Accessible Educational Materials (AEM)

The Massachusetts Accessible Instructional Materials Library

The Massachusetts Accessible Instructional Materials Library (AIM Library) acquires, maintains and distributes accessible textbooks and specialized instructional materials to assist LEA's and TVI's in providing equal access to the curriculum and to support and improve the quality of education for K-12 students who are blind or visually impaired.

www.aimlibrary.org

Digital Text, Scanning, and Copyright Law

Digital text is all around us, and enriches our abilities to access information (e.g., Web site resources and library databases) and communicate with one another (e.g., e-mail and word processing). Digital text is "malleable," and can be transformed into other types of media (Rose & Meyer, 1996). For instance, text in digital form can be converted into:

- Braille
- Synthesized speech
- Digital audio books
- Large print

Imagine how text in digital formats might transform learning experiences for students. Digital text provides support for students with learning and reading disabilities; enables individuals who read at beginner literacy levels to access text; and supports the preferences of a wide range of students. For example, text-to-speech can be used by students who have specific learning disabilities in reading, and can support students who have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) by focusing on the text, and drawing the students' attention to it. Other students who do not have identified disabilities utilize the technology simply because they are engaged by it.

In addition to e-mail and prepared word processing documents, digital text can be accessed acquiring electronic textbooks, downloading from the World Wide Web, and scanning existing print materials into electronic files.

E-Text Collections on the World Wide Web

The World Wide Web is host to a growing number of "electronic books" in the form of e-books and e-text. Additionally, Web-based collections and digital and audio libraries are provided by many libraries, universities, and educational organizations, allowing access to a wide variety of resources, from children's books to government documents.

Learning Ally

www.learningally.org is a national non-profit dedicated to helping blind, visually impaired and dyslexic students succeed in education. Started in 1948 in the New York Public Library as Recording for the Blind, the organization

utilized volunteers to record books for blinded veterans returning from WWII. Learning Ally now offers the world's largest collection of human-narrated audio textbooks and literature as well as solutions, support and community for parents, teachers and students.

[Learning Ally Android QuickGuide](#)

[Learning Ally Link for Mac and PC](#)

[Learning Ally Quickguide Chrome](#)

Bookshare.org

[Bookshare.org](#) enables book scans to be shared, thereby leveraging the collections of thousands of individuals who regularly scan books, eliminating significant duplication of effort. Bookshare.org takes advantage of a special exemption in the U.S. copyright law that permits the reproduction of publications into specialized formats for persons with disabilities. For books that are in the public domain, membership is not required. For books that are copyrighted, an annual membership fee is charged.

[Bookshare Web Reader](#)

Converting Traditional Print to Digital Format

If a specific book or text is not available on the Web, readers can create a digital version of the traditional print copy using a scanner and Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software. This can be laborious, but advances in scanning technology have improved the process, and made the necessary hardware and software more affordable.

Scanner types include:

- Flatbed (scan text from books)
- Single page (receives individual pages that are fed through)
- Handheld (is passed over text repeatedly)
- Self-feeding (scans multiple pages/double-sided)

When scanning text the computer creates a picture of the text, which must then be converted to digital text through the use of OCR (Optical Character Recognition) software. OCR software looks at the pattern of dots in the picture of the text, and "recognizes" the letters. Once the recognition process is finished, the pattern of dots is converted to digital text. Users can then have the text spoken back in a synthetic voice or saved to a computer.

Copyright and Fair Use

In 1996, Congress passed a copyright exemption that eliminated the need to receive permission from publishers before reproducing text in digital format for the use of individuals who have disabilities. For more information about copyright exemptions, refer to the Web site of the U.S. Copyright Office:

[www.copyright.gov/title17/92chap1.html#121](#)