



Ensuring a fair deal for writers:

All Party Writers Group calls for update to PLR legislation

At the All Party Writers Group (APWG) meeting in the House of Commons last night (Thursday, 11 December) Members of both Houses met with eminent writers and senior staff from PLR and the Authors' Licensing & Collecting Society (ALCS) to discuss proposals to amend the Public Lending Right legislation.

"The growth in audio-books and the emergence of ebooks in libraries ensures a wider audience for the written word which can only be a good thing for our writers," said Jim Parker, Registrar of PLR. *"However, the PLR legislation prevents us from paying a rate per loan for these new and emerging formats, and fails to recognise the reality of new models of library delivery that sees partnerships between educational, school and public libraries. "*

It is now 30 years since the PLR Act was passed and the market for writers' work has changed considerably since 1979. The original Act dictates that writers be rewarded for the loan of their printed works from public libraries; the reality is that their work now appears in multiple formats and the face of the traditional public library as defined in the Libraries Act of 1965 is also changing.

As well as the primary legislation of the original Act, there is secondary legislation that prescribes how the PLR scheme is administered. It is cumbersome and inflexible and restricts PLR's plans to increase the size and representativeness of the public library sample that provides the loans data on which payments are made.

These discussions explored ways in which the legislation can be rebalanced to give writers a fairer deal by including the different formats that their work appears in, as well as enabling PLR to follow best practice standards for sampling and increasing their cost efficiency. PLR needs to be fit for purpose in the 21st Century.

"Ensuring a fair deal for writers is exactly what the APWG was set up to do," commented Dr Gibson MP, the group's Chairman. *"Our aim was to identify a range of solutions to these issues as requested by The Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP, Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport at our APWG meeting in July. We will then ask Barbara Follett to take these solutions forward at DCMS where her role includes responsibility for PLR."*

Writer, ALCS Honorary President and authors' rights campaigner, Maureen Duffy confirmed that: *"PLR is an important right and a vital source of income for authors and it is essential that legislation accurately reflects changes in the use of authors' works in libraries"*.

It is now a year since the APWG was formed and it held its first AGM before the start of the discussions last night. Amongst writers attending both the AGM and PLR discussions were Simon Brett, Tracey Chevalier, Mavis Cheek, Dame Margaret Drabble, Sir Michael Holroyd, Simon Nye, Mal Peet, Michael Ridpath and Meg Rosoff.

Ends/11/12/08

Media Contact

(please do not publish these numbers)

Becca Wyatt: 01403 780 383; 07801 061 420

ALCS, Alison Baxter: 020 7264 5700

ALCS

ALCS collects fees on behalf of the whole spectrum of UK writers: novelists, film & TV script writers, literary prize winners, poets and playwrights, freelance journalists, translators and adaptors, as well as thousands of professional and academic writers who include nurses, lawyers, teachers, scientists, and college lecturers. All writers are eligible to join ALCS: further details on membership can be found at www.alcs.co.uk

The Society collects fees that are difficult, time-consuming or legally impossible for writers and their representatives to claim on an individual basis: money that is nonetheless due to them. Fees collected are distributed to writers twice a year in March and September. Since its inception, ALCS has distributed over £170 million to the nation's writers.

Contact information: ALCS, The Writers' House, 13 Haydon Street, London EC3N 1DB
Tel: 020 7264 5700; email alcs@alcs.co.uk. Website: www.alcs.co.uk

PLR

Passed in 1979, the PLR Act recognises the right for authors to receive payment from public funds for the free lending of printed books by the nation's public libraries. Since its inception PLR has distributed over £107 million to authors. Each year, PLR distributes its fund to registered authors at a rate per loan. In February 2008 - relating to book loans during the period July 2006-June 2007 - PLR distributed £6.66 million to 23,942 authors at a rate per loan of 5.98 pence.

The All Party Writers Group (APWG)

Chaired by Dr Ian Gibson MP, the APWG is a forum for elected Parliamentarians in Westminster to consider and discuss matters of importance to writers. As a focal point for authors' interests, with its links to UK writer organisations, APWG is well placed to draw attention to the current issues facing writers amongst an audience of decision-makers at Westminster and beyond. The affairs of the APWG are administered by ALCS.