

SECTION 7 AVAILABILITY OF ACCESSIBLE MATERIALS

Objective 7: To ascertain the current availability of accessible curriculum materials and what needs these are addressed to meet.

Outcome: Better understanding of what materials are available in accessible formats, what these formats are and which pupils are likely to benefit.

Summary

- 1) Although blind and partially sighted pupils have difficulty in obtaining accessible books²², compared to pupils with other impairments this group is relatively well-served by local authority VI and sensory services, by national providers such as RNIB, and through the 110,000 titles from providers listed on Revealweb, the UK catalogue of resources in alternative formats.
- 2) The Braille, large print and audio materials that are available are not suitable for all pupils who are visually impaired: many visually impaired pupils have additional learning or physical impairments and require other formats such as symbolised books or switch-accessible digital resources.
- 3) Pupils with physical impairments who are covered by copyright exemption are not supported either in terms of the formats listed on Revealweb, or by the majority of Revealweb providers. Most suppliers listed on Revealweb only support children with a visual impairment. There is no equivalent of Revealweb for pupils with physical, learning or other literacy difficulties even though substantially more pupils could benefit than those who are visually impaired.
- 4) For pupils who are not covered by copyright exemption (pupils with mild, moderate, severe or specific learning difficulties, hearing impairment, speech and language difficulties, or other issues), there are very few sources, either commercial, government-funded or in the voluntary sector, of accessible resources. A few commercial items do exist but these are more expensive than paper books or accessible versions available for visually impaired students.

²² Where's my book? Tackling the textbook deficit faced by school pupils with sight loss, RNIB

Background

To investigate the availability of learning materials in accessible format, we researched materials available from voluntary organisations such as those listed on Revealweb, those made by local authorities and school, commercial publishers and suppliers, and sources of materials on the internet.

Revealweb

Revealweb (www.Revealweb.org.uk) is an online database that lists over 100,000 titles in alternative formats from 146 suppliers in the UK. Revealweb is intended to be the UK national mechanism by which creators and users of alternative formats can:

- (a) satisfy the legal requirement under the Copyright (Visually Impaired Persons) Act to notify publishers when an accessible copy has been made;
- (b) satisfy the obligation to check to see if an accessible copy exists before creating one;
- (c) share resources and therefore improve service provision and reduce duplication.

Revealweb is the largest source of information about accessible formats in the UK and so is one of the best places to begin when searching for materials.

A brief analysis of the materials available on Revealweb was carried out. We wanted to find out:

- the type of resources and formats available for pupils in schools;
- which children can benefit from these resources.

Of the 146 suppliers listed on Revealweb, 92 offer accessible materials for pupils in education. A wide range of suppliers is listed on Revealweb: national organisations and transcription services such as RNIB; individual schools; transcription services in prisons, etc. Table 7.1 summarises the type of materials offered by the 92 suppliers.

| Type of material | No of sources of accessible formats |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Fiction | 84 |
| Non-fiction | 87 |
| Textbooks | 21 |

Table 7.1: Type of materials available from Revealweb providers

Table 7.2 lists the numbers of suppliers who provide materials for children with different types of impairments. 40 of the 92 (43%) will only supply to children who are visually impaired; 6 state that they will supply to children covered by the 2002 Copyright (Visually Impaired Persons) Act (i.e. visually impaired, physically unable to hold a book or turn the pages or to physically focus or track with their eyes); and the population served by the remaining 46 providers is not always specified,

but most (e.g. the eighteen H.M. Prison transcription services provide Braille, Large Print, Moon and/or raised diagrams) only supply materials for children who are visually impaired.

| Pupils supported | No of sources of accessible formats |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Visually impaired only | 40 (43.5%) |
| No specified group; mostly visually impaired | 46 (50%) |
| Pupils covered by the 2002 Copyright VIP Act: (visually impaired, physically disabled, difficulty visually focusing or tracking) | 6 (6.5%) |

Table 7.2: Children served by Revealweb providers

In terms of the alternative formats available from Revealweb providers, 68% of the providers supply Braille; 61% supply large print, and the majority of the suppliers listed on Revealweb offer formats that are suitable for children with a visual impairment (Table 7.3). Revealweb lists over 100,000 titles: most of these are Braille, large print or audio for blind and partially sighted children.

For example, only people with a visual impairment are eligible to join the RNIB Talking Books service and access the 9,500 titles in Daisy audio.

Out of 92 suppliers, 19 offer digital resources and only three of the 19 suppliers offer electronic files that can be used to create resources for children with physical impairments. There are no providers specifically serving children with physical disabilities even though there are far more children in Scotland who could benefit from digital materials accessible by keyboard, mouse or switches, than who need Braille.

| Accessible formats | No of sources of accessible formats |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Braille | 63 |
| Large print | 56 |
| Moon | 15 |
| Audio tape | 39 |
| Audio CD | 24 |
| Electronic text file | 19 |
| Moon | 15 |
| Daisy audio book | 11 |
| MP3 audio file | 2 |
| Daisy text book | 0 |
| PDF file | 0 |
| HTML file | 0 |
| Word file | 0 |
| Switch accessible formats (e.g. Clicker) | 0 |
| Symbol supported formats | 0 |

Table 7.3: Formats listed by Revealweb providers

Given that Revealweb exists in part to satisfy the requirement in the 2002 Copyright VIP Act for organisations to first check whether accessible formats exist, and to notify the publisher when an accessible copy is made, and that the Act covers children with physical difficulties and visual perceptual problems as well as those with visual impairment, it is disappointing that the majority of resources listed on Revealweb are intended for children with visual impairment only.

There are several reasons why this is likely to be the case. Firstly, Revealweb is operated and managed by RNIB and NLB (who merged in January 2007), and therefore it is not surprising that it focuses on those with a visual impairment. However since it is funded by²³:

- The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).
- Resource, the council of museums, libraries and archives.
- The British Library Co-operation and Partnership Programme.
- The Lloyds TSB Foundation.
- The Ellerman Foundation.
- The National Library for the Blind (NLB).
- The Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB).

we suggest that it should have wider scope beyond visual impairment to include all people covered by the 2002 Copyright VIP Act.

As part of this project we contacted Deborah Ryan, Revealweb manager to ask if the catalogue could be extended to include formats that are designed for children with physical difficulty (Revealweb does accept listings for materials in electronic text or Daisy but these are not accessible for switch users, for example). At the time of writing we understand that Revealweb is willing to accept a wider range of formats and so it is necessary for organisations and agencies who produce digital resources that are designed for children with physical impairments to collaborate and agree on standards and formats that should be used.

It would also be necessary for Revealweb to take active steps to advertise its service beyond the visual impairment world, and for Revealweb to engage with providers of other formats in order to specify the most appropriate formats for their own audience.

Alternatively, similar databases and services should be established to serve other groups of children using other formats.

Interestingly, none of the Scottish local authority Braille or large print transcription services are listed as suppliers on Revealweb. This is because they produce and distribute material for children within their local authority and therefore are not obliged to notify the publisher when an accessible copy is made. However, there is clear potential to improve efficiency and avoid duplication of effort in Scotland by encouraging transcription services to use Revealweb or other mechanism.

²³ <http://www.Revealweb.org.uk/about/funding.htm#content>

Commercial Publishers and Suppliers

Audio books

Commercial audio books are available on CD from many sources such as bookshops and internet retailers such as Amazon.com. Audio books are now also available as downloadable files (e.g. MP3) from suppliers such as Apple iTunes (over 20,000 audio books) or Audible.com (www.audible.co.uk – 11,000 audio books). These audio books can be played on computers, iPods and other MP3 players and mobile phones. The majority of these titles are reading books or novels: few if any are textbooks. By way of example, an audio CD set of Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban costs £35 in a bookshop or around £10 online (in comparison, a blind or partially-sighted pupil could buy the same book in Daisy format on CD from RNIB for £5.99).

eBooks

Electronic downloadable books in Adobe and Microsoft Reader format are now available from some retailers such as WH Smith (<http://ebooks.whsmith.co.uk/>) but the majority of the titles are for adult readers, and most are protected by Digital Rights Management software that prevents them from being accessed by text or screen readers. They are therefore only suitable and accessible for children with physical difficulties and good reading skills. Most titles are reading books or novels; *Sabriel* by Garth Nix, for example, in Adobe PDF, Microsoft Reader or Mobipocket Reader formats costs £10 from the WH Smith eBook online shop.

Electronic texts from publishers

We contacted a number of educational publishers to investigate whether they would be able and willing to provide electronic versions of text books and other materials for use by pupils with additional support needs. Harcourt (Heinemann, Ginn, Rigby and Payne-Galloway), Oxford University Press, and Leckie and Leckie all responded that they would be willing to provide PDF copies of books. RNIB are currently conducting a project with publishers in the UK whereby publishers provide a source text which is then converted into XML, Daisy text and audio format. The project has yet to report, but progress to date suggests that most publishers are amenable to providing digital source texts for conversion into accessible formats for use by children with additional support needs²⁴.

The accessibility of books provided by publishers in PDF is variable (see Section 10). In most cases, PDF files from publishers are unstructured and "untagged" and while they may be reasonably accessible for pupils with moderate reading difficulties and physical impairment, they are often not suitable for those with more severe difficulties because they lack structure, navigation and other features. Untagged PDFs usually require some adaptation and conversion in order to be accessible to these children. However, provision of books in PDF at least avoids the need for staff in schools and other agencies to scan the books into the computer.

²⁴ http://www.pls.org.uk/ngen_public/article.asp?aid=337

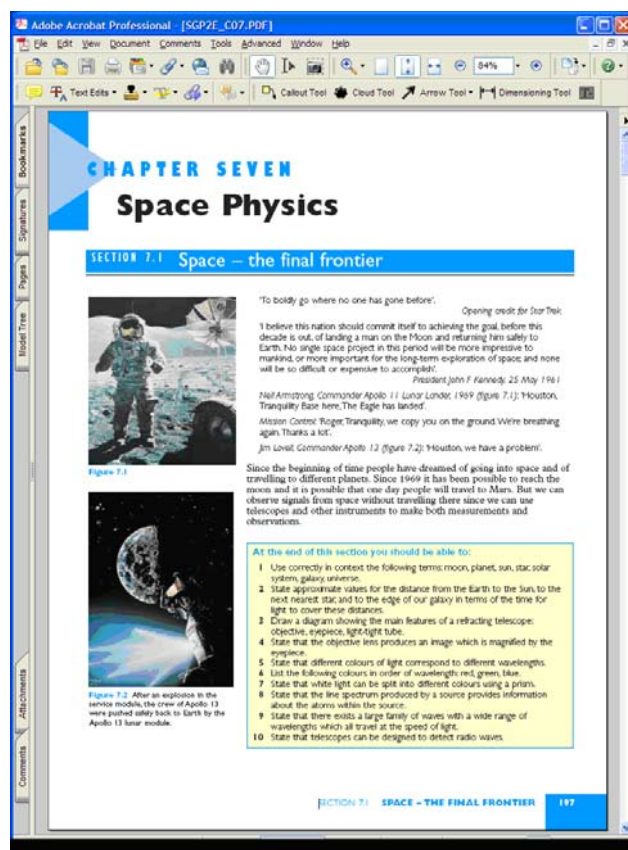


Figure 7.1: PDF page from Physics textbook provided by the publisher

Specialist formats from educational publishers

Several educational publishers do supply materials in digital interactive or audio formats. Very few materials are available and those which do exist are usually much more expensive than the equivalent paper book. There are of course very many resources available only in a digital form, i.e. they do not have a paper equivalent. While many of these are excellent resources, we have only included a few examples because the focus of this project is on accessible versions of paper materials which are in common use in school.

Pupil Activity Software from **Scottish Heinemann Maths**, for example, offers interactive and motivating activities on CD (£50 licence for the Primary 5 CD). However this type of resource is intended to complement the paper textbooks and workbooks and so the activities themselves are not the same as those contained within the textbooks and workbooks.

Oxford Reading Tree Talking Stories are CDs with six ORT stories and accompanying activities (www.oup.com/uk/catalogue/). Pupils can listen to the story and click on the buttons to turn the page. Each CD costs £50 for a single licence (compared to a pack of 6 paper books which costs from £12.50 to £16.) These CDs are suitable for many pupils with reading and learning difficulties, and some with visual and physical difficulties, but they are not accessible to pupils who use switches.



Figure 7.2: ORT Talking Story on CD

Some Oxford Reading Tree stories are also available in **Clicker 5** format from Crick Software (www.cricksoft.com/uk). The text is highlighted as it is read back (with a human voice – Tony Robinson, the actor) ; there are a large number of interactive activities; and the books are accessible to switch users. Each CD costs £50 for 6 stories.

Crick software also publish other resources that run with Clicker, such as **Clicker books** which come with paper books and Clicker versions, and the **Find Out and Write About** series.

The **Start to Finish** Resources from Don Johnston are relatively unusual in that they are readers aimed at older pupils (9-14) who have poor literacy skills, and are provided in paper, audio CD and computer text with audio. The resources are popular with staff and pupils but they are relatively expensive: £45 per title.

Inclusive Technology (<http://www.inclusive.co.uk/>) sell many excellent resources which are fully accessible for children using mouse, touchscreen, keyboard or switch, such as the SwitchIt! And Choose and Tell series.

Widgit Software (www.widgit.co.uk/), a company specialising in software for symbol users, have low cost resource packs with ready-made symbol supported materials to print out.

Local authority services

In Scotland, many local authorities have transcription services for visually impaired pupils and these can be an excellent source of adapted materials. The Edinburgh and Lothians VI service is a good example and this service has now produced 440 large print books and 173 Braille books. Many common textbooks from series such as Oxford Reading Tree, Scottish Heinemann Maths, Nelson's Skills and Maths in Action have been created and digital source texts for these resources exist in Edinburgh.

The other Scottish transcription services in Aberdeenshire, East Renfrewshire, Fife, Glasgow, Highlands, North and South Ayrshire, Shetland, Scottish Borders, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire and The Royal Blind School also have catalogues of materials.

Not all local authorities operate their own transcription services but all have specialist teachers of visually impaired pupils who may create materials and/or source resources from national providers through service level agreements or Revealweb.

RNIB report that there is still a shortfall in provision of accessible learning resources for pupils with sight loss²⁵. Since none of the Scottish transcription services are listed on Revealweb or any other source there is no efficient way for resources to be shared. A recent positive move in this regard is the development of an online database hosted by the Scottish Sensory Centre, listing Braille materials created at Uddingston Grammar VI Unit and Edinburgh. If all transcription services in Scotland supplied listings to this database and undertook to share their digital source files, considerable duplication of effort would be avoided.

It is worth noting that there are **no** local authority transcription services providing accessible materials on this scale for the far larger number of pupils with reading, physical or learning difficulties.

Schools

If pupils need accessible resources which are not available, staff in many schools will create the materials themselves, and sections 6 and 9 of this report give some examples.

We are aware that the Support for Learning Departments in Broughton High School in Edinburgh, Kinross High in Perth and Kinross, Earlston High in Scottish Borders, and no doubt many others make audio recordings of materials for pupils with reading difficulties. But in other schools, this provision is not made due to lack of awareness, skills or resources, and yet these schools will also serve pupils who could benefit. Lack of coordination both at local authority and national levels, and legal restrictions, prevent accessible materials being shared between schools and local authorities and cause duplication of effort (it is likely that the three schools mentioned above have all at some time created recordings of the same material).

Similarly, staff at Stranraer Academy, for example, have been creating digital materials for pupils with physical and reading difficulties for several years. The books are scanned in using Kurzweil 3000 software²⁶ and accessed by pupils on personal laptops or school desktop computers. Stranraer have now created 129 separate resources but the books are not made available to other schools in the local authority, in Scotland or the UK. The Copyright Licensing Agency licence that permits creation of these resources allows distribution to other pupils anywhere in the local authority provided the pupil is covered by the 2002 Copyright VIP Act (see section 12) but there is no mechanism at the present time for such distribution. The local authority are now aware of the issue and are taking steps to encourage cooperation between schools. Legally, the books can only be given to pupils who meet the 2002 copyright dispensation (i.e. who are visually impaired, physically unable to turn the page, or physically unable to focus or track with their eyes); provision to other pupils with additional support needs who might benefit (such as those with language difficulties, some types of dyslexia, English as a second language, etc) can only be undertaken if the school or local authority obtain permission from the rightsholder of every one of the 129 books.

²⁵ Proposal to the Scottish Executive to Establish a National Consortium for the Transcription of Educational Materials in Scotland, RNIB Scotland 2006.

²⁶ Kurzweil 3000, <http://www.sightandsound.co.uk/>, <http://www.kurzweiledu.com/>

The availability of accessible learning resources in schools cannot be determined exactly and this requires further research, but it is clear from the responses to the Books for All questionnaires that schools cannot meet the need for such materials themselves.

SQA Assessment and examination papers

SQA provide downloadable 5-14 assessments in both DOC (Microsoft Word) and PDF from the National Assessments 5-14 web site²⁷. We believe that staff in many schools are not aware that they can modify these downloadable resources – for example, by changing the font size or type, or that children with additional support needs can use the downloaded digital versions in place of paper copies.

National Assessment Bank tests (NABs) are available in PDF from the SQA web site, and also in other formats such as MS Word or Braille on request. Again, we suspect that staff are not aware of these possibilities (SQA report that they have only received 12 requests for adapted NABs in the past three years.)

There is therefore a need to raise awareness of the need, potential and availability of these accessible assessments.

SQA will provide examination question papers in Braille, large print, on coloured paper, with alternative fonts, and from 2007, in PDF on CD. See sections 6 and 9 for more details.

In many respects SQA are leading the way and developing and demonstrating good practice: for example, we believe that SQA are the first examination board to offer digital question papers for pupils with additional support needs. Unlike many organisations, SQA provide 5-14 tests, NABs and examination question papers in accessible formats that are suitable for many different groups of children with additional support needs, not just those who are blind or partially sighted.

²⁷ National Assessments 5-14, <http://www.aifl-na.net/>

Free texts on the internet

There are now many web sites offering free electronic books (eBooks), texts (eTexts) and audio files. Most of these eBooks and eTexts are older literary works that are out of copyright, so they may be freely downloaded and used for and by children with additional support needs.

Project Gutenberg (www.gutenberg.org) is the oldest source of free electronic texts on the Internet and now has over 20,000 books available in plain text, HTML and audio formats. Classic works by authors such as Dickens, Shakespeare and Burns are all available from project Gutenberg. Plain text, HTML and audio are better than nothing but these resources will often require some modification before they are accessible by a pupil with additional support needs. For example, in order to produce a large print copy for a pupil with a visual impairment, it will be necessary to convert the plain text file into a suitable word processor format, change the size of the text, add chapter headings, and then print out the result. Similarly, if a pupil wished to use the source electronic file it is important to add structure (such as chapter and section headings) so that the pupil can find information and navigate around the book.

The **University of Virginia eText library** (<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/ebooks/>) has around 2,100 books in HTML (web), Microsoft Reader and Palm Reader formats. Like Project Gutenberg, these materials are all out of copyright. The books in HTML will require adaptation in order to be made accessible although the Microsoft Reader versions may be suitable for some pupils with visual, reading and physical difficulties (see sections 6, 9 and 10).

Google Book Search (www.google.co.uk/books) offers another tool for searching for texts in a variety of formats – HTML, plain text and PDF - on the internet.

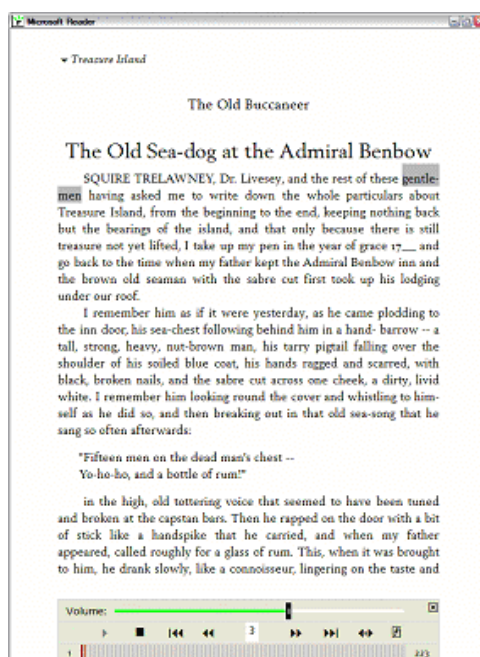


Figure 7.3: Treasure Island, downloaded free from the University of Virginia eBook library

Sample survey of available materials

Having explored the availability of different types of accessible resources from a range of sources, we conducted a survey of the availability of accessible formats for a small number of reading books and textbooks. We used Revealweb, the database of Scottish resources that is currently in development at the Scottish Sensory Centre, the list of books that have been created by the Edinburgh and Lothians VI service, publishers catalogues, and the internet. The resources listed on SSC and by Edinburgh & Lothians are not available yet, but we included them in the search to investigate the existence of material, in the expectation that the SSC database will enable them to become available. There will be many more resources that have been created both legally and illegally in existence in individual schools and homes but it was beyond the scope of this project to find such materials. In addition, copyright or other legal restrictions currently prevents access to most of these resources.

We chose to search for materials that were identified by staff who completed the project questionnaires. In many cases staff did not specify particular textbooks (e.g. "Course material in first and second year History, Geography, Science") and so only a relatively small number of identifiable materials were listed.

Table 7.4 summarises the results. A tick indicates that a book from that series was found in that particular format (not all the books in the Oxford Reading Tree are necessarily available in Braille, for example.)

The majority of the resources identified as required are available in Braille and the next most common type of adapted material are large print. No resources are available in symbol format (although some of these books would not be appropriate given the complexity of the language and subject matter).

This is a very small sample but it suggests that reading books are more likely to be available in some accessible formats and that textbooks are less common. The only accessible copies of textbooks that were found were in Braille and Large Print.

Only one book (as opposed to assessment and examination papers) was available in a digital format. However, we did not approach the publishers in this survey and we do know that some materials are available in PDF.

Accessible formats for children with visual impairments (i.e. Braille, Large Print, Daisy audio) are therefore easier to find, and cheaper, than formats for other groups.

| Resource | Printed Formats | | | | | | Audio Formats | | | | Digital multimedia formats | | | | | | Other | |
|---|-----------------|-------------|----------------|---------------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|----------|-------------|-----|----------------------------|------|------|-----|-----------------|---------|-------|--------------------------------|
| | Different font | Large print | Coloured paper | Simplified language | Braille / Moon | With symbols | Tape | Audio CD | Daisy audio | MP3 | Plain Text, RTF | HTML | Word | PDF | eBook/ e-format | Clicker | | Daisy text |
| Charlie & The Chocolate Factory | | √ | √ | | √ | | √ | √ | √ | | | | | | | | | |
| Stormbreaker | | √ | √ | | √ | | √ | √ | √ | | | | | | | | | |
| Oxford Reading Tree | | √ | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | √ | | |
| Ginn 360 Reading books | | √ | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Scottish Heinemann Maths textbooks | | √ | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 CDs of additional activities |
| Scottish Heinemann Maths workbooks | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| TJ Maths | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Maths in Action | | | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Nelson's Skills | | √ | | | √ | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Spotlight on Science | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | CD for teacher resources |
| To kill a mockingbird | | √ | √ | | √ | | √ | | √ | √ | | | | | | | | |
| Macbeth | | √ | | | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | | | √ | | | |
| 5-14 assessments | √ | √ | √ | | | | | | | | | | √ | √ | | | | |
| NABs | √ | √ | √ | | √ | | | | | | | | √ | √ | | | | |
| SQA examination question papers & past papers | √ | √ | √ | | √ | | | | | | | | | √ | | | | |
| Various novels and reference materials | | √ | | | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | | | √ | | | |

Table 7.4: Availability of resources in accessible formats

Table 7.5 gives further details of the type of formats and sources of a subset, comprising reading books, novels, and textbooks of the materials in Table 7.4.

Again, we see that availability of Braille and Large Print textbooks appears reasonably good, whereas other alternative formats are non-existent. The novels are available in various audio formats as well as in Braille or Large Print.

The two Scottish services would appear to be good sources of material but they do not appear on Revealweb. If all the local authority transcription services in Scotland provided their catalogue lists to Revealweb or the SSC database, and were willing to share the digital intermediate files (historically, and understandably, some services with large catalogues have not been willing to share the products of considerable investment by the local authority with other areas), this would have a significant impact on availability of Braille and Large Print materials in Scotland.

| Charlie & The Chocolate Factory, by Roald Dahl | | | |
|--|--|-------------------------------|---|
| 20 sources found (12 on Revealweb, remainder by internet search) | | | |
| Sources | Format(s) | Users | Cost |
| Calibre | Audio cassette (VI only) | VI only | Free loan |
| NLB | Braille Grade 2 | VI only | Free loan |
| Nottinghamshire Inclusion Support Service | LP: 24pt Arial bold | VI | Charge covers cost of print |
| RNIB Talking Book Service (Digital) | DAISY 2.02 Full audio structured by Chapter | RNIB members (VI) | Free loan, Annual Membership £70 |
| Amazon.co.uk | Audio cassette | Anyone | £9.99 |
| Amazon.co.uk | Audio CD | Anyone | £7.99 |
| www.audible.co.uk | Audio MP3 | Anyone | £8.99 |
| Stormbreaker, by Anthony Horowitz | | | |
| 12 sources, 6 on Revealweb, remainder internet search | | | |
| Calibre | Audio cassette | VI only | Free loan to VI, group & school membership £50 |
| National Library for the Blind | Braille Grade 2 Print 24pt Arial black on cream | VI only | Free loan to members |
| NBCS CustomEyesBooks | Print various sizes | Certified VI & member of NBCS | Ind: cover price Schools: 6p a page, min cover price |
| RNIB Talking Book Service (Digital) | DAISY 2.02 Full audio structured by Chapter | RNIB members (VI) | Free loan, Annual Membership £70 |
| Amazon | Audio CD | Anyone | £12.75 |
| www.audible.co.uk | Audio MP3 | Anyone | £13.99 |
| Oxford Reading Tree | | | |
| 218 items found on Revealweb, 2 sources on internet, 1 LA service | | | |
| Example on Revealweb: Nottinghamshire Inclusion Support Service | 19 Large Print books from ORT series, 24 – 36pt | VI | Charge covers cost – print copy only |

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| | | | |
|--|--|--------|-------------------------------------|
| Example on Revealweb: National Library for the Blind | 39 ORT books in Braille | VI | For loan |
| Edinburgh and Lothians VI service: various books and worksheets | 104 Large Print copies (various sizes) | VI | Free to pupils served by service |
| http://www.cricksoft.com/uk | Computer talking books | Anyone | £50 single user set |
| http://www2.sherston.com | Computer talking books | Anyone | £50 single user set |
| Scottish Heinemann Maths | | | |
| 1 source on Revealweb, 2 on the Scottish Sensory Centre database, also on Edinburgh & Lothians VI catalogue | | | |
| 53,900 listings on the internet, but we could not find any accessible copies of the actual textbooks | | | |
| SPMG Stage 4 & 5 HMP Wakefield | Braille | VI | 11p per page |
| SPMG Stage 4 & 5 progress Tests Braille Centre, Uddingston Grammar School | Braille | VI | Free to pupils served by service |
| Heinemann Higher Maths – Braille Centre, Uddingston Grammar School | Braille | VI | Free to pupils served by service |
| SPMG, various stages Edinburgh & Lothians VI service | 19 text and workbooks Large print | VI | Free to pupils served by service |
| Heinemann Maths 4 & 5 textbook and workbooks Edinburgh & Lothians VI service | Large print | VI | Free to pupils served by service |
| Heinemann Maths 4, 5, 6 & 7 textbook and workbooks Edinburgh & Lothians VI service | Braille | VI | Free to pupils served by service |
| http://www.myprimary.co.uk (Harcourt) | CD with additional activities – not digital versions of the books - touch screen and mouse access but not switch | anyone | £50 per stage |
| http://www.easiteach.co.uk/visitors/ info/maths/activities.htm | CD of IWB activities related to SHM, – touch screen and mouse but not switch | anyone | £56 single user |
| Nelson Skills | | | |
| 3 sources found on Revealweb, also in Uddingston and Edinburgh | | | |
| Nelson Books 3 and 4 HMP Wakefield, HMP Kingston | Braille | VI | 11p per page |
| Nelson English, Spelling, Grammar, Fiction etc books Edinburgh & Lothians VI service | 14 books in Large Print | VI | Free to pupils served by service |
| Nelson English, Spelling, Grammar books Edinburgh & Lothians VI service | 4 books Braille | VI | Free to pupils served by service |
| Spotlight Science – no accessible resources found – only a CD with teacher’s resources | | | |
| http://www.spotlightscience.co.uk/s cot_index.htm | CD with teacher resources | anyone | ? |

Table 7.5: Availability details of sample books

RNIB Scotland National Transcription Consortium

A case ('If I can't read it I can't learn it'; RNIB Scotland 2005) to set up a national transcription consortium to produce accessible materials for blind and partially sighted children was first presented to the Deputy Minister for Education at the Cross Party Group on Visual Impairment in 2005. The proposal itself (RNIB Scotland, 2006) was provided to the Books for All project team in November 2006 by RNIB Scotland.

The proposal argues that provision of accessible learning resources for pupils with sight loss in Scotland is inadequate and suggests establishing a National Consortium, centrally funded, to produce materials in Braille, large print, audio and digital formats.

To some extent, the proposed consortium already exists on a UK basis: as we saw earlier in this section, Revealweb is the catalogue of materials, and suppliers listed on Revealweb such as H.M. Prisons and RNIB itself already offer transcription services across the UK. The various RNIB Transcription Centres across the UK cooperate in this way: requests for transcription are pooled and coordinated between the RNIB Centres.

Local authority transcription services in Scotland already have a large bank of resources, none of which is listed on Revealweb: one relatively simple measure to improve availability of materials for blind and partially sighted pupils would be for these services to use Revealweb to share catalogues and resources. This would quickly show any gaps in provision and would allow services to coordinate production. Also, as we have seen, Revealweb is not the only mechanism that exists for sharing materials: the Braille Centre at Uddingston Grammar School and the Edinburgh and Lothians Services have provided listings of Braille materials to the Scottish Sensory Centre and these catalogues will be made available from the SSC web site. If other Scottish Centres participated, this would create a simple and cost-efficient mechanism for sharing information about resources already produced, or in the process of production, by others in Scotland.

While many local authorities do not have dedicated transcription services as such, almost all employ specialist teachers of the visually impaired and/or hearing impaired, and those staff could have access to materials created by their colleagues in other local authorities via Revealweb. One objection to this is that local authorities with transcription services would be subsidising those who do not invest in such services. There are two possible solutions to this problem: first, providers offering materials on Revealweb may make a charge "which does not exceed the cost of making and supplying it"; and secondly, local authorities are at liberty to negotiate service agreements with, for example the RNIB transcription service in Glasgow, to source materials.

Provision of accessible learning resources in Scotland and the UK is already inequitable: blind and partially sighted people benefit from copyright exemption; a national database of accessible materials; access to transcription services from voluntary agencies such as RNIB and HM Prisons; and statutory support services funded by local authorities. These benefits and services are not provided for other print-disabled people. Therefore a new, different approach is needed to address the needs of all print-disabled pupils.

RNIB and other organisations who represent people with a visual impairment are to be credited for the changes made to copyright legislation and for investment and development of services to support blind and partially sighted pupils: the Copyright and Visual Impairment Act permits accessible materials to be created and distributed; Revealweb lists over 100,000 accessible titles primarily in Braille, Large Print and audio; and extensive testing of DAISY has taken place. Organisations who represent other groups of print-disabled people have much to learn from RNIB, in order to achieve similar levels of provision.

The RNIB Scotland proposal notes that “it should be the right of each and every blind and visually impaired child in Scotland to access curriculum materials at the same time as their sighted peers in their preferred format” (RNIB Scotland 2005, p. 3). While we support the aims of the RNIB proposal, the Books for All project has demonstrated that these rights should also apply to other pupils with a print disability in Scotland.

The phrase ‘If I can’t read it I can’t learn it’ applies as much if not more to pupils who cannot physically hold a book or turn pages themselves, pupils with reading difficulties, pupils with language and communication difficulties, deaf pupils, and pupils with learning difficulties.

In terms of numbers, Sections 3 and 4 have shown that there are significantly more pupils with these difficulties than there are with visual impairments, and yet it is clear that availability of learning materials in suitable accessible formats for these pupils is very poor.

There is therefore an urgent need to provide accessible learning resources for all print-disabled pupils, not just those who are visually impaired. The following section explores this unmet need in more detail.