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## **New statistics highlight public demand for library investment and modernisation**

On today's publication of CIPFA's Public Library statistics Miranda McKearney, director of national charity The Reading Agency, hails the success of libraries' modernisation effort and changing role in promoting reading:

"Future library strategy must focus on growth trends. The tanker is turning around. These statistics tell an important story about the public's response to the new way libraries are promoting reading and offering digital access. Book borrowing has risen for first time in a decade and library web visits are up almost 50%."

### **A new reading role**

"On the reading front this is down to concentrated efforts to revolutionise the way libraries reach readers. They now offer reading groups, challenges, author events, baby rhyme times and clever promotions to guide book choice. The public respond with alacrity!

"The modernization effort has been most intense with children's reading, and it's paying off - children's borrowing is up 5.2% this year (continuing a four year trend of increased borrowing, but a bigger hike because of the National Year of Reading).

"Our own massive Summer Reading Challenge is contributing to the turnaround. It is growing year on year. In 2009, the Challenge was responsible for 19.7million children's book loans – up 48% from ten years ago – and 725,000 children took part, up 10% on 2008.

"The adult reading drive in libraries has been developing too. With concentrated effort we could achieve the same turnaround."

### **Digital growth**

"The huge rise in use of library websites also reflects the public's demand for more modern services. People are taking advantage of the fact you can now join online, reserve books, talk to other readers, and get local information. In planning for a future that gives everyone digital access, we ignore libraries at our peril."

### **New ways of working together, and with charities**

"These [2008/09] figures cover the National Year of Reading (Jan-Dec 2008) and highlight new ways libraries are combining their efforts and working with charities."

"Intensive, shared national and local initiatives like the Year and the Summer Reading Challenge are helping turn things around."

"The Reading Agency led the library part of the National Year of Reading, working with the National Literacy Trust. Harnessing the power of the voluntary sector, sharing best practice and promoting creativity will be vital for libraries' future success."

Ends..

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[www.readingagency.org.uk](http://www.readingagency.org.uk)

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**Notes to Editors:**

- Miranda McKearney OBE, Director of The Reading Agency, is available for interview via Colman Getty.
- The Reading Agency is an independent charity working to inspire more people to read more. It is funded by the Arts Council and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. ([www.readingagency.org.uk](http://www.readingagency.org.uk))
- The Reading Agency believes in the power of reading to change people's lives, equal opportunities for everyone to become a reader and the importance of public libraries
- Miranda McKearney can also provide expert comment on:
  - Examples of pioneering projects in libraries that are engaging readers of all ages
  - Transforming young people's library and reading experiences
  - Revolutionising the way publishers and libraries work together to reach readers
  - Community engagement and volunteering through reading

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