

Welcome to The Reading Agency's quarterly newsletter.

1. NEW GOVERNMENT STRATEGY FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport has this month published its new blueprint for the development of the public library service. *Framework for the Future: Libraries, Learning and Information in the Next Decade*.

We're delighted that reading is a key theme of the strategy, and that government has plans to harness the unique contribution that libraries are making to developing a reading nation.

Libraries' work with readers is changing fast and we're excited that the new strategy recognizes and builds on this change. Also that it offers the chance to build on a growing recognition that libraries' work with readers injects the access, inspiration and motivation necessary for the delivery of key government strategies.

We are particularly interested in the possibilities offered by the Framework's proposed strategy of developing national reading offers. The concept of national reading offers builds on the way libraries have started to create national programmes which can impact on national patterns of learning and cultural engagement. Book Trust's BookStart and our summer reading challenge are good examples of this new way of working.

We will be working with DCMS, Resource, SCL and CILIP on development plans for national reading offers.

2. NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR READERS OPENED UP BY MAJOR NEW PARTNERSHIPS

There are a huge range of opportunities for local reader development work being opened up by new national partnerships. Just in the next few months there's the World Book Day on-line festival delivered through the People's Network; libraries' partnerships with the BBC's Big Read, the Orange Prize and the WH Smith Prize. Plus an extension of the Orange Chatterbooks children's reading group scheme.

We have an overall strategy, within which these initiatives fit, of building a better service for readers by injecting the resources made possible through nationally brokered partnerships. The potential for national library advocacy is huge. We're bombarding library staff

with information about these initiatives but hope you agree that the opportunities are too good to miss!

3. THE FIRST EVER WORLD BOOK DAY ON LINE FESTIVAL, THURSDAY 6 MARCH 2003

85% of all UK library authorities are taking part in the World Book Day Online Festival via The People's Network. The festival heralds a new era for libraries, bringing information technology and reader development work in libraries together through a national initiative and offering library users the chance to access new virtual reading experiences combined with the chance to meet and interact with other readers in their local community.

It also marks a step change in libraries' partnership with the book trade – WBD is the UK's only regular generic promotion of reading, so is a vital partnership platform. The Reading Agency would like to see readers better served by much closer partnerships between libraries, publishers and booksellers - the Festival does a great advocacy job for libraries – showing publishers how they can showcase their authors to a much larger audience.

The programme

The first ever World Book Day Online Festival is also an exciting day for readers who would like to take a first step at using the internet, or for those already familiar with it. The highlight of the day is a live web cast by **Terry Pratchett** from one of the pods at Peckham Library. There are also live web chats and films for readers, both adults and children. The films show writers sharing their own reading passions, as well as reading from their work in a variety of settings, including their own homes. Through the web chats, readers will be able to share their own reading experiences, thoughts and opinions with their favorite writers and fellow book lovers.

Other highlights include domestic goddess **Nigella Lawson** launching the Festival from the British Library and talking about the books she likes to read on holiday; **Meera Syal** tries to match seven books to seven readers interviewed on the streets of London about their reading habits – see how accurate she is!

Bestselling children's author, **Jez Alborough**, makes a book with the under-5s, **Andy McNab** chats online about his high-octane adventures and **Michael Rosen** tracks down lots of delights in his local library. There's also a chance to chat to political commentator, **John Sergeant**; to

share thoughts on what makes a really good baddie with the creator of Artemis Fowl, **Eoin Colfer**, and to go online with the fantasy double-act, **Chris Riddell** and **Paul Stewart**.

The Festival website is www.worldbookdayfestival.com. All the events on the day will be archived, so the resources will be available for sustained reader development work.

The Festival will be carefully evaluated as there are a range of issues to explore – among them the extent to which new IT hungry library users are tempted by creative reading Internet experiences, and whether regular readers are tempted by libraries new IT offer! Participating libraries are being extensively briefed. Full briefing details are available on www.worldbookdayfestival.com/guidance.asp

The Festival is funded by the Arts Council of England. The partners are World Book Day, Resource, CILIP and The Reading Agency.

4. ASSOCIATES

We are delighted to announce details of The Reading Agency's Associates Scheme. The inaugural members are people who have been closely involved with our work over the years, either as trustees or committee members of the agencies which were merged to form TRA. We are delighted to be able to carry their involvement forward into the work of TRA.

- Catherine Blanshard, Head of Library and Information Services, Leeds City Council. Catherine played a critical role in the formation of LaunchPad, the children's library development agency, and was its Chair throughout its existence.
- Pat Beech, Library & Information Services Director for the National Library for the Blind
- Liz Dubber, Assistant County Librarian, Development and Client Services, Gloucestershire County Council
- Sue Jones, Head of Hertfordshire's School Library Service and our official link to ASCEL
- Lucy Love, Principal Librarian, Children and Education, London Borough of Enfield
- John Readman, Head of Libraries, Arts and Archives, Lambeth Borough Council
- Julia Strong, Deputy Director, National Literacy Trust

5. NEW BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

The Reading Agency believes that closer partnerships between libraries and the business community will lead to a more vibrant library service for readers. Libraries' creative remit through their work with readers could, in the long term, be the basis for huge business investment of the kind the arts already benefit from.

So we are delighted to be working with Birds Eye Walls and Surrey Library Service in an innovative programme called WORDS MATTER, a pilot to show how libraries and reading can inject creativity and improve communication in the workplace. The programme involves staff reading groups, staff volunteers being trained by libraries in how to support children's reading in schools, literature events, and a series of workshops in how to write stories for children.

The initiative is being created with Birds Eye Walls' Project Catalyst team, which operates in workplaces across both Birds Eye Walls and a sister company, Lever Faberge. It builds on experience gained in a previous partnership with Kingston Libraries. Words Matter has been awarded a New Partners grant from Arts & Business.

The lunch time book group

Staff at Birds Eye Walls will have their very own book group on site, supported by Surrey Libraries and facilitated by The Reading Agency. The eight monthly sessions will follow a slightly different approach from the usual. Whereas many book groups meet to undertake a literary critique, the focus here is the readers and how the book has affected them. The sessions are short, fast and intense with the aim of drawing out the varied emotional responses of the group.

Writing for children

Staff will also have the opportunity to write their own stories. Children's author, Ann Halam, will be running a series of workshops enabling participants to write stories for children. There has been a huge amount of interest partly fueled by the general increased interest in books for children, and also by the third part of this creative package. Throughout the year staff from Birds Eye Walls have volunteered to read with and to children in local schools. Training in this vital-to-get right initiative was given by Surrey Libraries.

Resources

The Lever Faberge and Birds Eye Walls initiatives have been created as a result of the Books & Business programme, in which TRA has been working with a range of partners including the London Libraries Development Agency, Arts & Business and West Sussex Library Service.

Various resources from this work are available if you are interested in knowing more – see our website for details of a new good practice Handbook and training in building business partnerships. The Books & Business website has case studies and useful resources: www.booksandbusiness.org.uk

6. THE BBC BIG READ

Hot on the heels of the Festival comes the BBC Big Read. The awareness raising campaign starts in the third week of March with a combination of broadcast, on line and print materials. Voting begins in April, kicked off by a BBC2 programme, with celebrities talking about their best loved books, and asking the British public to nominate their own best-loved novel. This will be followed by related coverage on CBBC and on book programmes on BBC 4 and Radio 4 during the summer and a dedicated BBC Big Read website, all leading to a ten-part series on the Top Ten novels in the Autumn, complete with a new round of voting. Britain's best loved book will be announced at the end of the year.

The Reading Agency is working closely with the BBC, and we'll be aiming to springboard off this massive promotion of reading to stimulate debate, bring readers together, open up new reading choices and new ways of sharing. The print materials available for libraries in the first phase of the Big Read include posters, headers and postcards.

We are working in partnership with the National Literacy Trust and Book Trust on the outreach plans. You'll find as much detail as currently is available for professionals working with readers on: www.readon.org.uk/bigread.html

We are delighted that libraries will be so closely linked to the initiative, as it offers major national advocacy and marketing opportunities. We have our eye very much on the long term too, and hope to build a lasting partnership with the BBC with real benefits for readers.

7. OUR NEW RESOURCES – DON'T FORGET TO ORDER!

A reminder of the **order deadline of 7 March 2003** for placing your orders for our new promotions – BOOX 8 featuring Miss Dynamite; First Choice for emergent readers working on their basic literacy skills, and Off Route, extending reading choices for mainstream library users.

You can download an order form from the resources area of our website, or get a hard copy from tel: 0871 750 1207 or alison.shakespeare@readingagency.org.uk

8. LIBRARY PARTNERSHIPS WITH BOOK PRIZES

The opportunity to work with the WH Smith Prize arose just before Christmas as part of Resource's plans to launch the People's Network. Despite the very tight timescale, we at TRA felt it was worth taking the opportunity to work at a basic level this year in order to be in a better position to develop the partnership next year. As part of the planning for next year, a questionnaire has been sent to our contacts across the UK (organised by CILIPS for Scottish authorities) and we will use the results to shape the Prize work for next year.

This is the fourth year that libraries will be working with the Orange Prize. Many library users in the hundred library authorities which take part now look forward to getting involved with the Prize at their library. Some authorities are planning to use the Prize work as a focus for marketing the library service outside to businesses and in other community venues.

9. FUNDING FOR POSITIVE HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Following on from our work on last summer's *Splash Extra* activities for young people at risk of offending, we are being briefed by DCMS about this year's plans. There is not a lot of information to share at this stage, but the basics are that the government is creating a single pot of cross-departmental money for *positive activities* targeting 8-19 year olds at risk of offending during the breaks from school.

The programme is

“aimed at diverting and developing those young people most at risk of social exclusion

and committing crime, encourage engagement in the community and contribute to the promotion of strong and active communities."

The money will go to regional Government Offices who will appoint delivery agents to manage the programme; libraries will need to bid to these agents. The funding covers a wider geographical range than before, so should be available in all English regions.

We are investigating, and will pass on, exactly how the bidding process will work. It may be possible, for instance, that libraries can bid in regional consortia or through regional agencies.

It is really encouraging that DCMS have recognized the importance of libraries' creative reading work in delivering this agenda, and that they have played a key advocacy role across government in getting this message across. We hope to play a role in creating ways to share the experience of the authorities involved in last year's work, and of those involved in our YouthBOOX programmes, run in partnership with the National Youth Agency. There are also important links to the work on the summer reading challenge. See our website for the evaluation report on last year's Splash work, and details of training for partnership working with youth workers. www.readingagency.org.uk.

10. READING MAZE

Once again we are delighted to be working with Books for Students to create another summer reading challenge for 2003. Building on the success of 2002, we'll be continuing with the new sticker format. By reading books over the summer, children can collect stickers featuring a team of quirky characters to stick on the maze in their personal collector folder.

Order forms for materials and books will be sent out in February to heads of children's services, with the closing date for orders at the end of March (as usual) with delivery in mid-late May. Some changes are being introduced this year such as a CD of resources including images, blank letterheads, training resources, and children's activity sheets.

A new web site for children - the Reading Maze website

A specially created Reading Maze website for children will offer lots of exciting possibilities for reading journeys and unexpected encounters with authors. This is being developed in partnership with Resource: the Council for

Museums, Libraries and Archives, and links the 2003 challenge with new content on the People's Network.

Hidden in the Reading Maze, the six selected authors/teams of authors are each featured within their own special habitat, presented online as a 360 degree panorama. The authors featured are Malorie Blackman, Korky Paul, Michael Rosen, Debi Gliori, Paul Stewart & Chris Ridell, Steve Skidmore & Steve Barlow.

Young visitors can explore the habitats by navigating left, right, up & down, zooming in and out of the scene, finding their own viewpoints and paths. In this way, each journey through a panorama is different, and users may discover another new detail about the author with every visit.

Hotspots are embedded in the habitats which light up as you navigate the panoramas, triggering for example audio and video clips. The panorama interface allows simple access to the habitats, and its multiple layers of exploration and interactivity give a sense of discovery, mystery and suspense, encouraging users to return several times.

The reading challenge will not require children to have access to the web content to complete the challenge - the website is there to add value to the reading experience using the unique capabilities of the internet medium. The site will introduce and profile leading children's writers and illustrators. And don't worry - we have considered the potential IT problems!

11. READING INSPIRED CULTURAL PARTNERSHIPS – NEW FUNDING

Funding has been secured for a follow up to the East Midlands Books Connect project, a national pilot focusing on the development of reading inspired partnership working between libraries, museums and the arts. The East Midlands Museums Libraries and Archive Council will be funding phase II of the initiative which will look at broadening the partnership base to include archives and to the building of long term, sustainable partnerships under the theme of community cohesion.

12. CONTACT DETAILS

penny.shapland@readingagency.org.uk

The Reading Agency, PO Box 96, St Albans, Herts AL1 3WP

Tel: 0871 750 1200/Fax: 0871 750 1201