

Audio Description Update

Winter 2009

Introduction

Hello and welcome to the latest edition of AD Update. In this issue you'll be reading about some digital radio research RNIB has commissioned; a new Bollywood project; DVDs with AD, and Help Scheme provision for people with sound-only TV solutions. We also need your help to get more AD on TV - so read on.

The cost of mailing this Update is increasing and sending this update by e-mail is the cheapest option. Therefore if you have an email address and are willing to receive the Update electronically, please send an email to audiodescription@rnib.org.uk letting us know your name, email address and postcode.

If you no longer wish to receive this Update and would like to be removed from our mailing list, please either send an email to audiodescription@rnib.org.uk or telephone 020 7391 2258 with your name, address and postcode.

All the RNIB contacts referred to in this issue appear at the end in a section entitled "contact details".

Audio Description targets - now there's no excuse!

"Audio description is brilliant - just fantastic. But there are still so many programmes that need it and don't have it. Why isn't there more audio description?" This comment, made by an RNIB Campaign Supporter, is typical of many RNIB receives from blind and partially sighted AD users.

Back in 2006 Ofcom (the media regulator) said they would not increase the current 10 per cent audio description targets for broadcasters until awareness of AD increased. So that's what we did. You may have seen some of the adverts on TV in early 2008. Awareness has increased from 42 per cent to 72 per cent amongst blind and partially sighted people.

Ofcom also said they needed to be “clearer” about usage of audio description. There is now much more equipment available that receives audio description. And over the next four years every registered blind or partially sighted person will, for a payment of around £40, receive equipment that gets audio description as part of the Government Help Scheme for Digital TV switchover.

Now there’s no excuse. It’s time for the Government to double the audio description targets to 20 per cent.

Take action now! In order for this to happen, MPs do need to hear that you, their constituent, want more audio description. Please support the campaign by writing, phoning or emailing your MP. We’ve provided draft letters that you can send to your MP or use as a basis to write your own letter. Contact us on 020 7391 2123, email campaigns@rnib.org.uk or www.rnib.org.uk/ad

DVDs with Audio Description

Below is the list of DVDs that have been added to our list since the last Update was written - end of May 2008. These DVDs are available from anywhere in the UK that sells DVDs; they are not available from RNIB. The AD is included as a feature that can be selected from the on-screen menu, or by pressing the "Audio" button on your DVD player's remote control you can access the audio described version of the film.

- 10,000 BC
- 21 (also available on Blu-ray)
- 27 Dresses
- Across the Universe
- Adulthood
- Aladdin Trilogy Limited Edition Boxed Set (2 out of 3 films with audio description)
- Anger Management - Blu ray ONLY
- Be Kind Rewind
- Bright Young Things
- Casino Royale
- Catch and Release
- Chronicles of Narnia - Prince Caspian

- Donkey Punch
- Dr Who Series 4 BBC box set with talking menus
- Einstein and Eddington
- Fools Gold
- Fred Claus
- Gothika - Blu ray ONLY
- Hancock (single and 2 disc special edition, also on Blu ray)
- Happy Go Lucky
- Hellboy (3 Disk Director's Cut)
- Horton Hears A Who
- Identity - Blu ray ONLY
- Jumper
- Juno
- Meet the Spartans
- National Treasure 2: Book of Secrets
- Oliver Twist (BBC 2007 with talking menus)
- Penelope
- Prom Night
- Rambo
- Saawariya
- Shutter
- Sleeping Beauty
- Son Of Rambow
- Speed Racer (not on packaging)
- Star Wars - The Clone Wars
- Street Kings
- Terry Pratchett's The Colour of Magic
- The Bucket List
- The Cottage
- The Covenant - Blu-ray ONLY
- The Dark Knight (also on Blu-ray)
- The Eye (also on Blu-ray)
- The First Sunday
- The Game Plan
- The Happening
- The Nightmare Before Christmas
- The Savages
- The Water Horse
- There Will Be Blood
- Toy Story

- Toy Story 2
- Vacancy - Blu ray ONLY
- Vantage Point
- Wallander (with talking menus)
- Wall-E (also available on Blu-ray)
- Welcome to the Jungle - Blu-ray ONLY
- What Happens in Vegas
- Wild China (with talking menus - Blu-ray ONLY)

Digital Switchover Help Scheme and Sound-Only TV Receivers

The following article has been submitted by the Digital Switchover Help Scheme. Any enquiries about the contents of this article should be addressed to the Help Scheme - contact details appear at the end of the article.

"Blind and partially sighted people can get help with digital switchover from the Switchover Help Scheme. The BBC-run Help Scheme offers eligible people practical help to switch one TV to digital when switchover comes to their region.

"The good news is that the Help Scheme has made provision for people with sound only TV receivers so they can continue to listen to television audio and remain exempt from the TV Licence.

People are eligible for the Help Scheme if:

- They are aged 75 or over, or
- They get (or could get) disability living allowance, or attendance or constant attendance allowance, or mobility supplement, or
- They are registered blind or partially sighted, or
- They have been resident in a care home for six months or more

"For around £40, or for free (if they receive pension credit or are on income benefits), they will be offered:

- equipment to convert one TV set;
- installation of that equipment;
- a demonstration of how it works, and someone to call for help whilst they are getting used to it.

"In general, eligible people must be covered by a valid TV Licence to be able to take advantage of the Help Scheme. However support under the Help Scheme is available to all registered blind or partially sighted people – who either have a television licence or are legally not required to have one, as they use a sound only receiver.

"The Switchover Help Scheme will offer help to people who are registered blind or partially sighted and

- use a digital box with a hi-fi system or another device that can only be used to produce audio and cannot display television programmes, and
- are not using any other television receiving equipment to watch or record programmes as they are being broadcast on live TV.
- for people with audio-only equipment, the Help Scheme will provide a digital set top receiver which can be connected to the eligible person's hi-fi equipment. No picture is produced so no TV Licence is necessary. The Help Scheme does not intend to supply specialist audio-only digital television receivers.

"The Switchover Help Scheme starts writing about five months before switchover in their region to all eligible people to offer them the help. People who are not listed on TV Licensing's database get a letter asking them to show evidence of a valid licence in order to get help. In the case of people who are also registered as blind or partially sighted, a special letter will be sent which sets out the help available for those who rely on audio-only equipment. Those people will be able to contact the Switchover Help Scheme and get the help.

"Nearer the time to switchover in a specific region, the Switchover Help Scheme will send out an information pack and an application form (we also have the information in CD and Braille format) to ask whether a person meets the requirements for eligibility and needs our help. All our literature, such as our Code of Service Standards booklet and equipment guides, is available in Braille format.

"Carefully vetted installers will visit their homes by appointment only and provide a digital set top box that can be plugged into a hi-fi system. Installers are trained to understand the needs of eligible people and will take the time to make sure Help Scheme customers are comfortable with how to use their new equipment. For example, they know not to move furniture without warning blind and visually impaired people and they will put back everything where they found it. They will also tell you if and why they need to leave the room at any time during the visit.

"For extra security at the door, our installers can carry a Help Scheme ID card in Braille, and you can also arrange a password before the visit for extra peace of mind.

"For further details about the Help Scheme please refer to the website: www.helpscheme.co.uk or call 0800 40 85 900."

Audio Description on Bollywood Movies

Bollywood has been a veritable dream factory for millions of its fans ever since its first silent film was presented to the masses almost a century ago. The dream has not lost its sheen and the industry produces the largest number of movies globally. Bollywood is known for producing song and dance visual extravaganzas and to ensure that these are enjoyed to the fullest by all aficionados, it is imperative that audio description becomes an intrinsic feature of Bollywood movies.

The Bollywood audio description project launched by RNIB is being undertaken to meet the specific needs of blind and partially sighted ethnic minority people in the UK. It seeks to establish a potential market for audio described Bollywood films in the UK. The project also plans to develop a working relationship with the Bollywood film industry and organisations supporting blind and partially sighted people in India and the UK to enable audio description provision in both countries.

Last year, Bollywood films generated £16 million at the UK box office. The market for Bollywood movies, despite being quite niche in the UK, is an important and growing one. One Bollywood film features almost regularly in the "Weekly Top Ten" charts in the UK.

As part of laying the basic groundwork for initiating the Bollywood project, a potential user study is to be conducted. It will look at developing focus groups, especially in areas of high Asian population where there are also dedicated cinemas screening the latest Bollywood films.

The biggest movie industry in the world, producing over 1,000 films with an annual turnover of \$2.1 billion has today attracted the attention of major global players like Warner Brothers, Columbia and Universal Studios. It has led to advances within the industry in terms of distribution and technology. What remains to be seen is the kind of excitement AD is able to generate in Mumbai – the home of Bollywood.

If you'd like more information on the Bollywood project, please contact Sonali Rai on 020 7391 3270 or email sonali.raai@rnib.org.uk.

Digital Radio Research Project

Access to radio is key to the quality of life for blind and partially sighted people and previous research showed that listening to the radio is a favoured and valued pastime for many.

Anecdotal evidence suggested to RNIB that although digital radio equipment is able to provide listeners with a range of features and functions not available on analogue radio (such as an increased choice of stations; pausing live broadcasts; recording and playing back digital radio broadcasts) the needs of blind and partially sighted people were not being met by the existing equipment available to consumers. Therefore RNIB has recently commissioned primary and independent research from i2 Media Research Ltd into the equipment needs of blind and partially sighted consumers for accessible and useable digital radio (DAB).

This initial research then led to RNIB commissioning Ricability to conduct independent product testing against the design checklist that the i2 Media research produced. This testing was to fully assess a range of current products on the market for usability and accessibility, and to also advise blind and partially sighted consumers on purchasing decisions.

The results of these product tests can be found at www.ricability-digitaltv.org.uk or by contacting Ricability on 020 7427 2460.

RNIB will now use this research to work with manufacturers, retailers, industry bodies, regulators and the UK government to make the digital radio experiences of blind and partially sighted listeners a better one.

For more information on this project please contact 020 7391 2398.

Contact Details

General Audio Description Enquiries: 020 7391 2398

Email enquiries: audiodescription@rnib.org.uk

Media & Culture Team
RNIB
105 Judd Street
London
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Specific Queries:

Audio Description on Television: Jill Whitehead, 020 7391 2398

Audio Description in Cinema: Jill Whitehead, 020 7391 2398

Request sample letter to send to your MP: 020 7391 2123

Request a sample of AD: Jill Whitehead, 020 7391 2398

DVDs with Audio Description: Joan Greening, 020 7391 2322

Requests for talks to local groups: Peter Atkin, 01487 813172

For help with setting up home technology: 0845 604 2341

Bollywood project: Sonali Rai, 020 7391 3270.

Audio Description in Theatre: Anna Jones, 020 7391 2150

Football, Rugby and Cricket AD: Eleanor Ellison, 01273 262221

Home Video Service: Customer Services, 0845 702 3153

Digital radio enquiries: Jill Whitehead, 020 7391 2398.

If you would like to comment on anything contained in this newsletter, change the format you receive it in, or to be removed from our mailing list, please contact Louise Arnold on 020 7391 2258 or email audiodescription@rnib.org.uk.