

For immediate release

## 48 million English residents have free 24x7 access to reference 'heaven'

*"If you were to pay to subscribe to half these books it would run, believe me, to thousands of pounds. Using them for nothing at home is a marvellous bargain, and is an excellent example of libraries bringing learning and scholarship to us all, just as they were always meant to."*

- The Oldie Magazine, June 2006

48 million people in England can explore the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* - and other award-winning Oxford Online resources - free of charge at anytime and from anywhere, simply by joining their local public library!

144 out of 149 public library authorities across England – from Cornwall to Northumberland, and from Herefordshire to Norfolk – have just signed up to a new 4-year National Agreement between Oxford University Press (OUP) and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Partnership (MLA). This means that a range of prestigious resources including the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, *Oxford Reference Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, and *Oxford Art Online* continue to be available to public library members in England.

The new 4-year agreement follows the success of the original ground-breaking National Agreement between OUP and the MLA in 2006, which has allowed English residents free access to Oxford's award-winning online resources for the past two years.

*"It's hard to imagine a better excuse for the recent rises in the council tax... Most English libraries have joined, but if yours hasn't, or you live in Scotland, I would start lobbying now."*

- The Independent, April 2006

This new agreement will now allow residents in England continued free access until 31 March 2012. It forms part of 'Reference Online', a programme created by the MLA to streamline the procurement process for online resources by negotiating agreements on behalf of English public libraries.

As well as access at their local branch, members of subscribing libraries can log on to the resources from any computer at any time using their library card number. In addition to the core reference package, many public libraries have also signed up for further Oxford Online products such as the brand-new *Who's Who*, *Encyclopedia of Popular Music*, *Oxford Language Dictionaries Online* and *Oxford Islamic Studies Online* resources.

The National Agreement has been met with great enthusiasm from librarians and library users alike, and OUP and the MLA are delighted with feedback received over the last two years.

*"The MLA/OUP deal has had a great impact on our library users,"* says Basil Nankivell, Customer Services Libraries and Information, Bath and North East

Somerset Council. *"Being able to offer excellent online resources for the Google generation has really helped to keep the library's profile high as a place to get quality information."*

Robert Faber, director of the OED and ODNB at OUP said, *"We've had a great response from librarians and readers and are delighted they've chosen to renew the national licence for another four years. Widespread access to top-quality information and scholarship is a central aim for OUP, and we look forward to supporting public librarians as they spread the word about the great online resources now available to readers free of charge, anywhere, any time."*

A key focus of OUP's activities over the past two years has been to work closely with the library authorities, ensuring that library members know that the very best in reference information is available to them 24 hours a day. As well as holding workshops and feedback sessions around the country, OUP – in partnership with the MLA – has sponsored the 'Oxford Online Library Champion Awards' in 2007. The Awards honour outstanding achievement by public libraries in promoting access to online resources such as those from Oxford Online.

**For further information please contact Juliet Evans at OUP on 01865 353911 or email [juliet.evans@oup.com](mailto:juliet.evans@oup.com).**

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

1. Oxford University Press (OUP) is a department of the University of Oxford, and the world's largest university press. It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education in its worldwide publishing. In addition to publishing over 4,600 new books each year and over 180 journals, Oxford is a major provider of online information to libraries and individuals worldwide. [www.oup.com](http://www.oup.com)
2. The MLA Partnership (MLA) is the government's agency for museums, galleries, libraries and archives. It delivers strategic leadership in England and in each of its regions, and it collaborates with partners across the UK. Its research identifies good practice, which is used to promote improvement. It offers advice, support and resources to funding bodies and other groups to incentivise innovation. Its aim is to raise professional standards and champion better services for users and readers of all ages and backgrounds, whether residents or visitors. [www.mla.gov.uk](http://www.mla.gov.uk)
3. The MLA/OUP National Agreement:  
128 English public library authorities have subscribed to the following resources until 31 March 2012:
  - Oxford Dictionary of National Biography ([www.oxforddnb.com](http://www.oxforddnb.com))
  - Oxford English Dictionary Online ([www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com))
  - Oxford Reference Online ([www.oxfordreference.com](http://www.oxfordreference.com))
  - Grove Music Online (access via [www.oxfordmusiconline.com](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com))
  - Grove Art Online (access via [www.oxfordartonline.com](http://www.oxfordartonline.com))
4. 16 library authorities have subscribed to the following resources until 31 March 2012:
  - Oxford Dictionary of National Biography ([www.oxforddnb.com](http://www.oxforddnb.com))
  - Oxford English Dictionary Online ([www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com))
  - Oxford Reference Online ([www.oxfordreference.com](http://www.oxfordreference.com))

5. A list of the libraries participating in the offer, and the resources they are subscribing to, can be found attached. The list is also available online at: [www.oxfordonline.com/library](http://www.oxfordonline.com/library)
6. Further feedback from librarians and library members:

*CILIP Newsletter, June 2006: "Click to free reference 'heaven'"*

Katharine Spackman, County Reference and Information Librarian,  
Oxfordshire Libraries:

*"We're delighted that Oxfordshire Libraries members are such impressive users of OUP titles online, and that's largely due to our staff who are so fired up by this wide world of information and promoting it enthusiastically. The excitement and interest when we introduce people to the titles is huge, with the typical reaction being, 'I'm going to tell my friends about this!' It's a great way to make our information service more accessible and convenient for people and we've had lots of excellent customer comments."*

Richard Primmer, Acting Head of Culture, East Riding of Yorkshire Council:  
*"We are delighted that our inclusion this partnership between the MLA and OUP has been used so enthusiastically by East Riding library customers. Once again we are able to demonstrate that the library service in the East Riding is about more than just borrowing books."*

Robert Dixon, member of Northumberland Libraries:

*"Not everyone can get to a library, for a variety of reasons, so it is wonderful that members of Northumberland Libraries like myself can now use Oxford online services from home, free of charge, as a way of increasing our knowledge."*