

# How Bookshare Works

Bookshare® is an online library of digital books for people with print disabilities. It operates under an **exception to U.S. copyright law** which allows copyrighted digital books to be made available to people with qualifying disabilities. In addition, many publishers and authors have volunteered to provide Bookshare with access to their works. By requiring individuals to register as Members and provide a Proof of Disability, Bookshare ensures that only qualified individuals use the service.

Bookshare Members download books, textbooks and newspapers in a compressed, encrypted file. They then read the material using adaptive technology, typically software that reads the book aloud (text-to-speech) and/or displays the text of the book on a computer screen, or Braille access devices, such as refreshable Braille displays.

Through an award from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), Bookshare offers free memberships to U.S. schools and qualifying U.S. students. **Read more about the OSEP award.**

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## Who Bookshare Serves

Bookshare provides multiple reading options for each of the communities it serves:

- **People with Visual Impairments**  
Members with visual impairments can listen to books with using a text-to-speech synthesized voice, read books in Braille, or access the material in large print. **Hard copy Braille books** can also be ordered-these are then created by a partner organization that specializes in producing embossed Braille books. Members with low vision can read books in an enlarged font using either a screen magnifier or by opening the book in a software program that supports increased font size, color, contrast, etc.
- **People with Physical Disabilities**  
Members can read books on a computer or a variety of portable devices, either visually and with text-to-speech as desired. Bookshare books are as easy or easier to access than books on tape and may be controlled with an individual's single-switch or other adaptive technology.
- **People with Learning Disabilities**  
Members with severe dyslexia typically benefit from access to the full text of books in digital format, for multi-modal reading with both visual and audio (through synthetic text to speech). Many great software programs exist that provide a range of reading support specifically designed for individuals with learning disabilities, including highlighting of text as it is read aloud, changing margin, word, paragraph and line spacing, and setting custom background and print colors.

Bookshare believes that all people, of all abilities, should have the same access to reading material as everyone else. With the help of Volunteers, publishers and partners of all kinds, Bookshare is making this vision a reality.

# Making Print Books Accessible

Bookshare adds books to the digital library in a variety of ways:

- Volunteers upload books they have scanned.
- Publishers and authors grant Bookshare rights to their digital files.
- In-house staff and partners scan and upload books.
- Universities and schools contribute their scanned books.
- Educators assign books to Bookshare from the NIMAC repository.

Developed over several years, this approach is far more efficient and less expensive than other approaches. Bookshare has successfully reduced the time required to provide a book in an accessible format from months or years to days, while doing so at a cost that is as much as 75 times less expensive than traditional methods.

The books scanned and produced by Volunteers or in-house staff follow an efficient, and well-developed process:

1. **Book purchase/procurement:** Bookshare obtains a new book either through purchase or donations. Bookshare chooses books based on user requests and surveys, best-seller lists, book award winners and recommendations from teachers and school administrators. Volunteers will buy books or check them out of their local libraries.
2. **Book scanning and file conversion:** A Volunteer or staff member scans the book into a computer using equipment similar to a photocopy machine and then runs it through optical character recognition software to convert the scanned image into a digital text file. A first review of the book determines whether the scan successfully included all pages and established proper recognition of page breaks and chapters. This step typically takes between two and four hours, depending on the size and complexity of the book. Some preliminary proofreading is done by the person who scanned the book.
3. **Proofreading:** After a book has been scanned, through a combination of Volunteers and in-house staff, a second Volunteer reviews the book for basic quality (e.g., book title, author and copyright notice are correct, the book is complete, etc). This Volunteer also has the option of proofreading the book. Bookshare Volunteers are very detail-oriented and take great pride in ensuring high quality books. The time required for this step varies based on the length and type of book. Textbooks, for example, are longer and more complicated than the average literature book and require more time.

The Volunteer then uploads the reviewed, proofread or book to the Bookshare approval queue for a final review.

4. **Final review and upload to the Bookshare website:** In the final step, a Bookshare staff member reviews all books and verifies that they meet all criteria for inclusion into the collection. This person makes the final decision about whether to add it to the Bookshare library.

Once approved, the book is converted from a simple text format to an accessible book format with relevant headings, page tags and other important features. The book is then made available to Bookshare Members for download in two accessible digital formats from the Bookshare website:

- o **DAISY (Digital Accessible Information System)**-a talking-book file format. DAISY books from Bookshare are DAISY 3 text files that work with screen readers, self-voicing