

Calibre News October 2007

For staff and volunteers working directly with
visually impaired people

Contact details: further information on everything in this newsletter is available from Calibre's Membership Services Team, on 01296 432 339 or enquiries@calibre.org.uk. Our website, www.calibre.org.uk, also has up-to-date information about all our services.

Young Calibre

New name, new digital disk service, new publicity material and a new website – everything about Calibre's service for under-16s has changed over the past few months.

More than 800 titles for children and young people are now available on digital MP3 format disks, as well as on cassette. For details of what's available just visit the Young Calibre website, www.youngcalibre.org.uk, or contact Membership Services.

New books will be available in both formats, and members can choose to have disks, cassettes or both. Many new CD players will play MP3 disks and they can also be played on DVD players, computers, and RNIB's Daisy machines. It is also possible to transfer the books from disk to iPods and similar players via a computer. Membership Services can give further information and advice.

Young Calibre members can also borrow from the main library, though some titles are restricted to over 16s. And grown-ups are welcome to borrow Young Calibre titles.

www.youngcalibre.org.uk is our new website specially for and about Young Calibre. It's full of reading ideas and other information.

We have also launched a new publication, *Press Play*, packed with reading

suggestions for all ages. The first issue provides a useful guide to choosing books from Calibre, as well as articles such as:

- If you like Harry Potter... other stories to take you into a fantasy world
- Me and my Teddy...for our youngest readers
- You don't understand... books for teenagers.

And for grownups...

Press Play is modelled on our successful quarterly magazine *For your ears only*, which describes new additions to the main library and suggests reading ideas for adults. The summer edition was a new books bonanza, with more than 150 new books. The autumn edition, due out in this month, will include articles on books about the French Resistance, and *Who writes like C S Forester?* (author of the Hornblower books). *For your ears only* is available in large print, audio (cassette or disk) and electronically.

Our new-style personal catalogues, mentioned in the last newsletter, have proved very popular. Members can now request a catalogue of just the subjects or types of books they enjoy, and they will be printed to order. A pack of three catalogues costs £10, or members can buy individual sections for £5 or £2.50 depending on size. As result of this success, we are withdrawing our old-style catalogues, each of which contained details of the latest 500 books, across all subjects. These will no longer be available after the end of 2007.

Please remember that our complete catalogue is available online, free of charge, and can be searched by author, title or keyword. We also have a version of the catalogue on CD-R, price £5.

Self certification

In common with other agencies, Calibre no longer requires independent confirmation of eligibility for our service. New members simply need to tick a box to indicate why they need the service, and sign the form to show that they will not copy Calibre books or lend them to anyone else. A new application form incorporating this change is enclosed. **Please use this new form from now on.**

Digital audio – what next?

Calibre's first digital service on MP3 disks is now firmly established, with over 3,700 users and nearly 3,000 titles in this format. But technology moves ever onwards, and we are already exploring the next steps.

As we mentioned in the last newsletter, we recently completed a trial using memory sticks. It was carried out with a cross section of our current users. The memory stick players were delivered to them at home and, despite initial disbelief that they could cope, all of them quickly learned to use the player after a short demonstration.

The player itself was not entirely satisfactory, but everyone on the trial said they would be happy to use this service if they had a player that performed to their requirements. We are now researching alternative players.

Meanwhile we are also looking at online listening and keeping an eye open for other developments which may interest our users. When we have new services to offer, we will announce them in this newsletter.

Exhibitions

We're coming to the end of a very busy year during which our Publicity Team has attended more than 60 exhibitions in all parts of the country. It's been a pleasure meeting so many of you at these events and we want to maintain this contact with you to keep you informed of the latest developments at Calibre. Already, requests are coming in for us to attend exhibitions next year, so if you are organising an event you'd like us to attend, please let us know the date as early as possible so that we can try to include it in our schedule for 2008.

Calibre International

With the poor weather this summer it is not surprising that more and more people are moving to live abroad. Calibre has many members throughout the EU, and we are able to provide the service to them free of charge, as the Articles for the Blind concession is international. So please reassure any Calibre users or potential users you may come across who are thinking of moving to sunnier climes that they will still be able to enjoy Calibre books.

New Director for Calibre

John Palmer, who was Director of Calibre Audio Library from October 1995, retired at the end of August 2007. John said:

'My twelve years at Calibre have been immensely satisfying. I have particularly enjoyed reading the letters we receive from our members, which show just how important the service is to them. This is a time of exciting change, and it has been my privilege to introduce Calibre's first digital audio service. I would like to

pay tribute to all those involved with the organisation, and wish everyone well for the future.'

Michael Lewington took over as Director at the beginning of September, after a successful career in the Army and subsequently as Secretary to the Financial Reporting Council. He says: "I am looking forward to leading an organisation which makes such a difference to so many people, and to helping Calibre continue to move forward.'

National Year of Reading

The government has announced that 2008 will be the second National Year of Reading (NYR). The aim is 'to put reading at the top of everyone's agenda'. Calibre and other agencies providing reading services for people with sight problems are planning activities of their own, and will also be campaigning to ensure that VIPs are able to take part in NYR activities. The year will run from January to December 2008, with public events from April onwards. The National Literacy Trust (www.literacytrust.org.uk) is the lead agency.

The Right to Read Alliance will use the year as an opportunity once again to point out the lack of reading material in alternative formats. We'll update you about our plans in our next newsletter, in spring 2008.

If you would like extra copies of this newsletter for colleagues please email maureen.reeves@calibre.org.uk. Please also use this email address if you have any comments on this newsletter, or if there are any topics you would like us to cover in future issues.

In case we don't speak to you again before 2008, may we wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

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