

23 March 2011

New steps towards libraries' digital future

Call for reading group data for new website

This month independent charity The Reading Agency has been working with the Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) on new building blocks for libraries' digital offer.

New Reading Groups for Everyone campaign

A new demonstration website – www.readinggroups.org – marks stage one of a major new campaign called Reading Groups for Everyone. It aims to double the number of library linked reading groups to 20,000 by 2013 and will roll out a national reading group offer from libraries. It offers libraries an exciting way of developing reading group provision in tough times.

With SCL, The Reading Agency is now calling for all libraries, book trade and other partners to get involved: “The site currently has reading group data from 19 trailblazing library partners from each of the SCL English regions,” says Tony Durcan, director of culture in Newcastle. “We’re now inviting all library authorities to join in the campaign.”

Reading Groups for Everyone will be at the heart of libraries' and The Reading Agency's contribution to the first ever National Reading Group Day on 25 June, run in partnership with the Booksellers' Association. It will also allow other library partners to join in, like the Royal National Institute for the Blind, with whom we are ensuring that the Reading Groups for Everyone campaign is inclusive and accessible for readers who are blind or who have sight loss, and Waterstone's, who are working on joint library/bookshop reading groups events for children.

New digital research

The Reading Agency has undertaken new research into libraries' current digital reading activity. This shows that many libraries are starting to use digital media to promote reading. See "Notes to editors" for details of the full report.

- 67% of library authorities incorporate digital in marketing campaigns
- 40% using social media to engage young people
- 79% would like to work more closely with publishers and access their digital content and marketing.

But development can be hindered by local authority IT systems and the need to update staff skills.

Digital marketing event and action plan with publisher partners

The work from The Reading Agency's recent digital marketing event with libraries and 40 publisher partners is being shaped into an action plan. The event, held on 15 March 2011 and sponsored by Public Library Online and OverDrive, attracted a large and enthusiastic audience with some big ambitions for libraries' future digital offer. Ideas now being worked up include:

- A one-stop web resource where publishers can load digital marketing materials for libraries
- A toolkit to show how to use digital marketing tools and activities
- Digital packaging for new authors, including video clips, podcasts, reading group notes and Skype author events
- Digital skills sharing between digital marketers and librarians

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Notes to editors:

- 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)

- Reading Groups for Everyone (www.readinggroups.org) is being developed by the Reading Agency in partnership with the Society of Chief Librarians and with funding from the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. It rolls out work tested in the Midlands, giving libraries a light touch and cost effective way of offering a good service to reading groups. National Library Reading Group Offer: www.readinggroups.org/library-help.html The 19 trailblazing library authorities involved in the development of the website and campaign are: Birmingham, Blackpool, Brent, Cumbria, Essex, Hampshire, Hull, Islington, Newcastle, Norfolk, Nottinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Peterborough, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Sefton, Staffordshire, Sunderland and Windsor and Maidenhead. Contact: ruth.harrison@readingagency.org.uk
- Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) (www.goscl.com) is a local government association made up of the chief librarian of each library authority in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Digital marketing: research and 15 March event:
 - Read our full [Digital Research report](#).
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