

SUPPORTING A CREATIVE NATION

Public Lending Right – 25 years

Serving authors in partnership with public libraries

“Writers need readers; readers need writers; libraries are the magic that connect them!”

Authors and other rightsholders make an invaluable contribution to our creativity as a nation. Authors, illustrators, translators and editors are all central in creating books that form the current UK public library stock of 116,000,000 books available for use in the 4,614 library service points across the country*.

Public Lending Right works closely with the public library authorities that make up its annual sample to ensure that loans data is collected effectively and efficiently with the minimum disruption to libraries. The Public Lending Right Scheme requires that the sample includes library authorities drawn from every region of the United Kingdom.

Payments to authors this year (February 2004) were based on loans data collected between 1 July 2002 and 30 June 2003 from 769 service points across 31 library authorities.

The Registrar is committed to a process of continuous improvement in the fairness and representativeness of the sample by increasing its size and range. From 2004/05 the sample will increase to 1000 service points in 38 authorities providing PLR with data on 21% of all UK public library book loans.

Public Lending Right works in partnership with a number of organisations and agencies committed to the future of public libraries and the development of readers. Amongst those partners are the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP); The MLA Council; The Reading Agency; CIPFA; LISU; and Book Marketing Ltd.

The loans data bank that Public Lending Right holds is proving to be invaluable to many of these organisations and to public library authorities themselves. Over the last four years Public Lending Right has been developing a service aimed at releasing specific data on request to assist in determining the impact on book loans of a range of public library and reader development initiatives. These include the BBC Big Read with The Reading Agency and the CILIP Carnegie & Greenaway Medals. This data has enabled these organisations to track the borrowing activity before, during and after their project to help analyse its success.

Looking to the future, this data has enormous potential to support an even wider range of work such as delivery of various aspects of Framework for the Future currently managed by MLAC nationally. Public Lending Right is currently working on a consultative basis with a public libraries focus group to assess how best to make the data available to support libraries with stock analysis and other management information. The usefulness of the data will be enhanced by PLR's plans to increase the size and representativeness of the library sample. In 2005-06 the number of participating authorities will increase to 40.



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The initial feedback from libraries has encouraged Public Lending Right to develop a more sophisticated range of data. An important innovation in 2002/03 was the application of the book trade's (BIC) standard subject categorisation system to book loans. This enabled the provision of data by subject – for example poetry, romantic fiction, sport biography. This data can be further interrogated to provide information by subject, nationally or regionally over a given period. In 2004 work has begun on the process of making this data available to Public Lending Right's partners via PLR's website. It is anticipated that this service will be available in 2005.

Other ventures include support for the Reading Agency's exciting new *Reading Partners* project which seeks opportunities for partnerships between public libraries and six major publishing houses.

Notes

* data from LISU Annual Library Statistics 2003

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