# Bookshare: Free Accessible Ebooks for Qualified Students of Any Age

## CHRISTINE JONES

Welcome everyone to a webinar entitled Bookshare: free accessible eBooks for qualified students of any age. I'm thrilled that you could join us today. Let me go over quickly what we're going to cover in this webinar. First of all, we're going to look at what Bookshare is, what it offers, and who qualifies for Bookshare. Then we'll talk about how Bookshare works, and how to sign up, how to search for books, and read books, different options for reading books, and we'll demonstrate a couple of the reading tools that can be used to read Bookshare.

So, first of all, what is Bookshare? Bookshare is the world's largest, online, assessable library of copyrighted eBooks, for people with what's called a print disability. And I’m going to get into it in a few minutes, a more detailed description of a print disability, but basically it's a barrier to print, someone who has a barrier to printed text and can't read or process printed text for one of several reasons, which I'll get into in a minute. But I did want to tell you that Bookshare helps more than 300,000 students of all different ages, keep up with assignments, read independently, and even enjoy reading.

Book share offers free membership, for qualified US students of any age. These memberships are funded by awards from the US Department of Education, office of special education programs. They allow access to more-our collection of more than 300,000 titles, books and periodicals, including 5,000 or more books in Spanish. And they offer-the membership offers use of several free reading tools, for reading Bookshare books. And there are many other commercially available tools that read Bookshare books as well.

And basically, I mentioned that memberships are free for qualified US students, and Bookshare defines student pretty liberally as being someone enrolled in class offered by an educational institution that is ongoing, for a period of at least a month, and part of a course of study or curriculum that follows a named set of coursework. And if this link on our help center, which I'm going to bring up now, I'm going to show you, some examples of classes that qualify someone for student status, because I know this is a very common question in the adult education community.

So let me--here I have a link to our help center, which answers the question, which students qualify for free subscriptions, underwritten by OSEP. And it basically explains what I just said here, Students are enrolled in classes to offer by an educational institution, are ongoing for a period of at least a month, and are part of a course of study, or curriculum that follows a named set of coursework. This includes distance

So examples of classes that qualify an individual for student status, meaning for free Bookshare membership if they have a qualifying print disability, which I'm going to get into that in a minute as well, would be classes that lead to a degree or certificate, professional development courses, guide dog classes, computer training classes, perhaps the Hadley school, distance education classes, any classes of course that are taken through a university, or a college, or a technical education program, a career in technical education program, any classes that meet these criteria above. So examples of classes that don't qualify someone for student status currently include, short courses of a duration of less than a month, one on one tutoring or training, and non-academic courses such as exercise classes.

So those are the types of classes that don't qualify an individual for student status, but the classes that do qualify, these are just some examples here, so, there's a wide range of classes that would qualify someone for student status, if they have a qualifying print disability and they're a student, then that means they get the Bookshare membership for free.

It's actually not possible to be a Bookshare member without a qualifying print disability, so I want to make sure that's clear, but if one has a qualifying print disability, and they're a student, by this definition, then they can have a free Bookshare membership. If they qualify for Bookshare, because of a print disability, but they are not a student they can still join and they would just pay a nominal annual fee for the membership. It's fifty dollars a year for an unlimited number of book downloads.

So what does Bookshare offer for adolescents and adults? We have several special collections for age this group. We have a special collection for adolescents called, hot books for emerging teen readers. We also have a great special collection of student resources, which contain material for things like SAT preparation, and the college application process. They have books for GED preparation, including a manual to prepare for the 2015 edition of the GED. We also have a special collection of career resources and a special collection for returning veterans.

And when you have the soft copy of this power point presentation, you can select the links here, the hotlinks phrases, and they will take you right to right to the places on our website where you can find these special collections.

So who qualifies for Bookshare, this is obviously a very common question that we hear all the time, and one that can definitely cause some confusion, and I do want to say at the outset, that our qualifications are determined by the exemption to copyright law, that makes it legal for Bookshare to do what we do.

Without this exemption, it would be illegal for book share to distribute books to anyone, but because of this exemption to copyright law, it is now legal for entities such as Bookshare to distribute books in accessible formats to individuals with certain disabilities. And so the qualifications for who qualifies for Bookshare, is determined, are determined by the wording of that exemption, exemption to copyright law.

So it boils down to the three categories of individuals who qualify for Bookshare. The first one is someone who is blind or has low vision, who is unable to read standard print, and in all cases an individual signing up for book share will need to be certified by a competent authority. And in the case of someone who is blind or has low vision that competent authority could be someone such as a family doctor or other medical professional, ophthalmologist, optometrist, a teacher of the visually impaired, a special education teacher, or if that person was already a member of the nationally library service for the blind and physically handicapped, then that automatically qualifies them for Bookshare membership.

The second category of individuals who might qualify for Bookshare are those with a physical disability that prevents them from being able to read standard print. And that can be a wide range of physical disabilities, everything from mobility issues, to brain injury, to things like cerebral palsy, that prevent motor function, basically someone who perhaps can't hold a book, or turn pages, or has some other physical disability that limits their ability to read.

Again they would have to be certified by a competent authority, and individuals who would be competent to indicate that this type of person qualifies for Bookshare would be somebody such as a family doctor, or other medical professional. Physical therapist, resource specialist, or special education teacher, or disability student services specialist, someone who works in the field and has knowledge of this type of disability.

Thirdly, the third type of category of individual who typically qualifies for Bookshare, is those with a learning disability that significantly interferes with reading. And again they need to have a form signed by a competent authority, and that might include a family doctor, or other medical profession, a neurologist, psychiatrist, learning disability specialist, school psychologist, and a clinical psychologist with a background in learning.

Now again these are just examples of competent authorities, who can certify that someone qualifies for Bookshare. There are other types of job titles and roles who would certainly qualify but this is just to give you a general idea of the type of individuals that will believe have the background and training to certify that someone qualifies for Bookshare.

The person who is signing up for Bookshare is prompted to download a form which they then take to this competent authority and they can fill out the member information, you know, the information on themselves, and the competent authority indicates which type of disability, which of these three disability categories this person is part of. And then they sign their name and give their title. And then our membership team reviews it just to make sure this is a person who is likely to have the background and training to indicate that this person qualifies for Bookshare.

So who doesn't qualify for Bookshare, well, that would be those with disabilities such as autism, intellectual disabilities, ADHD, or hearing loss, on the basis of that disability they would not qualify for Bookshare. However, it's very possible that individuals with those disabilities might also have an accompanying print disability that would qualify them for Bookshare. That would be the disabilities we just talked about, a learning disability, a physical disability, or a visual impairment. That would be the disability that would actually qualify them for Bookshare, not the disabilities listed here.

Another group of people who don't qualify on this basis are those whose first language is not English, so that again is not considered a print disability, does not qualify an individual for Bookshare. However, if the person's whose first language is not English also has accompanying print disability, it would be that disability that would qualify them for Bookshare. And frankly the ninety-eight percent or so of the population who can pick up a book and read it, or could if they learned to read, these individuals do not qualify for Bookshare.

So with all that in mind let's talk about how Bookshare works. First of all an individual who would like to be a member needs to sign up. And I'll talk a little bit more about what's involved in that process. Then they select how they're planning to read Bookshare books. Then browse or search for the books they're interested in reading, books or periodicals, and then download or open the books and read. Depending on the device, and--or software application that they are using, the way that they read the books will differ.

So the sign up process is quite simple. The first step is to go to Bookshare.org and select sign up today. And let me just show the website for a minute here, so I can--so this is the Bookshare website, and the box I am referring to is right here. It says sign up today. So if an individual is interested in joining Bookshare signs, or selects that button, then they would just indicate which type of membership they're interested in.

We have two types of memberships. One is an individual membership, and one is for an organization. So in most cases, someone in the adult ED community would probably be selecting the individual membership. However, it's certainly appropriate and encouraged for an organization supporting that individual to sign up for Bookshare, and then add that individual to their membership. And actually its fine for an individual to be--to have both kinds of memberships. To have their own personal Bookshare membership as well as to be listed on an organization membership.

So they select the type of membership and then from there they need to complete a form with just some basic information, a first name, last name, address, email, you actually create a password during the sign up process, and then, is this person a student, a US student, and then they can sign digitally here, and then they create their account, and at that point they'll be prompted to print a proof of disability form. And that form then is the one that they take to the competent authority to have them sign.

Okay, so as I mentioned the steps for signing up are to go to Bookshare.org and select sign up. Choose a membership type, complete the online form, and agree online to Bookshare's terms they submit then completed disability form signed by a competent authority. And that's in short what's involved in the sign up process. It's pretty straightforward.

The next step is to select how the member will read Bookshare books. And there a number of different ways to read Bookshare books. We try to make it possible to read on a number of different devices, many of the devices these individual will already have, and are already comfortable using. The first way that Bookshare books can be read, is on a computer with an internet browser, right in the browser with a tool called Bookshare web reader.

And I'm going to demonstrate that a little bit more in a few minutes, but basically it allows members to be able to find a book, and select the link that says read now, click on that link and then open the book right in the browser. There's no need to download the book, or download any software, or select any kind of format for the book, it's all pretty self-explanatory. The book opens and in the internet browser depending on the browser it allows the speech to be--it allows the text to be read out loud. And the words are highlighted at the same time.

Another way to read Bookshare books on a computer is with other types of reading software. There is a variety of software tools out there that read Bookshare books, and as soon as I finish this slide I will take you to a place on the Bookshare website where you can see a full list of products that read Bookshare books.

Another great way to read Bookshare books is to download the devices to a computer and transfer them to different kinds of assistive technology devices, or there are many of these devices that connect directly to Bookshare, and allow members to search for books, you know, log into their account, search for books, and download and open the books right there within the device.

Last but not least we encourage on the go reading with our mobile applications. We have an app for the iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad, called read to go, read with the number two and then go. And it's also possible from the Bookshare website to download books in mp3 format that can then be listened to in audio on mp3 players. So those are a lot of different options for individuals to read Bookshare books.

Then it's time to pick out some books to read. So the best way to do that, you could either search or browse, so you can select browse at Bookshare.org, select either a category such as author, a subject category, new books, most popular downloads, newspapers and magazines, or special collection, and there are other categories to select from as well. And just keep drilling down in browse, browse for a book that way.

Another option is to search for books. And to do that we recommend using advanced search. The search for title, author, or ISBN, Publisher, or word or phrase that might appear in the book's synopsis or word or phrase that might appear in the text of the book. For this you would use the field full text search in the advanced search. But you can also use the box on the top of the homepage of the Bookshare website.

Let me show you what I mean. Okay, so this box here is one where you can enter a title of a book, or an author, or an ISBN. And you'll get a great list of search results. You can also use advanced search, where you can search by title, author, ISBN, publisher, here's what I mentioned where you can search for a phrase that might be in the synopsis, or it might be in the full text of the book.

So you search for a book and then once you find a book that you're interested in then that's where you can read it using any number of different tools. So to know more about Bookshare we have a great selection of videos and other types of tutorials. Let me bring that up for you now.

This page-this part of the help center has a wide selection of videos, and webinars, and other types of information that can help you get started with Bookshare there is also a category of brochures and how to guides here. This has a number of videos on everything from basic Bookshare information, to how to sign up, to how to read books on different devices, and, and other helpful topics. I encourage you to check out the videos on the Bookshare website and the other guides as well, the brochures and the how to guides.

And then if you have additional questions you can use our contact us section of the Bookshare website, and that is, and that's here, so you'll see that I've selected under, it's under the help center, and I've gotten to contact us, and here's where you would complete a form, and indicate what your question is about and hit submit. And then you can submit that to Bookshare and we will get back to you fairly quickly with an answer to your question.

Alternatively I'll go ahead and live this screen up for a minute, this is my contact information, I'm Christine Jones, with Bookshare, Benetech, and there's my email address, and my phone number, if I can be of assistance to you. Bookshare's an initiative of Benetech, a nonprofit that develops and uses technology to create positive social change.

So with that I hope that I've addressed most, if not all of your questions, but again if you have questions feel free to contact us, through the website, or contact me directly, and I'll be happy to provide answers to your questions.