MIC-ING ABOUT

A QUEENSLAND NARRATING SERVICE NEWSLETTER

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It's Been a busy 6 months in the QNS Office. We commenced a project that involved working with and trainging students from Aboriginal Centre for Performing Arts (ACPA). They have attended an initial training session in the QNS studio and once competent will commence narrating one of the books that were supplied by University of Queensland Press for the project. These books were written by Indigenous authors.

We recently received a visit from Coralee O'Rourke, Minister for Disability Serives and Joe Kelly, Member for Greenslopes. After a brief discussion about the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) and the uncertain future that lies ahead they toured QNS, chatted with staff and sat in on a training session with one of the students from ACPA.

As you may be aware the NDIS was launched on 1 July with the first launce site for Queensland located in Townsville and Palm Island. We are currently in the process of establishing the QNS My Place Provider Portal on the NDIS website.

https://myplace.ndis.gov.au/ndisstorefront/index.html

NEWS & INTERESTING INFORMATION

Reading Between the Lines - SBS Insight

Did any one watch SBS Insight on Monday 22 August? The program addressed the issues faced by people with low levels of literacy. Many brave people came forward to share their experiences of living life with a low level of literacy. Statistcs reveal that 44% of Australians have low levels of literacy. The people on the show last night breathed life into those statistics.

The people interviewed struggled through school with little or no support. Many were pushed aside – one man said that he was sent outside to do gardening, another was told to sit quietly at the side of the room and not say anything. The support from parents was not enough to tackle the problem. After leaving school a few had supportive employers, most struggled in menial jobs.

If you would like to watch the program here is a link

http://www.sbs.com.au/news/insight/tvepisode/reading-between-lines?ct=t(Newsletter_23_August_2016)&mc_cid=cf54c1887a&mc_eid=c3a8591512

NEWS & INTERESTING INFORMATION

The Fastest Growing Format in Publishing: Audiobooks

The digital revolution that flummoxed the music, movie and publishing industries has given rise to a surprising winner: the audiobook.

Audiobooks are the fastest-growing format in the book business today. Sales in the U.S. and Canada jumped 21% in 2015 from the previous year, according to the Audio Publishers Association. The format fits neatly in the sweet spot of changing technology and changing behavior. Carrying around a pocket-size entertainment center stuffed with games, news, music, videos and books has conditioned people to seek out constant entertainment, whether walking to a meeting or sitting in a doctor's office. For more multitasking book-lovers, audiobooks are the answer.

Publishers, spotting a juggernaut, are hiring high-profile actors, fattening production budgets and tiptoeing into original dramas. Some authors are writing specifically for audio. Stephen King last year released his short story, "Drunken Fireworks," as an audiobook four months before its print publication. Fred Armisen wrote and performed a 15-minute work based on Candace Devereaux, a character he plays on IFC's "Portlandia."

Digital downloads are fueling the explosion: Revenue from downloaded audiobooks in the U.S. grew 38% last year from 2014, according to the Association of American Publishers. Meanwhile, revenue from hardcovers and paperbacks grew by 8% and 3%, respectively, and e-books declined 11%.

The surge is continuing in 2016. Preliminary data from the same group show that downloaded audio sales were up 37% in January and February compared with the same period in 2015. Audible, the biggest producer and retailer of audiobooks, says its customers around the world are on track to listen to 2 billion hours of programming this year, double the 2014 figure. The company, which added Italy to its portfolio in May, now offers audiobooks in seven countries.

The surge in audiobooks marks "a massive turning point," said Donald Katz, Audible's founder and chief executive. "Many, many millions of people give us on average two hours a day."

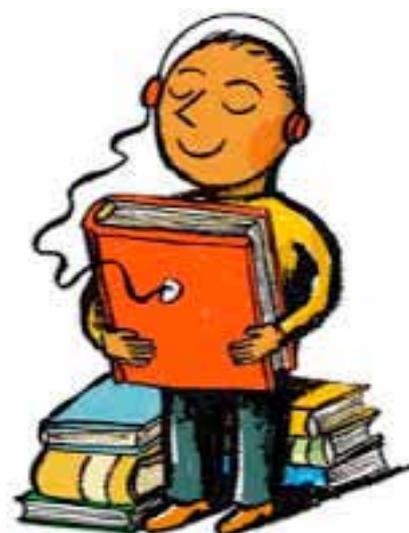# NEWS & INTERESTING INFORMATION

The Fastest Growing Format in Publishing (continued)

Smartphones have propelled the rise of audiobooks—just as they are helping podcasts flourish. Cassettes and CDs both involved carting around bulky boxes. They had other drawbacks, too. Cassettes melted on dashboards and froze in trunks. CDs, in many ways, were worse. You couldn't stop midsentence and pick up a day later where you left off. They skipped when you tried to take them running. And they were expensive. For many consumers, the steep price of a box set—as high as $50 US—marked it as a special-occasion purchase. Downloadable audiobooks are about half the price of the CD version and can be even cheaper through a subscription service. Some 64% of American adults now own a smartphone, up from 35% in the spring of 2011, according to the Pew Research Center. In 2016, 63% of all cars sold will have a built-in modem or a smartphone connection via Bluetooth, wi-fi or USB, said Egil Juliussen, principal analyst for car-market researcher IHS Automotive Technology. Sales of audiobooks on CD are declining slightly but won't disappear as long as cars have CD players, as most current models do, said Michele Cobb, executive director of the Audio Publishers Association. Libraries now offer both formats.

Audiobooks remain a small percentage of overall industry sales, the Association of American Publishers says. Physical and downloaded audiobooks sold 81 million units in 2015, representing 3% of the total 2.5 billion trade books sold. Gains in audiobooks haven't made up for the drop in e-book sales, but combined with growth in print, they helped propel the industry to a slight increase in net revenue to $15.8 billion in 2015.

The numbers don't suggest that readers are abandoning e-books for audio. On the contrary, users of Audible buy 40% more books in all formats after they become members, Mr. Katz said. In interviews, audiobook listeners said they still read e-books and print books; listening allows them to explore books they wouldn't otherwise have time for, they said. An Audio Publishers Association survey last year found that listeners gravitated toward different formats depending on the genre of the book.

http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-fastest-growing-format-in-publishing-audiobooks-1469139910

NEWS & INTERESTING INFORMATION

Creating a computer voice that people like

When computers speak, how human should they sound?

This was a question that a team of six IBM linguists, engineers and marketers faced in 2009, when they began designing a function that turned text into speech for Watson, the company's "Jeopardy!"-playing artificial intelligence program.

Eighteen months later, a carefully crafted voice — sounding not quite human but also not quite like HAL 9000 from the movie "2001: A Space Odyssey" — expressed Watson's synthetic character in a highly publicized match in which the program defeated two of the best human "Jeopardy!" players.

The challenge of creating a computer "personality" is now one that a growing number of software designers are grappling with as computers become portable and users with busy hands and eyes increasingly use voice interaction.

Machines are listening, understanding and speaking, and not just computers and smartphones. Voices have been added to a wide range of everyday objects like cars and toys, as well as household information "appliances" like the home-companion robots Pepper and Jibo, and Alexa, the voice of the Amazon Echo speaker device.

A new design science is emerging in the pursuit of building what are called "conversational agents," software programs that understand natural language and speech and can respond to human voice commands.

However, the creation of such systems, led by researchers in a field known as human-computer interaction design, is still as much an art as it is a science.

It is not yet possible to create a computerized voice that is indistinguishable from a human one for anything longer than short phrases that might be used for weather forecasts or communicating driving directions.

NEWS & INTERESTING INFORMATION

Creating a computer voice that people like (Continued)

Most software designers acknowledge that they are still faced with crossing the "uncanny valley," in which voices that are almost human-sounding are actually disturbing or jarring. The phrase was coined by the Japanese roboticist Masahiro Mori in 1970. He observed that as graphical animations became more humanlike, there was a point at which they would become creepy and weird before improving to become indistinguishable from videos of humans.

The same is true for speech.

"Jarring is the way I would put it," said Brian Langner, senior speech scientist at ToyTalk, a technology firm in San Francisco that creates digital speech for things like the Barbie doll. "When the machine gets some of those things correct, people tend to expect that it will get everything correct."

Beyond correct pronunciation, there is the even larger challenge of correctly placing human qualities like inflection and emotion into speech. Linguists call this "prosody," the ability to add correct stress, intonation or sentiment to spoken language.

Today, even with all the progress, it is not possible to completely represent rich emotions in human speech via artificial intelligence. The first experimental-research results — gained from employing machine-learning algorithms and huge databases of human emotions embedded in speech — are just becoming available to speech scientists.

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/15/technology/creating-a-computer-voice-that-people-like.html?_r=1

Quality Assurance

Naming your Files/Chapters

We have noticed that some of the exported files that are returned on USB to QNS are being numbered incorrectly. Here is an example of the best way to number your files-

0a Intro
0b Synopsis
0c Contents
01 Chapter 1
02 Chapter 2 etc.   (names may differ depending on your book)

We do this so that 01 = Chapter 01. The computer will automatically arrange the files so that the 0a, 0b, 0c come before the numbers.

By using this as a guide for naming your files, it will keep them all in order.
If they are named without placing a zero before the single digit numbers it will place 1 next to 10, 11, 12 etc. and 2 next to 20, 21, 22 etc.

The chapters should be numbered so that they read in the same order that they appear in the book. It is good to use the books contents page as a guide so that any section of the book that isn't narrated in the contents should be placed before the contents file, eg. The Intro and Synopsis in the above examples are not included in the Contents narration. We do this so that the contents narration lines up perfectly with the rest of the book and it is easy for the listener to navigate through the chapters. The best way to edit the name of your file is to do it when you are exporting the finished chapter. This is done after clicking 'Export Selection', The name of the file can be changed in the 'Save as' bar.

If anyone would like to come into the QNS studio for a training session on this, or any other aspect of using Audacity , please don't hesitate to contact us to arrange a time here in our studio.

Quality Assurance

Exporting Audio Files from Audacity

1. Insert the first empty usb into computer
2. Double lick on the "Title of the book"FINISH folder on the desktop
3. You should now be able to see the files that are located in this folder.
4. click on the file that is located at the top of the list.
5. Hold down the SHIFT button and click on a file that is roughly half way down the list of files. (Make a mental note of the name of this file)
6. The first half of the files should all be selected (they turn blue)
7. Hold down the COMMAND button and then press C on the keyboard (this will copy the selected files)
8. Now locate the USB's icon on the Desktop and double click to open (You may need to reposition the current open window by clicking on the grey area at the top of the window and holding down the button and dragging it out of the way)
9. When the USB window opens up hold down the COMMAND button and press V, This will paste the selected copied files on to the USB.
10. Once they finish copying, you can remove the USB and insert the second empty USB and then go back and repeat these steps and highlight the remaining sections
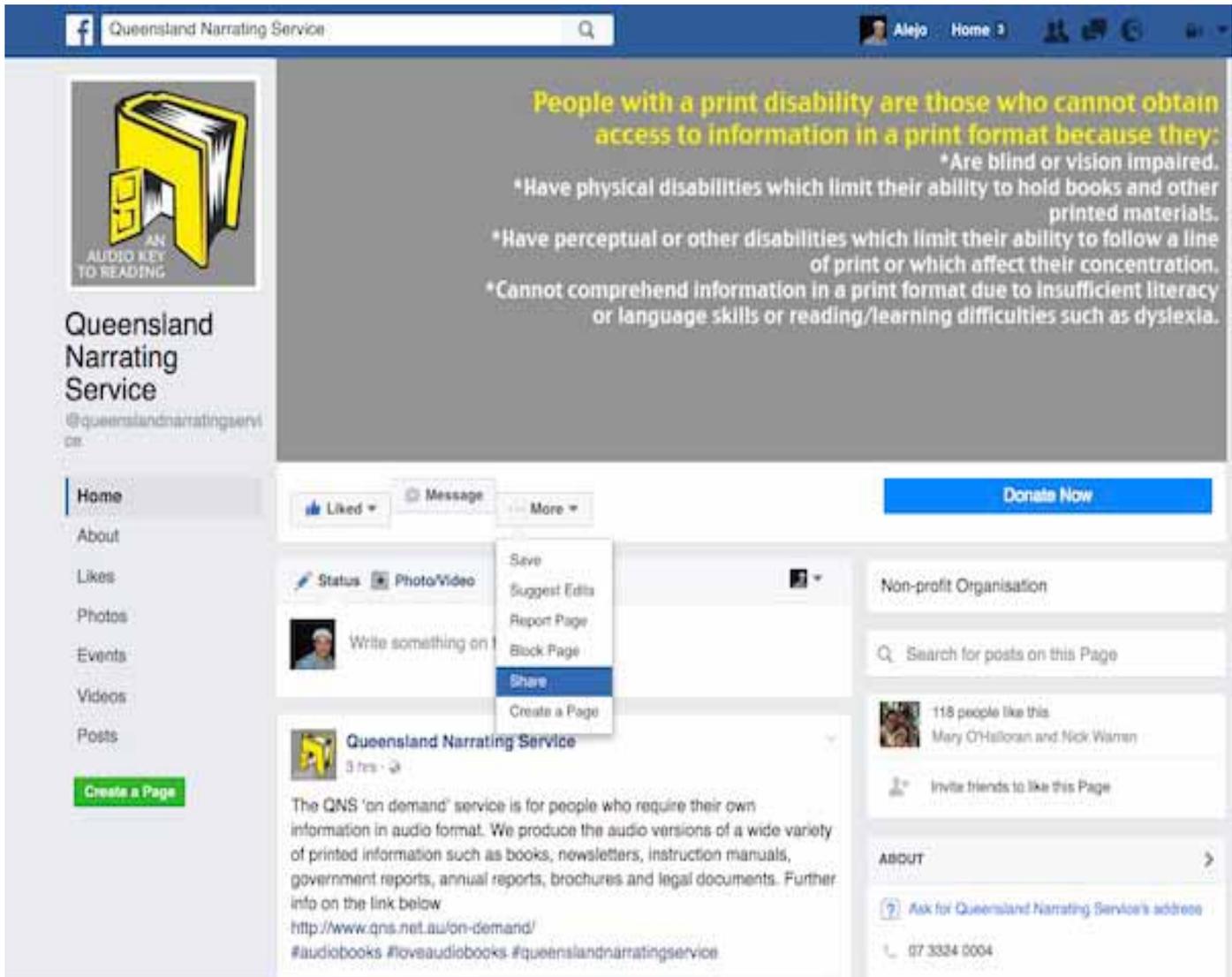

CHANGE OF DETAILS & CIRCUMSTANCES

Please advise QNS of any changes to your address, phone/fax or email as soon as they occurr - it is important for us to keep up-to-date contact details and to be able to contact you easily. Also please advise the dates you maybe unavailable due to holidays or illness.

We are aware that your circumstances and availability will change from time to time and we ask that you please keep us informed of these changes. If you feel you have come to the end of the narrating line don't despair - we have a few other volunteer jobs you maybe interested in undertaking.

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1. Hover over More below the Page's cover photo
2. Select Share
3. Click the dropdown menu at the top to select where you want to share the Page (ex: your Timeline, a Page you manage)
4. Write an optional update or message
5. Click Post or Send

Re-use or recycle this newsletter or pass on to a friend or family member