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*An initiative of Bristol Cultural Development Partnership:*





Bristol Old Vic stage adaptation of *Around the World in Eighty Days* (Mark Simmons).

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**Above** Aouda and Phileas with pupil from Hannah More Primary School at Swindon station (Neil Phillips).

**Right** Pupils from Hannah More Primary School, Bristol travelling to Swindon on launch day (Neil Phillips).



## INTRODUCTION

On Thursday 5 January 2006 a Victorian English gentleman, his French valet, an Indian princess and an incompetent detective could be seen travelling by train from Swindon to Penzance and by rickshaw around Weston-Super-Mare, heralding the first of 80 days of reading activity across the South West region.

Phileas Fogg, Passepartout, Aouda and Fix from Jules Verne's classic novel *Around the World in Eighty Days* were publicising the launch of the fourth Great Reading Adventure. This community-based mass-reading initiative led by Bristol Cultural Development Partnership (BCDP) has been running in Bristol since 2003, but for this year had expanded to encompass the whole of the South West. BCDP worked with partners in schools, libraries, local media and other organisations within the region to encourage everyone to read the same book at the same time.

Each year the Great Reading Adventure aims:

- To help develop standards of literacy through the promotion of reading.
- To stimulate new forms of creativity inspired by the reading experience.
- To use reading to facilitate learning about the past.
- To bring diverse communities together through the act of reading and thereby foster a sense of shared identity.

For 2006 two additional objectives were set:

- To initiate and promote Britain's biggest mass-reading project by widening participation beyond Bristol.

- To form an effective lead-in to the Brunel 200 programme, a year-long celebration marking the 200th anniversary of the birth of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, which was being led by – and centred on – Bristol, but extended to the South West of England.

*Around the World in Eighty Days* followed the selection of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* in 2003, John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* in 2004 and, in 2005, *The Siege* by Bristol-based author Helen Dunmore. Verne's novel was an apt choice for the Brunel 200 year. Brunel was one of the greatest Victorian engineers and his influence across the South West region can be seen through his legacy of bridges, steamships, railways, viaducts and the enduring vision for change with which he realised the impossible. Jules Verne's story captures the spirit of that Victorian age of fresh horizons and new ideas, conveying a sense of daring and adventure brought by innovations that transformed the speed and reliability of travel across the globe.

Adrian Tinniswood, Chair of Heritage Lottery Fund's South West committee, said at the outset of the Great Reading Adventure:

*Brunel 200 is one of the most dynamic and innovative schemes that the Heritage Lottery Fund has ever supported in the South West. It will raise the profile of local heritage with people and really emphasise the continued importance of Brunel's legacy in the contemporary environment.*

Nick Capaldi, Chief Executive of Arts Council of England South West, another major supporter of the initiative, said:

*Brunel was an artist and an engineer. This is a fantastic project that we are delighted to support. As well as promoting the pleasure of reading and writing, the Great Reading Adventure promotes new artistic activity. It is a great start to what will be a momentous year for the South West.*

Passepartout at Bristol Temple Meads (Mark Simmons).



**Opposite page left** Cover of the full-text edition of *Around the World in Eighty Days* (Oxford World's Classics).

**Opposite page top** Cover of *All Change* (Hodder).

**Opposite page bottom** Cover of the children's edition of *Around the World in Eighty Days*.

**Below** Promoting the project at Swanage Railway Station, Dorset.

**Right** Phileas and Passepartout at Buckfastleigh station on the Primrose Line, Devon.

**Bottom** Phileas and Passepartout travelling by rickshaw in North Somerset.



On that launch day in January, Andrew Kelly, Director of the Great Reading Adventure and Brunel 200, said:

*For our fourth project we wanted a book that the whole region could enjoy and learn from as part of our celebrations of the work of Isambard Kingdom Brunel. Jules Verne wrote optimistically about the opening up of the world through transport and technology and was an admirer of Brunel, having sailed on the Great Eastern – Brunel's last great ship. There is no better choice than Around the World in Eighty Days for 2006.*

The Great Reading Adventure ended on 25 March 2006. This report summarises the findings from the evaluation of the project. It combines statistical data collected by the organisers and their partners with qualitative feedback gathered from self-completed questionnaires, interviews and correspondence. Each Great Reading Adventure is distinctive, reflecting the themes and tone of each year's chosen book. What remains constant is the enthusiasm and commitment of the participants, and the quality of the reading experience.



## Key findings

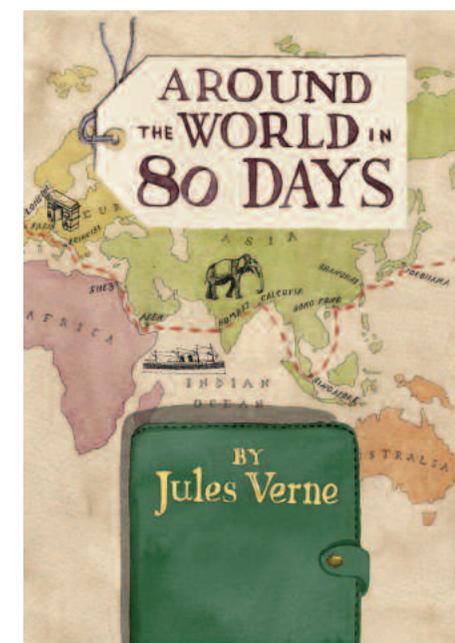
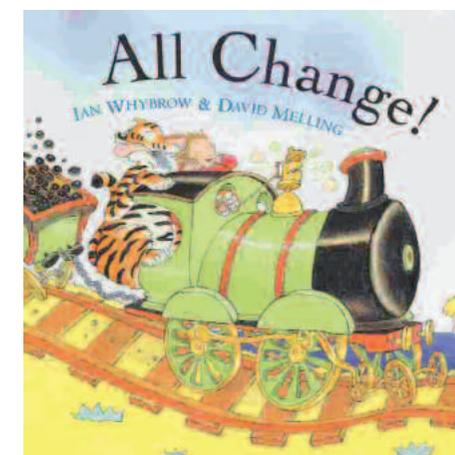
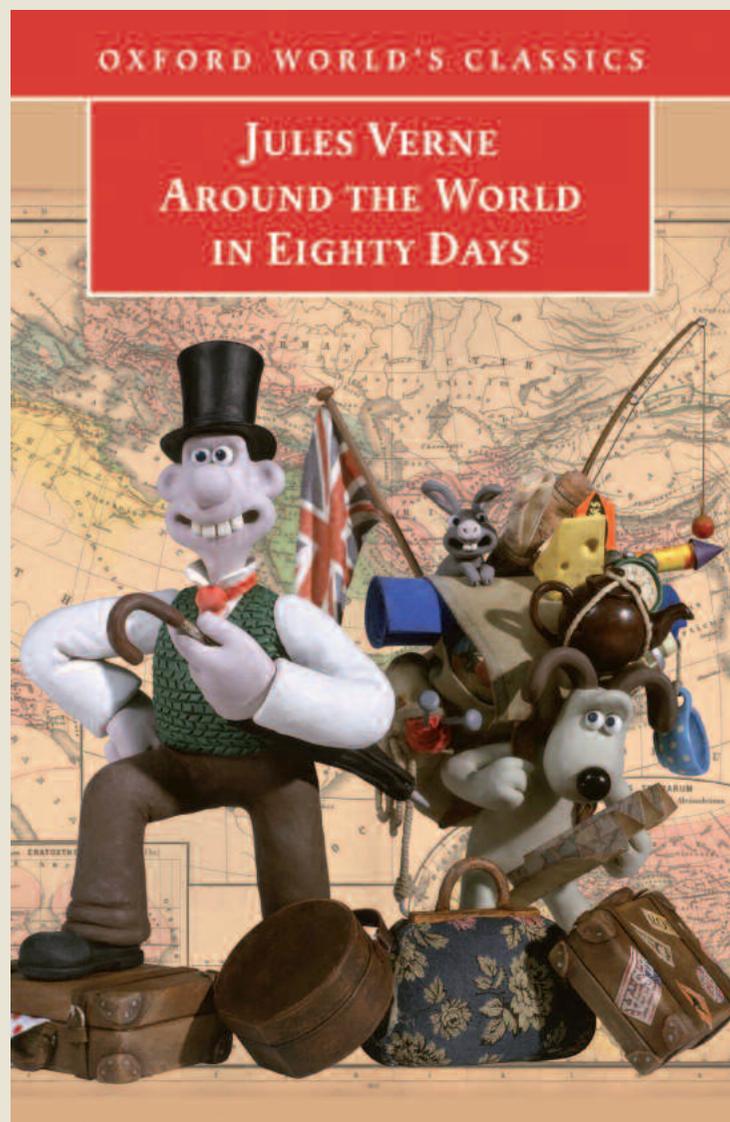
- 50,000 copies of *Around the World in Eighty Days* full text edition, 50,000 of the children's adaptation and 40,000 of the illustrated readers' guide were distributed across the region.
- Over 23,000 people borrowed *Around the World in Eighty Days* from library services in the South West from January to March, compared to 704 in the six months prior to the project.
- Most ages and all socio-economic groups participated in the project.
- The project website had a total of 15,381 visits between January and March.
- Nearly 90 per cent of those who expressed an opinion said the support material and coverage had enhanced their reading experience.
- Nearly 90 per cent of those who expressed an opinion said they had learned something about the past by joining in the project.
- The project was the topic of at least 261 stories in the local, regional and national media.

## DISTRIBUTING THE BOOKS

Oxford World Classics (Oxford University Press) supplied at cost price 50,000 copies of the full-text edition of *Around the World in Eighty Days* (later, another 2,000 copies of the book – at the same price – were sent to Rolls-Royce in Filton near Bristol following demand from the company).

The book had a special Great Reading Adventure cover and was reformatted to allow for a larger font size than the standard edition. In addition 50,000 copies of a specially commissioned children's version of the book were printed by BCDP along with 40,000 copies of an illustrated readers' guide (this proved not to be enough – at least an additional 50 per cent more guides were needed). For younger readers, 200 copies of *All Aboard*, a picture book with a travel theme aimed at the under fives, were purchased by BCDP for use in Bristol. Oxford also provided free of charge 15 copies of an adaptation of *Around the World in Eighty Days* aimed at those learning English as a foreign language, allowing one for each of the South West's library services. The publisher proved to be an invaluable partner in the project, offering constructive advice, marketing expertise, encouragement, support and practical assistance that went well beyond a standard commercial relationship.

The majority of the books were distributed across the South West through the region's library services. Other significant distribution points included Blackwell in Bristol, Seclusion Books in Bath and sales kiosks of the *Swindon Advertiser* where members of the public could claim a free book-pack containing one each of the full-text edition, children's version and readers' guide using a coupon clipped from, respectively, the *Bristol Evening Post*, *Bath Chronicle* or *Advertiser*. Books were also available to the public at a variety of sites around



Bristol including Bristol Zoo, *ss Great Britain*, At-Bristol, Bristol Old Vic and Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery. Copies were distributed to the business community through Business West's Initiative Members' list, to schools in Bristol direct and in the Swindon area via Sixth Sense Theatre Company, to all 4,000 employees at Rolls-Royce in Filton, to delegates at the Left Coast Crime convention and as a supplement to *Venue* magazine. Some books were also posted out on request to individuals. Taking up the travel theme, a thousand copies of the full-text edition of *Around the World in Eighty Days* were 'released' as a book-crossing initiative. Each copy contained a numbered sticker asking anyone who picked it up to tell BCDP where they had found it, and then to pass it on once they had read it so other readers could join in the Adventure.

Table 1 provides distribution details.

**Table 1 Book distribution across the South West**

	Full-text edition	Children's	Reader's guide
South West library authorities	23,760	22,970	17,750
Venue magazine	10,000	0	10,000
Secession Bookshop, Bath	560	500	500
Blackwell Bookshop, Bristol	1,040	1,000	1,000
Rolls-Royce	4,000	2,000	2,000
Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery	400	400	400
Bristol Old Vic Theatre	500	500	500
Bristol Royal Infirmary and Hospital Education Service	480	140	280
British Empire and Commonwealth Museum	400	500	480
Bristol Zoo	160	150	150
Bristol International Airport	200	200	200
Sixth Sense Theatre Company	1,520	4,500	150
Swindon Advertiser	560	500	500
Left Coast Crime Conference	560	500	500
Bristol Schools	1,520	10,000	500
BCDP	2,000	1,000	600
Others	4,340	5,140	4,490
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>52,000</b>	<b>50,000</b>	<b>40,000</b>

Source: BCDP  
All books were given away free of charge.

## PUBLICISING THE PROJECT

### Promotional material and images

For the first two Great Reading Adventures, promotional material had been produced featuring a custom-made image of Wallace and Gromit created by Bristol-based Aardman Animations.

This had not been thought suitable for *The Siege*, but given the light-hearted nature of *Around the World in Eighty Days*, it was felt that approaching Aardman again for a Wallace and Gromit design would provide the perfect image, attracting potential participants to the project whose curiosity would be raised by the presence of the well-loved comic figures. The final design featured the famous pair heading off on their journey, Gromit laden with supplies, luggage and a Union Flag – which was later discovered to be upside down, a nautical distress signal!

The Wallace and Gromit image was used on the front cover of the full-text edition of the book and also on large-scale posters displayed at Adshel sites in Bristol, and on 8,000 A3 posters and 40,000 A6 postcards distributed to schools, libraries and community venues.

Peter Lord, Director, Aardman Animations said:

*At Aardman we love stories. And though animation is obviously a very visual medium, we know that behind every great animated film there lies a great story. That's why we were happy to get involved in the Great Reading Adventure.*

*Children now enjoy a bewildering range of options for entertainment and leisure, but nothing quite matches the absorbing and magical entry into worlds of imagination that comes with reading.*

Simon Hind, a Swindon-commuter who was given a copy of the book on launch day said of the project:

*I think it is a great idea and a really good way of getting people to do something together. Having Wallace and Gromit on the cover is pure genius too.*

Artist James de la Rue was commissioned to design and illustrate the children's edition of the book, providing images that were reproduced in the six-part serialisation of the book in the *Bristol Evening Post*, *Bath Chronicle*, *Swindon Advertiser*, *Torquay Herald* and the BBC Online website. James' illustrations also formed the basis for the publicity and set design of Bristol Old Vic's stage production of *Around the World in Eighty Days*, presented at the theatre from 23 February to 18 March 2006.

James, who led an illustration workshop based on the book as part of the project's educational activity, said:

*I had a very rewarding time working for the Reading Adventure. Firstly it was an exciting brief and it felt a privilege to illustrate Around the World in 80 Days. The feedback and discussion of details throughout was always helpful and constructive.*

*I thought Melanie [Kelly]'s abridgment of the story was a great achievement, somehow making such drastic cuts but managing to keep the thrust of the characters throughout in accordance with the original text. I hope it encouraged many of the children in their (further) reading.*

*The decision to use Verne's story was clever because with both Fogg and Brunel you have two men perceived as having limitless ambitions aligned with little or no fear, or at least no conception that they can fail, so they tie together nicely.*



Two of James de la Rue's illustrations for the children's edition of the book.



Passepartout, Phileas, Aouda and Fix at Bristol Temple Meads with the children's edition of the book (Mark Simmons).

## Launch-day events

The Great Reading Adventure launch on 5 January 2006 embodied Brunel's and Verne's sense of audacity and exploration. Two teams of actors playing the four key characters in the novel headed out across the South West region on separate train journeys, one from Swindon to Bristol and the other from Bristol to Penzance. Library staff across the region also dressed up in period costume for various activities promoting the project.

A group of children from Hannah More Primary School in Bristol was able to travel between Bristol and Swindon on launch day, helping the actors to hand out free copies of the book to passengers and give readings. Comments from the children and teachers included:

*We are here for the day as part of the Great Reading Adventure. Reading is a skill and it has to be encouraged – events like this really help. This is a great book to start with.*

*It's been a really fun day and I've already read the first few pages and am looking forward to carrying on. This is a really good way to get involved with reading the book.*

*It's been very exciting. Having people dressed up as the characters helps us to imagine them and bring the book to life. I like reading and I am looking forward to finishing this book.*

Train operators First Group, who sponsored the reading guide, provided free rail tickets for the actors and children, and distributed hundreds more free copies of the books to their passengers over the course of the project.

The launch-day event at Temple Meads Station, Bristol was attended by the Lord Mayor of Bristol – Councillor Peter Abraham – and the Lady Mayoress, who welcomed back the travellers from Hannah More Primary, spoke to passing commuters about the project and gave

press interviews. Earlier in the day, the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress travelled to Hotwells Primary School for a reading with pupils and later, after the visit to Temple Meads, visited Bedminster Library for a lunchtime reading group for parents and toddlers.

Councillor Peter Abraham said:

*The children were so impressed with the book we read four chapters and they then asked to carry on with the book after we had left. They could see that travel and Brunel were interconnected and I was impressed that they got that connection. I have taken part every year and it is a fantastic project. We are hoping to get these children more interested in reading.*

## Media coverage

Media partnerships were a crucial part of reaching as wide an audience as possible across the South West, the second largest region in the UK. *Bristol Evening Post*, *Bath Chronicle*, the *Swindon Advertiser* and the *Torquay Herald Express* serialised the children's version of *Around the World in Eighty Days* in six daily instalments over the week of 9 January. Along with the launch event on 5 January, this contributed to the extensive media coverage the project received. Table 2 provides details of known media coverage.

**Table 2 Media coverage for the project**

Source	Quantity	
Number of newspapers reached	69	Number of articles/ radio/ television 220
Number of journals	6	Number of features 8
Number of websites	3	Number of articles 12
TV stations	3	Number of features 4
Radio stations	5	Number of features/ interviews 17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>261</b>

Source: Durrants 2006. It should be noted that not all the clips in the Bristol *Evening Post* are included in this analysis. There at least 20 additional articles that could be included.

On the launch day alone, 13 newspapers and websites ran a total of 22 articles and features (Bristol *Evening Post* ran ten articles over several regional editions and two time slots), radio stations broadcast 33.13 minutes of interviews over different shows during the day and three TV stations, the most notoriously difficult sector of the media to reach, ran 6.14 minutes of features.

Both Bristol *Evening Post* and *Swindon Advertiser* assigned dedicated journalists to cover the Great Reading Adventure as part of general reporting on the Brunel 200 year, leading to wide-ranging local attention and support. This also proved to be a valuable learning experience for the journalists concerned. In September 2006 Radio Bristol received a prestigious Silver Gillard award in the Radio Promotion category for its coverage of Brunel 200, including the Great Reading Adventure.

On launch-day an *Evening Post* editorial said:

*Around the World in Eighty Days is a tremendous adventure story that everyone can enjoy. Like Brunel, Jules Verne was a man who saw amazing potential in science and engineering. And like Brunel, his imagination seemed to know no bounds.... We do hope you all get a copy of the specially-adapted version of the book. And we hope that you thoroughly enjoy it – whether you're eight or 80.*



Phileas and Passepartout outside the Curzon Cinema, Clevedon, North Somerset.



Passepartout handing out books to commuters travelling by First Great Western to Bristol (Neil Phillips).

On 9 January, the first day of its serialisation of the children’s adaptation of the book, the *Bath Chronicle* editorial read:

*[This] is an initiative which not only encourages young and old to indulge their imaginations in a feast of fine writing but also celebrates the achievement of that 19th century wizard Brunel. Both [Brunel and Verne] developed ideas that outstripped the limited minds of those around them. They set new standards, challenged conventional thoughts and their creations have more than stood the test of time. We urge you to find some time to share in a mass literary experience. And we should all ponder on just what might be achieved when energy, vision and dedication are fused together.*

The value of this coverage was substantial. Table 3 provides details:

**Table 3 Value of Media Coverage**

Total Advertising value equivalent	£256,771
<b>Total circulation of 241 articles</b>	<b>5,974,738</b>

Source: Durrants 2006. It should be noted that not all the clips in the *Bristol Evening Post* are included in this analysis. There at least 20 additional articles that could be included.

The project also received coverage in September/ October 2005 when the choice of book was first announced. This included an appearance by Andrew Kelly on the Johnnie Walker drive-time show on BBC Radio Two, which attracted widespread attention.

## Bookshop promotions

With so many books being available for free or for loan during the Great Reading Adventure, it has not always been feasible to establish relationships with bookshops. However, Blackwell on Park Street in Bristol has been supportive of the project in the past and this partnership was developed further in 2006. Coupons printed in the *Bristol Evening Post* could be exchanged for Great Reading Adventure packs in the shop. Coupons were also printed in the *Bath Chronicle* to exchange for packs at Seccession Books in Bath.

Hannah Reich-Levbarg, co-owner and manager of Seccession, said on the launch of the project:

*I think [Around the World in Eighty Days] is a great choice – it is a really good adventure. It is a good bit of quality, fun reading as well as a good way to dip into the classics if you have been meaning to, but not got around to it. It is also a good way to interest children in the classics as well. The ancillary material has been brilliantly produced, written and illustrated, so it is quite a nice package.*

## SOUTH WEST LIBRARIES

Across the South West region, all 15 library authorities played an essential part in the Great Reading Adventure. These were Bath & North East Somerset, Bournemouth, Bristol, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, North Somerset, Plymouth, Poole, Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Swindon, Torbay and Wiltshire.

Although representatives of the library authorities regularly meet to exchange ideas and information as part of Read South West, this was one of the first region-wide projects in which all were actively involved. In total, over 300 libraries participated.

A briefing day was held in Bristol for representatives from the library authorities on 23 November 2005. Areas discussed included the history and context of the novel and its links to regional heritage, developing media partnerships, using the readers' guide and other support material, and evaluation processes. As well as giving librarians a chance to ask questions about the project, the day was important in bringing home a realisation of the wider reach of the Great Reading Adventure as a South West-wide project.

After the meeting, Sharon Kirkpatrick, Senior Manager, Dorset Library Service, said:

*Around the World in Eighty Days is the perfect book to read during Brunel's 200th anniversary. Brunel was an innovative Victorian engineer, designing bridges, railways and steamships, and Jules Verne's famous story of transport and technology combines scientific fantasy with Victorian science fact.*

Each of the authorities was provided with bulk supplies of the full-text and children's editions of the book and the readers' guides for distribution to their branches, as well as posters and postcards for

use in displays. Most also purchased foreign language, large-print, audio and film versions of *Around the World in Eighty Days* to widen access to the project.

Table 4 provides details of loan activity where data is available.

**Table 4 Loans of *Around the World in Eighty Days* January - March 2006**

Authority	Loans of book July-Dec 2005	Loans of book Jan 2006	Loans of book Feb 2006	Loans of book Mar 2006	Other related material
B&NES	30	609	339	250	0
Bournemouth	0	0	0	782	0
Bristol	0	1,057	630	294	1,151
Cornwall	115	1,047	317	139	0
Devon	47	1,085	1,010	1,084	0
Dorset	0	0	0	1,946	0
Gloucester	145	0	0	778	0
N Somerset	3	383	249	153	5
Plymouth	37	0	0	428	46
Poole	3	122	94	35	119
Somerset	25	558	455	532	190
S Gloucester	8	236	188	175	0
Swindon	0	0	0	3,287	0
Torbay	9	69	64	24	0
Wiltshire	282	0	0	4,872	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>704</b>	<b>5,166</b>	<b>3,346</b>	<b>14,779</b>	<b>1,511</b>

This makes the overall loan figure for the main versions of *Around the World in Eighty Days* 23,291, compared with 704 loans in the six months prior to the project starting. This is just over a 3,300 per cent increase, which is similar to the increase for the 2004 project *The Day of the Triffids* (*The Siege* project in 2005 showed an exceptional increase of over 6,300 per cent, which may, in part, be because this was a local author and also because the theme of the project touched upon a generation's personal history). Note that some authorities were unable to provide a per-month break down for their book loans or loan details for the related material that was available. Note too that some authorities gave away – rather than loaned – multiple copies of the books to schools and as part of community initiatives.

Asked what he thought was good about the Great Reading Adventure, Basil Nankivell, a librarian in Bath, said:

*Encouraging debate and interest in reading novels, especially a book that most may have felt familiar with, but may not have actually read! The book-crossing idea was great, and the fact that we could give away free books. The reader guides were really popular with the public!*



Lord Mayor of Bristol, Cllr Peter Abraham reading *All Change* at Bedminster Library (Martin Chainey).

Bristol Library Service purchased 30 large print – one for every branch – and 12 audio editions of *Around the World in Eighty Days* as well as 30 copies of the picture book *All Change* and copies of the Usborne children's edition of *Around the World in Eighty Days*. Every library used *All Change* at special story-times for pre-school children and for visits by local school classes, and nearly 1,200 children joined in the project this way. Copies of *Around the World in Eighty Days* were purchased in French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Hindi, Urdu and Polish along with DVDs of film adaptations of the book – both the classic version starring David Niven and the more recent one starring Jackie Chan.

Cynthia Martin, Assistant Libraries Manager, Bristol Library Service, said:

*The Great Reading Adventure is a big hit with our readers – people really enjoy being part of something big and talking about the books. It's like being part of one really big reading group.*

*Anything that promotes books and reading is good for the library service. It's wonderful to have so many brand new copies of the title – we can really make a splash with them. Staff enjoy it as much as the readers and are enthusiastic to promote it across the counter. Having the title in other formats meant everyone could access the story, and we had copies to take to readers who are not able to visit the library – everyone joined in.*

*We were really pleased with the choice of book. In Brunel's year it was very apt to have a book which was such a positive celebration of Victorian transport engineering, and reflected the spirit of optimism and adventure brought by new ways of travelling. It's also good to have a title that can be read by such a wide age range – the children's version was very successful. Even the smallest children enjoyed joining in stories and activities based on the travel theme.*

*We bought new copies of some other titles by Jules Verne, and some people went on to read those as well.*

*The GRA has built quite a following and our readers are already asking what the next title will be! Over the last few years the number of reading groups we work with has grown, and the GRA is a wonderful opportunity to unite them in reading and talking about the same book.*

*It is a truly inclusive project.*

Not only did the Great Reading Adventure encourage people to make more use of their local libraries for borrowing books, the libraries provided an important focus for events. These included quiz nights, creative workshops, exhibitions, story-telling sessions, talks, reading group discussions, food tasting from around the world and family fun days.

In North Somerset, for example, every branch had an *Around the World in Eighty Days* display, including, at Nailsea, a map of the world updated daily, plotting the heroes' journey. In the library service's work with children, every primary school was sent a newsletter before Christmas explaining the project and its benefits, several Home Educators used the book and the activity pack with their pupils, surplus library copies of the book were donated to schools at the end of the project and Portishead Tourism used the schools' activity pack as the basis for a children's competition they were organising for their Brunel 200 celebrations. Half-term activity for children in libraries included inventing a new form of transport, and a Wallace and Gromit colouring competition. A screening of the David Niven film version of *Around the World in Eighty Days* was shown at the Curzon Cinema in Clevedon, with Phileas and Passepartout arriving by vintage car, and the two characters also visited Bristol International airport where they distributed copies of the book to passengers.

In Cornwall the library service ran 29 Great Reading Adventure events including Phileas Fogg appearing in schools with the Education Library Services mobile library, meetings of writers and readers' groups, half term drama workshops at Hall for Cornwall and a Victorian afternoon tea with readings by suitably-costumed library staff at Helston Housing complex.

Maureen Twose, Reader Development and Outreach Officer, Cornwall Library, said:

*Cornwall thoroughly enjoyed taking part in our first Great Reading Adventure. Readers from 9 to 90 engaged with Cornish libraries, increasing our visitors and book issues. We also developed valuable partnerships and had fun dressing up in hilarious hats!*

*Despite many readers thinking they already knew the story of Around the World in Eighty Days, the book caught imaginations and broke down the barrier of reading stuffy 'classics'. It also crossed generations bringing together schoolchildren and adult learners exploring newly created travel stories. As the Adventure progressed, our beloved Isambard Kingdom Brunel became even more of a local hero.*

*We are all looking forward to taking part in the next reading project: the Small Island Read 2007. It will inspire us to look into local stories of diversity and further promote reading and literacy for one and all.*

Feedback from children who had joined in library activities in Cornwall included the following:

*The launch of the Great Reading Adventure was a great opportunity to meet the people from Around the World in Eighty Days and I had great fun meeting all of them. Entering the postcard competition was brilliant because you could show where Phileas went all over the world. World Book Day was also excellent because the Linked to Learning group were inspired by Around the World in Eighty Days. They wrote stories and they read the stories they wrote and all of them were very interesting.*

*I went to the launch of Around the World in Eighty Days. I enjoyed meeting all the characters and seeing what their clothes were like. Phileas read us some of the book. I took part in a postcard competition to do with somewhere Phileas went on his journey. On World Book Day we went down to Penzance library and had stories read to us by a writing group. They were inspired by Around the World in Eighty Days. I really enjoyed the afternoon and the stories.*

*I took part in Link into Learning writing group. I thought the stories were great because I liked all the characters, especially the cat. The launch of the Great Reading Adventure was fun because I liked all the great costumes. We all entered the postcard competition. I think the whole class enjoyed making the postcards.*

A feedback form from a respondent in Poole said:

*I am a school librarian and we worked with the public library on a [Great Reading Adventure] project. The children liked having their own individual copy of the book to read as a class. Good to promote the public library. The pupils enjoyed researching with computers and books to find information on the places visited in the book. It was a good way to teach research skills. Good to read a whole book not just an extract from a book.*



**Right** Pupils from St Mary's Roman Catholic School visit Falmouth Library in Cornwall. After the readings, they all took part in a circus workshop led by Swamp Circus.

**Far right** Display in Yate library, South Gloucestershire.



## PUBLIC RESPONSE

In previous years, thousands of copies of the book selected for the Great Reading Adventure have been distributed on request to members of the public by post.

This is an expensive process in terms of time and postage costs and so alternative distribution methods were used in 2006 which included exchanging newspaper coupons at selected sites for a reading pack or having copies of the book available to collect at key visitor attractions. Nevertheless, some copies were still sent by post to those in Bristol who were unable to pick copies up in person. Requests were received via the website or in coupons sent to BCDP.

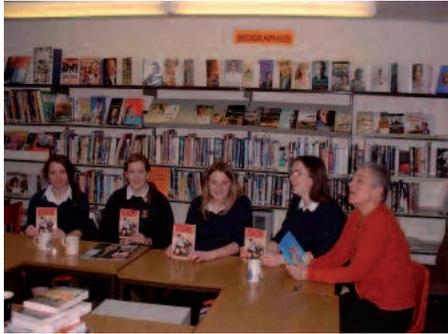
By the Great Reading Adventure's official close, 977 copies of *Around the World in Eighty Days* had been sent out by post as a result of these requests. Of these, where gender is known, the split is roughly 70 per cent female to 30 per cent male. This is comparable to previous Adventures: *The Siege* split was 69:31 and *The Day of the Triffids* was 67:33. For 2006 male readers were targeted by distributing 10,000 copies of the book through *Venue* magazine, which is thought to have a readership profile that is 50 per cent male.

In August a random sample of 325 of those who had received a book by post were sent a questionnaire asking them what they thought about the project. At the time of writing this report, there have been 120 replies, a response rate of around 34 per cent.

Nearly all the questionnaires were completed fully with few questions left unanswered. Of those who replied, around 32 per cent had first found out about the project from Bristol *Evening Post*, 31 per cent from local radio or television, 13 per cent from a display in their local library and 3 per cent from *Venue* magazine. The rest had learned



Pupil from Hannah More Primary School, Bristol (Neil Phillips).



**Top** Librarian Elaine Davis with some of Clyst Vale Community College's year 11 Book Club discussing the book in Devon.

**Above** Detective Fix at Swindon station (Neil Phillips)

about it from the on-street posters, banners, word of mouth, the national press and the Internet.

Comments on the book and the project included:

*First read as [a] child, enjoyed repeating the experience.*

*I love the stories of the different lives and countries.*

*First class. The book had been thoroughly researched and gave excellent detail of various countries and culture.*

*Most intriguing reading, held my concentration and couldn't wait to get to the end to see if all turned out well.*

*I hope this project of Great Reading can continue yearly. A wonderful idea.*

*Never considered reading Jules Verne before but loved the book and intend to read more. Informative and funny.*

*Excellent – really enjoyed it and inspired me to read a book I wouldn't normally choose.*

*A good read – seen the film, preferred the book! Had me laughing out loud – always good.*

*Very good read – took it out to India where it went down very well for its good English.*

*Very good on the whole, easy to read, kept your interest, just a little dated and slightly sexist....*

Further feedback was gathered from postcards distributed via libraries. Comments here included:

*A delightful read. I was carried along by Mr Fogg and his companions on their epic journey. I never doubted they would arrive at the Reform Club on time. Although a happy outcome, I could have stayed with the group for further adventures.*

*I really enjoyed this book. Once I'd got used to the style, I found it impossible to stop reading. The Great Reading Adventure is a fantastic idea as I would never normally have read this book. It's also nice to know a lot of other people are reading it too. Thank you!*

*I thought it was a very good read full of excitement, fear for them and always waiting for the next chapter to see where they were going. Well written and a surprise at the end. What more could you want. Everyone knows the film, but the book brought it alive for our Book Group and myself. Well chosen.*

*I read this book as a child and thought it thrilling to know about the world and travel. As a fifty something the book still inspires dreams of travel despite the fact that I have visited some of the places described in the book! It is still a 'page-turner' and the tension builds throughout. Very enjoyable to read it again.*

*Never read it as a child – traditionally a boy's book – but I enjoyed it and am passing it on to my nephews along with readers' guide. A good choice for Brunel's 200th year and for encouraging younger readers. Brunel is a real inspiration/ hero.*

*Had it not been for the Great Reading Adventure, I would never have considered reading Around the World... However, I did and feel all the better for doing so. Around the World in Eighty Days is somewhat of a classic and probably an interesting cog in the whole sci-fi/ fantasy scene.*

Feedback on the book and project was also received from those who reported finding copies of the book as part of the book-crossing initiative. Books were initially released at railway stations, airports, tourist buses and bus depots, hotels, service stations, ferries, tourist attractions here and abroad, and through 60 Chinese takeaways in Plymouth. Copies reached mainland Europe, North and South America, the Far East, Australia and New Zealand. Among the comments received were the following:

*I discovered the 'grown-up' copy of Around the World in Eighty Days... in Mo's Chinese Takeaway in Hyde Park, Plymouth... I'm so glad it was left there: on a Sunday train journey to attend a course, the time was taken up very expertly by Verne's wit, characters and pace. I read several titles of his as a teen, such as From the Earth to the Moon, Journey to the Centre of the Earth and even the less-fêted Master of the World and Around the Moon. It was just bad luck that I never got around to "80 days", so I am grateful to this reading initiative for at last giving me the chance – and getting me back into the habit of regarding books as fun, rather than chores to be completed.*

*This email is to let you know that [a copy] reached Puerto Vallarta in Mexico on 22nd Jan 2006 via Frankfurt on the 21st. On the flight on the way over, the video system on the plane didn't work so I was very glad to have it. I have passed it on to a man from Calgary so hopefully you will hear from it there.*

*My son Jack aged nine and I have picked up one of your reading books... in our local Chinese Take Away located in Derriford, Plymouth, Devon. We are reading two or four pages every other day or so depending upon homework and available time in the evenings. We are also having fun with the pronunciation of the name Passepartout, our French is not very good. So far we have read through to the start of the first boat journey. Thank you for the opportunity of reading this book. What a great idea, we are really enjoying this read. We will set the book free when we have finished.*

*I have just found Jules Verne Around the World In Eighty Days... in the May Fong, Tamerton Foliot, Plymouth, Devon. It looks that I am the first to find it. I will read it and set it free as you wish. It is always a book that I have wanted to read after Michael Palin's adventures but would never had bought it, or gone to a library to read it. The use of Wallace and Gromit on the front cover really made me look at it. I am very interested in this project and if you could send me more info about it I would love to get that.*

Using the ACORN classification system, it has been possible to ascertain the socio-economic backgrounds of the majority of those who requested a copy of the book to be sent by post in addition to those who exchanged coupons at Blackwell in Bristol. This is based upon a postcode analysis that identifies particular household types. Table 5 provides details of the Bristol analysis based on 1,340 entries.

**Table 5: ACORN postcode analysis of requests for Bristol**

Category of household	Percentage of requests received 2006	Percentage of Bristol population as a whole	Percentage of requests received 2005	Percentage of requests received 2004
1: Wealthy Achievers – wealthy executives, affluent greys, flourishing families	23.4	5.9	20.5	20.7
2: Urban Prosperity – prosperous professionals, educated urbanites, aspiring singles	23.0	24	13.4	13.0
3: Comfortably Off – starting out, secure families, settled suburbia, prudent pensioners	29.1	23.6	30.6	33.9
4: Moderate Means – Asian communities, post industrial families, blue collar roots	15.0	21.3	21.5	20.5
5: Hard Pressed – struggling families, burdened singles, high rise hardship, inner city adversity	9.5	25.1	13.9	11.6
6: Unclassified*				0.3

Source: amh/BCDP Unclassifiable entries were excluded in 2005 and 2006.

Note the figures presented in column 2 are an average of the combined data collected from Blackwell and via the requests for posted copies. There were some wide discrepancies in the socio-economic categories for each distribution method. For example, 35.1 per cent of those who collected copies from the bookshop were categorised as Urban Prosperity compared with only 10.9 per cent of those who requested a copy to be sent by post. This is probably an indication of the type of people who would normally be in the Park Street area of Bristol and able to go into Blackwell. Looking at the table as a whole the project is under representative of the hard-pressed people in the city and over representative of the wealthy achievers. More outreach work seems to be needed to engage those from the poorer sectors who may be less interested in reading at the moment and therefore need greater encouragement to join in.

All groups were represented in the age analysis of respondents to the questionnaire, where information was known. The greatest concentration of requests came from those aged 36-45, compared with 65-75 in 2005. Table 6 provides details.

**Table 6: Age of questionnaire respondents**

Age group	2006	2005	2004	2003*
Under 10	2.4	0.0	0.9	2.2
10-14	3.3	1.3	10.0	2.2
15-18	0.8	0.0	2.8	1.4
19-25	3.3	0.9	4.0	0.7
26-35	13.9	4.8	13.5	9.3
36-45	25.5	13.2	11.5	13.7
46-55	19.7	15.1	19.5	23.0
56-65	15.6	20.0	16.0	19.4
65-75	9.0	27.0	14.0	28.1
Over 75	6.5	17.7	7.8	-

Source: BCDP

\*Note in 2003, the oldest category given in the questionnaire was 'Over 65'.

These figures only refer to individual readers of *Around the World in Eighty Days* and do not include the thousands of younger people who participated in the project through schools, colleges and libraries.

## SUPPORT MATERIAL FOR READERS OF AROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHTY DAYS

As with previous Great Reading Adventures, an illustrated readers' guide was produced as part of the project's support material, providing background information on the author and the historical context of the book.

This was distributed to accompany 40,000 of the 50,000 copies of the full-text editions. Comments received on the guide by supporters of the project who were shown proof copies in October 2005 included:

*Very good. They reflect the continuing quality of design and print for the Great Reading Adventure. They have captured that sense of the innocence, or imperial naivety of Victorian travel really well.*

*I think they're wonderful – just the right blend of classic, modern and quirky.*

Of those who returned a questionnaire, around 91 per cent had used the guide (an increase over the previous two projects). Comments on the readability and value of the guide included:

*Excellent – really sets the scene and explains things well.*

*Made me think differently.*

*Enhanced my reading enjoyment and provided more information.*

*Very informative guide. Wonderful to read about past transport of the trains and other forms of travel.*

*Beautifully presented and very informative. Fascinating and the choice of archive images was great.*

*A good companion to set the book into context of the period.*

*I thought it gave me a lot of information on Brunel.*

*It was interesting to read about the author and how this book related to other work.*

*Interesting information and context for the story, eg. the information about Thomas Cook.*

*Very informative, especially as I've moved into the area recently and didn't know much about Brunel.*

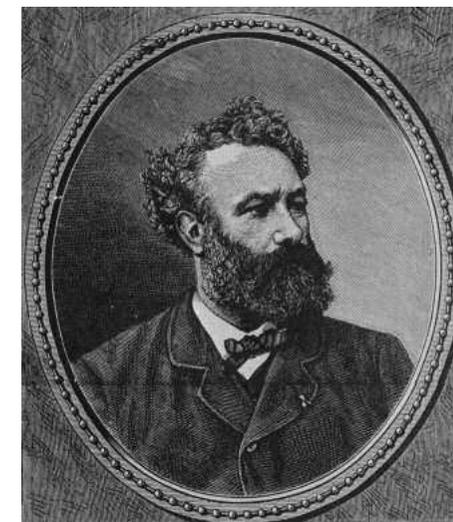
*Thought it was interesting with some facts that I hadn't associated with the book and the era.*

One person wrote to criticise the legibility of the guide as follows:

*I'm sure there was lots of interesting info in the adult readers' guide but the size of the font was much too small and when put over a dark-coloured background was almost impossible to read. Are adults so difficult to attract that lots of colour is imperative? At least make the colour lighter for those of us visually challenged.*

In response to this comment (received after the project ended) it should be noted that the guide was made available online on the project website in both PDF and Microsoft Word format, which could be downloaded and adapted as needed to meet individual visibility needs. Both the Word version and the website pages were compatible with the Royal National Institute for the Blinds' JAWS speech output system. The availability of this accessible format will be made more apparent in 2007.

The project website also included further background information on the author and historical context, as well as news of events that were taking place as part of the Great Reading Adventure. Table 7 provides details of website visits.



Portrait of Jules Verne used in the support material.

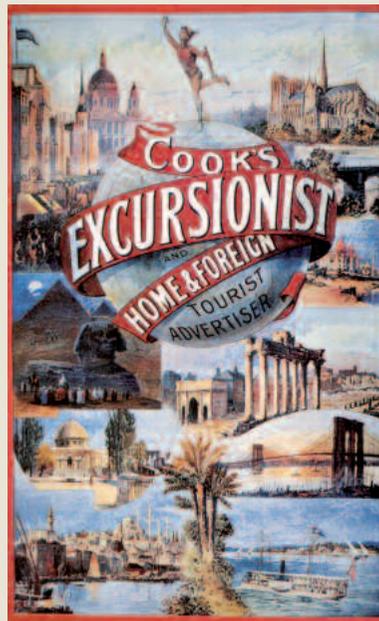
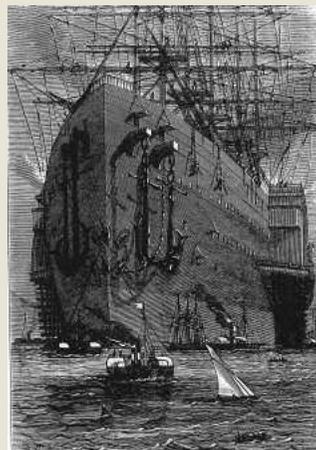
**Table 7: Website visits**

		Average visit length 2006	Visits 2005	Average visit length 2005	Visits 2004	Average visit length 2004
January	7,438	8.16 mins	6,355	7.44 mins	4,564	5.51 mins
February	4,475	7.49 mins	6,387	6.30 mins	3,797	3.57 mins
March	3,468	9.41 mins	5,298	7.54 mins	2,338	7.05 mins
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,381</b>		<b>18,040</b>		<b>10,699</b>	

Source: E3 Media. The average visit length shows a significant increase on previous years, although the total number of visits has fallen, perhaps because people may have gone to the Brunel 200 website instead.

**Right** Cover of Cook's *Excursionist* used as an illustration in the readers' guide (Thomas Cook Archives).

**Below** Brunel's *Great Eastern* as depicted in Verne's *The Floating City*.



Of those who returned a questionnaire, 40.7 per cent had visited the website. This was three times higher than the response received from the questionnaire in 2005. This increase might be attributable to the fact that this time most of the questionnaires were sent via email – in previous years all questionnaires had been sent out by standard post as hard copies to recipients of the book, thereby capturing some of those without direct internet access.

Comments on the website included:

*I used it and loved the pictures and very easy to follow.*

*Website was easy to use and very informative. I ordered a copy of the book through it.*

*I signed up on the site, it was innovative and easy to use.*

*Positive impression. I used it to request a copy of the book and later to find out about related events.*

*Fun. My sister could download children's version in Budapest. Saw stage version at Bristol Old Vic and were impressed.*

Of those who expressed an opinion, over 87 per cent said that the support material produced for the project along with the media coverage the project received had enhanced their experience of reading *Around the World in Eighty Days* (there is no direct comparison to be made with previous years' evaluation as the questions were worded differently but in 2005 over 97 per cent say the readers' guide was useful, 67 per cent thought the website was useful and nearly 93 per cent thought joining the project had enhanced their reading experience). A similar percentage thought they had learnt something about the past by participating in the project and 71 per cent thought they had learnt something about Brunel, showing this was an effective 'light-touch' introduction to the engineer's work before the official launch of Brunel 200 in April 2006.

## THE GREAT READING ADVENTURE AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

With its revised version of the classic full-text edition of *Around the World in Eighty Days*, Oxford World's Classics provided an attractively presented book with an eye-catching cover, larger than normal font and a clear layout.

However, it was realised that in spite of these modifications to the standard edition, designed to improve accessibility, the content of the book was still beyond the reading levels of Keystage 1 and most Keystage 2 pupils, as well as adults who were reluctant or emergent readers. Therefore a specially adapted children's version of the novel was written and produced. This condensed the plot into six 1000-word chapters, each ending on a cliffhanger, which, in addition to being printed in book-form were used for the serialisations that ran in the local media. Each chapter was illustrated by a newly-commissioned picture by University of the West of England graduate James de la Rue and, in the book-form, included snippets of background information and puzzles. The adaptation was designed to be read by the individual reader but also to be used within classroom and other group educational activities.

Comments received on the book from children and teachers included:

*Used simplified version and general knowledge book as the basis for a long stretch of work with emerging readers. Excellent.*

*The puzzles were good. They were interesting. They were fun to do.*

*As a teacher I have found this book very useful. It has been challenging for the learners but not too difficult. The layout makes it easier for the students to follow the text.*

*The pace of the book was a good incentive to read on. My learners enjoyed the games at the end of the chapters. We will be doing more with the Jules Verne theme next term.*

*It was very good. I learnt about geography and it was fun. I learnt a bit of history too.*

*It was an interesting book. It wasn't too difficult to read. The layout is very good. The questions and puzzles at the end of each chapter are useful.*

*They enjoyed following the journey. We plotted progress on a world map, designed our own passport with visas, had weekly telegrams in the school newsletter from Phileas Fogg.*

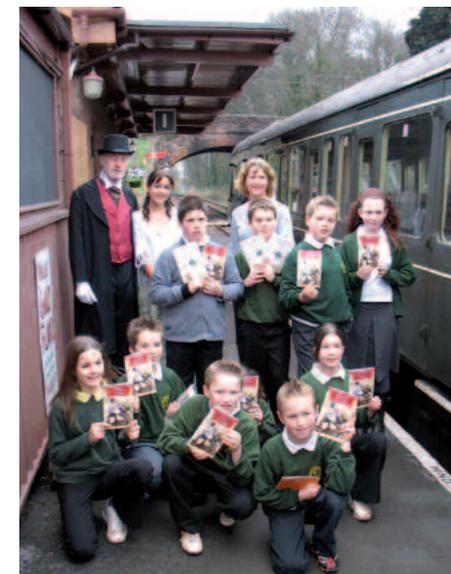
*I thought *Around the World in Eighty Days* was interesting, especially the Victorian travel. I read it with my mum, and she enjoyed it too. I liked doing the puzzles at the end of the chapters. I would recommend this book.*

*My 10 year old daughter enjoyed this story. We read it together. She liked the puzzles at the end of each chapter. It was nice to read a slightly different story from her usual choice. Very manageable for her age group.*

*Really loved the children's version of *Around the World* – inspired more able readers to read the classic version.*

*I thought the puzzles were very good and I could not understand some of the words so the dictionary came in useful. At the start of the chapters the illustrations were brilliant. If I had to give it a mark out of ten I would give it nine.*

As with the readers' guide, there were a couple of adverse comments about the size of font used in the book. A Word version was available to download from the website but this facility might have been made



Pupils from Bishops Lydeard Primary School at Bishops Lydeard station on the West Somerset Railway.

more widely known by referring to it in clear print on the inside cover of the printed version.

Further background material and activities were available in the *Around the World in Eighty Days* activity pack, which was distributed to schools in Bristol. The pack was designed to enable young and emergent readers to read around the book and expand their learning experience by way of quizzes, fact sheets, chapter summaries and probing questions that encouraged discussion. The pack was produced as a high quality printed publication and folder and included many images that were specially sourced, as well as further illustrations provided by James de la Rue. The pack could also be downloaded as a PDF from the Great Reading Adventure website.



James de la Rue at Avonmouth library.

Education activity in Bristol was promoted and managed as part of the remit of the Brunel 200 Education Co-ordinator. In total, 65 Bristol schools and colleges opted to take part in the project and they received between them 1,520 full-text and 10,000 children's versions of *Around the World in Eighty Days*, along with most of BCDP's stock of *All Change*. Schools commented on how successful the choice of book had been for this year's Great Reading Adventure. They liked the cross-curricular scope of the book, which linked in well across geography, history, PHSE and science, in addition to its literacy value. The richness of themes resulted in the generation of a breadth of learning activities both within BCDP-provided workshops and developed by schools themselves. Teachers also felt that the Great Reading Adventure was a good introduction to learning about the Victorians and prepared the pupils for learning about Brunel and his achievements.

Feedback from teachers who had been involved in classroom activities linked to the project included the following:

*Learning support classes loved the accessible abridged versions, puzzles were great, acted as a 'springboard' into looking at non-fiction about Victorians etc; with older students we've looked at extracts from the classic version to explore Verne's use of language*

*We used this project during Enrichment Week for the pupils and it was very successful. Pupils enjoyed the books and as a follow on with other subjects, eg. science, and used this to do a project on bridges. The pupils built a bridge made of pasta in the Science Lab. Many thanks for your support.*

In Bristol three local artists, Claire Williamson, Fiona Hamilton and Toby Hulse, ran between them a total of 40 educational workshops in schools and other centres of learning as part of the Great Reading Adventure project. Claire's workshops involved poetry, prose and drama, Fiona's focused on facilitating creative writing, drama and

visual art, and Toby's were primarily based on prose and performance.

All the workshops were provided free of charge and were tailored to the needs of each participating group using information provided in advance by the hosts. The majority of the outreach workshops took place in primary schools. Among those taking part were Elmfield School for the Deaf, Woodstock Special School and The Belgrave School for Dyslexia, as well as special needs students at City of Bristol College and the Youth Education Service. Three workshops took place in libraries with an additional library workshop being led by James de la Rue.

Outline notes from the workshop programme by the artists include the following:

*Sefton Park Junior School, 11 January 2006: Introductory workshop, exploring the globe and how the characters circumnavigated. 'Speed theatre' through the book, leaving the end as a surprise. Performance poems looking at favourite parts of the book. Children keen to join in with activities. Teacher commented that they were unusually well engaged for a sustained period of time and that they clearly enjoyed the workshop.*

*SS Peter & Paul 12 January 2006: A workshop on plot tension and suspense in stories. We looked at the 'beats' – the peaks and troughs of excitement in *Around the World*. Then we formed a sample plot based on a time and a goal. The class wrote wonderful story plans deciding on something their character would achieve in a set time. We discussed pace and how each part of the story needs to be told with conviction, leaving the reader to anticipate the next instalment. I was very impressed with the work in progress at this school. Their story plans were amazing.*

*Youth Education Service 26 January 2006: Due to the special nature of this client group (very low reading and writing ability), we thought laterally about the book talking about the theme of special places. Inspired by WB Yeats 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' and Pablo Neruda's 'Poet's Invitation', we wrote about special places. A booklet was created and distributed among YES members.*

*St Ursula's 1 February 2006: A lot of fun was had introducing the characters and dressing up. The maturity of the group led to some great discussion about the Victorians, aided by a Brunel workshop they had had previously from Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. A really lovely afternoon.*

*Badminton School 9 March 2006: A 'speed theatre' workshop with a wonderful group of girls, who went on to write performance poems in groups about their favourite parts of the story and then present them to one another. A true sense of understanding and management of the book content into their own words. The groups gained performance poetry skills.*

As an example of the quality of work produced through the workshop activity, the following are from a series of country profile poems created during what has been described as 'a very rich morning' at Embleton School on 8 February.

### **Egypt**

Lots of sailing boats  
 White sails gliding down the  
     River Nile  
 Pyramids like prisms reflecting  
     sun and shadows  
 An ancient Egypt:  
 where they prayed to the cat, bowed heads, open arms to  
     the goddess  
 while lumpy camels tremble through the heat haze.



Children showing their artwork in a storytime session in Somerset.

### **America**

A country of horses, skyscrapers  
and herds of cows.

Cowboys in their leather boots  
and black hats.

Native American Indians with  
coloured feathers against  
a rusty land, whilst fighting  
for freedom.

### **France**

The Eiffel tower looking  
round Paris

Four legs planted in a coffee  
lovers country

Skies sliding down the body  
of the Alps,

The scent of garlic rising in  
the air.

### **Japan**

Volcanic islands steaming up  
with heat.

Silky kimonos, tiny footsteps,  
sumo wrestlers.

Four thousand islands like  
sandcastles

dotted in the water.

Silent temples catch our  
memories like cameras.

Claire Williamson said of the project:

*I thought that Around the World in Eighty Days was a brilliant book to choose. I particularly enjoyed reading it myself with a genuine sense of wonder. This was infectious to facilitating workshops that highlighted not just the adventure, but also a sense of time, history and geography. There were endless permutations for fabulous workshops and studies. I thought the short-version of the book was particularly good, retaining a sense of adventure in quite a complicated story.*

In addition to the workshops, the Bristol Library Service hosted three puppet-show performances linked to the project entitled *Mr Brown's Pig* along with six performances of the Captain Barnacle puppet show that followed the voyages around the world of this popular local character. Approximately 25 children attended each show, with ages ranging from four to 12. All attendees received a free copy of the children's version of the book. Libraries Coordinator Janet Randall reported that the picture book *All Change* was very popular with the under five age group, and that library staff found it easy to adapt to the project's overall transport theme. Other libraries in the South West region ran activities for young people as has been outlined earlier in this report.

Bristol Old Vic ran some Playdays experiences in conjunction with the stage adaptation of *Around the World in Eighty Days* performed in the Old Vic Studio. Comments from those who attended these sessions included the following:

*The workshop was brilliant. Having enjoyed reading the book some of the class were able to attend the play and it was brilliant for them to meet the director/playwright. It was also great training for me.*

*We went to see Around the World in Eighty Days at Bristol Old Vic. Excellent entertainment. Appealed to all ages. Interesting reflection back on Victorian age and the lessons for today!*

*I liked it because it kept us going at all times and we were never bored.*

*I loved it because it boosted my confidence!*

*The sessions were successful in helping pupils discover the way in which a story is adapted for the stage and how writers and directors can dramatise the impossible. Teachers commented favourably on the impression made on pupils by the production itself and how this had stimulated further learning in school.*

Toby Hulse who adapted and directed the Bristol Old Vic production, in addition to leading workshops, said:

*I thought that Around the World in Eighty Days was an inspired choice for the Great Reading Adventure in Brunel's bicentennial year. It picked up on what I felt were the major themes being explored by the Brunel celebrations – technological achievements and advances of the Victorians, the power of the human imagination and creative spirit, the daring to imagine the impossible. As an adaptor and director the book presented fantastic practical, technical and artistic challenges, which inspired in me a very Brunel-ian spirit of adventure and daring. From the evidence of the performances I attended it was a delight to be working on a project that appealed genuinely to such a wide cross section of Bristol's community. I feel that this was only possible because the book had been chosen for The Great Reading Adventure, and given such a high profile across the city.*

Schools in Swindon and across Wiltshire who booked Sixth Sense Theatre Company's touring production *Toad's Great Western Railway Adventure* were given copies of both the full-text and children's editions of the book along with the readers' guide. The play, with ingenious sets and a new musical score, was inspired by characters from *The Wind In The Willows* and showed the mischievous Mr Toad stealing a steam train and running riot through the railways of yesteryear.



Pupils from Branksome Heath Middle School, Dorset. They read the story in class and then the Literacy Officer from Poole Library, over a period of six weeks, met with the pupils at the school to look at the different countries visited by Phileas Fogg.

Benedict Eccles, Artistic Director of Sixth Sense said:

*The Great Reading Adventure presented Sixth Sense Theatre Company and its audience with a unique opportunity to work strategically across our region in order to promote literacy development.*

*Our touring production to over 90 primary schools and arts centres shared the Great Reading Adventure's aims: by adding Around The World in Eighty Days to our adaptation from The Wind in the Willows, we were able to offer thousands of children and their teachers a broad arts and education experience.*

He said that feedback had been strong and provided the following examples of comments received:

*Very good – adults and children enjoyed the story and humour.*

*Entertaining, lively, kept children's focus.*

*Super choice of subject at just the right level to maintain interest of all children.*

Children enjoying a Victorian fun day at Dorset County Museum in a joint venture with Dorset libraries.



*Wonderful. Very professional. Exciting and stimulating for the children.*

*Great fun. Really good. Whole school and staff loved it.*

*GREAT ENTERTAINMENT! Good opportunity for further work in a variety of curriculum areas mainly Literacy/PSHE.*

*We have used many of the ideas and have added some of our own. We have got over half a term's work out of it.*

Another example of the kind of educational activity that forms part of the Great Reading Adventure project is the reading group session for ten men that took place at Dorchester Prison in Dorset on 7 March. This was led by Jeanine Beale, Assistant-in-Charge at Dorchester Prison Library, and Marion Patterson, Extended Learning Co-ordinator at Dorchester Prison, who both hoped that the session would provide

a good opportunity for men who do not usually visit or use the library to come along, enjoy a book and take part in a reading group. The format was casual. The men were encouraged to follow the pages of the children's adaptation of the book while Jeanine and Marion took turns reading the story out loud, interspersed with lively discussion at the end of each chapter. An additional learning pack was produced by Jeanine and Marion containing puzzles, word searches and key words, which was completed by the men during the session, to encourage word recognition and additional reading and writing skills. As the finishing touch to the morning, the men were invited to try some international foods from around the world, selected from some of the countries Phileas Fogg visited on his journey. Both Jeanine and Marion considered the morning to have been a great success and, judging by the many positive comments received, so did the men. These included:

*Being here this morning was very good. It was a good group to work with and the place was quiet and you can get to concentrate. I like some of the food. It is a very good experience. I would like to be here whenever it is available.*

*I had beautiful morning. Something different like reading book and making conversation about story.*

*I like the group. Was very good and cool doing the group interacting with each other with the questions and the food. Thank you.*

*This was a lovely group activity. We learnt a lot about the world and travelling. We tried different foods. I would like to do something similar again.*

*This is a first time I have been involved in this and I love every minute of it. Also I like being part of the group. If I get a chance to, I would like to come again.*

*[Jeanine and Marion] are both very lively and made the reading interesting and intensified the book. Was happy to do this.*

## BUDGET

Table 8 provides details of the expenditure and income for the 2006 Great Reading Adventure (some of these costs represent in-kind support by BCDP and its partners rather than cash payments). In comparison the 2004 and 2005 projects, both of which were Bristol-only, totalled £65,000 and £70,638, respectively.

**Table 8: Great Reading Adventure budget 2006**

<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>2006</b>
Management and evaluation	15,000
Design and publicity material	2,400
Launch event	3,500
Website	4,000
Books and readers' guides	43,650
Education packs	4,998
Workshops	15,000
Postage and telephone	4,467
Travel	1,000
Evaluation	5,000
Training	1,000
<b>Total expenditure and income</b>	<b>£100,015</b>

Note that in 2006 the estimated media value of the project was an additional £257,771.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the challenges in working across the whole of the South West is that this is a disparate region, covering a large geographic area. There are therefore few opportunities for inclusive projects that are accessible to people from all walks of life and all locations. Building on the success of previous Great Reading Adventures which have brought diverse communities together across Bristol, the 2006 South West Great Reading Adventure and the wider Brunel 200 programme provided the region with an effective way of working together in a mass-participation project.

The 2006 Great Reading Adventure received funding and support in kind from Aardman Animations, Arts Council England South West, Blackwell, Bristol City Council, Business West, Heritage Lottery Fund, the National Lottery/ Millennium Fund, Oxford World's Classics, Seccession Books and the library services of the South West. The main media partners were BBC Radio Bristol, BBC Points West, [bbc.co.uk/bristol](http://bbc.co.uk/bristol), the Bath Chronicle, Bristol *Evening Post* and Press Ltd, the *Swindon Advertiser* and *Venue* magazine. All supporters and partners were keen to be involved in a high-quality project that was of benefit to a wide sector of the community through the encouragement of reading, civic participation and pride, new creativity and an interest in history.

At the project's close, Nick Capaldi, Chief Executive of Arts Council England South West, said:



Phileas and Aouda at Minehead Library, Somerset.

*Jules Verne's magnificent Around the World in Eighty Days captured marvellously the spirit, adventure and enterprise of the Great Reading Adventure. Reading opens up whole new worlds of knowledge, creativity and imagination. Never has it been more important to promote these qualities in a world assaulted on all sides by the superficial and mediocre. The impact and reach of the Great Reading Adventure, bringing enjoyment to thousands of people across Bristol and the South West, represents a scale of ambition and achievement that Brunel himself would have applauded.*

Adrian Tinniswood, Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund's South West committee, commented:

*For me, the Great Reading Adventure's biggest achievement is the way it has introduced new audiences to their heritage – not just in Bristol, but throughout the South West.*

Anna Vines of Blackwell, Park Street, Bristol said:

*Blackwell thinks that the Great Reading Adventure is a fantastic idea. It is great that the Reading Adventure gets people reading and discussing books, and we love getting behind initiatives like it. Having people collecting the book from our shop was an added bonus – it makes people who don't know who we are or what we do aware of us, it increases footfall into the shop and also people who came to collect their book also bought other books as well. Blackwell enjoyed taking part in the Great Reading Adventure and look forward to 2007.*

Judith Luna, Editor, Oxford World's Classics, Oxford University Press, wrote:

*We were very pleased to be joining Brunel 200 in this project. Many publishers had watched with admiration Bristol's work in getting the whole city reading over the past three years. We fully supported this massive project and enjoyed the two months of reading pleasure and learning. We were delighted that it proved to be such a great success.*

Mark Waldron, editor of the *Swindon Advertiser*, said:

*The Swindon Advertiser was delighted to be involved in this year's Great Reading Adventure. As part of the project we gave away 560 copies of *Around the World in Eighty days* and 500 copies of the special children's version. These were snapped up by our readers within days of being offered which demonstrated how popular the scheme was.*

*To further support the adventure, over one week the Advertiser devoted two pages a day in the paper to serialise the story and included quizzes for our younger readers to take part in. These eye-catching spreads were helped by the illustrations supplied to us.*

*As a local newspaper we take a great interest in any initiatives designed to help improve the education of local people of all ages. If by taking part in this project we have opened up more people to the delights of getting stuck in to a great book, then our involvement would have certainly served its purpose. I would certainly look forward to taking part again next year.*

The key recommendations following the 2005 Great Reading Adventure were:

- Working more closely with Bristol Libraries' literacy initiatives and its targeted projects involving young people.
- Considering announcing the name of the chosen book in advance of the launch event, to generate interest from the start.
- Not producing promotional postcards.
- Having a more effective booking scheme for the schools' workshops.
- Making more use of day schools at the University of Bristol's Lifelong Learning department, rather than focusing on talks and films.
- Reviewing the project's overall objectives to ensure they are strategic and measureable.

Of these, working with Bristol Libraries' literacy initiatives, announcing the chosen book in advance of the launch event and reviewing the project's objectives were achieved in 2006. The other recommendations need further consideration, but it is intended that they will all be implemented in 2007.

The key recommendations from the 2006 Great Reading Adventure are:

- Carrying out data collection for evaluation purposes before the conclusion of the project and ensuring that all relevant partners have appropriate collection procedures in place from the start. This will need training of staff involved as well as easier methods of regular data collection.

Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Bristol at Hotwells Primary (Martin Chainey).





**Above** Bristol Old Vic's stage adaptation of *Around the World in Eighty Days* (Mark Simmons).

**Right** Phileas, Aouda, Fix and Passepartout at Penzance Library, Cornwall.

- Showing greater persistence in obtaining essential information in a timely manner from participating sites in order to ensure consistent delivery project-wide.
- Highlighting the availability of more visually accessible versions of the readers' guide and other specially produced material via the website.
- Having more reading guides available.
- Looking for ways to involve more people from hard-pressed areas of the city, while continuing to engage those groups who have already shown their commitment to the project in previous years.

The 2006 Great Reading Adventure was Britain's biggest mass-reading project to date. In 2007 the project will become bigger still as it combines with the existing Liverpool Reads initiative and partners in Glasgow and Hull for a shared reading of Andrea Levy's *Small Island*.

Evaluation of the 2006 project has demonstrated that the Great Reading Adventure is an initiative that engages a wide range of people in a single book, inspires discussion and debate, encourages more reading, writing and other forms of creativity, enhances social capital through the building of networks across the community, promotes learning about our heritage, and is fun for all those involved.

Some participants occasionally find the choice of book difficult to get into, and a few give up, but most of those initially reluctant readers feel impelled to carry on and are rewarded by having a revelatory reading experience, in terms of the type of book they might enjoy and the knowledge they gain of the past. The project is also an opportunity for people to revisit – and reassess – books or authors they might have read before. BCDP is keen to continue the project, funding permitting, beyond 2007 and is already making initial plans for suitable books to read in the future that will inspire and stimulate participants.



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It forms part of the Creative Bristol initiative, which aims to deliver as much of the programme contained in Bristol's bid to be Capital of Culture as possible. The Brunel 200 celebrations were also part of that extensive programme.

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