

The Reading Agency is the development agency for public libraries' work with readers. Our main areas of work - all with an emphasis on innovation - are policy, research, advocacy, partnerships and national library programmes.

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1. SELECT COMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES

The Select Committee on public libraries issued its report in March. We are delighted that it emphasizes the fundamental importance of reading for libraries in the 21st century.

We'd like to see libraries' role in fostering an active reading culture at the heart of the vision for their future, and agree with the Committee that performance measures should be aligned more closely to this main role.

We also agree that getting libraries' basic reading service better is a priority. But this isn't just about

passively providing access to books, it's about imaginatively reaching out to inspire and support readers of all kinds.

If reading is at the heart of libraries' work, they can play a huge role in championing equal access to knowledge for everyone and in fostering innovation and creativity.

Miranda McKearney, The Reading Agency's Director, was one of the witnesses giving evidence to the Committee.

2. PARTNERSHIPS

Library Partnership With BBC Radio

"The potential in this partnership for increasing people's enjoyment and consumption of books is enormous" Mark Damazer, Controller, Radio 4 and BBC7.

We are being funded by the Arts Council to spend a year experimenting with links between public libraries and BBC Radio 4 and BBC7.

We're very excited that Radio 4's Open Book will be doing a special library programme on 10 July. If you work in a library and have any feature ideas to suggest please get in touch.

We are also developing:

- A radio producers' guide to working with libraries
- A radio information sheet for readers' groups
- Listening post pilots
- A special Woman's Hour series about the last ten Orange Prize winners. Readers in libraries will vote for their favourites
- A scheme to help young people in libraries develop broadcasting skills, and create radio programme material for national broadcast.

For more information contact:

Harriet.Williams@readingagency.org.uk

BBC Learning

In June there will be an event to celebrate the creation of a groundbreaking partnership between the public library sector and BBC Learning. Working with MLA and the Society of Chief Librarians, we have been leading negotiations on this, and are delighted that a three year agreement has now been signed that will make libraries a partner in the BBC's big learning campaigns.

The first of these campaigns is RaW, the BBC's major new literacy campaign. It starts in October and runs for at least three years. It will focus on self assessment (autumn 2005–spring 2006), reading passions including sport (2006) and reading with children (2007). We are setting up a series of national consultation workshops to help shape libraries' involvement with the campaign. We are also exploring with the BBC the possibility of media training to help libraries get the most out of the relationship.

The literacy campaign comes at a particularly important time. World Book Day 2006 will have a big

focus on adult literacy and the Vital Link programme is, as part of Framework for the Future, helping build capacity for libraries' reader development work to support learners.

Taking part in the Vital Link improvement will help libraries prepare for the BBC campaign. To join the mailing list for newsletters contact:

resources@readingagency.org.uk

Partnerships Strategy

London Book Fair

Working in partnership with CILIP we held a very successful partnerships seminar at the London Book Fair in March. It looked at the implications for library services of our partnership with the booktrade and broadcasters, especially adult publishers, BBC Learning, BBC Radio and Channel 4's Richard and Judy Show.

Partnerships strategy

We are starting to put in place the recommendations of our new partnerships strategy which was approved by the Advisory Council on Libraries late last year. We are establishing a new advisory group, made up of senior library sector people. It will be chaired by John Dolan of Birmingham Libraries.

We are aiming to improve library services for readers by building longer term, more strategic partnerships, with a particular focus on broadcasters, the booktrade, the basic skills and youth sectors.

Adult Publishers – Reading Partners

"By sharing and improving our knowledge across the industry, we can all encourage more people into reading. Libraries and publishers are realising this opportunity through the Reading Partners initiative. We are absolutely delighted to be involved in achieving this vision." **Tim Hely Hutchinson, Chief Executive, Hachette Livre UK**

We're delighted to welcome Hachette Livre and Pan MacMillan to our Reading Partners initiative with adult publishers. And to have been shortlisted for the Nielsen BookData Award for Innovation in the Book Business, part of the British Book Awards.

A workshop at the Booksellers' Association conference in Glasgow attracted huge interest from 100 delegates wanting to hear more about how Reading Partners is changing the way adult publishers and libraries work together.

The main areas of focus in the next few months are:

- Finalizing a new code of practice for publishers, libraries and library suppliers to make sure library users get a first class reading service
- Exploring the potential for adding retailers to the partnership
- Creating new opportunities for readers through experimental events and promotions like Harper Collins' Readers Nights, Bloomsbury's interactive readers' days and Vintage's 15th anniversary

backlist promotion created with library linked readers groups

- Developing a skills sharing programme
- Developing author and touring databases.

"Reading Partners is an exciting and long overdue initiative. Pan Macmillan looks forward to working creatively with the library sector in a way that is mutually beneficial." David North, Managing Director of Pan Macmillan

For more information on Reading Partners contact Tom Palmer tom.palmer@readingagency.org.uk or go to: www.readingagency.org.uk/readingpartners

Other Booktrade/Media Partnerships:

Orange Prize 2005

Celebrating its 10th year, The Orange Prize for Fiction longlist is being promoted in 110 library authorities through 1593 libraries. The Orange Prize Libraries' Project continues to be a key reader development promotion that excites readers. This year Orange Prize parties are being organised, reading groups will be nominating their own winner and writing reviews for www.orangeprize.co.uk The Prize shortlist was announced on May 18, and on April 25 the Orange Award for New Writers will be announced.

The library readers' groups shadowing the Prize will be holding their breath at parties on the night of the awards ceremony (June 7) to find out if the winners they have chosen are the same as the official winner.

In November 2005, The Orange Prize continues its 10th birthday celebrations through the 'Best of the Best' promotion in association with Women's Hour.

For further information contact:

Ruth.Harrison@readingagency.org.uk or Lisa.gee@readingagency.org.uk

BBC 1's Page Turners

We are working to make sure libraries feature in BBC 1's new daytime broadcast, Page Turners: 9.15 am-10am on Mondays and Fridays. Libraries across the country are promoting the 24 featured books, and library readers groups are involved as studio audiences. If this series is a success, we look forward to a further one in the autumn.

3. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Summer Reading Challenge

The summer reading challenge is the nation's biggest children's reading promotion, and growing. This year's challenge, The Reading Voyage, will be the seventh. Research¹ shows the challenge builds children's reading confidence, skills and enjoyment. We've just published results from the 2004 challenge, the Reading Rollercoaster and you can find the report on



¹ Inspiring Children: The Impact of the Summer Reading Challenge, The Reading Agency 2004

our website. Go to the download centre and look under Reading Rollercoaster.

- 600,000 children took part – 8% more than the year before
- 300,000 children read at least 6 books
- 90% of library authorities took part
- 48,000 children joined the library to take part.

In 2004, for the first time, the Department for Education and Skills supported the challenge, recognizing the power of public libraries to inspire children to read for pleasure. New materials helped libraries reach out to children in schools. This made a big impact:

- 84% of libraries sent out invitations to schools (compared to 56% the previous year)
- 97% of library services targeted schools with visits and information, many reporting “a remarkable increase in take-up”.

The challenge website offered increased interactivity, quizzes and links to Stories from the Web. 50,000 people visited the Reading Rollercoaster website in the summer, and 1,643 reviews and 9,703 email messages were submitted.

“I thought the Reading Rollercoaster was wicked. It has helped me to read more confidently” Liam 7

“I couldn't stop reading the books and I can't wait to get my meddle...” Hannah 6

This year's challenge, The Reading Voyage, started life as The Reading Wave. We had to revise our plans rapidly after the tragic tsunami, but held on to the link with the sea because of libraries' existing plans to use Sea Britain as a focus for working with museums.

Orders from libraries for challenge materials are 11% up, indicating that its impact continues to grow. It is now one of libraries' areas of work linked to new impact performance measures.

We are very excited to have three new authors feature on the 2005 website - Jacqueline Wilson, Anthony Horowitz and Martin Waddell - and to have a continuing partnership with the British Council. Following last year's piloting in places from Delhi to Lagos, 8,500 children will be taking part globally through 32 offices with children's libraries and resource centres.

For queries about The Reading Voyage, contact Lynne.taylor@readingagency.org.uk

Booktrust's Teenage Book Prize In Libraries

We are working with Booktrust to promote their Teenage Prize to libraries, providing display materials, an ideas and Prize pack and eletters. The shortlist is announced in June and the winner in November.

For more information contact:

Ruth.Harrison@readingagency.org.uk or go to www.bookheads.org.uk

Fulfilling Their Potential:

Library Services for 11-19 year olds

Through MLA's action plan for the government's new library strategy – Framework for the Future - we are involved in some of the national programmes trying to improve library services for specific groups. The programme for 11-19 year olds is called Fulfilling Their Potential.

We are delighted to welcome a new Senior Project Manager to The Reading Agency to drive this work forward. Ciara Eastell joins us from Somerset Libraries. She will be combining this work with her place as a fellow on the Clore Leadership Programme.

The main work ahead of us is:

- defining the 'national offer' libraries make to this age group
- fundraising for pilots to test this offer, for staff training programmes and for a support network for library staff
- an advocacy campaign with a special focus on the forthcoming youth green paper
- developing a proposal with CSV to promote library volunteering by young people
- Piloting participation with Southwark Libraries through book purchasing visits, and library redesigns.

As part of the work we have set up a new public library youth work forum, with the National Youth Agency. The Arts Council hosted the first meeting in February.

If you would like to be involved in any of the Fulfilling Their Potential pilot work, please telephone Liz Dubber at TRA on 0871 750 8071.

Socially Excluded Young People: Partners for Change

One of the pilots for Fulfilling Their Potential is called Partners for Change. This is a new project funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation based in three South West library authorities. It aims to involve young people 'at risk' in decisions about their library services. The groups and library services involved are:

- Dorset: young people from traveller sites.
- Gloucestershire: young people at risk of exclusion who'll help redesign the music library space at Cheltenham library
- Swindon: looked after young people, and teenage mums

The project lasts for 2 years, from June 2005. , It is supported by the National Youth Agency, the south west regional agency for museums, libraries and archives (SWMLAC) and ASCEL.

Positive Activities For Young People (PAYP)

We have been working to impress on government the potential of libraries' work with young people at risk. It was a real breakthrough to get libraries featuring in the March national conference and related publication for

the government's Positive Activities for Young People scheme.

Our next steps will be determined by the forthcoming Youth Green Paper.

4. READING GROUPS

East Midlands pilot

We are excited to be getting going on a two year East Midlands pilot for a national development programme for libraries' reading group work. This will create a flagship regional programme to test drive the methodology for creating a national library offer to readers groups.

The project will follow the main stages outlined in the *National Public Library Development Programme for Reading Groups Report* on our website:

- Help library authorities agree and build a minimum level of reader group provision
- A support system for library authorities with less resources
- Mapping provision, and skills
- Training staff and building capacity.
- Developing new models of reading group activity, new resources, and events
- Gather evidence of impact
- Creating tools to underpin national roll out.

The project will be appointing a regional coordinator in June and piloting will happen over the next two years.

Our partners in the pilot are EMLLAC, and the East Midlands SCL. Other partnerships will come into play, especially those with publishers and the BBC.

The project will explore links with other national programmes like The Vital Link, Chatterbooks, and Books & Business.

For further information contact:

debbie.hicks@readingagency.org.uk

Readers' Groups Database

The work of building a national database of library-linked readers' groups got underway this month. Working with MLA and Ufl Learn Direct we will be creating a resource which will provide a service for individuals looking for local readers' groups through the People's Network portal. At the same time it will help libraries' national partners reach libraries' readers' groups and provide management and advocacy information for the sector.

Orange Chatterbooks Reading Groups

Chatterbooks is a national network of reading groups for 4-12 year olds, funded by Orange.

Chatterbooks continues to expand and develop in 2005, with training courses being held in Marylebone (12 April) and York (10 June) and more groups set to develop as a result.

North East Chatterbooks groups met on Saturday 19 March for a celebration and special reader's day

which used Philip Reeve's 'Mortal Engines' as the focus. This was a reader's day with a difference, run in partnership with Newcastle and with additional support from Orange. All the region's Chatterbooks clubs were invited to take part, and a great day was had by all.

Next steps in the Chatterbooks story are: launching the project in Northern Ireland; developing the programme of employee volunteering in partnership with Orange.

It was great to have Chatterbooks shortlisted for the recent Arts and Business awards.

For information about Orange Chatterbooks, contact Liz Dubber on 0871 750 8071, or Tricia Kings on 0871 750 1206.

5. BOOKS AND BUSINESS

We are working with partners in the eastern region to build a replicable model of library/business partnerships, supported by Arts & Business.

The work includes:

- visioning work with senior library practitioners
- mapping of business contacts
- brokering new business contacts with libraries, aiming to build at least 3 business/library partnership projects
- cultivation events for the corporate sector
- offering library staff access to Arts & Business' mentoring and Skills Bank support.

Our partners are Arts & Business, EMLAC, and the Society of Chief Librarians.

6. PUBLIC LIBRARY PARTNERSHIPS WITH SCHOOLS

We launched *Enjoying Reading*, a DfES funded pack promoting partnerships between public libraries and schools, at the British Library early in the New Year. The pack pulls together the evidence to convince partners of the value of libraries' work. The reference sheets and photocopyable handouts are already proving their worth. We are talking to DfES about how to build on the pack. You can find it at www.readingagency.org.uk (via the download center) or you can buy a copy of the complete pack for £25 plus £5 p&p by emailing your details to resources@readingagency.org.uk

7. CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Creative Partnerships is the government funded programme to develop creative links between schools and arts practitioners.

We are delighted to have recently won a Creative Partnerships grant to help us do action research in three places showing how libraries and literature can develop young people's creativity.

For more about libraries, reading and young people's creative development, see Demos' 'Creative Reading' on www.theirreadingfutures.org.uk

For more information on libraries and Creative Partnerships contact: ruth.harrison@readingagency.org.uk

8. READING PROMOTIONS RESOURCES

Family reading, Manga for teenagers, Chatterbooks reading group packs... if you'd like to order any of our reading promotion materials, contact resources@readingagency.org.uk or look at the list of the resources available and download the order form in the Resources section of the TRA website.

9. POETRY ARCHIVE

The brainchild of the poet laureate Andrew Motion, The Poetry Archive will be an exciting on-line accessible resource promoting poetry to both adults and children. The site (launching November 2005) will feature 100 audio clips from contemporary poets plus book information and games. CDs of the featured poets will also be available.

We held a very productive consultation workshop with librarians last December and are currently developing a Poetry Archive Toolkit which will be sent out in June 2005. Further information from:

ruth.harrison@readingagency.org.uk

10. WORLD BOOK DAY 2005 AND 2006

World Book Day 2005

Libraries did a fantastic job with this year's World Book Day book recommendation campaign. This was called Spread the Word and used special postcards to create a massive national sharing of book ideas:

- 1,016,600 of the postcards were used by libraries
- 201 library authorities took part (there are 208 in total)
- World Book Day featured in 3688 libraries.

We compiled an Ideas Bank showcasing the impressively creative activities of libraries, from:

- **Speed Spread the Word/Book Dating:** Readers in Tyneside and Brent had a minute to recommend their favourite book to each other
- **Housebound paired reading:** Lewisham used the postcards to kick start a paired housebound readers recommend scheme
- **Surprise books:** Isle of Wight readers groups used the postcards and brought along surprise books wrapped up
- **You're Booked For Lunch:** In Northern Ireland 20 adults who regularly visit the library were invited to join the staff for lunch and bookchat on WBD
- **People recommend:** Sunderland created recommend boxes for people to post their cards, then created display boards.

You can see the resources at www.readingagency.org.uk via the download center.

World Book Day 2006

World Book Day 2006 will have a big focus on adult literacy, with a publisher partnership planning a new *Quick Reads* list of books especially suitable for emergent readers. This is going to be a great

opportunity to harness the interest raised by the BBC campaign (see BBC Learning above) and to show how accessible libraries and their collections can be.

11. RICHARD & JUDY/BRITISH BOOK AWARDS

Richard and Judy's book club on Channel 4 has had an extraordinary impact. 1.8 million people say it has influenced their reading habits. We are working to make sure libraries feature strongly and have been delighted by the way the programme talks so often about libraries. This spring 107 UK library authorities are promoting the Richard and Judy book club book of the year and the British Book Awards with a further 44 libraries choosing to promote one or the other. In all over 2000 libraries across the UK are displaying materials to support these promotions.

Early reports suggest that the promotion has been even more successful than last year. Library suppliers have been pulling out all the stops to get books into libraries in really good time.

Issue figures from Public Lending Right showed a 300%+ increase in loans of the featured books following the 2004 summer campaign.

Contact: Penny.shapland@readingagency.org.uk

12. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: THEIR READING FUTURES

Take a look at the new learning package to be offered by Their Reading Futures, our workforce development programme for library staff working with children. It's a pre-planned route through the training materials, designed for front line staff at induction level. The package guides them through the key things they need to know about working with children and young people, offers practical activities to try, and prompts the trainee to discuss issues with their mentor for the programme.

More packages are on the way: for front line staff, for managers and an on-line training manual. In the meantime, all the training materials remain freely available, on a pick and mix basis, from the website www.theirreadingfutures.org.uk

Library authorities are using TRF in a very practical way to support the quality of the service. TRF is the way to challenge the attitude of any library staff who say they 'don't work with children'.

Rob Jones, Head of Library Services in the Isle of Wight, has changed all library staff job descriptions using the skills for working with children and young people that TRF identifies. A new pilot project is enabling us to test out models for introducing TRF across a whole service. Supported by YMLAC, we are working with Barnsley and Doncaster library services, to offer TRF across the board to all staff, in advance of this year's Summer Reading Challenge. The project findings will be available by the late autumn.

For more information on Their Reading Futures, please contact tricia.kings@readingagency.org.uk

13. THE BIG BOOK SHARE

Our family reading in prison programme is called The Big Book Share. It aims to:

- get every prison offering the big book share or a similar project to help prisoners and their families share
- for all prisoners and their families to know and be able to access the help public libraries offer.

Phase 2 of the Big Book Share is now reaching completion. It's funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and reached 520 prisoners and their families in 2002–2004. Its impact included

- more contact and communication between prisoners and their families
- more sharing of books between prisoners and their children
- prisoners' increased confidence about books and literacy skills.

We are developing an 'Inside Outside' bid to develop the work beyond prisoners' release back into the community. This work needs rolling out nationwide so all ex-offenders have easy routes to library use and reading for pleasure.

More information: tricia.kings@readingagency.org.uk

14. ADULT LITERACY: THE VITAL LINK

Adult learning

The Vital Link is another of the national programmes we are developing as part of the action plan for Framework for the Future. It aims to improve the support libraries offer to adults with low literacy skills. The importance of reading for pleasure in this support is becoming increasingly recognized as a valuable way of developing reading confidence.

The Society of Chief Librarians has endorsed the programme, and in a recent survey there was strong support for the Vital Link 'national offer grid' (see www.vitalink.org.uk under Update) which helps libraries improve their service. This includes staff awareness, information on courses and a new focus on fiction and non-fiction at the right level for emergent readers in addition to basic skills collections.

The Vital Link will now be working to support libraries in building their capacity by providing practical guidance, case studies and good practice models, initially on its website over the coming months. If library authorities or Skills for Life providers are interested in working with us on areas such as stock development, evaluation or ways of reaching audiences, The Vital Link would be delighted to hear from you – contact genevieve.clarke@readingagency.org.uk

94% of library authorities have sent staff for training in a series of partnership development events run by The Vital Link and the regional agencies for

museums, libraries and archives in the last few months.

Children's Centres project

The Vital Link has also been funded by the DfES Skills for Life Strategy Unit to deliver an exciting pilot project to encourage parents back into reading and learning by helping families share books. Libraries in Hull, Leicestershire, Newcastle, Solihull, Somerset, Southampton, Stockport, Thurrock and at HMP Birmingham linked with local children's centres to use new 'Got kids? Get Reading!' book collections as a catalyst to bring parents back into learning. The book collections have been carefully selected for adult emergent readers and their families. Guidance for library, children's centre and family literacy practitioners will be available in May.

Our partners in the Vital Link are The National Literacy Trust and the National Reading Campaign. The funding comes from MLA.

15. READING AGENCY & PARTNER EVENTS IN 2005

May/July: regional workshops hosted by the BBC to develop libraries' response to RaW, the new campaign for emergent readers.

June: Big Book Share conferences on family reading programmes in prisons in partnership with HMPs Nottingham and Wandsworth.

June/July: launch of new sea-themed Summer Reading Challenge.

7 October: Vital Link conference about reading and adult basic skills learners on libraries' work for emergent readers with input from the BBC and World Book Day.

16. WANT MORE NEWS?

As well as this overview eletter, we have some specialist eletters you might be interested in:

- **The Vital Link**, about our reading work with adults trying to improve their basic literacy skills;
- **Orange Chatterbooks**, about our national network of reading clubs for 4-12 year olds;
- **Reading Partners**, about our pilot to change the way adult publishers work with readers.

To join the mailing list for any of these send your full contact details and specify which eletters you are interested in to: resources@readingagency.org.uk

17. CONTACT DETAILS

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