

# ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL

In June, member states of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) formally adopted the *Treaty to Improve Access to Published Works for Persons who are Blind, Visually Impaired, or otherwise Print Disabled*. This was the culmination of decades of discussions and very hard work over recent years by many groups, among them IFLA and the World Blind Union.

The World Blind Union has estimated that a mere 7% of published books are ever made accessible in formats such as Braille, audio or large print. The objective of the treaty is to establish a copyright exception to enable cross-border transfer of books to increase that figure, by sharing and improving accessibility of copies for the print disabled across national borders.

Emeritus Professor Ron McCallum, Australia's first totally blind person to achieve a full professorship and to become a Dean of Law, recently likened the achievement of this treaty as the "biggest thing since the invention of Braille". Professor McCallum, now an acclaimed human rights advocate, was assisted in his studies by family and



friends reading endless law texts onto tape before the advent of computer technology changed his world forever. But very few ebooks, he trenchantly points out, are produced enabled for the print disabled.

The Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities defines the print disabled as not only individuals who are blind or vision impaired, but also people with physical disabilities that affect their ability to manipulate print materials, those with disabilities that affect concentration and those who are limited by poor literacy or language skills.

That we might not usually include people with poor literacy skills when we talk about the print disabled is just one example of how difficult it can be to understand and plan for people with disabilities to truly ensure they are able to be an active part of our community of patrons and colleagues. Is now a good time to look again at your organisation's policy and procedures?

Read the WIPO Treaty at [wipo.int/meetings/en/doc\\_details.jsp?doc\\_id=241683](http://wipo.int/meetings/en/doc_details.jsp?doc_id=241683).

- People with disabilities are individuals.
- Disabilities may be temporary or permanent.
- People may have more than one disability.
- People can be further disadvantaged by a lack of English language skills, lack of familiarity with Australian library and information practices and by poor literacy skills.
- The needs of friends, families, professionals and self-help groups must also be considered.
- Not all disabilities are obvious.

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