

It is time for the Copyright office to stand up to the self-interests of the publishing industry and remove restrictions which serve to deny access to the printed word to Americans with print handicaps. I have been legally blind all of my life. I can't express fully the roller-coaster of emotions I went through upon hearing that the Kindle 2 would have a text to speech feature and then finding that the authors had forced Amazon to disable it. Adobe's decision to disable their text to speech feature is equally troubling. I missed out on many class discussions in school and college because my recorded books arrived after the book had already been finished by the class. I continue to miss the opportunity to comment on and benefit in other ways from printed material of a time sensitive nature, including books about current events. Also, as a writer, I cannot write about currently popular books or include them in the research I do, which drastically limits my opportunities for being paid for my work. In addition, my opportunities to participate as an informed, contributing member of our democratic society are reduced. I also miss the social opportunities of being able to participate in local and online book clubs or to chat with my family, friends and neighbors intelligently about the books they are reading, because I can't obtain versions of the books in a timely fashion.

Blind people and others with print handicaps have much to offer the society as a whole, especially during this time of economic downturn in which many people are experiencing unemployment, rejection and loss -- things which we have a long history of dealing with and about which we have suggestions and tips for coping. We also have the right to be equal participants in our society both on a professional and social basis.

We are knocking on many doors, asking to be allowed to pursue the rights that everyone says we have under the Constitution, but which are systematically denied to us by short-sighted and inconsiderate acts of selfishness such as the ones forced on Adobe and Amazon by the author's union. Please help us open this door.