

...approximately  
seventy books are  
being converted to  
audio every month

conscious of environmental concerns, and many are prioritising the digitisation of copyright free content. The advantages to libraries themselves are plentiful; valuable books are available to all yet can be physically archived and protected from degradation through use, reducing costs associated with the handling and management of books, and access is not restricted to the physical availability of the book. Rare texts are protected, and the production of new books is greatly reduced. It is a win for all. By digitising their texts, libraries are on their way to becoming an ecologically sound industry, and simultaneously promote intellectual freedom and growth.

I recently interviewed Michael Hart, founder of Project Gutenberg, the world's first and largest database of public domain ebooks, and a passionate advocate for the distribution of free content. He believes we are entering a brand new age of knowledge due to the spread of free electronic books. "I think this is all going to change the world as much as did the Gutenberg Press, and I think the Gutenberg Press created [much] of The Industrial Revolution, The Scientific Revolution and elevated the entire world literacy rate [and] education rate."

The original Gutenberg press was invented in 1440, and was the first machine to enable mass printing of books, or indeed the mass production of anything. Before then, books were hand scribed and very rare, each said to have cost as much as the average farm. After the rapid spread of the press, and subsequent flood of books suddenly available to the middle classes, literacy escalated and the world shot into a revolution of knowledge, and later the Age of Enlightenment. Now, with easy access to information, enabled by people like Hart dedicating their time, if not lives, to the distribution of knowledge, we have the potential to enter a new Age of Enlightenment; a time where information is freely available to all. With global access to a wide knowledge base, and the ability to freely exchange and develop ideas, there is a huge potential for a worldwide advancement in economy, climate awareness, political freedom, and third world conditions. Change needs more than blind action; it needs knowledge and understanding.

One woman making an enormous contribution is Kara Shallenberg. She converts public domain texts into audio books for LibriVox, <http://librivox.org>, a project that aims to convert all books in the public domain into audio. LibriVox has a phalanx of volunteers, dictating chapters of books and releasing them on the internet for free download through LibriVox servers. Shallenberg works in her home studio where she reads and edits her recordings. I asked her how, with no professional voice training, she has developed a voice so clear and polished; "My son, Henry, who is almost 12, is an insatiable audiobook addict. When he was little, oh, 3 or 4, I started reading his bedtime stories into a tape recorder so he could listen again in the daytime and I could get things done. I always wished I could let other kids enjoy the recordings

I made for Henry... [so] when I discovered LibriVox it was a match made in heaven!" With her contribution, and that of nearly two thousand other volunteers, approximately seventy books are being converted to audio every month. Project Gutenberg has around four times that average, with over three hundred books a month, or around seventy books a week. There are now about one hundred thousand books spread across Gutenberg's many servers and mirror sites, and over a thousand audio books on Librivox. These are all free.

We all have the power to promote change and support a positive ecological impact. Lift a copy of Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* from the virtual shelf. Put *The Just So Stories* on your iPod and listen to it on the way to work. By developing and sharing your knowledge of the world in a sustainable way, you are changing it for the better.

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## 'Ergo', service and access at UQ Library

The University of Queensland Library applies flexible practices to both the physical and online environment to ensure students with disabilities can access and manage the information they need for their learning and research.

And it was highly commended for its efforts when it was recognised at the UQ Vice-Chancellor's Equity and Diversity Awards ceremony during the University's Diversity Week celebrations in May.

"I was honoured to accept the acknowledgement on behalf of the Library, which recognised the Library's work in assisting clients," said University Librarian and Director of Learning Services, Keith Webster.

"We have established a working party which focuses on activities aimed at improving library support for people with disabilities," said Mr Webster. "The group designed a workshop for library staff that is run annually and sets out to raise awareness of the University's disability program, library facilities, and software available to clients with disabilities."

These facilities include special accommodation and access to computing facilities and software packages that assist in making resources more accessible.

All fourteen branches of the UQ Library allow for wheelchair access and provide a variety of seating configurations for clients with various needs, including height adjustable desks.

The Library provides equipment to meet the needs of those with a sight disability, including a Braille embosser, ergonomic keyboards and large flat screen monitors, and new lifts are equipped with Braille buttons. Braille tape is used as an interim measure in old lifts until they are refurbished.

Each of the University's campuses rooms in the library are equipped with assistive software including Jaws, Open Book, Duxbury Braille translator, Dragon Dictate Naturally Speaking, Zoom text, and voice synthesizer software.



The library website is developed and maintained following the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. To meet the needs of students relying upon speech-generating programs, websites are tested using a text only browser in addition to the Internet Explorer and Firefox browsers. Each branch library has a designated staff member to assist students.

“And in addition,” said Mr Webster, “extensive library and IT assistance is available in person and also via telephone and online via email, chat and new technologies such as blogs, RSS feeds and Blackboard tools.”

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## Reduce, re-use and recycle @ your library®



Coming up with suggestions of things to do for the various NSW @your library® campaigns is always fun with the ideas flowing freely. When we celebrated reduce, re-use and recycle @your library®, I was somewhat apprehensive: would our creative juices be stymied? I should never have doubted the imaginative prowess of library colleagues. Many libraries are already doing a lot of things to help

REDUCE, RE-USE and RECYCLE their waste but here a few more suggestions to consider.

- Keep up the good work by helping to reduce the number of plastic bags in our environment by promoting and distributing your fabulous library bags.
- Accept the challenge and try to organise a “waste free” morning tea.
- Build a display around your collection, and don’t neglect the wealth of information available on the web.
- Purchase a Bokashi Bin – all of your food scraps can go into the Bokashi Bin <http://www.eco-organics.com.au> to find out more.
- Does one of your staff have chickens at home? How about having a ‘chook bucket’?
- Consider running a paper making workshop at the library. It can be lots of fun and will help spread the word about reduce, reuse and recycle.
- Find out if your local council has an Environmental Education Officer who could help to organise some ‘waste workshops’ through your library.
- Hold a recycling education session for staff. It can be lots of fun!
- Set up a paper, cartridge and/or computer recycling program.

- Visit the Planet Ark website for more information about various recycling programs <http://www.planetark.com/>
- Organise a tour to your local waste management centre and see how it all works.
- Reduce your paper use.
- Set up a filing system within your email program and regularly make back-ups.
- Try and use both sides of office and writing paper.
- Email instead of using paper and don’t print!
- Reuse envelopes.
- Buy paper and stationery with recycled content and encourage your purchasing officer to source products made from recycled materials.
- Treat yourselves and purchase tissues, paper towels and loo paper made from recycled paper.
- Share your good ideas with other libraries.

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## EcoCentre library in Port Phillip

Climate change, sustainability, global warming are all terms that have become everyday phrases. Not a news bulletin can be aired without some reference to the deterioration of the planet. It is a very serious issue that confronts communities across the globe and solutions will not be easy to find. The most important fact about sustainability is that it is dependent upon local action for a global future.

The Port Phillip EcoCentre is a not-for-profit umbrella environment organization that aims to work with the community to improve and protect the natural environment and ensure good living for future generations.

One of the primary objectives of the EcoCentre is to provide access to current technical expertise to maintain and improve the environment and one tool that has been vital in supporting this objective has been the development of the EcoCentre Library.



**Reference shelves**

The library includes reference books, field guides, government policies and legislation, magazines and newsletters on a wide range of subjects related to sustainability. While at this stage the library is unable to provide lending library services it is primarily geared to support research and project development.

Services at the library include free internet access for appropriate research; and photocopying at very reasonable rates.

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