

INFORMATION LEAFLET

THE ROLE OF UK SAMPLE LIBRARIES

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1. Loans Sampling

The loans figures, on which payments to authors are calculated, are derived from loans data supplied by sample libraries selected from the public library sector. UK library authorities are grouped by the PLR Scheme into eight geographical regions and each year a representative sample of authorities (currently a minimum of thirty) is chosen and designated by the PLR Operations and Marketing Manager, to provide details of book issues.

The sample is chosen to include libraries of varying size. Data is usually collected from all computerised branches within an authority.

To help ensure fairness and accuracy at least seven of the authorities are replaced each year and no library can stay in the sample for more than four years. The PLR Operations and Marketing Manager will always consult with authorities prior to their being designated as sample libraries and at least six months formal notice of participation is given.

Costs incurred by a library authority in the collection of this data are reimbursed by the PLR office.

2. Collecting Data

How is the data collected?

The software to collect loans data is developed by the library management system (LMS) supplier and is linked to a library's circulation system. A separate file is created to collect issues by item number. At agreed reporting intervals this loans information is matched against the catalogue and the bibliographic information extracted. The combined loans and bibliographic data are sent to the PLR office by email. This should have no impact on normal computer response times and will not affect library staff and users.

What is collected?

The PLR office is interested only in the loans of books to individuals. Previously we used the library's own material and borrower categories to filter out loans that we didn't need. However, the latest version of the PLR software only picks up ISBN loans anyway, so we no longer need to apply these collection parameters.

What information is reported?

Data is reported in the form of the ISBN, number of loans, number of copies and a four digit acronym derived from the author's surname.

3. Data Processing

How is the data processed?

The PLR computer system maintains separate loans files for each of the sample authorities and matches the incoming data against its own bibliographic database.

Where invalid, incomplete or unmatched data is reported it may be necessary to seek further information from the sample library authority.

What further help may be required from the library authority?

PLR staff aim to keep enquiries to the minimum. They will have made extensive bibliographic checks on all queried items before going back to the authority, including use of the authority's catalogue if available online. Any remaining enquiries arising are reported back by email. The information required for PLR purposes will usually be obtained from checking catalogue files.

How is the data used?

The PLR year runs from July to June with an annual payment to authors in February. Loans reported from sample libraries are totalled by region. These regional sub-totals are separately grossed-up, using figures derived from the published CIPFA library loans statistics. The resulting regional estimates are added together to produce national estimates for every book with a unique ISBN.

A further calculation identifies and adds up those loans of registered books for which payment is due. The total is then divided into the available monies to give an annual Pence Per Loan rate. This determines how much each registered author is paid.

As the national estimates are calculated on the loans of all books reported to PLR, the PLR office is uniquely placed to produce information on public library use in the UK.

PLR produces an annual media release including details of the most borrowed authors and titles in different genres (adult and children's fiction,

non-fiction, the classics) and of the most popular subject categories based on the book trade's BIC classification scheme. Sample library authorities receive annual listings of the most-borrowed titles in their own authority, in their region and nationally. PLR can also provide libraries with online access to a wider range of loans information via the PLR website (<https://www.bl.uk/plr/how-plr-uses-loans-information>).

4. Further Information

Public Lending Right (PLR) was established by Act of Parliament in 1979. PLR's rules of operation are set out in the PLR Scheme (1982). The Act confers on authors the right to receive payment for the borrowing of their books from public libraries. The United Kingdom is currently one of over thirty countries which have PLR systems. The main features of British PLR are:

- funding from Central Government
- registration of authors and their books
- statistical sampling of public library loans
- payment based on estimated book loans

Responsibility for administering the PLR Scheme was transferred to the British Library in October 2013. The British Library's plan is to transfer operations from Stockton-on-Tees to Boston Spa, completing by March 2020.

5. Background

The PLR website (www.bl.uk/plr) provides fuller background information. An explanatory leaflet for authors wishing to apply for registration is also available from the PLR office or to download from the PLR website. Enquiries and visits from the general public or from literary, educational and other bodies with an interest in PLR are welcome.

The nearest mainline station to the PLR office in Stockton-on-Tees is Darlington (two and a half hours from London) from which Stockton is easily accessible by local rail service or taxi. For road users Stockton is served by the A19 which links with the A1. The nearest airports are Durham Tees Valley (five miles) and Newcastle (forty miles).