

All Party



Writers Group
Protecting and promoting
authors' rights

All Party Writers Group

Overview of achievements during the past year

February 2008

At their first meeting, the All Party Writers Group looked at the general issues writers are facing regarding the use of their work in the digital environment. The Group examined the current IP policy discussions (notably those arising from the Gowers recommendations on copyright) and considered the way in which new allowances for users would be framed so as to protect writers' fundamental right to a fair reward for the use of their works.

The All Party Writers Group also supported an Early Day Motion requesting the Government to reconsider the recent decision to apply a cut to the budget allocated to the Public Lending Right.

May 2008

At the second meeting the All Party Writers Group welcomed the Chairs from other All Party Groups involved with the creative industries to identify key issues and potential areas of joint activity. It was unanimously acknowledged that the work of creators was invaluable to both society and the British economy and that the creators had a right to be compensated for the use of their work. A more detailed discussion looked at the proposals advanced by British Music Rights concerning licensing models for format-shift rights proposed by Gowers.

June 2008

The Summer Drinks Reception on the Terrace was well attended by MPs, Peers and eminent writers. Margaret Hodge, then Minister for Culture, Tourism and Creative Industries spoke of the importance of writers to society, noting that *'we need a fair deal for writers'* and that we need to *'value creativity and ensure that it is properly recognised and properly rewarded'*. Attendees included Doris Lessing, Philippa Gregory, Margaret Drabble, Sir Michael Holroyd, Helen Fielding, Tracy Chevalier, Maggie Gee and Ben Okri, and provided an invaluable opportunity to bring writers together with those responsible for directing the policy that shapes their profession.

July 2008

At the July Meeting Andy Burnham, Minister for Culture, Media and Sport attended and heard from representatives of the National Union of Journalists on their concerns regarding the prevalence of 'rights-grabbing' contracts throughout the media industries. He also spoke to members of the Public Lending Right Advisory Committee and agreed to support a review of PLR in its 30th year to ensure that the scheme was able to cope with the diverse range of services and content offered by libraries in the 21st century. The Minister also noted the importance of the forthcoming Government review into the issue of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and their role in policing the illegal 'sharing' of cultural works on-line.

December 2008

The Annual General Meeting will be addressed by Dr Jim Parker, the Registrar of PLR to highlight some of the issues which should be considered as part of the review mentioned above. Writers, MPs and Lords will attend a drinks reception following the AGM to celebrate a fine first year, and look forward to challenges to come in 2009.

The year ahead

The main item on the 2009 agenda for All Party Writers Group is to support and sustain the review of the PLR scheme to ensure that it continues to provide writers with a fair reward for the use of their works in libraries, irrespective of the medium in which it is used. The group will also continue to monitor and comment on developing copyright policies that affect writers' rights, notably the ongoing reviews of copyright exceptions and illegal file-sharing.