



LIBRARY OF
CONGRESS
LITERACY AWARDS
2015

BEST PRACTICES



A MESSAGE FROM JOHN Y. COLE

Since 2013, the Library of Congress Literacy Awards Program has recognized 59 organizations worldwide for their effectiveness in promoting literacy. The programs of 17 organizations are being honored in 2015 and described in this publication.

The work of the three 2015 prize winners is particularly notable, but outstanding specific examples, often presenting a unique approach, also are found among the best practices implemented by the 14 other organizations.

The Library of Congress Literacy Awards, administered by the Library of Congress Center for the Book, are made possible through the generosity of David M. Rubenstein.

The prizes and the 2015 winners are:

The David M. Rubenstein Prize (\$150,000) for an outstanding and measurable contribution to increasing literacy levels by an organization based either in the United States or abroad that has demonstrated exceptional and sustained depth in its commitment to the advancement of literacy.

Winner: First Book

The American Prize (\$50,000) for a significant and measurable contribution to increasing literacy levels or national awareness of the importance of literacy by an organization based in the United States.

Winner: United Through Reading

The International Prize (\$50,000) for a significant and measurable contribution to increasing literacy levels by an organization based outside of the United States.

Winner: Beanstalk

This year applications were due to the Library of Congress on March 31, 2015; submissions came from organizations in 22 U.S. states and 24 countries.

The Library of Congress Literacy Awards Program is a pilot, five-year project. In addition to recognizing and encouraging organizations now engaged in promoting literacy, we seek to broaden and stimulate public understanding about the essential role of literacy in all aspects of society. In this spirit of sharing experience and new ideas, we hope that organizations that did not receive prizes or best practices recognition in 2013–2015 will reapply. Information about winning programs and best practice projects is available on read.gov, the Library of Congress reading and literacy promotion website.

The Library of Congress is grateful to the members of the Literacy Awards Advisory Board for their energy, service and advice, and to David M. Rubenstein for his concern, as a citizen, about the state of literacy in our country and throughout the world.

John Y. Cole

*Chair, Library of Congress Literacy Awards Program
Director, Library of Congress Center for the Book*



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2015

BEST PRACTICES

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Library of Congress Literacy Awards*

Front cover: The cover of this year's Literacy Awards publication is graced by an owl, the symbol of learning and wisdom, which appears often in the iconography of the Library's Capitol Hill buildings. It is especially important in the John Adams Building (1939), where this sturdy and forward-looking art deco image reminds us of the importance of literacy, now and in the ages ahead.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction to 2015 Literacy Award Winners	3
The Rubenstein Prize: First Book	4
The American Prize: United Through Reading	5
The International Prize: Beanstalk	6
Introduction to Best Practices	7
Working with Government Policymakers	8–11
Creating a Community of Literacy	12–15
Selecting Appropriate Language of Instruction	16–19
Literacy in Service of Social Goals	20–23
Providing Access for Readers with Physical Disabilities	24–26
Board Members	27
Endnotes	28
Index	29



s the winners of the 2015 Library of Congress Literacy Awards, First Book, United Through Reading and Beanstalk demonstrate the highest levels of effectiveness and dedication to the cause of literacy promotion. These three organizations are empowering people around the world through education, mentorship and increased access to books and reading. Each is a functional example of the standard by which the prizes are judged.

The David M. Rubenstein Prize (\$150,000) is awarded to an organization that has made outstanding and measurable contributions in increasing literacy levels and has demonstrated exceptional and sustained depth and breadth in its commitment to the advancement of literacy. The organization meets the highest standards of excellence in its operations and services. This award may be given to any organization based either inside or outside the United States.

The American Prize (\$50,000) is awarded to an organization that has made a significant and measurable contribution to increasing literacy levels or the national awareness of the importance of literacy. This award may be given to any organization that is based in the United States.

The International Prize (\$50,000) is awarded to an organization or national entity that has made a significant and measurable contribution to increasing literacy levels. This award may be given to any organization that is based in a country outside the United States.



FIRST BOOK



FIRST BOOK

LOCATION:
Washington, DC

SERVICE AREA:
United States and Canada

POPULATION SERVED:
Low-income children

SCOPE:
9 million books
donated/year

FOUNDED:
1992



First Book’s mission is to ensure that a steady stream of books reaches children in need. The National Book Bank is First Book’s foundational program. Through this program, the organization works with publishers to secure mass donations of new children’s books, which are then distributed to organizations, educators and children across the country at no cost. Recipient organizations include schools, libraries, social service organizations and

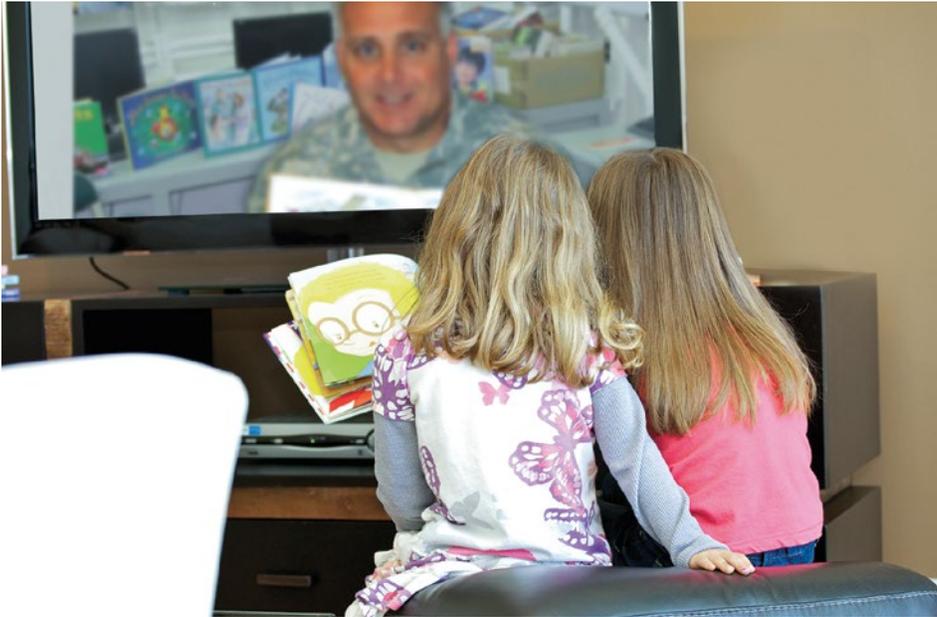
other groups serving low-income children and communities.

In 2012 the organization created a second program aimed at getting books into the hands of children in need. The First Book Marketplace is an online resource where schools and educators serving low-income populations can purchase books and resources for a discount of 50 to 90 percent. To offer this resource, First Book negotiates volume discounts with publishers and then purchases large quantities of popular, quality books. These are then resold through the online marketplace for a minimal cost.

First Book also leverages its purchasing power to encourage publishers to produce diverse, relevant content. The Stories for All program works to prove to publishers that there is a market for books with diverse characters and plots, as well as multilingual editions of classic titles. Among other successes, it was responsible for the first bilingual edition of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, which is now sold in retail bookstores as well as being a fixture in the National Book Bank and the First Book Marketplace.



UNITED THROUGH READING

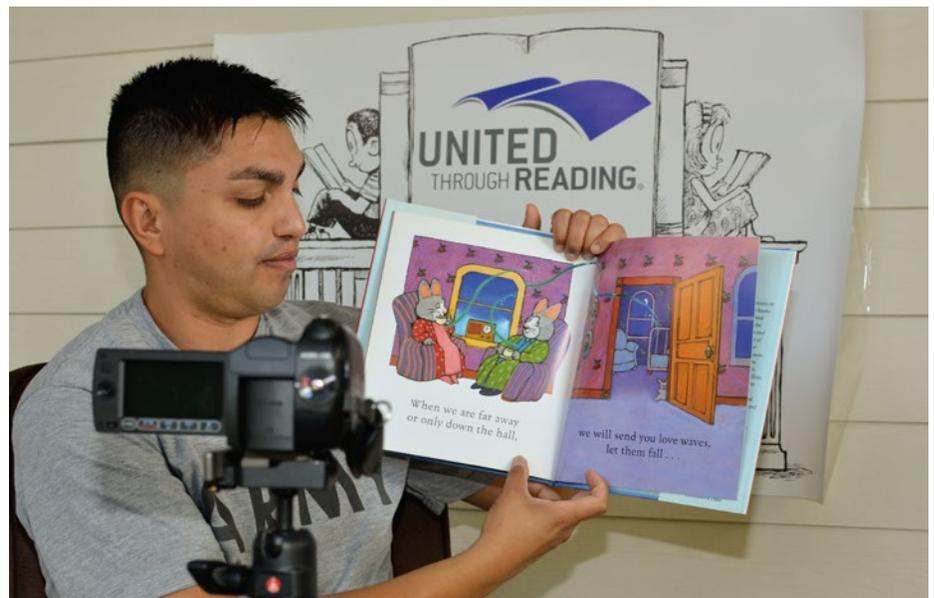


To help active military personnel stay involved in their children's literacy development, United Through Reading films them reading storybooks and distributes the recordings to their



families. The program is based on research showing that reading aloud to children is a key factor in their acquisition of literacy skills. United Through Reading has recording stations on military bases and outposts, in USO centers and on half of all U.S. Navy ships. At these 180 stations, more than 500 volunteers coach service members on storytelling techniques to engage young children.

Each recording session has a number of steps. First the service member selects a title from a variety of children's books; then he or she is recorded reading the book aloud; finally, the book and the recording are sent to their family. The children often watch these recordings daily as they follow along in their book, allowing deployed parents to be regular contributors to their children's education.



UNITED THROUGH READING

LOCATION:
San Diego, CA

SERVICE AREA:
USA and US military facilities

POPULATION SERVED:
Military families with children

SCOPE:
25,000 recordings/year

FOUNDED:
1989



Beanstalk

BEANSTALK

LOCATION:
London, UK

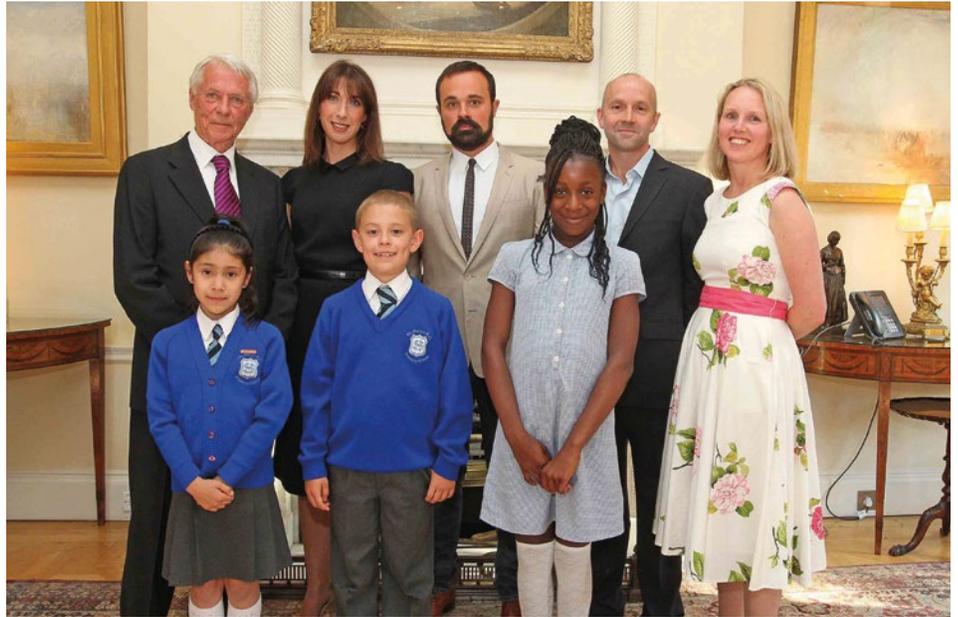
SERVICE AREA:
England

POPULATION SERVED:
Children ages 6-11

SCOPE:
2,800 volunteer mentors;
8,400 children/year

FOUNDED:
1973

BEANSTALK



Beanstalk is a volunteer-based literacy organization that provides one-on-one support to children ages 6 to 11. Teachers refer children to Beanstalk when they are struggling with reading in the classroom and could benefit from enhanced support.

Volunteer tutors work consistently with their assigned children, meeting twice a week for the entire school year to read,

play and talk together. By creating a less structured environment, without consequences for perceived failure, tutors are able to help the students engage with and enjoy reading and learning.

In 2011 Beanstalk launched a campaign called Get London Reading to raise awareness of the importance of reading and literacy and galvanize public support for literacy promotion efforts. In order to reach a wide audience, they partnered with the *London Evening Standard* to create and feature articles on the state of children's literacy, publish profiles of those affected by illiteracy and issue calls to action. Follow-up articles focused on people who had subsequently become reading mentors and the students they were helping.

The success of the London campaign has led to its replication across the United Kingdom, with programs including Born and Read in Brum and Get Leeds Reading. Additionally, Beanstalk is now working with organizations in other European cities to replicate this project.





The Best Practices publication and related programming, such as symposia and webcasts, have emerged as core components of the Library of Congress Literacy Awards Program.

Highlighting both research-validated practices and concrete implementations of these practices demonstrates how literacy promotion groups have successfully applied theory in a real-world context. These solutions provide a model for organizations seeking to create programs that use evidence-based practice to promote literacy.

Five practices are presented here. Each is illustrated by profiles of two or three organizations that have successfully used the practice to enhance and focus their literacy promotion activities. The five practices are: working with government policymakers; creating a community of literacy; selecting appropriate language of instruction; literacy in service of social goals; and providing access to readers with physical disabilities. They were selected in consultation with the Literacy Awards Advisory Board to reflect methods of addressing a range of factors that lead to low literacy, from a need for national advocacy to a lack of qualified instructors.

The 14 organizations profiled here are effectively applying these practices, often in new and creative ways. They are examples of how a program can successfully use evidence-based practice to enhance the promotion of literacy and reading.



WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT POLICYMAKERS

Working with the government and other policymakers allows organizations to influence key decisions such as those about program development, funding priorities and programmatic support. This influence can be either direct, through advice or program implementation, or indirect through program modeling.

Giving direct advice to governing officials can encourage them to incorporate good organizational and curricular practices when they create government-sponsored programs. This advice might be given formally in a policy meeting, or informally in conversation



with an official the group has worked with in the past. An organization might also seek a grant to directly carry out government programming. This allows the organization to ensure that the program is consistent with good programmatic and curricular practices.

Even if they are not connected to the government, organizations can influence policy by modeling effective programs. Providing ongoing programming can demonstrate that there is a need for this type of service in the community and encourage constituents to ask their government for it. When governments or policy groups want to start a program or initiative, they often seek groups that are already successful. They then might emulate these groups or grant them official status and an expanded role in program management, amplifying their effectiveness.

WORKING WITH THE GOVERNMENT AND OTHER POLICYMAKERS ALLOWS ORGANIZATIONS TO INFLUENCE KEY DECISIONS, DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY



STIFTUNG LESEN

Stiftung Lesen's program Lesestart supports libraries in familiarizing parents with the importance of reading aloud to their children. It relies on a diverse network of non-profit and government partners—including pediatricians, libraries and schools—to provide book packs to families with young children. A pediatrician gives the first pack when the child comes in for a one-year checkup. The second pack is received when parents bring the child to the library at age 3. The last is provided when the child begins school at age 5. By having the packs distributed by different groups, Lesestart encourages parents to understand that reading affects many different facets of public and private life and is integral to children's development.

In addition to Lesestart, its current flagship program, Stiftung Lesen also supports 36,000 educators through its Teacher's Club. Participating teachers receive professional development training and support as well as access to research and materials supporting the importance



of literacy promotion. The group also participates in advocacy activities centered on World Book Day in order to remind the public of the importance of books and reading. Additionally, it has established the Institute for Research on Reading and Media to ensure that its projects align with the latest scientific research.

Stiftung Lesen

STIFTUNG LESEN

LOCATION:
Mainz, Germany

SERVICE AREA:
Germany

POPULATION SERVED:
Children and teens

SCOPE:
4.5 million book packs
distributed by 2018;
1 million participants/year
in World Book Day

FOUNDED:
1988



German chancellor Angela Merkel read to children as part of a press event supporting the nationwide early literacy program Lesestart.





**NATIONAL
RESOURCE CENTER
FOR NON-FORMAL
EDUCATION**

LOCATION:
Kathmandu, Nepal

SERVICE AREA:
Nepal

POPULATION SERVED:
Adults and out-of-school
children

SCOPE:
6,000+ personnel trained;
16 CLCs administered

FOUNDED:
1995

NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR NON-FORMAL EDUCATION



The National Resource Center for Non-Formal Education (NRC-NFE) promotes literacy through the creation of community learning centers (CLC) throughout Nepal.

These CLCs focus on serving illiterate and low-literate adults as well as out-of-school children. In addition to overseeing 16 CLCs directly, the organization has helped support the creation of over 2,000 CLCs throughout the country. The program uses the 16 sites that it directly oversees to model need-based aid delivered through local community institutions. It creates manuals and educational materials for service providers as well as providing direct training to more than 6,000 CLC personnel and government officials.

In addition to modeling effective programming through its own CLCs, the NRC-NFE also developed materials to enable local centers to participate in nationwide advocacy and engagement efforts designed to raise awareness of the importance of literacy and education. It also has been responsible for the creation of standardized literacy and reading curricula and textbooks that have been used by over 60,000 learners.



KAZAKHSTAN READING ASSOCIATION



KAZAKHSTAN READING ASSOCIATION

LOCATION:

Karagandy, Kazakhstan

SERVICE AREA:

Kazakhstan

POPULATION SERVED:

Educators

SCOPE:

3,000 members; 18 training manuals published

FOUNDED:

1998

The Kazakhstan Reading Association (KazRA) supports the professional development of teachers throughout the country through implementation of the International Literacy Association's program, Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking. This program teaches educators how to move beyond memorization and incorporate classroom models that encourage problem solving, collaboration and dialogue.

Traditional Kazakh education methods rely almost exclusively on rote learning, and many teachers do not know the value of incorporating critical thinking into literacy and reading education. KazRA provides a secure space for teachers to explore new teaching methods and understand the role that critical thinking can play in the classroom. It sponsors direct training, an annual conference and a series of 18 professional development manuals to help teachers improve their methods and bolster student performance.

When KazRA was founded in 1998, it was the only professional development organization in the country devoted to supporting teachers and bringing up-to-date teaching methods into elementary and secondary education. Its successes have since been emulated by several institutions, including government centers, which are now involved with school improvement and teacher training.



CREATING A COMMUNITY OF LITERACY

If learners view literacy programming and reading as inaccessible or limited to a certain class or group they will not be motivated learn to read or to continue reading. Therefore, it is important for communities to demonstrate that literacy and love of reading are experiences that all members can share. This inclusiveness is the key to creating a community of literacy.

One way to include everyone in a community of literacy is to place books and other literacy promotion materials in places that many people already frequent. These could include doctors' offices or clinics, grocery stores and community centers. Public awareness campaigns can also increase interest in literacy throughout the community.

Recruiting community members as literacy promoters can create a grassroots movement in support of reading. Each individual is then in charge of encouraging friends and neighbors to read. This type of strategy allows community members to be in charge of the dissemination of reading and literacy promotion materials where they believe the materials will be most useful. This is a type of community-driven development, which holds that local communities are the best judges of their own needs.¹



Targeted outreach can also be a tool for creating a community of literacy. When using targeted outreach, organizations identify which groups are accessing services at lower rates and devote resources to connecting with members of those groups.² This can include both promoting existing programs and services and creating services that better meet the needs of the underrepresented groups.



INCLUSIVENESS IS THE
KEY TO CREATING
A COMMUNITY OF
LITERACY



LITTLE FREE LIBRARY

Little Free Library (LFL) is a community book exchange program that works to engender a culture of books and reading throughout cities and neighborhoods. The book exchanges are usually structures shaped like a large birdhouse with a door. Each one is installed in a yard or community location and filled with free books. Anyone can share books by simply taking or leaving them. Each little free library is placed and maintained by at least one volunteer steward. Part of the appeal of the program is the inclusiveness and ease of entry; anyone can build a library and register it with the organization.

Additionally, the program works to identify certain high-need areas and provide little free libraries there. Partnerships with organizations like First Book ensure that library stewards in these areas have access to low-cost, high-quality books to distribute. A current initiative called Kids, Cops and Community sees LFL partnering with police departments around the country to install book exchanges in police precincts and create safe spaces in the community for children, families and individuals to enjoy books.



The organization also sponsors advocacy initiatives to promote book culture and encourage the idea that reading is a vital and enjoyable part of community life. The Whatcha Readin? project encourages people to ask each other about books as often as they ask “How are you?” Online videos using the catchphrase are submitted by users to show their commitment to encouraging an ongoing conversation about reading.



LITTLE FREE LIBRARY

LOCATION:
Hudson, WI

SERVICE AREA:
All 50 states, 70 countries

POPULATION SERVED:
Neighborhoods/
community members

SCOPE:
30,000 book exchanges

FOUNDED:
2009





FAMILY READING PARTNERSHIP

LOCATION:
Ithaca, NY

SERVICE AREA:
Tompkins County, NY

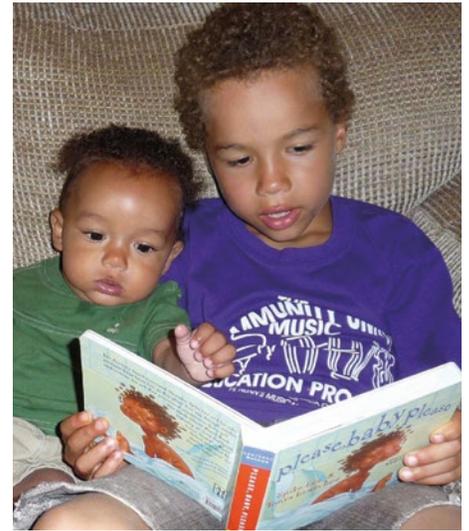
POPULATION SERVED:
Children ages 0–5

SCOPE:
30,000 books
donated/year

FOUNDED:
1997

FAMILY READING PARTNERSHIP

Family Reading Partnership works to create a culture of reading to support early literacy for children ages 0 to 5. It provides a range of family literacy initiatives designed to demonstrate the intrinsic importance of reading every day and to support families as they do this. Twelve separate projects target parents and children at different stages of development and in different circumstances.



children a book when they register for kindergarten to welcome them to the next stage of education. Give the Gift of Family Reading provides low-income parents with books to give their children as presents. These and other projects seek to help families incorporate a love of books and reading into each part of their lives.

Many of these projects work to provide diverse, age-appropriate books to all children in Tompkins County, New York, from before their birth until they are ready for kindergarten. Books Before Birth provides expectant parents at prenatal visits with a children’s book as well as an adult book on the importance of literacy. Welcome to School gives



Family Reading Partnership also sponsors outreach initiatives for the whole community. One of these places twelve-foot-high banners on the sides of buildings around the city. The banners feature illustrations of shared reading and the message “Read to Me! Any Time, Any Place.”



LITERACY ALBERNI SOCIETY

Literacy Alberni Society (LAS) works to create a community of literacy in Port Alberni, on Vancouver Island in Canada, an area with a 42 percent rate of functional illiteracy. This is a particularly challenging task in an area with a large immigrant population, low high school graduation rate and extreme geographic isolation. LAS serves up to 10 percent of the adults and families of Port Alberni, including residents of the three First Nations reservations in Alberni Valley.

To reach out to the many different groups in the area, LAS provides a variety of adult and family literacy services. These include classes in English for speakers of other languages, basic literacy, numeracy and other subjects. The variety of classes helps learners create a program that responds to their specific needs.

Community engagement is particularly important in this area to counter the legacy of disenfranchisement of First Nations people left by the residential school system and to include those who have recently immigrated. Therefore, in addition to targeted programs it also supports 25 public book boxes filled with



books to borrow or keep. These are placed in heavily trafficked areas throughout the region to maximize the number of people who will access them. LAS also participates in events such as the local Canada Day parade by handing out books to spectators. These efforts provide a point of entry for those interested in participating in the group's other programs and demonstrate that reading is a community value.



LITERACY ALBERNI SOCIETY

LOCATION:
Port Alberni, Canada

SERVICE AREA:
Port Alberni

POPULATION SERVED:
Vancouver Island residents

SCOPE:
1,750 unique clients/year

FOUNDED:
2004



SELECTING APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

All literacy organizations must select the language or languages in which they will offer materials and instruction. This can be an easy choice when the entire population served speaks the official or dominant language of the country.

However, in many countries and regions multiple languages and dialects are spoken as primary, or mother tongue, languages. Even in areas where there is a single dominant or official language, some groups may primarily speak a different language. Therefore, organizations must consider the unique needs of the population when determining which language should be used.

It is much easier for people to learn to read and write

in a language in which they are fluent.³ Additionally, those who are literate in their mother tongue have an easier time learning to read and speak a second language.⁴ Providing materials in the local language is particularly important in areas

where teachers may not have a strong understanding of the official language and may themselves primarily speak the local language or dialect.⁵ In all areas, providing literacy education in the learners' mother tongue reduces barriers to literacy because learners do not have to simultaneously learn a new language and learn to read.

However, literacy education in the official or dominant language can also be critical. Many learners live in places where the language of business and government is one that they do not speak as a primary language. In order to fully participate in civic and economic life they need to be able to read and speak this language. Organizations that teach dominant language literacy can be especially helpful for adult immigrants, particularly those who are already literate in their primary language.⁶



IT IS MUCH EASIER FOR PEOPLE
TO LEARN TO READ AND WRITE
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ARE FLUENT



WORLDREADER

Worldreader provides access to a library of over 27,000 e-books in 43 languages to children and adults in 50 low- and middle-income countries. These books are distributed through e-readers and mobile phones. In many low-income countries mobile phones are more common than bathrooms or running water, and people at every income level see them as a vital tool. Therefore, providing books in mobile-friendly formats makes it possible to reach people with no other access to books and reading. One effect of delivering books through mobile devices and e-readers is that no one besides the reader can see the topics and thus forbid them. This has been particularly important in allowing girls and women to access critical information about reproduction and sexuality without interference.

To maintain a wide array of titles, Worldreader partners with publishers of all sizes. Large international publishers donate licenses to some of



their best works, while small, local publishers give a large discount. This support for local publishers helps stimulate the book and publishing industries in many different countries and nurture a culture of reading.



WORLDREADER

LOCATION:
Barcelona, Spain

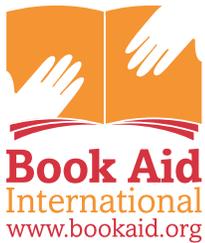
SERVICE AREA:
50 countries in
Africa and Asia

POPULATION SERVED:
e-reader and
mobile device users

SCOPE:
2.2 million participants

FOUNDED:
2010





BOOK AID INTERNATIONAL

LOCATION:
London, UK

SERVICE AREA:
Sub-Saharan Africa

POPULATION SERVED:
Adults and children

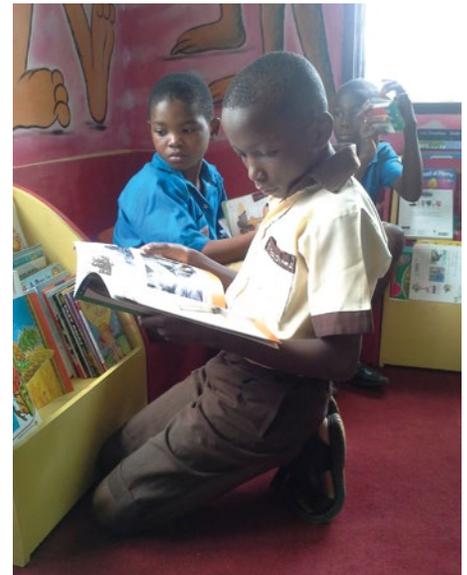
SCOPE:
1 million books/year;
300 librarians trained

FOUNDED:
1954

BOOK AID INTERNATIONAL

Book Aid International works with communities in 11 countries in sub-Saharan Africa to create functional, vibrant libraries by training teachers and librarians, refurbishing dilapidated community spaces, and providing books and materials. The organization supports libraries in many types of community spaces, including schools, prisons, community centers and refugee camps. Each library receives books donated by UK publishers, and many also receive grants to purchase locally published books. Additionally, libraries are encouraged to create child-friendly environments by including a children's corner. Libraries that choose to host a children's corner receive additional funds to refurbish the space to appeal to children and to train two librarians in outreach and programming for children.

Having both internationally published and locally published books can be particularly important for children as they learn to read. In many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, literacy education begins in the local language for several



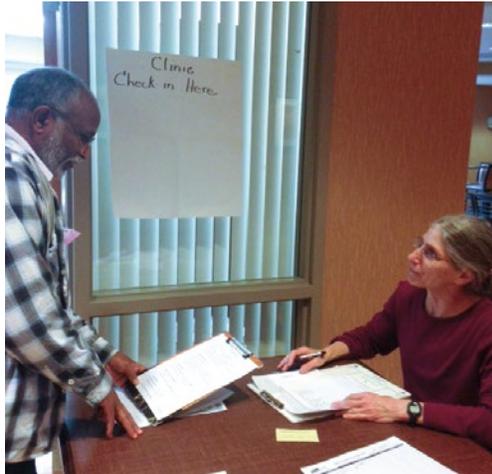
grades, then there may be an abrupt shift to the official language, usually English. The books donated by UK publishers are almost all in English, while locally published books are often in the local language. Having materials in both the students' mother tongue and in the official language means that children will always have something to read.



LITERACY COUNCIL OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

The Literacy Council of Montgomery County serves adults living or working in Montgomery County, Maryland. It provides a variety of programs designed to be responsive to community needs. Examples of these programs include classroom-based literacy instruction, one-on-one and small group tutoring in basic literacy or English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and customized workplace literacy programming.

A recent addition is the English for Health program. This program targets adults with low literacy and limited English proficiency. As part of the curriculum, ESOL lessons and literacy instruction are combined with informational presentations by medical professionals. Students are taught to read prescription bottles, fill out medical forms and ask questions about procedures in a mock clinic setting. In addition to helping students become more proficient in written and spoken English, these classes also help participating doctors and medical staff understand how to communicate with patients with limited literacy or English proficiency.



LITERACY COUNCIL
of Montgomery County

**LITERACY COUNCIL
OF MONTGOMERY
COUNTY**

LOCATION:
Rockville, MD

SERVICE AREA:
Montgomery County, MD

POPULATION SERVED:
Adults

SCOPE:
700 volunteers serving
1,500 adult learners/year

FOUNDED:
1963

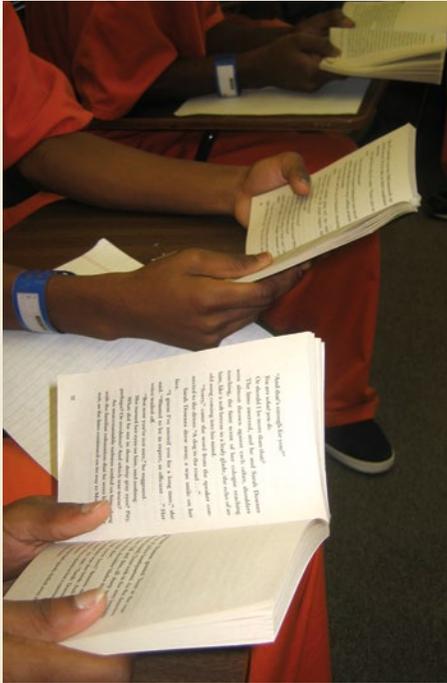


LITERACY IN SERVICE OF SOCIAL GOALS

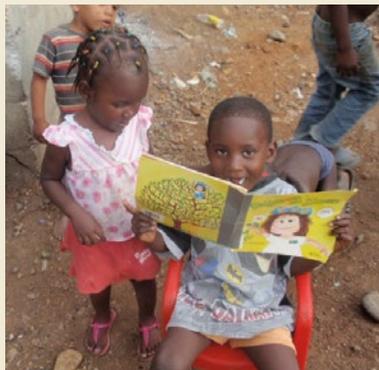
Many literacy learners face substantial challenges in their daily lives, including violence, trauma, neglect and lack of empowerment. These challenges can present serious barriers to learning. However, literacy education can be used to address some of the root causes of these barriers.

Learners who have suffered trauma or been exposed to violence often have difficulty learning.⁷ However, education can be used to help them establish a context for traumatic events and move past the acute stages of trauma. This can be a particularly important strategy for populations that have little access to other counseling services.

For children who are neglected or given minimal adult supervision, literacy education and other basic education can provide much-needed structure and stimulation. This kind of structure is particularly important for the youngest learners because it keeps them from falling too far behind their peers. Literacy organizations can also work with other providers of social services to ensure that the children have access to food and medical care.



Even learners who have not suffered violence or neglect may benefit from literacy organizations' promotion of social goals. Literacy education can strengthen learners' connections to the community and reduce the likelihood of violence. For example, incarcerated youth and adults who participate in literacy programs have significantly lower than average rates of recidivism.⁸



**LITERACY EDUCATION
CAN STRENGTHEN
CONNECTIONS TO THE
COMMUNITY AND
REDUCE VIOLENCE**



FREE MINDS BOOK CLUB & WRITING WORKSHOP

Free Minds Book Club & Writing Workshop works with youth who have been charged and incarcerated as adults in the D.C. jail and federal prisons. The three-stage program uses reading and writing projects to help motivate inmates to read and increase their literacy levels. The first stage begins when the inmates are 16 or 17 and are still housed in the D.C. jail. To stimulate interest in books and reading, they participate in book groups and poetry workshops and receive visits from authors. When prisoners turn 18, they are transferred to federal prisons around the country and enter the second program phase. During their time in federal prison, inmates send their poetry to the group for review. It is then critiqued by community volunteers and returned to them.

Stage three begins when inmates complete their terms and are released into the community. Free Minds helps its alumni find job training and educational opportunities in the community. They then serve as “poet ambassadors,” leading reading and writing workshops



for at-risk teens and working on a violence prevention initiative called On the Same Page.



FREE MINDS BOOK CLUB & WRITING WORKSHOP

LOCATION:
Washington, DC

SERVICE AREA:
D.C. jail and federal prisons

POPULATION SERVED:
Incarcerated D.C. youth
ages 16-24

SCOPE:
900+ youth served

FOUNDED:
2002





ALIF LAILA BOOK BUS SOCIETY

LOCATION:

Lahore, Pakistan

SERVICE AREA:

Pakistan

POPULATION SERVED:

Children and teens

SCOPE:

1 million children served

FOUNDED:

1978

ALIF LAILA BOOK BUS SOCIETY

The Alif Laila Book Bus Society (ALBBS) works to develop and foster a culture of reading among children in Pakistan. It does this by creating libraries of all shapes and sizes; providing books to schools, libraries and children; and training teachers and librarians in effective literacy promotion techniques.

ALBBS creates libraries that respond to the needs and resources of the community, ranging from tiny “pocket libraries” on the back of auto-rickshaws to full-sized school libraries with their own rooms. Large buses act as mobile library centers; more than just bookmobiles, these centers allow traveling librarians to bring programming and activities to neighborhoods that cannot support a library of their own.

ALBBS has a long history of partnering with international development organizations to provide services and resources that focus on specific facets



of literacy and book promotion. After the recent school shooting in Peshwar, it partnered with Hoopoe Books to use reading as a tool for psycho-social therapy to help the children in that area process the events and reconnect to education. Recently, the organization has worked with publishers to recruit local women who create book corners in their homes so girls have a safe space to explore reading. Both of these programs address the unique needs of young readers in volatile situations and demonstrate that reading can play a vital part in creating safe communities.



ESCUELA SANTO NIÑO JESÚS, FE Y ALEGRÍA



Escuela Santo Niño Jesús, Fe Y Alegría (Escuela) was established to provide literacy education to the children of Batey Lechería. Bateys are slum-like encampments with few services or opportunities for the residents.

Escuela began as a library in a shipping container serving the batey's children, but has grown to include a range of educational and social services. In 2008, it became an official public school, which allowed younger children to access its programs. Now children as young as age 3 are included in its Montessori-style educational activities.

Students are also encouraged to take books and lessons home to share with their families. This opportunity for intergenerational learning has allowed some of the mothers, who themselves had no education, to support their children and participate in the community efforts. These low literate or illiterate mothers are taught to share the books by talking about the pictures and telling stories with their children.



ESCUELA

ESCUELA SANTO NIÑO JESÚS, FE Y ALEGRÍA

LOCATION:

Batey Lechería,
Dominican Republic

SERVICE AREA:

Batey Lechería

POPULATION SERVED:

Children ages 3-18

SCOPE:

400 children/year

FOUNDED:

1998



PROVIDING ACCESS TO READERS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

Physical disabilities can present unique challenges for readers. These range from difficulty understanding written syntax when deaf or hard of hearing learners are first starting to read to a lack of accessible college-level texts for blind or visually impaired students and professionals.

Many deaf students enter school using a sign language. Sign languages share much of their vocabulary with spoken languages, but are syntactically distinct.⁹ This means that when these students start to read, they have to learn both how to decode individual words and how to understand a new sentence structure. In the United States, 50 percent of deaf students who graduate from high school read at less than a fifth grade level.¹⁰

Students who are only partially deaf have better outcomes, but even mild or

moderate hearing loss creates barriers to learning. For example, children who are hard of hearing may not be able to distinguish between similar words or sounds. This makes listening to a story confusing, rather than engaging, and limits the benefit of shared reading.

Readers who are blind or visually impaired also face ongoing difficulties with reading. One of the most formidable of these is the lack of accessible print material. Blind readers need books that have been encoded into braille or audio formats, while those with partial visual impairment may need large-print text. This need is particularly acute when a school textbook or professional article does not exist in any of these formats, since the reader cannot simply select another text.

PHYSICAL
DISABILITIES
CAN PRESENT
UNIQUE
CHALLENGES
FOR READERS



MEN WITH A MESSAGE



MEN WITH A MESSAGE

LOCATION:
Smyrna, Delaware

SERVICE AREA:
Delaware

POPULATION SERVED:
Blind and visually impaired readers

SCOPE:
300,000+ pages translated

FOUNDED:
1989

The Men with a Message Braille Program transcribes written and visual material into formats that are accessible to readers with visual impairments. The program is a collaboration between the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services Division for the Visually Impaired and the Delaware Department of Corrections. Eleven residents of the James T. Vaughn Correctional Facility spend hours each day creating materials for the residents of Delaware and, through the American Printing House, the nation.

Each participant has earned his Literary Braille Certification and will soon be certified in the new Unified English Braille Code, adopted in 2012. Several have gone beyond this achievement and obtained advanced certifications to translate math and science texts or written music. These specialty qualifications allow for the translation of materials that range from elementary science texts up to advanced music theory.

Visually impaired readers can request the translation of materials through schools or state agencies. This means that they are not limited in their reading selection to material that is already translated into braille or a large-print format, but can access the texts that they are interested in reading, opening all subject areas to them. Past requests have included, among many other items, worksheets and textbooks used by K-12 students in mainstream classrooms, allowing them to learn alongside their sighted peers; poetry and plays; and religious texts used for worship. The common factor among all of these materials is that they would not be available to visually impaired readers without the translations.



PICSTERBOOKS

Picsterbooks developed the iDeaf project in 2011 to help deaf and partially deaf students learn to read. The project uses downloadable, app-based storybooks to introduce students to written English and Afrikaans, two of the official languages of South Africa. The books include simplified text and syntax, picture animations and embedded videos showing South African Sign Language interpretations of the text and fingerspelling. Audio is also included for the benefit of partially deaf students, so that they can hear the text while learning the written word and the sign. These integrated features allow deaf and partially deaf learners to read along with their own signs and fingerspelling, just as a hearing student might practice reading aloud and sounding out words.

Since these books are providing an introduction into the joy of reading, it is important that they are engaging for the students. Picsterbooks uses a combination of stories originally created for the app, and others that are digital adaptations

of printed books. Rather than focusing on rote memorization of written words, these books prioritize skills such as context-based understanding and reading comprehension.



PICSTERBOOKS

LOCATION:
Johannesburg, South Africa

SERVICE AREA:
South Africa

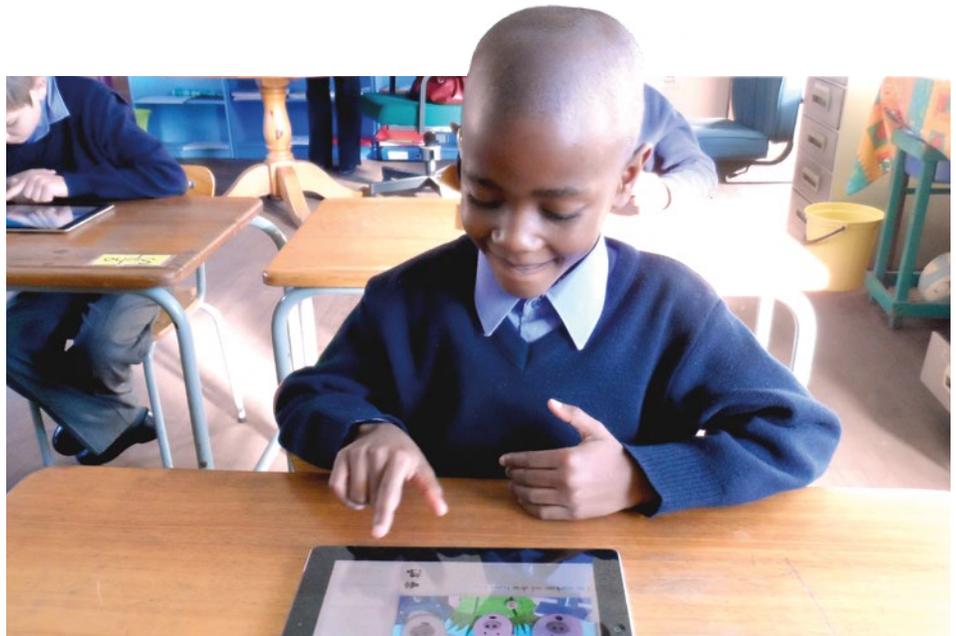
POPULATION SERVED:
Deaf and partially deaf students

SCOPE:
15,000 books downloaded

FOUNDED:
2011



To ensure that as many students as possible have access to the books, Picsterbooks provides their titles as free downloads on the App store for iPad. Additionally, it has worked with donors to facilitate the donation of tablets to schools for the deaf. Many of these tablets are used by up to 10 students, amplifying the impact of each download. To date, the books have been downloaded more than 15,000 times.



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Co-editor, The Oxford Companion to the Book (2010)

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Global Lead for Innovation in Education, The World Bank

Christie Vilsack

Senior Adviser for International Education, U.S. Agency for International Development

Former first lady of Iowa, 1999-2007

Founder of the Iowa Center for the Book in the Iowa State Library, 2002



ENDNOTES

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INDEX OF ORGANIZATIONS

Alif Laila Book Bus Society	22
Beanstalk	6
Book Aid International	18
Escuela Santo Niño Jesús, Fe Y Alegría	23
Family Reading Partnership	14
First Book	4
Free Minds Book Club & Writing Workshop	21
Kazakhstan Reading Association	11
Literacy Alberni Society	15
Literacy Council of Montgomery County	19
Little Free Library	13
Men With a Message	25
National Resource Center for Non-Formal Education	10
Picsterbooks	26
Stiftung Lesen	9
United Through Reading	5
Worldreader	17

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CONGRESS

LITERACY AWARDS

2015

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS LITERACY AWARDS

Through the generosity of David M. Rubenstein, the Library of Congress Literacy Awards Program honors organizations that have made outstanding contributions to increasing literacy in the United States or abroad. The awards also encourage the continuing development of innovative methods for combating illiteracy and the wide dissemination of the most effective practices. They are intended to draw public attention to the continuing need for literacy services and to increase awareness of the importance of literacy. By recognizing current achievements, the awards seek to inspire organizations, foundations and other private sector groups to become involved in combating illiteracy.

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