

April 26, 2009

RE. COPYRIGHT LEGISLATION FOR THE BLIND

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I am a legally blind Roman Catholic Priest, blind for 55 years, working with disabled people the world over, helping them to use their disabilities to better our world... For my 65th birthday, March 18, 2009, I received from many friends the gift of the Kindle 2 reader... I wept, many, many tears of joy, that for the first time in my blind life, since 9 years old, I am able to read materials instantly because the Kindle 2 is enhanced with text-to-speech... I am able to read today's newspapers, this month's favorite magazines, and the latest best sellers... IMMEDIATELY, not needing any longer to wait for them to be translated into accessible media! ... I am a published author, 5 books thus far, and the cost of making my published materials accessible to those I serve is astronomical! If I send them to Amazon's Kindle, they can be immediately accessible... For the first time in my 55 years of blindness I have seen a ray of hope that perhaps, just perhaps, we who are visually impaired can come to some equality with the sighted world... The recent discussion about stopping this technology distresses me thoroughly, not only for myself but for the millions of my brothers and sisters who also are reading impaired... Why should we be forced to wait for materials to be translated into accessible formats when that process is truly no longer necessary? And why should we be forced to pay the astronomical prices for audio books, etc. that are not immediately available through the Library of Congress, etc.? I have a Bachelor's Degree in English Literature, a Master's Degree in Library Science, and a Master's Degree in Divinity... My colleagues can pick up and read books and articles immediately and thanks to new technology I can do the same... unless Copyright laws say "NO!" to my rights to read like others! I hope, I pray, the authors of new copyright legislation will look with compassion and fairness upon us who are denied the privileges of reading by "print only formats."

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