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**Audio and E–book Opportunities**

**By Ruth Marlene Friesen**

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I joined a Christian Writers' Group a few weeks ago, and the email exchanges of those members is quite exhilarating. Browsing and skimming them last night I came to one where a writer who has vision trouble and can't read regular print books challenged the others to produce more e–books.

E–books are read on the computer, and the greatest thing about them, as I've discovered myself, is that one can enlarge the text so it is easier to read. For those who find even that too difficult, it is possible to get software in your computer which will read the text to you. I'm not sure how digital it sounds, but I believe in many places that software is free to any who are legally defined as blind.

What shocked me about the exchange was that a number of writers had admitted a bias against e–books when this other member first asked who all offered their books in this form. The mindset still seems to be, a book is not really published until it comes out in paperback or hardcover.

I confess I've learned too, that fiction doesn't sell as an ebook yet, though all kinds of marketing manuals and self–help books do.

Fortunately, when this writer explained herself, the others rallied around with offers to help out. One

said she'd gladly offer her books to be read on tape if anyone could be found to do it. Another urged that we all consider producing our books in digital at the same time as in print.

Thinking about all this today, I suddenly see wide open doors of opportunity for ministry and perhaps a business.

Here in Canada, I believe the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) is on the lookout for volunteers to read books on tape. They have a lending

library by mail. The US has similar organizations.

All you would need is a good clear voice for reading without stammering or hesitation, and with a lively, instead of monotone voice. It wouldn't matter if you sat in a wheelchair, or had no use of arms and legs.

The same reading could be put on tape or CD. Besides the audio, the CD might have a graphics or flash movie version as well.

If you know, or could learn some web design skills, you could volunteer or make small paying arrangements with various authors to turn their books into e-books. If they have a website they might be happy to pay you a small commission on each downloadable copy sold alongside of their print book.

If they don't have a website – guess what – you have the skill, so offer to build that author a simple one or two page website to sell her books. All it needs to be is a terrific sales letter with ordering links at the bottom. You'd think the writer could write up that effective sales letter, right? You'd just copy and paste it into the web page.

Should it happen that you have more advanced skills, or they grow on you, why not set up a library, or bookstore of ebooks? Market it specifically to those who need the benefit of being able to read a book on their computer.



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