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PILOT STUDY ON REMOTE E-LENDING

Statement on the main findings from The Publishers Association, Society of Chief Librarians, Booksellers Association, Society of Authors and Association of Authors Agents

The remote e-lending pilot study, jointly commissioned by the Society of Chief Librarians and The Publishers Association, funded via the British Library Trust and Arts Council England (ACE) and developed and delivered by MTM London, has been instrumental in helping stakeholders - publishers, agents, authors, booksellers and libraries - better understand the impact of remote ebook lending in English public libraries.

The measures, as recommended by William Sieghart, were put in place to try to establish whether a remote e-lending service might disrupt the delicate ecology of the print and, still nascent, digital market and that a fair balance existed between those who loaned the books for free and those who wanted to be rewarded for creating, publishing and selling the book. The report will be useful in further shaping publishers' understanding of the e-lending landscape and their policies (commercial terms, titles they make available and appropriate lending conditions frictions) and will help to inform ongoing discussions with authors and agents.

E-lending accounts for only 5% of loans, yet librarians believed that in the event of an extension of e-lending, they would spend up to 25% of their book budget on ebooks and would spend the majority of that on the most popular titles. However, the results also show that library footfall could drop, with those who use the remote e-lending service less likely to visit the library premises.

In terms of users, the results of the pilot indicate that while remote e-lending may drive up usage of the service, it would currently be from a very small, and more affluent, user base.

The results are of particular concern to booksellers. This research indicates a possible reduction in the propensity to buy new physical books and visit bookshops amongst e-book borrowers. The research was inconclusive as to whether e-book lending leads to greater e-book purchasing.

There is no Public Lending Right for ebooks when borrowed remotely. All parties note that it is critically important that authors receive fair payment each time their works are borrowed as well as on the initial licence to the library. The future development of any remote e-lending model will have to have this principle at its core.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

The pilot was set up following the Sieghart Review into E-Lending in Public Libraries (April 2013) to analyse the impact of ebook lending on publishers and authors and public libraries. In particular, the pilot is seeking to establish the impact of different models for e-lending on sales. Publishers and librarians agreed four key principles that would guide the project:

- Lending should be free of charge;
- Library members should be able to borrow digital books remotely;
- Only one user should be able to access one copy at any time;
- To address issues of deterioration, each digital copy would have a lifespan similar to that which exists for physical books.

Four local authorities were selected to participate in the pilot which sees publishers make available for lending an additional catalogue of 893 titles, across genres. Two authorities serve an urban area (Newcastle City Council and Peterborough City Council) while two serve rural communities (Derbyshire County Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead). The length of loan period also varies between the authorities – one rural and one urban authority loan period being 7 days, the others 21 days.

The pilot and associated research has been funded by the British Library Trust and Arts Council England.

The Publishers Association

The Publishers Association is the leading trade organisation serving book, journal, audio and electronic publishers in the UK. Membership comprises 114 companies from across the trade, academic and education sectors. Its core service is representation and lobbying, around copyright, rights and other matters relevant to members, who represent roughly 80% of the industry by turnover. www.publishers.org.uk.

The Society of Chief Librarians

The Society of Chief Librarians is a local government association made up of the chief librarian of each library authority in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. SCL takes a leading role in the development of public libraries, through sharing best practices, advocating for continuous improvement on behalf of local people, and leading the debate on the future of the public library service. www.goscl.com

The Society of Authors

The SoA protects the rights and furthers the interests of authors. It is a membership organisation representing over 9,000 professional writers from all sectors and genres.

The Booksellers Association

The Booksellers Association is a membership organization for all booksellers in the UK & Ireland, and we represent over 95% of specialist booksellers selling new books. The BA exists to support, advise and work with its members to create excellent products for booksellers. These range from National Book Tokens, our gift card which prompts increased footfall and keeps gift spending in the book trade, and Batch, our award-winning payments service, which saves time, money and hassle when settling invoices and organising returns, to a full range of money-saving affinity deals, a free Business Support Helpline and a whole range of tailored events, marketing and promotional campaign work, including World Book Day, Books Are My Bag, Independent Booksellers Week and the Christmas Books Catalogue.

The Association of Authors' Agents

The Association of Authors' Agents represents UK-based literary agencies. It provides a forum which allows member agencies to discuss issues arising in their profession, a collective voice for UK literary agencies in public affairs and the media and a code of conduct to promote best practice amongst members.

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