

Virginia M. Woolf Foundation

Nonprofit uses Adobe Acrobat and Adobe PDF to make thousands of books available to people with impaired vision

PROFILE

- A nonprofit corporation that makes publications available to the blind and vision impaired
- Headquarters: Manhattan Beach, California
- www.text-key.com

BENEFITS SUMMARY

- Using the accessibility features of Acrobat, combined with screen reader applications, legally blind people can have books in Adobe PDF read aloud.
- Acrobat and Adobe PDF are a cost-effective solution that enables the Foundation to lower costs and provide services to the vision impaired.
- Acrobat integrates easily into the Foundation's process for converting traditional printed materials into accessible electronic publications.
- Acrobat Reader software allows readers to use keyboard commands to navigate through documents, an easier process than using a mouse.
- Books in Adobe PDF can be searched quickly using the electronic search function in Acrobat.
- Acrobat retains the hyperlinks between tables of contents and chapters, enabling vision-impaired readers to quickly locate information.
- Acrobat and Adobe PDF allow readers to enlarge or reduce point sizes to suit their individual needs.

Blind and vision-impaired people have limited access to books. Although some books are available in Braille and libraries lend books with larger type sizes, the selection is limited, and often the type is still too small for many vision-impaired readers. Using Adobe Acrobat software and Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF), the Virginia M. Woolf Foundation is working to change that. Founded in memory of Virginia M. Woolf (1938-1999), a woman with a remarkable record of civic involvement, the Foundation already has distributed more than 1,700 CDs containing books in Adobe PDF. The result is that more publications are now accessible to both legally blind and vision-impaired readers in a format that makes it easier for them to enjoy reading.

"Acrobat and Adobe PDF were the obvious choice for us," says Mike Gold, executive director for the Virginia M. Woolf Foundation. "Screen reader applications read document text aloud while the text appears onscreen. By combining the accessibility features in Acrobat software with a screen reader application, people with impaired vision can now easily view books with 28- and 48-point type or have documents in Adobe PDF read aloud to them."

Full accessibility

The combination of books with extra large font sizes and accessibility features in Acrobat enables the Foundation to serve people who traditionally have a difficult time reading books. In 2001, the Foundation converted 11 titles, including *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, the Bible,

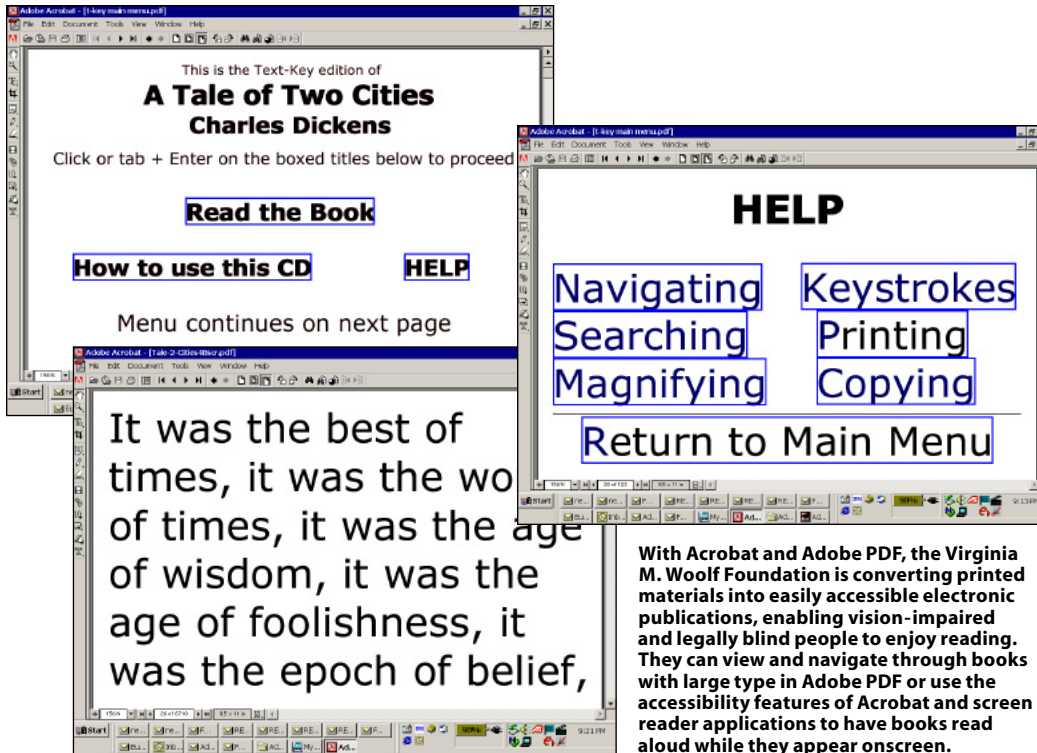
Little Women, and *A Tale of Two Cities*, to fully accessible Adobe PDF files and placed them on CDs.

To request a CD, readers can log on to the Foundation's Web site and order from the list of books available. The cost-effectiveness of Acrobat and Adobe PDF is vital to the nonprofit's ability to keep costs down and provide numerous titles at little or no charge. Each CD contains the reader's requested title and a copy of the free Adobe Acrobat Reader® software.

In addition to displaying the large font sizes and accessibility features in Acrobat, the Adobe software provides other convenient features for vision-impaired and blind people. Adobe PDF is a popular format, and most readers already have the Acrobat Reader software for viewing files and feel comfortable using it. Acrobat Reader software also allows readers to use keyboard commands to navigate through a document. For most vision-impaired people, this is easier than using a mouse and trying to see a computer cursor. Another benefit is that books in Adobe PDF can be searched quickly using the electronic search function in Acrobat.

Easy integration

Acrobat integrates easily into the Foundation's process for converting printed books into accessible electronic publications. The group receives books in electronic file formats containing plain text or in paper copy from which text is then



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Expanded services

Having established a successful process for improving access to books for blind and vision-impaired people, the Foundation is expanding its offerings to include copyright-protected materials such as the Harry Potter series, *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, *The House of Seven Gables*, and other titles. The group plans to offer publishers a reasonable fee for each copyright-protected book distributed and will in turn pass the cost to readers. In addition to publishing novels and its *Vision Enhancement* magazine in large-font format, the group is planning

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*Mike Gold
Executive director
Virginia M. Woolf Foundation*

scanned. Text is then pasted into Microsoft Word or WordPerfect for editing. Typically, editors increase the font size to 28 or 48 points, reformat the pages to ensure that text does not extend past the margins, and add a table of contents with links. Then in one easy step, they can convert finished documents to Adobe PDF. “Acrobat fits easily with our existing way of working,” explains Gold. “All we do is click a single icon to convert files to Adobe PDF.”

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to expand services by providing textbooks and other educational materials to schools. Future projects include making books in Spanish and other languages available as accessible Adobe PDF files for readers worldwide.

“We constantly strive to enhance our services and make our publications more user friendly for the blind and vision impaired,” says Gold. “Acrobat and Adobe PDF are critical to our success.”

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