

LibriVox: Audiobooks of Books in the Public Domain

< <http://Librivox.org> > whose tag line is “acoustical liberation of books in the public domain,” is a library of digital recordings of public domain books, including fiction, non-fiction, children’s literature, poetry and other works. The books are read by volunteers. Their objective is to “make all books in the public domain available, for free, in audio format on the Internet.” This is a challenging goal, but since they started the project in August 1995, they have created a collection of more than 137 completed books, such as the *Canterbury Tales*, 49 non-fiction books and short works, and many other items, such as Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*, *The Secret Garden* by Francis Hodgson Burnett, Hugh Lofting’s *The Story of Dr. Doolittle* and many others. Each item includes a link to the Project Gutenberg etext as well as multiple ways to access the audio file.

Listeners can download the files of individual works, either mp3 or ogg format and listen that way, or you can use a podcast retrieval service such as iTunes, ipodder or juice to subscribe to LibriVox and get podcasts downloaded to your computer four times a week automatically. Once you have the files, it’s just a matter of sitting back and enjoying them! These freely available audiobooks may be of great value to libraries for your patrons who enjoy podcasts and audiobooks.

One of the cool things about LibriVox is that all of the readings are done by volunteers. Volunteer readers need only a love of reading, a desire to read out loud, and a way to record the audio file and send it to LibriVox. There are extensive materials and FAQs < <http://librivox.org/wiki/moin.cgi/> > on how to best to do this, but very simple recording technology can be used. Readers can sign up for chapters of books, poetry or entire works. The web site provides information about which books and chapters are in need of readers using a discussion forum < <http://librivox.org/forum/viewforum.php?f=2> >.

If you’re not quite ready for a reading assignment, you could also help out by volunteering as a “proof listener.” If you want to read, but doubt your voice, take a look at < <http://librivox.org/wiki/moin.cgi/HelpWhatIfISuck> >.

Volunteering to read for LibriVox seems like a great way for librarians to contribute to the reading and literacy community. Happy Reading!

[Jane Neale, Information Technology Coordinator, Nylink]

