

**Welcome to the Summer 2006 Vital Link eletter. This is designed to keep you up to date with developments in the Vital Link libraries and Skills for Life programme.**

In this Newsletter, read about:

- new content for the online toolkit
- Vital Link action plan for 2006-2008
- new developments in family reading and learning

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### 1. WHAT IS THE VITAL LINK?

For readers of this newsletter who are new to The Vital Link, it is a national library-led programme aiming to inspire adult learners with basic skills needs to enjoy reading for pleasure. Run by The Reading Agency in partnership with the National Literacy Trust and the National Reading Campaign, it has a special focus on helping library services and Skills for Life practitioners work together, and forms part of the Government’s Framework for the Future strategy for public libraries being taken forward by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.

### 2. VITAL LINK ONLINE TOOLKIT – WHAT’S NEW?

Check out the toolkit at [www.vitalink.org.uk](http://www.vitalink.org.uk) for new items. Recent additions include:

A list of Skills for Life books purchased for all libraries in Wandsworth  
[http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/vitalink/Stockprovisi  
onguidance.html](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/vitalink/Stockprovisi<br/>onguidance.html))

Details of the Chat about Books reading group for emergent readers in Leicestershire libraries  
[http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/vitalink/Readinggro  
up.html](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/vitalink/Readinggro<br/>up.html)

A self-assessment checklist developed for London libraries, to establish a service baseline and measure improvements against it  
[http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/vitalink/manageme  
ntcommitment.html](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/vitalink/manageme<br/>ntcommitment.html)

A new section on evaluation with some sample forms from Bradford Libraries.  
[http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/vitalink/RDGuidanc  
e.html](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/vitalink/RDGuidanc<br/>e.html) Look out soon for the full Vital Link evaluation toolkit to download!

News of the Open Doors regional partnership in Yorkshire between libraries, museums and archives and adult education providers  
[www.mlay-skillsforlife.org.uk](http://www.mlay-skillsforlife.org.uk)

Details of Hull Libraries Six-Book Challenge for adult emergent readers  
[http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/vitalink/RDGuidanc  
e.html](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/vitalink/RDGuidanc<br/>e.html)

Useful links to other websites on adult learning, training, funding, accessibility and stock at  
[http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/vitalink/toolkitlinks.h  
tml](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/vitalink/toolkitlinks.h<br/>tml)

### 3. NEW TRAINING DATES

**Vital Link** and **Got kids? Get reading!** training courses are now available to book for Autumn 2006. **Vital Link** courses will run in Manchester and York on 10 October and 9 November, while **Got kids? Get reading!** courses will run in Manchester on 26 September and in London on 3 November. Booking forms and more information on each course is available in the TRA Training booklet at  
[http://www.readingagency.org.uk/projects/events/tr  
aining.html](http://www.readingagency.org.uk/projects/events/tr<br/>aining.html)

Latest dates for the free **Adult Learner Support** training events open to UK Online staff are also now available. To check if courses are running in your area, visit  
[https://www.helpisathand.gov.uk/news/national/ad  
ult-learner-support-new-training-dates/](https://www.helpisathand.gov.uk/news/national/ad<br/>ult-learner-support-new-training-dates/)

#### 4. VITAL LINK READING FOR PLEASURE CAMPAIGN

A new range of downloadable learning resources is now available to support the second phase of Quick Reads, which were published for Adult Learners Week in May. The new resources take a themed approach and offer ideas for using the books in new ways to encourage reading and act as a springboard to other texts. The 12 new titles are by authors such as Andy McNab, Danny Wallace and Val McDermid. Two very successful events in London and York during June helped to publicise the campaign and support Skills for Life practitioners and library staff in using the resources. Over 20,000 resources have now been downloaded from the Vital Link and Quick Reads sites and we welcome feedback from practitioners on how they are being used. There is an online questionnaire at <http://www.readingagency.org.uk/include/vlrfpevents.html>[TheReadingAgency.html](http://www.readingagency.org.uk)

To see the resources and the First Choice database, go to [www.vitallink.org.uk](http://www.vitallink.org.uk) and follow the links to Quick Reads.

#### 5. QUICK READS

You might also like to know that the RaW Reader at [www.bbc.co.uk/raw](http://www.bbc.co.uk/raw) has been updated so that users can listen to or read first chapters of the new Quick Reads titles online. You'll find ideas for running RaW Reads groups around some of the Quick Reads titles at [www.bbc.co.uk/raw/campaign](http://www.bbc.co.uk/raw/campaign)

This is an ideal time for libraries to be promoting the Quick Reads and other new titles from New Island and Sandstone Press to local learning providers, along with the new downloadable learning resources. It's also a good time to be getting the message out to tutors that libraries are a great destination to support learners over the summer break to help them get into the reading habit.

#### 6. VITAL LINK ACTION PLAN

We have been developing a new Action Plan for the Vital Link as part of Framework for the Future 2. We plan to prioritise our activities for the next two years around embedding work with Skills for Life Learners into libraries' mainstream programmes. Between now and 2008, we will be concentrating on improving the consistency of services to Skills for Life learners across English library authorities, increasing the availability of and information about suitable stock for the target group and refining our strategies for integrating reading

for pleasure into the curriculum. A development area for the future is likely to be extending reading for pleasure into the workplace. With the help of our partners in the Vital Link Advisory and Consultation groups, we have set ourselves challenging targets for each of these objectives. Look out for the full Action Plan, with detailed tasks and targets, on the Vital Link website during the summer.

#### 7. VITAL LINK EVALUATION TOOLKIT

The online toolkit to help libraries demonstrate the impact of their work with emergent readers is currently being piloted in four library authorities and should be available to download from the Vital Link website by the start of the Autumn term.

#### 8. MORE TITLES FOR EMERGENT READERS!

Thanks to those of you who have been sending through titles that have been through Vital Link stock selection criteria – these will be going up on the First Choice database ([www.firstchoicebooks.org.uk](http://www.firstchoicebooks.org.uk)) and will also be added to the First Choice booklist. We're always on the lookout for new titles suitable for emergent readers, so if you are using the Vital Link stock selection criteria to select titles, do please send these through to Ruth Harrison, either by post: Ruth Harrison, Project Manager, The Reading Agency, 57, Effingham Rd, Lee Green, London, SE12 8NT, or by email [ruth.harrison@readingagency.org.uk](mailto:ruth.harrison@readingagency.org.uk)

In particular we'd like more non-fiction, and recommendations around themes featuring in the RaW campaign in coming months: True crime; Sport; Travel/holiday; Survival; Families and children; Multi-cultural Britain; Local history; TV soaps & gossip; Diet and exercise. You can find guidance on and download the stock selection criteria for fiction and nonfiction titles from [www.vitallink.org.uk](http://www.vitallink.org.uk)

We're trying to find the best ways for libraries to embed stock selection for emergent readers into normal stock selection processes, to enable you to keep up the supply of appropriate stock. An advisory group is looking at different models and solutions; if you'd like to contribute to this we'd be glad to hear from you. Contact Ruth Harrison for further information [ruth.harrison@readingagency.org.uk](mailto:ruth.harrison@readingagency.org.uk)

#### 9. DADS PROMOTION – COMING SOON!

A new reading promotion for dads with low level literacy with children aged 0-10 will be available to purchase from the end of July, for delivery in September, in time for your work on BBC RaW families and Family Learning Week. The promotion includes banners, headers, postcards,

case studies and advice on working with dads and a new booklist with both adult and children's titles selected using Vital Link stock selection criteria. The promotion is being developed in partnership with libraries, basic skills tutors and dads themselves. For more information, please contact [ruth.harrison@readingagency.org.uk](mailto:ruth.harrison@readingagency.org.uk)

Don't forget that First Choice and Got kids? Get reading! promotions (banners, headers, posters, postcards, reading diaries, stickers) are still available to order for immediate dispatch. More details on [www.vitallink.org.uk](http://www.vitallink.org.uk) or the resources page of [www.readingagency.org.uk](http://www.readingagency.org.uk)

## 10. BBC RAW CAMPAIGN

Libraries' involvement in the RaW campaign was boosted by the new Quick Reads titles and lots of activity around Adult Learners week in May. RaW is now concentrating on football and sport in general to capture the World Cup interest. A focus on families will follow in the autumn, providing an opportunity for libraries to link new activity to existing programmes and promotions such as Big Book Share and Got kids? Get reading!.

Libraries should also benefit from mentions in some major marketing promotions for RaW. The Tiscali website is currently running a competition for the Perfect Family Summer at <http://www.tiscali.co.uk/lifestyle/competitions/raw.html>, while the September edition of Tesco magazine is promoting RaW to win a trip to Australia and meet Ned from Neighbours. These promotions will be signposting people to libraries and RaW centres.

Contact Genevieve Clarke for up to date news about RaW activity  
[Genevieve.clarke@readingagency.org.uk](mailto:Genevieve.clarke@readingagency.org.uk)

## 11. WORLD CUP FEVER

New Reading Champions posters from the National Literacy Trust, featuring England footballers, were released in time for this year's World Cup. The set of four posters features Rio Ferdinand, David James, Alan Smith and Ashley Cole. Look out also for Reading Champions posters featuring members of the Ashes-winning English cricket team, available now from [www.literacytrust.org.uk/posters](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/posters)

After the World Cup, Radio Five Live's 606 football show will be working together with RaW to invite listeners to send in their football stories. Keep up to date with the latest on-air activity at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/raw/rawonair/>

## 12. OPEN DOORS – SKILLS FOR LIFE PROJECT IN YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE

Open Doors is a project funded by MLA Yorkshire to support museum, library and archive staff and Skills for Life practitioners to use museum, library and archive resources with learners.

Activities include advocacy and partnership brokering, newsletters and training events, and the Open Doors network. This network operates on a sub regional basis across Yorkshire and Humberside, and brings together museum, library and archive professionals and Skills for Life practitioners to share good practice and develop ways to support the Skills for Life agenda.

The project has recently launched a website of interest to museum, library and archive staff and Skills for Life practitioners outside Yorkshire - visit [www.mlay-skillsforlife.org.uk](http://www.mlay-skillsforlife.org.uk). The website includes a 'getting started' guide for working in partnership with Skills for Life providers, case studies and a Learning Resources Library, where you can look at resources produced for use by adult learners in museums, libraries and archives.

For more information, contact Abi Hackett, Skills for Life Manager, using the contact form on the Open Doors website.

## 13. FAMILY READING CAMPAIGN

The Family Reading Campaign is a partnership campaign working to ensure that the benefits of reading in the home, and strategies to support parents, are incorporated into the messages of all the key organisations concerned with education, libraries, health and parenting. It aims to encourage effective partnership working to increase the level of support for families, with a particular focus on reaching homes where reading has not traditionally been part of the family culture. BBC RaW will be a key partner in the campaign, which launches in autumn 2006 to tie in with the Raw family focus. As part of the joint launch the campaign is looking for a wide range of organisations, including libraries, to showcase how their work helps reading in the home. If you are interested in being involved, contact Julia Strong, Director of the National Reading Campaign on 020 7828 2435 or [Julia.strong@literacytrust.org.uk](mailto:Julia.strong@literacytrust.org.uk)

For more information about the campaign, visit [www.familyreading.org.uk](http://www.familyreading.org.uk)

## 14. FAMILY READING MISSION

This year's Summer Reading Challenge from The Reading Agency encourages children to embark on a top secret reading mission at their local library. This year a family approach to The Reading Mission will encourage parents and

carers to take special interest in their children's achievement. A Reading Mission leaflet is available for parents and carers, to provide ideas and encouragement for ways to help children through the challenge. Quite a few library services are using the challenge to link up to families; TRA is working closely with four different authorities to see how their different plans work and what makes for success in engaging families. The programmes being studied include working with family learning, running an adults' challenge alongside the children's, reading/writing events, and working with family reading groups. Results of this study, which should help other authorities to develop plans to involve families in the Challenge in future years, will be available in the autumn. Contact [patricia.sharkey@readingagency.org.uk](mailto:patricia.sharkey@readingagency.org.uk)

### 15. SKILLS FOR LIFE FOR PRISONERS

The Vital Link is developing plans to liaise more closely with prisons. We expect this to include providing the Quick Reads learning resources on CD for prison staff who find access to the internet for downloads difficult.

A new resource detailing providers for the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) across England and Wales is available from the Forum for Prisoner Education. The forum also produces a weekly email newsletter, with up-to-the-minute information on developments in OLASS. To subscribe, just send a blank email to [news@fpe.org.uk](mailto:news@fpe.org.uk). For more information, visit [www.fpe.org.uk/olass](http://www.fpe.org.uk/olass)

In December 2005, the Government published a Green Paper entitled "Reducing Re-offending through Skills and Employment". Jointly produced by the Department for Education and Skills, the Home Office and the Department for Work and Pensions, the document is available to download at [www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/offenderlearning/](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/offenderlearning/)

### 16. LEARNING AND SKILLS WEB

Keep up to date with developments in the Skills for Life sector by checking out the Learning and Skills Web. This 'one-stop-shop' to information, resources and news for practitioners working at all levels in the Learning and Skills Sector, is funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) through the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Registration is free. Web site at: <http://www.learningandskillsweb.org.uk/home.do>

### 17. MORE READERS READING MORE...

Look out for this new publication from The Reading Agency. Written by Tom Palmer, with the help of publishing and library staff involved in the TRA's Reading Partners scheme, it contains practical examples of how libraries working with publishers have brought more readers together and encouraged more reading. Also inside are lots of practical tips and checklists to help with the planning and running of reading events. Copies available now to order from the TRA website ([http://www.readingagency.org.uk/resources/order\\_forms/documents/TRAResourcesOrderForm2006-2.doc](http://www.readingagency.org.uk/resources/order_forms/documents/TRAResourcesOrderForm2006-2.doc)) price £9.99 + p & p

### 18. NEW WAYS WITH SIGNAGE

Jason Healey, a design student at the Arts Institute at Bournemouth has developed a classification system using colours and symbols to make it easier for people with disabilities to find their way around the library. Julia Waite, Librarian at the Institute said she was interested in the idea 'to get people to the right part of the library without using numbers'. Jason Healey's system was given a Best New Blood Award from educational charity D&AD. (*THES*, pp54-55, 25 May)

### 19. NEW FUNDING STREAMS

If you are a library authority in the East Midlands, you may like to know that the East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA) has allocated £2 million of European Social Funds (ESF) to stimulate the growth of learning and skills across the region and to boost economic growth. Details <https://www.helpisathand.gov.uk/news/funding/regional/emda-fund/>

### 20. .... AND FINALLY

If you have found this eletter useful, please pass it on to colleagues in libraries and the basic skills sector and ask them to sign up by sending their **full** contact details to:

[resources@readingagency.org.uk](mailto:resources@readingagency.org.uk)

The next issue will go out in September.

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