

# Newsletter

## February 2017

### Editor's Note

Dear friends,

Reading is a means of language acquisition, communication, and of sharing information. The library plays a pivotal role in this journey of acquiring knowledge. Assistive Technology is a boon to all with print-disability i.e. who cannot effectively read print because of a visual, physical, perceptual, developmental, cognitive, or learning disability".

This edition is dedicated to ideas on how accessible libraries can be created thus ensuring that all citizens, young and old have an equal opportunity in their quest for learning.

I also want to bring to your notice that henceforth all the editions of Connect Special will be available online at <http://info.connectspecial.com/>

So Happy Reading & sharing!!

Regards

Bhavna Botta



### Preface

#### Access to information

##### Article 21 of Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities explicitly states about Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas on an equal basis with others and through all forms of communication of their choice, as defined in article 2 of the present Convention, including by:

- (a) Providing information intended for the general public to persons with disabilities in accessible formats and technologies appropriate to different kinds of disabilities in a timely manner and without additional cost;
- (b) Accepting and facilitating the use of sign languages, Braille, augmentative and alternative communication, and all other accessible means, modes and formats of communication of their choice by persons with disabilities in official interactions;
- (c) Urging private entities that provide services to the general public, including through the Internet, to provide information and services in accessible and usable formats for persons with disabilities;
- (d) Encouraging the mass media, including providers of information through the Internet, to make their services accessible to persons with disabilities;
- (e) Recognizing and promoting the use of sign languages.

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## **From the Heart**

**Knock, knock ,your book is here ...**

**Dr .Namita Jacob**

### **Tell us the need of a library like this**

The Chetana Accessible Early Reading library was created for children whose impairments make it difficult to access typically available story books. India has a rich tradition of oral storytelling, but being captured by books - filled with illustrations; stories rich with personalities, places, and all kinds of exciting events and things - this is what pulls little kids to wanting to read.

On home visits, I realized that children with disabilities, regardless of what strata of society they come from, rarely had or enjoyed books - books they could leaf through themselves, books they recognized, a favorite story book. Pre readers become emerging readers as they pore over the same large bright colored story books again and again and that early excitement and love of stories is what gets children to persevere and become successful early readers

### **How is this different from other libraries?**

While libraries offer audio books and braille books, there are no services that provide for the range of children with disabilities BEFORE they achieve literacy.

### **Please tell us about your journey**

Over the years, Chetana pioneered many efforts to raise awareness of this need - we wrote and published our own story book; we

partnered with Tulika Publishers and made five of their titles accessible. We tested accessible story books in homes, in schools and across disabilities and wrote articles, conducted research and ran workshops on the importance of having many sensory elements in books. We discovered again and again, that touch particularly was an incredibly powerful tool of engagement and understanding for ALL children - not just those with vision impairment.

### **How do you select a book and can you adapt any story book?**

Creating a book that is accessible is an expensive and time consuming task. . Adapting a book so that a child may access it requires knowledge, ingenuity and a lot of thinking and planning.

The Marrakesh Treaty permits us to adapt a book without specific permission of the author or publisher in order to make it accessible to individuals with disabilities. To our way of thinking, this places a very big responsibility on us to be respectful of the author, illustrator and publisher and all that they have put into creating a wonderful story. We receive book recommendations from kids and from parents of children with disabilities.

### **What is the process of making them accessible?**

We work steadily with our volunteers to create more books every month, and while the work involved is not easy, the feedback from the children, their parents and teachers tells us it is certainly worth it. Our engagement with

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independent artists, authors and publishing houses, Visual Arts colleges has been richly rewarding and at least in Chennai, from the car seat guys of Royapettah to the roadside tailor in Mylapore, the sticker shop folk and the paper street in Parry's.... they all know a lot about disability thanks to this work!

A good book draws a child into another world, or into an experience and exploration that is rich and exciting. We try to have a balance of Indian and foreign authors and try to ensure that we have Tamil and English books

## **How long does it take to make a book accessible ?**

Once a recommendation or a suggestion comes we either purchase or are given at least one copy of the original book. The possibilities of each book are explored and a team of people meet to discuss how we may make the book accessible across various access issues. Sometimes we make several copies of the same book, each one accommodating some specific difficulty.

We may simplify the story to make it accessible to a child with intellectual impairment or remove elements of the images to make it visible to child with low vision. With each book, a group comprising of people from different fields of disability, education, writing and even law, talk through each change, examining its purpose and considering how it may be done most effectively.

## **It's exciting news that there is a door delivery service available for this interesting library**

Although we began this journey thinking of the child, we were gently reminded by a father, of

the important role these books play in allowing parents with disability read to their children. It is our dream to build a rich resource of early books for children with disabilities and finally one day, to encourage all public libraries to create the same, so any child (or adult) may be able to have the pleasure of reading a little kid's book.

We therefore decided to explore the idea of a library. Our partner Little Sparks helps us with deliveries and maintaining the membership list. Our members are thrilled to be handed their little colored bags with their books of the month and parents are as excited as their children as the knock on the door each month brings new surprises.



*Dr. Namita Jacob is special education consultant and an expert in the field of multiple disabilities with visual impairment . She is the director of Chetana Charitable Trust, Chennai.*

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### A Point To Note

#### **Inclusive Libraries – Right to knowledge and self-learning**

**-Shankar Subbiah**

Libraries are the most important point of access or gateway for knowledge acquisition, research, self-development and opportunities for student community. Though Internet serves the requirement, Libraries provide a guided tour towards knowledge in an organized way, quick to know, enabled by the services of experienced and trained librarians saving time and efforts especially with no distractions or diversification chances from the focal point. ,

Today, gathering information and knowledge acquisition has become a phenomenon in studies, employment, leisure, why not in all walks of life from childhood. Persons with disabilities have special requirements in this process.

Access to libraries provide the first step but that is not to be contended with. Providing a ramp, wheelchair facility for persons with difficulties in mobility, or a guided pathway for those with visual impairment, easy to remember, accessible resource organization for children and others with intellectual and learning difficulties, can be the next step towards making libraries inclusive.

The vast resource of knowledge in the form of books, periodicals, newspapers, journals, reference study materials, self educative and preparatory materials of the knowledge warehouse, along with collections stored in digital formats accessible by

computers, and networking is also required to be accessible to progress further. Finally, the social attitude in the library services offered bridges the last mile connectivity to the inclusive setup.

When a person is enabled, his family is. When a family is enabled, the community is, When a community is enabled, the country is empowered goes the famous Tamil saying. The resource pools, Libraries especially those accessible to public, in educational institutions and organizations shall not alone serve the right to knowledge acquisition of the individual, in turn provides equal opportunities in enabling, contributing to the growth of our nation

. Inclusive libraries create a larger impact on the education process of children with disabilities towards achieving their goals in life and life leading experiences.

#### ***Who does inclusion benefit?***

Accessible and inclusive libraries not only address the information and knowledge requirements of persons with print disabilities (low vision, total blindness, deaf blind condition, reading difficulties, severe motor difficulties), but also address the needs of those with communication, intellectual and developmental disabilities. Another considerable group of audience is the elderly persons, pregnant women and those with health conditions.

#### ***Steps towards Inclusive Library***

Establishing an inclusive library or converting



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an existing setup for inclusion is a simple three step approach to accessibility for all.

Physical Accessibility ,Intellectual Accessibility & Social Accessibility

### Physical Accessibility

A library may have informative resources in all formats and be accessible to through modern assistive methods but an easy physical access ensures their usage, continued knowledge acquisition and purpose of setting up. In an inclusive library, physical access meant, any person irrespective of their physical, sensory or cognitive abilities shall be able to access and use all sections of the library independently, safely and comfortably.

While discussing about physical access into a library, there are various components of the structural infrastructure that need to be looked at.

Inclusiveness in structure shall not only benefit people with physical impairment, but also enables people with sensory challenges like vision and cognitive disabilities. The steps are simple and can be considered are

an **accessible entrance** and easy to approach pathway for persons with mobility, visual impairments and elderly persons

**easy to negotiate path within library sections** without hitting against obstacles, book racks or other immovable resources for persons with visual impairments

**written instructions or information, easy to understand signage, helpdesk** wherever required for persons with communication disabilities

**easy differentiation by color, organization of book stacks** for persons with cognitive and learning difficulties

**accessible furniture and adaptive toilets** for persons with mobility, visual impairments, health conditions, short stature and elderly persons

**security and emergency alarms in accessible mode** like visual lights, vibrator for persons with communication, audio for visual disabilities, easy to identify alarming displays for people with cognitive and learning difficulties

**faster exit or a guided mode approach for emergency evacuation** from the building infrastructure

### Information Accessibility

Access to resources like printed books, newspapers, magazines, periodicals, journals, audio / video books in the form of MP3, MP4 Digital format books or as DAISY or e-formatted text books in the library becomes inclusive, then everyone can access information in a way they could easily understand. Including accessible resources, adaptations in existing reading process accomplishes the above objectives, like.

**Magnification** – for persons with print disabilities and elderly require a magnified view of reading contents, and for few a color contrast mode too.

Tools like hand held magnifiers, CCTV magnifiers, and magnification utilities in computers / tablets for digital formats support it.

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**Screen Reader Support** – Access to digital format information in the form of e-Books, soft copy of books as Texts, Documents, PDF and Internet for the visually challenged can be accomplished by Screen Reading software installed in computers. The screen reading software uses TTS (Text To Speech) technology like NVDA, JAWS, Supernova converts every text, menu, commands visual in the computer screen to audio to hear and act. Screen readers for Android and iOS Mobile devices are part of Accessibility settings. They serve for English, Indian and other language content in the world.

**Scanning and Reading** – With amount of knowledge available in printed format, smaller sized texts, colored contents, to convert them into digital format becomes an additional task and time taking effort. A scanning and reading assistive technology scans the printed book, Optically Recognize the Characters (OCR) and convert into audio for those with print disabilities. The scanning and reading technology is available as independent reading tools as well as software installed in computers equipped with a scanner.

**Braille, Large Print and Tactile Resources** – Braille is a Six Dot character sensory reading method for persons with visual impairments. Any text or graphical representation of reading material can be converted into Braille. And for those with low vision and reading difficulties, and large print versions can serve the purpose of information access.

Book and reference materials can be provided either as physical resources like Braille books or in a digital way through **Refreshable Braille Displays** connected with Computers or

independent Braille Readers that can store book contents.

**Tactile graphics** of printed maps, biological representations, other science and mathematical objects of learning support easy to feel, sense, and learn through exploration.

**Alternate Input Devices** – Digital format resources in internet and other network environment require access to computers or mobile devices. An adaptive keyboard, mouse or contact / non-contact switch connected can serve access for persons with mobility impairments.

**Alternate Format Services** – Talking Books in audio formats or DAISY (Digital Accessible Information System) / E-Pub Text are best companions for navigating, repetitive hearing when the knowledge resource is a digital content. Online accessible libraries like Bookshare.org, Suganya Pustakalaya by DAISY forum and Government of India serve as voluminous repositories of such content.

**Accessible Website and Digital Library** – Website and OPAC serve as the gateway to the library for online as well as distant community to know about its resource strength and easy navigation to a particular content required. Websites of the library or the digital library must conform to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 as outlined by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

If any informatory resources are in regional languages then Unicode formatted content is required for reading assistive technology to recognize the font

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**Social Accessibility Services** act as a bridge between the resources and the users. An accessible service and communication setup ensures the goals of inclusive library.

**Etiquettes training** – Librarians play a major role as information service providers as well as sourcing hands in a library. The staff and librarians have to be trained with adequate knowledge on daily life as well as reading access requirements of persons with disabilities, health conditions, children and elderly persons.

**Training on assistive methods and tools** – Training for librarians and service staff enhances the service and time for easy access to resources in an inclusive setup **Special services** - Special services like arranging workshops, programmes on latest technology developments, job alerts, study guidance seminars, reading sessions can be organized with the help of social organizations, films and storytelling activities serve to utilize the resources available in Library and encourage more visits.

**Guided resource visibility** - Guided tours or resource visibility through notice boards, signage displays, and knowledge sessions on the library at the time of their membership as well as updates on new resources, services support the process. Information booklets in accessible formats like Braille, Tactile, and Audio for resources, rules and procedures followed by the library assist persons with print disabilities.

**Going an extra mile** – Existing human resource blended with the modern marketing techniques like Social media (Facebook,

Twitter, Blogs) by publishing their events, activities and making online resources of Government, conducting awareness workshops among the parents, children as well as adults on disabilities irrespective of the demography, other Government departments are add on services to look upon.

### **Conclusion**

Right to Education (RTE) act in India as well as the country signing in United Nations Convention on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), are milestones for education as well as life opportunities for creating an inclusive society. Inclusive Public Libraries and those in educational institutions, organizations can make these milestones achieved in reality. Let the inclusive libraries make all those vast knowledge resources available physical as well as digital to achieve everyone's dream education, enhanced reading and learning experience.



**Shankar Subbiah,**  
 DIRECTOR, AGATE  
 INFOTEK is a much  
 sought after Assistive  
 Technology Consultant

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## Trending now

A **reading pen** can be a helpful tool for a wide range of users, from those with **reading** and learning difficulties (particularly dyslexia) to students and business travelers looking to work more efficiently. Most **reading pens** have a scanning mechanism in place of a **pen tip**.



Read it air magnifier is a portable unit where you simply place your document under the camera, press Enter on your keyboard and a few seconds later, your document is being read aloud to you, in your chosen text size, colour and formatting.

Blind Reader is a device that looks like a smartphone but functions like a text-to-Braille converter. Simply skim it over the paper publication and the surface transforms to Braille that can be easily read. Simple, effective and portable



A page turner helps people with motor difficulty

Transforms your television into a visual aid! Place the ezRead™ directly on top of your reading material to display the magnified image in full color on your television screen!



Tar Heel Reader is a wonderful free source of books for emergent and beginning readers. It is now possible to convert a Tar Heel Reader book into a Pictello story and read it on your iPad, iPhone or iPod touch!

<http://www.assistiveware.com/tar-heel-reader-pictello-converter>



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### Snippets

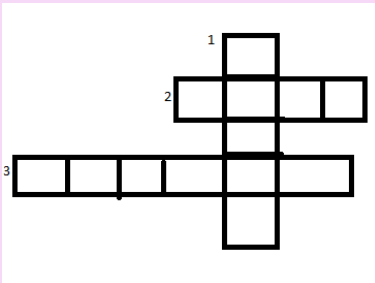
**Bookshare®** is the world's largest accessible online library for people with print disabilities. BookShare India is working to enable access to reading materials of all kinds to print disabled individuals.

**Sugamya Pustakalaya**, India's first and largest collection of accessible books. It is a collaborative effort of several organizations to end the book famine faced by people with print disabilities. Users can access a collection of over 2,30,000 books. It is a facilitating platform for producers of accessible books to people with print disabilities.

**The Inclusive Publishing** promotes publishing processes through which publishers deliver "born accessible" publications that are fully accessible to all readers, including people with print disabilities.

The **Marrakesh VIP Treaty** is a treaty on copyright adopted in Marrakesh, Morocco, on 28 June 2013. The treaty allows for copyright exceptions to facilitate the creation of accessible versions of books and other copyrighted works for visually impaired persons. India ratified the treaty on 24 July 2014 and was the first country to do so.

### Cross connect



- 1.a screen magnifying software
- 2.easily navigate the computer
- 3.an electronic magnifier

### Letter to editor

Dear editor,  
 This first edition of this year is very useful and informative, especially about the inclusive education by the Monfort School is really good and would like to more about it. The news about CAR is also very interesting and will try to check the usability of the Software. May be a small suggestion :is it possible to allot some space for Special Educators to share only about their challenges and solutions that they have adopted in his/her classroom?

regards  
 Raghu

**Editor**-Thank you Raghu, we will be happy to feature this column

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