

*“Joining Bookshare and reading the books I love gave me this feeling of being normal again.”*

—JOHN PHILLIP ARTACHO, BOOKSHARE MEMBER



## CHALLENGE

John Artacho lives in the Philippines and has always loved reading and learning. A former massage therapist, he holds Bachelor of Science degrees in nursing and botany. His favorite books are mysteries, thrillers, science fiction, and literary fiction by authors such as Dan Brown, John Grisham, and JRR Tolkien. He believes that reading makes a person wiser, and he tells his children that people should never be deprived of books. After a traumatic injury from a gunshot wound left him blind, his life changed drastically and he became very depressed. He feared that he would never be able to read books or enjoy movies again.

## SOLUTION

Fortunately, John was introduced to Resources for the Blind, Inc., a company that provides services, training, and equipment to help the half million visually impaired people in the Philippines reach their fullest potential. The staff introduced John to Bookshare and helped him become a member. They taught him how to search for and read ebooks on his smartphone and laptop. Since he was already familiar with using these devices, he was able to start reading right away.

## IMPACT

Bookshare has had an enormous impact on John's independence, beliefs, and outlook despite his blindness. He says that Bookshare is much more than a way for the blind community to feel connected to the world; it's also a vault of great treasures. Joining Bookshare brought back his desire to read. Reading the books he loves gives him a feeling of being normal again and helps him get through episodes of depression. He can now use an Android phone, tablet, or a screen reader-assisted laptop with ease and navigate the Bookshare website without the help of a sighted person. Before, it was difficult for him and he needed his sister to help him. "If most sighted people cannot live without their smartphones, I say, I can't live without Bookshare on my smartphone." The novels he reads are inspiration for his poems and song compositions, and he hopes to write a book in the future. In addition, he is applying for online jobs for the visually impaired. He is confident that Benetech will continue to expand the collection and bring knowledge and light to the blind community.

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*Benetech is a nonprofit that empowers communities through software for social good. Our work transforms how people with disabilities read and learn, makes it safer for human rights defenders to pursue truth and justice, and connects people to the services they need to live and prosper. We're constantly pursuing the next big social impact.*