



PLR e-NEWS

First Edition, October 2003

Hot off the press!! The Public Lending Right Commission brings you news for the first time outside of the annual cheque-mailing/new title registration period. *The general PLR mailing will still take place in February.* This electronic newsletter is simply a way of keeping you informed about PLR issues at other times of the year.

Who/What is the Public Lending Right (PLR) Commission?

The PLR Commission is composed primarily of authors like yourself: 11 out of its 19 members are writers from all parts of the country. Four librarians, two publishers and representatives from the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Canada Council for the Arts round out the membership. The PLR Commission's **mandate** is to make payments to Canadian authors to recognize the service your books provide in our libraries. The PLR Commission works on your behalf to ensure that Canadians have the best conditions possible for a healthy and efficient Public Lending Right program. It meets twice a year in Ottawa. A staff of four, located in Ottawa, carries out the day to day administration of the PLR program.

The Chair of the PLR Commission is always a writer, alternating every two years between French- and English-language writers. For 2002-2004, the PLR Chair is Joan Clark. Ms. Clark has been widely recognized this year by winning three prizes (Winterset, Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction, Mr. Christie Book Award) for her most recent book of young adult fiction, *THE WORD FOR HOME*. Ms. Clark is also a novelist and lives in St. John's, Nfld.

Did you know?

The Public Lending Right program has been in operation since 1986 and has recently undergone a **government evaluation**, the first one in over 13 years. You can read the complete report online at:

http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/em-cr/eval/2003/2003_03/20_e.cfm

For your convenience, we list here the 3 observations made as a result of this evaluation:

1. **The PLRP remains relevant and contributes to the achievement of government cultural policy objectives.**
2. **The PLRP benefits from the administrative efficiencies that its delivery under the aegis of the Canada Council provides.**
3. **PLRP budget considerations should be conducted in accordance with the Administrative Agreement of 1995 between the Canada Council and the PLRC. Canada Council and PLRC should ensure that the Administrative Agreement is clear and provides a means to make changes as necessary to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the Program and ensure that government objectives are met.**

Is PLR just a "Canadian thing"?

Far from it! Although Canada is **the only country in the Americas** to have a PLR program, there are 17 other countries with operating PLR programs in the world. (Thirty-four countries in total have recognized the principle of PLR.) PLR started in Denmark in 1946. Now all of Scandinavia, other countries such as the UK, Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Israel, Australia, New Zealand and Lithuania have PLR programs. France will join the PLR family in 2004.

Quick facts

- there are currently 61,000 titles registered by 14,750 authors in the Canadian PLR program
- the PLR registration period for new titles is from 15 February to 1 May
- titles must have an ISBN in order to be eligible in the PLR program
- the PLR cheques are issued in mid-February
- only living authors are eligible for PLR; payments do not continue to authors' estates
- not all titles are eligible for PLR. You can find out about this and other details on the PLR website at www.plr-dpp.ca

How are PLR payments calculated?

Our PLR system is based on the presence of the book in the library, not the number of times the book is lent, nor on the number of copies of the title in the library. We check the holdings of large urban public and university libraries (10 English-language, 5 French) on a rotating basis each year to find out how many have at least one copy of your titles. We add up all of the 'hits' we collect for all of the libraries, then divide that number by the total amount of money we have available for PLR payments in any given year. We call the resulting unit figure the 'hit rate.' In February 2003, the hit rate was \$34.85.

How much/little can I earn from the PLR program?

No matter how prolific you are as an author, nor how widely available your titles are in the libraries, the **maximum** amount you can receive in any year is one hundred times the PLR hit rate. In 2003, this amount was \$3,485. The purpose of the maximum is to distribute more evenly the PLR fund over the broad range of authors.

The **minimum** PLR amount paid in 2003 was \$25. So, if you are, say, an illustrator with a 50% claim in a title and that title was found only once in the 2002-03 library sampling exercise, you would not have received half of \$34.85 (\$17.43), but rather \$25. We have simply determined that it is not efficient to send out cheques worth less than \$25.

Funding:

Until four years ago, funding for the Public Lending Right Commission was allocated by the Department of Canadian Heritage and channelled through the Canada Council for the Arts. This arrangement changed in 2000 with the result that the Commission lost its direct link with the Department of Canadian Heritage. The Commission was informed that henceforth it would have to share in any new monies coming directly to the Canada Council for the Arts. This has made it difficult for the Commission to maintain control over its budgetary appropriation. We are actively working toward having the Department earmark PLR funds and expect to report very soon that we have made significant progress in this regard.

Returned cheques, authors on the move

Each year, there are a few hundred of you whose cheques are returned to the PLR Commission because you have moved. **Do not become one of these missing persons!** Please remember to inform the PLR Commission of your new address whenever you move. Remember, we cannot re-issue your cheque once the calendar year in which it was issued changes.

Let us know . . .

Let us know if there are other topics you would like addressed in future newsletters.
We are at your service!