

International Authors Forum Position Statement – Public Libraries

Introduction

Libraries are an essential point of access to books for many people who might not otherwise be able to have sight of and enjoy them. Literature contributes significantly to the richness and diversity of our cultural environment and is a highly beneficial leisure pursuit. We know reading for pleasure has a very positive effect on a child's development through life, and lifelong learning opportunities for adults therefore it's important to ensure people have access to a range of books that meet their needs. Libraries are also very important to the authors' community, as they provide lasting, easy access to their works while respecting copyright. Whether people are reading for pleasure, study or self-improvement it is important that we, as a society, make reading accessible to all. As Andrew Carnegie said "*A library outranks any other one thing a community can do to benefit its people. It is a never failing spring in the desert*".

Background

Today libraries not only loan books, they often also provide a variety of cultural and educational opportunities to their local communities. Their facilities can include computers for users to work on and access the internet, music libraries with instruments for visitors to play, and access to newspapers past and present. They can offer CD's and audiobooks to enjoy. Some even offer remote access to e-books and audiobooks on a user's computer or mobile device. Libraries are a communal space. They host events with authors, classes to learn about writing or computer skills. An increasing number of libraries offer "makerspace" or "maker programs" for patrons to work together, accessing a diverse range of services to create intellectual or even physical projects of their own.

Issues

Funding is a frequent challenge, with government cuts leaving libraries with poorer resources, or even facing closure. A well-resourced library is highly valuable to a community; a wide range of books that both reflects the diverse interests of visitors whilst also expanding them is what creates value and opportunity for a community. Reading, writing and literacy provide significant cultural and economic benefits, and these important goals should not be undermined for short term gain.

It is also important that authors receive fair remuneration for the use of their works in libraries. Public Lending Right (PLR) is an important part of a creator's income essential to ensure the continuing creation and flow of professional literary content. PLR currently takes many forms around the world and we support any system that acts to deliver fair remuneration with funding from government and not to the detriment of library budgets.

Position

Libraries are cherished by authors as a means to keep their work available to the public, and to appreciate the writing of others. Libraries build community upon their valuable content and as an access point to leisure and education, while offering space where these things are shared. Governments make cuts to library services and authors remuneration for public lending at the cost of literacy, education, and social mobility, all of which suffer in any area where it is harder to access books.