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Marrakesh in action: history is made in Kyrgyzstan

First international transfer of accessible books in Kyrgyzstan under the Marrakesh Treaty for persons with print disabilities

EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries) and the University of Toronto (U of T) Libraries are proud to announce the first international transfer of accessible format books to beneficiaries in Kyrgyzstan.

The transfer, that took place on the occasion of a National Seminar with the IP Office of Kyrgyzstan on the Marrakesh Treaty on World Book and Copyright Day, was in response to requests from two beneficiaries: Dastan Bekeshev, a lawyer and member of parliament (MP) who lost his sight at six years of age, and Gulnaz Juzbaeva, an MBA student at the American University of Central Asia (AUCA) who was born with low vision and later became blind.

The request to U of T Libraries was facilitated by EIFL and Sania Battalova, EIFL's Marrakesh Advisor in the region. "We wanted to show the Marrakesh Treaty in action", said Teresa Hackett, EIFL Copyright and Programme Manager, "and how straightforward international exchange of accessible books can be, once a country has ratified and implemented the treaty".

"After many years of librarians being involved in negotiation of the Marrakesh Treaty and national legislation, we can finally begin to put the treaty into practice", said Victoria Owen, Chief Librarian, University of Toronto Scarborough. "We checked our catalogue for the requested titles - a Russian work entitled *Zemli, liudi* on Mahatma Ghandi, and *The lean startup: how today's entrepreneurs use continuous innovation to create radically successful businesses*. The University's librarians arranged for them to be converted into an accessible digital format and agreed to deliver the files using Dropbox".

The DAISY Consortium, that supports equal access to information and knowledge regardless of disability, provided technical advice so that the digital files could be used with free software on a computer or smartphone, or to produce a braille version. At the seminar in Kyrgyzstan, Richard Orme, the DAISY representative, showed how the book text could be made very big for someone with partial vision, and could be read aloud with the computer voice. In this way, they can be read by people with different print disabilities.

"In 2016, I committed to Kyrgyzstan joining the Marrakesh Treaty", said Dastan Bekeshev MP. "I am honoured to be the first recipient of an accessible book under Marrakesh Treaty rules on cross-border exchange. I truly believe that the lives of blind people in Kyrgyzstan will change when a new world of reading is opened up for work, study and leisure".

"One of the main obstacles I've encountered in school and university is the inaccessibility of study materials", said Gulnaz Juzbaeva. "I'm in my second semester at AUCA and I'm still

struggling. My professors in the MBA department do their best to help me, but access to most of the books I need is severely limited due to copyright and format restrictions. As blind people, we especially miss out on reading newly published books, like our sighted peers. I'm so excited at the opportunities the Marrakesh Treaty will bring, and look forward to reading more, learning more and achieving my best results".

"This is a great day for my country Kyrgyzstan, and for everyone who helped make the Marrakesh Treaty a reality", said Sania Battlova, St. Petersburg State Library for the Blind, EIFL Marrakesh Advisor and former Vice-President of the Kyrgyzstan Library Information Consortium (KLIC). "Libraries in Kyrgyzstan have already established guidelines for the making and exchange of accessible format copies, in line with their responsibilities as so-called 'authorized entities' under the treaty, to enable services to blind and visually impaired people to be extended".

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), the World Blind Union and EIFL will soon publish a new guide, "Getting Started: Implementing the Marrakesh Treaty for Persons with Print Disabilities - a Practical Guide for Librarians". The guide is aimed at assisting librarians around the world on how to make full use of their new rights under the Marrakesh Treaty.

When as many libraries as possible take full advantage of the treaty, they are playing their part in finally ending the book famine. The international accessible book transfer that took place in Kyrgyzstan shows just how it can be done.

Background

The Marrakesh Treaty was adopted by member states of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in 2013. The goal is to help end the book famine, the fact that only about 7% of published works are made available globally in accessible formats, such as Braille, audio and large print, and digital formats.

The treaty creates an international legal framework that makes it possible for organizations like libraries to make accessible format copies (for example, in braille, large print and audio) of books and other printed works, and to share these copies across national borders with other countries that have ratified the treaty.

Canada acceded to the Marrakesh Treaty in June 2016, and Kyrgyzstan did so in May 2017. Both countries have implemented the treaty into national law.

About EIFL

EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries) is a not-for-profit organization that works with libraries to enable access to knowledge in developing and transition economy countries in Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe and Latin America.

In Kyrgyzstan, EIFL partners with the Kyrgyzstan Library Information Consortium (KLIC).



EIFL supported negotiations of the Marrakesh Treaty over five years at WIPO, and participated in the Diplomatic Conference that led to the adoption in 2013 of the treaty.

To complete the work at WIPO, and to fulfill the promise of the right to read for blind, visually impaired and other print disabled people, EIFL is supporting ratification of the treaty in partner countries, and its implementation into national copyright law.

www.eifl.net

About U of T Scarborough

An anchor institution in the eastern Greater Toronto Area, University of Toronto Scarborough combines the intimacy of a close-knit campus, the breadth of the liberal arts and the depth and rigor of one of the world's best research universities. Fostering a vibrant culture of community engagement, U of T Scarborough students cross academic as well as geographic boundaries in the pursuit of knowledge. <http://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/home/>

About U of T Libraries

The University of Toronto Libraries system is the largest academic library in Canada and is ranked sixth among peer institutions in North America. The system consists of 44 libraries located on three university campuses: St. George, Mississauga, and Scarborough. This array of college libraries, special collections, and specialized libraries and information centres supports the teaching and research requirements of 200 graduate programs, 50 professional programs, and about 700 undergraduate degree programs.

In addition to more than 12 million print volumes in 341 languages, the library system currently provides access to millions of electronic resources in various forms and over 30,000 linear metres of archival material. More than 150,000 new print volumes are acquired each year. The Libraries' data centre houses more than 200 servers with a storage capacity of 1.5 petabytes. <https://onesearch.library.utoronto.ca/>

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