

TALKING BOOKS: WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE WHETHER WE READ A BOOK OR LISTEN TO IT?

PROFILE

Dr Matthew Rubery

GRANT

£94,232

DURATION

2014 – 2015

UK INSTITUTION

Queen Mary University of London



BRITISH ACADEMY MID-CAREER FELLOWSHIP

SUMMARY

Dr Rubery received a Mid-Career Fellowship to write the first history of recorded literature since Thomas Edison's invention of the phonograph in 1877. It traces the tradition from phonographic books made on wax cylinders to talking books made for blinded soldiers returning from the First World War and today's billion-dollar audiobook industry.

OUTCOMES

- Dr Rubery's monograph 'The Untold Story of the Talking Book' will be published by Harvard University Press in November 2016.
- He co-curated (along with Birkbeck's Dr Heather Tilley) a public exhibition titled 'How We Read: A Sensory History of Books for Blind People'. This interactive exhibition explored the history of assistive technologies such as raised print, talking books, and optophones designed to help blind people read. The virtual exhibition can still be visited at www.howweweread.co.uk
- Dr Rubery also presented a documentary on the history of Britain's talking book to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the talking book, on Insight Radio, Europe's first radio station for blind and partially sighted listeners.

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