There is a great deal of evidence for the importance of reading for academic success, and many people have written persuasively about the richness books bring to readers' lives. Teachers and librarians the world over struggle to make children competent readers and then avid readers. The theme of this issue of School Libraries Worldwide, Promoting a Reading Culture, is and should be a very present concern of school librarians.

The first article, "Literacy and Reading in the South Pacific," written by Mel Rainey, of Fiji, describes conditions in the Pacific Island nations that contribute to alarmingly low literacy levels: a strong oral tradition; an undeveloped publishing industry; the high cost of imported books; inadequate school library collections; a shortage of trained staff; and instruction in English, which is a second language for most students. The author reports on research projects that made teachers and librarians aware of the importance for literacy of books and reading at the primary school level, and describes the work of the Oceania Literacy Development Program.

The second article, in contrast, describes a very well developed reading culture rich in resources. In Baerum, Norway, the children do very well in national reading tests, and borrow more library books than the Norwegian average. Ellen Øyno suggests that close cooperation between school libraries and the public library has contributed to this success.

Iveta Gudakovska, of Latvia, begins with the premise that reading should be the most important way of acquiring information in school. She reports on a study that investigated the role of books and reading in the information seeking processes of Latvian students from grade 5 to grade 7. The results of the study suggest that more attention needs to be paid to promoting a reading culture.

The fourth article in this issue, "The Book Resisters: Ways of Approaching Reluctant Teenage Readers," aims to help teachers and librarians foster reading as a creative pastime. Margaret Mackey and Ingrid Johnston, of Canada, begin with arguments for reading, raise questions about readers who can read but usually don't, and suggest answers to these questions that will make it possible for young people to give reading a chance.

Far too often students learn in school that reading is an unpleasant chore. Anne Simpson, of Australia, also considers how students can learn to read novels for pleasure. "There's more than Tomato Day to Come": Shared Reading and the Teacher-Librarian" describes an innovative classroom read-
ing program that allows students to choose their books and to respond to them in shared reading groups.

These days books and computers may seem to be set up in opposition to each other. In "A Book in the Hand Is Worth Two on a Disk" Ruth Hayden, of Canada, argues that the introduction of technology into the elementary school library can take away from the reading culture of the school. Computers and CD-ROMs may be acquired as educational novelties or inappropriate donations with strings attached. Money and time spent on electronic materials and machines could often be spent far more productively on the book collection and reading programs.

There are three articles Of Special Interest in this issue of School Libraries Worldwide. Irit Getz, of Israel, reports on a study carried out in the United States that investigated preservice and inservice teachers' attitudes toward cooperative work with librarians. The article suggests that both preservice and inservice teachers need information about the use of libraries and actual experience of working with librarians. Alvin Schrader, of Canada, takes a look at "The Fallacy and Futility of Censorproofing School Library Collections." Drawing on a large body of research on library censorship, including his own work, Schrader lays out the reasons why librarians can never hope to outrun the censor, and argues that they will serve their users much better if they stop trying to avoid controversy. Catherine Scott and Gay Tierney, of Australia, summarize the purpose, contents, and uses of Learning for the Future: Developing Information Services in Australia. This national standards document provides both quantitative and qualitative guidelines and indicators for school libraries within a context of devolved decision-making and outcomes-based education.

Competence, choice, and pleasure are recurring themes in these articles on promoting a reading culture. Since you, dear reader, have got this far in a piece of dry and formal prose, you are demonstrably a competent reader. And since this introduction is very unlikely to be required reading for anyone, we may assume that you are reading by choice. One or more of the articles that follow should give you the pleasure of discovery, of finding your experiences confirmed or challenged, of joining with colleagues in the conversation that is scholarship.