

Press Release

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Book industry identifies libraries as ‘fundamental’ to future reading strategy: at least 40 new libraries announced for 2012

Leading figures from the publishing, retail and public sectors gathered at Waterstone’s flagship store in Piccadilly last night to celebrate libraries’ work with publishers led by **The Reading Agency** and to announce details of the book trade’s support for libraries in 2012.

It was announced that at least 40 new or significantly refurbished libraries will be opened in 2012 and **The Reading Agency** with **Society of Chief Librarians** together set out a vision for a vibrant future library service based on collaboration and innovation - with libraries, authors, publishers, retailers and book trade charities working closely together towards a ‘shared reading universe’, and focusing energy on a strategic reading year with high impact events and promotions.

Tony Durcan, Society of Chief Librarians, said:

" We all have a responsibility to get good news out about libraries. Those funding them deserve to see that there is a huge public demand for our reading role, and that this is changing excitingly. Despite the news about potential library closures, we know that library authorities have a real ambition to renew their library buildings. The Society of Chief Librarians estimates that at least 40 new or significantly refurbished libraries will open in 2012. These include Rotherham’s Riverside Library; the Kent History and Library Centre in Maidstone; The Hive in Worcester, and the Idea Store, Watney Market in Tower Hamlets. Spectacular new city centre openings expected in 2013 include The Library of Birmingham and Liverpool Central Library."

The Reading Partners initiative was set up by the Reading Agency in 2004 and now involves 40 UK publishers working with the public library network, bringing authors and promotions to readers in communities right across the country. Expanding the partnership, The Reading Agency announced **Waterstone’s** as a retail partner for 2012. Independent booksellers will continue to be important partners, and in 2012 will work closely with libraries on National Reading Group Day, June 30.

Miranda McKearney, Director of The Reading Agency, said:

"The Reading Partners initiative is a shining example of how libraries can work creatively with partners to bring reading alive in every kind of community. Through the scheme, publishers and libraries are responding to change with new ideas and closer working. Building on this model we are delighted to wire Waterstone’s and the book trade charities more powerfully into the mix. Thankfully, they now also see libraries as essential strategic partners in reaching readers"

James Daunt, Managing Director of Waterstone’s, said:

"Just as we have a network of shops serving communities across the UK, so do libraries, and anything we can do to help each other and aid literacy in these challenging times has got to be worthwhile. We’ve worked closely with the Reading Agency over the last year to develop our links with local libraries. In 2012, through our partnership, we will be testing out practical ideas and new ways of working with libraries, to the benefit of all."

The Reading Agency publishers alongside the three big book trade charity promotions – Quick Reads, World Book Day and World Book Night – announced a major library membership drive tied to on-going audience development strategies and supported by free resources for author promotions, reading groups and skills training for librarians. High profile authors such as Ben Fogle (Canada Water) and Joanna Trollope (Mansfield) will attend library openings, events and promotions. The work spearheaded by The Reading Agency in developing networks between libraries and creative industry partners is seen as vital to the future.

Joanna Prior, Managing Director Penguin General Division and Reading Partners Publisher said:

“Libraries are a vital partner for publishers in connecting authors with readers. Whether working with well-established brand authors or with new writers at the start of a career, libraries are vital in the chain of promoting and proselytising about the pleasures of reading. Skilled librarians are supremely good at spreading their passion for reading and developing audiences. As publishers, it is essential we lock all these virtues into our work to promote writers, helped - as always - by The Reading Agency. In 2012 we will stitch libraries into the fabric of our big industry reading promotions, push library membership and help tell a positive PR story about the importance of libraries to a healthy reading nation.”

Alan Davey, Chief Executive of Arts Council England, said:

“Reading is this country’s biggest participative art form and the Arts Council is really excited about its new responsibilities for championing and developing libraries. We want to unite libraries with the country’s wider artistic and cultural life and are delighted to be supporting The Reading Agency to develop links between libraries and the creative industries. These kinds of innovative partnerships will be vital in creating the conditions for library services to thrive.”

Kate Mosse, bestselling novelist and co-founder of the Orange Prize said: “The British Library service is the envy of readers and writers around the world. Libraries are community spaces, meeting spaces, places in the heart of towns small and large, where people learn to read, enjoy sharing stories with others, where some even begin their writing careers. Their brick and mortar presence on our high streets makes clear our firm commitment to the principles of free and fair access to books, learning, education, literacy for all. The authors and readers of today will not let down the writers and readers of tomorrow. We will safeguard what’s been achieved and build for the future.”

**For further information please contact Fiona McMorrough or Jessica Axe at FMCM
on 0207 405 7422 or fionam@fmcm.co.uk; jessica@fmcm.co.uk**

Notes to editors:

- **The Reading Agency** is an independent charity working to inspire more people to read more. It specializes in helping libraries make more social impact through reading. It is funded by the Arts Council. (www.readingagency.org.uk)
- **Reading Partners** was established in 2004 and involves the whole UK public library network, 40 adult and children’s publishers, The Publishers Association and the main children’s library bodies. (www.readingagency.org.uk/adults/reading-partners/) For more information, please contact Sandeep Mahal on 0871 223 2041 or sandeep.mahal@readingagency.org.uk
- **SCL:** The Society of Chief Librarians leads the debate on the future of public libraries and advocates for continuous improvement of the public library service on behalf of local people.
- **ACE:** Arts Council England is the national development agency for the arts in England, distributing public money from the Government and the National Lottery. It has recently taken on responsibility for libraries.
- **The Publishers Association** supports the work of the Reading Partners scheme, and has sponsored tonight’s event at Waterstone’s.
- **The Booksellers Association** will work in partnership with The Reading Agency’s and libraries’ major new Reading Groups for Everyone campaign and to build connections between independent booksellers and libraries. There will be a particular emphasis on National Reading Group Day, 30 June 2012.



Waterstone's

