

Press release: Government to extend Public Lending Right scheme to e-book authors

The change to the Public Lending Right scheme is being introduced in the Digital Economy Bill and will mean authors of e-books and e-audiobooks are eligible for payment in the same way as those whose physical books are borrowed from libraries.

The UK is one of the first countries to extend its library lending compensation scheme to remote e-lending.

E-book lending has jumped 38% in the last year alone, with more than four million e-book loans and almost one million e-audiobook loans in Great Britain in the twelve months to April 2016.

Rob Wilson, Minister for Civil Society and responsible for libraries, said:

“We want to help public libraries embrace the digital age by improving access to e-lending and wifi services.

“This important change will put e-book authors on the same footing as those writers, illustrators and photographers whose physical books are borrowed for free.

“This legislation fulfils a manifesto commitment and underlines our support for the growing e-book sector, while ensuring that appropriate protections for rights holders are maintained.”

The Public Lending Right scheme is managed by the British Library on behalf of the Government, with more than £6 million of payments made to 22,000 authors, illustrators, photographers, translators and rights holders each year.

Roly Keating, Chief Executive of the British Library, said:

“With the rapid rise in popularity of ebooks and e-audiobooks in recent years, it’s fantastic news that authors’ PLR payments will now reflect remote ebook loans of their books from public libraries as well as the borrowing of hard copies.

“Over 22,000 writers, illustrators, photographers, translators and editors who have contributed to books lent out by public libraries in the UK receive PLR payments each year, so we look forward to working with even more new authors who are now eligible.”

The change comes after the Government funded a wifi roll-out across England, which benefitted more than 1,000 libraries, helping to increase access to digital services and e-lending.

Government has also launched a £4 million library fund to help disadvantaged communities and promote new digital and literacy projects. The Libraries Taskforce's Libraries Ambition: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021 also provides local authorities with practical and innovative options to help improve and develop services across the country.

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