



## Marrakesh Treaty Forum Ultimo, Sydney, Tuesday 8 November, 2016

### Communiqué

Representatives of the publishing industry, authors, libraries, copyright, disability associations, government and accessible format providers joined together on 8 November for a far-reaching exchange of information and ideas to progress the Marrakesh Treaty's implementation in Australia.

The aim of the Forum was to identify the key challenges in making published material accessible to the print disabled and to identify the pathways to address those challenges.

The Forum looked at Marrakesh Treaty implementation, and at medium-to-long-term initiatives with respect to 'Born Accessible' content in the commercial sector.

#### Overview

The Marrakesh Treaty aims to increase the amount of material available to those with a print disability by facilitating access to published material within nations and across borders. The Marrakesh Treaty covers both physical impairment in terms of vision as well as the motor capability of manipulating a book to the perceptual impairment of dyslexia.

Australia has had exceptions under copyright law to make published material available to the print-disabled for many years. Now, as a signatory to the Marrakesh Treaty, Australian print-disability organisations can provide accessible format copies of published material to other signatory countries and, in turn, can import accessible format publications.

Globally, it is estimated that as little as 5% of published books are available in an accessible format. While there have been many advances in technology, and even with an increased availability of accessible format material from overseas under the Treaty, the print-disabled are still significantly disadvantaged.

Accessibility, in a practical sense, means many things, and is as diverse, in many respects, as individuals and their contexts. What is an appropriate accessibility solution for a young vision-impaired reader developing literacy is different to a student with MS attending university and different again to leisure reading for someone partially-sighted.

Similarly, publishing is a diverse enterprise with a diversity of products, platforms, production considerations, business models and markets. Investing in solutions for the myriad of accessibility solutions for an undefined market has proven an obstacle for the proactive production of accessible format content.

Each part of the diverse sectors involved in the print-disability space, either as content creators, producers or service providers, face internal pressures and external obstacles that, in turn, have shaped the current environment.

It was acknowledged that only in considering the varied perspectives of each party within the print-disability space that consensus could be attained, problems solved and real progress achieved.

## **Challenges**

The Forum agreed that the challenges to achieving greater accessibility were:

- a lack of awareness within the publishing industry
- a lack of publishing skills and knowledge in the production of accessible format
- a lack of standardisation for master file and format production within the initial process of publication
- a lack of understanding of the commercial opportunities represented by the print-disability market
- a need to better leverage and augment current resources and capabilities
- a need to clarify the protocols around information-sharing about the production and import or export of accessible format material
- a need to secure greater investment in the accessibility of published material for the print disabled

## **Pathways**

The Forum agreed to the following areas of focus:

- education and awareness of accessibility issues in the publishing industry
- building publishing industry capability
- leveraging international relationships and knowledge to form collaborations
- developing and influencing print accessibility standards
- researching the scope of the market, the commercial opportunities and the most appropriate commercial models for the proactive production of accessible formats
- a re-examination of business models, resources and capabilities in relation to the needs of the print-disability sector and the publishing industry (such as with providers like Read How You Want)
- investigate sources of investment

### **Targets 2021**

The Forum agreed to the following targets:

- establish a formalised, cross-sector group that speaks with one voice and a shared knowledge base
- 50% increased level of accessible content
- increased community and business awareness
- a global central metadata repository that integrates commercial and non-commercial titles
- independent service-based conversion process
- establish an equitable and sustainable economic model in which authors and publishers are paid

### **Marrakesh Treaty Forum Projects 2017**

The Forum agreed to work collaboratively over the next 12 months to progress practical actions:

- to initiate a research project into an economically sustainable model for the proactive production of accessible format
- to develop and disseminate an agreed standard of master file output for both text and image content
- to expand TitlePage accessible format metadata to support commercial availability
- to develop the protocols for the collaborative implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty
- to develop 'Born Accessible' Australian standards and pitch those standards to the Accessible Book Consortium

- to develop optimal business models for the commercialisation of accessible format published material (and to support specific initiatives by providers such as Read How You Want)
- to develop a metadata repository that brings together information on both commercially and non-commercially available titles
- to develop a collaborative framework for the Forum and working groups to facilitate appropriate governance and communication.

Each of the projects will be led by Forum participants.

The Marrakesh Treaty Forum will reconvene in a year's time to report progress in making 'Born Accessible' a reality for Australian readers with a print disability.