

First online reading festival for World Book Day

World Book Day will host the first online Readers' and Writers' Festival on Thursday 6th March 2003.

Following a successful bid to the Arts Council Touring Fund, the festival will be broadcast via The People's Network from public libraries across the UK. World Book Day is working in partnership with Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries, CILIP (The Chartered Institute of Librarians and Information Professionals) and The Reading Agency to develop the Festival.

The People's Network is the Lottery-sponsored project to provide internet access for all through public libraries. By the end of 2002, libraries in the UK will have 30,000 new computer terminals offering fast access to the internet, along with trained staff to help people make the most of getting online. The People's Network project is managed by Resource and funded by the New Opportunities Fund.

One of the principal aims of the Festival is to provide increased access for adults and children who want to take part in World Book Day events. Throughout World Book Day, a series of author interviews and other activities will be broadcast on the web with readers having the opportunity to take part in live chat sessions and related events.

Following World Book Day, the broadcasts and resource materials will be archived to provide a re-usable resource on the web.

A new website – www.worldbookdayfestival.com – is being developed to host the Festival; it will sit alongside and be linked to World Book Day's existing site, www.worldbookday.com.

Gary McKeone, Literature Director of the Arts Council of England, comments,

“We're delighted to support World Book Day. The idea of a virtual readers and writers festival working through every library is terrific news for literature. Through imaginative initiatives like this, we can enable huge numbers of people to participate in and enjoy all kinds of literature. The benefits to libraries, to readers, to writers and to publishers will be considerable.”

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Notes to Editors

World Book Day is the biggest annual celebration of books and reading in the UK. The next World Book Day will be held on Thursday March 6th 2003.

People's Network

The People's Network is a project to connect all public libraries to the internet, as part of the Government's commitment to give everyone in the UK the opportunity to get online. Lottery-funded by the New Opportunities Fund and managed by Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries more than 4000 library centres will be up and running by the end of 2002. Further information is available from the People's Network website at <http://www.peoplesnetwork.gov.uk>

Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries

Resource provides the strategic leadership, advocacy and advice to enable museums, archives and libraries to touch people's lives and inspire their imagination, learning and creativity. The Resource website can be viewed at <http://www.resource.gov.uk>

New Opportunities Fund

The New Opportunities Fund distributes National Lottery money to health, education and environment projects across the UK. NOF supports sustainable projects that will: improve the quality of life of people throughout the UK; address the needs of those who are most disadvantaged in society; encourage community participation; complement relevant local and national strategies and programmes. Funding for programmes is divided between England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales on the basis of population weighted to reflect levels of deprivation. Further information is available on the NOF website at <http://www.nof.org.uk>

UK online

UK online is a national drive to help everyone in the UK make the most of the internet. The aims of UK online are to make the UK the best place in the world for e-commerce; to ensure that everyone who wants to can get online; and to deliver all government services online to citizens by 2005. An important part of the UK online project is the creation of 6000 UK online Centres in England by the end of 2002, where people can access the internet. At least half of these Centres will be in public libraries, thanks to the lottery-funded People's Network project. Further information on UK online is available at: www.ukonline.gov.uk or www.letsallgeton.gov.uk

The Reading Agency was formed by the merger of three existing agencies - LaunchPad, The Reading Partnership and Well Worth Reading – in July 2002 as a UK wide development agency with its roots in the public library sector. It is founded on the principle that reading has infinite potential for making life richer and that libraries are the most democratic medium for bringing reading to people. The Reading Agency is managing the Festival, in partnership with Resource, on behalf of World Book Day.

CILIP is the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, a new professional body formed following the unification of the Institute of Information Scientist (IIS) and the Library Association (LA).

The World Book Day Readers and Writers Festival will be hosted at www.worldbookdayfestival.com. There will be a link to the main World Book Day website, www.worldbookday.com which is sponsored by fireandwater.com.

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