

10 February 2006



JACQUELINE WILSON:

UK's Most Borrowed Author for Third Year Running

Children's writer Jacqueline Wilson has retained her crown as the most borrowed author in UK libraries for the third year running, Public Lending Right (PLR) announced today. Ms Wilson toppled popular romantic fiction writer Catherine Cookson from the top of the lending charts in 2003 after a 17 year reign by the romantic novelist.

PLR figures released today show that Ms Wilson, the current Children's Laureate, was the only UK writer to notch up over 2 million loans, during 2004-5, ahead of adult fiction writers Josephine Cox, Danielle Steel and James Patterson. Also in the Top 10 were John Grisham, Ian Rankin and Bernard Cornwell, demonstrating the nation's continuing love of thrillers, crime fiction and historical adventure stories. Former champion Catherine Cookson drops out of the Top 10 for the first time since PLR began collecting lending statistics in 1984.

Besides Jacqueline Wilson, the Top 10 also includes children's writers Mick Inkpen, Janet & Allan Ahlberg and Roald Dahl. JK Rowling appears further down the list at 74.

"This year's charts show that the children's and young people's library service is as vibrant as ever," says PLR Registrar, Jim Parker. *"It is fitting that, at the time Jacqueline Wilson holds the post of Children's Laureate and continues to do so much for reading, libraries and young people, our figures demonstrate her enduring popularity as a writer."*

Jacqueline Wilson commented: *"I am thrilled by the news from PLR: it's great that so many children are obviously spending time in libraries. It's a tribute to the hard work of many people, and to the success of initiatives such as the Bookstart scheme which have done such a great job in encouraging children into libraries from an early age. I know that libraries are also wholeheartedly behind the Reading Aloud campaign which I am making the centrepiece of my tenure as Children's Laureate."*

The UK's most borrowed title was Patricia Cornwell's "Blow Fly", whilst the top lending children's fiction title was "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix" by JK Rowling.

Bill Bryson takes the top spot for the most borrowed non-fiction title with "A Short History of Nearly Everything", closely followed by Gillian McKeith's "You Are What You Eat" and Paul Burrell's "A Royal Duty".

The latest PLR figures also illustrate the nation's love of TV chefs and cookery, cricket, theatre and television celebrities; the popularity of France as a holiday destination; and our penchant for historical biography and comic poetry.

PLR – Keeping Writers Writing

As this announcement is made, the nation's writers, as well as illustrators, photographers, editors and translators, will be receiving their annual PLR payments. This year's rate per loan is up again to its highest ever level, at 5.57 pence per loan (for titles loaned between July 2004 and June 2005). This increase has been achieved partly as a result of PLR meeting its government spending targets.

PLR is a right authors have held since 1979 when an Act of Parliament established that they would receive remuneration for the public's use of their work through public libraries. For the past five years, European authors have also qualified for PLR. The Scheme has been

extended beyond the UK to promote the PLR principle and encourage the development of reciprocal arrangements with other countries.

The UK's PLR Scheme is considered a model one, and members of the Stockton-based administration team travel extensively supporting and encouraging other European countries as they set up their own schemes.

"Public Lending Right is a vital source of income for the nation's writers. It is also an important public investment in writers' creativity, and a continuing symbol of the Government's support for books and the written word at the heart of our public library service," says Culture Minister David Lammy. *"It is a great tribute to Jim Parker and his team that good practice developed in the UK is now being shared across Europe, as more and more countries recognise the value of their creative industries and look to safeguard their writers and the vital contribution they make."*

Ask Lewis

In 2004, PLR set up a new database facility, LEWIS, which enables detailed analysis of the data collected from UK libraries. LEWIS gives a fascinating picture of what we're all reading by genre and region. LEWIS can tell you what our favourite exotic pets are; which childcare gurus we trust; what extreme sports we like to indulge in and where we most like to holiday. (See "Ask LEWIS" attached.)

Ends/10 February 2006

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 in 2002, PLR's sponsor department, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), confirmed the government's continuing commitment to PLR as an important means of support for authors. The report praised the way the Scheme is 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 (www.plr.uk.com).
3. In December 2004, DCMS announced an increase in PLR funding to £7.6 million with effect from 2006-07. Funding currently stands at £7.4 million (2005-06).
4. In 2006 - relating to book loans during the period July 2004-June 2005 - PLR is distributing £6.59 million to 18,587 authors at a record rate per loan of 5.57 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. This year 286 authors will receive the maximum payment.
6. Since its inception in 1979, PLR has distributed over £95 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.
8. European authors will qualify for payment from the UK scheme for the fifth time in 2006. The Scheme has been extended beyond the UK to help encourage the spread of the PLR principle and to encourage the development of reciprocal arrangements with other PLR countries. The extended scheme opens PLR to British authors resident everywhere in the EU, as well as to other European writers whose books are borrowed from British libraries. In this fifth year of payments Irish authors are the principal beneficiaries.

