Print Disability

A national service for accessible information.
The future is already here – it is just unevenly distributed

William Ford Gibson
1948-
Print Disability

A person with a print disability is:

- a person without sight; or
- a person whose sight is severely impaired; or
- a person unable to hold or manipulate books or to focus or move his or her eyes; or
- a person with a perceptual disability
VAR leads in radio news

VAR is leading the way in providing news and information attracting more than 130,000 listeners, or 2.8 percent of the total Victorian population aged 18 years and over, each week according to a recent newspaper survey.

The survey found there is a loyal listener base of people who were unable to read and present the program, technical operation, researchers and administration assistants.

The VA Radio network of volunteers includes numerous names from commercial and ABC radio. Many celebrities, from the small and large screen, are committed to our programs and frequently engaged in a range of activities associated with Vision Australia.

The original station, RPH Melbourne, was established by a group of blind people in the late seventies and it became an information service of the Association for the Blind (now known as Vision Australia) in 1983.

Who’s listening to VAR?

There are many reasons why people listen to VAR Radio. Some are unable to read standard print material due to blindness or vision impairment. Others have a physical disability such as cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, arthritis or quadriplegia. Still others have a learning or comprehension difficulty such as dyslexia, or come from a non-English speaking background. There are also those who simply enjoy the convenience of having the newspaper read to them each day, or who listen in their cars while out on the road for work.

In fact, VA Radio is a vital daily companion for many people.

Giving you the facts - all day, every day

VAR Radio operates 24 hours a day, seven hours a day, every day of the year.

Programs include:
- Readings from the daily newspapers; Magazines and books; As well as information from government, disability and other community organizations.
- Special events program: Covering sport, market information; Daily radio and TV listings; Health and lifestyle; Science and technology; and the sports pages.

Vision Australia Radio has pioneered the use of audio description of television via the radio.

In the past it has covered events spanning from a number of TV series and every Christmas Eve simulcasts the Vision Australia Carols by Candlelight.

The station also has a nightly program which, for example, guests from government services, that covers a variety of topics of interest to others people and those with disabilities. The service operates from 6:00pm until 11:00pm each night at which time the station switches to broadcast the BBC World Service during the weekend.

Regional VA Radio stations take a relay of programs of general relevance from the Melbourne studio each day. In addition, each regional station has up to 50 volunteers presenting several hours of local content per day.

This makes the service more relevant to those living in regional and rural areas across the state, who can pick-up on local news of interest as well as keeping in touch with the bigger picture from Melbourne.

Program guides are available for each of the stations in alternative formats such as Braille, audio cassette and large print.
How someone with Diabetic retinopathy would see the same newspaper
How someone with age related macular degeneration would see the same newspaper
How someone with cataracts would see the same newspaper
How someone with glaucoma would see the same newspaper
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How someone with Dyslexia would see the same newspaper
The biggest barrier to full participation: Lack of access to information

Only 5% of printed information is accessible

Only 20% of websites are accessible
Junk mail DNA of a green tree frog
Issues

- Limited titles available
- The digital divide
  - Connectivity and bandwidth
- No easy way to find library material in alternative formats in the global perspective
- Copyright exceptions and import/export of works in alternative formats
  - Licensing agreements
  - Digital Rights Management
Solutions:

- DAISY is the key to an inclusive digital world
- Global collaboration
- World Blind Union Treaty
- National Repository Accessible Material
Thank you

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