



Joint statement on accessibility and ebooks

Advances in technology have helped not only to open up new markets for publishers, but also to offer vast new opportunities for published works to become more accessible to a wider variety of people.

The growing availability of ebooks provides a wonderful opportunity for people with print impairment – whether blind or partially sighted, dyslexic, or without sufficient dexterity to handle printed materials – to become customers for mainstream published products. Until now, special versions such as large print or braille have been required, often at great cost and after considerable delay. There will soon be no good reason for people with print impairment to be excluded from the mainstream market.

Following practical guidelines (www.editeur.org/109/Enabling-Technologies-Framework) publishers can work towards ensuring that all their ebooks have easily added features that assist accessibility (like enhanced navigation); and equally that their ebooks do not have accessibility features unnecessarily disabled. In this respect, the UK Publishers Association, working with the Society of Authors and the Association of Authors' Agents, has led the way in encouraging its members not to disable text to speech capabilities unless they harbour concerns about having been granted the appropriate rights. This has already had a remarkable effect in the proportion of bestselling ebooks which have text to speech available to those users who find this feature useful (see the PA recommendation at www.publishers.org.uk/accessibility).

However, publishers can achieve only so much on their own. The mechanisms by which an ebook is made accessible involve all the actors in the supply chain from author to reader; no single actor in that chain can solve the challenge of accessibility by itself. Publishers, ebook device manufacturers, platform developers, ebook wholesalers and retailers, and of course consumers themselves all have their part to play.

Publishers are committed to working with the advocacy organisations working for people with print impairment to ensure that our common ambition is achieved – making mainstream ebooks accessible to those with print impairments. We are therefore looking to work together:

- **with the developers of ebook devices and platforms** to ensure that these provide the accessibility features which serve the needs of the widest possible market;
- **with the actors in the supply chain for ebooks** – digital asset distributors, wholesalers, retailers, and library services – to ensure that they are aware of the needs of print impaired readers, and that the supply chain itself is accessible to them;
- **with people with print impairment** to ensure that they know which assistive technologies are most appropriate to their needs and to help them to identify ebooks that are accessible to them;
- **with learning providers and libraries** to support them in their obligations to provide learning resources in accessible formats.

Ebooks should enable all readers, using whatever assistive technology they may require, to access new books as they are published in ebook form and at no additional cost. Significant progress has already been made by some forward-looking companies that considered accessibility in the design of their products and services.

What next?

We are hoping to engage fully with every part of the supply chain. Starting points can be found at the following links:

- **Working in Partnership** – we are always keen to foster good accessibility practice and ensure the different parts of the supply chain maintain accessibility opportunities. Please contact accessibility@editeur.org to find out how we can facilitate good practice.
- **Publisher training** – accessibility is now embedded in the new National Occupational Standards [<http://www.creativeskillset.org>]
- **Understanding accessibility** - see Enabling Technologies Framework [<http://www.editeur.org/109/Enabling-Technologies-Framework>], subscribe to the PLS Accessibility Newsletter [<http://bit.ly/bGcx89>], see RNIB publisher support pages [www.rnib.org.uk/publisheradvice] and see JISC TechDis research on ebook platform accessibility [<http://bit.ly/HTxrJO>].
- **Accessible ebook readers** – see RNIB recommendations [<http://bit.ly/qj8wio>].

Please join us in supporting this Statement

Contact one of the following founder representatives:

Advocacy representatives

Dyslexia Action (<http://dyslexiaaction.org.uk>) There are some 10 million children in the UK school system. On average more than one child in each class – 400,000 in the UK – is severely dyslexic. Text to speech support can transform reading confidence making avid readers from reluctant readers. Contact: Kevin Geeson [KGeeson@dyslexiaaction.org.uk]

JISC TechDis (<http://www.jisctechdis.ac.uk>) supports post-16 learning providers across the UK in meeting their legal obligations to provide resources in accessible format. Working with publishers, library services and teacher training programmes JISC TechDis seeks to maximise the benefits of accessible ebooks. Contact: Alistair McNaught [alistair@techdis.ac.uk]

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB - <http://www.rnib.org.uk>) the leading charity offering information, support and advice to almost two million people with sight loss. Every day 100 people in the UK start losing their sight, and we are working to make sure every person can continue to enjoy reading. Contact: Helen.Gunesequera [helen.gunesequera@rnib.org.uk]

Publisher representatives

EDiTEUR (<http://www.editeur.org>) has been integrally involved in delivering the WIPO-funded Enabling Technologies Framework. With key expertise in standards for the publishing industry, EDiTEUR is well placed to support an accessible supply chain. Contact: Mark Bide [mark@editeur.org]

The Publishers Association (<http://www.publishers.org.uk>) recognises that accessibility is key to widening the audience for publishers. But publishers alone cannot guarantee an accessible reading experience without support from other parts of the supply chain – hence the importance of a joint statement. Contact: Nicola Swann [nswann@publishers.org.uk]

The supporters of this Joint Statement applaud these advances, and encourage others to ensure that everyone can enjoy the widest possible choice of publications through whatever medium works best for them.

Our Supporters

Authors

Association of Authors' Agents - <http://agentsassoc.co.uk>

The Society of Authors - <http://www.societyofauthors.org>

Publishers

International Publishers Association - <http://www.internationalpublishers.org>

Publishers Licensing Society - <http://www.pls.org.uk>

Print impairment support

Macular Society - <http://www.macularsociety.org>

Right to Read Alliance - http://www.rnib.org.uk/getinvolved/campaign/accesstoinformation/righttoread/Pages/r2r_alliance.aspx