Books change lives

BookLinks
Sharing information across libraries in Africa and beyond
Welcome

Dear partner,

Welcome to 2019’s first issue of BookLinks.

As always, this issue seeks to inspire you, share learnings and highlight your successes as you encourage reading in your libraries, schools and communities.

We continue to expand our partner networking – welcoming new NGO and library partners who are working to support reading and learning in their own communities and remain committed to understanding your needs and helping you promote the value of books.

That is why this issue of BookLinks features a range of methods that you can use to help children develop their reading skills. These include ideas for creative uses of storybooks to teach curriculum lessons and the effective ‘Shared Reading’ technique. We hope both ignite new ideas of how you can put the books you receive to work.

This issue also features an interview with CODE Ethiopia, a literacy NGO which has a powerful message about how books and child friendly spaces can contribute to positive change at a national level. Their story is just one example of how organisations like yours are using books to change lives.

As always, I hope you enjoy this issue of BookLinks and I warmly thank you for your on-going partnership.

Very kind regards,

Alison Tweed
Chief Executive

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BookLinks is our bi-annual publication for library practitioners. Through BookLinks we aim to share the good practice, insights, learnings and knowledge from our project work, partners and the wider library world.

BookLinks is published with the support of a grant from the Unwin Charitable Trust and we are delighted to be among its beneficiaries.

Cover image: A child enjoying books in one of Book Aid International’s newest countries of operation: Bhutan.

Free resources for your library

In the Library is a series of free resources that has been specifically created by Taylor & Francis for librarians in order to help them discover and engage with current key areas of interest, including: social media, metadata practices, user experience, digital ethnography, and digital resources. To access the resources, visit: www.librarianresources.taylorandfrancis.com/in-the-library-series/
CODE Ethiopia is an NGO based in the capital Addis Ababa which aims to support literacy in rural Ethiopia. In 2018, we worked with CODE Ethiopia to promote children’s reading through the establishment of Book Havens – designated areas in CODE Ethiopia’s community libraries.

In each Book Haven, we provided a collection of UK donated books, grants to purchase local books and refurbish the space and training for staff in how to run a library.

Prior to the project, the children’s areas in CODE Ethiopia’s libraries, where they did exist were struggling to attract children. Librarians didn’t have the skills to support children in their reading.

By the end of the project, CODE staff had seen a significant change in how children were engaging in reading. We caught up with the CODE Ethiopia Director, Yisrael Zeleke to find out how the project has gone and how the Book Havens concept supports the Governments, renewed focus on education.

Does Ethiopia’s new president have any new plans for education, and how do you think these plans will impact your work?

Yes Dr. Abiy is our new Prime Minister - and by the way the President is Sahlework Zewude and she is the first female head of state in Ethiopian modern history! In his inauguration speech and message to the Ethiopian people, the Prime Minister highlighted the importance of reading. The government has prepared a new education road map for the education sector and this will highly and positively affect educational development.

We had the chance to meet the Minister of Education and he promised to work closely with CODE Ethiopia and other agencies in the sector.

So education and reading are really at the forefront of the agenda then. Do Book Havens have a role to play in helping more young people read?

The refurbishment and set up of the Book Havens in the community libraries was significant because it gave the local children the opportunity to use the library any time they want. No more scheduling, now they can use it any time its open.

The number of children using the library has increased. The library staff are now encouraged and empowered to provide more professional services.

Have you seen any other changes?

The libraries help people alot as they are now vibrant and hubs for community development.

All of these changes were caused by the support from Book Aid International and the communities themselves. The day to day support and encouragement our organisation gave to the community libraries has also contributed a lot. The collaboration between CODE Ethiopia and Book Aid International – the way we work together and the connections made at the nearby schools - also lead to the positive changes.

Considering that English is not the official language in Ethiopia, why did you decide to partner with Book Aid International which provides primarily English books?

As English is the second working language and English is the medium of instruction from secondary level up, we want our citizens to use it well.

Apart from that, English is given as a subject to learn in the school at all levels of the education structure. So, we need children to have the base from the lower grades.

Book Havens Ethiopia was made possible by support from players of People’s Postcode Lottery. We warmly thank them for their support.
Using books in the classroom

Our Inspiring Readers programme improves children’s access to books and increases their confidence with reading

We aim to achieve this by providing high quality books to primary schools, by training teachers both in library management and how to use the books effectively at school and by training public librarians to offer ongoing support to teachers. By the end of the project the goal is that primary schools are book rich, staffed by confident, capable and supportive teachers, attended by children who enjoy regular reading, and supported by regular outreach from local librarians.

The Inspiring Readers Programme has now been running in seven countries in Africa since 2016. Earlier this year, we completed a final evaluation of Inspiring Readers in Sierra Leone, with some fantastic outcomes!

These included:

- increased access to books for children and teachers
- regular reading implemented at school and at home
- improved confidence and enjoyment of reading amongst children and teachers
- improved reading skills and wider learning
- new skills gained by teachers in teaching methodology and library management
- strong partnerships built between schools and public libraries
- schools and public libraries publicised amongst local communities

A really successful aspect of the project was how teachers in Sierra Leone were integrating fiction and non-fiction books with teaching in curriculum lessons. A range of books were used to enhance and enrich subject lessons across the curriculum, helping to embed, deepen and broaden children’s learning.

It is a common misconception that fiction and non-fiction books can only be used in reading or English lessons. But there are fantastic opportunities for linking these books to subjects such as Maths, Science, History, Geography, Social Studies and more! Fiction and non-fiction books offer a wealth of relevant information, photos and illustrations that can demonstrate a range of topics being taught in schools. The use of these types of books can supplement curriculum textbooks, enliven lessons and engage children.

In Sierra Leone we found teachers using books such as ‘All about Mummies’ to teach about Ancient Egypt in History lessons, ‘At the Dentist’ for teaching Hygiene, ‘Handa’s Surprise’ for teaching Agriculture and Home Economics, ‘Topsy and Tim – Our Day’ for teaching Maths and ‘Going into Space’ for teaching Science, amongst others!

The project has helped us to know how to use the materials in terms of reading. We even use those materials to teach other subjects; maths, science, and so forth.

Elizabeth Kumba Sesay
Teacher
Roman Catholic Primary School, Segbwema

For example, a storybook set in space could help children learn about the solar system. Pick a non-fiction book to help children research a science topic, such as animal species.

With thanks to players of People’s Postcode Lottery for funding Inspiring Readers Sierra Leone.
The power of pairing fast and slow readers

We recently partnered with Africa Educational Trust to launch the Shared Reading project in ten primary schools in Mbale, Eastern Uganda.

Running a Shared Reading Lesson

Reading assessments and pairing children

Short reading assessments should be completed, or recent reading assessments should be referred to, before pairing children for Shared Reading. The outcomes of reading assessments will help you pair the children appropriately, so that higher level readers are paired with lower level readers. It can work well for example, to pair a higher level child from Class 6 with a lower level child from Class 5.

Other factors may also be considered when pairing children, such as their gender, maturity, schools attendance and phonic understanding.

Pairs should remain the same for a substantial number of sessions - at least a term or a year to ensure continuity.

Getting Started

Each pair should read a different book that suits their level. The Shared Reading sessions are designed for children to read in pairs at their own pace and not together as a whole class.

It is important that the teacher chooses the right level books for each pair to read. If both pupils read the book without any problem then the book is too easy and they should move on to a more difficult book to help them forward.

Ensure children are sitting comfortably next to each other in their pairs and can see the book they are reading without distraction.

Lesson Structure

The following lesson structure can be used to frame your Shared Reading session. This structure should be repeated each time sessions take place, so that children know what to expect and get used to the routine. The sessions should be well paced and not too long, so that children are able to sustain concentration and enjoy the session.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sequence</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teacher introduces the session and reminds children of Shared Reading procedures.</td>
<td>2 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teacher leads a short phonics activity.</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teacher asks a comprehension question for the children to think about during their reading. (They will answer the question at the end of the session.)</td>
<td>3 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Shared Reading takes place amongst pairs</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Children answer a comprehension question (given before Shared Reading amongst pairs.)</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 1: Reading Together

The pair should read their book aloud together. The tutor adjusts his/her reading speed to the learner’s pace.

Step 2: Reading Alone

The pair should return to the first page that they read and repeat it, taking turns to read a page each. This time reading is independent, but the tutor should help the learner as necessary.

With a longer text “Reading Together” and “Reading Alone” could be done over each page of a book reading alternative paragraphs.

The tutor and learner first read together, then the learner reads alone with support.

Correcting Errors

The learner must read all the words out loud correctly. If the learner makes an error, the tutor waits a seconds and if the learner does not self-correct, the tutor corrects the learner. The tutor corrects errors by giving a perfect example of how to read the word. The tutor must speak slowly and clearly so that the learner can copy good pronunciation. The learner must repeat the word correctly, the tutor praises the learner, and then reading continues.

Unknown words

If neither child can read a word then they should raise their hands and the teacher should come and help them.

The Shared Reading technique allows the teacher valuable time to circulate the room to assess how children’s reading is progressing and to support where necessary. Teachers should never sit down and leave children unsupported, but be ready to help with difficult words, to check children’s understanding and support with the Shared Reading steps where necessary.
Tips for Tutors
You will need to teach the higher level child to act as a good ‘tutor’ for the lower level reader during Shared Reading sessions. The following tips can help them.

Tips for Tutors
- Go at the speed of the learner.
- Involve the learner – don’t do it all for them!
- Talk and ask questions to be sure the learner understands.
- Be patient.
- Don’t criticise or ‘tell off’ children.
- Praise success – say “well done” or “good” regularly.
- Correct any mistakes straight away.
- Check that the learners can do it by themselves.

The teacher’s role during Shared Reading sessions
The Shared Reading technique allows the teacher valuable time to circulate the room to assess how children’s reading is progressing and to support where necessary. At no time should the teacher sit down and leave the pupils unsupported.

During the session the teachers should:
- Give general support to pairs to follow Shared Reading procedures.
- Respond to pairs who raise their hands for help with difficult words.
- Listen to each pair’s reading for a short time to assess progress.
- Praise pairs for good effort, working together and improvements in reading.
- Advise pairs on how to improve their reading, such as the use of punctuation, using expression and intonation.
- Check understanding by asking children questions about what they are reading.

A final word
If you are interested in hearing more about the Shared Reading project or getting further advice about how to run Shared Reading sessions please do contact us.

Final evaluation of the first Shared Reading project in Uganda will take place in October, where we will assess children’s reading and look at progress made since the beginning of the project.

We look forward to sharing the outcomes and learning from our first Shared Reading project by the end of 2019!

Responding when books are lost
As part of our work ensuring that everyone – whatever their circumstances – has access to books, we are committed to responding when disaster or conflict destroy or damage books.

Over the past twelve months, we have responded to calls from around the world to help restore libraries.

Cyclone Idai
On 14 March, Tropical Cyclone Idai made landfall in Mozambique. Winds reached 106 mph and heavy rainfall caused disastrous flooding across Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe. We are already hearing from our long-standing partners in Malawi and Zimbabwe that many schools have suffered heavy damage – and books have been lost to the floods. We are working with partners in both countries to restore these damaged libraries.

Cameroon conflict
In Cameroon, where violence continues to grip the country’s Anglophone region many families are seeking shelter in the forest after villages have been burnt to the ground. Schools have been closed for years, and libraries destroyed. Again, we are working with our long-standing partners in Cameroon to offer books for displaced children and, when the time is right, begin restoring the libraries which have been lost.

Mosul, Iraq
In 2015, Islamic State (IS) fighters deliberately destroyed the library of the University of Mosul, burning thousands of books on philosophy, science, law and poetry in what UNESCO called “one of the most devastating acts of destruction of library collections in human history.” Today, we are helping a local campaign, the Mosul Book Bridge, restock the library – restoring what IS destroyed.

We are always happy to help when books are lost to natural disaster or conflict – so if your organisation needs support please reach out.
ABOUT OUR CHARITY

Book Aid International is the UK’s leading international book donation and library development charity. Every year, we ship around one million books to thousands of libraries in communities where people have very few opportunities to access new books.

We work with an extensive network of libraries, schools, hospitals, NGOs and other partners to ensure that the books we send reach those who face the greatest barriers to accessing books. In addition, we also run library development projects which build the capacity of librarians to support readers and communities.

We only send books at our library partners’ request. These books are carefully selected by our UK team led by professional librarians to ensure that they meet the needs of local communities. All of the books we send are donated by the UK book trade so they are all new.

To find out more, visit www.bookaid.org.