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Bookshare Helped Student Transition to College

May 7, 2012

by [Valerie Cherneke](#)

Zach Bryant pulled straight A's in his Maryland high school. He liked to read all kinds of books then, but that wasn't always the case for Zach. He has Cerebral Palsy (CP) which prohibits him from speaking and walking. To communicate and write his thoughts down, he uses an augmentative communication device (AAC).



Zach

(<http://bookshareblog.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/zach-bryant.jpg>)

Simple tasks, like turning a printed page or finding the last chapter he read was frustrating for him. According to his mom, this experience happens to many children with CP. "They get frustrated and don't want to read, but access to digital books and reading technologies changed all that for Zach, my son who is very intelligent."

Now, with his *individual membership* to Bookshare, an online library introduced to him in high school by his Assistive Technology teacher, Zach applies himself and put his eagerness to learn into action. He attends Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. He still uses his Kurzweil 3000 technology and Bookshare to find textbooks and he still loves to read political and non-fiction books for reading pleasure.

When we caught up with this busy young college student, he said, "Without Bookshare my academic life would have been much harder for me and my caregivers. It's amazing that I can find most books I want and even postsecondary textbooks. No one has to do all that scanning for me and I don't have to wait for my books. I can search for them and find them myself."

The online library of accessible books and periodicals is free for U.S. students who are blind, have low vision, a physical disability, like CP, or a reading disability, like severe dyslexia, that prevents them from reading a standard book in print. The library is funded through awards from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Today, there are over 150,000 books including many textbooks on all kinds of subjects at many different levels.

According to Mrs. Bryant, "Zach is still very independent. Without Bookshare, he may not have stayed on grade level work to enable him to progress to college. These tools helped him to make the transition." She credits her son's love of knowledge and the ability to access digital books and reading technologies that enable him to reach for higher goals. "He's our brainiac!"

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