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## Australian Inclusive Publishing Initiative response to the Meeting of Cultural Ministers National Arts and Disability Strategy Discussion Paper

3 December, 2018

### 1. About the Australian Inclusive Publishing Initiative

The Australian Inclusive Publishing Initiative (AIPI), supported by publishers, booksellers, authors, editors, libraries and disability groups, is an industry-created collaboration to develop and promote an “accessible by design” approach to book production in Australia.

There have been two further annual AIPI meetings in Sydney since the first in November 2016. The inaugural meeting was prompted by Australia signing the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works by Visually Impaired Persons and Persons with Print Disabilities in June 2014. The Marrakesh Treaty aims to end the ‘book famine’ that means that over 90% of published works globally are inaccessible to those who are blind or vision impaired. It places two main obligations on countries: to ensure they have a domestic limitation or exception to facilitate the availability of works in accessible formats for beneficiaries, and to facilitate the cross-border exchange of accessible works.

While each of the industry sectors had independently identified opportunities to improve access to published works, we also realised that the best results would be achieved by working together

In between the annual meetings, working groups have been established to carry forward a number of important projects:

- Draft protocols for implementing the Marrakesh Treaty have been developed in consultation with people with print disabilities.
- Draft disability access copyright guidelines have been produced for final comment and endorsement by AIPI members, and an introductory guide to accessibility standards is underway.
- Three online skills courses are under development:
  - *Accessible Document Preparation for Editors*
  - *Accessible Document Preparation for Publishing Production Teams*
  - *Educating Professionals in the Effective Use of Accessible Formats*
- The role of artificial intelligence (AI) in embedding accessibility into the publishing workflow has been investigated, as has the use of the Australian Publishers Association's TitlePage platform and the National Library of Australia's Trove, to develop metadata repositories for commercial and non-commercial titles.
- Members are working together to assess business models to make accessible materials economically viable and embed accessibility into the publishing workflow.

AIPI has been hailed as a world leader in terms of a collaborative model, bringing together commercial and not-for-profit partners around a common goal. As further background, appendix 1 features an interview with the Australian Publisher Association's (APA) Sarah Runcie (*Books+Publishing* 14 November, 2019).

## 2. Fit with the National Arts and Disability Strategy

AIPI is part of the libraries and literature arts stream from the strategy introduction, and with the form of audience engagement described as 'connect'.

AIPI's current focus is on making more books available in an accessible format for people with print disability, in Australia, and as part of a worldwide movement. However, through the act of discussion, there has also been recognition of the opportunity to promote increased diversity in the books and publishing industry.

## 3. The issue

Research published in 2014 estimated that more than 4.7 million people, or 22% of the Australian population at the time were print disabled<sup>1</sup>, through literacy

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rph.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Ipsos-RPH-Secondary-Research-May-2014.pdf>

impairment, learning disability, physical impairment and low vision. The number had increased over time, with the growth in population and the ageing demographic.

	Total number of print disabled in Australia
2002	3304639
2007	3655869
2014	4726186

The publishing industry estimates that only 5% of books published in Australia are in an accessible form, and accessibility is a post-publication activity. AIPi's ambitious goal is for 50% of new published works to be born accessible by 2025.

#### 4. Opportunities and challenges

Led by the APA, AIPi is a rare example of a world class, industry-driven collaboration to improve equity for people living with print disability. AIPi has a three-year track record for tackling challenges, both at a strategic and at a detailed operational level.

We have a high chance of success, but with zero funding we are unable to map the current situation (the percentage of Australian books which are accessible or not accessible, the publishing workflow, national and international standards) and to set targets and KPIs that will enable us to measure our achievements.

Even more critically, without investment progress will be slow, relying on voluntary contributions of time and resources by commercial and not-for-profit partners with limited capacity. With our current trajectory, it will take 7-10 years before people with print disability begin to see the benefits of this work in terms of increased availability of accessible books.

#### 5. Funding requirement

With an injection of \$2 million the AIPi projects could be fast-tracked and the priority outcomes achieved within 3 years.

#### **Training development and roll out**

The book industry is working with the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and the Accessible Books Consortium (ABC) at an international level to develop training for authors and publishers, to embed accessible design in the publishing workflow. In Australia, plans are to run briefings for CEOs, followed by two-day courses in all the major cities for publishers, designers, authors, illustrators, indexers and other stakeholders, backed up by online webinars for those unable to attend face-to-face sessions.

Budget \$880,000

## **Metadata standards and platforms**

Developing and implementing metadata standards will overcome a major barrier to making accessible books discoverable for people with print disability. The two principal platforms are Title Page (used by bookshops and libraries) and Trove (used by libraries and individuals). Further development of both platforms would enable print disability groups to integrate their catalogues into these national databases.

Budget \$1,000,000

## **Knowledge hub**

Each AIPI partner organisation holds useful information and resources, but there is currently no easy way to share this knowledge. A knowledge hub would provide a central repository which could not only be accessed by AIPI members, but by any organisation, interested party or individual member of the public.

Budget \$120,000

## 6. Recommendations to the Meeting of Cultural Ministers

AIPI recommends that the Meeting of Cultural Ministers (MCM):

- Acknowledge AIPI as an exemplar of cross-industry support for inclusivity in its report on the National Arts and Disability Strategy.
- Consider a special funding provision by the MCM to advance this agenda. A modest contribution of \$2 million would carve three years off the timeline and put a greater number of accessible books in the hands of people living with print disability by 2021.

## **CONTACTS**

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## APPENDIX 1

### Accessible print for all: Sarah Runcie on the Australian Inclusive Publishing Initiative

14 November 2018

*In October Sarah Runcie from the Australian Publishers Association (APA) travelled to Tokyo to address the Advanced Publishing Lab at Keio University about the APA's Australian Inclusive Publishing Initiative (AIPI). She spoke to Books+Publishing about making publishing more inclusive and accessible for those with print disabilities.*

#### **Can you give a little bit of background about AIPI and what it does?**

The Australian Inclusive Publishing Initiative (AIPI) was established in 2016 to identify the key challenges in making published material accessible to the print disabled and to identify pathways to address those challenges.

AIPI is a group of stakeholders unified by a common aim. Each participant represents a key element in the accessibility ecosystem—libraries, publishers, authors, editors, print disability peak bodies, copyright experts, government. Having a diverse range of perspectives allows a comprehensive approach to a multi-faceted and sometimes complex arena.

#### **AIPI was originally called the Marrakesh Treaty Forum. What is the Marrakesh Treaty and how does it impact the work of AIPI?**

The Marrakesh Treaty is an international agreement that provides exceptions to copyright protections to permit the printing and sending of accessible material within national jurisdictions and across borders. In terms of copyright, the Marrakesh Treaty is very significant—it is the first user right of its kind. Australia was one of the first countries to sign the treaty, which came into force on 30 September 2016.

In Australia there had been an exception for the print disabled for some time in the Copyright Act (1968). However, the government decided to implement the treaty by codifying

a specific fair dealing exception that set out the parameters of the right while also protecting the potential of a commercial market in accessible formats. The APA actively advocated to government to ensure that commercial availability remained part of the legislation.

In terms of impact, the signing of the treaty was the catalyst for us to form an initiative, but our work does more than service a treaty. AIPI aims to actively solve problems and not just produce rhetoric. The reason for the name change in 2017 was to indicate two critical shifts in thinking: moving away from focusing on the treaty, and recognising that the right pathway to achieving the most efficient and cost-effective solution for accessibility is to promote an inclusive publishing industry.

Accessibility focuses on formats and the print disabled, whereas inclusive publishing is about the mainstreaming of accessibility solutions into all publishing and leveraging the advantages of those solutions for all readers. Inclusive publishing is a strategic investment and an innovation pathway—is a way of future-proofing your business. Thinking only in terms of accessibility and formats for a small cohort has limited solutions and opportunities. That mental shift was the first hurdle we had to, as a group, get beyond.

## **What key problems regarding print accessibility in the publishing industry has AIPI identified?**

The most significant problem was the cost of retrofitting content with accessibility requirements. No print disability organisation would be surprised by the huge amount of labour it takes to take the PDF file from a publisher—if they get access to such a thing—and literally re-key all the content and produce image descriptions. It is labour-intensive, and expensive.

Once you move from thinking in terms of retrofitting to an inclusive publishing model, which embeds accessibility requirements into the publishing workflow, much of the cost actually falls away and a commercial market becomes a little more possible.

Our current challenge is that many publishers don't know what print accessibility is, let alone inclusive publishing, and do not have a high degree of engagement on the issue. Not all publishers, but a lot of them. In the international space, Hachette Livre has just been awarded an Accessible Books Consortium International Excellence Award so things are shifting.

## **What in-roads have AIPI made into addressing these problems?**

Within the APA membership there is a growing awareness of accessibility. There are fewer requests from print disability organisations that take months to resolve. Some publishers will now turn around requests in a day. (I think the industry record goes to Text Publishing, which got the file for their ABIA-winning book *Reckoning* by Magda Szubanski to the requesting print disability body in 20 minutes after they tweeted Magda their request.) The lesson is, it is possible to be more responsive to these requests.

## **What kinds of technologies are currently available to make print more accessible?**

There are probably two key initial investments for publishers to make: educate their people on accessibility, and move to EPUB 3.0. With the convergence of world standards, EPUB 3.0 represents the most accessibility-compliant format. But a format alone does not guarantee accessibility—the content has to be there.

Technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) are not there yet as a means of short-cutting the labour involved in, say, image description. Context is something that AI technology is still struggling with. We are still quite some time away from having a virtual robot trawl through content and produce reliable alt-text.

The APA, as the founder of AIPI, will have a key role in educating publishers. We intend to ensure that all our members have access to the right information and world's best practice in inclusive publishing. Being 'born accessible' is the best way for publishers to protect their intellectual property and service a growing market.

## **You recently spoke in Japan at the Advanced Publishing Lab at Keio University. What kinds of things were Japanese publishing professionals interested in hearing from you about the Australian publishing industry?**

The Japanese audience was surprised by how we all managed to work together. I was asked more than once, 'How did you get all these people together?'

The Japanese publishing industry is all on EPUB. In this sense the publishing industry is a step ahead technically in dealing with accessibility compliance. But the lack of cross-industry collaboration means that whatever technical advancements there are, the industry remains unconnected to actually solving accessibility problems. This is where AIPI is unique.

**Who is leading the way in terms of print accessibility?**

There are many other publishing industries making investments in accessibility. Some of which I would say are more advanced than publishers in Australia, but none are collaborating in the way that we are. In that sense I can truly say that AIPI is in a world-leading position. We know we are on the right path and have the right perspectives in place to ensure that we are not making the wrong investments of time, money and knowledge. Efficiency and taking costs out of the work of accessibility have been key issues for us, and our key focus for the next year is researching best practice and education for publishers.

**How often does AIPI meet and how can publishing industry members get involved with the initiative?**

AIPI meets annually. Our most recent meeting was held in Sydney courtesy of venue sponsorship from Gilbert + Tobin Lawyers and financial support from the Copyright Agency. If you are interested in learning more about AIPI, contact the [APA office](#).