

WILSON TOPPLES COOKSON

Children's Writer Jacqueline Wilson becomes UK's Most Borrowed Author as PLR celebrates its 25th Anniversary

Children's author Jacqueline Wilson has become the top lending author and the new 'champion' of fiction lending in the UK's libraries, according to data released today by Public Lending Right for loans in 2002-2003. This ends a remarkable 17-year reign at the top of the PLR charts by Dame Catherine Cookson.

"It's a fitting start to our 25th anniversary celebrations that we should see such a dramatic change at the top of the lending charts," says Dr Jim Parker, Registrar of Public Lending Right. *"This is the first time since our records began that we have had a new author replacing Catherine Cookson at number one. The loans data that we collate helps to reinforce the important role that both writers and public libraries offer society. Having an eminent children's author such as Jacqueline Wilson at number one surely reflects the passion of young readers and the vibrancy of the public library service for an emerging generation."*

Since Public Lending Right's records began Catherine Cookson has reigned supreme as the country's top lending author. Having lost her crown, she has slipped back to fourth place behind Danielle Steel and Josephine Cox in second and third place respectively.

Another children's author JK Rowling features high in the lending charts. *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* is the fourth most borrowed title overall and tops the children's charts for the most borrowed individual title in 2002-2003. In spite of the success of her individual titles, JK Rowling is only the 42nd most borrowed author overall. Besides Jacqueline Wilson, four other children's writers make the top ten most borrowed authors list, including Mick Inkpen in fifth place, followed by R L Stine and Janet and Allan Ahlberg with Lucy Daniels in tenth place. ***(For more details of this year's most-borrowed authors and books, visit the PLR website at www.plr.uk.com)***

As well as being the top-lending author in the UK's libraries, Jacqueline Wilson is also one of our best-selling children's writers whose international following is growing all the time. She is tireless in her support of children's literacy in schools for which she received an OBE in 2002. Her ability to write about young people for young people in a way they can easily relate to has led to massive popularity and a loyal following in both bookshops and libraries nationwide. She has also either won or been short-listed for virtually every children's book award in the country.

"I was both surprised and totally delighted with the news from Public Lending Right," says Wilson. *"Every author is thrilled to know their books are selling but I know I share with many authors an almost greater thrill when your books are borrowed from libraries. My thanks go to the public library service and librarians everywhere who work so hard to help ensure that EVERYONE has the opportunity to enjoy books and reading."*

With its new Chairman, TV script-writer and best-selling author Simon Brett at the helm, Public Lending Right celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2004. After 30 years of campaigning by the nation's authors, their right to receive remuneration for the loan of their work by public libraries became law when the Public Lending Right Act came into being on 22 March 1979. During 2004, Public Lending Right will celebrate its 25th anniversary with a range of seminars and events attended by authors and other rights holders, the public library service and many other organisations that contribute to our creativity as a nation.

Ends/13/02/04

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. The report is available on PLR's website.
3. Increase in PLR funding. In 2000, DCMS Ministers accepted the case for a 40% increase in funding. The PLR Fund increased to £7 million in 2002-03 and to £7.2 million in 2003-04.
4. In 2004 - relating to book loans during the period July 2002-June 2003 - PLR will distribute £6.4 million to 18,763 authors at a record rate per loan of 4.85 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 over £83 million to authors.
7. Author Simon Brett was appointed to succeed Clare Francis as chair of the PLR Advisory Committee in August 2003. The appointment runs for four years.