

The Need For Audio Journals In The Uzbekistan Media Field. Problems And Solutions

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Abstract

This article discusses the history of the emergence of audio publications specialized for visually impaired information consumers in the global media landscape and their types. The author analyzes the requirements for audio journals prepared for the visually impaired and the importance of such publications in the Uzbek press, as well as some proposals on the topic.

Keywords: visually impaired, audio magazine, audio format, speaker, voice intonation, live conversation, sound effects, Uzbek media, typhlomeia, audio publications.

Introduction

In the global media arena, special attention is paid to the formation of opportunities for persons with disabilities to receive information in formats that are convenient for them, depending on the type of disability. This is reflected in international normative documents as the rights of this category of information consumers, including Article 21, entitled "Freedom of expression of opinion and belief and access to information", of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly by resolution 61/106 of December 13, 2006."¹

Among people with disabilities, a separate group that needs to receive information in special formats is the blind. Unlike information consumers with other types of disabilities, the blind need to have appropriate accessibility for them, regardless of which media they use. For example, braille or audio for printed publications, voice-over for television content, and speech synthesizer for Internet pages. It is no secret that the most important means for people with visual impairments to absorb external information

is to receive information through listening. In this regard, the role of audio publications is of particular importance. It can be said that the idea of audio publications arose on the basis of the practice of producing audiobooks by the American Foundation for the Blind. The fact is that in the 1930s, this foundation, with its own funds, as well as funds provided by the state and sponsoring organizations, undertook a project to produce "talking" books for blind readers living in the country. "By 1934, the project had produced audio versions of several books, including the Constitution of the United States, Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Hamlet*. In 1962, the US Congress authorized the operation of a library providing audiobooks for the blind. By 1968, the library was recording audiobooks on vinyl records and distributing them in printed form. When the experiment was successful, local journals also began to offer their publications in this format. The first magazine in American history to be presented in audio format was the *US News & World Report*, which was introduced to subscribers in 1971"². Later, in a number of countries around the world, the practice of

¹ <https://lex.uz/docs/5501227>

² <https://www.loc.gov/nls/who-we-are/history/>

selecting various materials published in local publications that were considered important and interesting for the visually impaired and presenting them in the form of a separate audio magazine was established.

To date, several experiments have been tested in foreign media to convert printed materials into audio format. For example, in the 90s of the last century, in Great Britain, samples of articles from local weekly newspapers were read by volunteers, recorded on audio cassettes in a high-quality format and delivered to subscribers via free postal services with the condition of return. Although this method was widespread in Western countries, it was not without some shortcomings. For example, since the maximum capacity of audio cassettes was 90 minutes, it was not possible to record newspapers in their entirety. Therefore, the materials in them were selected and voiced by the initiators. In this case, choosing news or articles that would be of equal interest to everyone was considered a difficult process. Also, since the process of transcribing a newspaper and delivering it to the listener by mail takes a certain amount of time, there have been cases where blind newspaper readers are informed of the information later than others. In Canada, the USA and Australia, another method of presenting printed publications in a voice format is the transmission of information through telephone calls. In this case, the blind listener dials special numbers and calls the central system where the newspapers are stored, which are voiced by the speakers. The necessary newspaper is selected and listened to using the appropriate numbers. It is also possible to listen to sections of the newspaper using the necessary numbers or digital codes. Newspapers are presented in

their entirety in this central system. The disadvantage of this method is that blind information consumers are assessed as spending more than usual on telephone services.

"Audio newspapers and journals in the press of foreign countries are mostly prepared by volunteers. For example, a number of audio journals in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America use mostly volunteers. In Sweden, the production of audio newspapers and journals is financed by the government. Editors also add an audio version to the printed version of their newspapers and journals"³. This ensures equal access to the press for visually impaired and non-visually impaired information consumers.

Audio publications can be divided into types such as non-independent and independent audio journals according to the method of preparation. For example, it is appropriate to call a non-independent audio magazine a completely voiced version of a printed publication or a voiced version of materials collected from several newspapers and journals. This is because no separate content is prepared for this type of audio publication, but materials previously published in other publications are simply converted into audio content.

In independent audio journals, the main part of the content is focused on topics specialized for the visually impaired, which requires special preparation and a creative approach. Working on materials for such publications includes several stages: first, selecting topics that are interesting for listeners. In this case, taking into account the fact that information consumers are representatives of different ages and different fields, a golden mean is determined, and topics are selected and recorded on paper accordingly. Taking into

³ <https://www.loc.gov/nls/braille-audio-reading-materials/journals/>

account that the audio magazine is intended only for listening, the articles prepared are edited with sentences that are as understandable to the listener as possible. However, it is necessary not to deviate from the norms of the literary language. After the text on paper is edited, the sound operator prepares a phonogram based on it.

After the content of the audio magazine is formed, it is advisable to voice it with the help of speakers who have no speech defects. In this case, special attention should be paid to the fact that there should be several speakers and, of course, they should consist of male and female voices. Because the variety of voices serves to increase the attractiveness of the magazine. If the audio material is about the description of a place or a description of some reality, conveying this information using additional sound effects will further increase the interest of subscribers.

Independent audio journals specially prepared for visually impaired information consumers have not been observed in the Uzbek media to date. Considering that today there is only one special magazine published in Braille for more than 70 thousand visually impaired information consumers, it is not difficult to feel how limited the opportunities for this category of people to access information are. This problem can be positively solved through audio publications. Based on the above, starting in 2023, the first audio magazine "Tiflomeia" specializing in transmitting audio information for visually impaired people has been launched in Uzbekistan. It disseminates important and necessary information not only about the life of the visually impaired, but also about the life of society as a whole. At the same time, it introduces the visually impaired to the life of society as a whole, and representatives of the general public to the life of the visually impaired. This approach aims to develop information communication between people

with visual impairments and the general public. Today, the audio magazine "Tiflomeia" is brought to the attention of listeners through the official Tiflomeia channel on the Telegram messenger. The editorial team focuses on preparing high-quality content that is easy to understand for visually impaired information consumers, and is based on professional commentary, as much as possible, that is not found in other sources. In particular, in the issues published to date, the "Media World" column covers the opportunities for visually impaired people to obtain information, and the "History We Don't Know" column covers interesting information about the history of events in various fields. The "Contact Address" column contains interviews with representatives of various fields, and the "Famous Blind People of the World" column tells about the lives of blind people who have become famous in various fields around the world. The "IT podcast" column provides information about the technical capabilities created for the visually impaired in modern information technologies, as well as instructions on the rules for their use, along with practical procedures. Since June 2024, the audio magazine "Tiflomeia" has been registered as an official audio publication of the Uzbekistan Society for the Blind.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that the expansion of the network of publications in audio form primarily serves to satisfy the necessary needs of information consumers who are blind. In addition, the implementation of the requirements set forth in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by our country in 2021, will be ensured at the national level.

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