





Calibre Audio is a national charity lending free audiobooks to anyone who is print disabled.

1 in 10 people are estimated to have dyslexia (*British Dyslexia Association and NHS UK*)



4.1 million people will be affected by sight loss in the UK by 2050 (*RNIB*)

## Charitable Purpose

To enrich the life quality and opportunities for people of all age groups with a print disability by providing access to free audiobooks and content, and to raise awareness of related issues affecting our members.

Our vision is an inclusive society where everyone with a reading disability can enjoy free and accessible books.

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## A statement from our Chair of Trustees

2021 was another year of major achievement for Calibre Audio, with continued progress towards our long-term goals of increasing membership numbers and diversity, forging strategic partnerships, and broadening the range and appeal of our services to members.

Meeting and exceeding many of our targets amid the continuing challenges of the COVID pandemic is tribute to the team, coupled with the dedication of all Calibre's staff and volunteers.

The generosity of members, trusts and foundations, and other donors ensures our service remains available to those who need it most. We receive no statutory funding and are supremely grateful to all those who give so generously to Calibre's continuing success – whether financially, or by giving up their time as volunteers. Our aim is to continue to deliver excellence to our members and to all who benefit from Calibre's service, and we are confident that that goal remains achievable.

**RICHARD BALKWILL, CHAIR OF TRUSTEES**

## A statement from our CEO

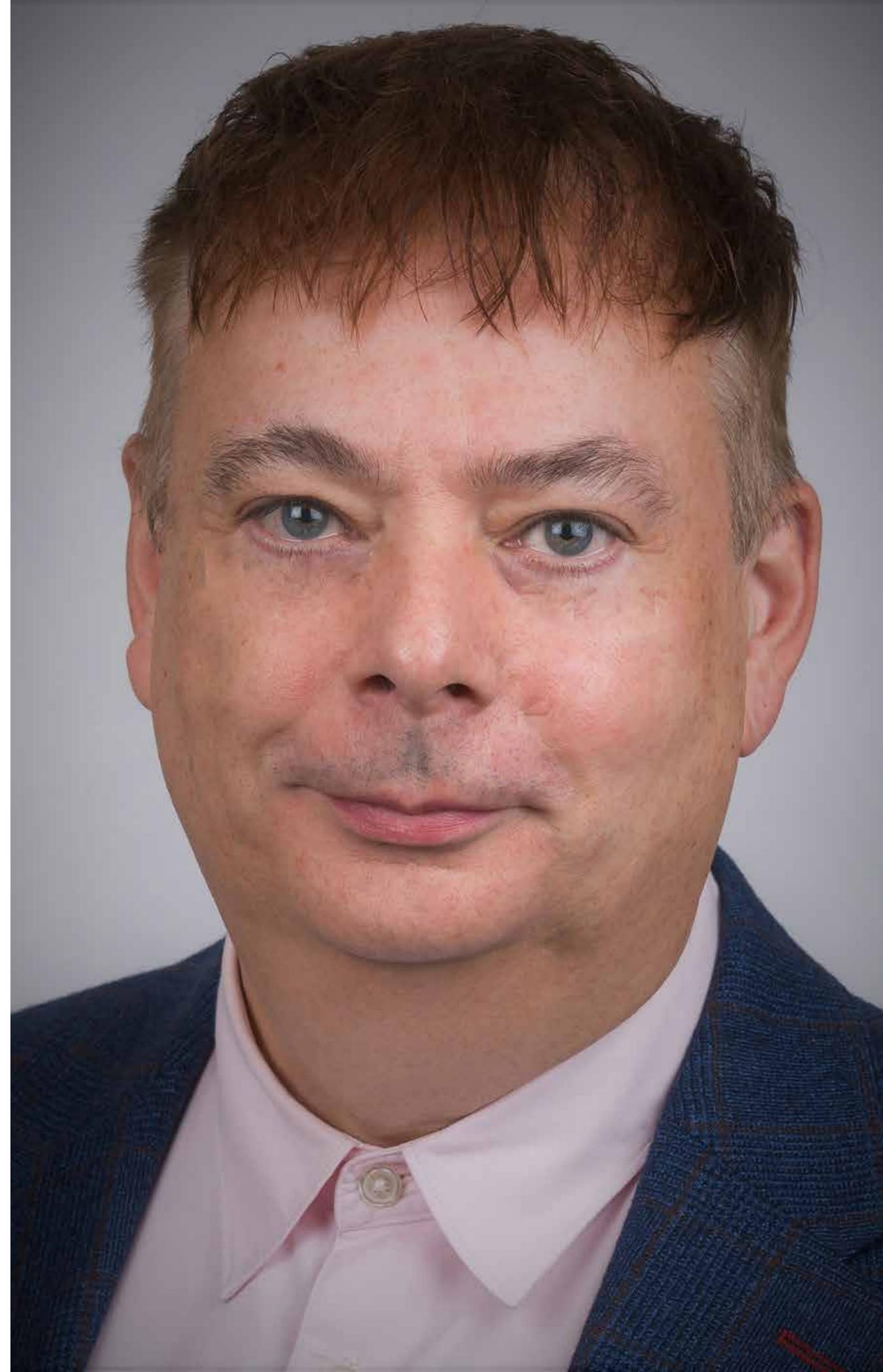
Despite all the challenges we faced in 2021, it was a hugely successful year for Calibre thanks to everyone's continued support. Many of the highlights are mentioned in this report.

We now want to look forward to 2022 and then further beyond that to our 50th anniversary in 2024 and will continue to offer the service our members have come to love. We want to expand our service in Scotland and alongside this, we feel that the time is right to take Calibre to the next level, by expanding our service out into the community and offering facilitated book clubs across the UK to enable people from all backgrounds and disabilities to come together to make new friendships and talk about the books they love.

We also hope to build on the initial work we began in 2021, working with schools and partner agencies to research and measure the benefit audiobooks can bring in supporting mental health and educational achievement for children with learning disabilities across the UK, helping them enjoy and engage in reading. As part of our commitment to strengthen our services for younger members we will form a youth board to help further shape and deliver our services.

Last but not least we will also commit to reducing our carbon footprint wherever possible and to increase our diversity of staff, volunteers and members as well as our book collection so we truly reflect the diversity of the UK population.

**ANTHONY KEMP, CHIEF EXECUTIVE**



## Why are we needed?

In a YouGov poll on Britain's reading habits (March 2020):

- one in five Britons (21%) describe themselves as an avid reader
- 43% of Britons say they read for pleasure at least once a week
- with a third (35%) doing so multiple times and
- 19% of UK adults reading every day

Yet for those members of society who are unable to read print, this simple pleasure would be denied to them without the availability of audiobooks.

Only a staggering 7% of print books are converted to audio, the format needed for print disabled people which, particularly for the younger generation, can have serious implications for their ability to learn and develop. It can be devastating for the elderly, socially isolated, or disadvantaged, to come to terms with their loss of sight as this is often accompanied by a decline in their health and mobility.

The proven benefits of reading (Source: The Reading Agency)

- Reading for pleasure is more important for children's cognitive development than their parents' level of education and is a more powerful factor in life achievement than socio-economic background
- 16 year olds who choose to read books for pleasure outside of school are more likely to secure managerial or professional jobs later in life
- 19% of readers say that reading stops them from feeling lonely
- Children with reading difficulties are at greater risk of developing mental health problems later in life, including depression, anxiety, behavioural problems, anger and aggression
- Each week about 1 in 6 adults in the UK are affected by a common mental health disorder. Studies have shown that those who read for pleasure have higher levels of self-esteem and a greater ability to cope with difficult situations

At Calibre Audio, we believe that *everyone* deserves to lose themselves in a good book and **unleash their imagination.**





## How we made a difference in 2021

*'We are so thankful to Calibre for the rich experience you provide to Zaki whose love of literature and the spoken word is made accessible to him despite his visual impairment. He is always so excited to receive his orange post!'*

ALICE, PARENT OF A YOUNG CALIBRE MEMBER, STOURBRIDGE

*For 15 months most of us have been isolated but thanks to you I have never been without a book to read (listen to) and it makes a lot of difference. Thank you very much.*

CALIBRE MEMBER, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

*I am an avid reader of varied genres; a well-read audiobook is a lifeline to me. I can't imagine life without them!*

KAREN, FOREST OF DEAN

## How we made a difference in 2021

New collaborations with a university and in secondary schools have allowed us to pilot our audiobooks in education, to support learning and engage non-reading children in reading as well as to reach the special needs of some pupils.

### FEEDBACK FROM PUPILS:

*"Using the audiobook has really helped me to understand the text."*

*"I enjoyed listening to the story and was able to follow easier."*

*"It helped me to learn new words and read words I couldn't read myself."*





## Welcome to our new Patron

In 2021 we were excited to announce the wonderful Dame Judi Dench as a new Patron of Calibre.

The Academy Award winning actress's career has spanned over half a century with roles such as Queen Elizabeth I in Shakespeare in Love and M in the Bond films, leading her to become one of Britain's best-loved actresses.

In 2012 Dame Judi was diagnosed with age-related macular degeneration (AMD), a common condition that effects the middle part of your vision in later life. Age-related macular degeneration is the biggest cause of sight loss in the UK, affecting more than 600,000 people. Dame Judi has previously shared how her vision loss has impacted her life; she has had to find other ways for learning lines and can no longer read books. She is hoping that by supporting Calibre she will be able to bring the world of reading to as many people as possible who can not access printed books.

## How we help

We continually add new titles to our collection, ensuring we provide a wide range of books that include bestsellers and new releases as well as classics and more unusual requests from our members. Our editorial team keep a close eye on the literary world, ensuring we keep as up-to-date as possible with events like **World Book Day** and the **Yoto Carnegie Greenaway Children's book awards**. We pride ourselves on our truly unique collection of over **13,000 unabridged audiobooks**, ranging over **70 categories**, with both fiction and non-fiction titles to suit all interests and ages.



Our **dedicated customer service team** provide a personalised and much-valued service to all our members, recommending books and responding to member requests. On hand throughout the working week, our team are contactable by telephone, email or our online chat function, offering support when and how it's needed.



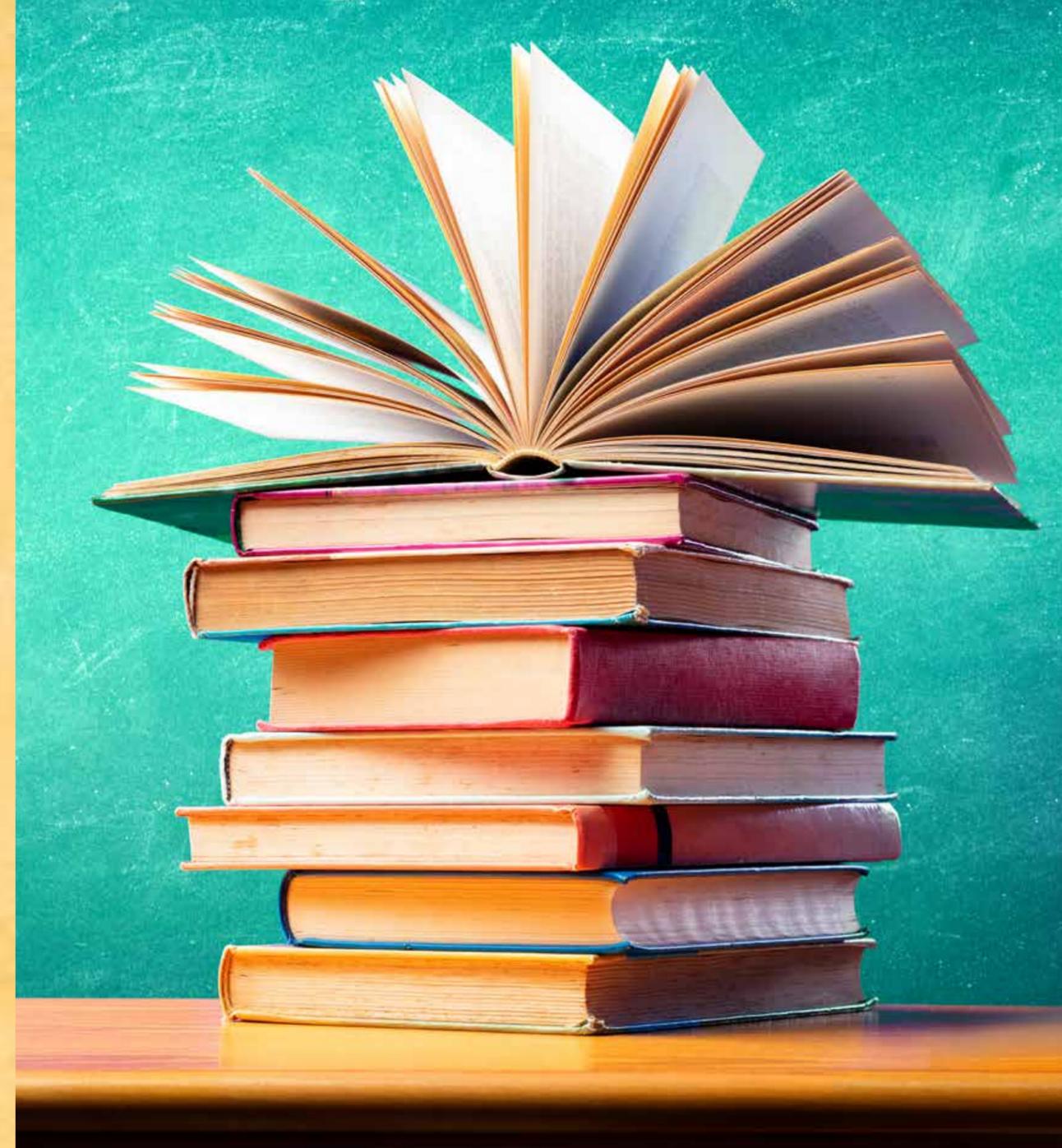
We facilitate an **inclusive community-outreach reading programme**, collaborating with local authorities, libraries, schools and community groups nationwide, improving support and learning, and reducing social isolation and loneliness.

## It's all about books...

To ensure our collection of titles continues to grow so our members have the best possible choice of reading materials, we are forging some great relationships with our colleagues in the world of publishing. During 2021 we increased our number of publisher partners and strengthened those links by joining the [Independent Publishers Guild](#) and by becoming a member of the [Accessible Books Consortium](#).

We are also delighted to have secured an agreement with Penguin Random House to obtain their audio titles for free. This deal is ground-breaking for Calibre Audio and its members, with far reaching benefits. It will expand our audio offer and crucially will allow us to increase the diversity of our books, which in turn will help attract new members of all ages and backgrounds.

Going forward we hope this agreement will encourage other publishers to follow the example set by Penguin Random House and donate their titles freely for the use of our members who may have no other way of accessing them.



# Leading the way with technology

Our digital offering to members is going from strength to strength with our own streaming site which also acts as a catalogue to our collection. Our collaboration with other organisations also gives our members more choice in when and how they listen.



## PLAY Calibre

Our audiobooks are now available on this easily searchable and accessible platform and can be streamed to a variety of devices.

## Calibre Downloads on Dolphin EasyReader

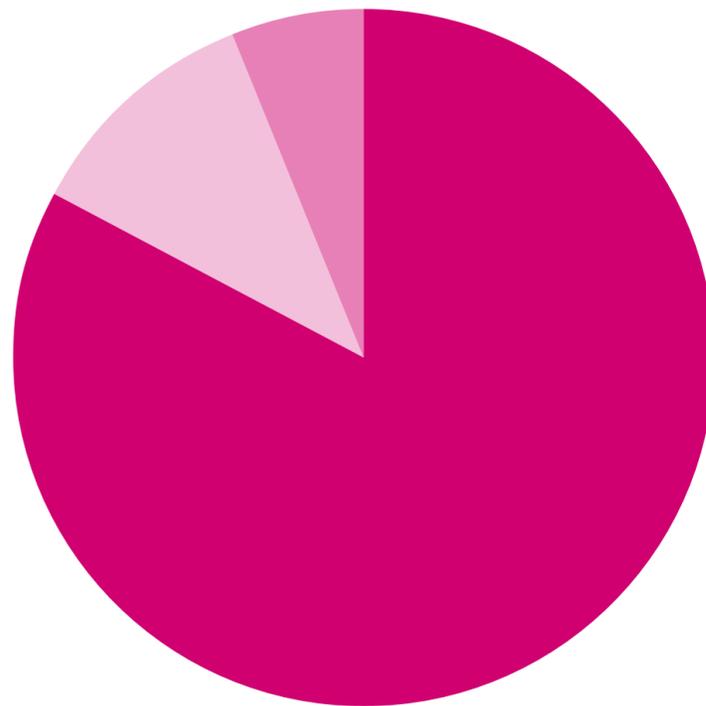
In a collaborative partnership with Dolphin, most of our audiobooks are now available on their EasyReader app, giving even greater freedom for our members to download our titles and listen offline. Specifically designed for readers with dyslexia, low vision and blindness, the app is easy to navigate with accessibility features built in.

Our collection is also available through the Library App, Libby, and RealSAM technology on their pocket phones, and Google Nest and Alexa smart speakers.

# Who we help

Our 16,600 members, aged from five to 105, have a wide range of conditions including:

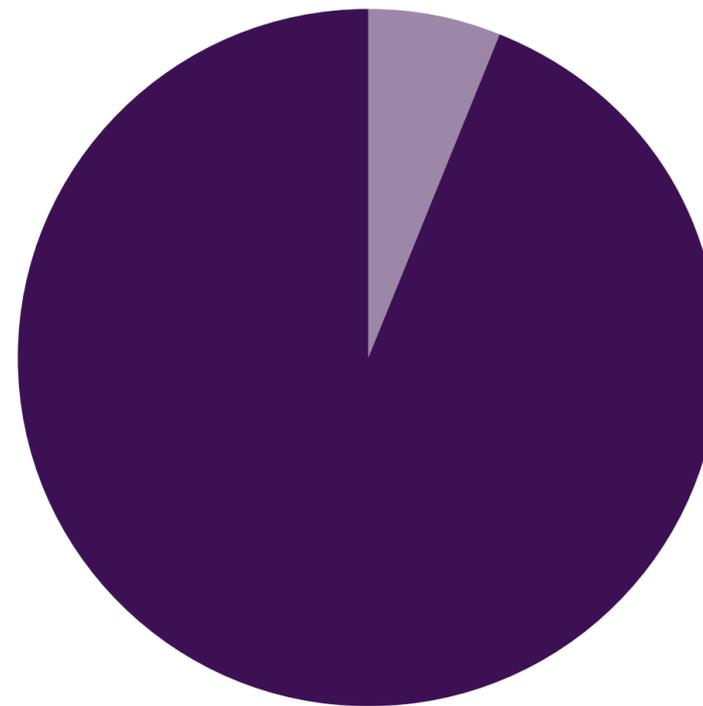
- a learning disability, such as dyslexia;
- a brain injury or cognitive impairment such as head trauma or stroke;
- a vision impairment;
- those suffering with long covid;
- a physical dexterity problem such as multiple sclerosis, Motor Neurone Disease (MND), Parkinson's disease, arthritis, paralysis, terminal illness or early dementia.



**74.5%** Visually Impaired

**17%** dyslexic

**8.5%** other



**91%** Adult members

**9%** Younger members

# Calibre in the community

*'The audio bookclub is important to me because not only do we get to listen to authors we wouldn't normally choose and so discover new favourites but the companionship and discussions are important too.'*

NORFOLK BOOK GROUP MEMBER

*'Isolation is a real problem when you start to lose your sight, and the monthly audiobook clubs give me a purpose to go out'*

*'It helps me to feel the love and enjoyment of books'*

MEMBERS OF THE GAYWOOD BOOK CLUB

Calibre supplies books to over 50 schools and over 47 book groups, making a huge difference to those who love to read in our communities.

## Our impact in 2021

**380,000**  
audiobooks



Sent out over 380,000 audiobooks to our members across the UK and worldwide.

**1,500**  
books a day



That's over 1,500 books posted out and checked back in on USB and CD every working day.

**901**  
new titles



Added 901 new audiobooks to the collection.

**16,600**  
members



Provided a friendly, exemplary service to our 16,600 members.

## ...impact in 2021 continued

**4,159**

new members



We welcomed 4,159 new joiners to the service.

**47**

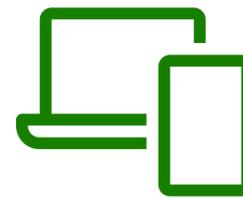
book groups



We send our audiobooks to 47 book groups and numerous libraries, schools and organisations across the UK.

**2,833**

new digital users



We helped 2,833 new members to use our download & streaming services.

**65**

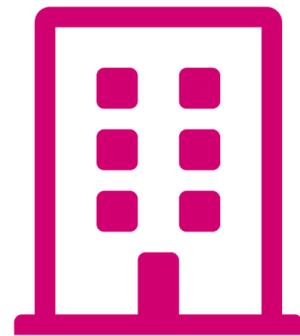
countries



We have members in 65 different countries.



Our team of over 100 volunteers make a vital contribution to the quality and swiftness of our service delivery, we simply couldn't do it without them.



**200 hours**

of volunteer time generously given processing books for our members, downloading books to memory sticks, checking CDs and posting out newsletters.



**79**

narrators recorded new books.



**18**

checkers ensured that all the recordings were of the highest quality for our listeners.

*I am a bookworm and would be bereft without the company of books. I volunteered for Calibre to help distribute the wide ranging selection of audiobooks which are accessible to members.*

JULIET, VOLUNTEER

*I volunteered to give back something to Calibre for supporting my mother and aunt with your excellent service. It has given both of them enjoyment.*

LINDSEY, VOLUNTEER



Our narrators are the voices of Calibre. We rely on a team of 79 narrators, all voice professionals. They record books that are not commercially available so that our members have the widest possible choice of titles. Some of our volunteers have recorded over 100 books each.

# Fundraising

Calibre Audio receives no direct government funding and relies on donations from our supporters and trusts to fund our free audiobook service.

## Fundraising highlights

In 2021 we ran two very successful appeals.

Our **annual appeal** was very much centred around the pandemic and the need to keep our service running for all those who found themselves isolated and alone. We raised an incredible **£110,000**.



Towards the end of 2021, we focused on **our Christmas appeal**. We raised a total of **£35,400**.



A huge thanks to all our donors for the generous amounts, large and small, you continue to send us throughout the year. We couldn't do this without you.



## Fundraising - trusts and grants



We were once again lucky to receive a grant from **The Julia and Hans Rausing Trust**. The amount awarded to us was an amazing **£80,000** and we are hugely grateful to Julia and Hans Rausing for this money.



The **Garfield Weston Foundation** very kindly awarded us **£30,000**.



The **Draper's Charitable Fund** awarded us **£14,960** to support our visually-impaired members aged 70 and above in Greater London.



The **CAF Resilience Fund** awarded us **£31,319**; the funding has been jointly provided by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Community Match Challenge funding scheme as part of the Government's £750 million coronavirus support package for charities.

## Our Supporters



**The generous regular donations we receive are just as important as the large trusts and grants.**

Gerald Walker is fondly described by his granddaughter as ‘an old school gentleman’. When old age started to take hold, his eyesight failed him and he turned to Calibre, spending hours absorbed in his favourite books.

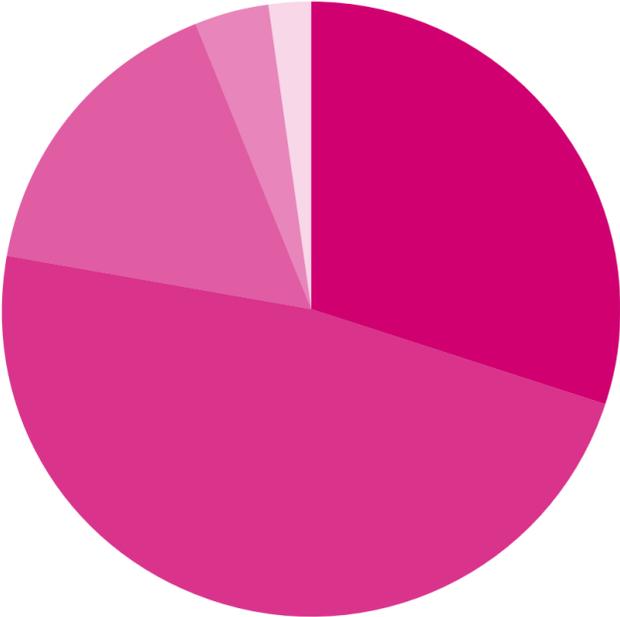
Sadly, Gerald died on 18th April 2021, and his granddaughter, Gemma decided that she wanted to raise money for Calibre in memory of her grandad. The challenge: to walk the Cotswold Way in 5 days, a walk that would normally take 7-10 days. Gemma set up her JustGiving page, aiming to raise £300 and the challenge was on. Gemma completed the task with the support of her partner, George, and they raised an amazing £520.

*Calibre Audio was the best charity we could have ever hoped to find to help my grandad get back his eyes through his hearing. Having books being read to him through a machine was pure joy. This enabled him to still engage in conversation with friends and family over books, characters and authors they all knew and had read. Secretly I think sometimes one of the best bits for him was that he could put his headphones on, sit in his chair and often not even turn the book on. Just so he could get some peace from my nan, as she wouldn't nag him when she thought he was listening to one of his books!*

GEMMA WALKER

# 2021 financials

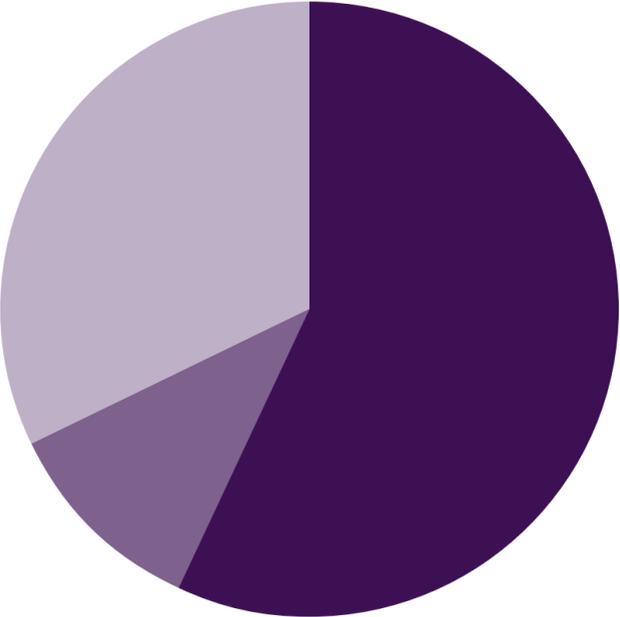
## Income



Total: **£1,373,983**

Donations	26%
Legacies	46%
Trusts and foundations	22%
Merchandising	4%
Other	2%

## Expenditure



Total: **£1,480,126**

Service & digital development	44%
Fundraising cost	14%
Other support & running costs	42%



For every £1 donated **86p** goes directly to fund our audiobook service

## Be a part of our future

As we work towards our 50th anniversary in 2024 our priority is to increase both the number and diversity of our members. We will continue our work with primary and secondary schools to help children with special education needs engage in and enjoy reading and achieve greater academic success. A youth board is also planned to help support the services we offer younger members from different racial, social and economic backgrounds. We are planning to extend the diversity and range of the books in our collection and our presence on social media is also set to grow as we aim to increase the number of our followers. We will also continue to make our books available on as many platforms as possible, including smart speakers and other partner apps, so Calibre audiobooks can be accessed by all who need us, when they need us.

### Our mission statement:

To improve the lives of people with a reading disability by being the leading provider of free and accessible audiobooks; delivering a personalised experience which supports inclusivity and wellbeing, whilst bringing stories and learning to life.





At Calibre Audio, we believe that everyone deserves to lose themselves in a good book and unleash their imagination. But we can't do it alone. If you would like to find out how you can get involved, we'd love to hear from you.

Our contact details are on the last page.



Thank you for  
your interest  
and support

# Calibre audio

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