

December 2007

NEXT WEB 2.0 STEP IN NEW LIBRARY VISION GOES LIVE IN 2008

The Reading Agency's website where reading, young people, libraries and the virtual meet

The Reading Agency is delighted to announce a new virtual dimension to its work helping libraries create community hubs for reading. Launching in May 2008, a new website will create a dynamic social network where young people aged 13+ will be able to share their reading and writing passions.

This builds on the work The Reading Agency is already doing with 20 local authorities to create Book Bars, a new model for teenage library services which combines cafe culture with reading, and gives young people genuine decision making powers about the direction of the service.

"Through the grassroots power of libraries' community connections we'll be exploring new ways of linking physical and virtual communities. If we're to have a next generation of readers, we need to lasso the creativity and community power of Web 2.0 technology to excite young people about reading," says Miranda McKearney, director of The Reading Agency.

The website (name to be announced early 2008), will make the most of web 2.0 technologies – blogs, podcasts, videocasts, RSS feeds, tagging, webchats – to create new reading communities for young people. Young people across the UK are being consulted about the site's content, which will allow them to create their own pages and get involved with reading in all its forms – from manga to non-fiction, audio to poetry, books to computer games, plays to lyrics. Site content will also include quizzes, competitions, news, author interviews and advice on reading and creative writing. Any young person will be able to access the site for free.

For libraries, who are also involved in the consultation, the site will provide a new way to actively engage with young people around reading.

It will showcase how they are changing to meet the reading needs of 21st century young people.

For a user's licence fee, schools and libraries will be able to use the site to create their own young people's reading spaces. They will also receive advance information on new content, support on how to make the most of their virtual space and access to events, booklists and reading activity ideas. From November 2007, libraries and schools will be able to see what the site will look like and how it will work

"We've been able to drive change in the library system through our nationwide Summer Reading Challenge which uses a combination of books, IT and community events to fire children up about reading. This new website, combined with the Book Bars model, is an experiment which we hope will affect the same kind of change for the teenage audience," continues Miranda McKearney.

**For further information please contact
Ruth Harrison, Project Manager, The Reading Agency
020 8297 5058 or mobile 07866 362 870
ruth.harrison@readingagency.org.uk**

Notes for editors:

- The Reading Agency is passionate about reading and believes everyone should be given an equal chance to become a reader. Reading opens doors to knowledge and an inner imaginative life; it connects people to each other.
- Founded in 2002, The Reading Agency is an independent charity and reading development agency. We run national programmes such as the Summer Reading Challenge and the Vital Link programme for emergent adult readers.
- Fulfilling their Potential is a major change programme run by The Reading Agency which enables library services to engage with teenagers. It provides a basis for planning a long term vision and strategy to redefine libraries' relationship with young people. The programme supports the Every Child Matters and Youth Matters policy agendas. The development of the new website and Book Bars are key innovations being developed as part of the Fulfilling their Potential programme.
- The Reading Agency is also committed to forming national partnerships, linking libraries to broadcasters, the book trade, youth services and the basic skills sector.
- The Reading Agency engages in research, policy and advocacy, exploring the benefits of reading and libraries. We also develop practical resources to support people working with readers: training, toolkits and promotional materials.
- For more information, please visit: www.readingagency.org.uk

Ends

