

# Improving Literacy

with

## Audio-eBooks



Alberto Pettarin, CEO  
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# Summary

- ▶ Introducing ReadBeyond
- ▶ Improving Literacy with Audio-eBooks
  - ▶ What is an Audio-eBook?
  - ▶ Our Proposal
  - ▶ ReadBeyond Sync
  - ▶ ReadBeyond Menestrello
  - ▶ Free/Commercial Audio-eBooks

# Introducing ReadBeyond



- ▶ **Research lab** developing innovative software for **digital publishing**
- ▶ Limited-liability **startup** (“Srl startup innovativa”)
- ▶ Founded in July 2013 @ Padova, Italy, by
  - ▶ Alberto Pettarin, PhD, 30 (CEO, R&D)
  - ▶ Paolo Bertasi, PhD, 35 (CTO, IT Operations)
  - ▶ Simplicissimus Book Farm Srl (Legal, Marketing, Operations, PR)
- ▶ <http://www.readbeyond.it/>

## Our Mission

We love **great stories**

We **research** and **create** tools allowing  
people to **share** their **digital stories**



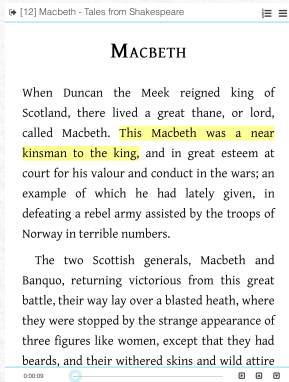
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## Audio-eBooks

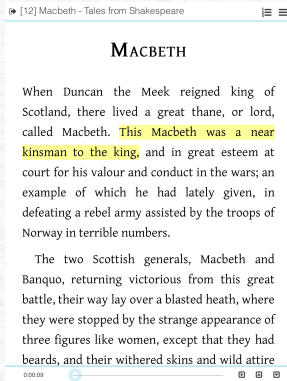
# What is an Audio-eBook?

An **Audio-eBook** is a digital file



The phrase currently narrated is highlighted

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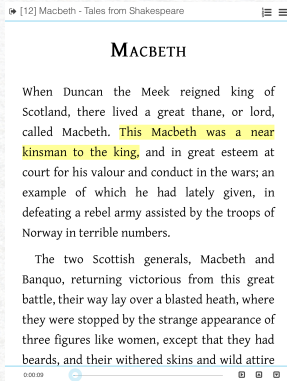


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- ▶ containing the **text** of the book  
⇒ user can **read**

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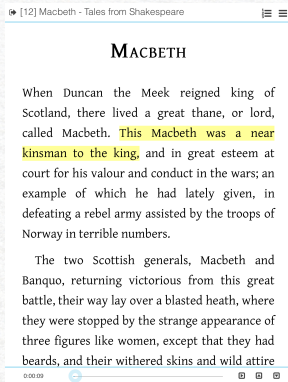
An **Audio-eBook** is a digital file

- ▶ containing the **text** of the book  
⇒ user can **read**
- ▶ and its **narration** recorded by a **professional reader**  
⇒ user can **listen**

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# What is an Audio-eBook?



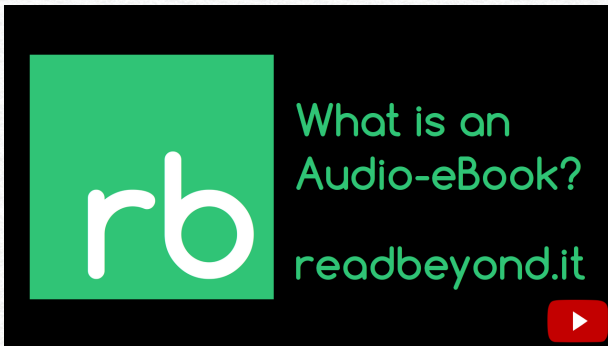
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An **Audio-eBook** is a digital file

- ▶ containing the **text** of the book  
⇒ user can **read**
- ▶ and its **narration** recorded by a **professional reader**  
⇒ user can **listen**
- ▶ where audio and text are **synchronized**  
⇒ user can **read+listen**, stimulating the **visual** and **aural** channels **simultaneously**

# What is an Audio-eBook?

Click to watch an Audio-eBook in action!



<http://www.readbeyond.it/audioebooks.html>

Video in italiano: <http://www.readbeyond.it/it/audioebook.html>

# Practical Advantages of Audio-eBooks

**Synchronized** audio/text allow

- ▶ **highlighting** the text fragment being narrated
- ▶ restarting audio from a precise point of the text (**tap-to-play**)
- ▶ **switching modality** (Read, Listen, Read+Listen) seamlessly

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Audio-eBooks **combine** the best of **reflow eBooks** and **audiobooks**

- ▶ **adjustable typography** (font face, size, line spacing, ...)
- ▶ **adapt** to any screen size (PC, tablet, smartphone, ...)
- ▶ easy **navigation** of text (Table of Contents) and audio (Playlist)
- ▶ **audio controls**, including adjustable playback speed



# Improving Literacy with Audio-eBooks

Simultaneously **reading+listening** conveys several benefits

- ▶ **immersive**: professional narrators create an unrivaled experience of immersion in the story
- ▶ **cognitive**: information retention is better and lasting longer than just reading or just listening
- ▶ **assistive**: it mitigates reading disabilities (e.g., dyslexia, learning disorders)

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In short, several **scientific studies** on reading+listening **show** that Audio-eBooks are **extremely effective** at **improving literacy**

# Our Proposal

Building an **ecosystem**

for creating, selling, enjoying **Audio-eBooks**

including **non-English markets**

based on **open formats** (e.g. EPUB 3)

## Our Proposal

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- ▶ **distribution** platforms
- ▶ **readers/apps** ( $\Rightarrow$  **RB Menestrello**)

# ReadBeyond Sync

## Problem

**Synchronizing** audio and text (with 100% accuracy) requires a **human operator**, listening to the audio and using a special program to create the synchronization information



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Because of the human-in-the-loop, this process is

- ▶ prone to fatigue errors
- ▶ slow and with unpredictable latency
- ▶ expensive
- ▶ not scalable

# ReadBeyond Sync

## Solution

We developed **Sync**, a **computational package** which reads a pair of audio/text files, and outputs the synchronization information

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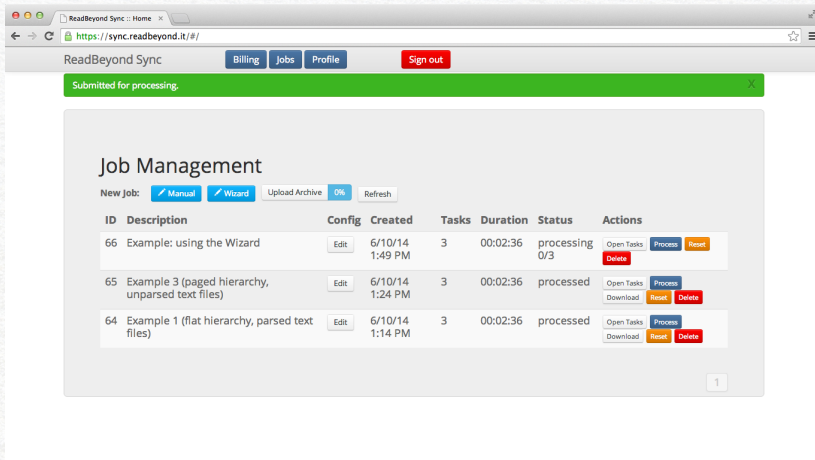
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Thanks to **Sync**, ReadBeyond is the **first company** able to massively produce **reflowable EPUB3 Audio-eBooks**, in 31 languages!



# ReadBeyond Sync



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://sync.readbeyond.it/#/>. The page header includes the ReadBeyond Sync logo and navigation links: Billing, Jobs, Profile, and a red Sign out button. A green notification bar at the top states "Submitted for processing." with a close button (X).

## Job Management

New Job:

ID	Description	Config	Created	Tasks	Duration	Status	Actions
66	Example: using the Wizard	<input type="button" value="Edit"/>	6/10/14 1:49 PM	3	00:02:36	processing 0/3	<input type="button" value="Open Tasks"/> <input type="button" value="Process"/> <input type="button" value="Reset"/> <input type="button" value="Delete"/>
65	Example 3 (paged hierarchy, unparsed text files)	<input type="button" value="Edit"/>	6/10/14 1:24 PM	3	00:02:36	processed	<input type="button" value="Open Tasks"/> <input type="button" value="Process"/> <input type="button" value="Download"/> <input type="button" value="Reset"/> <input type="button" value="Delete"/>
64	Example 1 (flat hierarchy, parsed text files)	<input type="button" value="Edit"/>	6/10/14 1:14 PM	3	00:02:36	processed	<input type="button" value="Open Tasks"/> <input type="button" value="Process"/> <input type="button" value="Download"/> <input type="button" value="Reset"/> <input type="button" value="Delete"/>

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<http://www.readbeyond.it/sync/>

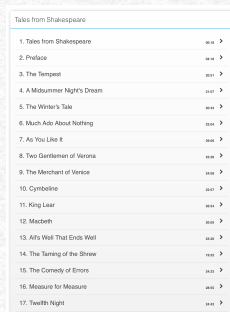
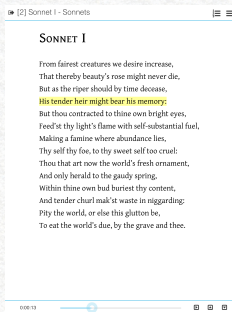
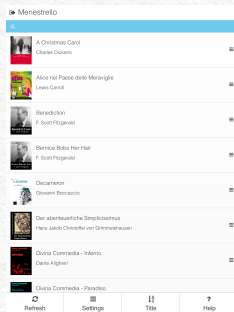
# ReadBeyond Menestrello

**EPUB3** is the *de facto* **standard open format** for eBooks, and it supports **Media Overlays**, i.e. the audio/text synchronization

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**Menestrello** is our **free** app designed for EPUB3 Audio-eBooks



<http://www.readbeyond.it/menestrello/>

# Free Audio-eBooks by ReadBeyond

ReadBeyond **has contributed** 130+ Audio-eBooks

- ▶ **111 English Short Stories**

<http://www.readbeyond.it/shortstories.html>

- ▶ **20+** other titles, in **10 languages**, including Dante's **Divine Comedy** read by Prof. Pertile (Harvard University)

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Our favourite bits

- ▶ **free, anonymous download** from our Web site
- ▶ **no DRM**
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# Commercial Audio-eBooks are Already Among Us!

60+ EPUB3 Audio-eBooks, produced in collaboration with the Italian audiobook publisher **il Narratore Audiolibri**, are **already on sale**



<http://www.ilnarratore.com/>

We would like to hear from **you!**

- ▶ **publishers, digipub pros**
- ▶ **self-publishers**
- ▶ **voice over pros**
- ▶ **librarians**
- ▶ **teachers**
- ▶ **students**
- ▶ **readers**
- ▶ **...**

# Thank You!

<http://www.readbeyond.it/>

[info@readbeyond.it](mailto:info@readbeyond.it)

This document is available online at <http://www.readbeyond.it/docs/li14.pdf>





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