



In The Picture *Inspiring the book world to include disabled children*

Making Stories More Accessible

As part of the work complementing In The Picture it is important to summarise some of the current alternative formats available to extend the experience of books into the lives of all children.

All children will benefit from improved access to books. If stories are made available in different formats it can also mean that grouping the resources in one space entitled “special needs” is not necessary. Stories can be made casually available with the minimum of direction or comment making the “book corner” inclusive to all children.

The aim of the information below is to inspire the book world and people working with young children to consider how to put more children “*in the picture*”. There are graphic examples of most of the methods on the In The Picture website.

www.childreninthepicture.org.uk

Audio

For many children with little or no vision audio formats are the most commonly used media for providing accessible information. As well as being used by visually impaired people audio formats can also be used by anyone with difficulty reading the printed word e.g. people who have dyslexia or who have trouble holding books and turning pages. One way to create audio tapes is to use a professional transcription service – you can find out more information at:

www.rnib.org.uk

Other audio formats

The RNIB Talking Book Service has developed a new technology called “Daisy”. It offers accessible digital talking books for children

and adults. Daisy - Digital Accessible Information System - offers a worldwide standard for reading and producing books. The technology allows the reader to have the same access to books as the print reader; you can use bookmarks, pause a book and jump easily from chapter to chapter. For more information and a list of titles visit: http://www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/publicwebsite/public_daisy.hcsp

Braille [and Moon]

Braille is a system of raised dots which people can read with their fingers. It is often assumed that people with a severe visual impairment use Braille; there are 13000 blind and partially sighted people read in Braille in the UK.

If you have the right software Braille can be produced “in house” however it is more common to use a transcription agency.

The RNIB produce a pack “*See It Right*” which discusses how to produce Braille. More information is available here: http://www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/PublicWebsite/public_seeitright.hcsp

Moon is a system of reading and writing in which tactile symbols based on lines and curves are used to represent letters, numbers and punctuation marks. Moon is considered easier than the more complex Braille system. Very few people use Moon; however some children’s books are available in this format.

Tactile

A tactile book is similar to a regular print book but the images are designed to be touched rather than looked at and are especially good for visually impaired children.

All children like novelty books - but to children with little or no sight they are invaluable. Shapes and textures, smells and sound buttons on the page make all the difference for a child unable to see the printed pictures.

Clearvision's initiative the Tactile Book Advancement Group [TBAG] offers advice and information about producing, using and creating tactile books – visit their website: <http://www.tactilebooks.org/>

The RNIB also produce guidelines for making tactile books – http://www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/PublicWebsite/public_tactilebooksw.doc

The Living Paintings Trust is a national charity that designs and manufactures touch and sound packs. They have produced a number of tactile books for children from popular illustrated children's books with the main characters translated into raised images which are brightly coloured for the benefit of children with partial sight. These books also contain Braille text on clear plastic pages allowing the book to be shared with sighted parents or friends. Visit: <http://www.livingpaintings.org/home.php>

Computer/Switch accessible stories

Some stories have been adapted for use on the computer for children who have motor impairments and are unable to use a mouse. Instead they can access the stories by using a simple switch. The switches are buttons that connect to the computer and because they are easy to press they are good for children with motor impairments. More than one switch can be connected to a computer via a switch box allowing one or more child to take part in the fun.

There are many websites offering information, advice and an array of switch accessible programmes and products. One example is here: <http://www.chooseandtellseries.com/>

Multi sensory

Multi sensory stories allow the child to enjoy a story by using a range of exciting materials to illustrate existing books. The stories are told interactively using such mediums as touch, sound, smell, sight and motion.

You can see examples of multi sensory stories on the Bag Books website: http://www.bagbooks.org/multi_sensory.html. There are also

guidelines for developing multi sensory packs. See also Story Sacks <http://www.storysack.com/>.

Signs and symbols

In any area containing books for children it is good to have a selection that show signs and symbols.

There are many different signing systems including British Sign Language [BSL], Makaton, Widgit, PCS, Signalong, Bliss and Sign Supported English [SSE]. You can find out more about each system by visiting their websites.

The National Autistic Society provides information about the use of signs, symbols and pictures on their website:

<http://www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=297&a=3642> and you can download a reading and symbols advice pack produced by the CALL Centre at this link:

http://callcentre.education.ed.ac.uk/downloads/using_pics_symbols/storyreading.pdf

You can also see a number of BSL signs by visiting the following website – this website is also a good resource for children to learn BSL as much of it is animated and interactive:

<http://www.learnbsl.org/bsldictionary.htm>

A number of books are available with signs in the text – some of these are listed on the Wordpool website

www.worldpool.co.uk/ccb/disability/signing.htm . You can also get advice from the RNID and the National Deaf Children's Society.

Child's Play International have produced a series of signing board books aimed at very young hearing and deaf children: www.childs-play.com/

Signalong is based on British Sign Language, using unaltered BSL signs wherever possible. The difference between Signalong manuals and other sources of signs, apart from a much wider range, is the way that they are presented. <http://www.signalong.org.uk/wa/>

The Widgit Literacy Symbols are designed for literacy and learning and follow clear design rules for independent learning. The Picture Communicate Symbols (PCS) from Mayer-Johnson are used in AAC systems to support communication. Both are available at <http://www.widgit.com/>

Physical adaptations

For some children it can be more difficult to physically access books. This could be because of the size of the book, difficulty turning pages or the size of the print.

It is possible to loan or buy large format editions of story books. The books can be as large as 45cm x 37 cm with the print size ranging from 1.5cm in some to 0.5 cm in others.

Board books may be easier for a child to turn the pages or a simple adaptation might help – some ideas can be found in Scope's Playtalks Pack, particularly in the choosing and adapting toys section. This pack can be downloaded from Scope's Early Years website: www.scope.org.uk/earlyyears/ .

Print and accessibility

Good standards of print legibility help all readers but these standards are particularly important to those with a visual impairment. Large print does not solely refer to the size of the text itself; the contrast, type face, paper weight and print quality also impact on the accessibility of the book. These RNIB Clear Print Guidelines might be useful if you are producing stories or information: http://www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/publicwebsite/public_printdesign.hcsp

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