



19 May 2008

Libraries, reading and innovation: be part of the debate

The Reading Agency is launching a *New Thinking* publications programme, capturing cutting edge thinking and challenging debate about reading, and libraries' work with readers. The Reading Agency is an independent charity working to get more people reading more.

The *New Thinking* publications series is linked to a series of debates bringing together strategists and activists who are passionate about reading and libraries. The debates aim to inject new ideas, share innovation and shape policy. The published think pieces open up the debate to a wider audience.

The first two publications in the *New Thinking* series focus on key local government-related themes – the library offer for young people and community engagement through reading. The third explores the power of reading for pleasure in adult literacy. Please see 'Further information' for more details about each publication.

A fourth *New Thinking* publication will debate the new reading territory of narrative and gaming: this will be published in the autumn.

"Our *New Thinking* series listens to a range of voices and challenges conventional approaches. We want it to open up discussion about the power of reading and libraries in our rapidly-changing society, and about the challenges ahead," says Debbie Hicks, Director of Research for The Reading Agency. **"The series is an important starting point, and we really hope that people will join in the debate. Look out for the *New Thinking* blog on our website."** (Blog address: www.readingagency.org.uk/new-thining to be launched 28 May 2008)

The Reading Agency works to find out about reading and reading habits, to understand readers and learn how to serve them better. It helps create and share new thinking, whether in the form of research, discussion, events, training or learning blogs. Active in public policy and advocacy, working with government departments and think tanks, The Reading Agency carries out and commissions its own research, and organises events and discussions with and beyond the library sector. It also runs training courses and events related to projects it runs both face-to-face and online.

- Each publication costs £15. To order visit The Reading Agency shop: www.readingagency.org.uk or call The Reading Agency on 020 7278 8922.

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Further information about *New Thinking* publications:

- **New Thinking 1: Community engagement through reading.** Looks at how reading and libraries' work with readers can be a powerful springboard for involving communities in shaping public services. It draws on a conference held in November 2007 by The Reading Agency and the Local Government Association, and looks at how libraries' work with readers can deliver the ambitions of the local government white paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities*. Contributors include: Alison Seabrooke, Community Development Foundation; Janene Cox, Culture and Library Services, Staffordshire County Council; Roy Clare MBE, Museums, Libraries and Archives Council; Geoff Thompson, writer, teacher and Executive Chair of the Youth Charter for the Arts, plus Sarah Benioff, Office of the Third Sector. (*Editor: Debbie Hicks. Available from 30 May 2008.*)
- **New Thinking 2: Our space: young people, reading and libraries.** Explores the future shape of teenage library services and how they can help support and change young people's lives. Shaped by the joint Reading Agency and Local Government Association (LGA) *Aiming High* conference in January 2008, this publication contains new ideas on how library services can be led by young people, and explores what libraries should be offering young people today. Contributors to the conference and this publication include: David Bell, Permanent Secretary, Department for Children, Schools and Families; Miranda McKearney, Director of The Reading Agency; Councillor Chris White, Chair, LGA Culture, Tourism and Sport Board; Anne Marie Carrie, Executive Director, Family and Children's Services Business Group, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea; Leon Cynch, Learn4Life; Jon Boagey, Director of Communications, National Youth Agency and award-winning author Malorie Blackman. (*Editor: Liz Dubber, series editor: Debbie Hicks. Available from 27 June 2008.*)
- **New Thinking 3: A passion for reading: where does it fit into Skills for Life?** This publication draws on the Vital Link libraries and adult literacy conference held in March 2008 for the National Year of Reading. It features contributions from key policymakers, practitioners and strategists, highlighting and making a powerful case for weaving reading for pleasure into literacy provision. Contributors include Miranda McKearney, Director of The Reading Agency; Liz Lawson, Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills; Jane Mace, consultant and researcher in adult literacy education; Helen Sunderland, Assistant Director LLU+, London South Bank University; Jill Harrison, Assistant Manager, Skills for Life and Family Learning; Fiona Williams, Head of Libraries and Heritage, York City Council; Honor Wilson-Fletcher, Director, National Year of Reading, plus librarians, activists and readers. (*Editor: Genevieve Clarke, series editor Debbie Hicks. Available from end of July 2008.*)

Notes to editors

- For more general information about The Reading Agency and its work, please visit: www.readingagency.org.uk
- The 2008 National Year of Reading is a year-long celebration of reading in all its forms. It aims to build a greater national passion for reading – for children, families and adult learners alike. The Year will encourage people to read in businesses, homes and communities around the country, providing new opportunities to read and helping people to access help and support through schools and libraries. To get involved and sign up to National Year of Reading activities in your area, log on to: www.yearofreading.org.uk

It's time to stop reading. It's time to get someone else to start.