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Reader development and ICT: an overview of projects in Welsh public libraries

Angela Bird and Lucy A. Tedd

Abstract

The role of the public library in encouraging reading and using ICT in the reading development process has been included in a number of Government reports during the 1990s and 2000s in the UK. Following the successful implementation of the People's Network many public libraries are developing ways of using ICT in reader development. In Wales, as part of an initiative called Estyn Allan (Branching Out) all 22 public library authorities have staff responsible for reader-development issues covering, in many cases, both the Welsh and English language. This paper reports on the results of a questionnaire, sent to all reader-development librarians in Wales, and provides examples of some of the work being undertaken.

1. Introduction and context

Reader development is defined by Opening the Book, an organisation in the UK which has been actively involved in this area since the late 1980s, as being an active intervention to :

- increase people's confidence and enjoyment of reading;
- open up reading choices;
- offer opportunities for people to share their reading experience;
- raise the status of reading as a creative activity (<http://www.openingthebook.com/>).

Public libraries have a longstanding role in promoting books and encouraging reading and such activity has been given added impetus with a number of national and international developments.

At the national level in the UK, a major development in the use of ICT for reader development has been the People's Network (<http://www.peoplesnetwork.gov.uk>). In 1997 the then Library and Information Commission (LIC) produced a report *New Library: The People's Network* which set out the direction that public libraries in the UK should take to meet the challenges brought about by information and communication technologies (ICT) on citizens and communities (Library and Information Commission, 1997). The report argued for the transformation of libraries and what they do and made the case for re-equipping them and reskilling the staff so that they continue to fulfil their widely valued role as intermediary, guide, interpreter and referral point in a digital, as well as a print, environment. Funds were made available for the technological infrastructure, development of appropriate information sources and for the training of staff working in public libraries. The implementation of the People's Network, which is part of the UK government's commitment to provide online access to all its citizens has been deemed a great success. By 2004 there were in the UK:

- more than 4000 public libraries offering free Internet access and other ICT-based services;
- over 30,000 computer terminals in public libraries providing over 68.5 million hours worth of Internet use every year;
- many libraries providing extra support facilities (also known as assistive technology) so that people who find conventional computer facilities difficult to use could enjoy and benefit from these services;
- more than 40,000 public library staff trained to use computers and support people in their online learning and information needs (<http://www.peoplesnetwork.gov.uk/progress/libfacts.asp>).

The promotion of reader development was specifically included in the report *Building the New Library Network* which identified the strategy for implementing the People's Network. In particular it noted that all public library staff should be:

- “aware of reader-related sites on the Internet including:
 - thematic approaches and guides to further reading
 - sites on specific genres and authors
 - online bookstores
 - publishers' sites
 - reading groups;
- know about literacy initiatives in education;
- know about Bookstart and other early-reading initiatives and have a working knowledge of sites for children and their reading, such as Stories from the Web;
- know about sites and sources of interest to readers with a range of special needs” (Library and Information Commission, 1998, p90).

Wales is a country within the UK of some 8,000 square miles, with a population of almost three million, of whom about 20% are Welsh speaking. Following local government re-organisation in 1996 the former seven authorities became 22 authorities as shown in Figure 1.

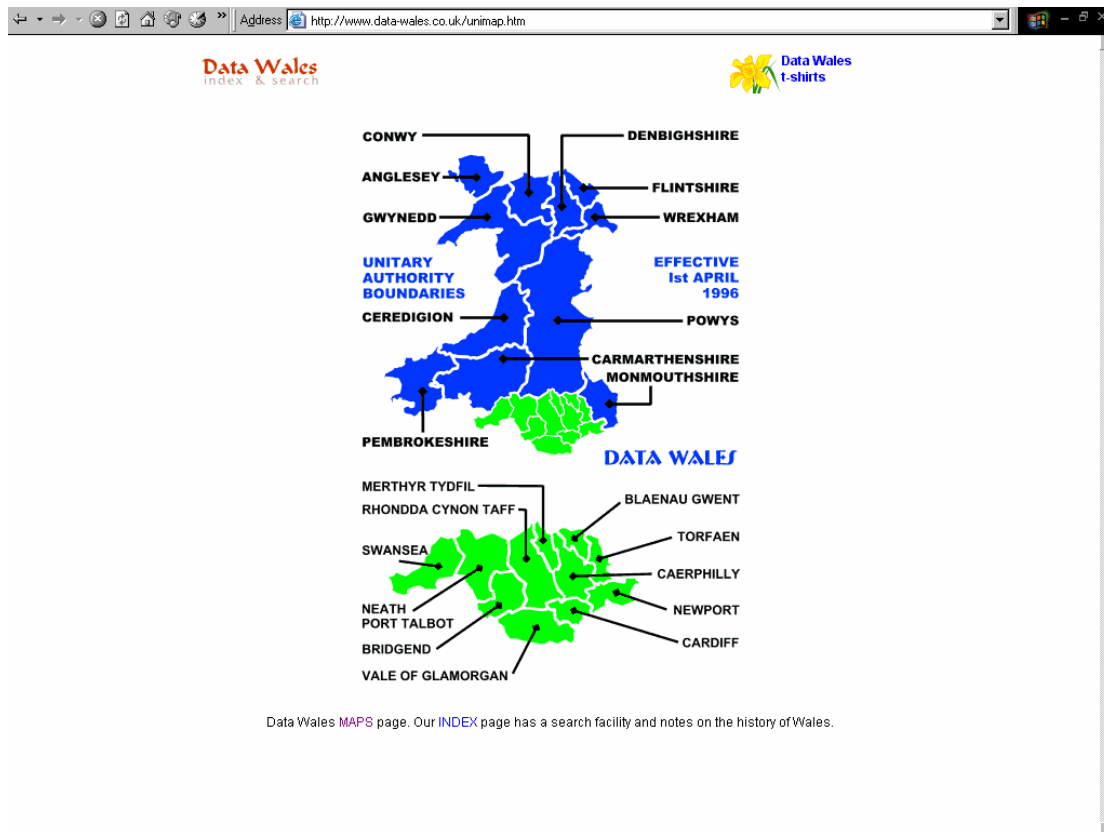


Figure 1. Map of Wales and its authorities (taken from <http://www.data-wales.co.uk/unimap.htm>)

The populations served by the authorities vary greatly from large urban authorities (such as Cardiff serving 305,300) to small rural authorities (such as Anglesey serving 66,800). As can be seen in Figure 1 the physical size of the authority also varies from the very large Powys (about 200 square miles) to the much smaller Blaenau Gwent (about 42 square miles) and the number of main service points vary from 29 in Rhondda Cynon Taf to five in Merthyr Tydfil. Further details about public libraries in Wales can be acquired from the *Public Library Statistics: actuals* published annually by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and also from links to the websites of the authorities given via the UK Public Libraries website (<http://dSPACE.dial.pipex.com/town/square/ac940/ukpublib.html>). Within Wales there are 316 branch libraries and each now has at least one workstation providing free access to the Internet for users. In total, some 1,976 personal computers (PCs) have been placed in these libraries through the People's Network.

The use of ICT for reader development was included in the training programme developed for all public library staff in the UK for the People's Network. For instance, in Wales an open learning package, *ICT, literacy and reader development* was developed by staff at the Department of Information Studies of the University of Wales Aberystwyth (Huws et al., 2002) and used for training staff in 13 library authorities and was available in both English and the Welsh language (Tedd, 2003).

Agencies such as Opening The Book (<http://www.openingthebook.com>) and The Reading Agency (TRA - <http://www.readingagency.org.uk>) work with libraries and others to encourage reading as indicated in an editorial by Goulding (2002). The critical role played by these agencies "in changing the way in promoting reader

development" was also acknowledged in a report for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport which outlined the long term strategic vision for the role of public libraries in the UK (Leadbetter, 2003). The use of ICT in libraries in international initiatives, such as World Book Day, are acknowledged by many, including the following, from a report by the TRA on the 2003 World Book Day:

“World Book Day made a real impact across the country, bringing literature to a huge audience by making use of new technology in imaginative ways. The focus on libraries made it even more strategically effective from the Arts Council’s point of view. Libraries can be the heartland of literature development and by working with World Book Day, they underlined their significance in the cultural landscape.” (Stewart, 2003).

World Book Day (<http://www.worldbookday.com>) was designated by Unesco as a worldwide celebration of books and reading, and its origins come from Catalonia, where roses and books are traditionally given as gifts on St. George’s Day. In 2004 many libraries in the UK were involved with the accompanying World Book Online Festival. Through the People’s Network initiative in the libraries readers were able to participate in the ‘webchats’ with J.K. Rowling (author of the Harry Potter series of books) and other authors and the transcripts of these have been archived (<http://www.worldbookdayfestival.com/2004/>).

One major project related to reader development and initiated by the Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) in England is Branching Out (<http://www.branching-out.net>) which aims to:

- increase access to the richness and diversity of contemporary writing through the public library service;
- to create a range of reader-based projects which are responsive to readers’ needs;
- to develop projects which will appeal to, and encourage the involvement of readers from various ethnic communities.

Branching Out has received funding from the UK’s national lottery and from the Arts Council of England and is being managed by staff from Opening the Book.

In Wales a linked initiative is Estyn Allan (Branching Out in Wales) - a three-year project (2002-4) with funds of £300,000 in the form of a lottery grant from the Arts Council of Wales and managed by the SCL Wales in partnership with staff from Opening the Book. The aim of Estyn Allan is to develop a more reader-oriented library service evolving from an institution of passive provision to one which actively promotes itself and its holdings to readers. All 22 Welsh public library authorities are participating in Estyn Allan.

Reader development initiatives encourage readers to use reader-centred websites and are targeting people who now just use libraries for computer access. Before reporting on the results of the survey of the Estyn Allan librarians in Wales a brief overview of some of the websites of relevance to reader development in Wales is given.

2. Reader development related websites

The report *Building the New Library Network* referred to in the previous section outlined the need for library staff to know about relevant reader-related websites. There are now a large number of such websites from organisations such as

booksellers, publishers and so on and some of the ones referred to within the responses from the Estyn Allan librarians are now described.

2.1. Whichbook

Whichbook (<http://www.whichbook.net>) offers readers a way of choosing a particular book by identifying the mood and style of the book using a sliding scale as shown in Figure 2.

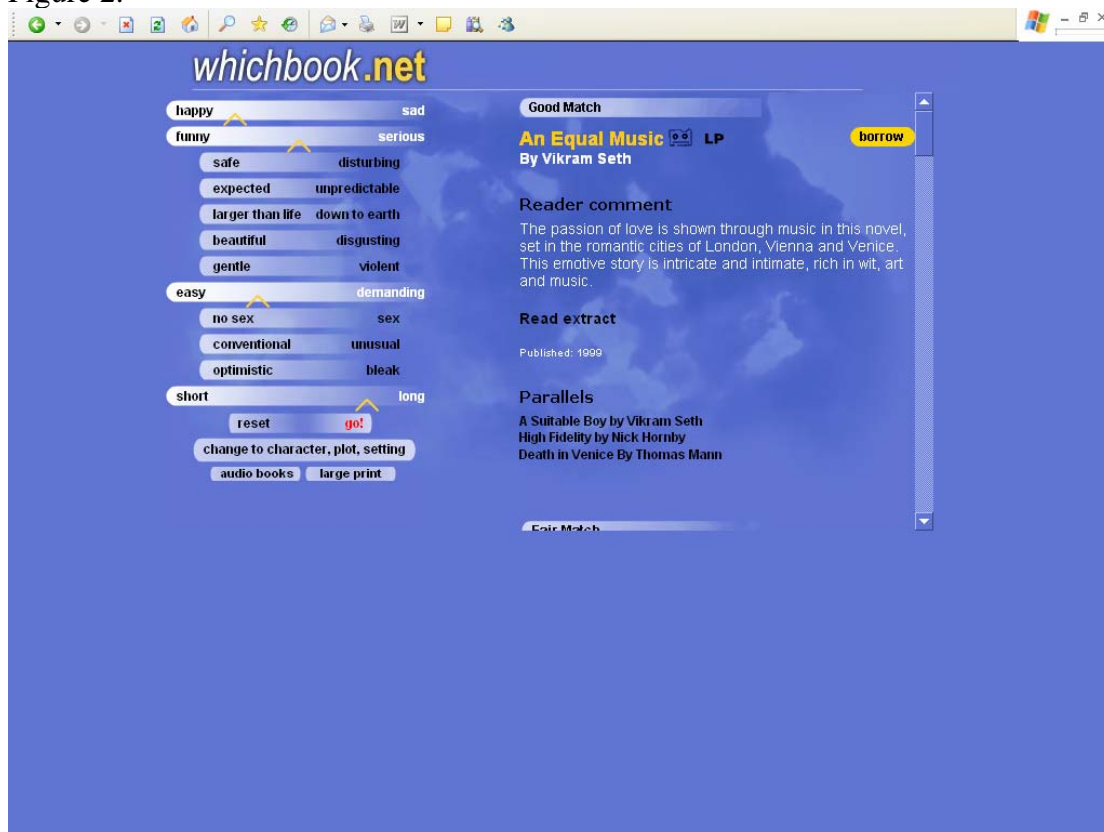


Figure 2 Choosing a book on the Whichbook website

A number of books are selected to meet the specified criteria and links can be made from the website (using the borrow radio button on the right hand side of the screen) to catalogues in certain libraries to ascertain the local availability of a title. In Figure 3 a link has been made to the Talis online catalogue of Conwy, Gwynedd and the Isle of Anglesey Libraries and the location for the large print version of *An Equal Music* is shown.

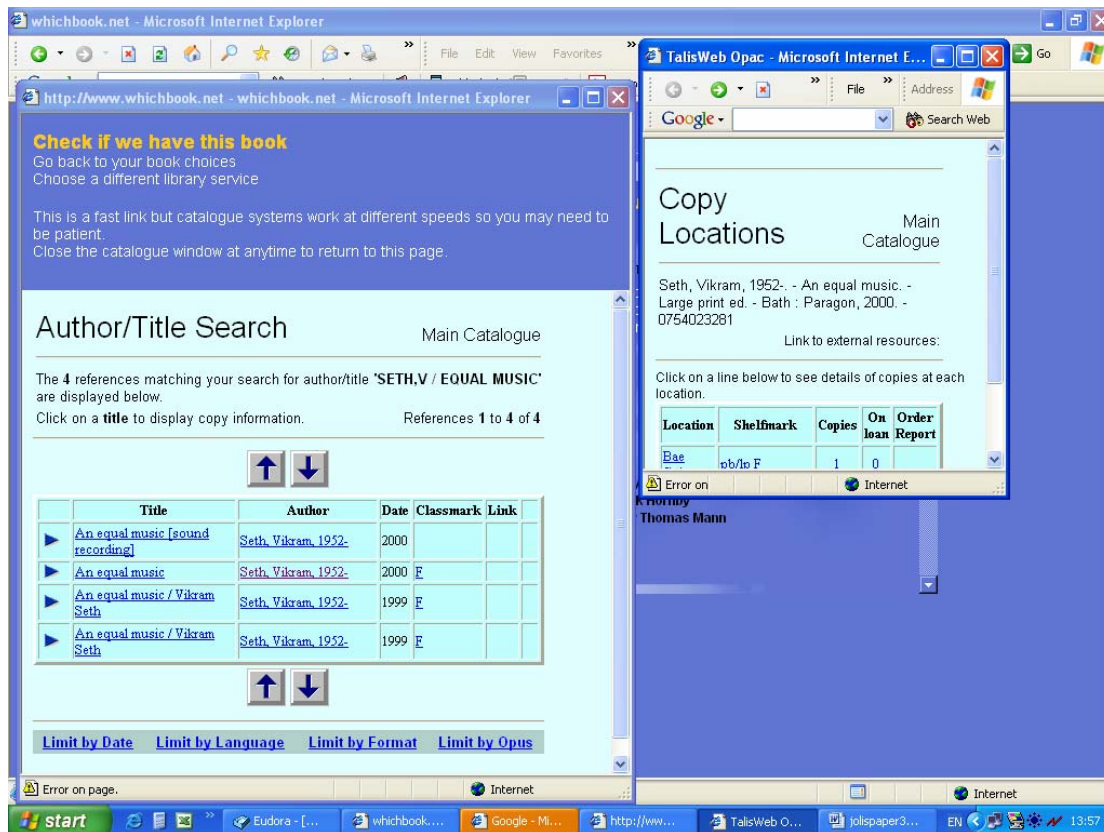


Figure 3. Example of a link from a title to the online catalogue of a library

This is a very different approach to that taken normally which is to look for books by a certain author, or covering a certain topic. The software (previously known as Book Forager) for Whichbook was developed by a firm called Applied Psychology Research Ltd. from funding from the Branching Out programme. The software links the disciplines of reader development, computing and psychology. Openlibraries (<http://www.openlibraries.net>) is a company created by Opening the Book and the SCL to expand Whichbook.net further. The Whichbook website has received many accolades, including ones for its accessibility for the visually impaired. The National Library for the Blind (NLB) in the UK (<http://www.nlb-online.org/>) is using the Whichbook software and provides links to Braille books in its catalogue. Figure 4 shows output of a search, this time using a different approach of identifying plot/character/setting where a book about straight, Asian people in the age range 26-50 was specified.

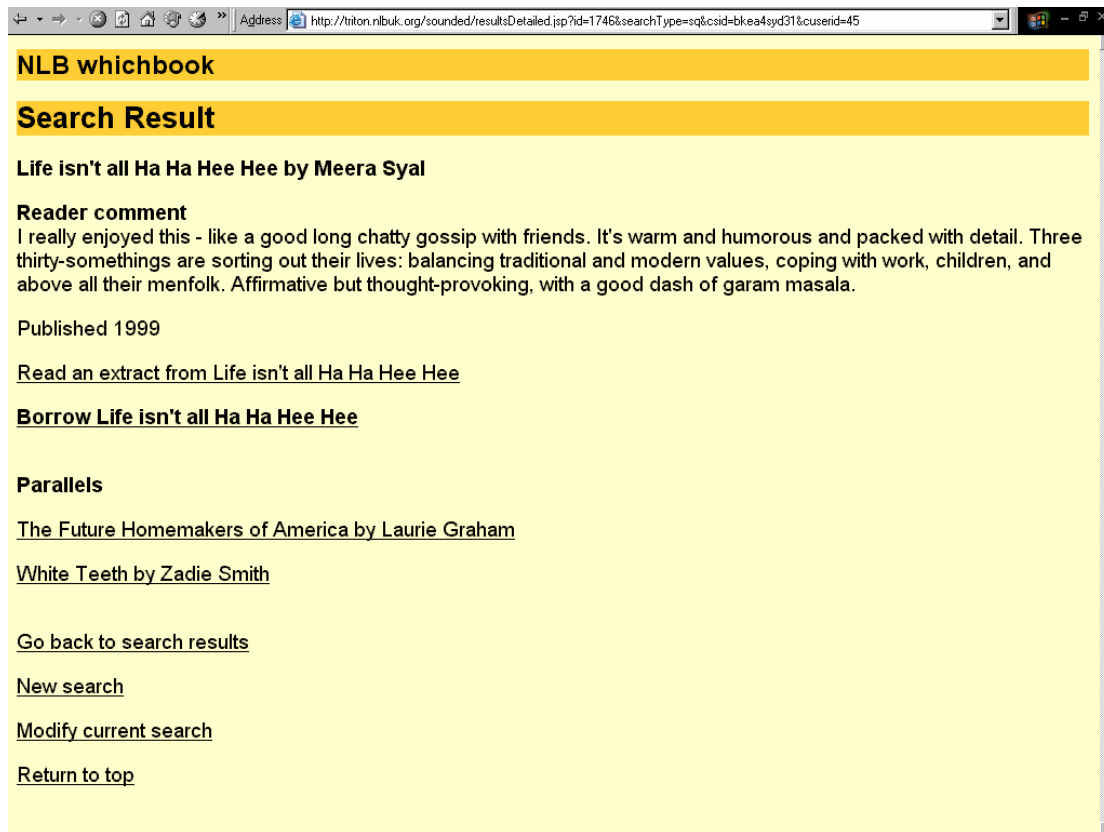


Figure 4. Results of a search for books using Whichbook at the National Library for the Blind

2.2 Give me a Break/Cyfle I Ddianc

As part of the mission to involve libraries and librarians in becoming skilled promoters of contemporary literature Estyn Allan librarians in Wales have developed a bilingual reader-development website Give me a Break/Cyfle I Ddianc (<http://www.givemeabreak.org>). The content of Give me a Break/Cyfle I Ddianc was developed as a result of discussions between the Estyn Allan librarians and trainers from Opening the Book. The website was developed through Opening the Book with £5,500 of project money and an additional £1,000 for translation of the site into the Welsh language. Figure 5 shows a few of the books, in both Welsh and English, chosen from a search on “Give me a break from the ironing”.

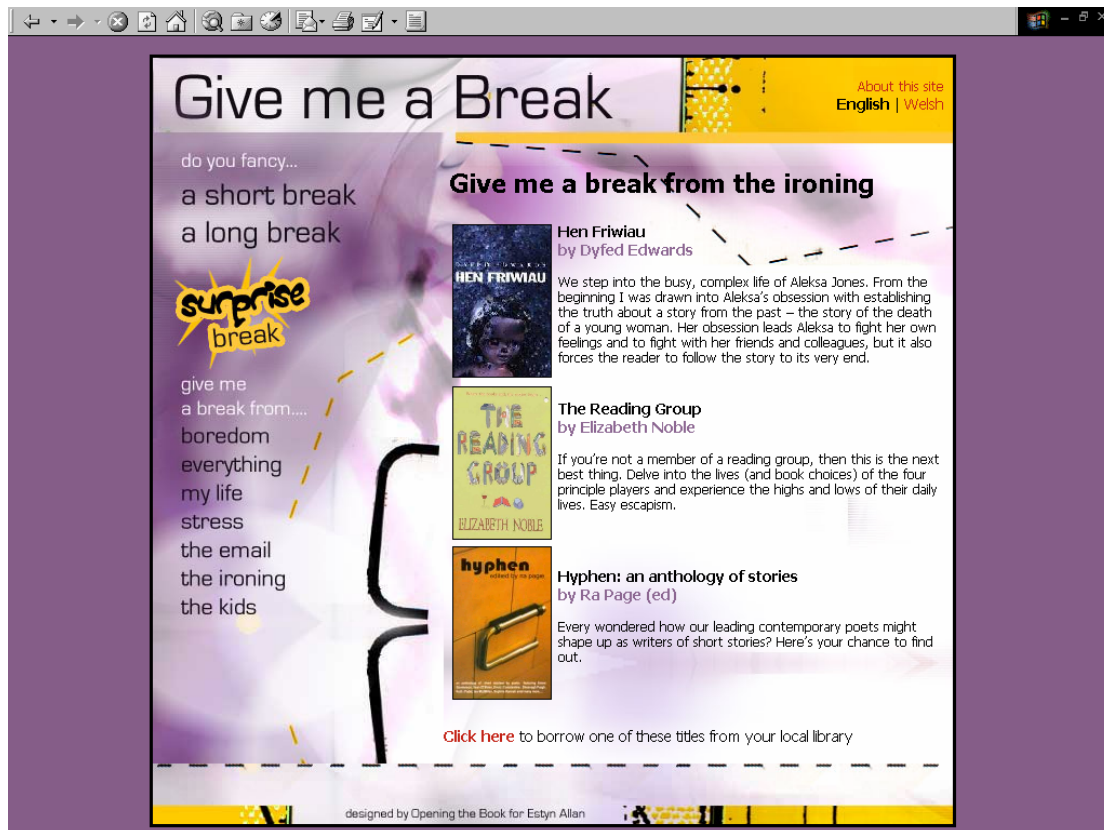


Figure 5. Books suggested by Estyn Allan’s “Give me a break from the ironing”

As with Whichbook links are made to library catalogues in Wales so that readers can check for the availability of selected books. This site, which was launched in May 2004, provides a number of ‘firsts’ in that it is:

- the first ever national promotion for readers involving all the 22 Welsh authorities
- the first website for readers in Wales
- the first bilingual website for readers in Wales
- the first mixed promotion of English and Welsh books
- the first reader-centred promotion targeting a young adult audience.

The Give me a Break/ Cyfle I Ddiac promotion is aimed at people under 40 who do not have much time to come into a library to browse for suitable reading materials.

The criteria for books used in the promotion are that they are:

- young in feel
- have a good cover
- provide a mix of titles for both males and females
- some have a Welsh connection through theme, being by a Welsh author, in Welsh or published within Wales.

2.3 Websites that link to particular promotions

Some book ‘awards’ are judged by a select number of suitable people (e.g. Welsh Book of the Year (<http://www.academi.org/bookoftheyear/>), and the Orange Prize for Fiction (<http://www.orangeprize.co.uk/>)) and libraries sometimes provide links to the related websites. Both these awards also feature in one of the major annual book festivals in Wales held at Hay-on-Wye in Powys. Other book ‘awards’ are

made from votes being cast by members of the public. Many public library authorities encourage members to participate in these events. Examples of such promotions include:

- BBC Big Read (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/bigread>). The British Broadcasting Corporation's Big Read website provided people with the opportunity to vote online for their favourite book and also had links to further reader-centred resources. The Big Read was a major marketing tool for the book industry in 2003 and many libraries found that borrowing figures for the 21 titles on the final shortlist increased during the promotion.
- Richard and Judy's book club (http://www.channel4.com/entertainment/tv/microsites/R/richardandjudy/keep4archive/book_club.html). In 2004 the television presenters, Richard and Judy, as part of the British Books Award, championed a new award - 'Richard and Judy's Best Read' which was based on votes cast by viewers of the show. The voting was the culmination of a 10-week feature covering each of the 10 titles nominated. Within Wales the effect of this on libraries was evident. In Rhondda Cynon Taf, for instance, extra copies of the 10 titles were acquired to satisfy user demand and in Conwy a reading group based in the library was invited on to the show to discuss one of the books and subsequently a library assistant from Conwy was asked to announce the final winner.
- W H Smith People's Choice Book Awards (<http://www.whsmithbookawards.co.uk/>). In 2004 the eight nominated books received a total of 148,253 votes, of which about two thirds were canvassed online and of these some were entered from PCs in public libraries.

2.4 Websites aimed at reader development for children

One of the first websites aimed at children in the UK was Stories from the Web (<http://www.storiesfromtheweb.org>). This is a reader development programme for children managed by Birmingham Libraries which caters for two separate age groups, 8-11 and 11-14. Developed originally in 1997 with funding from the then Library and Information Commission (which became Resource and then the Museums, Libraries and Archives (MLA) Council) the initial partners were Birmingham Library Services, Centre for the Child, Bristol Library Service, Leeds Library and Information Service and UKOLN (formerly known as the UK Office for Library and Information Networking) at the University of Bath. In 2003 funding for the project continued through individual library authorities and by 2004 there were some 40 subscribers. Figure 6 shows the opening page for Stories from the Web for 8-11 year olds.



Figure 6. Opening page from the Stories from the Web website for readers aged 8-11

The Reading RollerCoaster (<http://www.readingrollercoaster.org.uk/>) is a development of the TRA which, since 1999, has held an annual event each summer to encourage reading and the use of libraries amongst young children. The homepage of the 2004 website is shown in Figure 7.



Figure 7. Opening page from the Reading Rollercoaster

There are very many examples of other websites aimed at children including:

- International Children’s Digital Library (<http://www.icdlbooks.org>) at the University of Maryland in the US which contains the full text of about 330 children’s books online that can be navigated using a special children-friendly interface design.
- Narnia (<http://www.narnia.com>) which was developed for the 50th anniversary of C.S. Lewis’ publication of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.
- Reading matters (<http://www.readingmatters.co.uk/>) which includes a ‘Bookchooser’ feature that enables the young readers to decide on the sort of book they wish to read using characteristics such as scary, funny, animal interest, fantasy, adventure and so on.

2.5 Websites of relevance to readers in Wales

There is a number of websites developed specifically for readers in Wales. These include:

- Books from the Past (<http://www.booksfromthepast.org>) - a collection of ebooks of Welsh national cultural interest which are out of print and are made available online through Culturenet Cymru.
- Llais llên (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/cymru/adloniant/llyfrau/pwy.shtml>) - the BBC’s website for books published in the Welsh language and covering information about new books, author profiles and book reviews.
- Welsh Books Council (<http://www.clc.org.uk>) - a website including a Kids’ Bookline with competitions, stories, poems, good reads,

information about authors and illustrators and so on. Information about books is also available via the linked website Gwales (<http://www.gwales.com>) which provides an online bookshop for items from the Welsh Books Council.

Figure 8 shows an example of links to reader-development websites such as those described above from Denbighshire Libraries (<http://www.denbighshire.gov.uk>).

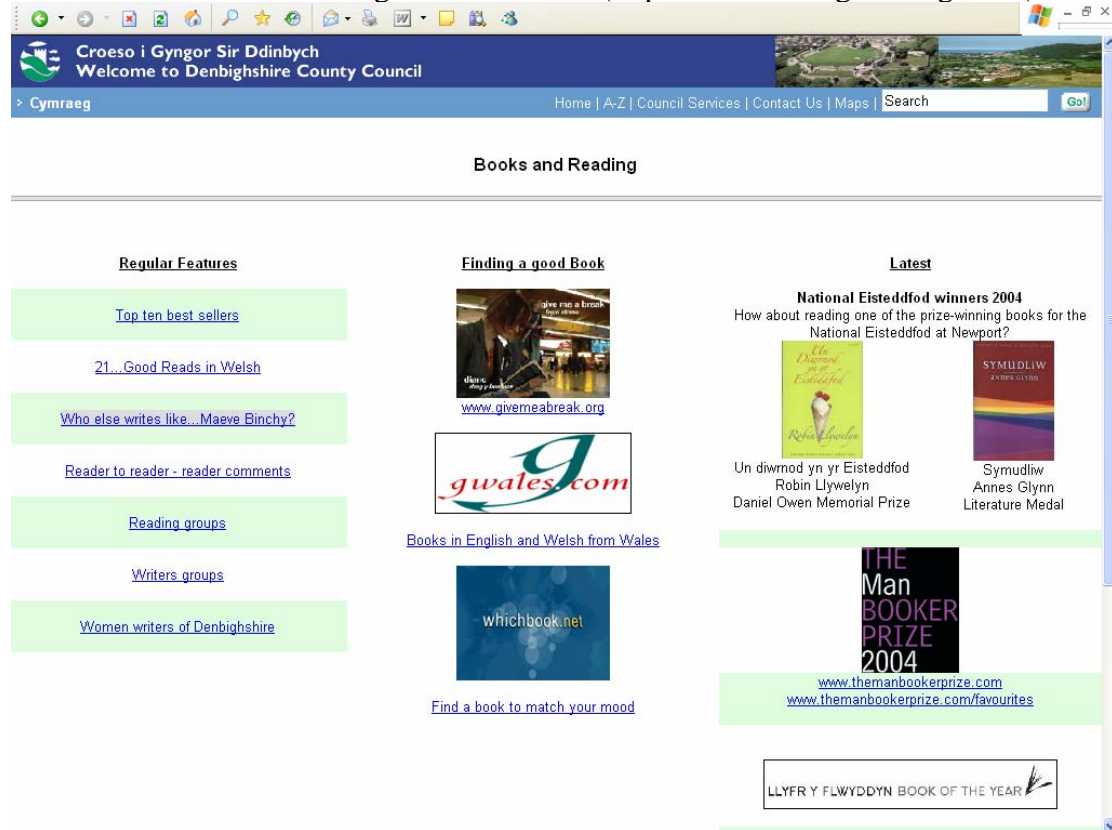


Figure 8. Links to websites on Books and Reading from Denbighshire Libraries

3. Results of questionnaire sent to Estyn Allan librarians

As part of Estyn Allan each of the 22 public library authorities in Wales has allocated a member of its staff to be an 'Estyn Allan librarian' who is responsible for reader development initiatives within the authority. These librarians meet on a regular basis, with the first meeting having taken place in September 2002.

In March 2004 a questionnaire, comprising seven questions, was e-mailed to all 22 librarians and by mid-April responses had been received from 19 (a good 86% response rate). Of the three authorities which did not reply, two had Estyn Allan librarians who were in the position of taking up new positions within their authorities and another was on maternity leave. The responses received for each question are now provided.

3.1 Membership of the library and use of the computers

Eleven authorities made it a condition that users of the PCs in the libraries needed to be library members. Where library membership was a condition most authorities

provided temporary membership for holidaymakers and travellers. Of the eight authorities providing totally free access to anyone:

- Anglesey required proof of identity for non-members each time they used a computer, therefore, most people joined as it is easier to show a library membership card than identification.
- Blaenau Gwent suspected that membership figures are increasing because there is a maximum time limit of 30 minutes a day for those using the computers who are not library members.
- Caerphilly, in general, requires membership of the library but does not stop people using computers and staff then encourage them to join the library on their next visit.
- Cardiff commented that although they encourage Internet users to join the library many of their computer users are tourists and so are ineligible to join.
- Carmarthenshire asks for names and addresses of computer users but does not require proof of identification.

The Estyn Allan librarian for Neath Port Talbot pointed out that there was no direct increase in library membership due to computer use as there was no requirement to become a member. Denbighshire noted that computers are bringing in new people, “younger and more male than the traditional profile”.

The majority of Estyn Allan librarians were of the opinion that the People’s Network initiative had increased the use of libraries and brought new people in to the library buildings.

3.2 Encouraging computer users to borrow books

Ten authorities reported that the most common approach to encourage their computer users to borrow books was to display books near the computers. Whether or not computer users new to the library went on to borrow items was difficult to answer. Bridgend mentioned that this was hard to monitor, but for the couple of days after receiving the questionnaire, the respondent claimed that very few books were issued to computer users in her library. Gwynedd, however, which places contemporary fiction, by, or behind, computers, found that these books were borrowed. The librarian from Blaenau Gwent reported that there had been a small fall in junior non-fiction issues and thinks this may be due to the ease of finding homework topics online. Nine authorities replied that they were not doing anything at present to encourage the computer users to borrow books but most had plans to start.

3.3 Use of ICT in reader-development initiatives

The Estyn Allan librarians reported a number of initiatives being undertaken to encourage reader-development. Some of these involved users within the library buildings and others could be used for reader development within a school, home or elsewhere. Examples include:

- a) Leaflets containing web resources for readers. Monmouthshire, for instance, has produced a *leaflet@ Websites* for novel lovers and the Anglesey respondent noted that the demand for the leaflets they produce is high as they have to be re-stocked regularly.
- b) Links to reader-centred resources from the library website. Examples of this were given by Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Denbighshire (see Figure 8), Flintshire, Neath Port Talbot and Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- c) Posters are produced each month at Bridgend on a "Site of the month". These posters are displayed in its libraries along with other reader-centred websites.
- d) Book reviews by library members are included on the library website in some authorities.
- e) Training courses for library staff in the use of ICT in reader development. All staff should have received some training in this as part of the People's Network training programme. However, further examples include Denbighshire, Neath Port Talbot and Torfaen which all run specific courses on reader development and ICT.
- f) Encouraging groups to use library ICT facilities to produce materials. Denbighshire encourages reading group leaders to show members various websites and produce posters including reader comments using the library's computing facilities. In Rhondda Cynon Taf teenage boys have been encouraged to use computer facilities to produce a magazine, which includes book reviews, and a CD-ROM.
- g) Book promotions and competitions. Denbighshire encourages its members to use the Orange Prize website as part of the promotion of this prize for fiction books. Flintshire has encouraged its members to participate in voting promotions such as the Big Read and Richard and Judy. Torfaen took part in the World Book Day and encouraged groups to join in.
- h) ICT tutors in libraries. ICT tutors in Anglesey are encouraged to use examples of book related websites.
- i) Reading groups. Many libraries now have reading groups. Torfaen, for instance has set up two reading groups and is planning to carry out promotional sessions about whichbook.net and other relevant websites. When talking to book groups the Monmouthshire librarian mentions various websites.

Several librarians mentioned the possibility of introducing reader-centred displays and screen savers on the library computers. The Gwynedd respondent noted that they are awaiting the launch of Estyn Allan's Give me a Break/Cyfle I Ddianc (which happened in May 2004 i.e. a month or so after the questionnaire was distributed) to avoid duplication. Five authorities replied that they were not at present actively involved in any use of ICT for reader-development activities.

3.4 Reader-centred webpages in the authorities

Some Estyn Allan librarians reported that they had been actively involved in the development of reader-centred webpages within the libraries' websites. Here are some examples:

- Blaenau Gwent staff have developed the 'Bookch@tter' webpages and Figure 9 shows details of how to use a book chain (<http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/bglibraries/Library/BookChatter/content/bookchain.htm>).

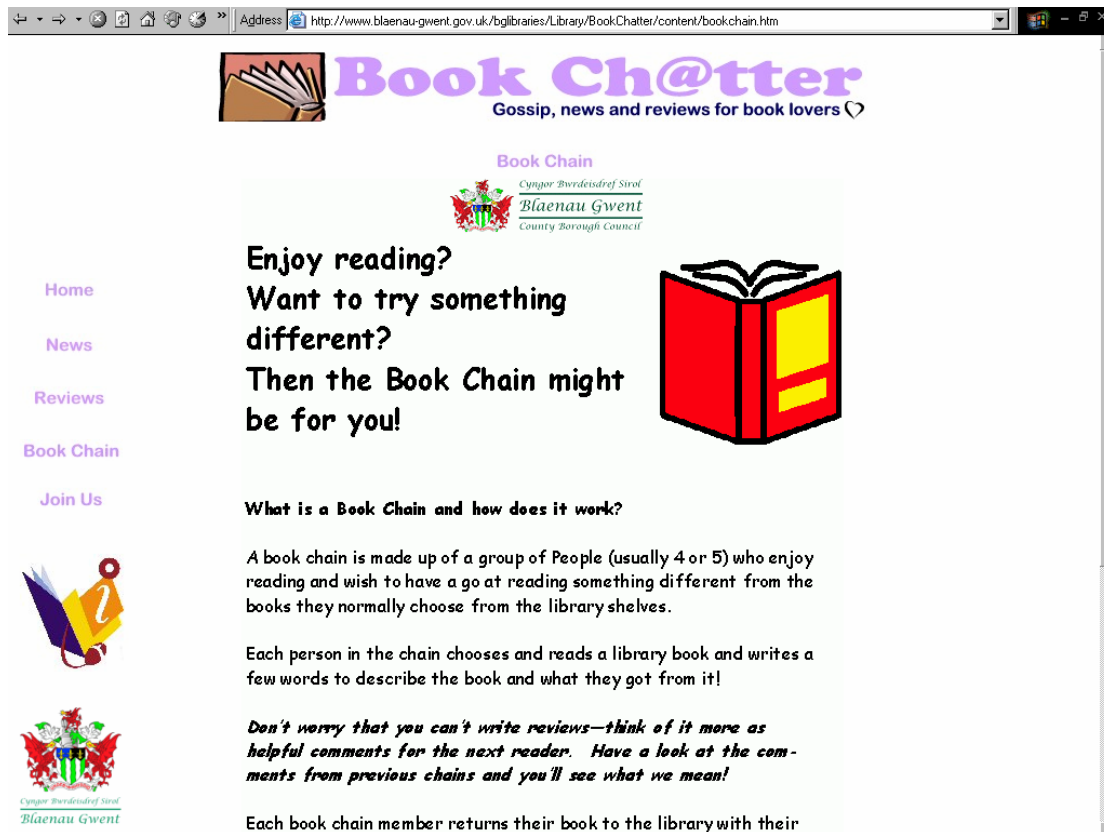


Figure 9. Part of the Bookch@tter website at Blaenau Gwent Libraries

- Caerphilly has links to reader-centred sites including Stories from the Web.
- Denbighshire has links to books and reading as was shown in Figure 8; time for development and maintenance of the website was seen as a problem.
- Flintshire has information about its reading groups on its website and is planning to have a deep link connection, similar to that shown in Figure 3, to Whichbook.
- Neath Port Talbot's reader-centred pages provide links to a number of the websites mentioned in the previous section and have a Book of the month section as shown in Figure 10 (<http://www.neath-porttalbot.gov.uk/libraries/bookofthemoth.cfm>).

NPT.GOV.UK
Welcome to Neath Port Talbot Online

A-Z of Services | Your Council | Jobs | News | Links | Contact Us

Home Business & Economy | Leisure & Tourism | Living | Learning | Health & Social Care | Environment | Travel & Transport

Learning Search

You are here > Home > Libraries > A Good Read > Book of the Month

Book of the Month

October 2004

The Death and Life of Charlie St. Cloud by Ben Sherwood

"The Death and Life of Charlie St. Cloud, by Ben Sherwood, A fabulous book, difficult to 'pigeon-hole' into a particular genre. Death, life, and the 'bit' in between are covered, as well as plenty of adventure and a love story. This is the only book that has made me cry since 'A Tale of Two Cities', but not in a maudlin way. I found it spiritually uplifting, and I'm sure it will be a best seller."
- Anne Roberts

[suggest a new book](#)

Previous Books of the Month.

2004

September
-----> [Weathercock by Glen Duncan](#)
"A read with dark, sinister undertones. It follows the progress of Dominic from a teenager, getting into the usual scrapes, through to adulthood where he wrestles with his own personal demons; all the time with the fiendish Deborah Black casting a shadow over him. Not always the most comfortable of reads but totally compelling and thoroughly menacing. This is a book you'll want to talk about with friends because there is so much in it." - Mark Allen

August
-----> [The Da Vinci Code by Dan Brown](#)
"A brilliant read, mixing fact with fiction, something a bit different from the average thriller, will keep you guessing to the very end." - Anne Roberts

July
-----> [Tell No One by Harlan Coben](#)
An e-mail from his wife sends David Beck into turmoil - his wife has been dead for eight years. A fast paced and gripping novel that is utterly compulsive and which

Figure 10. Book of the Month from Neath Port Talbot

- Rhondda Cynon Taf has a link to reader-centred pages from the library home page and this leads to book reviews, as shown in Figure 11, author of the month and links to reader-centred websites (<http://www.rhondda-cynon-taff.gov.uk/libraries/recommended.htm>).



Figure 11. Book reviews at Rhondda Cynon Taf Libraries

RCT also subscribes to a number of databases through EBSCO and one of these, Novelist, provides support for reading (http://www.odedodea.edu/instruction/curriculum/lars/ela_lab/ppt/NovelistPresentation.ppt). Novelist contains material for all ages and RCT members can access the database free of charge from home, school or from within the library. Schools and workplaces were sent details of this service to encourage remote use.

Twelve authorities replied that they didn't have any reader-centred webpages at present but most were looking into the possibility. Some Estyn Allan librarians commented on the lack of success in trying to use ICT in reader-development initiatives. Staff from both Bridgend and Flintshire noted the lack of interest in voting online for the voting based promotions with Flintshire making the point that people were interested in borrowing titles from these promotions but not voting. Flintshire also claimed that reading groups, although not anti-ICT, thought that any discussion of ICT-related developments in meetings got in the way. Merthyr mentioned that response to a recent adult competition with Oxford Reference Online was not wonderful but there had been some replies.

3.5 Attitudes of staff/users to the introduction of ICT in libraries and its effect

Twelve authorities reported that they had lost book space due to People's Network computers being located in the libraries and 14 admitted that the People's Network developments had meant extra work for staff. Torfaen made the point that book issues are declining and staff in general realise that the service has to change to survive. Most of the replies, however, concentrated on the positive side. For example, Wrexham had to lose a junior library in one of its branches. However, to compensate the children's section was given a 'makeover' and an injection of money into the

bookstock, and as a result issue figures rose dramatically. Anglesey mentioned the positive side of all staff having the opportunity to do the ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence) course which resulted in a growth of confidence amongst staff with some saying that their jobs are more enjoyable with the variety that computers brought to their day-to-day work.

There was one negative response from an Estyn Allan librarian who claimed that in some libraries the computer users and the book users are seen as separate people and with regard to the library service there is not much linking between the two. For some, there is a perception that the People's Network computers have been brought in to the detriment of books and have not been located in the best place for users. Some staff feel their time is taken up with the computers and that they are being used to support the ICT Learning Centres many of which, as detailed on the website of the Welsh Assembly Government (<http://www.cymruarlein.wales.gov.uk>), are located in public libraries. Some found that trying to persuade ICT people that there should be a session for readers was not easy. Another respondent commented that staff felt that the People's Network was taking over from the 'core service'.

3.6 Collaboration with other organisations in regard to reader-development activities

Eight authorities had been, or planned to be, involved in collaborative initiatives and some examples are given:

- Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot have started sharing books for their reading groups.
- Carmarthenshire has plans to collaborate with neighbouring authorities especially in children's book based activities and hopes to develop an annual literature festival.
- Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham have taken part in the North East Wales English Books Quiz. It is book-based but children research on the Web as well.
- Monmouthshire, as was the only authority in Wales subscribing to Stories from the Web, collaborates with other UK libraries in the development of this website.
- Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT)'s n3b (not a bad bunch of boys) project, was initiated by the library service as a way of encouraging teenage boys to use the library. Skateboarders and rollerbladers, who use the area outside one of the libraries (at Aberdare) were targeted and as a result a partnership was formed between RCT Libraries, cultural services, detached youth workers/accreditation team, a commercial media company and a group of young people aged between 11 and 18 years old. A CD-ROM and magazine aimed at skateboarders and rollerbladers was launched at Aberdare Library on World Book Day 2004.

3.7 Extra funding for reader development

Welsh libraries have received funding from the New Opportunities Fund, the People's Network and lottery funding from the Welsh Arts Council. The following six authorities gave details of additional funding:

- Denbighshire, Flintshire and RCT have received money from the Welsh Academy (Yr Academi Gymraeg) – the Welsh National Literature Promotion Agency and Society of Writers (<http://www.academi.org>) to fund author events/workshops for reader development.
- Denbighshire Libraries has also received a grant from 'Out-of-School Hours Learning' towards a readers' day for children in their final year in primary school.
- Merthyr has received money from the Bill and Melissa Gates Foundation.
- Monmouthshire has a children's library and information post of 18.5 hours paid for from Cymorth – the Children and Youth Support Fund of the Welsh Assembly Government (<http://www.wales.gov.uk/subichildren/content/cymorth-e.htm>). Monmouthshire has also received sponsorship from Tesco for an Indulgence Evening for reading groups in a branch library in Chepstow.
- RCT received funding from the European Social Fund to create the n3b CD-ROM

4. Conclusions

In a report on initial findings from the People's Network it is claimed that 40% of non-members who come to the libraries to use the computers went on to become members (Brophy, 2003). The People's Network in Wales has certainly brought more people into libraries who are, as reported by one Estyn Allan librarian, "younger and more male than the traditional profile".

There is a number of advantages that the People's Network initiative has provided for reader development; these include:

- an opportunity to find other readers interested in similar material and learn of their opinions of a particular title;
- there is no-one to 'judge' users in their choice of reading material;
- there is opportunity for much 'value-added' activity, such as web-chatting with authors.

The launch of the Welsh national reader-development promotion Give me a Break/Cyfle i Ddianc will provide ideas and material for the Estyn Allan librarians who participated in this survey. The responses received from the survey show that in general staff and users recognise the benefits of using ICT for reader-development work however, sometimes it is necessary to be pro-active in encouraging users to take advantage of the facilities provided by the People's Network to access appropriate reader-development websites. A report on the future of the People's Network in Wales is being produced (Roberts and Everitt, 2004).

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