

**Authors'
Licensing and
Collecting
Society**

Briefing for Parliamentarians

The Authors' Licensing & Collecting Society is a not-for-profit organisation for the benefit of all kinds of writers. Set up in 1977 and owned by its writer members, ALCS collects money due for licensed secondary uses of authors' work and currently has over 100,000 members. At Westminster, it is also proud to provide support for the All Party Writers Group (APWG).

Key Issues

The Current Health Crisis and Freelance/Self-Employed Incomes

Many authors and writers subsist on low incomes, whilst often doing second or third jobs to make ends meet, sources of work which have also now widely dried up. While initial plans were generous to full-time employees, there was no equity for the self-employed.

To help, the ALCS has contributed significantly to the Authors' Emergency Fund, which was launched for writers in real financial hardship right now. It joined the Society of Authors, the Royal Literary Fund, the T S Eliot Foundation in partnership with English PEN and Amazon UK in mounting this initiative, but also called on the Government to step in itself.

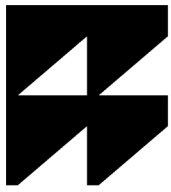
We are grateful, therefore, for the Chancellor's new measures to help the self-employed. They will be of great benefit at this awful time. There are, however, still concerns about the timing of payments, what happens if people do not have 3 years of tax returns or are newly freelance, and the restriction to people having a majority of income from self-employment.

We have written again to the Chancellor with our thanks and to ask him to be flexible about other possible short-term support - and would be grateful if you could help our efforts, too.

Authors and Writers' Earnings in General

A range of surveys have shown that authors' earnings are in steep decline, with the most recent finding a 42% fall since 2005. Writers are the cultural bedrock of our successful creative industries, and action is needed to counter this decline. We would, therefore, ask you, to urge the Government to consider the measures below from a recent APWG inquiry.

- Establish a Creators Council, equivalent to the Creative Industries Council. Such a standing channel of communication between the Government, creators and their groups, with a balanced range of views, would be positive for cultural policy-making.
- Adopt equivalent, or improved, protections for use of writers' original content as contained in the EU Copyright Directive, which the UK supported in its ten-year development. We particularly back measures to establish greater industry transparency and profit-sharing, which are increasingly necessary in the digital age.
- Protect and promote the UK's effective copyright system internationally. Our copyright law is well-balanced in its application of licensing and limited exceptions for use of original content, ensuring access for users as well as reward for authors.



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Creative Europe

Creative Europe is the EU's support programme for the audio-visual, creative and cultural sectors and its grants are worth an average of €18.4 million a year to creators in the UK. In all, €84 million has come to our country during the course of the programme since 2014.

This major financial contribution will be lost following the decision to pull out of Creative Europe, unless the Government gives similar, replacement support after 2020. If they were to lose this investment, opportunities for writers and our creative industries would suffer.

The Public Lending Right

PLR benefits authors of published works based in the UK or within the European Economic Area. It is paid to authors named on the publication of a book (printed or electronic, written or audio) and can be split between multiple contributors. Recipients include writers, illustrators, editors/compilers, translators, adaptors, producers and audio narrators.

Loans for PLR are only counted from libraries run by local authorities, but volunteer library loans are currently not, and library cuts have deflated PLR numbers and authors' income.

Individual loan payments are small and, to qualify under the scheme, an author must have £1 worth of loans to receive a payment, and cannot receive more than £6,600. This is important so that the PLR does not go to great lengths making inconsequential payments, while ensuring public funding does not go mostly to already hugely successful writers.

Currently, funds paid out under the PLR come to £6 million, after administrative costs. In 2019, this allowed 8.52p per loan, a small amount compared to PLR systems in countries such as Germany. **We are asking for the fund for PLR to be ring-fenced at the very least.**

'Axe the reading tax': a recent campaign success!

'Axe the reading tax' has been a long-running campaign, supported by ALCS, calling for the removal of VAT on all digital publications: e-books, audiobooks, research journals, textbooks and educational materials, newspapers and magazines.

We are delighted, therefore, that in this year's Budget, the Chancellor has listened and removed the VAT charge, treating e-publications on the same basis as print.

For a modest reduction in revenue, lower e-book costs benefit children and readers with disabilities, in particular, with the growth in consumption through digital devices. Removal of this unfair tax also helps authors, of course, and the UK's digital and literacy strategy.

For further information, please contact:

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