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PlanetRead gets US award for promoting literacy using films

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Washington: PlanetRead, a Mumbai-based Indian non-profit, has won US Library of Congress's Literacy Award for its innovative programme to promote literacy skills, primarily through subtitles for popular Bollywood film songs-based television programmes.

The \$50,000 International Prize won by PlanetRead is part of a programme to help support organizations working to alleviate the problems of illiteracy and aliteracy (a lack of interest in reading) both in the United States and worldwide.

"SLS (Same Language Subtitling) was developed in India based on solid research," the citation noted.

"It is simple to implement and easy to replicate, reaching 200 million low-literacy TV viewers in India. SLS is notable as a highly motivational approach for getting low-literacy adults to read, particularly where access to books is difficult," it said.

According to PlanetRead website, SLS for literacy was first conceived and researched in 1996 at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. Then PlanetRead pioneered the concept of SLS for mass literacy, by suggesting its implementation on the immensely popular Bollywood film songs on TV in India.

PlanetRead has the simple vision of a reading planet - a planet where everyone can read and affordable reading opportunities in both his/her native or other

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ly used SLS on several song-based TV programmes on roadcaster, says its main target group is the early-literates, ate" but who cannot read, for example, the headlines of a

entre for the Book created in 1977 to "stimulate public interest in books and reading, administers the awards sponsored by philanthropist David M. Rubenstein.

The awards seek to reward those organizations that have been doing exemplary, innovative and easily replicable work over a sustained period of time and to encourage new groups, organizations and individuals to become involved.

"Literacy opens doors to life's great opportunities," said Rubenstein, a co-founder of The Carlyle Group and a major donor to the Library of Congress National Book Festival.

(Arun Kumar can be contacted at arun.kumar@ians.in)

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