

PLS and Halstan supply 16,000 books to Ukrainian children displaced by war

Publishers' Licencing Services (PLS) and book print specialists Halstan have partnered to fund and produce 16,000 Ukrainian-language books for newly arrived refugee children in the UK as part of the Ukrainian government's 'Books Without Borders' initiative.

'Books Without Borders', which has been organised in the UK by the Ukrainian Embassy, was created under the patronage of Ukraine's First Lady, Olena Zelenska, and has been able to print and distribute books to Ukrainian refugee children across Europe. The project's aim is to minimise the disruption to education, as well as reduce feelings of anxiety experienced by young refugees, who are adjusting to a new life in an unfamiliar country, by providing them with a physical connection to home.

A special event to promote the availability of the books to refugees living in the UK took place on 11 August at the British Library. At the event, refugee families were joined by the Ukrainian Ambassador to the UK, Vadym Rystaiko, and representatives from all the organisations who have played a role in printing the books. The highlight of the event was a special appearance by the First Lady. First Lady Zelenska, who joined the event virtually, took part in a reading of one of the printed books and spoke to the children in attendance.

The 16,000 books have been sourced and printed after the Ukrainian Embassy requested help to support refugee children in the UK. Ukrainian publishers donated the layouts and permissions for 16 picture books, novels and other titles suitable for readers aged 3 to 17. With printing not possible in Ukraine, Halstan manufactured all books, which ranged from picture books aimed at younger children to novels for young adults, from its UK production facility.

The UK project is part of a bigger scheme and mirrors initiatives underway across Europe. In mainland Europe, Books Without Borders has received support from the Federation of European Publishers, who has also arranged the printing and distribution of Ukrainian books to refugees.

Production of the books was funded through substantial donations by PLS and Halstan, with additional material support provided by Canon Commercial Print Division and Premier Paper. The Bookmark Reading Charity also kindly agreed to donate an additional 1,000 books from their own Bookbox campaign to the project.

Additional support was provided by the Publishers Association as well as the Department for Education, who liaised with local authorities across the UK and the Association for Ukrainians in Great Britain to ascertain where the books will be delivered for onward distribution.

First Lady of Ukraine, Olena Zelenska *“Books not only entertain and educate us - they also unite us and bring us back to a feeling of home. This project is our victory on the cultural front, and it brings our primary victory closer.*

We can bring the homeland to Ukrainian children in the form of books. We called this project "Books Without Borders" as Ukrainian books can travel with Ukrainians to any country where they are needed. The Embassy of Ukraine to the UK, together with Halstan, Publishers' Licensing Service and other benefactors, have printed 16,000 books.

I am grateful to everyone who has contributed to this project. Displaced Ukrainian children will now be able to enjoy a mini library at home.”

Rupert Smith, Chief Executive of Halstan: *“We are honoured to have the opportunity to support Ukrainian families entering the UK in this way. This project aims to provide young readers with many much-loved books from their homeland so they can feel connected and hopefully find some comfort, while assisting with their education and development whilst they are away from home. A huge thanks to the organisations that have donated and supported this fantastic project.”*

Sarah Faulder, Chief Executive of PLS: *“I am proud that PLS has been able to play a part, on behalf of publishers, in supporting the First Lady’s initiative to turn to the power of books to bring comfort to displaced Ukrainian children taking refuge in the UK.”*

Liz Jolly, Chief Librarian of the British Library: *“Across the world, libraries represent trusted spaces where people can learn in safety, with professional staff who have a mission to connect people with information and provide access to rich cultural resources. For people in Ukraine this basic right is under grave threat, with the current conflict endangering both a living nation and its history and recorded memory. As the UK’s national library, we are proud to be supporting the ‘Books without Borders’ initiative and it was a great privilege to welcome refugee families, alongside the Ukrainian Ambassador to the UK, Vadym Rystaiko, to the British Library for a very special event featuring a virtual reading from the First Lady of Ukraine, Olena Zelenska.”*

About Halstan. Halstan is an international, fourth generation family run printers and specialist book producer, in particular known for their high-quality thread-sewn and lay-flat books. Halstan serve many publishers across the music, education, fiction and non-fiction, children's book and notebook sectors. The group has production facilities in the UK, the US and Europe.

About Publishers' Licencing Services. Since its establishment in 1981, Publishers' Licensing Services (PLS) has provided rights management services to the publishing industry. PLS' primary remit is to oversee collective licensing in the UK for book, journal, magazine and website copying. In addition, it also provides a range of rights management services, including the award-winning PLSclear. A not-for-profit organisation, PLS distributed more than £38.5 million from collective licensing in 2020/21 and has more than 4,000 publishers signed up to their services.

About The British Library. We are the national library of the UK and we are here for everyone. Our shelves hold over 170 million items – a living collection that gets bigger every day. Although our roots extend back centuries, we aim to collect everything published in the UK today, tomorrow and far into the future. Our trusted experts care for this collection and open it up for everyone to spark new discoveries, ideas and to help people do incredible things.

We have millions of books, and much more besides. Our London and Yorkshire sites hold collections ranging from newspapers and maps to sound recordings, patents, academic journals, as well as a copy of every UK domain website and blog. Our public spaces are a place to research, to meet friends, to start up a new business or simply to get inspired by visiting our galleries and events. We work with partners and libraries across the UK and the world to make sure that as many people as possible have the chance to use and explore our collections, events and expertise. And we're always open online, along with more and more of our digitised collection.

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