

CHILDREN'S AUTHORS MORE POPULAR THAN EVER IN LIBRARIES

Children's authors have increased their share of library book loans by over 30% in the last 10 years. This is one of the conclusions emerging from the annual survey of library lending conducted by the Public Lending Right Office.

PLR, the government scheme that makes payments to authors for the free use of their books in public libraries, provides a unique insight into the nation's taste in books through the loans data it collects from libraries.

PLR's latest figures – for 1998/99 – show the percentage of overall library loans accounted for by children's books has grown to 28.6% compared with 21.7% in 1988. Ten of the top twenty most popular authors in libraries are now children's writers.

PLR Registrar, Jim Parker, described the figures as 'wonderful news'. They testify to the excellence of children's books in this country and to the success of librarians in attracting young people into libraries in the face of competition from other leisure interests.

The PLR findings – summarised in the attached tables – also highlight one of the key differences between library loans and sales: libraries provide access to the full repertoire of an author's work – not just what's in print. Three out of five of the top loaned children's books were published in the 1980s. Children's writers feature prominently among the most popular 'classic' authors.

In welcoming the PLR results Arts Minister, Alan Howarth, said:

'The PLR Scheme is central to the government's plans for culture and literacy. It underpins the work of libraries, encourages creativity and develops talent.'

Background Information for Editors

The PLR Scheme is funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and is administered by the Registrar of PLR. Payments are made annually and are based on the number of times an author's books are borrowed from public libraries. Loans data is collected from a sample of 30 library authorities throughout the UK. These are grossed up to provide a national loans estimate for each book. The total number of loans is then divided into the money made available by the Secretary of State (after the running costs of the Scheme have been deducted) and the resulting Rate Per Loan forms the basis of the payments made.