

“ I am 32 years old and totally blind. I am in college now thanks to Bookshare which makes it easy for me to reach the world through books. I never thought I could read independently or listen to so many books until I got Bookshare. It is a dream come true. ”

—ANNABELLE V.



CHALLENGE

Annabelle lives with her husband and two daughters on Palawan Island in the Philippines. She has been blind since birth due to cataracts and developmental problems with her eyes. When Annabelle was in elementary and high school, she read braille books. When she first started college, she had access to a few braille and audiobooks, but she also relied on cassette recordings of friends reading books for her. She found a few digital books on the internet, but the selection was extremely limited. She didn't see how she would be able to complete her education without access to more books in alternate formats.

SOLUTION

In 2017, Annabelle was using the student resource center at Resources for the Blind, Inc., a nonprofit that provides programs to help visually impaired people in the Philippines reach their full potential. She saw a folder on the computer labeled Bookshare, so she asked what it was. A staff member gave her a Bookshare account, and now she reads books using FS Reader by JAWS and Voice Dream Reader on her iPhone. She is grateful to have so many books in a variety of formats including braille, text, and audio.

IMPACT

In 2018, Annabelle enrolled in Palawan State University to earn a bachelor's degree in elementary education. She appreciates the vast collection of 600,000+ books in the Bookshare library including academic books on teaching English, math, and science that are required for her college classes. Without these books, her college goals would be out of reach. Once she gets her degree, Annabelle is inspired to start her own business. She dreams of opening a training center to teach persons with disabilities who have not been given much attention. "I want to help them learn skills so they can be independent and work for a living," she says.

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.