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## PUBLIC LENDING RIGHT - THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES

### UK Authors Receive Vital Income

For the majority of authors in the UK, the arrival of their PLR cheque this week makes a significant contribution to their livelihoods. These are the 75% of this country's writers who earn less than half the national average wage.

Very few authors receive huge, headline grabbing advances. 60% of authors recently surveyed earned less than £10,000 in 1999 (source: Society of Authors survey\*). The majority of writers depend to some extent on their annual PLR payment. For authors who have not recently published a best-seller, or whose work for whatever reason is no longer in the bookshops, it is the loan of their work through the public library service, that generates a vital source of income thanks to Public Lending Right.

Uniquely the public library service, with 90 million books for loan free of charge, provides access to the full repertoire of an author's works. The Stockton based PLR office uses sophisticated computer technology to track the annual loans data with the support of public libraries, and then distributes funds on a rate per loan basis in February each year.

Even for those writers who have found critical and financial success, the arrival of the annual PLR payment is a surprisingly important confidence boost, proving that the public continue to enjoy their work by borrowing their books from libraries up and down the country.

*"The arrival of my PLR statement always gives me such a lift. Writing's such a solitary profession and like many authors I have moments of self-doubt. To know that so many people borrow my books boosts my confidence hugely and helps me to keep writing."*

Clare Francis, current Chair of the PLR Advisory Committee.

Established in 1979 Public Lending Right is not a state handout or subsidy; it is a legal right that rewards authors for the loan of their work by public libraries. The latest data, which covers the period July 1999 – June 2000, represents the distribution of a record £4.5 million to 17,678 authors, payable at the rate of 2.49 pence per loan, the highest to date.

By helping to support authors, whatever their overall earnings, the PLR Scheme also makes an active contribution to education and to the creative industries in this country. Considered an exemplary system, the UK's PLR team are supporting and advising countries around the world seeking to set up similar schemes.

*"This has been a great year for PLR and for authors, with a record Rate per Loan and the promise from the government of an extra £2million in funding next year. With 75% of the PLR fund being distributed in payments of £500 or above, the PLR Scheme is making a real contribution to writers' livelihoods and sustaining their creativity."*

Dr Jim Parker, PLR Registrar

Ends/February 2001

**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. Increase in PLR funding. In 2000 Ministers at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, PLR's sponsoring department, accepted the case for a 40% increase in funding. With effect from 1 April 2002 the Fund will be increased to £ 7 million with a further increase to £7.2 million in April 2003.
3. In 2001 - relating to the period June 1999 - July 2000 PLR is distributing £4.5 million at a rate per loan of 2.49 pence to 17, 678 authors including 1200 new authors that have joined the scheme in the last year.
4. Authors are eligible for payment if their loans total reaches a minimum of £5. There is a payment limit of £6000 for the top-lending authors.
5. Since its inception in 1979 PLR has distributed £61,782,000 to authors.
6. On 1 July 2000 the scheme was extended to European writers. Prior to this date the scheme had been restricted to authors resident in the UK and Germany (with which Britain has a reciprocal arrangement). The extended scheme opens PLR to British authors resident everywhere in the European Community and related states as well as to other European writers whose books are borrowed from British libraries.
7. Author Clare Francis was appointed by Culture Secretary Chris Smith to succeed Michael Holroyd as chair of the PLR Advisory Committee on 7 August 2000. The appointment runs for three years.
8. \* Taken from '*Love Not Money*' an analysis of the Society of Authors Survey into authors' earnings, 2000 by Kate Pool.
9. For more information visit the PLR website at [www.plr.uk.com](http://www.plr.uk.com).