

Reading Partners

Reading Partners – the facts (not fiction...)

In 2007, Reading Partners has been encouraging publishers to put more of their resources into libraries' work with readers, creating a wide range of events and reading promotions. Much of this activity involved authors meeting readers in libraries instead of bookshops. The events proved that libraries can be great places for author visits.

We've been tracking a sample of 60 Reading Partners' events in 2007, which were attended by 6,000 readers and resulted in book sales worth £20,000. And we know this is just the tip of the iceberg. There's lots going on which isn't tracked by Reading Partners. If you would like to share your events or promotion successes with us, please email us (see Contact at the end of this newsletter).

"I don't normally read, but after today I will join [the library] and borrow Bali Rai's books." Ezzah Bukhari, student, under 19

In this issue:

- Reaching Readers, a major project aimed at BME audiences
- Recent Reading Partners activity
- Forthcoming Reading Partners' activity
- Reading Partners and the National Year of Reading
- The Reading Agency celebrates five years
- New-look rolling calendar

Reaching Readers

This year Reading Partners had a special focus – to understand the reading habits and market gaps for British Black Minority Ethnic readers. Reaching Readers, was a short investigative project that helped publishers and libraries understand how their offers to readers could better reflect the creativity and reality of the ethnically diverse world around us. Reaching Readers consisted of four key strands:

- Launch event at Penguin
- Skills sharing projects - twelve publishers and twelve librarians work in six regions, finding out more about BME reading and writing
- Four master classes - with experts from other fields to stimulate skills sharing
- Research – desk research into sales and borrowing trends of BME authors and BME reader research in partnership with BML looking at reading, buying and borrowing habits

Through these four strands the Reaching Readers publishers and libraries worked together on innovative projects to promote books and the joys of reading to a culturally diverse audience. Activities included work with reading groups, exciting book promotions to introduce more readers to books by British Black and Asian writers, and engaging author events.

As one teacher who brought his students to a Reaching Readers events commented: “The event was particularly meaningful to the Asian students, because they had not met an author who was from their community or ethnic background.”

BME readers demand non-fiction

As part of Reaching Readers, The Reading Agency and HarperCollins carried out research of 500 readers. This revealed a growing demand from BME readers for non-fiction, particularly books based on the lives of strong role models, such as Constance Briscoe. The most popular genre was crime, mystery and thrillers. Literary fiction was cited by only 26 per cent of respondents.

Amanda Ridout of HarperCollins said the findings were a “major cry out to the publishing industry” to follow libraries’ lead and address the lack of diversity and representation..

The full research report will be available on The Reading Agency website from January 2008.

“Publishers should ensure that a breadth of UK fiction for the minority audience is created - commercial as well as literary”. (Keshini Naidoo, Editorial Assistant, Avon, HarperCollins)

The future

We shall sustain all this brilliant Reaching Readers work, through mainstream Reading Partners’ activity, ensuring a more diverse offer is made available from publishers to reach and engage with BME audiences. We will have information about how we are doing this in the next edition of this newsletter. In the meantime, if you would like more information about our Reaching Readers projects, please get in touch (see Contact at the end of this newsletter).

“It has opened up some doors – and I have made some valuable contacts.” Unpublished BME writer

Recent activity

In addition to Reaching Readers, publishers and libraries worked together on many exciting projects between August and November 2007. Here's a taster.

Faber's Northern Exposure tour of three writers in three northern towns – summary of the evaluation in the next edition.

Building on past success, HarperCollins joined up with libraries in the north west, Yorkshire and Scotland to run another crime tour. Two hundred people attended and over 100 books were sold at a value of more than £1,000.

Penguin worked with libraries in Leeds, Norwich and Dorset to tour Nick Hornby's new teen novel, *Slam!* By using innovative publicity techniques, including engaging teenagers in on- and offline, libraries ensured that at least 50 per cent of the audience was children and young people.

Hodder took Jeffrey Deaver on tour in Sandwell, Exeter and Leeds. It was attended by 600 readers and sold over £1,500 of books. Following these events, Jeff's book went to number two in the Hardback Fiction chart on only three days of sales and Hodder have committed to more library events.

Coming up...

National Historical Novels promotion (Pan) – Jan to March 2008

A national promotion in which all 208 libraries authorities will receive posters and cards that readers can use to vote for their favourite historical novel. The cards can be used in interactive library displays. No deadline but there will be a big push in January to March.

Harlequin Mills & Boon Centenary touring exhibition

Manchester Library will host the first leg of a touring exhibition to celebrate 100 years of Mills & Boon, which is being run in conjunction with the British Museum. The exhibition will include old covers, references to the publishers' involvement with the suffragettes and creative writing workshops. It launches in June 2008. Mills & Boon are also supporting *Pure Passion*, promoting romantic fiction throughout the north west region in 2008, with a big Romantic event in February 2008.

National Stephen King promotion (Hodder) - Feb 2008

A promotional offer was sent out from Hodder in early December asking all library authorities to submit their expressions of interest to take part in the national Stephen King promotion. Each library authority who responded will receive a set of free posters, worded to change people's perceptions of him, and a set of free Stephen King books for their reading groups. Reading groups will be able to discuss the titles on the Stephen King website and download reading group guides.

Terry Pratchett celebrating 25 years of Discworld (Transworld) – March 2008

Next year is the 25th Anniversary for Discworld. Our plans to celebrate this are very hush hush at the moment but more will be announced in March 2008. To give you a sneak preview we will be asking reading groups to tell us their favourite Pratchett book and giving several reading groups a set of Discworld books.

Nicolette Jones author tour in Yorkshire (Little Brown) – April 2008

Little Brown is keen to work with libraries for an author tour in Yorkshire with Nicolette Jones, author of *The Plimsoll Sensation* and well-known children's book reviewer. One of the successes of the Jill Liddington tour last year was that it attracted local press coverage. The offer includes free posters.

Reading Partners and the National Year of Reading

As part of the National Year of Reading in 2008 there will be lots of exciting opportunities for publishers and libraries to work together with readers. Already publishers' have outlined plans to:

- run a huge author programme in libraries and festivals with big-name fiction and non fiction writers
- pair 149 authors with a library in their region, covering every library authority in England, with each author doing at least one event at their library
- work with libraries to identify more books appropriate for readers trying to improve their literacy skills.

These exciting programmes involving some of the UK's biggest and best-selling writers is being drawn up by nine publishers and Reading Partners' project manager Sandeep Mahal. Fellow Reading Partner project manager, Tom Palmer, is compiling new models of author events to reach disengaged audiences who are not interested in the traditional "reading from the page" event. We want libraries to start thinking creatively about how they are going to make the most of their local author events.

All activities will be run between April and December 2008.

We are five

The Reading Agency was five in November and we celebrated our birthday at the Royal Festival Hall. It was great to see so many faces from publishers and libraries helping us celebrate our achievements. We have grown rapidly and achieved much in five years and are extremely grateful to all the publishers and libraries who have worked with us to bring more reading to more people – we couldn't have done it without you...

As part of our birthday celebrations we re-branded. Our new brand places 'read' and 'reading' at the very centre of our identity. We have placed a far greater emphasis on words and the importance of words – opening up the language that we use so that it is more friendly and inclusive.

You can see the results of our new branding at www.readingagency.org.uk and in communications such as this new-look newsletter. If you would like to send us any feedback on our branding please email info@readingagency.org.uk

New-look rolling calendar

The rolling calendar lists publisher offers such as authors available for library events, free posters and books for reading groups, and library offers for publishers such as festivals or readers' days. We've updated it as part of our new website.

The rolling calendar can now be searched by region and by event type. We would appreciate it if you could look at the new calendar and send us feedback on presentation, navigation and usability. If anything seems out of date or inaccurate, please email Sandeep (see Contact).

To post information about events and offers, go to www.readingagency.org.uk/calendar/ and click on 'submit your event'. Use the new form and submit as much information as possible. Once you've submitted the form it will need to be authorised, which may take up to 24 hours before it goes live on the website.

Author and venue databases

Both databases are currently being redesigned. The venue database will be launched a month before the official launch of the National Year of Reading. The author database will be launched towards the end of the year, as part of the NYR legacy.

What can I do?

Here's how you can be more involved with Reading Partners:

- Check the Reading Partners' rolling calendar for publisher offers to libraries.
- Get support with a library event or festival opportunity. Email Sandeep (see contact) who will initially liaise with publishers to support an event that meets your requirements.
- Get help with planning your pitch to publishers and working out who to contact. Read the *More Readers, Reading More* book or contact Sandeep (see Contact).

And finally...

Tom Palmer will be reducing the time he spends on Reading Partners to focus on his eight book football fiction deal with Puffin, the first of which *Football Detective: Foul Play* is published in June 2008. Tom will still be involved in all the Reading Partners but Sandy will be doing more of the project delivery. Everyone at The Reading Agency would like to wish Tom all the best with his book.

Contact

For more information about Reading Partners please visit www.readingagency.org.uk/adults/reading-partners. Your Reading Partners project managers are and **Sandeep (Sandy) Mahal** (sandeep.mahal@readingagency.org.uk) and **Tom Palmer** (tom.palmer@readingagency.org.uk).

Each region of the UK has a Reading Partners contact. If you want to feed ideas into the project feel free to get in touch with the contact in your region:

- East Midlands, Lynn Hodgkins, lynn.hodgkins@derbyshire.gov.uk
- East of England, Elaine Wilkinson, Elaine.wilkinson@peterborough.gov.uk
- London, Louise O Shea, louise.o'shea@cityoflondon.gov.uk
- North East, Joanne Parkinson, joanne.parkinson@sunderland.gov.uk
- North West, Jane Mathieson, nwreader@libraries.manchester.gov.uk
- Scotland, Mary Greenshields mary.greenshields@cls.glasgow.gov.uk
- South East, Angela Hicken angela.hicken@portsmouthcc.gov.uk
- South West, Carol Ackroyd, carol.ackroyd@devon.gov.uk
- Wales, Bethan Hughes, bethan.hughes@denbighshire.gov.uk
- West Midlands, Alison McKellar alisonmckellar@warwickshire.gov.uk
- Yorkshire, Jessica Leathley: jessica.leathley@hullcc.gov.uk
- Anne McCart, Northern Ireland anne.mccart@NI-libraries.net

Don't miss the next edition, which will feature:

- A new partner joins the Reading Partners' consortium
- Our new partnership with the BBC Asian Network
- Reading Partners at the London Book Fair and BA Conference
- An evaluation summary of Reading Partners' activity for 2007
- Forthcoming activity March to June 2008
- National Year of Reading update