

Summer Reading Challenge 2013 – Creepy House



I am so happy. I finished 6 books and I got a medal. Thank you so much!

Rachana, 6, Surrey

It was good because it gave me a reason to read and it helped my reading skills too.

Anthony, 9, Doncaster

It has really brought Nathan's reading on – much more confident and now starting to read books on his own.

Parent, North Yorkshire

Key Achievements

- 777,973 children aged 4-11 took part in the Creepy House Summer Reading Challenge
- In total 810,089 children took part including under 4s (6,711) and international programmes via the British Council (12,060) and libraries in the Republic of Ireland (13,345)
- 98% of UK libraries ran the Creepy House Summer Reading Challenge
- 336,588 or 44% of participants in UK libraries were boys
- Children doing the Challenge read more than 3 million books over the summer holidays
- 66,764 children signed up as new library members
- The website attracted 188,689 visitors, who visited 343,876 times, with 3.9 million page views
- 55,000 children created profiles on the website, logging 192,661 books on the *Book Sorter*
- 309,191 children attended 15,084 Creepy House events organised by libraries
- 5,684 young volunteers aged 12-24 helped in 137 library authorities. This represents a 30% increase on the number involved in 2012
- 96% of the young people involved in volunteering gained new skills and experience



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**ARTS COUNCIL
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**THE
READING
AGENCY**

2013 Report

1. Background

Each year independent charity The Reading Agency partners with libraries to create the Summer Reading Challenge, the UK's biggest children's reading promotion. Research shows the Challenge improves children's enjoyment of reading, as well as their reading range, confidence and motivation. It helps prevent the summer holiday dip in literacy skills.¹

The Summer Reading Challenge encourages children to read six library books of their choice over the summer holidays. They join the Challenge at their local library, where library staff and volunteers give out themed materials and incentives. There are medals and certificates for those who finish six books.

The 2013 Challenge was called Creepy House. The materials were created with award-winning children's illustrator Chris Riddell.

Partnership with BBC, featured on CBBC, Trafalgar Square, Hay-on-Wye festival, Children's University, RNIB, piloting with Bridge organisations, Trinity College and Arts Council on Discover Arts Award, GfTA awards to develop regional approaches, 100% completion in 2 schools in Wales, supported by author Helena Pielichaty. Support on the website from many children's authors, and Frank Lampard. Launch event at No. 11 Downing Street, supported by Frances Osborne, and 58 MPs attended a reception to support the Challenge at Portcullis House.

Aims and evaluation methodology

The Summer Reading Challenge's aims for children and young people are:

- To get more children reading more
- To build children's confidence and enthusiasm about reading
- To build children's and families' use of public libraries
- To help children and families benefit from cultural experiences
- To help young people experience rewarding reading and library volunteering activity
- To reach disadvantaged children with a summer reading offer

The 2013 programme was evaluated through an online survey completed by 100% of participating library authorities; detailed reports from a selection of these; feedback from children and parents; statistics from the Summer Reading Challenge website; a survey of the young people volunteering to support the programme, and the library services running a volunteering programme.

The changing library environment

In England and Wales, the Summer Reading Challenge is a prioritised programme within a new Universal Reading Offer strategy developed by the Society of Chief Librarians², and it has maintained a high level of 98% take-up from library authorities. In Scotland Tesco Bank sponsor the programme, where it is known as the Tesco Bank Summer Reading Challenge Scotland. Here, 29/32 of local authorities run the programme and children's participation has risen by 30% in the three years of the sponsorship (from 31,125 in 2010 to 40,557 in 2013).

At a time of huge change for libraries, the Summer Reading Challenge is a pivotal programme, helping libraries work smarter and collectively across local authority boundaries to help build children's love of reading. The combination of national co-ordination and local delivery helps save costs through economies

¹ Summer Reading Challenge 2009 Impact Research Report, UKLA, December 2009

² <http://www.goscl.com/libraries-of-the-21st-century-scl-launches-four-national-offers-for-public-libraries/>

of scale, and this model also helps libraries attract major partnerships, develop positive media profile and demonstrate impact.

The involvement of young volunteers is growing significantly; 5,684 young Reading Activists helped deliver the 2013 Challenge, an increase of 30% on 2012. Evaluation shows volunteering increases their skills, experience and confidence with 96% of young volunteers saying that their skills and experience had been enhanced.

2. Programme impact

2.1 Children's reading and use of the library

810,089 children took part in the Summer Reading Challenge in 2013, which is an increase of 9% on participation in 2012. Scottish authorities saw an increase of 3.4% on last year. The Challenge is successful at drawing in boys with 44% of participants being boys, an increase of 1% over 2012.

777,973 children aged 4-11 took part in UK libraries, and 447,116 children, 57% of participants, completed the Challenge by reading six books over the summer. Completion rates vary considerably in different library authorities, (see Appendix Charts, Completion Rate Individual Authorities). The highest completion rate is 71%. There was a significant increase of 15% in the SW region, where they used funding from GfTA for a drive to increase participation, and link to cultural experiences through working with dance organisations and their Bridge organisation. Also a 15% increase in SE.

More than 3 million library books were read by children taking part in the Challenge, and the Impact Research suggests that many children read even more over the summer. 25% of the children who took part in the Summer Reading Challenge read between 7 and 12 books, and 8% read more than 12.³

Previous UKLA impact research provides evidence that the Summer Reading Challenge can contribute towards preventing the 'summer holiday dip' in reading motivation and attainment³. Teachers indicate that children who undertake the Challenge are more likely to maintain or improve their reading performance than those who do not, and far fewer dip in attainment after the summer. All teachers surveyed commented on the value of the Challenge in developing a wider reading repertoire and increasing children's confidence – giving them a more secure view of themselves as readers as well as greater independence.³ This was borne out by feedback from the 2013 Challenge: The Summer Reading Challenge directly supports the Reading for Pleasure element of the new Primary Curriculum through this sustained encouragement of reading through the summer holiday. The Book sorter recommendations from participants offer pupils and teachers year-round access to suggestions to enhance and encourage the love of reading.

The Summer Reading Challenge helps by encouraging the children to read during the holidays as reading ages can dip significantly in years during 6 weeks

Teacher, Staffordshire

Reaching Disadvantaged Children

Library services worked with a wide range of local partners to reach children needing extra support. These included children of refugees and asylum seekers, Looked After children, young carers, children of homeless families and with a parent in prison. Some services sent out information through the local home educated network, or visited traveller sites.

Use of the library

The Summer Reading Challenge encourages thousands of children to join their library. In 2013 66,760 children joined their local library to take part in Creepy House. The Summer Reading Challenge also builds

³ Summer Reading Challenge 2009 Impact Research Report, UKLA, December 2009

children's borrowing of books and other materials from libraries. 70% of authorities provided data on loans of children's materials, and that totalled 17 million issues during the 10 week summer period.

Wider cultural and artistic experiences

As part of their delivery of the Summer Reading Challenge libraries organised a wide range of events – music, dance, poetry, art, performance – in many different community settings. During the summer holidays there were 15,084 different Creepy House events, attended by 309,191 children, more events than in 2012, but with fewer children.

2448 of these activities were run by partner organisations and arts practitioners working with libraries. There were also art clubs, author and illustrator events and workshops using story telling, drama, poetry and creative writing.

In Hull, the library service worked with a local theatre company who created a production about the Summer Reading Challenge theme, for school assemblies, to encourage participation. The actors dressed up as the child characters from the Challenge; as well as the play, they created YouTube clips introducing the characters, and also appeared at shopping centres to promote the challenge.

In the South West, thirteen library authorities worked together to produce a Creepy House inspired dance tour using funding from GfTA. The aim of the project was to try out a new and innovative approach to enrich children's connection with the Summer Reading Challenge. It was a hugely successful project. Sixteen libraries hosted Creepy House dance shows and the response was incredibly positive.

50% of the children that took part had never seen a dance show before, so the project exposed these children to a new and memorable experience. There are already plans to build on this work and roll it out in 2014 and 2015.

Last year 76,000 children in the region participated in the Summer Reading Challenge, and by animating the challenge through dance we aimed to engage even more 4-11 year olds in the thrill of reading. Given that 87,793 participated in the Challenge and over 53,000 completed this year we - have been successful!

Sarah Hillier, South West ASCEL

2.2 Young people volunteering

There has been a big increase in the number of library authorities involving volunteers with the Summer Reading Challenge. In 2011, 117 library authorities involved volunteers in 1,000 libraries. In 2013 this rose to 137 library authorities.

The Reading Agency was supported for three years by the John Laing Charitable Trust and has now received Cabinet Office Social Action Funding to provide training and support for libraries involving young volunteers. Working with libraries, the programme has been embedded as an important model that adds capacity for libraries, alongside very real benefits for young people and participating children.

5,684 young volunteers aged 12-24 years were involved, a 30% increase on 2012 96% said they gained skills and experience, and 85% said they would like to keep volunteering in a library after the Summer Reading Challenge has finished. 9 young volunteers achieved their Bronze Arts Award accreditation.

65% of library authorities have offered volunteers opportunities to continue volunteering in the library or the community after the summer, with offers made to at least 1023 volunteers.

It's been a truly fantastic opportunity. I've had the chance to work closely with children - something I've never really done before, at any level. There's something great about seeing their eyes light up when you've read and enjoyed a book that they love too. You just don't get to have that kind of interaction anywhere else. Rest assured I'll be back next year!

Katya, 17, Milton Keynes

Taking part in volunteering is a good way to spend a little time to give back to your community while developing your people skills. In addition working with children is very rewarding and really makes the job satisfying.

Ben, 19, Fleet

I really enjoyed working with the Summer Reading Challenge... the library staff were very welcoming and it felt great to be contributing to the community.

Anindita, 15, Kingston upon Thames

Spending time in the library has helped to remind me how much I love reading for leisure and not just for my course at university.

Emily, 19, West Berkshire

The full report on library volunteering can be found as an appendix to this report.

2.3 Working with schools

Evidence shows that the Summer Reading Challenge works best where there are strong links between schools, teachers, librarians and children's and youth services.

The 2013 feedback from library authorities indicated that 84% of library authorities organised visits to schools. They visited 7897 schools, representing 49% of the total schools in their authorities, to encourage children to take part in the Challenge.

Resources provided by The Reading Agency included a video trailer for Creepy House, introducing the characters and encouraging children to sign up at their local library. A PowerPoint for delivering an assembly about the Challenge, which library authorities could customise, was available to all authorities as a downloadable resource.

Libraries used invitations, posters and noticeboard information, PowerPoint presentations, and their own specially printed flyers/summer activity booklets. They reported on a range of successful approaches including

- Children acting as ambassadors and talking about the Challenge to the other children at school
- Using the video trailer and website to generate interest in the characters and narrative
- Creating YouTube clips to promote the Challenge
- Talking to parents at school open days and summer events
- Presentation at Head teachers' conference and presentations to Literacy Co-ordinators
- Sending out registration forms via the schools

At Ysgol Esgob Morgan and Ysgol Cyffylliog schools in, North Wales, ALL of the pupils took part in the Summer Reading Challenge and completed it. They were encouraged by their Patron of Reading, author Helena Pielichaty, who presented them with a trophy. Helena also worked with Nottinghamshire Library Service and fellow authors Michael Cox and Elizabeth Baguley to donate book prizes to the school in Newark with the highest percentage of Summer Reading Challenge participants, and gave a cup to the class with the highest percentage of completing the Challenge.

My children really enjoyed doing the Challenge. They are looking forward to the next challenge really enjoyed doing the Challenge. It has encouraged them to read alone as well.

Parent of 6 and 8 year olds, Wales

3. Programme innovation and development in 2013

3.1 Digital developments

The Summer Reading Challenge website featured a new design, and additional functionality: Reviews could be added to the Book sorter, children could create a Wish List, and could become fans of authors. Using the database of titles input by children during the Challenge, visitors to the site could ask for book recommendations based on the types of books they like reading. 55,000 children created profiles, and collectively input 192,661 titles between June and the end of September.

The Summer Reading Challenge website attracted 188,689 visitors (up 39%). They visited the site 343,876 times (up 57%), with 3.9 million page views (up 48%).

There were online incentives to complete the Challenge, with codes at the end of each stage which unlocked videos. The site offered encouraging video messages from children's authors, two Creepy House games, a facility to keep a note of the books read and advice from library staff for reading tips. A new 'Finish the Story' writing competition featured stories started by well-known children's writers including Chris Riddell, Cressida Cowell and Charlie Higson; there were 5800 entries.

The Summer Reading Challenge website is now a year-round site. Children can continue to log books on their profiles, earning badges for reaching new totals of books read. It also offers competitions, publisher promotions, messages from authors, online support from library staff, games, and a place to chat about books.

A new social media campaign with authors who include Frank Lampard, Julia Donaldson, Michael Rosen, Jacqueline Wilson, Charlie Higson, Liz Pichon, Frank Cottrell Boyce, Cressida Cowell and Justin Sompter encouraged parents to support the challenge and children to complete it.

I'm proud to be a Champion for Creepy House and that Frankie's Magic Football is included in the suggested books to read list. Reading with my children is incredibly important to me and a wonderful way to spend time together as a family.

Frank Lampard

The Summer Reading Challenge Facebook page and Twitter highlighted activities, events and photos from all over the UK. On launch day, 13th July there were 311 retweets of messages, including those from Chris Addison and Stephen Fry.

3.2 Press and PR

The Reading Agency worked with libraries to run a strong PR campaign for the Summer Reading Challenge and increased national coverage through press and online media.

In a partnership with the BBC, Creepy House featured heavily on Blue Peter with illustrator Chris Riddell in the studio showcasing his fantastic concepts for the challenge.

3.3 Public affairs



Frances Osborne arranged a launch event at No 11 Downing Street to celebrate the work of the young people who volunteered to support the Challenge.

This was attended by librarians and key stakeholders and 3 Reading Activist Summer Reading Challenge volunteers spoke about their experiences and the impact on them in terms of their confidence and skills.

The All Party Parliamentary Group for Libraries hosted a July launch event for MPs at Portcullis House. This was attended by 58 MPs.

3.4 Supporting Partnerships 2013

The Reading Agency works with libraries to build key partnerships at national level to reach wider audiences:

Tesco Bank: as in 2012, Tesco Bank supported the Summer Reading Challenge in Scotland. This gave each Scottish authority free materials for 300 children and £350 for each participating authority to run extra activities aimed at increasing participation.

The **BBC** supported the Summer Reading Challenge with two features on Blue Peter with Chris Riddell and Francesca Simon, and supporting video from the presenters.

A **Children's University** partnership means that the Summer Reading Challenge is a Children's University nationally validated learning activity. 31 library authorities reported that children brought passports in, and at least 1900 children had their passports stamped.

Welsh Books Council: Welsh/English bilingual versions of all the Challenge materials were made possible through the support of the Welsh Books Council and funding from the Welsh Government.

RNIB National Library Service: The RNIB National Library Service supported the creation of large print and Braille versions of the Creepy House materials to enable children with visual impairment to take part anywhere in the UK, through their local library.

Bookstart: The Bookstart Baby Book Crawl worked well for libraries but the move to the Bookstart Bear Club in 2013 saw a drop-off in numbers as the model isn't such a neat fit to the way the challenge works. We will work with libraries in 2014 to support children under 5 wanting to do the Challenge.

Bookbug: A similar certificate was created and available for younger children in Scotland, through a partnership with Scottish Book Trust.

The British Council: The Summer Reading Challenge ran in 15 different countries through 29 British Council offices, involving an estimated 12,000 children.

Arts Council/Arts Award

Arts Award is managed by Trinity College London in association with Arts Council England, working with 10 regional bridge organisations. It connects children and young people with the best of arts and culture, allowing them to achieve an award through their chosen art form. In 2013, with support from the Bridge organisations, 9 Reading Activist young volunteers gained their Bronze Award and 610 participants gained the Discover award. A full report on the Arts Award pilot can be found as an appendix to this report.

Festivals



In May, the Reading Agency was at the Hay-on Wye Festival where the Duchess of Cornwall announced the 2013 Summer Reading Challenge theme.



In July, the Challenge was officially launched as part of the Evening Standard's Get Reading Campaign. 18000 people attended the event in Trafalgar Square, Summer Reading Champions Malorie Blackman, Chris Riddell and Akala were on stage, and 27 librarians from 14 London boroughs roamed the square promoting the Challenge.

4. Looking Forward: The 2014 Summer Reading Challenge

The Summer Reading Challenge strategy group is currently working on a three year development plan. For 2014 the following developments are being prioritised:

Diversification of funding

- Continue the Tesco Bank sponsorship pilot in Scotland, alongside developing plans for a national sponsor in 2014
- Encourage libraries to innovate/develop the programme using Grants for the Arts funding and plan a national Grants for the Arts and Nesta bid
- Position libraries' reading for pleasure work with health commissioners and explore the possibility of schools commissioning funding, Pupil Premium etc.
- Test a donations model

National Partnership development

- Develop media partnerships, with special focus on BBC and the Times Education Supplement
- Develop partnerships to support drive to reach disadvantaged children/troubled families, e.g. with Barnados
- Develop partnerships to support a new schools engagement plan: the National Association of Teachers of English; UKLA; Education Scotland; the Arts Council's Bridge organisations; Trinity
- Develop partnerships with the Duke of Edinburgh Award and Trinity to accredit young people's contribution

Delivery models

- Develop the involvement of young people as volunteers with skills benefits for themselves, especially in Wales and Scotland.
- Develop policy for how the Challenge will work in volunteer run libraries

PR and public affairs

- High profile launches, including in Scottish Parliament. MPs supported to publicise locally.
- Ten big name authors acting as advocates and media spokespeople + an army of other author champions
- New media partnerships
- SCL and ASCEL working regionally with the Arts Council on *before and after* stories and advocacy

Digital audience development

- Develop children's engagement through further development of website and Book sorter, with new drive to use on People's Network computers, and in schools. Further develop website to become all year round presence
- Bid to Nesta for linked parents' digital development
- Integration of approaches from digital skills sharing programme with publishers, especially Reading Families online
- Develop co-ordinated national social media campaign through Facebook and Twitter
- Work with SOLUS on an augmented reality aspect to the challenge

Local partnership development

Schools

We have appointed an Education Consultant to support our work with schools and we are delighted that Professor Teresa Cremin, Open University, will be our Education Advisor, acting as a critical friend to our Children's and Young Peoples programmes. They will help us to:

- Encourage schools to put the Summer Reading Challenge and partnerships with libraries into the school improvement plan
- Develop new volunteering *Reading Activists* roles to incentivise participation
- Develop use of schools trophies to incentivise participation
- Invite authors to promote libraries and the Challenge
- Develop links with literacy co-ordinator roles where they exist – Primary Consultant (Every Child a Reader)
- Explore commissioning possibilities through Bridges and possibility of ITT package to support summer term teaching practice

Health

- Incorporate health/well being advocacy and link to SCL/TRA's new drive on health
- Pilot the use of Challenge in hospital settings (Leicestershire)
- Explore commissioning possibilities linked to local health and well being strategies. Develop Commissioner interest in mental health by focusing on wider determinants of health

Culture

- Support the development of models of arts and museums delivery partnerships

Evaluation

Refocus evaluation strategy to deliver priority linked evidence based relevant to commissioners and other partners

- 2013: pilot health/well being impact in two authorities with an established relationship with health commissioners and partners. Roll out framework in 2014
- UKLA research with education partners still valid for establishing impact on reading range, motivation and prevention of summer holiday reading dip. New research to be commissioned building on the findings of the 2009 UKLA Impact Book Research.