

# Publishing Services

SUSANNE MCDADD

## Library Events with the Reading Agency

Reading Partners is a partnership consortium which aims to transform the way public libraries and adult publishers work together. It is led by The Reading Agency and involves 9 publishers and the IPG – Bloomsbury, Faber, Hachette Livre, HarperCollins, Harlequin Mills and Boon, Little Brown, Pan Macmillan, Penguin and Random House. The scheme started in 2004 as a 2-year pilot and has gone on to become a major force for innovation in the reading market.

Since the 2-year pilot, Reading Partners has encouraged all libraries and publishers to build on this work and develop vibrant partnerships of their own, revolutionising the way the two sides communicate. The consortium has created a buzz about books beyond the high street. They have developed an audience for reading by cross-fertilising library and retail markets and changed the working practices of publishers and libraries. This has influenced the way books are marketed, creating a more vibrant library experience for readers and to explore changes in publishing to draw new readers into the market.

The Reading Partners group of publishers wants to bring about a big mindshift in publishing houses so that library audiences are automatically part of publishers' marketing and publicity planning.

- *“Publishers are waking up to the strategic importance of the library service, and the role it can play with reading. Statistics help the more commercially hard headed see that this is a genuine route to the market – eg 22% of borrowers have liked a book so much that they've bought it, 70% of the heaviest books buyers have a library card.”* Stephen Page, CEO, Faber
- *“This initiative is all about doing things differently. Libraries bring a creativity and interactivity to author events making books seem more appealing, less rarefied and more part of everyday life. Library audiences are extremely diverse and our authors get far more feedback from both readers and staff making it a rewarding experience. And in addition you sell lots of books.”* Joanna Prior, Penguin

### **The Project Co-ordinator**

A project coordinator, Tom Palmer and now me - Sandy Mahal, acts as a conduit between the two sectors. Most of the opportunities transpire as a direct result of our co-ordinating role, as most publishers email us directly with offers and suggestions, which I will test out and consult with library reps before sending it out as a formal offer to libraries. Always on hand to offer support and advice, we have developed excellent networks and a communications systems with consortium members including:

- Compiling a bi-monthly e-letter for publishers
- Managing quarterly library reps, publisher working group and steering group meetings
- Facilitating networks and connections between publishers and libraries and helping them to exploit the Rolling Calendar, author venues and databases
- Tom / Sandy is in touch by email, telephone and in person on a regular basis

### **The Resources**

We have established several resources to allow publishers and libraries to discover opportunities and build relationships with each other:

- **A new directory of library venues** for author events to be distributed in April 2008.

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- **The Rolling Calendar - A database of offers from publishers** to libraries (e.g. authors available, books for reading groups and promotional material) go to: [www.readingagency.org.uk](http://www.readingagency.org.uk)
- **A database of opportunities in libraries** for publishers (e.g. forthcoming festivals and readers days) is also posted on the same Rolling Calendar.
- **A database of authors**, detailing what authors write and where they live will be launched in Dec 08 / Jan 09.

## Key achievements in 2007

- **100+ Author events**
- **BME readers and writers initiative – 6 skills sharing projects and BME research**
- **Building new publisher/library networks**
- **New partnership with the Bookseller magazine**
- **Extra funding for a skills sharing programme from Arts & Business**

## National Year of Reading (NYR)

Reading Partners are backing the 2008 National Year of Reading with an array of ambitious activities to connect readers to writers in every English library authority. Plans to deliver:

- A huge NYR author programme in library venues and festivals, with big-name fiction and non fiction writers. This exciting programme involving some of the UK's biggest and best-selling writers will be unveiled in April.
- The pairing up of 149 authors with a library in their region, to cover every library authority in England, with each author doing at least one event at their library.
- Experimentation with new models of author events to reach disengaged reading audiences.
- Libraries working closely with publishers to define more books appropriate for emergent readers