

report

Reading Partners' report 2008

Reading Partners is a consortium of library and publisher partners which aims to get more people reading more. It is doing this by transforming the way public libraries and adult publishers work together. The scheme was started by The Reading Agency in 2004. It involves the whole UK public library network and nine publishers: Bloomsbury, Faber, Hachette Livre, HarperCollins, Harlequin Mills & Boon, Little Brown, Pan Macmillan, Penguin and Random House, plus the Independent Publishers' Guild. Thanks to the success of the Reading Partners' scheme, we also started a Children's Reading Partners scheme in May 2008, which involves 12 children's publishers and is supported by The Publishers Association.

This report covers the 2008 work of the adult scheme. Our evaluation shows that libraries are getting huge audiences for author events (often much bigger than bookshops), launching debut authors to keen audiences and reaching people the book trade finds hard to engage. Leading industry figures are talking about the strategic importance of this shift.

"We love working with libraries because they share both our passion for books and our fundamental aim to get more people reading. Libraries cultivate invaluable links with local communities, reaching a readership that is both diverse and engaged and slowly but surely, this connection is having a real impact on the way we market and publicise our books." Jamie Hodder-Williams, Managing Director, Hodder & Stoughton

"It is wonderful that public libraries have become so ambitious and professional in their approach to organizing talks for authors. Warwick Library organised a magical event for Alexander McCall Smith with an audience of 550. He enjoyed it more than any other reading he did that year, which, as anyone who has ever seen McCall Smith live will know, is saying something!" Ursula McKenzie, CEO, Little Brown

"The Reading Agency has formed a crucial bridge between libraries and publishers by creating real opportunities to promote the work of writers to the large community of readers who use libraries regularly. It has also made explicit the commercial incentives for publishers to take libraries seriously beyond the simple commerce of selling books to library suppliers. Building a grass roots readership for writers through libraries is now a vital part of our strategy." Stephen Page, CEO, Faber

"It is very exciting that in these tough times more and more engagement between readers and writers is taking place in libraries. In a no-risk and positive environment publishers can launch new authors and attract substantial audiences for established writers. There is so much to build on with many opportunities for finding new readers of all ages and from all communities." Amanda Ridout, Managing Director, Harper Collins

Main achievements in 2008 - summary

A National Year of Reading *Reader Meets Writer* programme with high profile authors. There were 80 events, attracting large audiences with matching book sales, and proving conclusively that libraries can host successful big name author events. Fifty-one big name authors took part in 80 library events, which were attended by 8,610 people and sold £25,876 worth of books. Alexander McCall Smith described his Warwickshire library appearance of 550 people as *“the biggest and the best.”* A highly sceptical Kate Adie was converted into a fan of library events and Val McDermid was struck by the enthusiasm of the library audiences. Jeffrey Deaver’s Hodder publicist said of his tour *“the libraries came through with much bigger audiences and book sales than straight bookshop events.”* Publishers cemented links with lots more library staff and built their understanding of how to use public sector marketing channels, including the partnerships that libraries have with their community. Some worked across whole regions to improve the impact of author events.

Events targeting the National Year of Reading’s ‘hard to reach’ audiences. Libraries have a very wide reach into their local communities and can target particular hard to reach audiences. For the 2008 National Year of Reading events were created to reach audiences like young men and people from black and ethnic minority communities. Half of the audience at Chris Ryan’s events were males under 35 and teenage boys said things like *“I’ll remember this night all my life.”* While Redbridge Libraries had 200 people attending Penguin’s event for Bollywood star Dev Anand, 95 per cent of which were Asian. Louis Ferrante’s events made a big impact on young offenders.

One hundred and eight National Year of Reading pairings between local authors and libraries. Seventy-two per cent of the library network was matched with authors who hosted events in their local libraries. These worked particularly well where these events were also linked to the National Year of Reading strategy for that region. For example, Norfolk library service was paired with Kate Hardy, who did a session with adult learners. Roma Tearne packed in several events in one day across Milton Keynes, visiting not only the local library, but also meeting a Tamil group and secondary school students in local schools. Linda Green did two over-subscribed workshops in Calderdale.

Reading promotions: Reading Partners created eleven big reading promotions, building the consortium’s use of libraries’ 10,000 readers groups to market titles and authors. Promotions included Discover Stephen King and Celebrating 25 years of *Discworld*. We also produced book trailers for plasma screen in libraries and created author promotions exclusive to libraries, like posters celebrating James Patterson, the most-borrowed author in UK libraries, and a film tie-in with *Revolutionary Road*, promoting Richard Yates and his entire backlist.

Changing working practices in libraries and publishers. Our evaluation showed that libraries see that selling books at author events provides a good service to their readers. They are becoming practiced at integrating bookselling partnerships into events. During 2008 we tracked 255 author events, including the big name ones. They generated book sales of £36,229 and were attended by 14,433 readers. In addition more libraries are now tried and tested venues for author events. Publishers have now run events in libraries in all regions of the UK - from Glasgow to Devon.

“This initiative is all about doing things differently. Libraries bring a creativity and interactivity to author events making books seem more appealing, less rarefied and more part of everyday life. Library audiences are extremely diverse and our authors get far more feedback from both readers and staff making it a rewarding experience. And in addition you sell lots of books.”
Joanna Prior, Penguin

“Appreciative audiences, varied venues. From a modern hall in a small village in Yorkshire (with scones and tea) to the grandest of libraries in the Mining Institute in Newcastle - a real treat.”
Kate Adie

New research into the reading habits and market gaps among Black and minority ethnic communities. This was joint research that we conducted with Harper Collins and launched at the Booksellers’ Association conference. It’s available to order from <http://shop.readingagency.org.uk/productslist.aspx>

New working tools. We launched a toolkit to help libraries and publishers plan more imaginative events. The use of our online calendar on www.readingagency.org.uk is building. This allows libraries and publishers to find new opportunities for events and other offers, such as proofs of new novels for reading groups to use. In 2008 we had over 48,000 page views.

1. Reader meets Writer - National Year of Reading

high profile author events

We built on the work we have done since 2004 to celebrate the National Year of Reading with ambitious activities to connect readers to writers.

Fifty-one high profile authors took part in 80 events, attended by 8,610 people.

These book sales were worth £25,876. There is a grid listing all these events at www.readingagency.org.uk/readingpartners. Some of the highlights include:

- **Alexander McCall Smith** in Warwickshire: a massive turnout of 550 people; £1,170 book sales. *“He thought this was the best event he had done this year, so many thanks for your brilliant organisation.”* Rosalie Macfarlane, Little Brown
- **Lionel Shriver** in Haringey and Southwark: an audience of 260; £600 book sales.
- **Jeffery Deaver** tour in five libraries: an audience of 687; £2,831 book sales. *“The libraries came through with much bigger audiences and book sales than the straight bookshop events.”* Emma Knight, Hodder
- **Nick Hornby** in Southampton: an audience of 250; £350 book sales. *“Libraries are essential. They make books available to everyone, whatever their circumstances. Initiatives like the National Year of Reading remind us of this, and make more people aware of the great work libraries do and opportunities they have to offer.”*

Other big names involved were **Kate Adie, Simon Armitage; Constance Briscoe, Stephanie Calman, Tracy Chevalier, Ken Follett, Tess Gerritsen, Victoria Hislop, Hanif Kureshi, Penelope Lively, Kate Mosse, Adele Parks, Ian Rankin and Rick Wakeman.**

“I always find the biggest crowds at library-sponsored events. So I am hugely enthusiastic about them. The audience is always attentive and enthusiastic about books, the venues are quiet and accommodating and, unlike in bookstores, you don't have to fight the noise of cappuccino machines and shoppers who've wandered in just to buy the latest calendar. I've often thought that a really fun tour would be to just get in the car and visit dozens of small town libraries, in parts of the country most authors never get the chance visit.” Tess Gerritsen

“As public libraries become more willing to mount events inside libraries or at larger outside venues, publicists are increasingly focused on the opportunities they offer and, as a result, have put library events onto their publicity agendas.” Ursula McKenzie, CEO, Little Brown

Feedback from readers, writers and library staff shows that author events can be extremely powerful in socially deprived areas where there is not a natural reading culture and where libraries are trying to offer people rare cultural opportunities and develop people's aspirations. Comments from audiences who attended events in libraries suggest that they also introduce inspirational role models to the community.

2. Targeting the National Year of Reading's 'hard to reach' audiences

These case studies show how publishers and libraries reached some of the National Year of Reading's target audiences like Asian communities and young men. We tried out new models of working together, built new partnerships and developed regional networks.

Case study: Louis Ferrante – Reading Hero, National Year of Reading

Libraries can attract non traditional audiences for true life writers. Louis Ferrante tells a mesmerizing true story of his criminal exploits, his incarceration in some of America's toughest prisons and how reading his first book turned his life around. Transworld were excited to bring a relatively unknown author (in the UK) for a packed tour in libraries and prisons, linked to the National Year of Reading. We asked libraries to pitch to run an event with Louis. Many saw this as a brilliant opportunity to engage with young offenders and adults trying to improve their reading and writing skills. They also saw it as a way of introducing an inspirational role model to local teenagers with messages about moving on from crime. Nine events were held in South Shields Central Library; Berwick Hills Library; Great Malvern Library, Sandwell Central Library; Bolsover Library; Sudbury Prison; Hull Prison and the Young Offenders Institute in Reading. Over 300 people attended and three events sold out. £1,400 worth of books were sold. As a result of the success of these events, Transworld and the National Year of Reading are bringing Louis back for a 2009 tour.

"We had a waiting list of 50 people who were unable to attend this event. Louis Ferrante was great. What a good speaker." Pauline Martin, Librarian, South Tyneside Library

Young offenders said the events had inspired them to change their attitude towards reading and that they were impressed and moved by the visit. Readers in public library events said, *"Louis' life story has captured my imagination"* and *"I would like to attend more events like this."* *"There was a real sense of excitement about this event but more because of Louis' life story and former mafia connections than as a literary event. We've been having trouble with local teenagers in the library. They were very interested when they saw Louis was coming to the library and spoke to him before the event. The visit had a good influence."* Christine Toothill, Worcestershire Library Service

Case study: Chris Ryan - reaching new male audiences

Random House approached Reading Partners to organise Chris Ryan's first UK library tour. We invited libraries to write a proposal for events with Chris showing how they would reach National Year of Reading target audiences, especially young boys and men. Three hundred and fifty people attended three events in Hornchurch, Gateshead and Warrington; £1,440 books were sold.

At all three events half of the audience were men and boys. This is a much higher percentage than usual - the audiences for author events are usually 80 per cent female. Most of the people who went to Chris Ryan's events were between the ages of 13 and 35 but at Warrington the

youngest person was 13 and the oldest 82. This event was also seen as an important inter-generational activity for the local community in Warrington.

Seventy people said that they had enjoyed their visit; 65 said they'd discovered something new; 56 said the event had given them lots to think about and they all said they'd be interested in coming to future events.

These comments show how powerful author events can be in helping people feel more enthusiastic about reading. Teenage boys who had never met a writer said, *"I'll remember tonight all my life"* and *"it was brilliant, my mates will be dead jealous."* Reluctant readers felt encouraged to read more. *"I probably wouldn't have picked up his books before, but I will now."* For other readers Chris Ryan simply, *"brought his books to life. I'll read them in a different way from now on."* He also built empathy and an understanding of the effects of war. *"Chris has really brought home to me what it's actually like on a human level – he's made it real."*

"We'd like to say a big thank you to Reading Partners for making so much possible. We couldn't possibly have provided such big name authors for our communities, because they'd be unlikely to have come to a small authority like ours. Chris Ryan gave positive messages about the value of libraries, reading and learning, especially aimed at the younger members of the audience. Fifty per cent of the audience were boys and men aged 15 to 30 – a notoriously hard to reach group. I would like to commend his publicist who has worked tirelessly to make this happen." Janet Puzylo, Warrington Library Service

Case study: Dev Anand - reaching new Asian audiences

In 2008 Reading Partners teamed up with Penguin India to organise an event with Dev Anand, one of India's major film stars, to promote his new book, *Romancing with Life*. With only three weeks to plan and promote the event, Reading Partners mobilised its regional communication networks and invited libraries to pitch for this exclusive event. We were overwhelmed by the enthusiasm from librarians who submitted their pitches within 24 hours.

Despite the massive response, Dev was in the UK on a short stay so we organised one library event at Ilford Library, Redbridge. The library service used its extensive local marketing avenues and community partnerships with local faith groups – many of which attended. Tickets sold out within days so the venue was changed to the Town Hall so that more people could attend. In front of an audience of 2000, 95 per cent of whom were Asian, councilor Askok Kumar interviewed Dev about his dramatic life story. The event was also broadcast by Nusound Radio – a new Asian community radio station based in East London – which helped to bring it to more people. Waterstones ran a bookstall with refreshments sponsored by local Asian businesses. There was a reception with local dignitaries before the event, which gave the author and the publicists a brilliant opportunity to talk about the local library service and the needs of the Asian community.

"Having Dev come to Ilford was a real thrill for us and the local Asian community. We are grateful to The Reading Agency for acting as facilitators." Nick Dobson, Redbridge Library Service

A large percentage of the audience were not library users and some people joined at the event while others made contact afterwards. Sixty-four people filled out feedback forms and a star-struck reader Ghuminder said: *"I am overjoyed. I have been his fan and watched his movies and to have this opportunity to see him in person is a dream come true."*

3. Local author events with the National Year of Reading

Reading Partners set itself the challenge of pairing every English library authority with a local author during the National Year of Reading. Writers were encouraged to support the ambitions of the Year by participating in a one-off event or developing an ongoing relationship with the library.

“This was a big piece of work that did bring authors into libraries who previously might not have worked with us and introduced libraries to authors they might not have thought of approaching before. It was an important thing to do in terms of advocating the value of libraries to the writing and publishing industry, and a great opportunity for all library authorities to take part in a major, national promotion – whatever their size and budgets.” Karen Thornton, Chair, Yorkshire Read Network.

Seventy-two per cent of English library authorities were paired with 130 authors. One hundred and fifty events were attended by 2,145 people. Some of the highlights include:

- **Margaret Dickinson** met with four reading groups, including a visually impaired reading group in Lincolnshire.
- **Lynda Page** did a tour in eight Leicestershire libraries, attracting 209 people. She was also took part in a session to promote reading and writing to families in a Children’s Centre, to people including Asian mothers and children some of whom had English as their second language. They worked together in small groups to create ideas for new stories.
- **Trezza Azzopardi, Karen Maitland, Simon Scarrow** and **RJ Ellory** were all involved in local NYR celebration events.
- **Andy Cave** judged a local poetry competition and 80 people went to a library event in Barnsley.
- **Barbara Ewing** generously agreed to visit every library in Westminster. The library service turned Westminster into one giant reading group by mobilising all their reading groups to read Barbara’s book, *The Mesmerist*.

Co-ordinating a national initiative to engage 100 per cent of English library authorities was always going to be challenging and it was not without its problems. Reading Partners identified early on in the year that most of the author pairings were working out really well but there were a few that were not. Several issues lay at the heart of this and the consortium swiftly agreed a plan of action to put things right. We have learnt many different lessons which will feed into future author events’ strategy. These include:

- Ensuring all events brokered through Reading Partners are monitored and tracked by an improved evaluation system.
- Managing expectations by clarifying the offer, timescales and possible costs involved at the planning stages.
- Communicating the decision about successful author events brokered to the regional Reading Partners representatives network.
- Ensuring publicists allow at least six weeks’ lead in time so that librarians can promote the event widely.
- Ensuring authors are properly briefed.

Evidence shows that the most successful local events were those where the library liaised directly with the author and worked out the best way to cooperate. Many ongoing positive relationships developed, with libraries are inviting their paired NYR author back for more events in 2009.

“Since this event, I have already facilitated a session with Jackie [Walker] at Lewisham College which will involve ‘instant library joining’ and I am planning a Readers and Writers Day. More ambitiously, Jackie and I are considering a one woman staged performance based upon the book at the Broadway Studio Theatre in Catford.” Alan Morrison, Lewisham Library Service

“Linda [Grant] did two over-subscribed workshops with teenagers. We will be doing some more work with Linda in 2009.” Anna Turner, Calderdale Library Service

Case study: Jackie Walker - reaching mothers and daughters

Hodder had been inspired by working with libraries to reach ethnically diverse audiences when they ran events with Constance Briscoe. They wanted to repeat their success when promoting Jackie Walker’s *Pilgrim State: a story of mothers and daughters*, a stunning memoir about survival. Reading Partners invited libraries to pitch for events and Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton and Wandsworth were chosen. One hundred and twenty three people attended these events, 40 per cent of whom were from a Black and minority ethnic background. Book sales were £250.

“We’ve had excellent value from Jackie Walker. She was the main draw for an excellent ‘SE4’s got talent’ night at one of the libraries in the Mayor’s priority neighbourhoods.” Alan Morrison, librarian, Lewisham

Jackie talked openly about her mother’s experiences of struggling with financial hardship, prejudice and trying to hold her family together. She also talked about her own life growing up in poverty in 1960s London. The audience was inspired, *“a wonderful reading, with thoughtful questions and insightful feedback”* and *“highly enjoyable – giving me a sense of the rich layers in Pilgrim State.”* Some people had never been to an author event. *“Great to hear a reading – my first time!”* and *“I have never attended such an event before and will try and attend others.”* These events can be a springboard for fostering better understanding in a community, offering a great opportunity for local people to meet and talk about a common topic.

“Perhaps most impressive aspect has been the variety of readers an author gets in a library event; from bibliophiles to those who only read a book a year. I remember a woman who came to Wandsworth Library one cold, rainy evening, almost by mistake, having been dragged from home and television by a friend. She became so engaged with the discussion around Pilgrim State that she bought a copy using the £15 she had tucked in her purse for groceries - I could have kissed her.” Jackie Walker

Case study: Celebrating a special year with 60 Mills & Boon authors

We were delighted to help to celebrate Mills & Boon’s centenary and show how much partnerships between libraries and publishers can deliver.

Sixty Mills & Boon authors took part in the National Year of Reading local author pairing initiative. They were all extremely enthusiastic about the opportunity to work with libraries. Many already had some links and were keen to take the relationship further. Libraries in turn were keen to capitalise on the centenary celebrations.

Harlequin Mills & Boon supplied merchandise to support an exhibition *And then he kissed her... 100 Years of Mills & Boon*. This was launched in Manchester Central Library and ran through June and July. At the launch, 90 people were treated to the Halle Singers and guided tours from real-

life Mills & Boon alpha male heroes! The exhibition toured across library authorities in the north west region and featured many inspirational activities including:

- a ‘real-life romance’ competition run with Manchester Central Library and local media
- a regency day family workshop, featuring M&B historical author Nicola Cornick
- six supporting author workshops attended by 15 to 60 people at each event.

“The partnerships have resulted in a welter of successful events and workshops around the country. The association between Reading Partners and Mills & Boon has opened up a myriad of marketing opportunities through libraries, bringing us nearer to our readers both existing and new. In 2009, we struck up an allegiance with Manchester libraries who hosted our centenary exhibition - helping us take the show on the road throughout the North West and beyond.” Clare Somerville, Harlequin, Mills & Boon

4. A new events toolkit

To help libraries plan the *Reader Meets Writer* programme, The Reading Agency launched a toolkit at the London Book Fair. This captured everything we have learnt during four years of previous Reading Partners’ work. Library staff used this to develop ideas for different kinds of author events, like *Girls’ Night In* and *Genre Panels*.

Case study: crime debate

Richmond library service used the toolkit to host their first ever genre event. This involved Simon Brett, Frances Fyfield and Meg Gardner, all of whom have very different styles of crime writing. There was a debate where each author was asked to defend either the classic or contemporary crime novel. Readers then voted for the writing style they supported then Richmond Borough’s Police Commander spoke the realities of crime and invited questions. This opened up a lively discussion and all agreed that the panel style event helped people widen their reading horizons. *“My favourite author is Maeve Binchy and although I wanted to try reading crime, I didn’t know which authors to read. The event seemed a good step into crime because I could hear from different authors.”*

“We knew we wanted to run a crime event and it was our idea to involve the local police. We managed to get Simon Brett to agree to the event but we struggled to get more authors so rang Reading Partners. They not only got two more authors but also got us authors we never dreamed of having at our library.” Fiona Pearson, Librarian

Fifty-one people attended the crime debate and of those that filled out the feedback forms, 55 per cent were over 60 and only eight were men. New readers to the crime genre said, *“I don’t usually buy contemporary crime novels because I am put off by the violence but the writers explained that the violence is part of the thrill and makes solving the crime even more rewarding”* and *“I haven’t read Meg Gardner’s books before but I am curious to borrow them.”*

Case study: Pirate themed family events in Yorkshire

Pan Macmillan enlisted the help of Reading Partners to promote an adult historical fiction series about pirates aimed at families. Written by the historian Tim Severin, the books are rip-roaring adventures and Tim gets loads of fan mail, including from boys aged 16+. We invited Yorkshire library services to pitch for these family themed events. We chose the bids from Kirklees and Barnsley because they showed how they would make links to their existing initiatives to get more ‘dads and lads’ reading more. The two events were attended by 127 people; 55 per cent were male and 25 per cent were children; book sales were £412.

Both libraries organised the pirate themed events during Family Learning Month in October. Their events appealed to a wide age range and were important in inspiring people to move from reading non-fiction to fiction titles.

“Enticing a regular reader to cross-over from non-fiction to fiction is a challenge, and listening to an author in a library events’ programme must be one of the most effective ways of meeting that challenge. The majority of people had probably never read one of my books before. But I came away from both talks, hopeful that if they did not themselves sample one of my books, they would at least tell others how they had spent the evening and the spoken word, like the written one, would get around.” Tim Severin

BBC Asian Network and Reading Partners present

Two years ago Reading Partners ran a project to explore how to understand and meet the diverse needs of the growing ethnic minority market. The 16 reader-focussed projects proved that Black and Asian author events help to bring people from different backgrounds together and get them talking to each other. We have continued to build on this work.

“Reading Partners has opened up rare opportunities for local people to meet writers. Writers like Rageh Omaar have done wonderful events; we have been able to offer readers quality social reading experiences and reach out to new members.” Linda Saunders, Sandwell Library Service

The Reading Agency has brokered a partnership with the BBC Asian Network, a national digital radio station aimed primarily at young British Asians under 35. This has presented libraries and publishers with the opportunity to reach one in five Asian adults (source: BBC Asian Network website). We have used the partnership to promote and broadcast Asian author events. The BBC Asian Network recorded and then broadcast two Asian author events in Leicester and Ealing. One with Gautam Malkani, author of *Londonstani*, and one with the playwright, screenwriter and novelist Hanif Kureshi. Nikki Bedi, presenter of the Arts and Culture Show, chaired both events. One hundred and eighty people came; 60 per cent of the audience were Asian and £535 worth of books were sold. But 250,000 listeners aged 18 to 35 also listened to the events through the BBC Asian Network programme.

“The BBC Asian Network thoroughly enjoyed the collaboration with The Reading Agency during the National Year of Reading and we were honoured that the Nikki Bedi show had the opportunity to meet listeners across the country in library events. Nikki’s interviews with Gautam Malkhani and Hanif Kureshi were highlights of the past year.” Kuljinder Singh, senior editor, BBC Asian Network

5. Reading Partners’ promotions

In 2008 Reading Partners created 11 promotions to support publishers’ marketing campaigns and libraries’ work with their reading groups. Reading Agency research showed that the network of library linked reading groups is growing fast – in 2008 it had nearly trebled since the last survey in 2004 and now 100,000 people belong to 10,000 groups in England and Wales. This network represents a major word of mouth marketing opportunity and can also be used to test ideas.

Promotions in 2008 included:

- **A national historical fiction genre promotion** - Pan Macmillan distributed posters and showcards promoting their historical fiction list to all 208 library authorities. Readers used showcards to vote for their favourite historical novel and these were then placed in library displays.

- **Discover Stephen King** – Hodder believe there is a large audience yet to discover Stephen King. Seventy-seven library authorities took part in this exclusive library promotion, created to introduce Stephen King to new readers through the vast reading groups’ network.
- **Celebrating 25 years of *Discworld*** – Transworld created an exclusive promotion for libraries to celebrate the 25th anniversary of *Discworld*. Forty-nine library authorities received posters, complimentary sets for their reading groups and access to an online forum where readers could post their reviews.
- **MIRA big library five** promotion – Fifteen library authorities took part in a promotion created for library reading groups by MIRA - a new imprint from Harlequin Mills & Boon. Each reading group received a complimentary set of books to read, discuss and review, and posters. Postcards and video trailers were used as part of library displays and readers could access the MIRA blog website.

“We have accessed library book groups through our MIRA Big Five fiction promotion – great grass roots promotion for new authors. We are looking forward to building on this partnership in 2009 and beyond.” Clare Somerville, Harlequin Mills & Boon

6. Reading Partners’ research

Reading Partners’ publishers recognise that library partnerships are a prime route to Black and minority ethnic readers. To underpin understanding of the market, the consortium has published new research into BME readers: *Getting closer to the BME book market* (March 2008, Debbie Hicks, The Reading Agency and Catherine Hunt, Harper Collins). This research provides new data about BME reading, buying and borrowing trends, explores the perception of BME writers and asks what readers want publishers and libraries to do to support BME authors and readers better. It also looks at the special role that libraries can play in growing the BME reading market and the powerful potential for more joined-up work between libraries and the commercial sector. The report costs £35 and is available on CD or in printed format from The Reading Agency shop at <http://shop.readingagency.org.uk/productslist.aspx>

7. Reading Partners’ resources

The Reading Agency is creating new tools to help the library/publisher relationship flourish. Resources include:

- A rolling online calendar detailing offers for author events made by publishers and libraries that can be searched by region, or type of offer available (i.e. author tour, literary festival, etc.).
- An events toolkit available to download from www.readingagency.org.uk/readingpartners for library staff to develop new ideas for different kinds of author events, like *Girls’ Night In* and *Genre Panels*.
- A database of 480 library venues for author events.
- *More Readers Reading More*, a handbook detailing Reading Partners’ projects across the two-year pilot phase.

“As trusted sources of recommendations, libraries are able to engage harder-to-reach audiences, such as 16 to 30 year-old males, can draw audiences from a large area and attract many reading groups. All of which enables them to deliver enthusiastic audiences both for big name authors and debut authors alike.” Ursula Mackenzie, CEO, Little Brown