

Teachers as Readers: Phase 1

Research Report for UKLA Web

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Summary

In the context of current educational pressures in the teaching of reading in England, the first phase of this research, undertaken by a team from the United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA), sought to ascertain patterns in primary teachers' reading, both personally and professionally. Phase I of the project, undertaken in 11 Local Authorities in England, explored primary teachers' personal reading habits and preferences, investigated their knowledge of children's literature, and documented their reported use of texts in the classroom. In addition, it sought to establish the extent of the teachers' involvement with and use of local area /school library services. Following analysis and dissemination of the findings from Phase I, teachers from a small group of Local Authorities are taking part in Phase II – Teachers as Readers: Building Communities of Readers, which seeks to develop wider knowledge about literature and enrich pedagogic practice. This report only focuses on Phase I of the research. The data collected through a questionnaire, represent responses from 1200 primary teachers whose main responsibility was not literacy related; a small sample of student teachers' views was also collected. The findings in sum indicate that whilst the teachers are readers who read personally for pleasure, their knowledge of children's literature is somewhat narrow and in particular their working knowledge of poets and picture fiction creators is very limited. Those working in K2 read much less aloud than their F/KS1 counterparts, but both groups lean on a limited range of authors when it comes to classroom practice and are not therefore in a strong position to recommend texts to young readers. The expertise of the library services is largely untapped by these teachers, who report relying heavily upon their own knowledge when choosing texts to use in the classroom, yet have a relatively restricted repertoire of children's literature. Consideration is given to what the findings may reveal about primary teachers as readers and their pedagogy and practice in the early 21st century.

Section One - Introduction

Since the inception of the National Literacy Strategy(NLS) (DfEE,1998) concerns have been voiced about the ways in which children's literature has been positioned and may be used in the classroom, in particular the practice of relying upon extracts, downloaded or purchased, has been heavily criticised (Dombey, 1998; Frater, 2000;Sedgwick, 2000; King, 2002). Writers too have articulated their concerns that their works are being subjected to inappropriate levels of analysis and that as comprehension and assessment are seen to dominate over reading and response, this may lead to reduced pleasure in the text and affect children's desire to read (Powling et al., 2003, 2005). There has also been a sense that teachers' own creative uses of literature have been subjugated to a centralised system for teaching literacy (Goouch and Lambirth, 2005; Grainger et al., 2005; Marshall, 2001; Martin, 2003) and that their confidence in knowing and using children's literature may be limited, particularly by lack of time to read personally for pleasure (Kwek et al., 2007; Arts Council England, 2003). In addition, comparative UK research by Sainsbury and Schagen (2004), who collected children's attitudes to reading at the onset of the NLS in 1998 and again in 2003, revealed a decline in reading for pleasure across this period. In this study, although the majority of children still

report enjoying reading stories, their desire to do so had markedly decreased, for example from 77% to 65% in 10-11 year olds, and among year 6 pupils the percentage of boys who say they enjoy reading declined from 70% in 1998 to 55% in 2003.

In response to these concerns and the findings from the 2001 Progress in International Literacy Study (PIRLS)(Mullis et al., 2003; Twist et al, 2003) that children in the UK read less independently, and find rather less pleasure in reading than many of their peers in other countries, various surveys and reports have been produced, including *Reading for Purpose and Pleasure* (Ofsted, 2004) and the NLT survey *Young Children's Reading Habits*, (Clark and Foster, 2005). In particular Ofsted perceived that many schools had not given sufficient thought to promoting children's independent reading or building on children's preferences and were concerned to note that few schools successfully engaged the interests of those who, whilst competent readers, did not choose to read for pleasure. Overall in the NLT survey, despite some enthusiasm for reading, it was clear that secondary school pupils and boys were rather more inclined to report negative attitudes than the primary aged learners and the girls. The more recent PIRLS study, undertaken in 2006, continues to show that children in England have less positive attitudes to reading than children in most other countries (Twist et al, 2007). This report states that

Of particular concern is the 15% of children in the sample for England who had the least positive attitudes, a significant increase from 2001(Twist et al, 2007:33).

This decline in enjoyment in reading is not unique to England but nonetheless represents a cause for concern. Alongside these reports, The Arts Council established a project *Literature Matters* (2004-6) to help ensure ITE students develop a rich working knowledge of children's literature through liaison projects between ITE institutions and the Schools' Library Service(Bailey et al., 2007). In addition, based on the Teacher Development Agency finding that Initial teacher education students in England have a limited knowledge of children's multicultural texts, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority commissioned the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education to explore the range available, which resulted in booklets seeking to support teachers introducing children to a broader range of literature from around the world (QCA, 2006).

It has been shown that effective teachers of reading in the primary phase need much more than knowledge of the skills and cueing systems which young readers employ; they also need an extensive knowledge of children's literature (Medwell et al., 1998). Yet at present the extent of their knowledge in this area is unknown, for while studies of children's attitudes to reading and knowledge of literature have been undertaken (Whitehead, 1977; Hall and Coles, 1999; Clark and Foster, 2005) no studies have systematically documented teachers' knowledge and use of literature.

The research team and the UKLA children's literature Special Interest Group (SIG) believed that in response to the current context outlined above, and the recent emphasis on phonics as a result of the Rose Review (Rose, 2006), which is likely to profile a more disconnected and atomistic approach to teaching reading, it was timely to undertake research into teachers as readers and ascertain their knowledge and use of children's literature in the primary classroom. There is also some evidence that teachers do not make significant use of children's and school librarians or libraries (Ofsted, 2004) so this research provides an opportunity to consider the working relationships between teachers and librarians and look for ways of developing innovative partnerships.

As a consequence Phase I of this research sought to explore the following areas:
primary teachers' personal reading habits and preferences

primary teachers' knowledge of children's literature
primary teachers' reported use of children's literature in the primary classroom
primary teachers' involvement in local area (YLG) /school library services (SLS)

Section Two - Methodology

Linking into UKLA networks and the UKLA children's literature SIG members, the research team collected questionnaire responses from 1200 primary teachers in 11 Local Authorities in England as well as from some student teachers in 5 different institutions. In Phase II, in which finance from external sources will be sought, it is hoped to collect interview data and to work with teachers from some of the LAs involved to develop innovative practice building on findings from the first phase.

The LAs represented a spread of inner city, rural and urban areas reflecting a broad range of socio-economic status. The questionnaire was piloted, adapted and introduced to teachers on continuing professional development short courses. Each Local Authority had a designated co-ordinator who completed context sheets and administered the questionnaire. The LA co-ordinators made efforts to administer the questionnaires at generic courses for classroom teachers rather than on courses specifically intended for literacy coordinators. This meant that the research team could gain evidence of a more general picture of teachers' knowledge and experience of children's literature. The questionnaire on reading would be completed and returned on the same day to ensure a high response rate and a wealth of data from a range of LAs in different parts of the country, thus increasing the validity and reliability of the findings. Both qualitative and quantitative information about teachers' views, knowledge and practices with regard to reading was sought; the former has been subjected to categorical analysis, the latter has been inputted and analysed by a research assistant making use of the quantitative software package SPSS (no. 13).

The data has the potential to yield connections and relationships between the three strands of the research, namely the teachers' personal reading habits and preferences, their knowledge of children's literature and their reported use of such literature in the classroom. Information has also been gathered about the length of experience and the age phase they teach. These findings are based on questionnaire responses from 1200 teachers: approximately 50% work in Key Stage 1 and approximately 50% in Key Stage 2 with varying lengths of teaching experience.

Section Three - Key findings

In terms of **current reading**, 73.2% had read for pleasure during the last month and 20.2% during the last three months. 5% had read for pleasure during the last 6 months and 1.6% over 6 months ago. Popular fiction, including women's popular fiction, thrillers and crime novels, was again the most frequent choice (40%). Autobiography and biography (14%) and 14% recorded other post 1980s novels (14%) were the next most popular categories. 6.5% had recently read children's fiction. The lowest recorded categories (2.5% and under) were: newspapers and magazines; lifestyle/health; religious/spiritual; academic; educational; practical/factual; travel; short stories; poetry; and plays.

There was a different picture in response to the question about **the most important book ever read**. The highest percentage recorded (17%) was for religious/spiritual books with 12% for significant recent novels (post 1980s) in second place. Following these, high scoring categories were:

19th century and earlier classics (11%); children’s fiction (11%); autobiography and biography (9%); 20th century American classics (9%) and 20th century European classics (5.5%). Smaller percentages were recorded for: allegorical books (4.5%); lifestyle/health (3.5); academic, educational and practical/factual books scored just over 2% but all other categories, including popular fiction, poetry, plays and travel scored less than 2%.

In terms of **favourite childhood reading** the overwhelming majority of respondents recorded popular fiction. Blyton and Dahl were by far the most mentioned authors. 10% of favourite childhood books were 19th century classics such as *Black Beauty* (Anna Sewell) (with 23 mentions), *Heidi* (Johanna Spyri) (19 mentions), *Little Women* (Louisa M. Alcott) and *What Katy Did* (Susan Coolidge) (13 mentions each). Relatively high numbers were also recorded for 20th century classics such as *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* (C.S. Lewis) with over 50 mentions, *The Hobbit* (JRR Tolkien) (16), *Swallows and Amazons* (Arthur Ransome) (15) and *Winnie the Pooh* (A.A. Milne) (14). 9% of the total were picture books; *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Eric Carle) topped the list with 13 mentions. Very few indeed (1.5%) noted poetry as their favourite childhood reading although this may, in part at least, have been a function of the question which referred to a favourite ‘book’ as a child, triggering perhaps a memory of a narrative. Nonetheless this response is in line with the limited mention of poetry in the question on recently recorded reading and is reinforced by the extremely limited knowledge of children’s poets known to these teachers. It is no surprise, perhaps, that popular or series fiction was so pre-eminent, but the connection between teachers’ favourite childhood reading and the texts they currently offer in the classroom is worth considering.

Teachers recorded several **sources of finding books for their own reading**. Bookshops - local (mentioned by 80%) and on-line (36%) - were the most popular, although friends were mentioned as a frequent resource (mentioned by 56%). In contrast, libraries were not recorded as a frequent source of getting reading material (34%). Some respondents noted other additional routes to finding reading material including advertising, ‘Richard and Judy’ recommendations and magazine/newspaper reviews. Some did not respond to this question.

Question 4. How do you usually get hold of books for your own reading?

	Mentioned		Not mentioned	
	Number	%	Number	%
Library	388	35.7%	698	64.3%
Bookshop	867	79.8%	214	19.7%
On-line bookshop	388	35.7%	694	63.9%
Friends	607	55.9%	475	43.7%

Other

118

10.9%

957

88.1%

Questions about **library use** indicated that 52% of respondents use the local library facilities for school, mostly for borrowing books for classroom use but also for professional and personal reading and visits to the library and from librarians. 14% had visited the local library with a class within the last 3 months and 6% within the last 6 months. The largest percentage (60%) had not taken children to visit the local library for over 6 months and 18% recorded never visiting the local library.

Teachers with fewer years of teaching experience in the classroom were less likely to use library services. 62% of those who had taught between 0-5 years reported not using the local library for school purposes (See responses to question 5b).

Graph for Question 5b: Do you use your local library for school, by number of years in teaching

The practice of reading aloud to a class for pleasure remains a popular activity, with 70% of the respondents reporting having read a book aloud during the previous month or reporting currently reading a book aloud to the class. 9% had last read aloud over 6 months ago or never. 45% of Key Stage 2 teachers had either only read a complete book to their class within the last three or six months or had never done so; reading aloud diminishes considerably in older classes. Teachers who are new to teaching tend to read whole books more frequently to their classes than more experienced colleagues. Picture books were by far the most frequently read to the class with 35% of the response. In terms of novels, fantasy (20%) and mystery/adventure (14%) predominated, with smaller percentages for fairy tales (5%), short stories (4%), war stories (4.5%), school stories (4%) and poetry (3%). Non-fiction and 19th century classics only represented 1% each of the totals, with about 6% books unclassified.

When asked to list 6 **'good' children's writers**, responses indicate that a wide number of authors are known to primary practitioners, although quite a few listed here might be more readily seen as picturebook makers. 64% of the teachers named five or six writers. 46% named six. Roald Dahl gained the highest number of mentions by far (744). The nearest four were: Michael Morpurgo (343), Jacqueline Wilson (323), JK Rowling (300) and Anne Fine (252). Others above a hundred mentions were: Dick King Smith (172), Janet and Alan Ahlberg (169), Enid Blyton (161), Shirley Hughes (128), CS Lewis (122), Philip Pullman (117), Mick Inkpen (106) and Martin Waddell (100).

The data suggest that naming **6 good poets** was not such an easy task. 58% of the respondents could only name one, two or no poets. 22% named no poets at all. Only 10% named six poets. Once again, some of the named poets might also be seen in the other categories (e.g. Allan Ahlberg and Roald Dahl). There was a predominance of poets mentioned whose poetry might be seen as light-hearted or humorous. In the top twenty in order of numbers of mentions, the last two were women poets. The highest number of mentions was Michael Rosen (452) with five others gaining over a hundred mentions: Allan Ahlberg (207), Roger McGough (197), Roald Dahl (165), Spike Milligan (159) and Benjamin Zephaniah (131). After these, three poets were mentioned more than fifty times: Edward Lear (85), Ted Hughes (58), A.A. Milne (57).

Well over half the sample (62%) were only able to name one, two or no **picture fiction creators**, 24% named no picture fiction authors/illustrators, whilst 10% named six. Some of these

picturebook makers were also named as 'authors' in the first list. The highest number of mentions by far was for Quentin Blake (423) with four others being mentioned over a hundred times: Anthony Browne (175), Shirley Hughes (123), Mick Inkpen (121) and Alan Alhberg (146). There were also 302 specifically named books rather than authors.

In **deciding which books to use in the classroom**, many teachers used several criteria, the highest category being personal interest (85%) with children's recommendations being another factor (64%). 31% take guidance from the literacy coordinator in their school and 21% use librarians' recommendations. This is in contrast to their practices with regard to sourcing their personal reading and it would seem that different practices drive the teachers personally and professionally. It is intriguing to speculate on this difference and it is hoped that the development phase of the project will help to explain this anomaly.

Use of the IWB is influenced by some local factors, since some Local Authorities have opted for laptops rather than large screens, but at the time of completing the questionnaire, 31% of the respondents used the IWB for literacy teaching and 69% did not.

The question about the **teachers' use of children's literature** in the classroom was analysed according to the following categories:

- * holistic approach where literature is seen as offering imaginative, creative and text-analysis purposes as well as being used as the basis for teaching reading and writing rooted in meaningful contexts
- * functional approach where literature is used to teach skills at word or sentence level, or for teaching reading
- * partial approach where respondents adopted a mixed approach but were not explicit about the range of activities
- * unspecific where respondents did not or could not offer a rationale to underpin their use of literature in the classroom.

11% of the whole sample offered no response to this question. Of those who did respond, 27% took a holistic approach; 22% functional; 28% partial and 22% were unspecific.

In relation to **publishers' prepared materials** for literacy teachers reported that these are used daily or weekly by 26% of respondents, monthly by 7% and infrequently by 38%. Although there was a high percentage of nil responses to this question (27%), only 2% explicitly stated that they never use publishers' materials.

Respondents saw the **importance of literature in the classroom** as developing the imagination (top priority) and engaging the emotions (second). The role of literature in promoting reading and developing knowledge were ranked third and fourth with the role of literature in developing writing rated as having the least importance(see diagram for question16 below)

Question 16: Rank the following statements in order of importance (The LOWER the score, the HIGHER the ranking)

Section Four – Discussion

Teachers' own reading

From the data so far, a mixed picture of teachers' preferences and practices emerges. Memories of favourite reading as children and current reading for pleasure are dominated by popular fiction although the sample as a whole reflects a wide range of types of reading, including children's and 'crossover' fiction. There is a clear emphasis on affective content, as evidenced by choices of autobiography and biography many of which were about people who has suffered indignity, emotional, political and physical deprivation and triumphed over adversity. However, when choosing their most important book, the respondents discounted popular fiction in favour of religious, spiritual, allegorical and exemplary books. These were not only the Bible (mentioned over 200 times) but also, for example, works with themes of morality and justice, including very recent as well as 20th century fiction. It is not possible to assess how far the demographic had an influence on these figures. The responses included many classics - both from Europe and North America - which the teachers would have studied in school when they were pupils, including a few mentions of plays and poetry which had made an impact. This bears out the importance of teachers studying literature with children as well as simply reading for pleasure. Since the great majority of the respondents had made time for their own reading pleasures within three weeks of answering the questionnaire, it seems that for these teachers at least, reading remains a pleasure. Three quarters of the respondents are quite clearly readers who gain satisfaction from settling down with a book. In addition, it is clear that the pleasures of popular fiction are balanced by the satisfactions of reading which prompts thought and reflection. For more discussion of teachers' reading habits and preferences, see Cremin, Bearne, Mottram and Goodwin, forthcoming, 2008a).

Teachers' knowledge of children's books

In terms of books chosen for children, the range is severely limited. The high numbers for Dahl, Morpurgo and Wilson may be related to how and where teachers access material that they use in the classroom. It is likely that if teachers are not reading from beyond the class library they may only be able to name those whose work they have been reading aloud over time. It also seems likely that the NLS requirement to study 'significant' children's authors may have influenced the knowledge indicated here, especially as the focus appears to fall on key authors. Since so many teachers indicate that they rely on their own knowledge of children's books for decisions about classroom reading, the relatively narrow range of their knowledge of authors is a matter of concern. In addition, the teachers' own reading indicates knowledge of global literature although this is not reflected in their classroom choices.

In considering the responses to the questions asking for 6 authors, poets and picturebook makers, the question of teachers' knowledge of a diverse enough range of writers to enable them to make informed recommendations to young readers is a cause for concern. Most of the authors who were mentioned by more than 100 respondents are very well known, perhaps to parents as well as teachers, but the dominance of these writers places in shadow the myriad of writers, such as Chris D'Lacey (1 mention only) Geraldine McCaughrean (10) Darren Shan (8) Jonathon Stroud (1) and Eva Ibbotson (1) whose work, more directed at older readers, deserves to be introduced to the young. In addition, it is surprising how few writers of novels for older readers are included in terms of range and diversity, for example, no mention is made of Morris Gleitzman or Marcus Sedgwick. Given the current popularity of fantasy novels there are few authors of this genre noted, for example there is only one record made each for Philip Reeve and William Nicholson.

The data for poetry indicates that the teachers in the survey leaned towards the more humorous or 'light hearted' poets (e.g. Rosen or Milligan) or towards the work of particular poets whose work may well be studied under the NLS banner of 'classic poetry' (e.g. Causley, Lear, Stephenson or Milne). In a sample of 1200, very few women poets are mentioned; the highest numbers are: Grace Nicholls (16), Christina Rossetti (11), Eleanor Farjeon (9), Judith Nicholls (8), Pam Ayres (5), Floella Benjamin (3), Sandy Brownjohn (3), Sharon Creech (3), Carol Ann Duffy (3), Jill Murphy (3), Jackie Kay (2), Valerie Bloom (2) and Wendy Cope (1). This is a matter of concern, but may reflect trends in anthologising or in the world of poetry more generally. Furthermore, with the single notable exception of Benjamin Zephaniah, very few black poets received any mentions. Unlike the picture book category very few teachers named any poetry books, suggesting perhaps a use of anthologies or perhaps that the covers and titles of poetry books are less memorable and significant with regard to the text as a whole. The lack of knowledge of poets may indicate that teachers tend to select poetry for its capacity to teach a particular linguistic feature rather than enjoying poetry for its own sake, an issue to be explored further in Phase II.

The repeated mentions which the Ahlbergs receive and indeed Mick Inkpen, Shirley Hughes and Colin McNaughton suggest that much of the well known work, whilst poetic in nature, is found within the pages of picture fiction. This question was before the picture fiction list so we do not perceive it as influenced by that. Indeed the 150 plus mentions that Roald Dahl received are, we assume, attached to his *Revolting Rhymes* and need to be placed alongside the evidence of 'over dependence' on Dahl found in the fiction section.

In response to the question about picture fiction, it is noticeable that some of the picturebook makers named were also named as 'authors' in the first list. In terms of multiple mentions a relatively small group of the myriad of authors/ illustrators who are publishing for teachers today are mentioned. The second highest category noted is the many books whose titles are offered but whose authors have not been recalled. These were very varied and included for example *A Piece of Cake* (Jill Murphy), *Pumpkin Soup* (Helen Cooper), *Can't You Sleep Little Bear* (Martin Waddell), *Going on a Bear Hunt* (Michael Rosen), *Owl Babies* (Martin Waddell), *Catkin* (illustrator P.J. Lynch) as well as a fairly large number of titles of traditional tales, e.g. *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* and *Jack and the Beanstalk*. In addition, there was a relatively large number of authors of other kinds of book inadvertently mentioned in this category, for example J.K. Rowling, Anne Fine, Jigsaw books, Graeme Green.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of the picturebook makers mentioned create texts targeted at children in the early years or KS1 (e.g. Eric Carle, Mick Inkpen, Nick Butterworth, Julia Donaldson). There are fewer mentions of named picturebook makers/illustrators who offer texts for KS2. For example there is very limited mention of the work of Gary Crew (4) or Neil Gaiman (only 1 mention). The work of Quentin Blake stands out as well known- whether this is through texts such as *Zog* or *Clown* or his illustrations of Roald Dahl (*The Twits*, *The Giraffe the Pelly and Me* and *Revolting Rhymes*) is unknown. It does however correlate with the findings from the fiction and poetry surveys that suggest Dahl is pre-eminent within his field in terms of teachers' knowledge of his work. It would appear that a relatively small number of more recent authors/illustrators are noted, although Lauren Child receives 22 mentions.

Overall, the data presents issues of concern about the infrequent mention of poetry, both as teachers' personal reading and in the narrow range indicated by the responses. Particularly, the absence of women poets, poets from other cultures writing in English and international poetry as a

whole suggest that there is much work to be done here. The recent Ofsted survey on poetry also supports the view that too limited a range of poets is known by primary phase teachers who, this survey suggests, rely upon a very narrow range of specific poems, many of which they were taught in school (Ofsted, 2007). Another key concern must be the absence of mentions of picturebooks for older readers. The visual world which young people live in deserves attention in classrooms and many complex picturebooks offer challenging reading for all ages. Teachers' own experience of poetry and complex picturebooks is a significant gap which needs attention. (For more information on teachers' knowledge of literature from this work, see Cremin et al, forthcoming, 2008b).

Links with library services

There is some basis for concern about links between teachers and their local library services. Although the figures will have been influenced by local conditions and arrangements between the local authority and the library services, the overall figures, drawn from a range of LAs, indicate at best infrequent visits and not much reliance on librarians' expertise in developing activities or selecting materials for the classroom. This is a serious under-use of valuable services and expertise.

Classroom practice

This is an area where more work needs to be carried out. It seems that about half of the respondents adopt a wide-ranging approach to enjoying and using children's literature on the classroom. However, that raises questions about the other half. The relatively high number (almost a quarter of the sample) noting the use of literature as purely functional is a matter of concern as are the 26% who use publishers' materials daily or at least weekly.

Although there were quite positive responses with regard to the reported frequency of reading aloud for enjoyment, the figures indicate that teachers in their early years of teaching read aloud most frequently and teachers with longer experience less frequently (See responses to Question 7b below). Also, it seems that this practice declines with older classes, which is of particular concern since as children become more independent as readers, they continue to need encouragement, support and enthusiastic introductions to the work of quality writers as well as the experience of engaging with demanding and emotionally satisfying literature.

Question 7b: When did you last read a book completely to your class for pleasure, By number of years in teaching

In recognising the deep imaginative value and emotional engagement which literature can offer, the survey's respondents clearly seek such satisfactions, sustaining themselves as adult readers. However, their limited knowledge of children's authors suggest some tensions and difficulties exist for these primary phase professionals, who may be able to successfully source their own reading habits, but are not in a strong position to support younger learners in developing their own preferences. Whilst the teachers in this survey may find time at home to read personally, the diminishing frequency of sharing literature as children grow older suggests that they may be finding it difficult in school to prioritise reading for pleasure.

The lowest rating of the role of literature in developing writing further suggests that the teachers did not necessarily see the important links between reading and writing. This raises the question of whether there is a tendency to divorce literature from pedagogy. Has literature become a mere tool for teachers to employ in the context of reading instruction, a resource for shared and guided

reading?

Section Five - Implications and next steps

Although the questionnaire did not aim to probe teacher education it is clear that the findings have implications for the education of future teachers as well as the continuing professional development of those already in post. The Department for Education and Skills, the National Literacy Strategy and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority have agreed, with Arts Council England and the Poet Laureate, Andrew Motion, a 'Literature Entitlement':

Every child has the right to read and write creatively and we believe that creativity should become a central part of formal education. This enriches the curriculum for the foundation stage and in schools (ACE, 2003: 3).

If this is to be achieved, then more needs to be done to support teachers in providing a wider and richer experience of children's texts.

The findings from Phase I of the project convince us that there is room for development in finding ways to extend the scope and range of teachers' knowledge of children's literature. It is clear that teachers are avid readers themselves, and enjoy fast-paced, engaging narratives. It is equally clear that many books which teachers treasure the most were introduced to them by their teachers. If their enjoyment of reading can be extended to a wider range of authors then this can only be beneficial for future readers whose diverse interests and reading preferences deserve to be both honoured and extended. In addition, the data suggests that teachers' knowledge of children's poetry, picture fiction and global literature needs considerable development, if they are to teach for the 'maximum entitlement' and develop readers for life (Martin, 2003). Recent work about identities and reading suggests that the choice of books and teachers' mediation of them has a profound effect on 'how [children] see themselves and who they want to be' (McCarthy and Moje, 2002:237). (See also Silin, 2003). At the same time, teachers' literate identities are becoming a focus for research (Moore, 2004) and there should be scope for exploring this further.

In addition there is serious work to be done in bringing together teachers and librarians. This will be a key aim in Phase II of the work which is a professional development project designed to develop children's pleasure and enthusiasm for reading through enriching and extending primary teachers':

knowledge of children's literature
confidence and skilful, reflective use of such literature in the classroom
relationships with librarians and parents.

This will be documented as a series of case studies drawn from the five Local Authorities involved: Barking and Dagenham, Birmingham, Kent, Medway and Suffolk.

Part I has been a unique study and has established strong partnerships between UKLA and a range of Local Authorities. This strengthens our desire as an association dedicated to the promotion of education in literacy to consolidate the links between schools, communities and local authorities working together to promote reading for purpose and pleasure.

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