



ALCS response to the consultation document: *The Literature Blueprint*

March 2010

Introduction

The Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society Limited ('ALCS') is the UK collecting society for writers of all genres of literary and dramatic copyright works including academic writers, fiction, non-fiction, translators, adaptors, scriptwriters, magazine and journal article writers, editors and children's writers.

Established in 1977 and wholly owned and governed by the writers it represents (of whom there are currently over 75,000), ALCS is a not-for-profit, non-union organisation. The Society's governing body, the Board of Directors, is composed of elected writers. Since its foundation, ALCS has paid writers over £230 million in fees and today it continues to identify and develop new sources of income for writers.

Our remit is also to 'protect and promote authors' rights' and we do this in a number of ways: copyright education among students and the general public, copyright/authors' rights awareness raising amongst authors' and lobbying at both UK and EU levels.

We are pleased to submit our input into *The Literature Blueprint* consultation being administered by Creative & Cultural Skills.

1. Key Challenges for the Literature sector (page 7)

For creators to earn a living from their work they must understand the concept of copyright and what it can do for their earning potential. The paper refers to the 'growth in creative writing courses provided by further and higher education institutions has increased the number of people wanting to enter the literature sector' and that 'they must be equipped with the rights skills and advice'. ALCS believes that to achieve this, appropriate education around the subject of copyright is essential. With ever-evolving technologies enabling creativity to be shared in different ways amongst the general population, other ways of securing remuneration for the creator in the future will be an issue. Understanding how copyright can protect a creator's work to allow financial gain is an important aspect in allowing them to make a living.

5. Initial Recommendations (page 12)

5.1 **Expand entry routes and encourage wider diversity within the literature sector workforce**

ALCS applauds the note that 'It is important that children are inspired to write creatively, gain the skills to do so, and grow up seeing writing as a viable and exciting career.' Through the Carnegie & Greenaway Awards Shadowing Scheme, <http://www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk/shadowingsite/teachers/resources.php> ALCS, partnered with the Chartered Institute of Librarians and Information Professionals (CILIP) has been working with young people (reach of 94,000) via the Shadowing Scheme

Group Leaders by offering copyright awareness packs (attached) including engaging activities through which we hope to influence students' understanding of copyright, how it should be protected and how it can help protect creativity so that creators can make a living from their work.

The Literature Blueprint also notes that 'for most writers, starting out involves a period of great uncertainty and unpaid or low-paid work... Writers are more likely to succeed if they can afford to work for no payments for periods of time'. Unfortunately, research ALCS carried out in 2007 (attached) regarding authors' earnings supports this statement, with typical earnings of professional authors aged 25-34 at just £5,000 per annum. It was also noted that less than 15% of authors surveyed had received payments for online uses of their works. Indeed, in the 'digital age' this is a worrisome trend and one writers and prospective writers should be aware of from the beginning of their career, hence the importance of copyright education as part of their overall education.

ALCS would, therefore, stress that in the summary of recommendations (page 14), it would be very useful if an element of copyright education could be included in any curricula or course content that might be influenced by this paper.

5.2 Encourage the reform of literature qualifications to address the need for a wide range of skills

ALCS would also echo this sentiment regarding any reform of literature qualifications (page 14) which should include more regarding copyright education and how it will benefit the writer in their quest to make a living.

5.3 Expand the range and uptake of Continuing Professional Development

Likewise, copyright education should also be addressed (page 16) when reviewing the business knowledge needed to develop a career in writing as part of Continuing Professional Development.

5.4 Take a lead in removing barriers to the development and exploitation of digital technology

On page 18, ALCS would, once again, reiterate that it is important that writers understand their rights and the purpose of copyright and an enabling law so that they can actively engage with other sectors in the discussion about intellectual property rights for digital file sharing and content, thus ensuring they can maximize their earning potential and that of the writing sector.

ALCS would like to take the opportunity to thank Creative & Cultural Skills for both producing the initial document and enabling individuals and organisations like ALCS to contribute to it.

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