

The School Library Association Announces Honours Lists for 2025 Awards

Monday 14 July, 2025

The School Library Association has today announced the Honours lists for its annual Secondary School Librarian of the Year Award, the Peter Usborne Primary School Library of the Year Award, and the Enterprise Award.

The organisation is marking two decades of recognising excellence, as the flagship School Librarian of the Year Award celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. The award, which has become a cornerstone of recognition for secondary school library staff, was originally proposed by the late author and educator Aidan Chambers, during his tenure as President of the SLA. Writing about the establishment of the School Librarian of the Year Award in 2005, Aidan said:

"I know from experience and from visiting schools that the library can, and should, be the cultural and educational heart of a school, the place where pupils are stimulated and helped to become readers for pleasure, as well as the best resource for information. The success of this depends on the skill, book knowledge and energy of the librarian."

I was determined as President to do all I could to raise the status of school librarians. That's why, with the help of the SLA Committee, we established the School Librarian of the Year Award, which I am glad to see continues to be given every year."

This year sponsored by Browns Books, the **Secondary School Librarian of the Year Award** continues to highlight and celebrate the achievements of staff who put reading at the heart of their pupils' education and support learning throughout the whole school community.

The 2025 shortlist features three dedicated librarians who have each developed innovative approaches to embedding and encouraging a reading culture within their schools, demonstrating excellence in many areas including curriculum support, collaborative working, and developing pupil-centred programmes of activity that extend enthusiasm for books and reading far beyond the walls of the library.

Clare Smith, Sales Director at Browns Books said: *"A huge congratulations to the exceptional finalists of the School Librarian of the Year Award! Browns Books is incredibly proud to sponsor this inspiring award, which celebrates the outstanding dedication of school librarians who empower students through literacy, learning, and a love of reading in their schools and communities. The best of luck to Gareth, Jill and Julie."*

The Peter Usborne Primary School Library of the Year Award

recognises a team that works together to ensure their school library positively impacts all the pupils in their primary school. Usborne's sponsorship of this award is a continuation of founder Peter Usborne's lifetime commitment to supporting literacy.

The shortlist of three primary school libraries in Birmingham, Bristol and Northampton showcases how dedicated librarians, strong leadership support, and whole-school community engagement can transform library spaces into vibrant hubs that elevate reading culture, engage pupils and create measurable impact.

Nicola Usborne, Managing Director of Usborne said: *"It is a joy to read about the fantastic school communities across the country, who are working day-in, day-out, to find innovative ways to ensure their school library has a positive impact; inspiring curiosity, informing and delighting pupils. The passion shown by the three shortlisted primary libraries in Birmingham, Bristol and Northampton for this invaluable work is truly an inspiration to all of us."*

The Enterprise of the Year Award celebrates one-off or progressive projects which contribute towards reading and literacy in schools. This could include a large refurbishment, or a smaller scale project such

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as a whole school information literacy, reading project, or book event. Sponsored by Reading Cloud, this award shortlists three inspiring projects that highlight imaginative approaches to library development and the importance of community engagement.

Ricky Nelson, Head of Customer Engagement at Reading Cloud said: *"It's great to see the incredible work the finalists are doing to raise the profile of reading within their schools. We congratulate each shortlisted entry for their hard work and dedication to making reading a priority across their whole school."*

Victoria Dilly, CEO of the SLA, said: *"The SLA Awards form a powerful advocacy programme that help us to amplify the voices and achievements of school librarians across the country. These awards showcase real-life case studies and demonstrate the transformative impact of school libraries on children and young people's lives."*

When we celebrate our award winners, we're not just honouring individual excellence; we're creating opportunities to evidence just how much school libraries support the personal, social and educational development of our children and young people. Each nomination tells a story of innovation, dedication, and measurable impact. These are stories that need to be heard by policymakers, senior leaders, and the wider community."

As we continue to champion the vital role of school libraries, these awards serve as our most prominent stage to demonstrate why investment in school library provision and the talented people who deliver it is not just beneficial – it's essential."

The award ceremony for Secondary School Librarian of the Year, Peter Usborne Primary Library of the Year, and Enterprise of the Year Awards will take place at the British Library in London on the afternoon of Thursday 6th November 2025. Industry guests, press and member school librarians will be invited by the SLA and will also have the opportunity to join an exclusive view of *Secret Maps*, a major exhibition at the British Library, which runs from 24th October 2025 – 18th January 2026.

Secret Maps will explore the relationship between mapping and secrecy in a global context between the 14th and 21st centuries. It is an exhibition about how and why, contrary to their modern appreciation as things which openly provide knowledge of the world, maps have been used by governments, armies, businesses, organisations, communities and individuals to withhold all kinds of spatial knowledge.

The Shortlist for each award is as follows:

Secondary School Librarian of the Year Award:

- **Jill Fenton**, Cheney School, Headington (Oxfordshire)
- **Julie Broadbent**, Northampton International Academy, Northampton
- **Gareth Evans**, Abbeyfield School, Chippenham (Wiltshire)

Judges' comments:

Jill Fenton has created a structured approach to both Reading for Pleasure and Research Skills and has equipped the library with the resources needed to respond to the needs of the students and staff she works with.

Julie Broadbent has worked collaboratively with both the local Public Library as well as the University of Northampton to maximise the reading for pleasure and study skills opportunities for the large numbers of students that she works with, across both Primary and Secondary phases.

Gareth Evans has built a strong and vibrant LRC offering over the past 8 years at Abbeyfield. He has created a curated programme of Library lessons complimenting the English curriculum throughout Key Stage 3, as well as integrating cross-curricular links wherever possible.

The Peter Usborne Primary Library Award:

- **Dorrington Academy**, Birmingham
- **Mangotsfield Church of England Primary School**, Bristol
- **Upton Meadows Primary School**, Northampton

Judges' comments:

Dorrington Academy's library has created real impact over the short time it has been open. The library staff have created multiple opportunities to engage school pupils and teachers and students alike use the Reference Library as an important learning resource. The creation of a dedicated Parents' Library has helped to build reading culture at home as well as at school.

Mangotsfield Church of England Primary School's journey of taking the library from a disused space to being an integral part of daily life is inspirational, and everyone can take something from it. The Library and Librarian truly demonstrates what a Primary School can achieve when enabled by the SLT and whole school community.

Upton Meadows Primary School have positioned their library at the physical and educational heart of the school. The pupils are regularly experiencing quality books, as well as many of them holding the position of library helper, further developing their sense of responsibility and community.

The Enterprise of the Year Award:

- **The Shore**, Thomas A' Becket Infant School, Worthing (West Sussex)

The new Thomas A' Becket Infant School Library is called 'The Shore' in tribute to Teaching Assistant, Miss Emily Shaw, who passed away suddenly at the start of 2024. The deliberate homophone also formed the basis for the library's underwater design, and acknowledges the school's location on the South Coast.

- **Creative Learning Hub**, Holmewood House School, Tunbridge Wells (Kent)

The aim of the Creative Learning Hub was to reimagine a disused space into a resource to support a whole school Reading for Pleasure initiative with creativity at the centre of the approach.

- **The Big Read**, Alleyn's Junior School, London

The Big Read is a termly Saturday book club for children from local state schools, especially those unable to host author visits due to budget constraints. Books are sent to schools free of charge for each pupil in advance, they read the chosen book ahead of time and then meet the author on the day.

Judges' comments:

The Shore: The school's creative approach to this project has created a welcoming and vibrant environment that perfectly reflects its pupils needs, making it a remarkable community-driven project.

Creative Learning Hub: This project makes an inspiring read; the transformation of the existing library into a ' Learning Hub' meant the space became much more accessible. The hub was exactly that; a hive of creative activity, the children's place to read in class and outside the curriculum

The Big Read: Children who have attended raved about this experience; the positivity on offer is impressive. The project is inspirational in its scope and in its broad enrichment objectives, all of which it is achieving.

The School Library Association annual awards rely entirely on sponsor funding and the SLA is grateful to all the sponsors, past and present, without whom these awards would not be possible.

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