

# THE PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

## PRESS RELEASE

Embargoed until 10am on Thursday 21 October 2010

## The future of public libraries

Publishers and The Reading Agency will unite today at the Public Library Authorities 2010 conference to emphasise the growth and social impact of libraries' new look reading service and how it can play a vital Big Society role. They will urge local authorities having to consider library cuts to prioritise this vital area.

Delegates at the conference will today hear from Stephen Page, CEO and Publisher of Faber and Faber, and Miranda McKearney, Chief Executive of The Reading Agency. Their joint speech will highlight the progressive work undertaken by libraries in partnership with publishers, which is now under threat as a result of the public spending cuts. Renowned authors will also be taking part in a series of events hosted by libraries, highlighting the importance of libraries in today's communities.

**Stephen Page's** speech will focus on the "re-imagining of library services" which has happened over the last ten years, and its future. He will say that independent charity The Reading Agency has been key to that success, not least through pioneering projects such as the Reading Partners initiative, which has seen 39 publishers across the UK sign up to work closely with libraries to bring authors and reading promotions into communities.

Stephen notes that: *"Faber recently held events involving Kazuo Ishiguro, and Iain Banks is due to take part in an event next week. A host of other authors will take part in events this autumn, including as part of the Penguin 75<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations, which will include a national readathon. More broadly, Faber has created a series of poetry and crime events, Random House has done brilliant online reading group events, there have been a host of readers' days, and imaginative events like Girls Nights In and Historical Readers Panels have been really popular with library users."*

Stephen will highlight how important libraries are to publishers, both in terms of building an audience of readers and in helping to raise awareness around niche publishing areas. The creative economy has become the UK's most important sector of the economy, after financial services, and publishing is playing a large part in creating both the economic output and the skilled individuals who work in those industries.

**Miranda McKearney's** section of the speech will highlight how libraries support literacy skills and act as a social and community hub. She will focus on the major achievements of the new-look library service over the past five years.

Miranda notes the development of a lively community offer: *"reading groups, author events, challenges, baby rhyme times, websites, whole city reading events, volunteering, targeting of special groups like looked-after children are just some of the innovations which libraries have put in place over the last few years, and they're working! There is important evidence for the social impact of this service - on people's sense of community, their reading range, literacy levels, confidence and self esteem.*

*"Children's borrowing has risen for five years running. The numbers of children doing the Summer Reading Challenge rise year on year - it looks like ¾ million will take part this year and reading groups have nearly trebled in four years. Participation in our adult literacy Six Book Challenge rose by 50% last year."*

*"Expert staff are bringing reading alive in communities. If cuts have to be made, let's do it carefully and strategically, with an eye to the long term. No business would ignore the growth trends we're seeing driven by a modernised reading service, and no local authority should ignore the outcomes it can achieve for local people. Continuing to develop the impact of the new reading service should be a priority.*

*The modern, more engaging reading service also has huge Big Society potential to act as a springboard for community activism, engaging local people in shaping services and volunteering. "*

**Author Iain M. Banks**, who will be meeting readers at one of the events promoting libraries, commented: *"What churches and temples are to people of faith, libraries are to people of reason (though don't get me wrong - of course they're hugely important to a lot of religious people too). libraries will remain very special, even revered places to me. It's always a privilege to be asked to do an event at a library; I look forward to this one and, I hope, to many others in the future."*

**ENDS**

## **Notes to Editors**

### **● The Publishers Association**

The Publishers Association is the leading trade organisation serving book, journal and electronic publishers in the UK. Our core service is representation and lobbying, around copyright, rights and other matters relevant to our members, who represent roughly 80% of the industry by turnover. Our membership is open to publishing companies that operate in the UK [www.publishers.org.uk](http://www.publishers.org.uk)

### **● Authors' events**

If you are interested in covering any of the authors' events coming up, please do get in touch with the Publishers Association.

For more information about The Publishers Association:  
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● **The Reading Agency**

Founded in 2002, The Reading Agency is an independent charity and reading development agency. It aims to get more people reading more and is passionate about everyone having an equal chance to become a reader. For general information, please visit: [www.readingagency.org.uk](http://www.readingagency.org.uk)

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