



Editorial 208

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I have just returned from Mexico where I have been attending the 34th **IBBY International Congress** in Mexico City. **IBBY ? the International Board on Books for Young People ?** is a charity concerned with promoting and supporting the access of young people across the world to books.

The theme of the Congress was 'Everybody means everybody' ? inclusion in the widest sense. At the opening ceremony, the Minister for Education described new initiatives by the Mexican government, supported by **IBBY Mexico**. Starting with Mexico City, schools with more than 10 classrooms, have a dedicated 'reading promoter' whose job is to coordinate reading activities across the school and promote all aspects of reading. He also mentioned a volunteer programme through which volunteers go into schools to promote reading.

We have our own ways of promoting and developing reading in the UK. There are school and public librarians, of course, who are just like the Mexican 'reading promoters' and there are IBBY-supported initiatives like **Bookstart**, **Bookbuzz**, and the **Summer Reading Challenge**. They aim to encourage a reading culture across communities. They've been so successful that other countries have copied them ? Germany, for instance, has a scheme very similar to **Bookstart**. These initiatives are doing good work, but they could do so much more with real government support and solid funding.

You can read about the new initiative, [Read On, Get On](#) [3] which is supported by **Save the Children**. Anything that raises the profile of reading development and reading promotion and creates discussion, debate and enthusiasm must be applauded.

However, I can't help being a little concerned about this campaign. **Read On, Get On's** aim is to get every child born in the UK reading well by the age of 11. Yes, we want every child to read, but our ultimate goal must be to create a nation of 'readers' ? by which I mean people who actively choose to read for pleasure, not just a nation of people who *can* read, although that is, of course, important. It's definition of being able to 'read well' includes being able to read **Treasure Island** ? but that is full of archaic language that many very good 11-year-old readers would struggle with, let alone enjoy. I'm not sure this campaign offers any new strategies or practical support beyond what already exists. The name **Read On, Get On** alone could induce more pressure and feelings of guilt among the very adults and children it's intending to inspire. And what about the many intelligent children for whom reading will never be easy? Sally Gardner, for instance, may be a best selling author now, but she also has severe dyslexia; she would never have been considered a good reader aged 11.

But whatever my concerns, I know that children's librarians, teachers and all those who believe in the transformative power of reading imaginatively and for pleasure will work, as they do now, to achieve a nation of readers.

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