



SINCE



1959

LISTENING B60KS

Celebrating 60 years

ANNUAL REVIEW 2018 - 2019

An audiobook service for children and adults with an illness, disability, specific learning difficulty or mental health condition that impacts on their ability to read. Registered charity no. 264221

Director

Bill Dee

Trustees

Julia Eccleshare

C.T. Sinclair-Stevenson

Nick Forster

David O'Neill

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Gillian M. Howarth

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chair

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A Word from Gillian Howarth, Chair



The past year has been a time of transition at Listening Books, so the mood now is of anticipation and excitement, particularly with regards to our new IT system, due to be operational early in 2020. We have great pride in our existing service but we will never be complacent when it comes to delivering the best we can to our members. Once our new IT system is in place, our new website will be compatible with mobile devices, allowing for a more streamlined service. Our Members'

Forum keeps us alert to priorities and reminds us how ease of access is so crucial alongside, of course, the widest possible choice of books. Transition, however, can be onerous for staff and I would especially like to pay tribute to our dedicated and experienced team who are managing our existing system with such care, while simultaneously focusing on making the new system even more efficient and member-friendly. It is a matter of pride that we have so many long-serving staff that select our books, liaise with publishers, ensure our compliance with copyright, respond to members' individual requests, record our Sound Learning audiobooks and of course, fundraise for and promote our service around the country. A new development has been the release of our own podcast, Voluminous, an innovation produced by Jess Stone, our new audio producer.

We are also expanding our social enterprise work with various publishers, any profits made going straight back into the charity and improving the service for members. It is so encouraging to read the heartfelt responses of members describing what the service means to them and how it enhances their lives. We have such a diverse membership – both young and old, some with long-term illnesses or disabilities, others who have been newly diagnosed with a condition that impacts on their ability to read. For each, being able to listen and be absorbed in the world of a book is a stimulus, a solace and a delight.

How wonderful to be able to enjoy a story and laugh aloud if you are a child confined to a bed for long periods, as many of our hospice members are.

These uncertain times have proved challenging for many charities. In this climate we are being cautious with our budgeting but it is reassuring that trusts and foundations continue to support us, recognising both our impact and our prudent management style. We owe a debt of gratitude especially to those funders who enable us to continue our expansion through repeated funding, some over many years.

Others who sustain us in a different way are our skilled and resourceful volunteers. I would like to thank most warmly our longest serving volunteer Alan Watling, who for 20 years has been supporting our library staff by carrying out essential maintenance to the audio-books in our MP3 CD library. His support and dedication over his time at Listening Books has proved invaluable.

To end on a further upbeat note, it is exciting to have been shortlisted by the Bookseller for their Library of the Year award. It is honouring that in our 60th year, Listening Books was recognised for its vision and perseverance.



Our Service

Listening Books History

Listening Books was founded in 1959 by Norma Skemp after a car accident caused her to virtually lose her sight. When she applied to another charity for help, they said they couldn't assist her because she had retained some of her vision. Norma immediately recognised a gap in provision for people with disabilities. She set up Listening Books with the goal to provide audiobooks to anyone who finds reading difficult due to a print impairment.

Since then we've grown to serve over 60,000 members with a library of over 8,000 titles. Our continuing aim is to ensure that anyone with an illness, disability, specific learning difficulty or mental health condition that impacts on their ability to read can still access the world of literature through our wide-ranging selection of high-quality audiobooks.



Our Library

Our extensive catalogue includes books from a varied range of genres, and features best-selling authors including James Patterson, Margaret Atwood, J.K. Rowling, Ian Rankin, Roald Dahl, Malorie Blackman, M.C. Beaton, Kazuo Ishiguro, David Walliams and Santa Montefiore - just to name a few!

Approximately 10% of our catalogue consists of in-house titles we have recorded in our studios, the rest of the audiobooks we have bought from publishers with whom we've have built strong relationships over the years. It is down to the generosity of both publishers and funders that we are able to have such a diverse library.

Our service is easy to use and our members can borrow titles either online or via MP3 CD. Our CDs are sent out through the post and members can borrow up to four at once.

We use download platform Overdrive to host our online titles, and members who use this service can log on to download or stream up to ten audio books a week. Our online service is a fantastic



option for many different types of members; for those who are housebound and not able to return CDs, or for those who listen to audiobooks on a portable device when they are out and about.

We charge a small, heavily-subsidised fee that starts at just £20 a year. We also receive funding to provide free memberships to those that would find the fee a barrier to joining the service. We have a small, dedicated library team that are always on hand to answer enquiries from members and provide any assistance needed with using Listening Books.

Our Work in Hospices and Hospitals

Hospices

In 2010 we began providing audiobooks to UK hospices. We've provided 'mini-libraries' of 300 MP3 CDs, CD players and headphones to over 180 hospices. In 2016 we expanded the project to also include our online service, providing tablets so patients can access the 5000+ titles we have available in our online library. We've delivered tablets to 43 children's hospices, two Maggie's cancer centres and three adult hospices, with a further three to receive them in the next few months.

Stevan Jackson, CEO of The Mary Stevens Hospice told us 'This very welcome gift is yet another way that our patients can get some level of normality into their lives at what is a very stressful and worrying time for them...this fantastic enhancement will hopefully bring those that want to take advantage of it many hours of listening and relaxing.'

Hospitals (Read for Good)

Our partnership with the charity Read for Good working in UK children's hospitals has continued to grow in the last year. We have doubled the number of hospitals that now have access to the Listening Books service bringing the total number to 21.

Each children's hospital receives three tablets, along with headphones, earphones and speakers. Teachers, children and play staff have been so excited to have something else to offer those children who are too ill or exhausted to read the printed word.



Our Studios

Our in-house studios have always been primarily dedicated to recording books that do not already have audio versions, to make previously inaccessible works available to those who would find it difficult to read in print. Since 2002, we have focussed our studio work solely on our Sound Learning project, the recording of educational titles that are not available in audio elsewhere. This means that for many pupils, Listening Books is the only place they can access many texts that are beneficial to their studies. This year we've recorded a number of inspiring books for children and young adults including **The Art of Being Normal** by Lisa Williamson, **Women in Sport** by Rachel Ignatofsky and **Troublemakers** by Catherine Barter.

We are also continuing to offer a professional voice-reel and audiobook production service through the commercial arm of our studios, Listening Books Productions, all profits from which go back to the charity. We were delighted to partner with independent publishers Canelo this year to produce six of their titles in audio and are planning to work with them again in 2020.



The Impact of Audio

As our patron, Stephen Fry, puts it; 'The companionship and delight of a voice telling stories is incomparable.'

For some of our members, companionship is one of the key benefits of listening to audiobooks. For older members particularly, or those we serve receiving hospice care, audiobooks can for some provide welcome relief from pain, boredom and loneliness, lifting them out of what are often challenging circumstances.

For our school-age members, audiobooks allow them to listen to the same books their friends and peers are reading, improve comprehension and word recognition as well as helping to instil a greater understanding and enjoyment of literature.

Anyone can develop a print impairment, and audiobooks mean that those who have started to find reading print more difficult never have to miss out on their favourite author's new book, widening their knowledge with non-fiction or revisiting an old classic.

Member Quotes

'I like stories but sometimes reading them can be exhausting – listening to them means I can still enjoy the characters and adventures while I relax. Thank you Listening Books for sending a tablet...'

Child from Chelsea Community Hospital

'Thank you for have such a brilliant service, I listen everyday...I do find it great therapy.'

Andre La'Course, member

I want to tell you how much I love listening books. Through all the hard days, I have a good place to go. Thank you.

Jacqueline, member



2019: Our 60th Year

2019 was a very special year for Listening Books as we celebrated the charity's 60th anniversary. One way we decided to mark the occasion was to announce our wonderful new ambassadors (pictured). We are delighted that children's authors Sally Gardner and Bali Rai, comedian and writer Jennyclair and author Kit de Waal are going to help spread the word about the work we do, and we very much look forward to working with them.

We also recorded a special 60th anniversary edition of our podcast, Voluminous, and carried out

our 60 for 60 promotion - where we added a new book to our online catalogue every day for 60 working days. In addition to these titles, we also added over 600 titles to the catalogue from the 1st April 2018 - 31st March 2019.

We were delighted for our work to be recognised by the Bookseller when we were nominated for the Library of the Year award. As a small, specialist charity library nominated alongside many excellent public libraries, we were honoured to make the final shortlist.

Baroness Mary Warnock

2019 was also a sad year for Listening Books, as we mourned the death of our charity's president Baroness Mary Warnock. We were so grateful to have Baroness Warnock as our president for over 20 years, in the words of our chairman Gillie Howarth; '...her backing of Listening Books was a source of great pride for us. It was entirely consistent with her outlook on inclusion that she wished books to be available in a format that would give them the widest currency; she believed passionately in the accessibility of books as a human right. We will miss her sorely.'



Financial Statement for the Year Ending March 2019

	Unrestricted Funds 2018	Restricted Funds 2018	Unrestricted Funds 2019	Restricted Funds 2019
	£	£	£	£
Income from:				
Donations and legacies	587,231	753,262	138,978	526,746
Charitable activities	56,921	-	56,718	-
Other trading activities	12,498	-	20,157	-
Total income	<u>656,650</u>	<u>753,262</u>	<u>215,853</u>	<u>526,746</u>
Expenditure on:				
Raising funds	32,436	-	36,635	-
Charitable activities	348,365	687,975	300,067	454,545
Total expenditure	<u>380,801</u>	<u>687,975</u>	<u>336,702</u>	<u>454,545</u>
Net income/(expenditure)	286,294	65,287	(91,271)	72,201
Transfer between funds	(672)	672	(70)	(70)
Net movement in funds	285,622	65,959	(91,341)	72,271
Total funds brought forward at 1 April 2018	<u>344,585</u>	<u>166,870</u>	<u>630,207</u>	<u>232,829</u>
Total funds carried forward at 31 Mar 2019	<u>630,207</u>	<u>232,829</u>	<u>538,866</u>	<u>305,100</u>

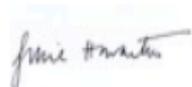
Balance Sheet March 31st 2019

	2018	£	2019	£
Fixed assets				
Tangible assets	81,107		95,708	
Investments	<u>249,767</u>		<u>279,345</u>	
	330,874		375,053	
Current assets				
Debtors	421,066		268,437	
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>137,057</u>		<u>224,879</u>	
	558,123		493,316	
Creditors: Amounts falling due within 1 year	<u>25,961</u>		<u>24,403</u>	
Net current assets	<u>532,162</u>		<u>468,913</u>	
Net assets	<u>863,036</u>		<u>843,966</u>	
Unrestricted funds	630,207		538,866	
Restricted funds	<u>232,829</u>		<u>305,100</u>	
Total Funds	<u>863,036</u>		<u>843,966</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 2019 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 2019 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 2019

We have examined the summary financial statement of Listening Books for the year ended 31 March 2019 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.

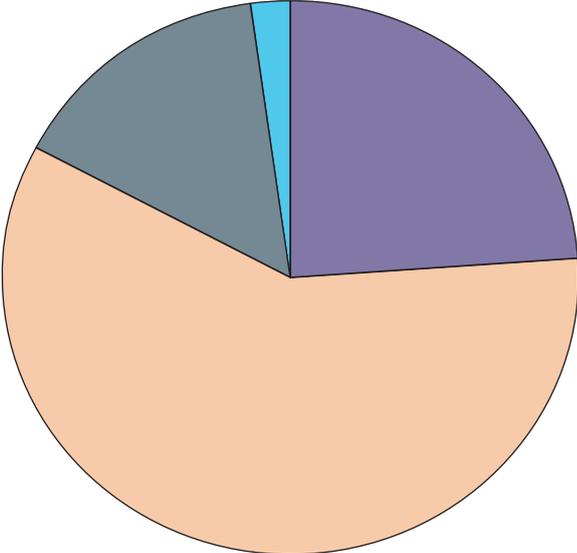
Opinion

In our opinion the summary financial statement is consistent with the full annual financial statements of Listening Books for the year ended 31 March 2019 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

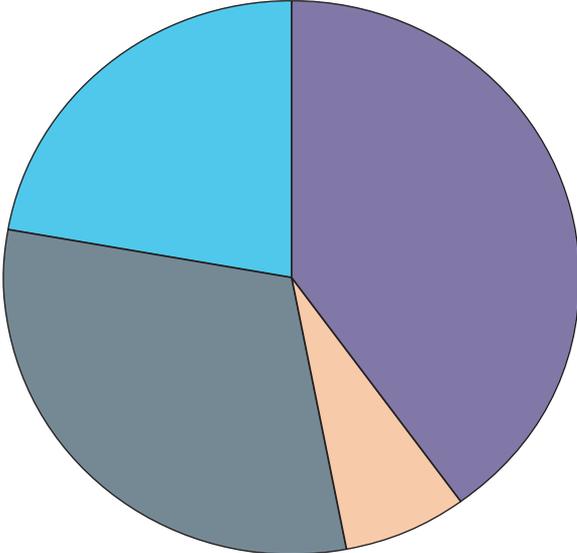
Membership Breakdown October 2019

Disability Groups



- Learning Difficulties (24%)
- Physical Impairment (59%)
- Visual Impairment (15%)
- Other (2%)

Membership Ages



- Under 18 (40%)
- 18-25 (7%)
- 26-60 (31%)
- 61 and over (22%)

Contact Us

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listeningbooks



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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.