

Developing a national database of resources in alternative formats: feasibility study

Final report to the British Library Co-operation and Partnership Programme

1. Overall evaluation of the project by the project team and David Owen, Executive Director, Share the Vision

We are very pleased with the study, which now equips us to move on to the next stage of development of Reveal. The project has been a very worthwhile learning exercise, although it turned out to be even more complicated and demanding than the expert contributors had imagined.

It has also been an excellent team effort, with invaluable contributions from Ann Chapman and Juliet Leeves. We were pleased to have James Elliot of the British Library working on the team and effecting introductions for us. Many other people also contributed to the study, giving generously and freely of their time with great enthusiasm and commitment. Our thanks go to them all.

2. Assessment of how far the project has met its original aims and objectives

The Feasibility Study has thoroughly explored the management and technical issues around the development of Reveal, including its scope, contents, services, procedures, standards and staffing. It includes an outline business plan. We believe it has not only met its original objectives, but exceeded them. It has gone beyond the original concept of Reveal purely as a database, to examine its function as a key service that will facilitate voluntary and public sector agencies to work together to improve the provision of library services for visually impaired people.

3. Assessment of how far the project has achieved the original outcomes and deliverables

The Feasibility Study included the elements described in the project proposal and has been delivered at the agreed time.

4. Assessment of the potential for transferability

The Reveal Feasibility Study addresses the special needs of visually impaired people, but a surprising number of transferable lessons have been identified. The work has

- Shown opportunities for joined-up thinking in the provision of library services for visually impaired people - could be copied for other groups of disabled people
- Built on and extended the principles of Full Disclosure
- Potential to be extended to other cultural manifestations, such as museums and archives, in line with the remit of Resource
- A contribution to make to the UK National Union Catalogue, which is interested in incorporating Reveal at phase 2
- Developed expertise - which is already in demand from the National Centre for Tactile Diagrams who have asked for help with their own database
- Relevance for similar opportunities and initiatives worldwide - already in touch with Canada, Australia and Russia
- A major contribution to a new work/manifestation model of bibliographic control, led by IFLA
- A major contribution on development of accessible OPACs, both technical and navigation issues
- Comparison with RLSP and e-lib clumps projects' work on collections registers
- Shown the benefits of partnership work

5. Note of actual and proposed project publicity

An initial press release (attached) was distributed to professional journals and mailing lists covering the library and disability sectors. A modest but very interested response came from readers of the Library Association Record and Disability Now in particular.

Presentations about the project have been or will be made to LA/STV Executive Briefings in London and Manchester; to the first annual conference of the National Centre for Tactile Diagrams; to the Force Foundation conference for libraries for the blind in anglophone Africa; and at numerous appearances of the Executive Director of Share the Vision.

When the Feasibility Study has been accepted and next steps agreed, a second press release will be issued. A short version of the study will be put on the web.

6. Review of plans for dissemination of transferable lessons and other findings

The report will be made available to anyone who is interested (except commercial-in-confidence sections). Dialogue has been established with the various initiatives mentioned above.

7. Assessment of the future of the project including ongoing commitment and available resources

The major stakeholders - British Library, RNIB/NLB partnership, Share the Vision and Resource - are completely committed to making Reveal a reality. The voluntary sector is looking to central government and the British Library for support to make Reveal part of mainstream library services - so that visually impaired people can, in future, have the same access to library services as everyone else.

The work will continue to be managed by the Resource/Share the Vision Joint Working Group and its Reveal Steering Group.

8. Recommendations for future co-operative action including possible sources of funding

<i>Actions</i>	<i>When</i>	<i>Possible funders</i>
Appoint full-time Reveal Project Manager	Oct 2000 - Apr 2002	Resource British Library
Prepare detailed functional specification	Oct 2000 - Mar 2001	Resource
Co-ordination with RNIB/NLB plans to merge catalogues and library services	Oct 2000 - Mar 2002	[RNIB/NLB partnership]
C-ordination with RNIB plans to replace Infoflo software	Oct 2000 - summer 2001	[RNIB]
Development and implementation	Apr 2001 - Apr 2002	Resource British Library CPP British Library
Collections register	3-4 months, timing to be agreed	Resource British Library RNIB/NLB partnership
Ongoing management	May 2002 -	British Library

PRESS RELEASE
1 June 2000

COPY BEGINS

British Library funds work on database for visually impaired people

A grant from the British Library Co-operation and Partnership Programme has enabled work to proceed on the development of a new database for visually impaired people, Reveal. A team from the National Library for the Blind, the Royal National Institute for the Blind, the UK Office for Library and Information Networking (UKOLN) together with an independent library consultant will work on the management and technical aspects of Reveal. The end result will be a detailed implementation plan for a "one stop shop" allowing visually impaired people quick and easy access to information on a range of material available to them. Work began in May 2000 and will last approximately four months.

Visually impaired people need a range of materials to carry on reading. They might need their daily newspaper on tape; the latest blockbuster novel in Braille or Moon; online reference material; 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. More than 230 specialist organisations transcribe material from standard print into other media. With so many organisations and media formats, it is necessary to have a single, easy to use source of information on which titles are available in which formats.

The Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) developed the National Union Catalogue of Alternative Formats (NUCAF) as a first response to this need. Initially the service was only available via RNIB but access was then extended through regional library systems' union catalogues. In 1999, a programme of work funded by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport through the Library and Information Commission working with Share the Vision reviewed the requirements for NUCAF. It was recommended that NUCAF should be made completely accessible and comprehensive and that it should be relaunched on the web as Reveal. The development work being funded is the next stage in achieving this objective.

COPY ENDS

Further details on the project are available from:

Helen Brazier, National Library for the Blind
E-mail: helen.brazier@nlbuk.org
Tel: 0161 355 2008