

Press release

Monday 28th March

protecting
and promoting
authors' rights



Culture, Media and Sport Committee Report recommends that UK PLR should be administered by ALCS.

The Authors' Licensing & Collecting Society (ALCS) welcomes the Committee's support for maintaining the current Public Lending Right (PLR) operation and particularly its recommendation that the scheme should be administered by a body with the interest of writers at heart.

Today the Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee published the report of its inquiry into funding of the arts and heritage. The report stated:

"We do not believe that the British Library is an appropriate body to take on the work of administering the PLR. Far more appropriate is the ALCS, which already distributes royalty payments to authors. We understand that there may be a legal technicality preventing this, in which case we recommend that legislative measures are put in place to allow it to happen as soon as possible."

The report also expressed surprise at the Government's decision to abolish the PLR body and disappointment that the future of PLR was not discussed with the registrar, Dr Jim Parker, before the announcement of its abolition was made.

For many years the PLR office in Stockton-on-Tees has provided an extremely high level of service at very low cost. At a time when the public library system is facing great uncertainty and change, ALCS too is concerned at the impact that this restructuring will have and the implications for the continued efficiency of paying writers for the free availability of their works to the public. As our recent submission to the Government's Independent Review of Intellectual Property and Growth (Hargreaves review) shows, income such as that provided by PLR and ALCS is vital in supporting creators at vulnerable points of their careers and providing a framework that enables many authors to continue writing.

Over the years ALCS has maintained a close association with the UK PLR operation, working with the Registrar Dr Jim Parker to devise enhancements to the scheme to recognise the evolution of

library services, such as the lending of e-books and audiobooks in libraries. ALCS currently administers PLR schemes (obligatory under EU law) for UK books borrowed in Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and Spain and has worked with Dr Parker for many years to support his efforts to develop the international PLR network.

Most recently ALCS and PLR have been collaborating to develop greater synergies between the two organisations to offset the impact of the cuts imposed on PLR during the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review and deliver a simpler, more efficient service to writers. Despite this, as part of its review of arm's-length bodies, the Government has announced plans to dismantle the present UK PLR structure and transfer its functions to another public-funded body through the powers set out in the Public Bodies Bill.

Maureen Duffy, Honorary President of ALCS who was instrumental in lobbying for PLR when it was set up over 30 years ago said: "Writers accept a small payment for the lending of their books in libraries instead of receiving royalties. To date we have had a magnificently efficient organisation looking after these monies. If change has to happen then I hope the Government will listen to the recommendations of the Committee as well as consulting with writers, many of whom have already signed a petition asking the Government to safeguard PLR. It would be most desirable to keep the administration of PLR with an organisation which has the interest of writers at heart."

We strongly support the recommendations made by the Committee and urge the Government to do the same.

Details of the CMS Report can be found here on the House of Commons website
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmcumeds/464/46402.htm>

Notes for editors

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. All writers are eligible to join ALCS: further details on membership can be found at www.alcs.co.uk

Set up in 1977 in the wake of the original campaign for Public Lending Right (led by ALCS Honorary President - Maureen Duffy, Brigid Brophy and Lord Ted Willis among others) 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 February and August.

ALCS currently administers PLR schemes from the following countries:

- Austria
- France
- Germany
- Ireland
- Netherlands
- Spain

Since its inception, ALCS has distributed over £250 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

Public Lending Right

1. PLR was established by an Act of Parliament in 1979. It gives authors the legal right to receive payment from government each time their books are loaned through the public library system.
2. PLR is funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). PLR's 2010/11 funding stood at £7.45 million (£7.58 million in 2009/10).
3. In October 2010 the government announced that the PLR office is to be abolished as part of the wider Public Bodies Review. Responsibility for the PLR scheme will be transferred to another (still to be decided) existing public body. PLR, as the author's right to payment for book loans continues and future government funding has been announced. Funding will decrease by 15% over the four year period from 2011/12 to £6.95 million in 2014/15.
4. Authors are eligible for payment if their PLR earnings reach a minimum of £1. There is a maximum payment threshold of £6,600 for the top-lending authors. This year, 230 authors will receive the maximum payment. In a survey of PLR's top earners, 80% specified that their annual PLR payment is core to their income.

www.plr.uk.com