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26



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29



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NYR – what will you do?

A special edition of Read On, the magazine of the National Reading Campaign

National
Literacy
Trust



department for
children, schools and families

Winter 2007



“The 2008 National Year of Reading will create a powerful focus of opportunities and activities so that children, families and adult learners understand the benefits that reading for pleasure and purpose can bring to change their lives.”

Rt Hon Ed Balls MP, Secretary of State,
Department for Children, Schools and Families

Support the National
Year of Reading –
take up the challenge!

See page 3

Contents

- 3 **National Year of Reading 2008 – get involved!**
- 4 **Creating a reading nation**
- 5 **Use the monthly themes to help structure your NYR**
- 6 **Local authorities – The central role of local authority coordinators**
- 8 **Early years – Get into reading early**
- 10 **Schools – Boost your reading culture**
- 12 **Libraries – Raising the profile of libraries and reading**
- 14 **Adult learners – Making the vital link**
- 15 **Higher education – Opening doors**
- 16 **Special needs**
 - A National Year of Reading for all?
 - Make reading an inclusive experience
- 18 **Business – The National Year of Reading: a challenge for business!**
- 20 **Arts – The art of reading**
- 21 **Media**
 - Getting television on board
 - Let's read: local press and the community
- 22 **Ethnic minority groups**
 - "Reading is boring; books don't relate to me"
 - Working with Gypsies and Travellers to support the National Year of Reading
- 24 **Community**
 - A reading snowball!
 - ROWA! takes up the NYR challenge
- 26 **Author visits**
 - Authors, poets, illustrators and storytellers
- 28 **Volunteering**
 - Reading comes roaring home
 - "Every aspect is hugely rewarding": the story of a reading volunteer
- 30 **Health**
 - Words for wellbeing
 - Poems that please patients
 - Read your way to health
- 32 **Sport – The power of sport**
- 34 **Resources**



National Year of Reading 2008 - get involved!

January 2008 sees the launch of the National Year of Reading (NYR). The challenge facing the NYR is truly ambitious: it aims to change the nature of reading in the nation forever. Reading opens many doors. The child who develops a love of reading at an early age becomes a lifelong reader, capable not only of fulfilling their own potential but of helping the nation fulfil its potential and face the diverse challenges of the 21st century.

The NYR's ambitions can only be achieved if a wide range of organisations within every sector gets involved so that we all work together effectively. The whole can be so much greater than the parts. The NYR is calling on all organisations from the business, private and voluntary sectors to help make this a reality by taking up the NYR challenge.

Taking up the NYR Challenge

The first three months of the year will be a period of direct challenge. Every individual, every family, every organisation, every workplace will be invited to commit to the NYR challenge. For the year, why not make one strategic and one practical commitment to make a difference? The strategic commitment could be to change one thing you do in the way you manage your home, school or business to focus on the importance of reading. From a practical point of view, what can you do in terms of your day-to-day activities to push reading up the agenda? Why not commit to

share reading with your children every night, to put recommending good reads onto the agenda of meetings or to convert old smoking rooms into a swap-a-book reading rooms for the workplace?

Get conversation going in your organisation about reading; encourage everyone to reread a book they've enjoyed and share it with others. Find the top 10 books enjoyed by your organisation and discover if your organisation is voting for Dan Brown, JK Rowling or Tolkien. Or, have they tried Khaled Hosseini or Constance Briscoe?

This special edition of *Read On* is packed with practical suggestions and great ideas from a wide range of organisations about how you can put the NYR challenge into practice. We know that once you start brainstorming ways to get the nation reading, you'll come up with hundreds of additional great ideas and improve on those suggested here. We want to hear your ideas. In January 2008, the NYR website will be launched and used as a great way of sharing your ideas and helping us all to meet the NYR challenge. Start thinking now so that by January you will be ready to take up the NYR challenge.

Send us your ideas for the NYR or register to be kept informed of NYR developments. Email nyr@literacytrust.org.uk. For more information visit www.yearofreading.org.uk.

Goodbye Read On – welcome the NYR

Read On magazine, part of the National Reading Campaign, was developed following the last National Year of Reading to build on the contacts made throughout the year. It is, therefore, illogical to publish *Read On* during the new National Year of Reading.

This will be the last copy of *Read On* produced. Details of current *Read On* subscribers will be passed to the new NYR team who will keep everyone informed about the year. If you currently receive *Read On* but do not want to receive information about the NYR, please email eliza.buckley@literacytrust.org.uk with "Please do not send me information about the NYR" in the subject line.

The key projects of the National Reading Campaign will be developed and strengthened throughout 2008. They are:

- Reading Connects – www.readingconnects.org.uk
- Reading Champions – www.readingchampions.org.uk
- Family Reading Campaign – www.familyreading.org.uk

The *Read On* team would like to give a big thank you to all contributors who met tight deadlines to help put this special edition together in record time.

Many thanks for all your support for *Read On*. Together we can make the NYR a really significant year and transform our reading culture.

Julia Strong, director, National Reading Campaign

Creating a reading nation



Jonathan Douglas, director of the National Literacy Trust, outlines the core values of the NYR and their place in achieving systemic change.

The overarching challenge facing the National Year of Reading (NYR) is to put in place the building blocks for medium-term systemic change in the nation's reading and literacy culture so that we really do achieve a reading nation. This is a massively ambitious vision but we can begin to see how it could be achieved if we look forward to 2009 and 2010 and say what we would like to change and what those building blocks could be.

Those building blocks have to include a different strategic approach to reading but also need to change the ways in which reading is supported and enlivened within communities.

Initial planning for the NYR came up with six key values to help turn the vision into reality. These characteristics need to underpin the strategy and practice that will deliver the required changes.

The first value is **impact**. We don't just want to make everyone feel good about reading; we want to change attitudes to reading and influence the reading culture, so there really is a difference in the way people and society practise reading.

The second value is **celebration**. The feel-good factor is essential if you are to achieve impact and celebration underpins the feel-good factor. We need to maximise opportunities to show how enjoyable reading can be, find a myriad ways to be positive about reading, and help reading make people smile. A year celebrating reading for pleasure is a wonderful concept, not simply because it will be

such fun but because it has the power to motivate so many people to read.

A third and very far-reaching value is **diversity**. Reading has changed since the first NYR 10 years ago and so have communities and the composition of the nation. The legacy of the NYR will have to be infinitely adaptable in order to suit the great range of changes that society will undergo in coming decades. And, of course, diversity relates to the reading experience, as well as to the communities in which reading takes place. The communications revolution has blurred the boundaries between reading and writing, through emails, blogging and texting. Reading has changed greatly in the last 10 years and will change again in the next 10 years, perhaps even more rapidly. The legacy of the year will have to bring out the links with speaking and listening, as well as writing, to stimulate and develop readers.

Our challenge is to personalise our promotion of reading in the NYR to show how the infinite range of texts available meet the infinite range of readers' needs. This challenge is illustrated by a significant piece of research the National Literacy Trust has just conducted¹. It looks at what young people understand by the term "reading". Traditional definitions of reading from teachers and librarians don't necessarily incorporate how young people themselves view reading. They may be reading on screen rather than reading *Pride and Prejudice* or *Treasure Island*; they are readers but they don't see themselves as such.

Therefore, the NYR also has to relate to the wide range of communities that need to be engaged and celebrate their reading. Not just young people and boys, but different ethnic groups, as well as people with special needs. The blind or disabled reader must be able to recognise their reading, and feel that the year has something to offer them.

The fourth challenge is a radical approach to **participation**. Everyone who takes part in the NYR will be helping to develop the year. We are not controlling the year but handing it over to schools, libraries, families, community organisations and individuals to join in and help make it a real success. In essence, we are handing the year over to the nation.

When you read, you make sense of text and create – this is what the year is about. Every reader will be creating the National Year of Reading. Every school will be creating the year, every library, every workplace, every health organisation.

Legacy is the final, and in many ways most important, value. The building blocks which the year will help establish need to be developed throughout 2008 and beyond so that we continue to work together in an effective way to encourage reading to flourish in every community. In this way, we will achieve lasting change. The year will be the catalyst to push us forward into a new vision of reading for the future.

The real NYR challenge is to take all these values and to reach all audiences to enliven lives and communities through reading.

¹Young people's self-perception as readers: An investigation including family, peer and school influences. NLT (2007)

Use the monthly themes to help structure your NYR

The monthly themes have been selected to help give each month a focus. We hope every sector will think imaginatively about how the themes can be interpreted to maximise involvement in their area. The NYR website will be a place to exchange great ideas and get inspiration – www.yearofreading.org.uk.

Public activity for the NYR starts in April 2008. Why not use World Book Day as a springboard for your NYR activities? Held on Thursday 6 March 2008, World Book Day will be celebrated by schools, adult education providers, publishers and booksellers across the country. There will be free resources, book tokens and a new series of Quick Reads books for emergent adult readers. For more information call 01634 729 810, email wbd@education.co.uk or visit www.worldbookday.com.

April – Read all about it

Read anything and everything, anywhere and everywhere. Use newspapers, online news or journalism as a tie-in. See the sections on schools (page 10), libraries (page 12) and media (page 21) for more.

May – Mind and body

Celebrate the links between reading and health. Run activities in partnership with health and wellbeing agencies: link with bibliotherapy or libraries. Emphasise the importance of bonding between parent and child through reading together. Emphasise the link between body and mind. See the health section (page 30) and sports section (page 32) for more.

June – Reading escapes

Focus on holiday reading or how reading helps you escape into different worlds. Try football escapes to tie in with Euro 2008, or reads to escape the football! Use the Summer Reading Challenge as a hook in schools and libraries. Publishers and booksellers can get on board – promote NYR beach reads or travel books.

July – Rhythm and rhyme

Celebrate poetry and lyrics from Shakespeare to Snoop Dogg. Make links between the music industry and schools. For families, don't forget 'rhyme time' sessions at your local library.

August – Read the game

The influence of sport can help promote reading. Use the Beijing Olympics as a tie-in or link work with the cultural olympiad. See the sports section (page 32) for more.

September – You are what you read

Use reading as a way to celebrate and explore cultural, personal and local identities. Think about city-wide reads, family history research and local community history.

October – Word of mouth

Celebrate storytelling, reading out loud, reading together and live literature. Also a great opportunity to harness the power of recommended reads. See the early years (page 8), schools (page 10), libraries (page 12), authors sections (page 26) and more.

November – Screen reads

Explore the diversity of reading and writing: scripts, television and films. Get involved with Film Education (visit www.filmeducation.org). Promote the original books of well-known films, link with the London Film Festival.

December – Write the future

What one person writes, others read and technology is bringing reading and writing closer together. The year ends with a celebration of all forms of writing.

The central role of local authority coordinators

Jonathan Douglas, director of the National Literacy Trust, explains why local authority coordinators are a crucial factor in making the National Year of Reading a success.

Local authorities are vital to the success of the National Year of Reading. No other agencies can stimulate and engage activity within the key organisations, communities and individuals that a successful NYR requires. We expect top tier local authorities to be stimulating interest and activities within district level authorities.

At the heart of local authority engagement sit schools, adult learning providers and libraries; experts at literacy support. But it's extraordinarily important that a wide range of other organisations, including the arts, museums, leisure and health (via primary care trusts), as well as local businesses and the local media, are brought into play.

The challenge to local authorities and to local coordinators is to address five key challenges.

“Coordinators will need to be able to develop, maintain and manage partnerships throughout the year and beyond, so that when the year ends the power of having someone holding the ring for literacy and coordinating the local approach is apparent to all.”

The first is to **win the buy in of key sectors** like education and libraries. It is imperative that when every teacher, librarian or community worker sees something in the national media relating to the NYR, they can identify with it and recognise the contribution of their own work. Local coordinators are vital in creating and developing these links. This will also be supported by monthly themes (see page 5) to help provide a shared focus.

The second challenge is to be **the catalyst of community activity**. On a person specification for the post of local coordinator, enthusiasm would be top of the list. To support them, they can be confident that the NYR is a national programme with national government support and local authority backing, not just in name but in real commitment.

The next challenge for local coordinators is **partnership brokerage**. In order to make the year a success and reach out to those audiences we have not reached, new partnerships will be key at national and local level. These will incorporate a diverse range of communities into the year. Partnership brokerage, whether with faith communities, business or media, is key for local coordinators because it will be central to the success of the year.

The fourth challenge is **ongoing coordination** because the local coordinator needs to be a completer and finisher as well as an inspirer. A year is longer than you might imagine when you are trying to maintain a focus on one thing for 12 months. Coordinators will need to be able to develop, maintain and manage partnerships throughout the year and beyond, so that when the NYR ends the power of having someone holding the ring for literacy and coordinating the local approach is apparent to all, and the authority will wish to sustain and develop the post of coordinator.

The ability to **build in legacy**, is the fifth challenge. While we want some wonderful and exciting practice to be going on throughout the year and while the year needs to include celebration, all this activity needs to be lodged within strategic planning and related action. The way to make it stick and create this legacy, is to make the coordinator role pertinent to the strategic framework that local authorities operate within. As local authorities are undergoing joint area reviews, formulating Local Area Agreements and local strategic partnerships,



Image: Alexandra Strick

Lambeth family reading activities

we want to see the local NYR coordinator offering examples and evidence of impact in reading and literacy work into these development processes. Reading development that supports hard-to-reach groups should be seen as strategically useful to delivering local shared and national priorities.

The challenge of the NYR is to put in place building blocks which will change the national reading culture forever, the key building block required at local level is a champion of this partnership and vision. This is the role of the coordinator.

The coordinators need to have all these characteristics, not just for the NYR but to spearhead the legacy. The partnership groups created by the local coordinator need to be strategic in thinking, medium-term in focus and well linked in practice. They need to be the motivating focus for change in the local authority culture which will put reading and literacy to the top of the pile. And, of course, to achieve this, commitment and involvement from chief executive level downwards is vital.

In order to support local authority engagement, the following timetable is in place:

- **24 October 2007** – a national conference to which all local authority chief executives have been invited
- **November and December 2007** – regional workshops to stimulate planning and help generate and exchange ideas
- **Spring 2008** – a series of regional roadshows for senior officers and elected members to promote the NYR
- **Early 2009** – a legacy conference to make certain the potential of the NYR to change the reading culture can be achieved.

“...the key building block required at local level is a champion of this partnership and vision.”

Get into reading early

The National Year of Reading is a great opportunity for everyone to talk about the books they love and share their favourites with friends. The very youngest children can join in and there are plenty of ways to involve them and their families. Most families with young children are reached through the nationwide Bookstart scheme, which provides a book for children at eight months, 18 months and three years. Bookstart and other schemes mean libraries are already engaged in supporting reading in the early years - but there is much more you can do to celebrate the NYR in your setting. The year is also an opportunity to inspire reading by giving your early years community ownership of the project. Involving the staff, parents and children in the planning of activity is a great way to introduce the NYR, draw upon everyone's ideas and resources, and empower a community through reading. These pages offer some ideas and inspiration.

Why not start by asking colleagues and helpers which picture books are their favourites? The children can also choose and have a pile of the books that they love best in a special place for easy access. Ask the families for any suggestions they have from home and borrow treasured family favourites to share with everyone.

With your list of favourites, it might be an idea to draw up a top 10 and share it with families, suggesting that parents and carers may like to borrow the titles to take home one evening, or get the books from the library. For everyone to be really familiar with particular titles means that your setting can have a shared language about some special characters, and can plan other activities that will have a particular resonance.

Parents and carers can feel overwhelmed by the choice of books available, and will welcome suggestions of books to look out for. Have a session for new parents specifically about books and reading, perhaps in the local library with the help of the librarian. Regular lists of favourites will provide useful guidance. Encourage your families to join the library to have access to a wide range of books.

When reading one-to-one with a young child, add the child's name into the story, either as an extra character, or as the name for an unnamed character in the illustrations. Sometimes you can get away with using the child's name in place of the main character in a book, especially if the character gets up to mischief.

Early years settings are not always environments in which men feel they belong. Make sure that your setting includes **fathers and male carers** in any NYR activities. Ask the children to invite their fathers, grandfathers, brothers or uncles to an event. If you have an NYR display, ensure that pictures of men reading with children are included. Try and select books which have good dad figures as well



Resources

A wide range of resources are available from the National Literacy Trust's Talk To Your Baby and Family Reading Campaign websites.

You can find top tips and ideas for working in early years and with families. Why not adapt the Family Reading Campaign editable posters for your NYR activities?

Visit www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk and www.familyreading.org.uk



as mums. If possible hold events at times when fathers may be more likely to be able to attend, such as outside of work hours.

Celebrate **oral storytelling traditions** from different cultures within your early years setting and embrace the different backgrounds that the children may come from. Have a storytelling week with parents and staff invited to tell their stories to the children. Encourage the storytelling tradition by giving tips and advice to staff and parents on what makes a good story, to help boost confidence. Talk about the stories afterwards with the children to reinforce what they've heard and encourage their active involvement. It is important to highlight that speaking and listening skills are the foundations of reading and writing.

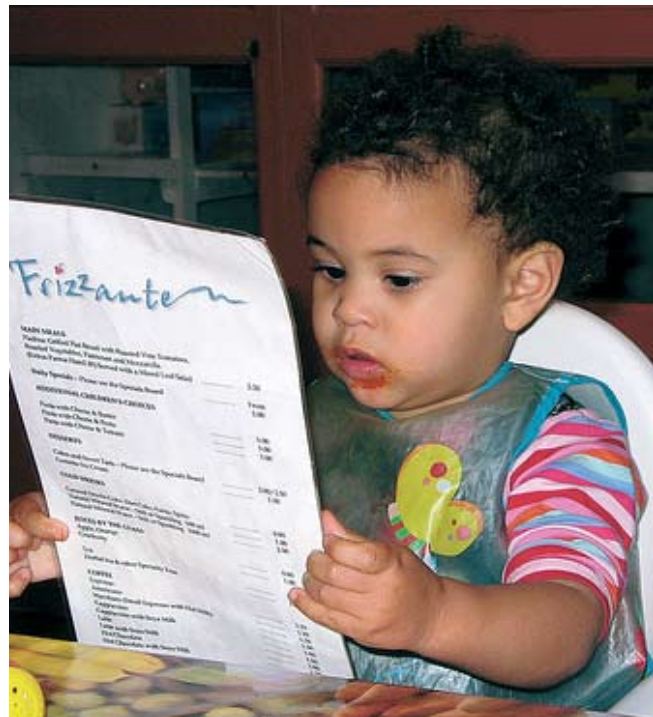


Talk to the children about why some books are special. Is it because it's funny? Are there animals in it that you especially like? Is there a character you would like to be your friend?



Collect lists of favourite picture books in your setting under different headings:

- Best-loved book to be read aloud in a group
- Best-loved book to be read one-to-one
- Best-loved book to look at alone



Use **favourite books** to create new stories. With the help of the children, make up new stories for favourite characters. What would the children do if Mr Magnolia or Spot or Alfie lived in their house? Get suggestions from the children about someone they would like to read about and what they would do. Then write the bare bones of a story on some poster-sized pieces of paper, with the best artist among you having a go at drawing some outlines. The children can do their bit with crayons, and you can see what happens. You may end up with a book to share with parents.

Celebrate the NYR with a **book party**. This could be at any point in the year: to launch the NYR, mid-way through, or to end it in style. Invite characters from books which have been popular with children and parents. Ask the children which characters they would like to invite and they could make invitations or draw the characters. Consult with the children as much as possible about the book party to build on their communication skills, stimulate their imaginations and help generate a feeling of excitement. Create a fun menu; ask everyone involved what food they would like, and

talk with the children about food in any books they have been reading. Plan games and activities around fun books, such as *What's the time, Mr Wolf?*, or *We're going on a Bear Hunt*. You could include games that involve rhymes from books to get everyone involved and talking. End the party with a final storytelling session. Children, parents and staff could vote for their favourite book to be read and a local librarian may be able to come along to tell the story. As everyone leaves give the children a certificate for taking part, and give parents and carers information about accessing books through the local library.

The ideas here work particularly well with some of the NYR monthly themes (see page 5). Reading with young children and sharing books together act as spurs for talking, which helps develop speaking and listening skills. It also helps parents and carers bond with their children and encourages communication. Promoting reading through the NYR is a great opportunity to build on existing work and, above all, to have lots of fun.

Boost your reading culture

The National Year of Reading is a great opportunity for schools and other educational settings to raise the profile of their reading promotions. Schools where reading for pleasure is not a current focus can use the NYR to kick-start a campaign. Sarah Osborne, Reading Connects and Reading Champions project manager at the National Literacy Trust, suggests some activities to help schools develop a reading culture across the whole school community.

The NYR has the potential to make a significant difference to achievement in schools if events and activities are integrated into a long-term vision to develop a reading culture across the whole school community. As part of such a vision, the Reading Connects approach advocates that:

- Promoting reading for pleasure should be central to the school's policy for pupils to achieve and enjoy
- Reading celebration and advocacy involves all groups of the wider school community, including catering staff, caretakers, governors and parent groups
- Curriculum delivery should integrate independent reading and promoting reading for pleasure and research, in class and beyond in creative and motivational ways
- Pupils have a lead role in planning and delivering the school's reading for pleasure promotion

Senior management buy-in to the NYR is the key factor in ensuring the strategies above underpin any reading activity during

the year, as well as providing levers for potential barriers. Senior management buy-in will decide whether reading for pleasure forms an ongoing part of the school's improvement plan and remains a priority beyond the NYR. When schools join Reading Connects, one of the first things suggested for an action plan is to create a focus group with a member of senior management on the team. Schools may want to consider this when planning for the NYR.

Practical ideas for the National Year of Reading



Reading promotions

Visibility of reading

Raise the profile of your NYR activity by making reading as visible as possible in school. As well as displays in classrooms, corridors and the school foyer, create reading displays in places where children would not expect to see them, for example in the playground, dining hall or PE changing rooms. For some ideas visit www.literacytrust.org.uk/readingconnects/pracschoolvisible.html.

Peer-to-peer recommendation

Whatever our age, peer recommendations for books and reading materials are those that we are most receptive to. Setting up systems to facilitate recommendations between pupils is an excellent way to create a buzz and a competitive edge around reading. Challenge pupils to create screensavers based on their favourite read and then use them on the school's computers.

Using digital communication

ICT facilities in school are a good way to



get pupils involved in reading activity, especially for those children who need a little more persuading that reading might be for them. If the school has video recording equipment, why not make a film about what staff and pupils in the school consider to be their all-time favourite read. This could run on a screen in the school foyer or during school events.

Reading events

The NYR monthly themes (see page 5) link with events on the reading calendar as well as other national events. The Olympics are a great opportunity to hook children into reading. Although the Olympics take place in the school holidays, the Olympic torch relay route will start at the end of March 2008 in Greece and pass through hundreds of cities and towns before arriving in Beijing. This may be a good opportunity to encourage pupils to engage in wider reading about the countries on the route during the lead up summer months. Visit <http://torchrelay.beijing2008.cn/en/> for more information.

School libraries

The school library may well be the school's central hub for reading, making the NYR a prime opportunity to raise its profile across the whole school community. Why not get pupils involved in designing a special NYR reading passport to use in the library? Reading Connects has lots of downloadable editable resources to help with library displays and promotions at www.literacytrust.org.uk/readingconnects/downloadables.html.

Get involved!

Reading Connects will be challenging all schools to share their great ideas on how to make the NYR a success via the Reading Connects (www.readingconnects.org.uk) and NYR (www.yearofreading.org.uk) websites.

Special interest groups

Boys

Using male reading role models in school is a good way to motivate the boys to get involved. With Reading Champions, boys strive to become bronze, silver and then gold Reading Champions by completing a series of increasingly pro-active tasks, during which they promote reading to others. The scheme also draws upon the influence of celebrity male reading role models, as well as those in the community and the pupils' dads. Visit www.readingchampions.org.uk for more information and to sign up (joining is free).

Celebrating diversity

The NYR is a chance to celebrate the reading materials of pupils from different cultures. Demonstrate that the school values reading materials in other languages by displaying them prominently. Download the multilingual 'Reading is fun!' poster from www.literacytrust.org.uk/readingconnects/langs.pdf. You could also enlist the help of bilingual speakers in school to set up a reading club using books in other languages.



Family involvement

Building partnerships with pupils' families is one of the most effective ways to encourage young people to read more. Some parents may be keen to get involved in the planning and delivery of NYR activity and to take on the role of NYR family reading ambassador. These enthusiasts could be key in getting other families on board. For example, parents may be interested in attending support sessions presented by the family reading ambassadors on encouraging their children to explore new reading materials. The Reading Connects Family Engagement Toolkit looks at the theory and practice of working with families. Visit www.literacytrust.org.uk/readingconnects/familytoolkit.html for more information.

Community involvement

Volunteering opportunities

Encouraging members of the local community to come in and read with pupils as part of a buddying scheme is an excellent way to create a buzz around reading and tap into the motivational power of reading role models. There are a large number of local and national organisations who can help with this. Visit www.literacytrust.org.uk/Database/volchild.html. See pages 18 and 28 for more ideas.

Collaborate with the public library

Public libraries all over the country will be organising lots of activities to engage the local community in reading. If schools have not already established partnerships, the NYR provides a good opportunity to tap into the resources and events that will be on offer, as well as a librarian's knowledge of children's literature. The Summer Reading Challenge is an established way of working with the library - visit www.readingagency.org.uk/projects/children/readingchallenge.html. There are also lots of other ways - for example, invite the local librarian to talk to parents during a school event, or set up a 'design an alternative book jacket' competition and display the entries in the local library.

Raising the profile of libraries and reading

The National Year of Reading offers public libraries a huge opportunity to raise their profile, nationally and in their local authority. Through the NYR they should be able to attract new reading audiences and achieve more for the local communities they serve. The Reading Agency (TRA) is leading the library engagement programme for the NYR. Miranda McKearney, chief executive officer at TRA, details how libraries can support the year.

Libraries are going to be integral to the NYR. There's an exciting opportunity to drive forward the reader development movement and to profile libraries' modern reading service. As well as books to borrow, many libraries now offer help with book choice, reading groups, author events, reading challenges, reading in new formats and zoned reading spaces. Plus special support for key audiences, including families, adult learners and school age children.

In planning for the NYR we need to be realistic – libraries are under huge pressure and lots are struggling with budget cuts. Capacity is stretched and it's going to be essential to build on what's already happening.

Reading is libraries' core business and public libraries now have in place major new building blocks to help reach out to new reading audiences:

- Framework for the Future, the Government's library strategy, has invested in national reading programmes
- There are big partnerships to support work in local communities
- New regional structures and websites can help to engage reading audiences
- The Love Libraries online toolkit is a useful new tool to support libraries' reading work. Visit www.lovelibraries.co.uk/making-it-happen.

The legacy of the NYR is going to be crucial. We hope libraries will come out of it with more national and local political visibility, stronger partnerships and recognition for the outcomes they can achieve as the pre-eminent community reading network. And we hope the NYR will provide the necessary momentum for reading and library targets to be included in Local Area Agreements.

Building reader development skills of staff

There are two workforce development programmes equipping staff with reader development skills: Branching Out, for work with adult readers (visit www.branching-out.net/branching-out/index.html) and Their Reading Futures, for work with children (visit www.theirreadingfutures.org.uk).

Planning for the NYR

- Get going quickly by using existing regional networks such as SCL, ASCEL, MLA and the reader development forums
- Look out for November/December 2007 regional creative planning days. Each authority's NYR coordinator will be invited.
- National reading programmes and partnerships will play a huge role in the year – use their structures and resources to make life easier
- Use existing work as a springboard to reach new audiences and change lives
- See www.readingagency.org.uk/calendars for a library planning calendar

Reading groups – useful links

Reading groups will be important in the NYR.

- The National Reading Group Development Programme, with an East Midlands pilot, offers resources and support at www.readingagency.org.uk/projects/groups/BooksConnectReadingPack.html. Other regions interested in taking part can email debbie.hicks@readingagency.org.uk
- Chatterbooks, the children's reading group network, can be used to reach boys and families. Visit www.readingagency.org.uk/projects/children/chatterbooks.html
- For the national database of library reading groups, visit www.peoplesnetwork.gov.uk/read/findagroup.html. Add your group at www10.learndirect-advice-search.co.uk/GroupDetails

“The 2008 NYR offers public libraries the chance to make a step change in their reading work. We can build on the work of the last few years and avoid reinventing the wheel by using programmes like Bookstart, the Summer Reading Challenge, Chatterbooks and The Vital Link to reach out to new audiences.”

Fiona Williams, chair of the Society of Chief Librarians' reading group

Reading and community engagement

Libraries' core business of reading can be used to develop community engagement by:

- Using reading as a hook to engage and work towards genuine power sharing
- Working with socially excluded and disenfranchised groups
- Using reading to connect and empower individuals and communities
- Working with volunteers to help shape services and engage with the wider community.

Reaching new audiences

The NYR offers a fantastic opportunity to reach new readers, according to your community's needs. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has highlighted some priority target groups:

Early years children, their parents and carers - Libraries' early years work has a real chance to shine during the NYR. Bounce and rhyme sessions are now a core element of library services, and libraries play a central role in the extended Bookstart programme - see www.booktrust.org.uk. The Campaign for Learning will also be working with libraries to inspire families through Family Learning Week. Visit www.familylearningweek.com.

Children, especially boys - Creative library reading activities will be a central feature of the NYR. The theme for next year's Summer Reading Challenge will be sport, an ideal way to reach more boys. Chatterbooks will be developing special resources to encourage more boys to join reading groups for four to 12-year-olds. Stories from the Web has online activities at www.storiesfromtheweb.org.

Young people - Fulfilling Their Potential is libraries' national improvement programme for young people. Visit www.theirreadingfutures.org.uk. The NYR offers the chance to push forward developments - for example the Big Lottery-funded

HeadSpace project; the Booktrust teenage book prize; the Enjoying Reading website, launching in spring 2008; work with providers of study support in libraries; reading groups; and library volunteering schemes for teenagers.

Adult learners - The Vital Link supports libraries' work with adult learners. There's an online toolkit, recommended book collections, a unique



databank of titles for emergent readers (www.firstchoicebooks.org.uk) and the Six Book Challenge (visit www.vitallink.org.uk). For more ideas see page 14.

Users of alternative formats - Audio, online and screen-based reading are all part of the reading scene and need to be supported as much as print-based media. Libraries can use the year to extend the reach of alternative formats.

Black and minority ethnic communities - Libraries will be able to build on their specialist work to support these groups. The TRA/ Bookseller conference on 22 November 2007 will explore the issues and opportunities further.

Socially excluded groups - The DCSF has highlighted looked-after children and children with disabilities (see page 17) as target groups for the NYR. Libraries may also want to use the year to support other groups such as visually impaired people (see page 16), those at risk of homelessness, teenage parents, Travellers, or anyone who may find the service hard to access. There's already a great deal of information about good practice in library services for looked-after children. The Paul Hamlyn Foundation has funded 45 projects under its Right to Read programme (visit www.phf.org.uk). There is also the Welcome to Your Library project which supports asylum-seekers. Visit www.welcometoyourlibrary.org.uk.

Prisons - Libraries and prisons are joining up in projects like The Big Book Share and Storybook Dad (www.storybookdads.co.uk), encouraging family reading and library use and getting parents in prison involved in their children's reading. Prison and public library partnership is key to prisoners and their families feeling welcome in libraries.

Partnerships with schools

Public libraries, Schools Library Services, school libraries and schools can work together to provide joined up support for young readers. Enjoying Reading is a new project led by TRA, and funded by the DCSF, which offers advocacy materials to use with schools in the run-up to the NYR. The project's website will launch in spring 2008, providing resources to encourage joint working. Booktrust runs a number of important initiatives offering libraries opportunities to work with schools, including National Children's Book Week, Booktime and Booked Up. See www.booktrust.org.uk. School libraries will be a natural focus for all kinds of reading activities. For useful support materials, visit www.sla.org.uk.

Creative industry partnerships

New national partnerships with broadcasters, publishers and book prizes can help attract readers to libraries, supporting mainstream reading audiences and social inclusion work:

- BBC Learning will be working alongside libraries through the RaW campaign - see www.bbc.co.uk/raw.
- The Reading Partners consortium of adult publishers works with libraries to reach new readers - see the rolling calendars on www.readingagency.org.uk.

Making the vital link



Reading for pleasure for adults who are improving their literacy skills has come of age, just in time for the National Year of Reading 2008. The year offers the best opportunity yet to push home the message that choosing books, and reading, talking and writing about them, is a perfectly legitimate, if not essential, part of supporting adults with literacy needs and helping them to progress. Genevieve Clarke, The Vital Link coordinator, explains.

Those involved in the field of adult literacy can feel reassured that the tools are in place to make the most of the National Year of Reading. These include:

- Online toolkits and case studies suggesting ways to work with emergent readers at www.vitalink.org.uk
- A growing list of Quick Reads titles for emergent readers and more to come on 6 March, World Book Day 2008, by authors such as Chris Ryan, Josephine Cox and Colin Jackson. Visit www.quickreads.org.uk
- Resources and activities to engage families from BBC RaW. Visit www.bbc.co.uk/raw
- An expanding books database at www.firstchoicebooks.org.uk, listing the Quick Reads, plus titles published by New Island, Sandstone and Barrington Stoke as well as mainstream books which have been selected for this audience using The Vital Link criteria
- Ideas for integrating use of the Quick Reads into teaching at www.vitalink.org.uk and www.quickreadsideas.org.uk.

Find the right books for dads

Fathers and other male carers who are not confident readers now have a specially selected list of books to choose from. The Five Minutes collection ranges from titles by Nick Hornby and Jeremy Clarkson to children's favourites like *Spot the Dog* and *Funnybones*. A Vital Link with Parents project earlier this year promoted these books through libraries, children's centres and family learning workers.

In Warrington, local role models such as a policeman, fire fighter and a real-life Mr Universe led a series of storytimes. In Swindon a dads' group were inspired to make their own book, based on Nick Sharratt's *Pants!* Similar activities in 10 locations around the country have provided replicable models for engaging parents using the Five Minutes and Got kids? Get reading! collections.

A film featuring Vital Link with Parents activity in Warrington, Swindon and Basildon is available to download at www.vitalink.org.uk.

Get learners to take the Six Book Challenge

Learners across Yorkshire have been taking up the challenge to read six books and keep a record of their reading in a diary. Tina Hewitt, an adult learner from Hull, enjoyed it so much that she set up a local book group and is having a second go. She says: "To read six books is quite hard for some people. But once you've read one you have to go on to another to compare them. You get a buzz out of it."

Libraries in Yorkshire found it an excellent way of working with learning providers. Tutors have been convinced that it can really help their learners. Now the scheme is going national and will run from January to May 2008 in association with the Costa Book Awards. There will also be a prize draw for those who complete the challenge. Any organisation wanting to run the Six Book Challenge can purchase a range of materials including an information leaflet, registration card, reading diary, bookmark and certificate from The Reading Agency. Visit www.vitalink.org.uk for more details.

Work with your local library

Library staff and adult literacy tutors in Essex have been working together for several years. In 2006 they had the chance to reflect on the impact of their practice in a study funded by the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC). Eight tutors worked with 57 learners, encouraging them to choose books, discuss them and write reviews or alternative endings. Participants completed a questionnaire before and after the project and contributed to focus groups. One commented: "I am not good at reading but this book was brilliant, I liked it so much that I did my own ending." Tutors completed their own evaluation of learners' progress.

The findings demonstrate that reading for pleasure supports the development of increased enjoyment, self-confidence, motivation and the acquisition of functional literacy skills. They also confirm that the support, expertise and resources of the library service make it very easy to include reading for pleasure in delivery of the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum.

Full report details: Sue Oakley, *Practitioners leading research: Weaving reading for pleasure into the Skills for Life Adult Literacy Curriculum*. Published by the NRDC (2007).

Opening doors



The Open University

To focus its literacy project activity in the UK, The Open University is currently in discussions with the National Literacy Trust to work in partnership during the National Year of Reading 2008 and beyond. The Open University describes its plans for the NYR.

Universities occupy a unique place in society and, as a result, carry certain responsibilities. One of these is to play a developmental role in the communities in which they are sustained. This means that universities have to ask themselves what kind of engagement is appropriate to the issues and concerns of those communities. The Open University (OU) is entirely receptive to this broader role and its vice-chancellor, Professor Brenda Gourley, chairs a global project on literacy: the heart of education for all, a cause that strikes at the very root of education. This global project has been designed to provide a scope broad enough to engage universities and, in particular, their millions of students all over the world in a diverse range of context-driven literacy projects.

The project's main aim is to encourage staff and students to volunteer with literacy projects in communities everywhere. Literacy is defined very broadly, going beyond language to encompass financial, technological as well as political literacy, and also includes numeracy. With 220,000 students worldwide studying with the OU, the potential volunteering power behind the OU's literacy project is immense.

To focus its literacy project activity in the UK, the OU is currently in discussions with the National Literacy Trust (NLT) to work in partnership during the National Year of Reading in 2008. Possible areas for joint working include: the promotion of current NLT projects to staff, students and alumni of the OU, including the Family Reading Campaign; raising awareness of Reading Connects; supporting male parents to become Reading Champion dads and encouraging their children's schools to get involved in the scheme.

The Open University is excited to be taking

up the National Year of Reading challenge, which asks organisations to commit to being involved throughout the year, by encouraging our students to become reading volunteers. We are also in talks to sponsor the creation of the National Year of Reading online reading volunteering database.

Another proposal for partnership working is currently being considered with the NLT and Changers, an independent charity which enables people to make a positive and continuing contribution to society. The possibilities of virtual reading volunteering, an idea that resonates with the teaching and learning approach of the OU, would make increased opportunities for involvement available to an even larger group of potential volunteers.

The OU is also participating in Unesco's initiative to get universities involved with promoting literacy. This year, 2007, is the half-way point in the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012), so it is an appropriate moment to review the global literacy challenge. In recent years there has been a growing emphasis on the importance of literacy being recognised properly, particularly in its relation to development and democracy. The 2006 Global Monitoring Report for the Education for All campaign focused on literacy, and Unesco is currently coordinating both the UN Literacy Decade and the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE).

In conjunction with this, the OU will be working with the NLT to encourage increased university participation in the UK.

In the meantime, the OU has created an online resource for the university community, which includes:

- access to information about literacy volunteering opportunities
- links to organisations with an interest in tackling literacy and enhancing educational opportunity
- a discussion forum for sharing experience and ideas
- provision of 'case study' material and updates on progress
- information about the global project and appropriate links.

The project will maintain links with other global higher education partners committed to the global project and extend access to the online resource developed, as well as seeking ways for all partners to link with and contribute to Unesco's Education for All programme.



Image: Richard Leary

A National Year of Reading for all?

You wouldn't be reading this magazine if you didn't believe that reading was important. As well as practical benefits, like the ability to study, access a range of careers and manage your own affairs, think of the personal pleasure you get from enjoying a good book. Yashoda Sutton, communications officer at the Royal National Institute of Blind People, states the case for including everyone in a National Year of Reading.



There are three million people in the UK who are currently denied the right to read. With an ageing population this figure is set to increase, as many of us will experience deterioration of our sight as we get older.

The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) believes that everyone has the right to read. As members of the Right to Read Alliance, we are campaigning for all print disabled readers, including blind and partially sighted people, and those with dyslexia, to have access to the same book, at the same time and for the same price as readers of standard print. Good progress has been achieved, but there is still a long way to go.

Modern technology has made it easier for books and other information to be transformed into formats such as large print, braille, audio or electronic. Yet of the 125,000 new titles published in the UK each year, a staggering 96 per cent are never made available in an alternative format that a blind or partially sighted person can read. The few books that are produced in accessible formats are rarely available at the same time as the print versions, and are often more expensive; an unabridged audio book can cost over £50, but the equivalent print version is just £6.99 or £7.99.

During the National Year of Reading, RNIB and our partners in the Right to Read Alliance will continue campaigning to end this book famine. If you believe that blind and partially sighted children and adults have the right to read the same books at the same time as their sighted peers, please add your name to the Right to Read declaration at www.rnib.org.uk/righttoread.

Lucy's story:

My name is Lucy and I love reading. I am partially sighted and it is so annoying when all my friends talk about books that I can't read because I can't get them in large print.

When I was little I had lots of books. As I get older, my reading is getting better. But the print in books for children my age is much smaller, and in grown-ups' books it's far too small for me. My mum finds it hard to get books with print large enough for me, so I can't read as much as I want to. If I can't get a book I really want, I get so upset, and that upsets my mum too.

When we can get books, like my favourite Harry Potter stories, they are very expensive. The last one cost £35.00 in large print, but my friends only paid £8.99 for the small print book. Also, my books are very heavy and hard to hold. If they have pictures they are usually very blurry, or often the pictures are just left out. I never get non-fiction books in large print.

When I heard about the National Year of Reading I was so excited, but now I'm not sure that I'll be able to take part. I want to read like my friends do. I just hope I can enjoy this year along with all my friends and not feel left out this time.

Lucy, aged 8

What you can do:

Sign the Right to Read declaration and encourage others to do the same - visit www.rnib.org.uk/righttoread.

Make sure that events and activities you organise to celebrate the NYR do not exclude blind, partially sighted, dyslexic and other print disabled readers.

For more information contact RNIB on 020 7391 2123 or email righttoread@rnib.org.uk.

Make reading an inclusive experience

The National Year of Reading was launched with a pledge by the Government to promote reading for pleasure for all. But can the NYR really include everyone? Penny Dickinson, information and resources officer at In the Picture, considers this issue.

The books that we read as children have a profound effect on our attitudes, values and development. By identifying with the characters in these books we learn about ourselves, and how we fit in and interact with the wider world. The first books for young children are picture books. Through their imagery and illustration they give powerful messages to children at a very early stage.



There are some 770,000 disabled children in the UK who have virtually no role models in literature. The absence of images of disabled children reinforces the sense of isolation they often experience. It affects the attitude of non-disabled children too. Research has shown that perception of disability is formed early in a child's development and children are more likely to accept disability if they see images of disabled people at an early age.

In The Picture is an innovative, Big Lottery-funded, project aimed at the children's book world. Managed by disability charity Scope as part of its Time to Get Equal initiative, In The Picture

wants disabled children to be able to find themselves represented in early years books.

The project, now in its final year, has been working with the children's book world to try to ensure that disabled children are more visible in mainstream literature. The aim is not to create a separate strand of literature for disabled children, but that all children will be able to recognise themselves in mainstream books right from the very beginning.

Encouraging children to enjoy story books and to read can be a challenge. For a disabled child other issues can come in to play:

"I am the mother of a bright, inquisitive, nine-year-old girl who attends our local mainstream school, despite having athetoid cerebral palsy and epilepsy. Unfortunately, she has little interest in reading to herself and I believe part of the reason for this is the lack of identifiable characters in everyday children's literature." Parent

“There are loads of books with children who aren't different in them but if I came across a book with disabled children in it I'd want to read it and it would also help me understand.”

Celine, aged 9.

"I feel passionately that disabled children should feature in stories, poems, plays and non-fiction writing. This initiative is brilliant and innovative, where the families with disabled children work with professional writers to produce lively, challenging and entertaining material." Gervase Phinn, author and former school inspector

Reading resources from the In the Picture website - www.childreninthepicture.org.uk

- The stories section. Read some of the entertaining, realistic and empowering stories for children. Some are animated and interactive, all are great fun.
- A section examining current methods available to include all children in reading experiences.
- Inclusive booklists. There are two parts to the booklists section of the website – one with links to lists created by other organisations and one listing details of new works since the project started.

Core values of the National Year of Reading include impact, celebration, diversity and participation - take up the challenge (see page 3) and make sure to include all children in your reading initiatives!

You can play your part in encouraging the book world to produce more books, both directly and through the website, and between us we will put disabled children "in the picture".

For more information, visit www.childreninthepicture.org.uk.

The National Year of Reading - a challenge for business!

“The National Year of Reading provides a great opportunity for businesses to play their part in raising the importance of reading to a modern, competitive economy. Reading enables people of all ages to develop and hone essential literacy skills as well as providing huge pleasure and fulfilment to many.

Business has a great role to play in the NYR. We want businesses to get employees reading and volunteering to help others read, and for businesses to provide financial support to community-based reading and literacy initiatives. UK economy will benefit in the end!”

Amanda Jordan, chair of trustees at the National Literacy Trust, and chair and founding director of The Smart Company

Good literacy skills are at the heart of any successful business and many organisations are already dedicated to supporting literacy for employees and local communities in the UK. There are now greater literacy and numeracy demands than ever before, due to the increased complexity of traditional jobs. Businesses have a unique role to play in literacy promotion and every company should support the development of skills for their employees, and their local communities. Literacy and reading for pleasure underpin all educational achievement, but also increase general knowledge, social skills and community participation.

Across the globe, companies need well-trained, ambitious employees to further their success. Successful businesses spark economic growth, fuelling prosperous communities. The task of

improving today’s workforce whilst preparing young people for the challenges of tomorrow remains critical.

Every company is able to make a sustainable, positive difference to its local communities, customers and employees through investing in literacy at every level. From volunteering to philanthropic grants, from support for basic skills to family reading promotion, business is in a unique position to help change lives through literacy.

The benefits to business

- Save money and increase profits – help create the efficient workforce of the future.
- Create a happier, more motivated workforce by supporting employees and their families, and by providing self-development opportunities.
- Create a positive company image – support high-profile campaigns and work with the local community.
- Understand your customers by more direct contact with the community.
- Develop new community networks.

Ideas for promoting reading in the workplace

Workplace library - Set up a workplace library and encourage borrowing. The library could be of books brought in by staff or donated by the company. A local librarian may be able to help.



Magazines in reception - Have magazines and newspapers available at reception, in staff rooms and canteens.

Reading groups - A workplace reading group can help staff get to know each other better and work more effectively as a team. Harness the power of recommended reads.

Swap a book at work day - Ask staff to bring in a book to swap with a colleague. Or have a Mystery Book Swap, where staff bring in old books wrapped in newspaper and then select a mystery book from the collection.



Reading volunteers in schools

Volunteers usually undergo a short period of training before committing to spending a set amount of time per week (usually an hour) with a child, for at least a term. Volunteers are not expected to take the place of a teacher but are there to give one-to-one encouragement to children, helping them to relax, gain confidence and enjoy their reading. Volunteers from business can also be role models for children who are unfamiliar with the world of work. Examples of success in this area are below:

- **UPS recognises the fundamental importance of reading**
In the deprived St Ann's area of Nottingham, UPS has enabled the National Literacy Trust to set up a corporate volunteering pilot project which has given UPS employees the opportunity to coordinate and manage a Reading Is Fundamental, UK programme for a group of 100 local children, in partnership with teachers and nursery workers. Each participating child is able to choose and keep up to three new books a year, for two years, at a series of special events celebrating the fun and enjoyment of reading and sharing stories. UPS employees have found working on the project, about to enter its second year, a hugely rewarding experience.

- **Whitbread Reading Buddies**
Employees from Whitbread head office support local schools in Luton and Dunstable through a reading buddies scheme that provides primary school children with one-to-one reading support. The local Education Business Partnership provided training for employees and helped identify schools most in need of support. Whitbread currently works with three local schools providing volunteers who give up 400 hours of their time annually to support the scheme.

"The children enjoy seeing new faces and get very excited if they are chosen to read with a volunteer. The children who have taken part in the programme have shown a marked improvement in both their reading and comprehension. This helps them not only in literacy but across the curriculum." St. Matthew's Junior School, Luton (one of the schools supported by Whitbread Reading Buddies)

Working in the community

Factory tours, talks, special projects and careers days can support a school's literacy strategy by boosting young people's confidence and enthusiasm for learning by showing them the relevance of literacy within the workforce.



Ideas for supporting employees and their families

- Buy books as presents for staff who have a new child.
- Invite a librarian to talk to staff and let them borrow books at work.
- **Children's library exchange:** create a children's library within the workplace. Encourage staff to bring in books their children have grown out of so they can be borrowed by other parents (or grandparents, uncles or aunts).
- Support family literacy projects with sponsorship, time and resources.

The art of reading

Antonia Byatt is director of the literature strategy at Arts Council England. Here, she explains how arts and literature organisations are ideally placed to support the National Year of Reading and provides some inspiration for getting started.

It is 10 years since the first National Year of Reading (NYR), which proved to be a phenomenal catalyst for a huge amount of exciting work in the promotion of reading. The 2008 NYR is a fresh challenge and we are committed to getting even more people reading. Reading is an essential skill and there is increasing recognition of how vital it is for our future success – as a nation, as communities, and as individuals. Reading also enriches our lives, stimulates our imaginations, offers new views of the world we live in and the people we live with. Reading encourages curiosity and makes us think.

Reading is something that people can do anytime, anywhere. But it is also increasingly a social activity. Reading groups have burgeoned in recent years – in libraries, bookshops, people's homes, and even on television. Blogs and network sites have taken discussion about books and reading online. Literature festivals and other events provide innumerable opportunities to hear writers read, and talk to them about their work. There is now a fantastic infrastructure of organisations and schemes that promote reading, including World Book Day, Quick Reads, prizes such as Orange and Man Booker, excellent work in public libraries, and the government's Sure Start programme.

We hope that as many organisations as possible will get involved next year so that reading becomes a part of even more people's lives. We know that there are particular sectors in society that do not have a reading habit, so one particular challenge is to encourage reading in those places where it is generally absent, for whatever reason. Literature and other arts

organisations are in a fantastic position to form partnerships with other sectors to increase opportunities for their users – a reading group or user selected book bank might be of enormous value to people in a hospital ward, day centre, detention centre or prison, for example. A local company might be looking to team-build or provide their staff with activities that improve their work/life balance. An arts organisation can help them set up a book club, or organise a series of discussion events or a book swap shop with recommendations.

Literature organisations have real expertise in developing the social side of reading, getting people to explore ideas and writing together, to share reading experiences. That literature expertise is there for other arts organisations. If your project explores a specific issue with its audience, why not build reading into the process from the very start? The written word is an enormous mine of information, endlessly flexible and

stimulating. Think of different formats to work with: diaries and blogs, newspapers and magazines, photo stories and graphic novels, audio CDs and downloads, short stories and poetry.

You can think about yourself and your own organisation too. Read a book on your journey to work on a regular basis, organise a sponsored read for your next fundraising event, promote creative reading around work projects. Use reading to involve your users online. How about a virtual book review competition to stimulate interest in an area of your activity?

These are just a few initial ideas. As the NYR develops there will be thousands of creative projects involving a wide range of people, from the very young to the very old, from new and emergent readers to people who devour books. NYR 2008 is on the horizon, it is time to get thinking!

“If your project explores a specific issue with its audience, why not build reading into the process from the very start? The written word is an enormous mine of information, endlessly flexible and stimulating.”

Getting television on board

TV broadcasters can get involved with the National Year of Reading in a number of ways. The suggestions below offer a range of activities to suit all budgets. Although not guaranteed, a significant commitment from TV broadcasters to promoting the year will be met by appropriate non-financial support in obtaining relevant talent and spokespeople. Juliet Waugh tells how BBC RaW is getting the ball rolling for the NYR.



BBC RaW is the BBC's literacy campaign. In order to sustain interest and maintain coverage over the campaign, the following options have been pursued:

- Storylines have been negotiated and inserted in existing programming e.g. EastEnders, Doctors and Neighbours.
- Links have been made with other mainstream output to provide extra-curricular activities, such as a specially commissioned Quick Reads book from the writers of Doctor Who.
- Where possible, programmes have been commissioned that linked RaW with other national reading events. Alongside

World Book Day, new commissions have been broadcast: the documentary "Hiding the Truth: I can't read" featuring Kristian Digby and a dramatisation of *The Grey Man* by Andy McNab.

- Throughout the campaign, there have been regular updates for editorial colleagues about RaW activities countrywide to ensure ongoing exposure.
- Where possible, national activity has been mirrored by regional and local output, as well as on-the-ground activities with appropriate partners.

As with BBC RaW, the NYR offers a good opportunity for individual or sustained broadcast support. It is hoped that all broadcasters will get involved.

Get started



- Commit to a monthly highlight for the NYR by featuring local events as part of regional news programmes.
- Plan to commission new programmes with reading themes.
- Appoint an internal NYR champion who will look for opportunities within existing broadcast output to highlight the year. They can also champion reading to employees internally – see page 18 for more on supporting NYR in the workplace.
- Consider book/TV tie-ins.

Let's Read – local press and the community



The Nottingham Evening Post has launched the Let's Read campaign, in partnership with Nottingham City Library and Information Services, to improve literacy and get people across the city reading together. The campaign aims to show people of all abilities and from different backgrounds that reading can be fun and that it can change their lives. This is a great example of how media organisations can support the NYR in their communities and create partnerships for a sustainable legacy.

The campaign targets parents and carers, teenagers, those with emerging literacy and adult readers. As an incentive to get involved in the campaign, the newspaper is printing tokens for readers to get books and other giveaways when they join their local library or activate their membership.

For more information and ideas, visit www.thisisnottingham.co.uk.

“Reading is boring; books don’t relate to me.”



These comments by young people show why we must ensure that the National Year of Reading has something for everyone. Natalie Smith, director of Red, a multicultural online bookseller, explains how this applies to youth and community organisations.

Due to the increase in technology, ranging from hi-tech mobile phones to advanced computer games, the passion and interest in reading among today’s young people has steadily declined. This is particularly the case in inner cities where many children live within single parent families and have parents who, whilst maintaining a busy lifestyle, often entertain children from a young age with gadgets, rather than encouraging them to read more. Schools and youth organisations are regularly relied upon to educate children, while enthusing them to enjoy learning, despite having limited resources to achieve this.

Equally, recognition must be given to the heavily influential peer pressure which is increasingly obvious among today’s youth, and particularly among those who live in multicultural urban areas. Peer pressure can be a cause for the decline in the passion for reading. Often, reading and being clever are defined by today’s youth as simply not ‘cool’, and of course, during the teenage years, perception by peers is of extreme importance.

While schools are provided with educational facilities, teachers and adequate learning provisions, youth organisations have the more difficult task of motivating children without the natural authority that is evident in schools. For these organisations, encouraging the development of reading in young people must be by making reading fun, rather than through the adoption of an authoritative

nature, and it should appeal to image-conscious kids.

For this reason, in January 2008 the National Year of Reading launches the NYR challenge (see page 3), which will involve a series of themed public activities with the aim of raising awareness of the importance of reading and inspiring more people to read for pleasure. Because of the nature of the NYR challenge, youth organisations are encouraged to participate as they are well-placed to motivate children to read and take part in activities whilst maintaining their non-authoritative stance. In addition, parents of children attending youth organisations can be encouraged to become involved in the challenge, which will improve interaction between parents and their children, remind parents of the joys that can be experienced through reading and, leading by example, encourage their children to read.

Public activities for the NYR will begin in April 2008, so ensure your organisation takes part and your children experience the enjoyment of reading and learning. You can obtain a range of multicultural titles that will appeal to readers at all levels, a list of the most effective titles for specific groups, and book bundles designed to meet your readers’ needs at www.redculture.org. In addition to literature, Red also offer a wide range of services from educational lifestyle workshops to reading campaigns designed to help you increase the enjoyment of reading.

Top tips for encouraging reading

- Facilitate reading groups for parents and children
- Obtain and share literature that contains themes and storylines that are of interest to young people and reflect today’s multicultural society
- Ensure your selection of books has an adequate amount of multicultural literature across all reading key stages to appeal to all readers
- Include supplementary activity to increase the association between reading and fun
- Promote reading by obtaining the support of key personalities and role models in your community
- Encourage creative writing
- Promote the use of electronic aids and audio books
- Read alternative literature i.e. magazines, inspirational literature, etc
- Actively promote reading as a necessary tool in achieving ultimate success.



Working with Gypsies and Travellers to support the National Year of Reading

Ideas and inspiration for working with these communities are provided by Rodie Akerman, policy analyst at the National Literacy Trust.

A wide variety of organisations work with Gypsies and Travellers, but not all of them will have thought that they can have a role in promoting reading to these communities. However, it is precisely with groups where many have traditionally been somewhat wary of anything to do with 'education' that seemingly unconnected organisations can have the most impact – and the National Year of Reading provides the ideal opportunity to spread the message that reading is fun.

Where people might not yet see reading as an enjoyable activity, there are other benefits to emphasise: for parents of young children, sharing a book can help to establish the bond between parent and baby, as well as helping children to develop their spoken language. Perhaps the most important message of all is that this applies whether or not the parent can read; he or she is still their child's first educator, can still contribute a tremendous amount to their child's development – and can still enjoy looking at books with their child. Parents want the best for their children, and being familiar with books and able to read provides a base for a child's whole education. For the parents themselves, if they struggle with literacy, reading can help them to improve their skills so that they can do more – for example, supporting their children's school work and reading letters that come home from the school, as well as understanding information for their own benefit, such as health promotion literature.

While organisations might struggle to achieve such outcomes or to provide access to reading materials on their own, working in

partnership can extend their reach. This may prove particularly important for local authorities, which are under a statutory duty to promote equal opportunities and race equality, and may wish to use the National Year of Reading to support outcomes for Gypsies and Travellers in their areas.

Essex Traveller education

When the county library service in Essex wanted to reach out to the Traveller community, it was a partnership with the Traveller Education Service, the Gypsy Services team, Sure Start, local schools and other community groups that helped the project take off. This enabled the library service to go to the Travellers, in the form of mobile library visits – after the ground had been prepared among the community, and the staff had been given training in cultural awareness and time to select the right book stock. This meant thinking about books that were culturally sensitive, and in some cases culturally specific.

The selection offered included mainstream children's material, and also non-fiction books, both adult and children's, on subjects known to be of interest, such as animal keeping. Some Traveller heritage books were also included, sourced through small publishers, often Traveller education services. While difficult to track down, the benefits of these books proved enormous: with lots of photos and little text, they were easier for those who struggled with literacy. They also had a special appeal in this case, because many of the photos featured extended family members and others known to the readers. The stock also featured a selection of videos and DVDs, which proved popular, and can be a good 'way in' to libraries for those who are unfamiliar with them.

This project helped the schools involved to support the Traveller children's reading – and as the children grew excited about the library and the books, their enthusiasm spilled over to their parents, proving once again how exciting reading can be once it is discovered.

Useful links

Friends, Families and Travellers - www.gypsy-traveller.org

National Association of Teachers of Travellers - www.natt.org.uk

Scottish Traveller Education Programme - www.scottishtravellered.net

“It's vital that children and young people read as much and as widely as possible. Reading is the key to success – at work and at play – and it can help you with your problems, and to understand how other people think and live. But just as importantly it's great fun!

Mike Clarke, director of the London Libraries Development Agency

A reading snowball!

READ.WRITE.inspire, Peterborough's city literacy campaign, is looking forward to the National Year of Reading. It is in this year that the campaign is hoping to reach the goal of 1,000 children supported by volunteer readers. Janet MacPhee, project director, describes what the project has in store.

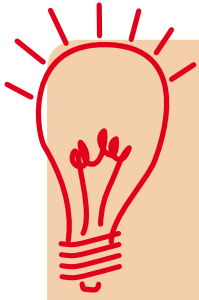
READ.WRITE.inspire started two years ago with the aim of encouraging businesses and organisations to become involved in reading with children and young people. The familiar 'reading buddy' model was chosen, whereby organisations agree to release employees in work time for an hour a week to read with children in schools on a one-to-one basis. READ.WRITE.inspire's original aim was to have 300 children supported by 100 reading buddies in schools within a year. To our delight this target was achieved. The local media gave the initiative a lot of attention which, in turn, attracted more organisations wanting to be involved – in other words, things snowballed! Peterborough now has 152 reading buddies reading in 46 schools (primary, secondary and special), working with 400 children and young people.

Following the success of using volunteers from organisations, the next stage was to engage parents, through the school their child attended, to become parent reading buddies. READ.WRITE.

inspire encouraged each school to try to get at least one man to agree to be a reading buddy – one school managed to recruit four dads. Twenty-four primary schools are now Parent Reading Buddy Schools, with 180 parents reading and sharing books with children. In some cases, the reading volunteers are grandparent reading buddies who are thoroughly enjoying their new role within the school.

The 'snowball' effect carried on with people learning and hearing about reading buddies through our website, by word of mouth and also through great local media coverage. READ.WRITE.inspire has been contacted by different organisations and individuals that would not otherwise have been approached – for example, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme (RSVP). The potential support from retired individuals is very exciting and we are very much looking forward to the first 10 reading volunteers from the Peterborough RSVP branch.





Top tips from READ.WRITE.inspire

Start with your own organisation - send an email round asking if any partners, spouses or relatives work in organisations that would be interested in voluntary reading with children.

The personal approach to employers is much more effective than a letter. Where possible, make an appointment to have a chat to explain what you have in mind. Make sure you leave information that is short, to the point and spells out exactly what commitment you need from an employer.

Check out the CSR (corporate social responsibility) policies via websites of businesses you are considering approaching to find out what they are committed to achieving in the community.

Find out if there is a regular meeting of school librarians and invite yourself along. Librarians are always keen to promote reading events, competitions and display material in their libraries – great publicity.

Don't forget to suggest to schools that their governors might like

to be involved in a reading initiative.

Monitor impact through questionnaires and interviews, making sure that children, reading buddies and the employer are all asked for their views.

Make sure that expectations are clearly understood by employers or line managers and that you have the name of a person who is responsible for the initiative within the organisation. If this isn't 'watertight' things soon start to fall apart.

Start small. Check your capacity to be able to organise matching reading volunteers with schools and then gradually let the initiative grow.

Hold a workshop session to start reading buddies off on the right foot. Liaise with the Primary Strategy team to make sure that the reading message is consistent.

Finally, line up some good local media coverage for your first event.

ROWA! takes up the NYR challenge

Read On – Write Away!, an independent literacy organisation based in Derbyshire, will be involved in promoting the National Year of Reading in the following ways:

Storytelling sessions – ROWA! will be offering Derby City and Derbyshire nursery, infant and primary schools storytelling sessions to promote the NYR and engage young people in reading activities. This may lead to the development of writing projects and competitions and will link to the BBC RaW campaign.

The MATCH IT! project – works to engage dads and their children in sporting activities with embedded Skills for Life activities. The NYR will be promoted through stock used on this challenging course – where lads, lasses and dads can have fun and share quality time together.

The ROWA! website (www.rowa.org.uk) will have a dedicated page, highlighting the NYR and encouraging everyone to take part in activities. The NYR will also feature on the ebulletin service.

ROWA! is already involved in partnership meetings with Derbyshire Libraries regarding the planning of NYR activities in Derbyshire. ROWA! assessors will also be checking with all library staff who are currently undertaking the Quality in Libraries Award to ensure they are knowledgeable about the NYR, and finding out what events they will be offering to their customers, especially families and those who may have literacy needs.

Every ROWA! project will be promoting activities to celebrate the NYR throughout the year and news will be shared via the website and ebulletin.

Libraries and community organisations

There is great potential to strengthen links between religious organisations and public libraries. The National Year of Reading is a celebration of reading in all languages. Many libraries already offer community language books in places of worship across the UK, e.g. in Sikh temples, Mandirs and Mosques. However, some religious and community organisations have set up their own special libraries and a partnership with your local library can help to enhance this collection – for example, by including reader development activities to help generate enthusiasm for books and reading.

Libraries are brilliant at staging events and promoting books in relation to religious festivals and events, so you may want to consider including a reading focus for the main festivals celebrated next year, e.g. Easter, Vaisakhi, Eid, Diwali and Christmas.

Community language and faith classes for children will also benefit from a partnership with the library service. Building reading for pleasure into the community language / faith curriculum, will help enthuse children to develop a reading and book borrowing habit, and develop and improve their reading skills, which will help support their mainstream schooling.

Authors, poets, illustrators and storytellers

A visit by an author, poet, illustrator or storyteller is a great way to bring the magic of reading alive to reluctant readers and to enthuse and motivate existing readers. This article focuses on inviting authors into schools, but author visits can be equally as effective in a variety of settings including libraries, workplaces, museums, and community centres.

Planning is the key to a successful visit. First, decide why you want the author to visit your setting. It could be to enthuse your pupils about reading; it could be to fit into a theme of work or as part of a programme of events. Once you are clear about your aims, think about what sort of person would be appropriate. The skills of talking, writing and illustrating are quite different; make sure you do your research into what would best motivate your audience, and what the age-range of your chosen author's work is. Don't limit yourself to fiction writers; there are plenty of enthusiastic non-fiction writers who could be linked to the curriculum outside of English or in an adult setting.

Think about what format you want the visit to take. It could be a reading to a large assembly, a question and answer session, a small workshop-based event, a performance or interactive event, or a writing technique top-tips session.



Top tips

- Get your students and colleagues to read one or more of the visiting author's books before the event. Discuss the books and think of some questions to ask the author
- Get parents, non-teaching staff, and as many people as possible involved
- A well organised event is essential. A non-event can confirm pupils' prejudices that stories are boring. If your visit is successful, you will have a good chance of getting the author back in the future.

Most authors will charge a fee to come into schools and libraries. You can find out more about recommended authors and fees from the resources recommended on the opposite page. Many authors will have full diaries for many months, particularly around national events, such as World Book Day, so make sure you book as early as possible. Remember, local bookshops and libraries are a good source of advice on local authors and events. Publishers can also put you in touch with authors, although they are often very busy.

Resources

Booktrust produces a comprehensive guide on how to plan a school visit from an author, sharing stories, and activities and suggested reads for different ages based on National Children's Book Week (October). To download the guide visit www.booktrusted.co.uk/authors/findauthor.php4.

As part of the **Writing Together** project, Booktrust has also produced a step-by-step guide to bringing writers into schools, including case studies, information, ideas and tips. Visit www.booktrust.org.uk/writers.



National Association of Writers in Education maintains a directory of artists working in education. Funded by Arts Council England, the 'artscape' directory lists hundreds of artists working in a wide range of art-forms across the UK. Visit www.nawe.co.uk.

National Centre for Language and Literature at the University of Reading has an up-to-date online database of contacts. Visit www.ncll.org.uk/25_LFA.

Reading Is Fundamental, UK has a downloadable storyteller list (pdf) including recommended authors, illustrators and performers willing to visit schools and libraries. Visit www.literacytrust.org.uk/rif/projectzone/resourcesEvents.htm.

Seven Stories Centre for Children's Books, based in Newcastle upon Tyne, runs storytelling events, as well as opportunities to meet and talk to authors and illustrators. Visit www.sevenstories.org.uk.

Society of Authors has over 8,000 members and a 'search for an author' function on its website. Visit www.societyofauthors.net.

Storytelling centres

London Centre for International Storytelling
Tel: 020 8841 9098. Website: www.thelcis.org.uk

Scottish Storytelling Centre, based in Edinburgh
Tel: 0131 556 9579. Website: www.scottishstorytellingcentre.co.uk

The George Ewart Evans Centre for Storytelling, based at the University of Glamorgan
Tel: 01443 483312. Website: <http://storytelling.research.glam.ac.uk>



Ideas and top-tips from the Scottish Storytelling Centre

- Research your local history and community stories – these can often be found in libraries in local history collections
- Gather family stories
- Book a storyteller for an event in your area

Reading comes roaring home

Volunteer Reading Help (VRH) is a national charity that helps disadvantaged children develop a love of reading and learning. The charity does this by recruiting and training volunteers to work with children aged six to 11 who find reading a challenge and may need extra support and mentoring. A new training programme from VRH brings confidence and materials to parents and carers who want to help children to read. A M Poppy, VRH communications manager, describes the programme and how it can support the National Year of Reading.

If you are faced with parents and volunteers brimming with good intentions towards children, but needing more support in their efforts to help, a solution is now easily to hand.

A bespoke training course for people who want to help children learn to read is available across England from Volunteer Reading Help, the country's largest volunteer literacy charity. ROAR (Reach Out and Read) has been piloted in Leeds with Sure Start participants and proved a great success. One individual said: "Good practical suggestions and helpful materials to use at home."

"We tailor the session to suit the needs of the participants," says Lesley Sharp, a ROAR trainer. "The best part is showing them how much fun learning can be. So we use exercises, games, and group discussion. Then we let the participants reflect on how they can use the same techniques with their children."

ROAR is based on extensive experience. For nearly 35 years VRH has been training volunteers, placing them in primary schools, and providing them with ongoing support. In that time, the volunteers have boosted the literacy and self-esteem of nearly 100,000 children who were in danger of falling through the net.

ROAR can be adapted to include a mixture of the following information:

- Pre-school reading
- What to do with a book
- The reading process
- What may be needed for effective reading
- What children learn at school
- The range of reading material
- Visiting a library
- Games
- Dyslexia
- English as an additional language



"The best part is showing them how much fun learning can be. So we use exercises, games, and group discussion. Then we let the participants reflect on how they can use the same techniques with their children."

The participants most appreciate the variety of ways they learn to encourage children to read. They also value learning about appropriate books, games and activities to make reading enjoyable.

"Teaching children is easy when you know how," says Lesley. "But at first it can be hard to imagine not being able to read so people can't identify with the child's problem and don't know the ways into the solution."

ROAR presents participants with puzzles that remind them how it feels not to be able to read and shows them ways to solve the problems. These exercises also remind the participants of the importance of building confidence in making progress. Other modules tackle issues such as using games, libraries, and overcoming problems associated with poor English and poor communication skills.

"You know it's worked when the participants say that overall they're more confident now in helping their children," says Lesley. "It's all very worthwhile."

VRH is an England-wide organisation so trainers will come to your area and deliver a ROAR session in any suitable venue. For more information contact Helen Healy on 020 7749 7971 or email helen.healy@vrh.org.uk.

“Every aspect is hugely rewarding”

Gill Pengelly, volunteer with Volunteer Reading Help, describes what it means to be a children's reading volunteer.

There are so many reasons for being a reading helper it's hard to know where to start. Working with a child who is obviously enjoying the exclusive experience of having an adult, who is not their carer or teacher, playing games, talking to them, and revealing a whole new world through reading to them is hugely rewarding. This is especially true if they don't have an extended family. Being the envy of the other children in the class helps them to gain confidence and is enormously flattering! I am not alone in feeling like this – there's one woman I know, who says that being a volunteer reading helper is the most satisfying thing she's ever done.

I approached VRH initially as a result of working as a magistrate in youth courts where the literacy levels of defendants were often strikingly poor. I hoped that working with pre-teens might help to nip offending in the bud. I go into my local primary school twice a week for an hour-and-a-half and chat, play games, and read with three children over a year. I find out something new every time I go in, about the culture and life of the young people, which is a huge bonus – you never stop learning.

Volunteering in this way also anchors me in my community. I sometimes bump into my children and their families in the local shops, and they always say, “hello miss”. There's one child who used to walk past my house on his way to the library, which thrilled me – I'd be in my front room and he would wave.

I build a relationship with the children; I learn about their lives and I tell them about my family life. I discover what makes them laugh, what they're interested in, and I feel valued too. One of my volunteer colleagues says she'd almost pay to do it, it's such fun.

Then there's the bonus of when the teacher tells me that one of the children's reading has been assessed and they have made a three-year improvement in the one year since we started. It's all so rewarding. The only downside is when the children move on to secondary school, and our meetings stop - but that's what growing up is all about. At least I know I have done what I can to make secondary school a good experience.



Image: Stefano Cagnoni

Words for wellbeing

Reading takes us out of ourselves, stretches the imagination, engages the emotions. A good read can help us relax, or see different ways of looking at things – and it gives us something to talk about. John Duffy works on the bibliotherapy project at Kirklees Libraries. Here he explains how reading and health can work in partnership.

Based in Kirklees Libraries, we use books and reading to engage with people affected by stress, depression and anxiety; who are marginalised or lonely; who love reading but who don't know what to read next.

We work with groups or individuals, getting to know people and the books they love (or hate), lending books and talking about them. We meet them in the libraries where we work, hospitals and day centres, community rooms and their own homes.

We read with people – comparing responses to books, poems or passages. Bookchat is a readers' club, enabling people affected by stress to enjoy book discussions without the demands of a reading group (though we've done those too).

Bookchat

Anne comes to Bookchat in a wheelchair: she has severe arthritis, psychosis and a history of domestic violence; she has been directed to the group by her community mental health team. She needs to read, saying: "I've been stuck in the house for months, reading, and I'm fed up with serial killers! I want something new."

Sitting in a room in Dewsbury Library, with seven or eight other people who attend Bookchat, she is visibly enthused by the discussion round the table as we read and discuss two poems, some passages from Iain Banks novels, and *The Boleyn Inheritance* by Philippa Gregory. She leaves with a novel and two volumes of poetry.

Most of the group members have a history of depression or psychosis, but some people come because they love to talk about books: everyone talks freely and listens sympathetically. Reading and our love for books is breaking down the isolation which people with mental illness often feel.

The group always ends with a visit to Cloggs Cafe, where staff are old friends of the group and make everyone welcome: we sit and keep talking about books. Anne makes friends, shares enthusiasms, can't wait until next week.

Reminiscence and reading

Some older people, affected by depression or memory loss, often find it difficult to read or write. Using the theme of Parks (as part of the Libraries' Breathing Places spring festival), we ran four

reminiscence sessions in Dewsbury Hospital. It was recorded in a method called 'catching butterflies', taking down the words as they are spoken.

After each session notes were transcribed, producing a group poem, which was read back to the group at the next session, giving people the opportunity to correct (or embellish) what they said the day before. The opportunity to talk, the sudden memory of something not thought about for years, the desire to tell your own story – these are things we all cherish. For this group it was important and inspirational. The response when we read back the previous day's words was one of delight.



Getting started with reading activities



- Run the activity in partnership with other agencies – find other book enthusiasts and go beyond your own immediate client group.
- Engage libraries and librarians' skill and enthusiasm.
- Choose books which you enjoy to begin with – these are the only 'right' books to use.
- Follow people's enthusiasms: everyone has strong opinions about books and authors, there is no shortage of advice.
- Don't restrict membership – people with no history of poor mental health join our groups because they provide laughter.

Poems that please patients

“What a really lovely idea, thank you very much for lighting up our doctor’s surgery waiting room. The atmosphere in the waiting room was none too healthy, but your poems are all wonderful - and meaningful. Well done and thanks.” An enthusiastic reader of Poems in the Waiting Room (PiTW). Editor of PiTWR, Michael Lee, describes the charity’s work.

**POEMS
IN THE
WAITING
ROOM**

Poems in the Waiting Room is a registered charity that supplies batches of poetry cards to doctors’ surgeries. Established in 1998, the poetry published combines classical poems with contemporary work. The reader is invited to keep the poetry card as an enduring, rather than ephemeral, link with the poems: the service is free. The charity’s objective is to promote poetry, engage users in reading and make the patient’s wait more pleasant. PiTWR has become the most widely read regular poetry publication and the most extensive arts in health programme in the NHS. The autumn 2007 circulation totals 17,500, distributed to over 750 NHS units.

The project focuses on general practice as this sector offers particular advantages to all literary arts in health projects. First, the individual units are small scale, and there is therefore close involvement of practice staff in the literary project: they get immediate and direct feedback. Enthusiasm of staff is a key to success. Further, general practice is diffused through all social sectors and therefore offers literary projects the means of penetrating more disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

PiTWR research shows that it has great appeal across the spectrum of social and economic diversity. The poetry cards are as likely to be taken by patients from hard-pressed problem areas as affluent neighbourhoods.

The quality of poetry is the most important ingredient. A prime consideration is the selection of poems. Editorial guidelines were shaped by experienced family doctors, with help from a consultant psychiatrist and poet. The crucial issue is that readers are patients waiting for a medical consultation. They are likely to be anxious, concerned, and perhaps even emotionally disturbed. A poem is acceptable only if it recognises this situation. The doctor’s waiting room is not the place for challenging or experimental literary or poetical work.

PiTWR poems flow from the springs of wellbeing. The virtue of hope is all-inclusive, yet other images and symbols such as home and acceptance, safe journey and arrival, friends and companionship, care and security, harvest and abundance, work and reward, books and learning, beauty and transcendence, spring and renaissance, together with all the joys of love and loving, ensure a wide variety in selections.

My post includes a letter saying: “I have just picked up a copy of Poems in the Waiting Room, and I thought what a great thing. Full of thoughts of self and sorrowful me, it plucked me out of my doom and filled me with a moment of beauty. Whosoever you are, thank you; great idea!” With such feedback you know that you have a successful project.

Read your way to health

Skills for Health, the sector skills development agency for health organisations, works to inspire reading across the sector as well as support literacy, language and numeracy. Colleen Blake, Skills for Life consultant/adviser, provides some useful links and ideas for health organisations looking to encourage the promotion of reading and realise the essential benefits.

Useful links

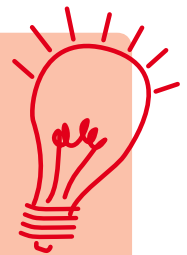
Skills for Health website – to enable health organisations to implement literacy, language and numeracy.
Visit www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/lln.

Move On and Get On At Work – Skills for Life is the national strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills. Get On At Work is the strand within Skills for Life that focuses on employees improving their literacy and numeracy skills to Level 2 and gaining a national qualification. Visit www.move-on.org.uk.

The Network - This site offers workplace language, literacy and numeracy stakeholders a complete portfolio of invaluable information. Visit www.thenetwork.co.uk.

Top tips

- Share experiences through writing stories and storytelling
- Hold workshops: family reading with emotions and expression; decipher medical language; read and write reports/instructions; skimming and scanning; planning a holiday; there’s always a book for you somewhere!
- Stimulate and connect the family through reading
- Run short story competitions.
- Promote reading for relaxation and health
- Read to reduce stress, anxiety and depression
- Encourage and support reading groups and reading areas
- Promote best reads and books related to the health sector
- Work in partnership with library services.



The power of sport

Sport can have a huge impact on the motivation of both children and adults to improve all aspects of their literacy and communication skills. Many sports grounds, especially football clubs, have study support centres through the Government's Playing for Success (PFS) initiative and are already doing a lot of work to inspire members of their local communities to improve their literacy skills.

Opportunities created through the world of sport have allowed children to experience literacy promotion activities in exciting new environments. Modern ICT equipment at PFS study centres enables people to use digital communication to strengthen their literacy skills through website building, blog writing, animation and even radio broadcasting.

Reading The Game (RTG), an initiative run by the National Literacy Trust, offers some ideas for how any sports organisation can get in on the act, no matter what size, in what league or whether or not they have a study support centre.



Sport and literacy – an inspiring combination

- Sport motivates reluctant readers and writers to engage with books and other literacy activities by providing a familiar and popular theme to begin exploring. Once reading and writing about sport, they will feel more comfortable with expanding their reading choices and writing about other topics.
- Linking sport to literacy activities enables teachers and librarians to tap into people's enthusiasm for sport to motivate them to read and write.
- Sportsmen and women are an inspiration to millions. Their influence can help promote the importance of literacy to people who might not otherwise be reached.

Why get involved with literacy?

- Sports organisations can make a real difference. A love of reading or writing, and an enthusiasm to share this with others, is all you need to create meaningful community literacy-based activity.

- By encouraging children to enjoy reading and writing, your organisation will be helping them to develop skills that enrich their lives and help them fulfil their potential.
- When a club is involved in literacy activities, it gives a positive message about literacy to young people. It shows children that their local and national heroes are interested in reading, and more importantly, that they read as part of their daily lives.
- Sports clubs have the very powerful tool of role models and can offer attractive rewards for learners to work towards. Sportsmen and women are aspired to, their activities imitated. By showing them as readers, reading can also become an activity to aspire to.

Reading activities – the benefits to clubs

By running reading activities a club can begin to form a greater role in the local community. Internally, the club can also benefit from new skills among staff, including players and team members. New audiences and fans can be reached through increased contact with local schools and libraries. Above all, younger sportsmen and women can gain experience of communication skills (eg through question and answer activities) and see how they will be expected to act as role models in their community.

RTG works to deliver projects directly to target beneficiaries, complemented by campaign activity and follow-up resources. The initiative provides sports clubs with meaningful and achievable ways in which they can use their influence to promote literacy in their communities. This helps to facilitate and share good practice. RTG also contributes to and leads workshops and seminars.

Various established RTG programmes are run through partnerships created with clubs, libraries and schools. Those featured below can easily be adapted to allow any sports organisation or club to run a version themselves. Visit www.readingthegame.org.uk to find out more.

Premier League Reading Stars

Creates family reading groups through partnerships between libraries and their local Premier League Football Club. Reading Champions from Premier League clubs nominate their favourite adult and children's titles, which are discussed by each group. Libraries are provided with free copies of the titles and the families receive free books at a bookshop visit. Clubs provide incentives ranging from player visits to free match tickets for the groups as end-of-project rewards.



Playing With Words (PWW)

A school-based reading programme that sees Football League clubs challenging local pupils to read 100 books in a term. The clubs then arrange for special rewards once the groups hit the 100 mark. Each class involved receives free books, and pupils record their reading choices in their own PWW reading journal. A club-branded class wall chart also tracks their progress.

12 ways to make reading part of your work

1. Reading Champions

Players, team members and staff can become Reading Champions. Visit www.readingchampions.org.uk.

2. Reading recommendations

Let people know what players are reading when they're away on tour and what they liked to read when they were younger.

3. Reading recordings

Create visual or audio recordings of sports people reading from or talking about their favourite books. This will be a great resource for local schools. Visit www.readingthegame.org.uk for the Reading the Game DVD, featuring top flight footballers doing just that.

4. School visits

Reading buddies: Players, coaches, or anyone from a sports club could act as volunteer readers in local schools. As well as trying to improve the reading skills of the children, it will also help to develop a love of reading, increase confidence and self-esteem, and give the pupils a sense of achievement and of being valued. Contact local schools or see page 28.

Assemblies, Q&A sessions: Having a sports person talk to young people about why they love reading will be incredibly inspiring and motivating for a sport-loving reluctant reader.

5. Dads 'n' lads groups

Get fathers and sons together at the sports ground, a library or a school. Try putting together book lists of recommended reads, offering prizes from a sports club for book reviews, recording match commentary to accompany pieces of silent footage, or match report writing (see below).

6. Match reports

Hold competitions to write match reports, published in the programmes, club newsletters, club website or a local newspaper. Children who take part in coaching sessions could be asked to write a report on the last session. To help them use their imagination, suggest they add to what really happened by pretending a sports star came along to teach them a few tricks.

7. Book club

Lead by example: start a book club at the club/organisation for staff and team members. This will help them be confident in talking about their own reading habits. Convince those who mainly read magazines or online content that this is just as valid and they can share this.

8. Book squad

Ask children who would make up their book squad? What about their first team of 11? Who would you want on the bench (three players)? Each child takes on the responsibility of a book and can argue for its place in the team.

9. Interviews

To inspire children to write, local sports clubs can send a representative to local schools for children to interview, eg for a school newsletter/website, the club's programme or a local paper. It could be in the form of a competition to carry out the interview or focused on boys who are reluctant writers.

10. Writing competition

Try one of the following themes:

- a day in the life of... (a player from a local team, manager, coach or a national sports star)
- an inspiring speech to rally the team at half-time
- a speech to persuade others to support the same team as you.

11. Library link

Have a presence in local libraries through signage or a sports themed display with photos of team members reading accompanied by quotes about their favourite books. See www.premierleaguereadingstars.org.uk for examples.

12. Book reviews for favourite sports stars

Ask children to write book reviews for the stars of the sport. For example, they could suggest their favourite reads to David Beckham or Jonny Wilkinson.

Booktrust's National Children's Book Week resource pack will help schools to plan an event to tie in with the national celebration in October, or at any time of the year. It includes a planning checklist, ideas for activities for the foundation stage to key stage 2, and a list of useful organisations to help you book an author to visit.

Visit www.booktrusted.com. For more on author visits see article on page 26.

Book Power is a practical guide to working with books to create a literature programme for the primary classroom. It features 10 books chosen because they will stir children's ideas and involve them in discussion, and also provides units of work on each. Separate versions are available for Years 5 and 6. ISBN 1 872267 32 7. £15 (£13 for CLPE Schools Network).

Visit www.clpe.co.uk.

In October 2007, the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education published a new edition of its Core Book List, which supports the use of books within the reading curriculum under three themes: learning to read, a literature collection and an information book collection. It is updated every two years and supports the Core Book, which outlines the principles behind the use of core books; book selection criteria; the organisation of books in the classroom and in the school; issues of implementation. ISBN 1-872267 10 6. £14.50 (£12.50 for CLPE Schools Network).

Visit www.clpe.co.uk.

Classical Comics aims to create exciting and engaging graphical novel versions of classical literature, to appeal to new generations aged seven and over. The full colour, non-manga artwork should enable readers at all levels to access the story using pictures as well as words. The first titles to be published are adaptations of Shakespeare plays, with Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and Mary Shelley to follow in 2008.

Visit www.classicalcomics.com.



ContinYou's Share programme aims to help families with children aged three to 13 years to share time together and have fun, through sessions with a trained facilitator and activities that are taken away to complete together. It can be run in numerous settings, including schools, nurseries, community centres, libraries and museums. Materials are structured to complement the classroom teaching of English and maths, with the emphasis on the shared learning experience rather than on specific tasks, such as spelling. Parents can gain accreditation for their work through the Open College Network.

Visit www.continyou.org.uk.



The Family Reading Campaign is a unique partnership between a wide range of organisations which have come together as a result of a shared belief in the importance of family reading. It is coordinated by the National Literacy Trust (NLT), which

has produced a free magazine with supporting DVD, *Family Reading Matters*, to help local authorities to develop a strategic approach. The FRC has also produced a Family Reading Adventure activity card. You can download editable pdf posters of the activity card and adapt them for your setting. Visit www.familyreading.org.uk.

The NLT has also produced *Getting the Blokes on Board*, a free magazine to help practitioners to involve fathers and male carers in reading activity.

Visit www.literacytrust.org.uk/familyreading/blokes.html.

Got kids? Get reading! is a family reading promotion focusing on books for adults with a readability level of nine to 14 years (Entry level 3 - Level 2). Developed for use in children's libraries, colleges, family centres and schools, it gives the message that it's good to share books with your children and for them to see you enjoying reading. Publicity materials include: banners and posters; headers to signpost the book collection and leaflets for parents/carers about how the library can support them. A similar promotion, Five Minutes - That's all it takes to read your child a story, has been developed specifically for dads with low literacy levels.

For more information on both resources email resources@readingagency.org.uk or visit www.readingagency.org.uk.

The Quick Reads initiative was launched on World Book Day 2006 to provide fast-paced, bite-sized books by bestselling writers for emergent readers, anyone who has lost the reading habit or simply wants a short, fast read. Authors so far include Ricky Tomlinson, Kerry Katona, Richard Branson, Andy McNab, Minette Walters, Maeve Binchy and Joanna Trollope. Further titles will be published on World Book Day 2008 and publishers have committed their support for Quick Reads until 2010.

For more information visit www.quickreads.org.uk. For teaching resources using Quick Reads titles, visit www.vitallink.org.uk. See article on page 14.

The National Family Learning Network, a partnership between Campaign for Learning, ContinYou and Niace, provides free information and support to family learning practitioners and facilitates the sharing of good practice. Membership is free.

Visit www.familylearningnetwork.org.uk.



Volunteer Reading Help provides Reach Out and Read training in supporting children's reading, for volunteers in schools as well as others who may want guidance – for example, parents, grandparents, siblings, carers and childminders. Sessions can be adapted according to the group's requirements, using

a mixture of modules on offer, including: choosing reading material; pre-school reading; what children learn at school; what may be needed for effective reading; games to develop reading and communication skills; visiting libraries; dyslexia; and English as an additional language. Prices start from £450, including course materials and a certificate for each person attending.

Call 020 7729 4087, email info@vrh.org.uk or visit www.vrh.org.uk. See article on page 28.



Reading Connects provides free downloadable resources to help schools build a reading community. These include a 'reader of the month' certificate, a 'read of the week' poster, a 'Get Caught Reading' photo poster, bookmarks, stickers and a reading diary. Schools that sign up will receive a copy of the Reading Connects handbook and Family Engagement

Toolkit, a certificate, and ongoing support.

Visit www.readingconnects.org.uk. See article on page 10.

Reading Champions supports schools, prisons and other organisations in using the motivational power of male reading role models to inspire other boys and men to read. They can nominate individuals as Reading Champions to receive a certificate and badge, and join an online network to share ideas.

Visit www.readingchampions.org.uk. See article on page 10.

Ready to Read delivers lunchtime workplace seminars to help parents support their children's reading at home. Seminars are written and delivered by experienced primary school teachers and attempt to address common concerns: how to share books with young children; understanding how children learn to read and providing support; selecting appropriate books; and strategies for reluctant or struggling readers. They are aimed at parents of three main age groups: birth to three – pre-reading; four to six – emergent reading; seven to 11 – capable readers. Clients include corporate organisations such as law firms, investment banks, insurance and retail companies who want to offer support to employees who are parents.

For more information contact Angela Cohen on 07977 466 240, email ready_to_read@hotmail.com or visit www.ready-to-read.co.uk.

Read with Me is a booklet for parents and carers who want to read with their children, produced by the Basic Skills Agency. It contains advice for parents, and three stories by well-known authors to share with children. £1.50 plus p&p.

Visit <http://publications.basic-skills.co.uk>.

The Sandstone Vista series of books has been developed for adult readers who are not used to reading full length novels, or for those who simply want to enjoy a 'quick read' which is satisfying and well written.

Visit www.sandstonepress.com/vistaseries.php.

enCompassCulture is the British Council's worldwide books and reading group website. It has full details of over 10,000 books for all age ranges with separate children, teens and adult sections. There is also information about setting up and running reading groups and you can chat online with leading authors and other reading groups.

Visit www.encompassculture.com.



Vibes and Voices, produced by the National Youth Agency, aims to be informative, educative and thought-provoking, and aspires to be the 'must have' magazine for all of those involved in working with minority ethnic young people. It is published three times a year and is part of the Youth Action package.

For more information or to contribute contact Merlyne Francique on 0116 242 7408.

Dyslexia in the Workplace, by Diana Bartlett and Sylvia Moody, is a book written both for dyslexic adults and those concerned with helping them. It covers the nature of dyslexic difficulties and their effects, both practical and emotional, and offers advice to employers on how to help dyslexic staff, including reference to the Disability Discrimination Act. £22.50. ISBN 1 86156 172 5.

Call 020 7359 5979 or email info@whurr.co.uk.

Reading Together is a resource pack for volunteers working with dyslexic children. It is available free of charge from the British Dyslexia Association.

Call 0118 966 2677 or email admin@bdadyslexia.org.uk.

That Reading Thing is a basic literacy method for disaffected teenagers and young people who struggle with reading. It aims to be especially suitable for those from marginalised groups and people with very low literacy. It provides a training package and materials that can be used by non-literacy specialists working with young people, as well as school or college tutors.

Call 0151 334 3510, email welcome@thatreadingthing.com or visit www.thatreadingthing.com.



Image: Stefano Cagnoni

Sign up to the National Year of Reading challenge!

Every individual, family, organisation and workplace is invited to commit to the NYR challenge.

In January 2008, the NYR website will be launched. It will be a great way to share ideas and help us all to meet the NYR challenge.

Start thinking now so you'll be ready to take on the NYR challenge in January.

www.yearofreading.org.uk

We want to hear from you - email nyr@literacytrust.org.uk.