Rediscovering DAISY with EasyReader v5.01: Broadening the Appeal of DAISY to a Wider Audience

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Abstract

"Rediscovering DAISY" will introduce Dolphin's new software talking book player EasyReader version 5.01. This presentation is ideal for anyone interested in the playback and distribution of digital talking books for readers with dyslexia, low vision or blindness.

Designed on the outcomes of extensive usability research, and consultations with educational experts, version 5.01 of EasyReader denotes vast improvements in access to DAISY content. The presenter will demonstrate that version 5.01 is THE most feature-rich DAISY solution available, meeting the needs of expert DAISY users. Equally, the new contemporary easy-to-use interface makes EasyReader the perfect solution for DAISY novices alike.

1 Introduction

1.1 DAISY Undiscovered

The full benefits of the DAISY standard, introduced in 2003, remain undiscovered by many readers with a visual impairment, with learning difficulties or with dyslexia. This lack of awareness is despite the well documented learning benefits associated with synchronised text, audio and images for all learners. For existing DAISY readers however, the benefits of reading DAISY books remain unmatched, thanks to the ease of navigation and the numerous high quality production libraries already available internationally.

1.1.1 Extending the use of DAISY to Dyslexic & Learning Disabled communities

DAISY is now the fastest growing alternative format within the visual impairment community, with demand for content now outstripping Braille. But the same can't be said within the learning disabled or dyslexic communities. For these audio learners, DAISY represents a real solution to break the barrier of the printed word. However, few schools, organisations and charities internationally offer DAISY content for this audience, which is in part due to themselves not being fully aware of the full benefits of DAISY talking books. This is further compounded by many of the DAISY playback tools having been designed with the needs of visually impaired learners in mind; many DAISY playback tools are nei-

ther attractive nor intuitive to the sighted and creative natures of dyslexic people. The lack of a contemporary or 'mainstream' playback device that has been designed intuitively for dyslexic readers represents one of the major barriers to the adoption of DAISY as THE preferred alternative format for learning disabled and dyslexic readers.

2 Solution

2.1 Customer-driven Design

In answering this call for a playback tool both fully accessible for visually impaired readers, yet intuitively designed for dyslexic readers, Dolphin Computer Access have developed the next generation of software DAISY player, allowing new readers to discover the full benefits that the rich DAISY format has to offer.

EasyReader version 5.01 has been designed on the outcomes of extensive usability feedback conducted with groups of dyslexic K12 learners at several schools, including Pershore High School in the UK. Further consultation has been conducted with educational experts from Scandinavia, UK and USA including the Norwegian education and DAISY expert Miriam Eileen Nes Begnum, and a focus group run at the AHEAD 2008 conference with faculty members and disability coordinators from colleges across the US.

2.2 Brand new interface with newly coded foundations

Dolphin EasyReader version 5.01 denotes vast improvements in access to DAISY content. EasyReader version 5.01 is not only the most feature-rich DAISY solution available, meeting the needs of expert DAISY users, but its brand new eye-catching and extremely easy-to-use interface makes it the perfect solution for DAISY novices alike.

Completely re-written in C++, the all new EasyReader version 5.01 user interface stores all of the reader's settings in an intuitive tabular design.
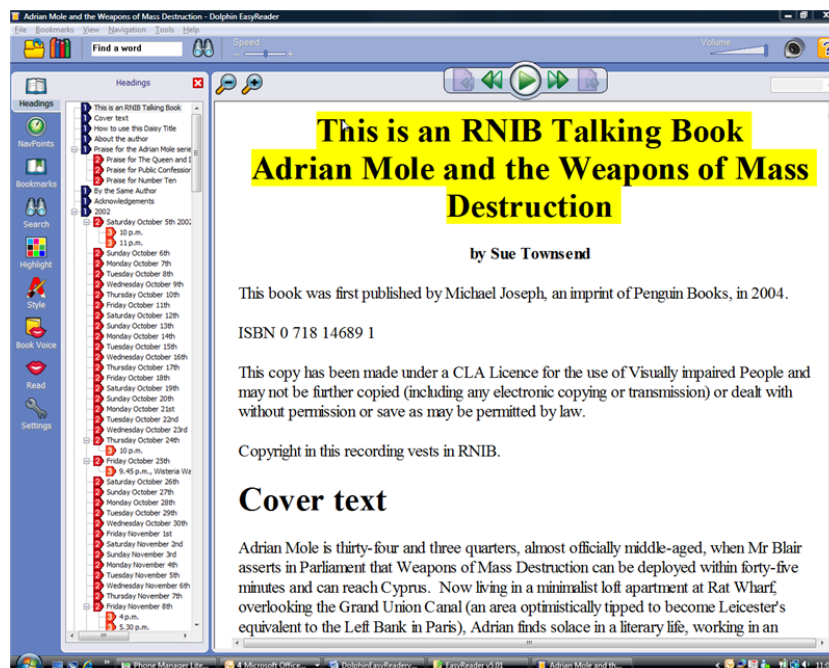
Illustration 1: A screenshot of the brand new EasyReader version 5.01 interface.

This tabular design, not dissimilar from other recognised document readers, utilises a resizable panel, from which users can select their preferred settings as well as accessing EasyReader's advanced heading navigation, bookmarking and search functions.

The addition of EasyReader's clear and distinct graphical icons, a menu bar and a complete terminology overhaul also mean that the concept of DAISY talking books is now inviting and fully accessible to readers with dyslexia and sight loss.
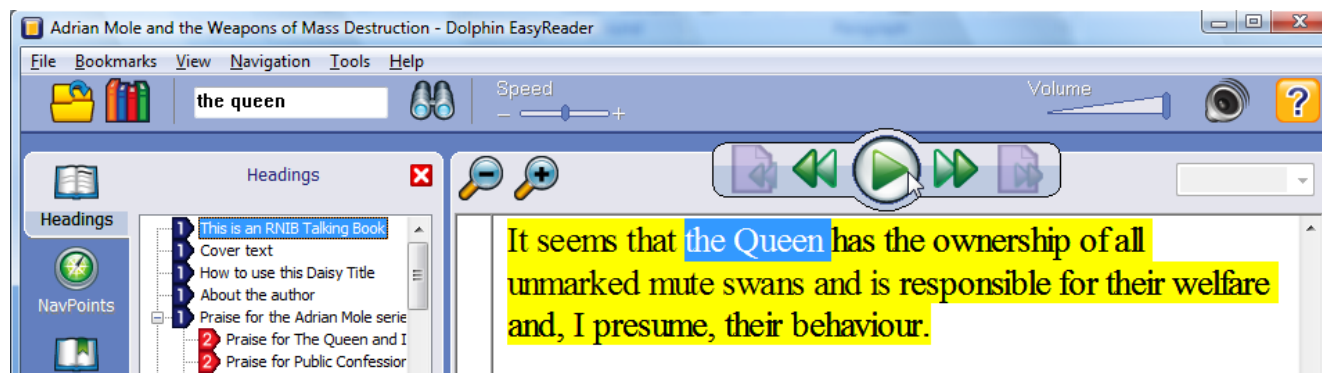

Illustration 2: A partial screenshot of the EasyReader version 5.01 menu bar and the new icons.

2.3 Accessibility

The new toolbar access to navigation functionality will ensure EasyReader has a shallow learning curve for mouse users. Play, Stop, Next Phrase, Previous Phrase, Next Page, Previous and Page can all be achieved at the touch of a button. Equally users can adjust their scroll bar and click into the content of the book to start reading using EasyReader's all new document scroll navigation. In an education setting, users can turn to a particular page in a second by simply

typing in their page number. Adjusting speed and clicking to mute are equally accessible for mouse users.

Whilst improving the access for mouse users, EasyReader version 5.01 has also achieved the dual focus of maintaining total and intuitive access for visually impaired users. EasyReader version 5.01 continues to include a self voicing option, enabling people with a visual impairment to install and navigate around EasyReader independently. EasyReader now also uses standard window controls, including a new menu bar ensuring users have instant access to all the EasyReader functionality. Equally this standard windows approach maximises the potential to work with third party assistive technologies, such as Dolphin SuperNova.

The EasyReader hotkeys also remain intuitive. Using standard windows conventions to browse within the body of the book means navigating to the next or previous phrase or heading is achieved with absolute ease. Low vision users are also able to 'Zoom in' and 'Zoom out' of their book, ensuring the text and images are clear and readable for their level of sight.

2.4 The EasyReader Bookshelf

EasyReader version 5.01 also includes an all new Bookshelf feature. The Bookshelf creates a path to users' recently opened and 'favourite' books, storing them in one handy location to make the process of opening a book easier than ever before. Users can chose to add books to their favourites, read more book information or directly select a book and 'Read now'. For sighted readers the visual representation of the book on the right hand side of the Bookshelf offers the perfect snap shot.

Illustration 3: A screenshot of the new EasyReader version 5.01 Bookshelf.

2.5 The EasyReader Setup Wizard

In making sure readers aren't missing out on any high priority features, the presenter will also demonstrate the use of EasyReader's handy setup Wizard. The setup Wizard allows readers to configure these higher priority settings and select their preferred reading voice, ensuring that users reading experience is as enjoyable as it is productive.

Illustration 4: A screenshot of the new EasyReader version 5.01 setup wizard.

2.6 Improved Access to Core DAISY functionality

2.6.1 Search

EasyReader's new Search interface is not only accessible and intuitive to visually impaired readers, but equally provides a visually logical way of displaying the results in the scrollable search results area. Under each of the heading chapters, any instances of the searched for word is highlighted for absolute clarity.
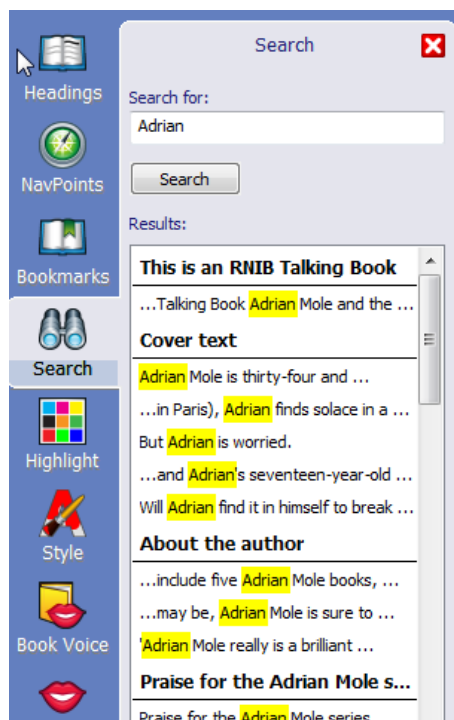
Illustration 5: A partial screenshot of the EasyReader version 5.01 Search interface.

Alternatively some readers may prefer to search on the fly and the Find facility makes this possible. By typing in the quick find field at the top of the EasyReader toolbar, the focus of the book jumps to the next instance of that word. In addition, as you search through each of the instances, the tree view representation of the headings structure opens the correct heading, meaning that you can quickly and easily find your exact location within your book at any time.
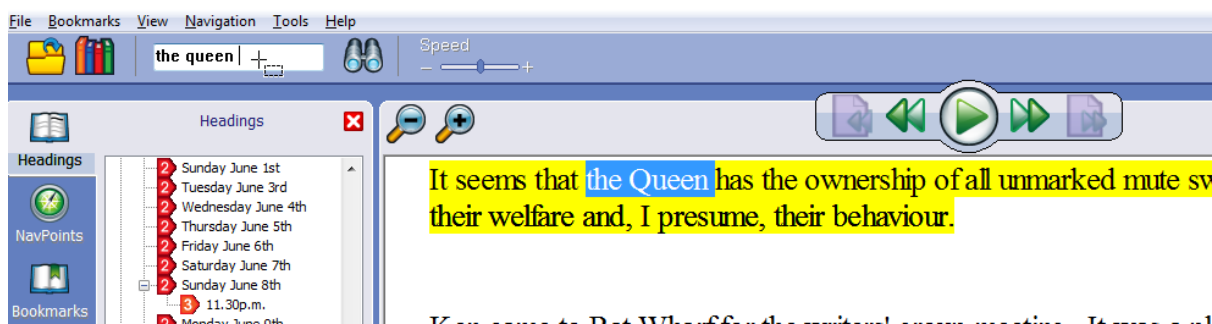

Illustration 6: A partial screenshot of the EasyReader version 5.01 Find facility.

2.6.2 Bookmarks

For readers that want to add their own notes, written or audio, the Bookmark facility in version 5 of EasyReader is simple and easy to use. Add and remove bookmarks, or view your list of bookmarks each displayed under their own chapter headings. You can then skip straight to any of these bookmarks and read through any notes you made by simply selecting the appropriate bookmark from the Bookmarks tab.
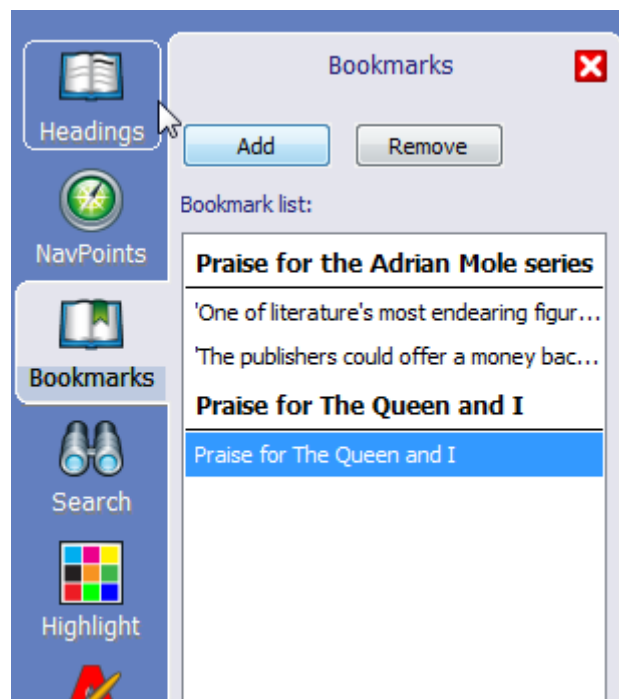
Illustration 7: A partial screenshot of the EasyReader version 5.01 Bookmark facility.

3 Conclusion

To be released in June 2009, EasyReader version 5.01 has already sparked great interest from initial usability tests with readers with dyslexia and visual impairments, and is certain to allow all readers to rediscover the full benefits that the rich DAISY format has to offer.

Packed full of demonstrations and discussion points, "Rediscovering DAISY" is an ideal session for anyone interested in the playback and distribution of DAISY, and definitely one not to miss.

Required Equipment:

No additional requirements.

Further Remarks:

None.