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Exciting developments in libraries' partnership with the book trade

Major developments in libraries' relationship with the book trade were announced at this week's Booksellers Association conference in Brighton (12-13 May 2008), during a session led by The Reading Agency and the Reading Partners library/publisher consortium. These included:

- the launch of a new children's library/publisher partnership scheme
- the announcement of Borders' plans for a toolkit to help stores build their relationship with libraries
- the publication of new research into black and minority ethnic readers.

Speakers in the session were author Tracy Chevalier; Amanda Ridout, Managing Director of Harper Collins; Karen Cunningham, Head of Libraries, Glasgow City Council and Miranda McKearney, Director of The Reading Agency.

Miranda McKearney hailed publishers' new understanding of the strategic significance of libraries' work with readers and called for the momentum to embrace the digital landscape. She said: ***"We've reached a tipping point in The National Year of Reading. Publishers are now convinced that libraries can create unparalleled contact between writers and readers, and are sending their authors to far flung library locations. We need to build on this new understanding of libraries' potential, and look to a future where we co-operate on digital developments."***

New children's publisher/library partnership scheme

An experimental, two-year partnership scheme between children's publishers and librarians begins work this month (May 2008). Called Children's Reading Partners, it is led by The Reading Agency, and involves 12 children's publishers, The Publishers' Association and the main children's library bodies. The scheme will work to take the children's library/publisher relationship to a new level, with the ultimate aim of encouraging more children to read more. It will help publishers connect to young readers in new ways by allowing them to link into important developments in libraries, including libraries' national Chatterbooks children's reading group network and The Reading Agency's new teenage social networking website, to be launched in September. New online databases will create a free flow of information and contact between libraries and publishers, and a regional structure of library representatives will allow publishers to talk to libraries across the country. Breakfast briefings and regional road shows will build new knowledge and contact between the sectors. (Please see "Notes to editors" for Children's Reading Partners members.)

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Retail partner to pilot new ways of working with libraries

Borders have announced that they will be piloting a toolkit for retailers to help stores build their work with libraries, and to give readers a better experience by ensuring all library author events have proper book sales arrangements.

"We've seen how powerful libraries' fantastic community links and creative work with readers can be and want to take the relationship much further," said Philip Downer, Chief Executive of Borders UK and Ireland.

The toolkit will be developed with The Reading Agency and libraries, piloted for six months, and then offered to other retailers. As well as author events, it will include ideas like joint staff shadowing schemes.

BME research

Reading Partners publishers recognize that library partnerships are a prime route to black and minority ethnic readers. To underpin understanding of the market, the consortium has published new research into BME readers: *Getting closer to the BME book market* (March 2008, Debbie Hicks, TRA and Catherine Hunt, Harper Collins).

This research provides exciting new data about BME reading, buying and borrowing trends, explores the perception of BME writers and asks what readers want publishers and libraries to do to support BME authors and readers better. It also looks at the special role that libraries can play in growing the BME reading market and the powerful potential for more joined-up work between libraries and the commercial sector.

The report costs £120. The concessionary price for libraries and other public sector organizations is £35. It is available on CD or in printed format from the Reading Agency shop at www.readingagency.org.uk or from resources@readingagency.org.uk

**For more information please contact Debbie Hyde
07956 320 486
debbie.hyde@oasismedia.co.uk**

Notes to editors

- Founded in 2002, The Reading Agency is an independent charity and reading development agency. It aims to get more people reading more. (www.readingagency.org.uk)
- **Children's Reading Partners:** the ten publishers involved in the new, two-year pilot scheme are Faber, Hachette, Harper Collins, Macmillan, OUP, Penguin, Random House, Simon and Schuster, Scholastic and Walker. Two other publishers, Bloomsbury and Egmont, are involved in smaller, one-year work packages linked to children's reading groups and The Reading Agency's new teenage website.

- 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.