

Reading Partners Five-Year Report

“We've made so much progress through Reading Partners that it's now hard to imagine a book campaign without some kind of library involvement. Five years on, we're working brilliantly well together.” **Joanna Prior, Managing Director, Penguin General Books**

“The millions of people who walk into 4000 libraries every day offer publishers and writers a different route to readers. Through Reading Partners we've been able to work with libraries across the country to bring our writers and their work to the attention of this audience in exciting new ways. The relationship between activities in libraries and book purchasing is dynamic and something that publishers are now much more attentive to in their marketing.” **Stephen Page, CEO, Faber**

1. The story so far: The launch of Reading Partners

Reading Partners is the national consortium of libraries and publishers, led by The Reading Agency. It aims to get more people reading more and started as a two-year pilot with five publishers. It has grown into a real force for change, and now involves 34 publishers. Thanks to the vision of publishers and libraries, we are celebrating five years of outstanding achievement.

It was in 2004, at a time when the industry was seeking new ways to expand the market for books, that The Reading Agency suggested creating a dynamic new alliance of publishers and libraries. With research proving the correlation between borrowing and buying, we showed there were compelling commercial reasons for publishers to work more strategically with libraries. For their part, libraries were craving publishers' support for their new efforts to bring reading alive at the heart of their communities.

The Reading Agency wanted to see every community benefit from a fresh injection of reading activity, and set out to revolutionise the way publishers and libraries worked together.

We were starting from scratch, and had to build a new framework. We secured public sector investment in a new national network of representatives to link the country's public libraries, and set out to recruit publisher partners. Our focus for the first four years was on adult publishers because—compared with their children's counterparts—their connection with libraries was so fragile. The scheme now involves :

Alma Books	Earthscan	Haus Publishing	Pan Macmillan	Picnic Publishing
Allison & Busby	Faber	Hodder /Headline	Penguin	Granta Books
Bloomsbury	Glasshouse Books	Icon Books	Random House	
Canongate	HarperCollins	Little Brown	The Book Guild Ltd	
Constable & Robinson	Harlequin Mills and Boon	Orion	Quaestor 2000 Ltd	

We are hugely grateful to these companies, as well as to all the libraries, agencies and individuals who have played a part in the Reading Partners story. Now, as we enter its sixth year, we are reflecting on achievements and setting strategy for the years ahead. Future plans include a special focus on digital development and diversity.

2. Success stories: Reading Partners' achievements

"For three years, we've toured Jodi Picoult, Jeffery Deaver, Sophie Hannah, Matt Hilton and a brilliant Girls' Night in panel with Jojo Moyes, Mike Gayle and Fiona Walker through libraries. The events were far and away the best we've done. The public sector has completely different marketing avenues that we can tap into, which means happy authors, happy readers and happy sales figures." **Karen Geary, Publicity Director, Hodder**

"Reading Partners offers a co-ordinated solution to get digital marketing content to the UK library and reading groups network. Last year we worked together to promote our ReadersPlace online community site with innovative marketing and the use of widgets, as well as successfully hosting a series of online chats between authors and reading groups. This year, we're piloting a brand new online readers group network. The Reading Agency's access to readers groups has added a whole new dimension to our digital marketing and content strategy." **Maureen Corish, Communications Director, Random House**

For publishers, the first five years of Reading Partners have brought more ways to understand their market and new avenues to profile authors and publicise and sell books. With contracting retail opportunities for books, publishers have seen how vital libraries are in connecting their writers to readers.

For libraries, the five years have brought invaluable new support for events and promotions, and the chance to establish themselves as buzzing community hubs—the places where literature comes alive. For book borrowers and buyers, they have brought unrivalled opportunities to interact with fellow readers, books and authors.

Here are ten ways in which Reading Partners has transformed publishing, libraries and reading. Reading Partners has...

- **Built a brand new framework for national collaboration.**

The initiative has transformed the relationship, giving publishers an easy gateway to the complex network of 4,000 public libraries and giving libraries one-stop access to the country's leading publishers. Essential elements of the framework include a dedicated Reading Agency coordinator, UK library representatives, online databases of events and venues and case studies of good practice.

- **Given publishers a new stage for author events.**

Reading Partners has tapped a latent demand for library author events and shown that readers in all kinds of communities are hungry for contact with writers. Hundreds of events have given thousands of people access to new reading opportunities, and provided publishers with ready-made, eager audiences. By 2009, the number of people at events and the number of books sold had risen by more than a third year-on-year.

- **Brought writing's biggest names into libraries.**

What do Kate Mosse, Sophie Kinsella, Nick Hornby, Hardeep Singh Kohli, Barbara Taylor Bradford and Hanif Kureishi have in common? They, and many more, have appeared in library venues thanks to Reading Partners. Crowds have been impressive: 550 people for Alexander McCall Smith in Warwickshire; 687 for Jeffery Deaver's tour. Adult publishers' working practices are changing—libraries are now a central part of publishers' publicity and marketing plans for everyone from debut authors to the biggest literary stars.

- **Helped publishers and libraries make the most of the digital age.**

2009 saw Reading Partners move beyond print to explore ways for publishers and libraries to work together in digital environments. We are looking at the impact of ebooks in libraries, and exploring digital marketing via projects using online films and webchats and widgets. Random House for instance has joined up with a dozen library-linked book groups to create a web-based Vintage Reading Group.

- **Found new ways for authors and readers to talk.**

From 'Readers' Days' to 'Girls' Night In', publishers and libraries have devised new models for bringing readers and writers together. Writers have been impressed by libraries' ability to draw diverse audiences and organise events, while publishers have realised their potential for selling books. Publishers are also finding that libraries can help build the careers of new writers. Pan Macmillan, for instance, put on events to promote two new authors, and found a third of participants bought books afterwards.

- **Unlocked libraries' vast network of reading groups**

In the year Reading Partners launched, libraries in England and Wales looked after around 4,000 reading groups. Now there are 10,000 with some 100,000 members. The 150% increase is not just down to Reading Partners, but the scheme has undoubtedly helped groups to thrive and given publishers much better access to them. Dedicated reading group promotions have included Penguin's 'War Book of the Month',

HarperCollins' 'Sinister Summer of Crime' and Faber's 'Faber Firsts'. Groups get the chance to try something new and publishers spread word of mouth among some of the country's most responsive readers.

- **Found new ways to share knowledge.**

We ran a major skills sharing project, pairing up publishing and library professionals to share approaches and organise new reading projects. The result was a huge change in the way publishers and libraries work with the other. Four Reading Partners Roadshows in London, Swansea, Glasgow and Gateshead have meanwhile brought publishers and libraries together to network and discuss new books and initiatives. The Love Libraries campaign explored new ways for libraries to use consumer marketing and has influenced government policy (see the core library offer in DCMS' Library Review 2010).

- **Celebrated diversity.**

Reading Partners has helped publishers broaden their horizons and reach previously neglected communities. A major 2007 'Reaching Readers' initiative delivered new research into BME buying, borrowing and reading trends and case studies of libraries' provision for local ethnic groups, plus a conference with The Bookseller to find ways to grow the BME market. Publishers and librarians responded with a range of different projects to find out more about BME reading and writing, and events targeting different ethnic groups. It has helped both publishers and libraries to understand and serve the BME market better.

- **Championed literacy and equality.**

Reading Partners has promoted libraries' role as the country's ultimate reading resource: the place to go to meet other readers and to get imaginative support for your reading, totally equal access to books and help with improving your literacy skills. We have helped publishers to become part of this hugely important work, showing them new ways to support libraries' development of readers and engagement of hard-to-reach individuals and groups within communities. The National Year of Reading membership campaign made 2.3 million new library members.

- **Inspired dozens of promotions**

Reading Partners has given publishers and libraries the help to stage national reading promotions that create a lively library scene and inspire readers' book choices. Promos like Borrowers Recommend have given libraries a compelling offer to their readers and brought communities together to celebrate and enjoy books. For publishers, they have forged new paths for marketing books to the nation's readers.

3. Kids come too: Children's Reading Partners

Reading Partners' success inspired us to create an equivalent children's scheme, launched as a two-year pilot project in May 2008. It involves 13 publishers: Bloomsbury, Egmont, Faber, Hachette, HarperCollins, Macmillan, Oxford Children's Books, Puffin, Random House, Scholastic, Simon & Schuster, Walker and a consortium of independents brought together by Bounce! Sales and Marketing. It has been supported by the Publishers Association, CILIP's Youth Libraries Group and the Association of Senior Children's and Educational Librarians.

Despite launching in tough economic times, Children's Reading Partners has already achieved a lot. It has widened children's access to books and authors, and made libraries more exciting places to discover the joys of reading. Just as adult publishers have used Reading Partners to access new audiences, so children's specialists have discovered new library contacts beyond their usual trusted partners.

Children's Reading Partners trialled Spotlight, a new scheme to promote publishers' latest titles to libraries and children. Seven in ten library authorities have taken part, and supported by Children's Reading Partners' network of regional reps and suppliers, Spotlight has already sold more than 21,000 books.

The scheme has tapped into libraries' thriving reading groups for children, too. It has organised 24 national reading group activities involving more than 1,000 groups and 30,000 readers. Publishers have inspired children with 8,000 free books and activity packs, and used reading groups as testing grounds and springboards for new authors. The scheme has experimented with new approaches—harnessing libraries' user power approach, a Teen Kicks event with Random House was programmed entirely by young people from Crawley, for instance.

"It was great to meet so many clever, witty, thoughtful, exciting young people who could **CREATE** such a genuine buzz for good books. I've decided never to be involved with sessions run by grown-ups again." **Keith Gray, Author**

All Children's Reading Partners' activity has—like that of its adult equivalent—been achieved through a new structure built to get publishers and libraries working together. As well as UK library representatives, three highly successful Roadshows, round-table events and local pair-ups of publishing and librarians have helped each side understand one another, exchange ideas and expand their skills and contacts.

4. The next steps: Reading Partners' three-year strategy

By continuing to work together on Reading Partners, publishers can discover better ways to connect to readers, while libraries can carve out a new role in the nation's reading life. The explosion of reading groups, the socialisation of reading through these groups and live literature and the arrival of new digital channels—all these trends present opportunities for publishers and libraries. For publishers, they create new opportunities to sell books. Between 2010 and 2013, the work of Adult and Children's Reading Partners will focus on six strands:

Community. We want to make libraries **the** place to go to reach local communities and find diverse, engaged audiences for events and promotions. We will use Reading Partners' activities to recruit new library members and gather more feedback on publishers' content.

Diversity. We want to reach more BME communities by promoting new titles, organising author events and encouraging writing talent. Projects like editor shadowing will help to identify what content these communities want, and libraries' closeness to their users can inspire publishers to produce more books for them.

Breaking new talent. Libraries are brilliant places to build the profile of new writers. By running promotions and launching debut authors to reading groups, Reading Partners will give publishers new marketing platforms and help librarians learn about emerging writing talent.

Digital content and marketing. There is enormous potential for libraries and publishers to work together on digital marketing. Pilot projects will include online author tours and reading groups. We will also support a workable e-lending model, encourage the use of supplementary book content in libraries, and look at what we can learn from the US. We will explore the potential to link online gaming to libraries' children's Summer Reading Challenge and adult literacy 6 Book Challenge.

Workforce development. We want to help more libraries get better at hosting author events. We will run joint industry training and create an events handbook. We will run more Regional Roadshows to support joint planning, book knowledge and the sharing of digital skills.

Partnerships. We will use Reading Partners as a springboard to build a wider partnership net to spread reading. We'll be exploring a new relationship with Waterstone's, and looking for new ways to collaborate with independent bookshops. We will build media partnerships, especially with C4's TV BookClub. Other partners will include data providers like Nielsen, and community partners including the South Asian Literary Festival, Asia House and the Muslim Writers Awards.

In these challenging times, this work is more important than ever. Thank you for your support for Reading Partners' first five years. We look forward to the next stage of our journey.

5. Reading Partners in words and numbers

“Children’s publishers and libraries have always been good friends, however Children’s Reading Partners has moved things on to another level. It’s given us access to some of the most voracious young readers in the country, and all sorts of opportunities to promote the joys of reading that will last a lifetime.” **Philippa Dickinson, Managing Director, Random House Children’s Books**

“We’ve made so much progress through Reading Partners that it’s now hard to imagine a book campaign without some kind of library involvement. In other words, we’ve achieved one of the most important things we set out to do - to make libraries a fully-integrated part of the reading universe. Libraries continue to offer publishers expertise in reaching out to new audiences and connecting writers with readers in the community in interesting, exciting and often completely new ways. Five years on, we’re working brilliantly well together. In the next five years we will further embed the learning and also leap on once again in our joint aim to put reading at the heart of a vibrant cultural life in Britain.” **Joanna Prior, Managing Director, Penguin Books**

5 publishing partners in 2004, **34** publishing partners 2010

24 library representatives making the partnership happen across the UK

25 national promotions staged so far

80 average attendance at author events, up 74% compared to 2008

250 average spend in pounds on books at adult events, up 76% compared to 2008

550 people at Warwickshire event for Alastair McCall Smith

500 authors involved in library events across the UK

10,000 reading groups reached

200,000 estimated value of sales in pounds through the children’s Spotlight scheme