Facts

Digital Audiobook Players

Introduction

In 2008 the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS), Library of Congress, will begin to distribute digital talking books (DTBs) and digital talking-book machines that will gradually replace the analog audiocassette books and audiocassette machines used today. While NLS moves forward with its digital talking-book program, many forms of audiobooks in a variety of digital formats are also emerging. To accommodate these books, an assortment of players has become available.

This factsheet describes the following:

- specialized audiobook players designed for use by blind or visually impaired individuals

- selected commercial off-the-shelf audiobook players with features that make them usable by blind or visually impaired individuals

- software programs that may be installed on a standard computer to enable users to play audiobooks without an additional device

This factsheet provides basic information about each product. Contact information is provided for each supplier, which can provide information about additional features of the players. The capabilities and supported formats of players change frequently. Therefore features such as search functions, note-taking capability, and variable playback speeds should be verified at the time of purchase. Please note that supported versions of the DAISY audiobook format vary among products, and books produced using later versions of the DAISY format will not play on all products.

In 2002, a NISO digital talking-book standard was approved and adopted as American National Standard ANSI/NISO Z39.86 (2002), "Specifications for the

Digital Talking Book." Digital talking-book players under development by NLS will be compliant with the standard, but this factsheet does not address the standard in relation to the players listed.

Audiobook formats covered in this factsheet include Audible, DAISY, MP3, text, and Windows Media Audio (WMA). The medium for each can be CD, CompactFlash, or Secure Digital memory card, or a computer hard drive. A brief description of the formats and the media is provided in the glossary.

Disclaimer

Items listed in this factsheet are not part of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped program. Their listing does not imply endorsement and they may not be compatible with the digital talking book that is under development by NLS. Prices are subject to frequent change and should be verified with the supplier before ordering.

Contents

Glossary

ANSI/NISO Z39.86 (2002)
 See NISO.

Audible
 Proprietary compressed audio file format tailored for human voices. Developed by Audible.com.

CD
 Compact disc.

CompactFlash memory card
 A small card that uses flash memory to store data and is used by such devices as digital cameras, music players, and some audiobook players.

DAISY (Digital Accessible Information System)
 A set of standards and software developed by the international DAISY Consortium for recording digital talking books designed specifically for people who are unable to read standard print.

Earbuds
 Small listening devices that fit in the ear canal. Earbuds may have one earpiece or two for stereo sound reproduction.

Earphones
 Listening devices usually consisting of two small speakers connected by wires and designed to fit over the head or under the chin. The speakers fit at the opening to the ear canal, and allow for listening to audio in stereo.

Flash memory
 A type of nonvolatile memory that can be erased and rewritten.

Keypad
 A keyboard, usually with no more than three or four numbered keys in each row.

Macintosh
 Computer created by Apple Computer, Inc.

MP3
 MPEG-1 Audio Layer-3. Compression scheme used to encode audio files.

NISO
   A digital talking-book standard created under the umbrella of the National Information
Standards Organization (NISO) and approved as an American National Standard by the
American National Standards Institute (ANSI). It is entitled "Specifications for the Talk-
ing Book."

Secure Digital (SD) memory card
   A small card that uses flash memory and is used by devices such as digital cameras,
   music players, and some audiobook players.

WMA (Windows Media Audio)
   Multimedia file or streaming audio format created by Microsoft Corporation and used
   to download and play files.

Windows
   Computer operating system created by Microsoft Corporation.

Specialized Audiobook Players

	BookCourier	Book Port
Name	BookCourier	Book Port
Producer	Springer Design, Inc.	APH
Price	$379	$395
Format	Audible, DAISY, MP3, and text formats	Audible, DAISY, MP3, and text formats
Media	CompactFlash memory card (included)	CompactFlash memory card (included)
Major features	**headphones required**, allows unlimited bookmarks, built-in speech synthesizer	**headphones required**, allows unlimited bookmarks, built-in speech synthesizer,
Operation	operates on two AA batteries	operates on two AA batteries
Size	2.75" x 4.87" x 1"	2.25" x 4" x 1"
Weight	6 oz.	7 oz.
Additional features	auto shut-off sleep timer, automatic bookmark at the end of each reading session, built-in microphone, built-in talking user guide	auto shut-off sleep timer, automatic bookmark at the end of each reading session, built-in micro-phone, built-in talking user guide, CD with software and seventeen hundred digital books to transfer from a computer, audiocassette instructions, note-taking capability
Distributor (s)	IRTI, Springer, and Technologies for the Visually Impaired, catalog no. 757836	APH, catalog no. 1-07440-00

	Icon from Levelstar	**Milestone 311 Voice Recorder/MP3 Player**
Name		
Producer	Levelstar, Inc.	Independent Living Aids, Inc.
Price	$1,395	$350
Format	DAISY, MP3, and text	DAISY and MP3
Media	mini SD and internal hard drive	SD memory card
Major features	allows unlimited bookmarks, built-in speech synthesizer, and internal speaker	includes earbuds, internal memory, and internal speaker
Operation	operates on a built-in rechargeable battery or AC adaptor (included)	operates on rechargeable battery or AC adaptor (included)
Size	3.35" x 5.09" x .97"	3.35" x 2.13" x .55"
Weight	7.4 ounces	1.7 ounces
Additional features	automatic bookmark at the end of each reading session, built-in microphone, built-in talking user guide, auto shut-off sleep timer	built-in microphone, note-taking capability
Distributor (s)	Levelstar, Inc.	Independent Living Aids item number 757828

	Plextalk DAISY CD Players: PTN1, PTN1 Pro	Plextalk Portable Recorder, PTR2
Name		
Producer	Plextor LLC	Plextor LLC
Price	$350	$895
Format	DAISY, MP3, and standard audio	DAISY and standard audio
Media	CD	CompactFlash memory card (included)
Major features	allows bookmarks, built-in speaker	allows multiple bookmarks, built-in speaker
Operation	operates on rechargeable battery or AC adaptor (included)	operates on rechargeable battery or AC adaptor (included)
Size	8.66" x 6.77" x 2.2"	1.6" x 3" x .8"
Weight	2.65 lbs	4.30 lbs
Additional features	auto shut-off sleep timer; PTN1 Pro has a keypad	auto shut-off sleep timer, built-in microphone, recording tools to record and edit DAISY books
Distributor(s)	EnableMart, IRTI, and RFB&D	EnableMart, IRTI, RFB&D, and Technologies for the Visually Impaired

	Telex ezDAISY CD Player	Telex Professor
Name		
Producer	Telex Communications, Inc.	Telex Communications, Inc.
Price	$249	$349
Format	DAISY, MP3, and standard audio	DAISY, MP3, and standard audio
Media	CD	CD and 4-track audiocassette
Major features	**headphones required**, LCD screen to display disc details	allows multiple bookmarks (on the CD), built-in speaker
Operation	operates on four AA batteries or AC adaptor (included)	operates on 6-volt DC rechargeable battery pack or AC adaptor (included)
Size	5.25" x 6" x 1.59"	11" x 6.75" x 10"
Weight	0.65 lbs	6.2 lbs
Additional features		AM/FM radio with audible station notification and ability to preset stations
Distributor(s)	Independent Living Aids, Inc.; RFB&D; and Telex catalog no. 301329	Independent Living Aids, Inc.; RFB&D; and Telex catalog no. 3016480000

	Telex Scholar Digital Talking Book Player	Victor Reader Classic VRC
Name	Telex Scholar Digital Talking Book Player	Victor Reader Classic VRC
Producer	Telex Communications, Inc.	HumanWare
Price	$249	$375
Format	DAISY, MP3, and standard audio	DAISY, MP3, and standard audio
Media	CD	CD
Major features	**headphones required**, allows bookmarks, LCD screen displays disc details	built-in speaker
Operation	operates on four AA batteries or AC adaptor (included)	operates on rechargeable factory-installed batteries or AC adaptor
Size	5.25" x 6" x 1.59"	9.3" x 8.2" x 2.1"
Weight	1.65 lbs	2.42 lbs
Additional features	retains its location in a commercial CD audio-book when stopped	
Distributor(s)	Independent Living Aids, Inc.; RFB&D; and Telex	Beyond Sight, Inc., and HumanWare

	Victor Reader Classic Plus	Victor Reader Classic Plus, with Recording
Name	Victor Reader Classic Plus	Victor Reader Classic Plus, with Recording
Producer	HumanWare	HumanWare
Price	$375	$495
Format	DAISY, MP3, and standard audio	DAISY, MP3, and standard audio
Media	CD	CD and SD memory card recording feature that records voice notes
Major features	allows multiple bookmarks, built-in speaker	allows multiple bookmarks, built-in speaker
Operation	operates on rechargeable, factory-installed batteries or AC adaptor (included)	operates on rechargeable, factory-installed batteries or AC adaptor (included)
Size	9.3" x 8.2" x 2.1"	9.3" x 8.2" x 2.1"
Weight	2.64 lbs	2.64 lbs
Additional features	allows skipping elements such as page numbers and footnotes	allows skipping elements such as page numbers and footnotes
Distributor(s)	Beyond Sight, Inc.; HumanWare; and RFB&D	Beyond Sight, Inc.; HumanWare; and RFB&D

Name	Victor Reader Vibe	Victor Reader Wave
Producer	HumanWare	HumanWare
Price	$219	$249
Format	DAISY, MP3, and standard audio	DAISY, MP3, and standard audio
Media	CD	CD
Major features	includes earbuds, allows bookmarks	**earphones required**, allows multiple bookmarks
Operation	operates on two AA rechargeable factory installed batteries	operates on two AA rechargeable factory installed batteries
Size	5.5" x 5.5" x 1"	5.82" x 5.43" x 1.14"
Weight	.65 lbs	.65 lbs
Additional features		
Distributor(s)	Beyond Sight, Inc.; HumanWare; Independent Living Aids, Inc; and RFB&D	Beyond Sight, Inc.; HumanWare; Independent Living Aids, Inc.; and RFB&D

Selected Commercial Audiobook Players

Name	Audiofy Player	MuVo Mix 512 MB	Playaway	Soul Player
Producer	Audiofy Corporation	Creative Labs	Findaway	Soulmate Audiobooks
Price	$29.95	$70	$30–$55	$149.99
Format	Audiofy audiobooks	Audible, MP3, and WMA	Preloaded, self-contained audio-book	MP3, standard audio, and WMA
Media	SD memory card (included)	built-in flash memory; requires a computer to load content		CD
Major features	headphones required	includes stereo earbuds	includes earbuds, allows bookmarks	forward and reverse by book, chapter, or page
Operation	operates on two AAA batteries	operates on one AAA battery (included)	operates on one AAA battery (included)	operates on two AA batteries, with a built-in battery charger
Size	3.9" x 2.5" x .5"	2.8" x 1.3" x .6"	2" x 3" x .5"	6" x 5" x 1"
Weight	2.8 oz	1.3 oz	.6 oz	11 oz.
Additional features		audible feedback in the rewind and fast-forward modes		auto-resume function
Distributor(s)	Audiofy	Creative Labs	Findaway	Soulmate

Selected Audiobook Software Players

Name	AMIS	Book Wizard Reader	EaseReader	eClipseReader	eReader
Producer	AMIS Project	APH	Dolphin Audio Publishing	IRTI	CAST
Price	Free (download)	$49 CD, $39 download	$55–$75	$59.99–$84.99	$85–$229
Format	DAISY and MP3	DAISY and MP3	DAISY and text	DAISY, MP3, and text	DAISY and text
Major features	allows bookmarks	allows bookmarks	allows unlimited bookmarks, includes speech synthesizer and audio user guide	allows unlimited bookmarks, includes speech synthesizer	available in both Windows and Macintosh versions, includes speech synthesizer
Additional features					
Distributor(s)	AMIS	APH	Dolphin	IRTI and RFB&D	CAST

Name	FSReader	gh Player 2.0	Katieplayer	Kurzweil 1000	Victor Reader Soft
Producer	Freedom Scientific	gh, LLC	RFB&D	Kurzweil Educational Systems	HumanWare
Price	$79.95	$149–$299.99	$18 (basic)	$995	$79–$150
Format	DAISY, MP3, standard audio	DAISY and text	DAISY	text-based DAISY	DAISY
Major features	allows unlimited bookmarks	allows bookmarks includes speech synthesizer	operates on a Macintosh computer (not Windows)	allows bookmarks, includes speech synthesizer	allows bookmarks; some versions include a speech synthesizer
Additional features	auto-resume function allows CD to resume playing at the last stop		auto shut-off sleep timer	scans paper documents then opens, reads, and stores them in DAISY format	
Distributor(s)	Freedom Scientific	Enable Mart and MaxiAids	RFB&D	HumanWare and Kurzweil	Beyond Sight, HumanWare, and RFB&D

Addresses of Sources

APH
(American Printing House for the Blind)
1839 Frankfort Avenue
Louisville, KY 40206
(502) 895-2405
800-223-2274
(502) 899-2274 fax
cs@aph.org
www.aph.org

AMIS
(Adaptive Multimedia Information System)
info@amisproject.org
marisademeglio@users.sourceforge.net
http://amis.sourceforge.net

Audiofy Corporation
3502 Scotts Lane, Building 12
Philadelphia, PA 19129
(215) 848-8000
866-472-8346
(215) 790-6200 fax
support@audiofy.com
www.audiofy.com

Beyond Sight, Inc.
5650 South Windermere Street
Littleton, CO 80120
(303) 795-6455
(303) 795-6425 fax
support@beyondsight.com
www.beyondsight.com

CAST
(formerly Center For Applied Speech Technology)
40 Harvard Mills Square, Suite 3
Wakefield, MA 01880-3233
(781) 245-2212
888-858-9994, ext. 273
(781) 245-5212 fax

cast@cast.org
www.cast.org

Creative Labs
1901 McCarthy Boulevard
Milpitas, CA 95035
(408) 428-6600
800-998-1000
(408) 428-6611 fax
http://us.creative.com

Dolphin Computer Access, Ltd.
231 Clarksville Road, Suite 3
Princeton Junction, NJ 08550
(650) 348-7401
866-797-5921
(650) 348-7403 fax
info@dolphinusa.com
www.yourdolphin.com

EnableMart
4210 East 4th Plain Boulevard
Vancouver, WA 98661
(360) 695-4155
888-640-1999
(360) 695-4133 fax
sales@enablemart.com
www.enablemart.com

Findaway
23 Bell Street
Chagrin Falls, OH 44022
(440) 893-0808
877-893-0808
(440) 893-0809 fax
www.playawaydigital.com

Freedom Scientific
11800 31st Court North
St. Petersburg, FL 33716
(727) 803-8000

800-444-4443
(727) 803-8001 fax
www.freedomscientific.com

gh, LLC
1305 Cumberland Avenue
West Lafayette, IN 47906
(765) 775-3776
866-693-3687 (866-MY-3-DOTS)
(765) 775-2501 fax
sales@ghbraille.com
www.ghbraille.com

HumanWare
175 Mason Circle
Concord, CA 94520
(925) 680-7100
800-722-3393
(925) 681-4630 fax
us.info@humanware.com
www.humanware.com

Independent Living Aids, Inc.
P. O. Box 9022
Hicksville, NY 11802-9022
(516) 937-1848
800-537-2118
(516) 937-3906 fax
can-do@independentliving.com
www.independentliving.com

IRTI
(Innovative Rehabilitation Technology, Inc.)
13465 Colfax Highway
Grass Valley, CA 95945
(530) 274-2090
800-322-4784
(530) 274-2093 fax
info@irti.net
www.irti.net

Kurzweil Educational Systems, Inc.
100 Crosby Drive, Suite 302
Bedford, MA 01730-1402
(781) 276-0600

800-894-5374
(781) 276-0650 fax
info@kurzweiledu.com
sales@kurzweiledu.com
technology@kurzweiltech.com
www.kurzweiledu.com

Levelstar, Inc.
1500 Cherry Street, Suite D
Louisville, CO 80027
(303) 926-4334
800-315-2305
(303) 926-1787 fax
info@levelstar.com
www.levelstar.com

MaxiAids, Inc.
42 Executive Boulevard
Farmingdale, NY 11735
(631) 752-0521
800-522-6294
(631) 752-0689 fax
sales@maxiaides.com
www.maxiaids.com

Plextor LLC
48383 Fremont Boulevard, Suite 120
Fremont, CA 94538
(510) 440-2000
(510) 651-9755 fax
sales@plextor.com
www.plextor.com

RFB&D
(Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic)
20 Roszel Road
Princeton, NJ 08540
800-221-4792
custserv@rfbd.org
www.rfbd.org
Plextalk reseller to RFB&D members only

Soulmate Audiobooks, Inc.
1704 Eaton Drive
Grand Haven, MI 49417

(616) 846-5256
800-854-7959
help@soulmateaudio.com
www.soulmateaudio.com

Springer Design, Inc.
3160 Crow Canyon Place, Suite 145
San Ramon, CA 94583
(925) 242-0310
(925) 242-0357 fax
sales@bookcourier.com
www.bookcourier.com

Technologies for the Visually Impaired
9 Nolan Court
Hauppauge, NY 11788
(631) 724-4479 voice and fax
866-689-5672
contact@tvi-web.com
www.tvi-web.com

Telex Communications, Inc.
Customer Services–Special Needs
12000 Portland Avenue South
Burnsville, MN 55337
(952) 884-4051
800-828-6107, ext. 7498
(952) 887-5595 fax
info@telex.com
www.telex.com

Selected Bibliography

2006 AccessWorld guide to assistive technology products. New York: AFB Press, 2006. 229p. Large print. $24.95.

Andrews, David. Which DAISY digital talking-book player is right for you? Proceedings of the Center on Disabilities, Technology and Persons with Disabilities Conference, California State University at Northridge (CSUN), 2006. Northridge, CA: 2006. Online at www.csun.edu/cod/conf/2006/proceedings/2812.htm.

Andrews, David. Reviews and comparisons of DAISY digital talking-book players. St. Paul: Minnesota State Services for the Blind, 2004. 46p.

Bernstein, Neil. Flash-memory distribution of digital talking books. Washington: National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Library of Congress, 2005. 8p. Free. [booklet]. Also available online at www.loc.gov/nls/technical/flashdistribution.html.

Chevalier, Gerry. Digital talking books–life after the CD. Proceedings of the Center on Disabilities, Technology and Persons with Disabilities Conference, California State University at Northridge (CSUN), 2006. Northridge, CA: 2006. Online at www.csun.edu/cod/conf/2006/proceedings/2757.htm.

Crabb, Nolan. Now you can take your reader everywhere! Dialogue, v. 42, winter 2003: 71–76.

E-Book Crossroads. E-book readers and handheld reading devices. Retrieved Aug. 18, 2005. www.ebookcrossroads.com/ebook-readers.html.

Hodges, Brad. Consumer electronics: crisis at the big box store, part 3. Braille monitor, v. 48, June 2005: 396–407.

Kendrick, Deborah. Marking the road to MP3 player accessibility: a review of the Milestone 311, product evaluation. AccessWorld, v. 7, Sept. 2006. Retrieved Aug. 28, 2006. www.afb.org/afbpress/pub.asp?DocID=aw070505.

Kendrick, Deborah. On the move with MuVo, product evaluation. AccessWorld, v. 6, Jan. 2005. Retrieved Aug. 16, 2005. www.afb.org/afbpress/pub.asp?DocID=aw060108.

Kendrick, Deborah. Read all day with Playaway, product evaluation. AccessWorld, v. 7, July 2006. Retrieved Aug. 31, 2006. www.afb.org/afbpress/pub.asp?DocID=aw070409.

Leventhal, Jay. A library in your hand: a review of the Book Port and the BookCourier. AccessWorld, v. 5, July 2004. Retrieved Aug. 18, 2006. www.afb.org/afbpress/pub.asp?DocID=aw050407.

Leventhal, Jay, and Janina Sajka. Read me, read me not: a review of four DAISY books players. AccessWorld, v. 5, Jan. 2004. Retrieved Aug. 18, 2006. www.afb.org/afbpress/pub.asp?DocID=aw050104.

Leventhal, Jay, and Janina Sajka. A rosy future for DAISY books. AccessWorld, v. 5, Jan 2004. Retrieved Aug. 18, 2006. www.afb.org/afbpress/pub.asp?DocID=aw050103.

Library of Congress. National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Current strategic business plan for the implementation of digital systems. Washington, 2006. 57p. Available online at www.loc.gov/nls/businessplan/index.html.

Library of Congress. National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Frequently asked questions: digital talking books. Washington. 10p. Free. [brochure]. Available online at www.loc.gov/nls/dtbfaq.html.

Library of Congress. National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Washington. NLS flash. Monthly. Free. Available online at www.loc.gov/nls/newsletters/flash/index.html.

Library of Congress. National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Reference Section. Facts: selected sources for electronic texts. Compiled by Carol Strauss and Judy Dixon. Washington, 2003. 8p. Free. Available online at www.loc.gov/nls/reference/factsheets/etexts.html; also available on audiocassette upon request.

National Federation of the Blind. Technology resource list: digital and e-book resources. Retrieved May 19, 2006. Available online at www.nfb.org/nfb/technology_resource_list1.asp?sn1d=1139857582#D&EBR

NIMAS Development and Technical Assistance Centers. Digital talking books. Retrieved May19, 2006. Available online at http://nimas.cast.org/about/resources/dtb.html.

Taylor, John M. Serving blind readers in a digital age. American libraries, v. 35, Dec. 2004: 49–51.

Worsfold, John. DAISY accessibility for the masses using EaseReader. Proceedings of the Center on Disabilities, Technology and Persons with Disabilities Conference, California State University at Northridge (CSUN), 2006. Northridge, CA: 2006. Online at http://www.csun.edu/cod/conf/2006/proceedings/2692.htm.

Reference Section
2007