

ALCS submission to ‘Promoting Britain abroad’ Inquiry

The Authors’ Licensing & Collecting Society (ALCS) is a not-for-profit organisation for the benefit of all kinds of writers. Set up in 1977 and owned by its members, ALCS collects money due for licensed secondary uses of authors’ work and currently has over 113,000 members. At Westminster, it is also proud to provide support for the All Party Parliamentary Writers Group (APWG).

In 2019, according to Oxford Economics research, the Creative Industries contributed £116 billion to UK GVA¹. ALCS members span across the creative sector whether that be audio-visual work, radio and television, fiction or academic texts. Our members are integral to the issue of the UK’s ‘soft power superpower’ status as they are responsible for the creation of cultural works that are internationally recognised and applauded, putting authors at the forefront of the image that we export globally as well as drawing tourism in.

3. What should the UK be doing to maintain its status as a ‘soft power superpower’ and further promote its culture and heritage on the global stage?

- How can the UK capitalise on its exit from the European Union?

The intellectual property and copyright regime in the UK has been recognised as gold standard amongst the international community. It allows for authors and creators to be protected and remunerated whilst also enabling consumers to enjoy the great literary works that come from the UK.

We are the biggest exporter of books around the world and we must keep in place the safeguards that have helped make Britain a cultural centre of writing excellence, the source and exporter of many of the most beloved stories and characters in the world.

Upon leaving the European Union, the UK decided not to implement the EU Copyright in the Digital Single Market Directive. This presents us with the opportunity to assess the Directive for what could rightfully be incorporated into our gold standard system as we head into the recovery phase after the pandemic and is in fitting with the Government’s aims to ‘build back better’.

Our exit gives us the flexibility to craft a copyright regime that benefits all, not just the consumer or the creator. The writing sector in the UK is an ecosystem made up of several constituent parts whether that be bookshops, authors and publishers. As a whole it is an economically and culturally powerful industry that needs the protection of the UK Government, this can come in the shape of pursuing policies most important to UK authors, which the UK promoted in the development of the directive, to secure a strong future for UK creators.

¹ [Creative UK, The UK Creative Industries, 2021](#)

- What are the biggest threats to the status of 'soft power superpower'?

A common threat across the political landscape at this time is COVID-19. The basis of the UK's cultural 'soft power super power' status internationally is built off the creative workforce, whether that be individual writers that contribute great works of literary fiction or the collective work across the sector that goes into bringing a film to screen.

The Creative Industries were responsible for more than 1 in 10 UK jobs in 2019. In the writing sector, we have seen the pandemic pose a real threat to the diversity and retention of authors due to the pressure on individual incomes and lack of support for individual freelancers from the Government. Research has found:

- More than a quarter (27%) of creative workers under the age of 25 have left creative occupations after lockdown, compared with 14% of workers aged 25 and over²
- The number of BME women working in the arts and entertainment sector has fallen by 44 per cent³
- In May 2021 showed 57% of authors had experienced a drop in income over the course of the last financial year (2020/21)⁴

Diversity of stories and talent in the sector are what keeps the UK at the forefront of cultural innovation. Out of the 200 highest earning films at worldwide cinemas from 2011-2020, 22 are based on stories and characters created by UK writers.⁵ The Government has to therefore find a way to better support individual writers and creators, stopping any further loss of talent, if we want to continue nurturing up and coming writers who will be responsible for the next 22 highest earning films. This fits in with DCMS policy priorities highlighted in the Government's 'Boundless creativity' report, issued in July 2021.

Writers benefit from a healthy supply chain and a recent threat to our members livelihoods is a change to the intellectual property framework that would radically impact the distribution of books internationally. A recent proposal from the IPO could see our current exhaustion rights change to an international regime which would threaten the livelihood of the British publishing sector and the writers within it.

We would encourage avoiding a radical shift to the way the book industry operates by maintaining the current exhaustion model. This will allow the UK to protect its international standing as a soft power in the literary field, safeguard authors' incomes by protecting them from further threat of decline and to ensure the industry can continue to promote and publish a diverse range of books from a diverse range of writers.

² [Centre for Cultural Value, 'The impact of Covid-19 on jobs in the cultural sector – part 2', February 2021](#)

³ [TUC, Jobs and recovery monitor, January 2021](#)

⁴ [Society of Authors, 'Authors in the Health Crisis survey', May 2021](#)

⁵ [BFI, 'UK Films and British talent worldwide', December 2021](#)