

## Accessibility and Law

The global movement focusing on content accessibility has been growing for decades. At the core is a fundamental belief that all people have a right to full access to information and that the global exchange of ideas and the human experience is improved when that is achieved.

There are, of course, many factors that have contributed to the growth of this movement. In part, the number of people with visual impairments worldwide is growing. People are living longer than ever before, and visual impairments most often occur or develop amongst older demographics.

In addition, birth rates worldwide are increasing, and so the number of children born with visual impairments is also growing. The World Health Organization report titled, *Global Data on Visual Impairments 2010*, showed that an estimated 8.47% or 550,778,000 people worldwide have some level of visual impairment.

**TABLE 1 — Global Estimate of the Number of People Visually Impaired by Age, 2010**

Ages in Years	Population (millions)	Blind (millions)	Low Vision (millions)	Visually Impaired (millions)
0-14	1,848.500	1.412	17.518	18.939
15-49	3,548.200	5.784	74.463	80.248
50-older	1,340.800	32.160	154.043	186.203
All Ages	6,737.500	39.365 (0.58%)	246.024 (3.65%)	285.389 (4.24%)

Source: World Health Organization, *Global Data on Visual Impairments, 2010*

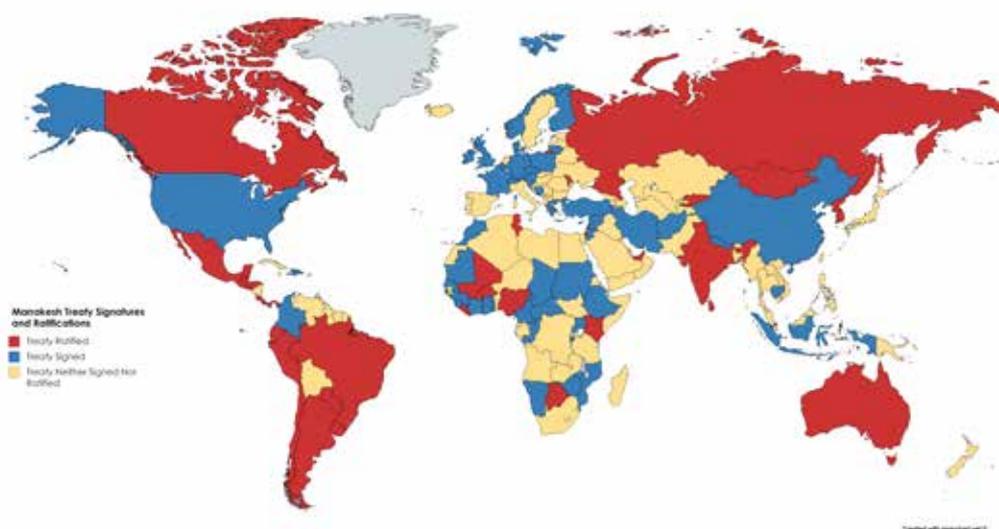
We have also seen significant changes within publishing resulting in advancements in standards and technology making content available in more ways than ever before.

Even with these changes, the World Blind Union estimates that 90% of published materials worldwide are still not available in formats accessible to the visually impaired. Organizations who are interested in helping to make that content accessible encounter challenges in the form of current copyright rules and laws.

This means we have a growing population of VIPs who want and deserve to have better access to content, publishers and organizations that want to help make that content accessible, and the technology to make that happen. The challenge is finding the right mechanisms to achieve these goals. This has all culminated in treaties and legal requirements designed to help make full accessibility to content a reality.

We will start by taking a look at the **Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons who are Blind or Otherwise Print Disabled** or simply the Marrakesh Treaty. The treaty was initially adopted on June 27, 2013, and came into force on September 30, 2016, when the 20th participating country ratified the treaty. According to the World Intellectual Property Organization, who administers the treaty, to date 35 countries have ratified the treaty and an additional 57 have signed it (ratification pending).

**FIGURE 1 — WORLD MAP OF MARRAKESH TREATY SIGNATURES AND RATIFICATIONS**



Source: World Blind Union