



PUBLIC LENDING RIGHT FOR 2013

SUBMISSION FROM THE BOOKSELLERS
ASSOCIATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
CULTURE, MEDIA & SPORT

To: Clare Pillman, Director at DCMS

From:

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Booksellers Association of the United Kingdom & Ireland welcomes the opportunity to give its views on the proposals from DCMS concerning the Public Lending Right ["PLR"] rate per loan payable to authors from February 2013.

1.2 The Booksellers Association ["BA"] is a trade association, based in London WC2, currently with 3,618 bookselling outlets in the United Kingdom & Ireland in membership, of which 1,056 relate to independent bookshops¹.

1.3 Our members cover a diverse range of different bookselling businesses - large High Street chains with mixed businesses (e.g. W H Smith); large specialist bookselling chains (e.g. Waterstones); independents (e.g. Daunts); library suppliers (e.g. Askews & Holts Library Services); school suppliers (e.g. Heath Educational Book Supplies); specialist internet booksellers (e.g. Eddington Hook); supermarkets (e.g. Tesco); and the two national wholesalers (Bertrams and Gardners).

1.4 BA members sell to all markets (consumer – fiction/ non-fiction/ reference/ children's; academic – academic/ professional/ school/ English Language Teaching) from terrestrial shops and over the internet in a variety of different formats (hardback, paperback, audiobook and e-book).

1.5 Many of our members have a strong business relationship with their libraries. 505 of all BA members supply libraries with printed books and e-books.

2 PROPOSED NEW RATE

2.1 We welcome the fact that in these times of Austerity an increase in the PLR rate has, in fact, been proposed.

2.2 Without wishing to appear churlish, we had hoped that the percentage increase would mirror the rate of inflation. The latest CPI index published by the Government in October shows an annual increase of 2.7% [October], whereas the proposed PLR increase from 6.05p to 6.20p per copy loaned amounts to 2.47%. With the cost of living unlikely to fall in the foreseeable future, it does look to us as if the authors' reimbursement on lending is not keeping pace with inflation.

3 INCLUSION OF E-BOOKS

3.1 At present, authors receive no PLR payment when an e-book is loaned out.

3.2 We strongly believe that authors should be entitled to PLR earnings on e-books. As Lindsay Davies, until very recently the Chair of the Society of Authors has said: *"We have earned it. It's not a benefit, it's a right. I would expect to be paid. There is no difference between e-books and print books – it is all work, produced for people to read ... It seems very obvious to me [that an e-book] is just another version of a title, in the same way that a paperback is"*.

3.3 Section 43 of the Digital Economy Act 2010 extends PLR to audiobooks and e-books "lent out" from library premises for a limited time, but these payments have never been implemented. Authors are entitled to equitable remuneration. We urge DCMS to bring s43 into force as soon as possible, and that extra funds be made available to cover PLR payments for such lending and that authors should be remunerated for rentals outside the s43 definition.

¹ 1 – 5 outlets.

3.4 The failure to implement these payments would seem to us to be a clear breach of the Directive.

4 LIBRARIES RUN BY VOLUNTEERS

4.1 Many local authorities have reduced their financial support to public libraries. In order to try and keep a library service going, a number of libraries have now been set up staffed by volunteers.

4.2 We understand that books loaned by libraries staffed by volunteers would not be subjected to any PLR calculation. If this is the case, we think this extremely unfair on the authors, as these volunteer libraries are trying to do their best in emulating the services provided by professional librarians. There is no difference in functionality.

4.3 In our view, PLR payments should cover loans from all public libraries, irrespective as to whether or not they are staffed by volunteers.

5 FUTURE ADMINISTRATION OF PLR

5.1 The BA believes that Jim Parker and his team in the PLR office are extremely efficient and do an excellent job. Moreover, as Registrar, Jim Parker has been independent of government and thus can be seen to be political impartial. These are valuable attributes.

5.2 We believe that Jim Parker should continue to act as the PLR Registrar and that the job should not be given to anyone else. We hope this request will be considered with sympathy.

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