

April 2003



## **COOKSON'S 17-YEAR REIGN UNDER THREAT: WHO IS HER HEIR APPARENT?**

### **Nation's Favourite Library Books Revealed**

The 'Queen of fiction lending', Catherine Cookson is gradually losing her place as the best loved writer, according to data released today by Public Lending Right. For the past 17 years Ms Cookson has been the best-lending author in the UK's libraries and retains her crown to June 2002.

However, her loans have dropped below 3 million for the first time, with saga writers Danielle Steel and Josephine Cox in hot pursuit, having each clocked up well over a million loans. Children's writer Jacqueline Wilson is also in the frame. The vibrancy of children's libraries is confirmed by the five children's authors with loans of over a million, including Mick Inkpen for the first time.

For the first time since records began Cookson has been pipped to the post for the most borrowed title in the UK's libraries; in 2001-2 that accolade went to J K Rowling's "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets", ahead of books by Josephine Cox and Maeve Binchy. Cookson's highest ranking title, "The Silent Lady" appears at number five.

The influence of J K Rowling, a relative newcomer to the lending charts, is looming ever larger - for the first time her titles have notched up over 500,000 loans. "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets" is the top lending fiction title in the country ahead of Josephine Cox, Maeve Binchy and Catherine Cookson.

Ms Rowling is also the 42<sup>nd</sup> most borrowed author in the UK, the 15<sup>th</sup> most borrowed children's writer and the various editions of her four titles take up places 1 – 5 on the most borrowed children's fiction titles for the year. Considering her relatively small backlist compared to other writers her rise in the lending charts has been meteoric, in line with her popularity on the bestseller lists.

This year sees the introduction of Book Industry Communication's Standard Subject Categories to the PLR database. PLR is now able to analyse its massive range of data in far greater detail, producing lending figures for categories such as poetry, sports biography, and travel writing reflecting the nation's enduring passions and interests.

Established in 1979, PLR is a legal right that remunerates authors for the loan of their work through public libraries in the UK. The Stockton-based PLR office uses sophisticated computer technology to track the annual loans data with the support of public libraries, and distributes its funds on the basis of a rate per loan each year. By supporting author, illustrators, and book editors in this way, PLR makes an active contribution to the creative industries in this country.

**Ends/March 2003**

## **Editors Notes**

1. PLR was established by an Act of Parliament in 1979. It gives authors the legal right to receive remuneration from government for the public's use of their work through the public library system.
2. Following a major five-yearly review, PLR's sponsor department, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), has confirmed the government's continuing commitment to PLR as a key means of support for UK authors. The report praised the way the Scheme is currently managed by the Registrar and his team, and made a number of recommendations, including support for the extension of PLR to reference books consultations.
3. Increase in PLR funding. In 2000, DCMS Ministers accepted the case for a 40% increase in funding. With effect from 1 April 2002 the Fund increased to £7 million; a further increase to £7.2 million will take effect from April 2003.
4. In 2003 – relating to book loans during the period July 2001 – June 2002, PLR will distribute £6.2 million to 19,064 authors at a rate per loan of 4.21 pence.
5. Authors are eligible for payment if their PLR earnings reach a minimum of £5. There is a payment limit of £6,000 for the top-lending authors.
6. Since its inception in 1979, PLR has distributed almost £77 million to authors.
7. Author Clare Francis was appointed to succeed Michael Holroyd as chair of the PLR Advisory Committee in August 2000. The appointment runs for three years.
8. \* Society of Authors Survey: 'For Love Not Money' by Kate Pool, 2000.