Dear Lord Puttnam

Re: Copyright Infringement and Public Access to the Internet via Institutions

We fully support the right of copyright holders to enjoy a fair and balanced legislative framework that encourages the UK digital economy to thrive in an increasingly competitive international market place. As leaders of major educational, research and cultural organisations and agencies in the United Kingdom, we are committed to ensuring that citizens are able to exploit lawfully what the internet offers, in order to transform the nation's economic, educational and cultural opportunities. We are a major source of creativity and economic development; our resources are used by students, the public and business to support innovation and entrepreneurialism. We also work to improve digital literacy, support online creativity, and promote the governmental agenda of digital inclusion.

We are writing to you to express our concern over the current proposals to combat copyright infringement in the Digital Economy Bill, which we believe if passed as originally drafted will impact on digital services offered to citizens by our institutions, and therefore on the creative output of the nation.

We support the need to tackle online copyright infringement. But it is not clear what the status of public intermediaries would be in relation to the terms of the Bill. Because public institutions often provide internet access to hundreds or thousands of individual users, the complexity of our position in relation to copyright infringements must be taken into consideration. If this is not done, a public institution such as a library, school or university's internet connection as a whole could be jeopardised, resulting in loss of internet access to large sections of the public, particularly the 15 million citizens without an internet connection at home.

Our institutions already take rigorous practical measures to ensure that copyright infringement is minimised. These measures are highly effective and have been recognised as such by major rights holders. The Bill risks imposing significant financial and administrative burdens on institutions relating to compliance, reporting and dealing with complaints – all of which may not have the desired effect of identifying persistently infringing individuals. We do not consider that the Bill as proposed adequately specifies reasonable obligations for institutions which provide a critical role in access to information and knowledge. We therefore hope institution's existing practice and the Bill's requirements can be more closely aligned.

Yours sincerely

Dr Paul Ayris – Director of University of London Library Services and UCL Copyright Officer

Toby Bainton – Secretary, Society of College, National and University Libraries

Helen Bingham – The Strategic Health Authority Library Leads (SHALL) on behalf of NHS England Libraries

Dame Lynne Brindley – Chief Executive, British Library

Dr Mark Brown – Chair, Research Libraries UK

Susan Carragher – Director of Adult Learning and Libraries, Essex County Council

Nicola Dandridge – Chief Executive of Universities UK

Roy Clare CBE – Chief Executive, Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA)

Gary Clawson – Chief Executive, North West Learning Grid

Stephen Clee – Chief Executive Officer, DatPresenter

Prof William Dutton – Professor of Internet Studies, Oxford Internet Institute

Caroline Ellis – Head of Special Collections, London Metropolitan University

Lorraine Estelle – Chief Executive Officer, JISC Collections

Jane Finnis – Director, Culture24

Rob Froud OBE – Head of Cultural Service, Somerset County Council

Elaine Fulton – Director, Scottish Library and Information Council and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) in Scotland

Hans Geleijnse – President, Association of European Research Libraries

Andrew Green – Librarian and Chief Executive Officer, National Library of Wales

Aline Hayes – Director of Information Systems and Technology, Sheffield Hallam University

Vice Principal Professor Jeff Haywood – Chief Information Officer & Librarian to the University of Edinburgh

Sandra Hickman – Deputy Principal, Swansea College

Chris Holland – Hon Vice President, the British and Irish Association of Law Librarians

Mike Houlihan – Director General, National Museum Wales

Linda Houston – Director, Library and Information Services Council Northern Ireland

Dr Michael Jubb – Director, Research Information Network

Dr Stuart D Lee – Director, Oxford University Computing Services

Diane Lees – Director-General, Imperial War Museum

Dr Jim McGreevy – Director of Collections & Interpretation, National Museums Northern Ireland

Tim Marshall – Chief Executive, JANET (UK)

Martin Molloy OBE – Strategic Director, Cultural and Community Services, Derbyshire County Council

Amanda Nevill – Director, British Film Institute

Edward Oyston – Director of Learning and Information Services, Sheffield Hallam University

Mel Philipson – Chair Education Network Managers Group, National Educational Network

Dr Malcolm Read OBE – Executive Secretary, Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC)

Dr Christine Sexton – Chair, University and Colleges Information Systems Association (UCISA)

Barbara Stratton – Secretary, Libraries and Archives Copyright Alliance

Helen Thomas – Central Services Librarian, University of Wales Institute

Peter Tinson – Executive Secretary, Universities and Colleges Information Systems Association (UCISA)

Martyn Wade – National Librarian and Chief Executive, National Library of Scotland

Christopher West – Director of Library & Information Services, Swansea University

Dr Matthew Woollard – Associate Director, United Kingdom Data Archive