



# Reveal Collections Register

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## Reveal

Reveal is a new resource being developed for people with visual impairments. Expected to be available from autumn 2003, it will initially comprise a union catalogue of materials in accessible formats and a collections register of organisations producing and holding these materials.

## Background

In 1999, a programme of work was begun, funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, to improve library and information services for visually impaired people. This was initially run by the Library and Information Commission, and from April 2000 by Resource.

The programme identified a number of key areas to be addressed, one of which was the need to identify the scarce and widely scattered resources in accessible formats, since existing provision was not integrated with facilities available to people without sight problems.

The British Library neither collects nor records systematically the production and publication of material in formats accessible to visually impaired people.

Local authority and academic library service provision is variable and often very limited.

Although recent initiatives and legislation have prompted improvements, it takes time to build up services to effective levels.

Even within the voluntary sector, services have developed on a piecemeal basis and vary greatly in size and specific groups of user served.

Visually impaired people need a range of materials to carry on reading. This might be a daily newspaper on tape; the latest novel in Braille or Moon; online reference materials; or a children's book using pictures, print and Braille to allow them to share their reading experience with a sighted person; or any combination of these. However, less than 5% of the 100,000 new titles published in the UK each year are converted into an accessible format.

## Objectives

A new resource - Reveal - is being developed. A key tool is a web-based union catalogue, which has been developed from an existing resource - the National Union Catalogue of Alternative Formats (NUCAF) - and will enable users to locate specific items.

However, the user may be more interested in locating a source of items in a particular format, or on a specific topic. They will want to identify relevant collections together with details of whether they can borrow (and in



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some case buy) items, if there are any membership fees, and how they can contact the organisation.

More than 230 specialist organisations transcribe material from standard print into other media. But while people know about libraries and bookshops, even if they don't use them, visually impaired people may only know about one service provider. Reveal aims to provide a standard way of directing someone to a range of providers and so to a wider range of material.

Therefore it was decided that a collections register was needed to complement the union catalogue. UKOLN and software development company Samsara Research were commissioned to develop the collections register.

## What we did

### Step 1: Defining the data

The priority was to identify the data that Reveal wanted to hold about collections. The data divides into 5 areas.

**Descriptive elements:** the title of the collection and an identifier, a description, details of stock and subject strengths and details of ownership.

**Indexed searching:** subjects covered, accessible formats available, language of items held, target audience for the collection, and educational level of items held (educational material in accessible formats is in short supply).

**Related resources:** sub-collections of the main collection, and whether catalogues are available.

**Access to the collection:** eligible users of the collection and any charges made, service availability (school collections may not be accessible during vacations) and how and when to contact the service point.

**Housekeeping:** Reveal partnership details, including data on contributing to the Reveal union catalogue. To assist in keeping entries up-to-date, the system needed a method of identifying entries which not been amended in a year: organisations can then be contacted and asked to check their entry.

### Step 2: Identifying a schema

With the data defined, a schema or element set was required to hold this data. The policy of the Reveal project is to use existing standards wherever possible, so the starting point was to examine the RSLP Collection Description Schema. The element set covered much of the data that Reveal users would need but some problems were identified.

These were:

- missing elements
- element label terminology
- elements not required
- elements requiring qualification

### Step 3: Missing elements

With the RSLP elements as the core, new elements were added when necessary. Where possible these used existing Dublin elements and qualifiers.

- **Audience** - this records the category of user for whom the collection is intended. Terms are taken from a controlled list.
- **Level** - the educational level of materials in the collection (for example, A or GCSE level, National Curriculum Keystages and examining board grades for Music).

### Step 4: Element labels

It was decided to change the labels for some elements to ones that Reveal users would find more understandable.

- **Subject** replaces *Concept* - this field holds keywords.
- **Stock** replaces *Accrual status* - guidance

on standardised wording is provided for this.

- **Available media** replaces *Physical characteristics* - the format of items in the collection. Terms are taken from a controlled list.
- **Users and charges** replaces *Access control* - guidance on relevant data for inclusion is provided.

### Step 5: Elements not required

Two elements were not required for Reveal - *Accumulation dates range*, *Contents date range* - and one was not required initially - *Strength*. It was decided to include *Strength* in the initial design as it would be difficult to re-instate it later if required.

- **Strength** - this field holds a free text or formalised indication of the strengths of the collection. Data is not currently available but it may be possible to add it in the future.

### Step 6: Elements requiring extension

The RSLP Schema element *Location* has had some additional attributes defined for Reveal. Some of these elements are only available to Reveal staff and are not visible on a public search.

- **Customer Services** - this records contact details and hours of availability of Customer Services for the collection. Users do not visit these collections and requests for loans are typically handled through such services.
- **Reveal Contact Administrator** - this records details of the person responsible for the technical processes in the contribution of bibliographic records to the Reveal union catalogue.
- **Reveal Partner** - this records details about an organisation as a partner within the Reveal project. This includes contribution of records to the union catalogue, participation in the Notification to Transcribe scheme and copyright permission application processes.

### Step 7: Database platform

With all the data defined, database software was required to hold it. The RSLP schema element set is not tied to any specific platform. An Access database had been developed for use by RSLP projects but this did not include the Reveal modifications and needed work on accessibility issues. The RSLP schema had also been used in the Cornucopia database but again would have needed modification if Reveal were to use it.

The decision was that it was better to develop a new database for Reveal. As it was to be a web-based resource it was decided to use an SQL database.

### Specific features

#### Accessibility

A requirement for the collection register was that in all aspects, accessibility for visually impaired users would be required and consequently built into the design at the start.

Users are able to set their own 'text / background' colour combinations or choose from three pre-set combinations of standard black/grey, dark blue on yellow or yellow on black. The blue on yellow version is the default as it provides good contrast and is the most useful combination for those with forms of colour blindness.

Help pages for searching and for data entry have numbered contents lists at the top; each heading links to its section and at the foot of each section is a return link to the top of the page.

#### Data entry

The database was designed to allow data entry by both Reveal staff and Reveal partner organisations. Reveal staff create the initial entries from data supplied by the organisations, and allocate a partnership number to each partner organisation. Once an entry has been created, partner organisations are able

to amend most of the elements (not title or partner number) in their entry enabling them to update stock level figures, changes in charges, or additional subjects covered, as these changes occur. An authentication process provides secure access, using password and partnership number, and restricts access to only the partner's own entry. Data can be entered in the usual way using either the mouse or by keystroke operation. Element labels, action buttons and text fields also display explanatory text that can be 'read' by speech synthesis and temporary Braille display software.

### Searching

On entering the web site, users are presented with a choice of simple or advanced search options. In simple searches, the keyword entered is matched against the title, description and indexed fields.

In advanced searches a combination of search terms (topic, format, language, etc.) can be used. A simple search on 'gardening' would identify any collection holding material on that subject, while an advanced search could identify collections of Braille material on gardening, or children's gardening books in large print.

### Results display

Following a search, a message is displayed indicating the number of records found. The results display shows a list of collections found matching the search terms, giving the title and a brief description. Users can move to the full entry by using the link in the title. The results displays show ten entries at a time.

### Lessons learnt

Testing during development, using test descriptions, is useful as it enables identification of problems at an early stage, when it is easier to change the design.

The first set of test descriptions, for imaginary collections, was useful, but better feedback on problems came when details were obtained for several real collections.

Several factors slowed the development stage down.

- A number of sets of permitted terms had to be agreed with Reveal for use with the database.
- A mapping of the language codes used in the database was needed so that they would display in natural text (i.e. 'fr' would display as French).

### Progress so far

The development stage was completed in the autumn of 2002, and the database moved to the NLB server during the spring of 2003.

The database already contains details of the collections held by the four largest holders of accessible materials. There will be a temporary appointment to collect details of the remaining organisations and to create their entries.

A formal launch of the Collections Register is planned for the second half of 2003.



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**UKOLN** is funded by Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives & Libraries, the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) of the Higher and Further Education Funding Councils, as well as by project funding from the JISC and the European Union. UKOLN also receives support from the University of Bath where it is based.