

# Listening Books Annual Review 2016-2017

Registered charity no. 264221

*An online and postal audiobook service for children and adults who struggle to read due to an illness, disability, learning or mental health difficulty.*



Listening books



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Jacob Cavenagh & Skeet  
5 Robin Hood Lane  
Sutton  
Surrey  
SM1 2SW

## Review of the Year

A Word from Gillian Howarth, Chair

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This last year has been a very encouraging one for Listening Books on many fronts. It has been cheering to end with a modest surplus, which is due to stronger support from our donors. So I start this account with a heartfelt thank you to them on behalf of all our members.

Given that three years ago we suffered a setback with the demise of BBC Audiobooks whose titles were so popular with our members, it is excellent that we have been able to renegotiate good terms with all the leading publishers, ensuring the widest range of books for members. We know that choice is crucial when listening is such a personal pleasure, and I would like to pay tribute to the staff who work so determinedly to ensure that members have access to the titles they really want. When frustrations abound in securing care (or in the case of some of our younger members, entitlement to the support they need) it is doubly important that our service is efficient and compassionate.

It is always our mission to reach as wide an audience as we can.

This year it has been especially rewarding to bring our focus to two particularly vulnerable groups. Firstly, we have expanded and enhanced our services to hospices. We are now offering access to our online library via tablets, which we are continuing to deliver to hospices that use our service. Secondly, we have sought to reach more children in care, both through working directly with local councils and in partnership with Book Trust on their excellent Letterbox Club, which aims to improve the educational outlook for children in care.

In the year ahead we will continue to seek out those people who are hard to reach but who desperately need our service, in particular individuals in or receiving care. We will also build on our already excellent relationships with publishers. Our biggest forthcoming challenge is to upgrade our IT systems, so we can deliver an even more bespoke service to each of our members and provide an enhanced user experience with mobile technology. We are currently in phase one of the transition, and we know that on completion, it will further transform our already excellent service.

We have lost a long standing member of the board, Zoe Richmond Watson, to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for wise counsel for many years. I would also like to record our debt to other members of the Board for their commitment to the charity, and particularly to the staff who have worked together to achieve what feels like our most successful year to date. Success which can be translated into more hours of happy listening.

## Our service

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Due to the generosity of charitable trusts and companies, individual donors and the kindness of publishers, we have created a vast collection of audiobooks which we are able to make accessible across a range of formats: downloads, MP3 CDs and internet streaming. We are proud to also serve those in need of audiobooks through hospices, and partnerships with schemes such as the Letterbox project. We would like to take this opportunity to outline our different services and provide updates on the areas that have seen development in the last year.

## The day-to-day library

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The Listening Books library has been running since 1959 and has seen many changes since then as technology has advanced significantly.

**MP3 CDs:** We have a fantastic range of titles available on MP3 CD which are delivered to members by post straight to their front door. This service is perfect for those members who have not yet made the transition online and encompasses titles sold by commercial publishers as well as those recorded in-house by Listening Books.

**Online:** Launched in 2010, our online catalogue stocks over 4,000 titles which can be downloaded, or streamed directly from the browser. This service is fantastic for many different types of members: for those who are housebound and cannot get to a post box to return CDs, and for those who like to listen to audiobooks on a portable device for when they are out and about.

## Studio Development

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As well as maintaining our commitment to recording high quality in-house educational titles, we are also continuing to offer competitively priced commercial audiobook and voice reel production services. Over the past year we've worked with several authors and actors to produce a number of commercial projects, and we are actively seeking new clients to bring in extra income for the charity.



## Books for Hospices

This service was launched back in May 2010 in order to bring audiobooks to a group of people arguably most in need—those with life-limiting illnesses under hospice care. Audiobooks can provide welcome distraction from the pain, discomfort and anxiety experienced by those currently living under these often difficult circumstances.

Each hospice is initially sent a library consisting of 200 audiobooks. We also provide them with a CD/radio player, a number of personal CD players, earphones and headphones. Over time we have been able to send many hospices further titles to add to their libraries. By placing mini-libraries directly into hospices, patients have easy access to great literature, complementing the range of activities already available to them, improving quality of life and the community as a whole within the hospice.



The service has received some fantastic feedback:

*"... (the patients) have enjoyed being able to listen to books again, it's helped them to relax and sleep. It's very positive for staff who are trying to make their patients last few days/weeks as comfortable as they can."*

**Margaret Armstrong, Hospice at Home**

*"I feel the books have helped families to relax more in very difficult situations and have brought a level of normality back to family life."*

**Jackie Rutter, Douglas Macmillan Hospice**

As of October 2017, we have delivered mini-libraries to over 180 hospices in the UK. Every children's hospice, or hospice group in the UK that caters for children over seven, has their own mini library.

Last year, we expanded our Books for Hospices project to also include our online service. We are currently delivering tablets to children's hospices around the country, 39 hospices have received the service so far. We have provided each hospice with four tablets, which the patients can use to access over 900 digital audiobooks we have available for children and young people. We also provide Bluetooth speakers and a variety of headphones, so the children can choose to listen individually or in a group. The service has been very positively received and we've been sent some encouraging feedback;

*... we've been using the service a lot. The selection of books is great especially with older kids... a lot of the audio books we had before were aimed at very young children, so now we have a great range of books for all ages...*

**Eilidh Grant, Robin House**

*"Good choice of books, reliable equipment... we are loving our new library and look forward to reading and listening to more stories."*

**Rachel Redden, Northern Ireland Hospice**

Independently from our Books for Hospices project, we have been working with Read for Good to provide our digital service to children in hospital. We have delivered the tablets to the five hospitals on the pilot scheme, with a further two hospitals receiving the service in November. Funding permitting, we will roll the project out to the further 23 hospitals associated with Read for Good.



## Statement of financial activities for the year ended 31 March 2017

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2017 £	Total 2016 £
<b>Income from:</b>				
Donations and legacies	246,128	875,395	1,121,523	904,410
Charitable activities	51,932	-	51,932	52,884
Other trading activities	12,110	-	12,110	12,204
<b>Total income</b>	<u>310,170</u>	<u>875,395</u>	<u>1,185,565</u>	<u>969,498</u>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>				
Raising funds	32,644	-	32,644	31,222
Charitable activities	334,818	816,877	1,151,695	952,888
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<u>367,462</u>	<u>816,877</u>	<u>1,184,339</u>	<u>984,110</u>
<b>Net income/(expenditure)</b>	(18,241)	58,518	40,277	(16,255)
Transfer between funds	(1,010)	1,010	-	-
Net gains on investments	<u>39,051</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>39,051</u>	<u>(1,643)</u>
<b>Net movement in funds</b>	(19,251)	59,528	40,277	(16,255)

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2017 £	Total 2016 £
<b>Reconciliation of funds</b>				
Total funds brought forward	<u>363,836</u>	<u>107,342</u>	<u>471,178</u>	<u>487,433</u>
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<u>344,585</u>	<u>166,870</u>	<u>511,455</u>	<u>471,178</u>

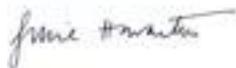
## Balance sheet as at 31 March 2017

	£	2017 £	£	2016 £	£
<b>Fixed assets</b>					
Tangible assets			8,484		14,230
Investments			<u>239,322</u>		<u>200,271</u>
			247,806		214,501
<b>Current assets</b>					
Debtors	154,455			116,791	
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>147,189</u>			<u>158,024</u>	
	301,644			274,815	
<b>Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year</b>	<u>37,995</u>			<u>18,138</u>	
<b>Net current assets</b>			<u>263,649</u>		<u>256,677</u>
<b>Net assets</b>			<u>511,455</u>		<u>471,178</u>
Unrestricted funds			344,585		363,836
Restricted funds			<u>166,870</u>		<u>107,342</u>
<b>Total Funds</b>			<u>511,455</u>		<u>471,178</u>

This summary financial statement is a summary of information extracted from the annual financial statements of Listening Books for the year ended 31 March 2017 and have been submitted to the Charity Commission and Registrar of Companies. The auditors' report on those financial statements was unqualified.

For further information the full annual financial statements, the auditors' report on those statements and the report of the council of management should be consulted. Copies of the full annual report and financial statements for 2017 can be obtained from the charity office.

Signed on behalf of the trustees



G Howarth – Chairman

### **Independent auditors' statement to the trustees of Listening Books for the year ended 31 March 2017**

We have examined the summary financial statement of Listening Books for the year ended 31 March 2017 which comprises the Statement of Financial Activities and the Balance Sheet.

#### **Respective responsibilities of the trustees and the auditor**

The charity's trustees are responsible for preparing the summary financial statement in accordance with applicable United Kingdom law. Our responsibility is to report to you our opinion on the consistency of the summary financial statement with the full annual financial statements, and its compliance with the relevant requirements of section 427 of the Companies Act 2006 and the regulations made thereunder.

We conducted our work in accordance with Bulletin 2008/3 issued by the Auditing Practices Board. Our report on the company's full annual financial statements describes the basis of our opinion on those financial statements.

#### **Opinion**

In our opinion the summary financial statement is consistent with the full annual financial statements of Listening Books for the year ended 31 March 2017 and complies with the applicable requirements of section 427 of the Companies Act 2006, and the regulations made thereunder.

Jacob Cavenagh & Skeet, Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditor  
5 Robin Hood Lane, Sutton, Surrey, SM1 2SW

## Membership breakdown: disability groups October 2017

- Physical impairments (58%)
- Learning difficulties (23%)
- Visual impairments (18%)
- Mental health difficulties (1%)

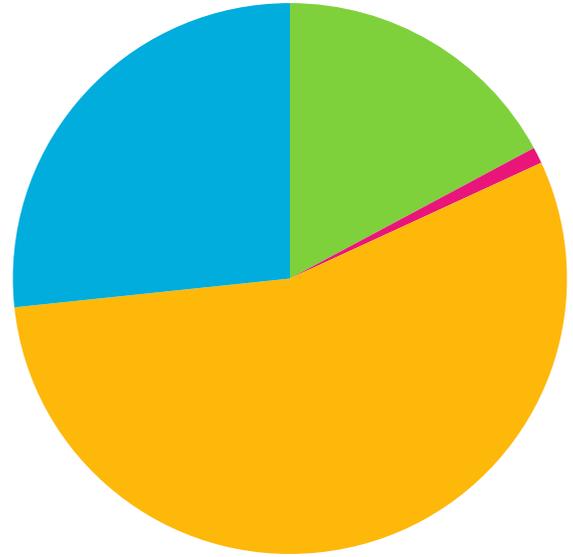
Our overall membership now stands at over 50,000 members (Oct 2017). Our service has proved to be invaluable for many of our members, which is evident from the quotes below.

*“I received my first MP3 CDs as a member last week. I am delighted with the ease of use, and the quality of the recordings ... I particularly like the MP3 CD version over the normal CD books that I get from my local library service, as I don't have to keep changing the CDs. My arthritis can make this difficult at times. I have really indulged myself these past few days, and have already finished listening to these two books. I look forward to many such 'indulgent' hours in the future. Thank you so much for the work that you do in 'Listening Books'. As an avid reader all of my life, you have given me a lifeline to the future. It is much appreciated.”*

**Member**

*“I want to thank you for the many years of great service to my dear father. You opened up and brightened his days for an extended period.”*

**Member's Daughter**



## Membership breakdown: membership ages October 2017

- 61 & Over (36%)
- 26-60 (36%)
- Under 18 (18%)
- 18-25 (10%)

*"[The audiobooks have] proved invaluable to our dyslexic/SEN students, who follow the text and listen to the story both in class and at home, so enabling them to keep up with their classmates. May I just take this opportunity to thank you for your service, we may only have a handful of students at our school who need this help, but it makes a big difference to them at a time when 'fitting in and keeping up' with their peer group brings so many pressures - one, at least, is alleviated."*

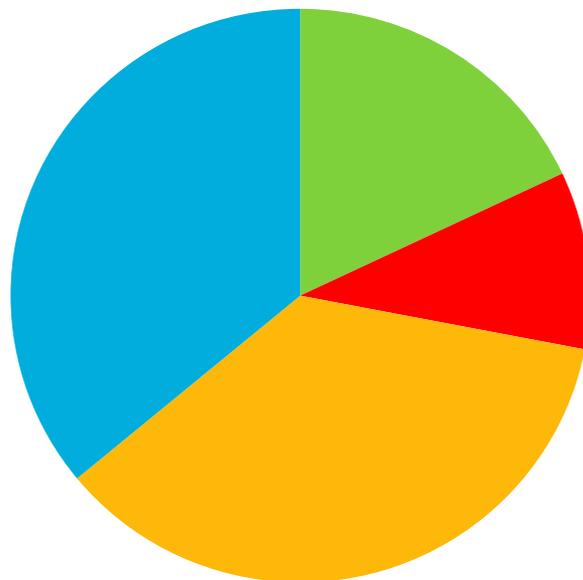
**School Librarian**

*"I found the customer service to be exceptional. I was given all the help and advice I needed to set this up for my mother who has poor eyesight. She is delighted with her new form of entertainment, thank you."*

**Member's daughter**

*"Thank you for your service, I'm so pleased I found it – it has made the world of difference!"*

**Member**





*The companionship and delight of a voice telling stories is incomparable. Listening Books distributes pure, undiluted pleasure and friendship. Not many schemes can make such a claim.'*

**Stephen Fry, patron**

Stephen has been patron of Listening Books since 2005. As a creator and lover of literature, and reader of the bestselling 'Harry Potter' audiobook series, he understands the importance of promoting the spoken word for all.

