WORLDREADER RECEIVES GRANT TO PILOT E-READING PROGRAM IN AFRICA’S LIBRARIES

Worldreader receives grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to discover if e-readers and local books in Africa’s libraries help eradicate illiteracy in the developing world

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA – October 16th, 2013 – Worldreader (worldreader.org), the nonprofit aiming to end illiteracy by providing digital books to children and families throughout the developing world, today announced a new grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to test what could be a long-term sustainable way to give access to digital books to millions of people in sub-Saharan Africa.

The pilot will provide eight libraries in Kenya with 250 e-readers fully equipped with protective cases providing their library patrons with instantaneous access to an immediate supply of 50,000 fiction, non-fiction, genre, reference books, storybooks, plus a complete set of Kenyan digital textbooks suitable for patrons of all ages. Worldreader’s previous work to reduce the cost and complexity of using e-readers makes the device a compelling, cost-effective and efficient alternative to distributing paper-based books in sub-Saharan Africa. E-readers, with their long battery life, decreasing price, and ability to download digital books in less than 60 seconds using 3G technology, have proven effective in Worldreader’s programs and are already used by 12,000 children, teachers, and their families in Worldreader’s school and library programs in Kenya, Ghana, Uganda, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, South Africa and Tanzania.

“Worldreader’s programs have a history of driving improvements in reading skills among children,” said Richard Atuti, director at Kenya National Library Service, “We anticipate seeing similar trends with library users.” The pilot will roll out near the Kisumu region in early 2014 and will last one year. The initial phase will target eight libraries in diverse settings, and include librarians and a large population of patrons. The targeted patrons will range from children to adults, with an anticipated concentration on the young adult age group. Worldreader will conduct outreach activities to encourage broad participation from the target group and will be gender inclusive.

According to Worldreader’s President and Co-Founder, David Risher, “More than 176 million adults are unable to read and write, and over 200 million children never have a book of their own. We’re thrilled to partner with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation so we can derive the first-ever data on the effects of e-readers in libraries with the end goal of scaling up across the developing world.”

Following the pilot phase, a project plan and budget will be developed by Worldreader for expansion of the program to a number of additional libraries.

For more information on Worldreader, please visit www.worldreader.org.

About Worldreader
Worldreader is a US- and European not-for-profit organization that aims to put a library of digital books within the hands of children and families across the planet. Founded in 2009 by
former Microsoft and Amazon executive David Risher, and former Marketing Director at Barcelona’s ESADE Business School Colin McElwee, Worldreader works with device manufacturers, local and international publishers, governments, education officials, and local communities to bring books to all.

Media Relations

For US:
Susan Moody, Director of Communications, Worldreader, susan@worldreader.org, +1(646) 853 1721

For Europe/Africa:
Nadja Borovac, Senior Marketing Manager, Worldreader, nadja@worldreader.org, +(34) 618 399 102