



Submission to the Copyright Review Committee

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## **Executive Summary**

To date, publishers have failed to recognise the value in engaging with the disability demographic however the Copyright Commission has the influence to provide a solution to this problem and instigate an increased market share for publishers.

Kanchi is a not for profit disability organisation that works to change mindsets and behaviours around disability. Kanchi works with decision makers and leaders to promote the Disability Business Case. The Disability Business Case demonstrates the benefits of engaging with the disability demographic as customers, employees and members of the community. The Copyright Commission is one of these leaders, they have the power to influence and ensure that people with print disabilities can access publications in alternative formats.

The publishing community now has the opportunity to engage with new demographics by expanding their customer base through the provision of a readily accessible library of materials for people with print disabilities. This will not only impact on their bottom line but will instigate a positive shift toward inclusive and sustainable education and business practices for people with disabilities.

Publishers are legally bound to keep a stock file of intermediate electronic copies of resources; with these resources at their disposal the publishing community has the opportunity to ensure that accessible publications are readily available to everyone.

## **What is Kanchi?**

Kanchi is a not for profit disability organisation that works to change mindsets and behaviours around disability. Kanchi works with decision makers and leaders to promote the Disability Business Case through unique, innovative and affective business initiatives.

Kanchi initiatives include the Ability Awards and the Kanchi Network.

The Ability Awards is an international business awards programme that recognises business for their achievements in best practice for the inclusion and employment of people with disabilities within business. Research conducted after the Ability Awards in Ireland showed that 20 per cent of the working population of Ireland were actively recruiting, marketing and serving people with disabilities highlighting the value of engaging with the disability demographic.

Following on from the success of the Ability Awards, Kanchi looked to a new way of continuing this shift in mindset around disability through the influence of business. In February 2011 the Kanchi Network was launched, a one stop shop committed to creating inclusive business in Ireland through the disability business case. Kanchi Network members receive support, tools, knowledge, training and consultancy from Kanchi and its disability and business experts.

## **Engaging with the Disability Demographic**

There are one billion people affected by disability in the world, a population that represents the market size of China, a community with a diverse range of skills, abilities and perspectives. However when publishers fail to provide materials in accessible format they are not only ignoring a valuable and typically overlooked customer base but are also contributing to the passive discrimination, segregation and marginalization of people with disabilities.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), “Disability is a phenomenon that exists in all societies and tends to affect predictable proportions of each population”. Despite an estimated 15 per cent of every countries population being affected by a disability (UN), disability is too often left off the agenda; essentially, it is the elephant in the room due to negative framing based on pity, dependency and crippling stereotypes.

Now more than ever businesses need a competitive edge, return on smart investment and a strategic business plan that will contribute to the overall success of their organisation. In 2008 the global down turn in the economy induced a stiff market space, this coupled with an impending talent shortage due to an aging population means that businesses need to source their talent, staff and customer base from new demographics and unsaturated market spaces.

People with disabilities make up one off the world’s most unsaturated market and talent pools due to the historically negative depiction of people with disabilities in society. As businesses look to more sustainable practices to ensure long term success in line with shifts in demographics they are recognising the value and contribution of people with disabilities as customers and employees. This demographic represents massive potential for the long term success and sustainability of the publishing community for a number of reasons.

### **Expanding Market Base**

The EU has estimated that the number of people with disabilities in Europe will grow to 20 per cent by 2020, but when publishers fail to provide alternative and accessible formats they are ignoring an untapped market base that is continuously growing. Engaging with the disability demographic has led to successful return on investment for a number of industries such as the Assistive Technology (AT) sector which is now worth over 30 billion euro in Europe and the telecommunications sector which continues to expand its portfolio of offerings due to the demand they are experiencing.

Limited resources and constraints on funding affect predictable parts of every sector, however if publishers took a mainstream approach to providing accessible publications it would reduce time constraints on converting publications in the long term and lead to a library of accessible materials for everyone. If publishers recognised the value of engaging with the disability demographic by providing accessible publications they could increase their market share significantly.

### **The Big Picture – From Education to Business**

A recent ESRI study showed that two thirds of young people with disabilities want to work if the circumstances allow them to. Currently, students with print disabilities are at a distinct disadvantage when trying to skill themselves up to enter the workforce. When requesting accessible course materials students with print disabilities experience, time consuming ad hoc

services, this inevitably lessens their competitiveness as potential talent in comparison to their peers without disabilities.

Denying students with disabilities the opportunity to skill themselves up to enter the workforce because there are no readily accessible publications is a form of passive discrimination. Furthermore it contributes to the increased difficulties for the business community as it faces an impending talent shortage due to an aging population globally.

When an organisation is unable to employ a person with a print disability because they will not be able to avail of accessible publications, this hinders an organisations reputation as an inclusive business, while also impacting on the diversity of thought within the company, at a time when inclusive business practices and a diverse workforce are seen as two key competitive elements within a successful business.

Similarly, 85 per cent of people with disabilities acquire their disability during the course of their working lives, if a business is unable to meet the needs of employees that they have invested in and developed if they acquire a print disability because publishers have failed to produce alternative text materials; an organisation is at an automatic loss.

In accordance with section 104 of the Copyright Act, publishers have an anticipatory duty to hold an intermediate electronic version of resources that can be supplied on request for the purpose of creating an accessible resource for a person with a disability who is the owner or lawful user of a work. Publishers already have electronic versions of resources; by taking the initiative to build a mainstream library of accessible publications the publishing community has the potential to expand their market base.

Alternative format materials can involve audio access, mostly using text-to-speech software; audio publications are a fantastic example of accessible publications and are becoming increasingly popular among mainstream society. Ensuring the provision of accessible materials will not only boost publishers reputation as inclusive of people with disabilities but will also expand into further market spaces as society is opting to use alternative means of accessing publications.

By ensuring that all outgoing materials from publishers are available in accessible formats, the publishing community has the potential to become a leader in this shift in mindset around people with disabilities gaining authority as an inclusive sector which will lead to long term sustainability through an increased market share, reputation management and new sources of talent – this is the Disability Business Case. .

If publishers were to take a mainstream approach to providing accessible publications, it would not only have a positive impact on the bottom line for publishers but would also lead to more inclusive educational and business practices.