



# Editorial 204

Article Author:

[Ferelith Hordon](#) [1]

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Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of **Books for Keeps** 2014.

What will this New Year bring? Reassuringly, reports of the demise of the book have been greatly exaggerated. While figures for the end of the year report a decline in sales for the big-brand names, at least in print format, children's books continue to sell well ? and over the counter as well as online.

It will be interesting to watch developments at the newly merged Random House Children's and Penguin Children's Books lists. Ever bigger groupings are not always the answer, and may even be cause for concern. But if, as it seems, there is now a demand for backlist titles, this new giant certainly has the resources. Maybe we will see welcome new editions of authors currently out-of-print? We can look forward to plenty of activity from independent publishers, the well-established and the very new; Andersen Press will be celebrating Elmer the Elephant who reaches the grand old age of 25; David Fickling Books (now independent), Phoenix Yard Books and Nosy Crow have bright new catalogues, and Faber have just launched their new picture book list. There may be more new faces in the coming year.

So we will continue to have plenty of books to talk about. What about the people who get them to readers? Bookshops face challenging times, as Tony Higginson of Formby Books describes in his feature article. Not all hope is gone however. Specialist children's bookshops with knowledgeable, committed staff continue to attract support. Customers want guidance and recommendations; and this includes schools.

In this area there are yet more grounds for pessimism. School library services and school librarians continue to be under threat; literacy coordinators are no longer universal; there are more ?cuts? in the pipeline. Despite this, school librarians around the country continue to promote books in lively and innovative ways. The nominations for School Librarian of the Year attest to this. The inclusion of the concept (at last) of Reading for Pleasure in Government reports must surely result in increased support for the school library.

Staffing is the great issue facing public libraries, especially Children's Services. As with bookshops this has always been a strength. Now with fewer dedicated professionals on the floor, this is an area that is very much threatened. However, the innovative and managed use of Reading Activists is helping support staff in a number of authorities and will grow. Other reasons to be cheerful include the children's titles included on the World Book Night giveaway list; The Summer Reading Challenge, which continues to go from strength to strength ? 2014?s Mythical Maze theme with materials designed by Sarah McIntyre should catch the attention of even more children; authorities across Britain are planning City Reads, a growing trend increasingly including a children's offer; many commemorations for World War I will begin in libraries. We should see even more collaboration between the public library and the school library - Read for my School is one such project, while CILIP?s Carnegie Kate Greenaway Shadowing scheme will build on last year's success, and the benefits identified in research published last year.

Prizes, like book festivals, help create a buzz both at a local and national level. Here too there are new faces. 2014 will

see the inauguration of the Book Trust Best Book Awards. It is a bit sad that in this case there will be significant overlap in timetables. A case for more joined up thinking, perhaps? More is great, just not all at the same time.

Whatever the new year brings, at **Books for Keeps** we will continue to report on the best of the children's book world, the best authors, illustrators and recommendations. Thank you for your support - and keep visiting.

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