



knowledge without boundaries

EIFL-PLIP

Improving lives and livelihoods through innovative public library services

Library improves lives of visually impaired people Ulaanbaatar Public Library, Mongolia

IMPACT CASE STUDY

Most of Mongolia's 130,000 blind and visually impaired people are unemployed. Their access to learning and information is extremely limited, and many live in poverty. Ulaanbaatar Public Library (UPL) had over 500,000 books, periodicals and sutras (historical sermons and stories), but only a fraction – 428 titles – were in Braille, large print or audio. Mongolia has 21 aimags (provinces), each with a library, but the rural libraries had no materials for visually impaired people.

UPL's innovative idea

UPL's idea was to record books into DAISY format. Short for Digital Accessible Information System, DAISY technology creates digital talking books from text or analogue audio formats. The books can be read on computer or on DAISY BookSense readers (digital audio). DAISY text is digitally structured so that readers can navigate, making it possible easily to re-visit sections, to move around in the text and to cross-refer when doing research.

With support from EIFL-PLIP (US\$30,000) the library built a digital recording studio and bought 40 DAISY BookSense readers. They asked blind and visually impaired people to vote for a shortlist of 12 books for priority recording. The resulting list included Mongolian history, epic poetry, a novel, home care and cookery manuals, and books on physiology and massage therapy. They trained volunteer readers to record books into DAISY format. The DAISY Talking Book Centre – a first for Mongolia – was ready to start.

Making history – achievements and impact

- For the first time, blind and visually impaired people in Mongolia's 21 provinces have direct access to information resources in their libraries.
- Before DAISY readers were introduced, no blind people visited rural libraries. Librarians now report an average of two to three visitors a day.
- The number of blind and visually impaired readers coming to the UPL trebled – from ten a week to 30 a week.



Blind and visually impaired schoolchildren learn to use DAISY BookSense readers.



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- Ulaanbaatar now has two DAISY recording studios. The Mongolian National Federation of the Blind (MNFb) were so impressed with the library's studio that they built one too – doubling Mongolia's DAISY recording capacity.
- The two studios have recorded 29 books into DAISY format.
- 250 blind and visually impaired adults and children have been trained to use DAISY BookSense readers.
- 25 volunteer readers have been trained to record books.

What the users say

'Thanks to this project I am confident that I will successfully complete my massage course. I am changing my profession, and I was not sure that I could become a true massage therapist. I did not know Braille and was not able to read the manuals. Now I believe in myself because listening to DAISY books helped me to understand a lot.' – Erdenebat, 38, of Ulaanbaatar, who lost his sight in a traffic accident.

'I became blind when I was an adult, and so I do not know how to read and write in Braille. I truly like this equipment as I feel as if I am reading a real book, turning the pages, jumping quickly to the subjects and different parts of the book. It is so easy and makes it fun. I also hope to have my own reader one day, as I feel it is like my best friend.' – Enhamgalan, 43, of Hentii aimag, who is totally blind.

'I attended the BookSense training classes three times. I have memorized all the buttons and now can touch them instantly. I wish to study to be a musician and composer.' – Batzul, 9th grade student.

The future

UPL has built solid partnerships with the MNFB, training institutes and schools serving blind and visually impaired people. The library has secured a salary for a manager for the DAISY recording studio. Strong support and positive feedback from blind and visually impaired people will ensure that the future of the service.

EIFL-PLIP supported the project in May 2010. A year later, the library assessed the impact of the project.

Information presented here is based on the library's assessment.

For further information, contact Ms Ch Altantsetseg, deputy director of UPL, ch_alt57@yahoo.com.

[EIFL](#) (Electronic Information for Libraries) is an international not-for-profit organisation dedicated to enabling access to knowledge through libraries in more than 60 developing and transition countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. EIFL's Public Library Innovation Programme (EIFL-PLIP) supports public libraries to use ICT to implement innovative community development services. Learn more - www.eifl.net/plip; further information - plip@eifl.net. EIFL's Public Library Innovation Programme is supported by a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation