the importance of providing a welcoming environment for student parents and their children.

Those seeking insight into therapy animals in libraries will appreciate a case study of the therapy dog program at Montana State University, presented in Chapter 11. This chapter offers several considerations about animal policies and procedures to protect and promote wellness for all library patrons. It also explains the differences between service animals, therapy animals, and comfort animals. Chapter 12 looks

at the importance of promoting physical activity programs through a review of the literature about the services academic libraries currently offer.

Overall, *Student Wellness & Academic Libraries* is a useful guidebook that provides valuable insight into ideas and directions librarians can take to foster and cultivate emotional, social, and physical wellness for students. This title is perfect for all librarians, but especially for those that are charged with leadership roles and those who are looking to make their libraries a better place for their students. The book is also well suited for LIS academic library programs.