



Meeting Special Needs

By *admin*

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Article Author:

[Margaret Marshall](#) [1]

[33](#) [2]

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Margaret Marshall reports on the new **National Library for the Handicapped**.

There are about 100,000 handicapped children in the United Kingdom. Out of every 100 children born 2 have a severe handicap and 8 are handicapped to a lesser degree. They have special needs; they also have abilities which can and must be developed so that they can take their place in and contribute to society in general. Many are now learning alongside children in ordinary schools. Books are as important for the special child as for the non-handicapped; but knowledge and information about what is suitable and available is not widespread, especially among those new to handicapped children.

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Which is why 30th April 1985 is a date to celebrate.

Margaret Marshall writes about the opening of **The National Library for the Handicapped Child**

A social worker phoned me to ask for advice about books for a nine year old, mentally handicapped, hyperactive boy in his care. The grandmother of a four year old blind, deaf and mentally handicapped girl wanted to know where she could get tactile books. A teacher of hearing impaired secondary school aged children asked about information books in simple language with clear pictures.

Many parents, teachers and paramedical professionals, plus librarians and handicapped children have said, 'I wish there was one place where we could get information about books to suit the special need.' That wish is now reality. The National Library for the Handicapped Child, sub-titled The Blyton Handi-Read Centre was opened by Susan Hampshire on 30th April, in the presence of Tony Newton, Minister, Bob Dunne MP and Jack Ashley MP, plus many other VIPs from the worlds of books, education, librarianship and the voluntary sector concerned with handicap.

The library is sponsored by the charity, The Enid Blyton Trust for Children, whose chairman is Enid Blyton's daughter Imogen Smallwood. With Beverley Mathias as Librarian and Julie Braithwaite as assistant and myself as Consultant, the library offers a reference library and information service to anyone who needs help in identifying books appropriate to the handicapped child whose disability affects reading.

Two examples of the success of the library occurred on the opening day when an eleven year old partially sighted girl discovered the large print edition of **The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole Aged 13³/₄** and a teacher of mentally handicapped children found an excellent simple book on airports. The girl literally jumped for joy and the teacher, though more restrained, was very pleased.

The stock contains books and audio-visual items, carefully selected according to criteria for format, layout, content and

intended reader, with particular attention to typesize and page layout, clarity of illustration, vocabulary and sentence structure. There are ordinary children's books, fiction and non-fiction that fit the criteria and there are specially produced books for children with partial sight, mental handicap, hearing impairment or other conditions that affect reading. Yellow Terrapin Reska shelving provides an attractive setting and there is special audio-visual equipment, eg television, micro-computer, video, tape-slide for use with the software which will gradually be acquired. Shelf labelling is in print, braille and pictograph.

Visitors and enquirers by post or telephone are welcome and groups can be accommodated by prior arrangement, as can meetings and workshops.

The stock is in the process of being computer catalogued in great detail with many variables so that specific printouts can be obtained to meet enquirers' needs. The logo seen above is not only for the Blyton Handi-Read Centre but can also be seen on those books specially produced for children with a handicap that affects reading, for example the Chivers Press large print editions of six children's books including Philippa Pearce's **Bubble and Squeak** and Enid Blyton's **Five on a Treasure Island**. Two titles from Collins also have the logo, **Jane Telephones Her Friends** and **Jane Shops at the Supermarket**, both intended for mentally handicapped teenage readers but also useful for deaf and reading retarded older children. The logo is copyright to the Enid Blyton Trust for Children. The library is the result of years of requests for such a service and of the vision and funds raised by the Trust. As the continuance of the library depends on charitable giving, all contributions will be gratefully received, by Imogen Smallwood care of the library address.

The National Library for the Handicapped Child is at Lynton House, Tavistock Square, London WC1 (Tel: 01-387 7016). The library is open Monday to Friday from 10.00 am to 6.00 pm.

Books and Bibliographies

Libraries and the Handicapped Child

Margaret Marshall, Gower (1981), 0 233 97299 4, £8.95

The most comprehensive and definitive consideration of handicapped children and libraries.

See All Say All:

A selection of books for the language deprived child

Chosen by Margaret Marshall, IBBY (1985), 0 9508315 15, £1.50 Available from Margaret Marshall, 6a Harmer Green Lane, Digswell, Welwyn, Herts AL6 0AD. (Please enclose large sae.)

Books for the Mentally Handicapped:

A guide to selection

IFLA (1983), 90 70916 010, £2.50

A discussion document on the criteria needed in books for mentally handicapped people and in library services for them. Available from Margaret Marshall.

Seeing Clear:

Books and materials suitable for the partially sighted child SLA (1985), 0 900641 45 2, £3.00

Jane Shops at the Supermarket

0 00 184419 9

Jane Telephones Her Friends

0 00 184418 0

Collins (1985), £2.50 each

The first two titles in a new series, Books for the Handicapped, consultant editor Margaret Marshall.

Page Number:

7

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