

The Road To Becoming A Reader Starts With Hearing Stories Read

(NAPSA)—Experts agree that reading aloud is the single most important activity for developing reading skills—and becoming good at reading may start with listening to someone else read aloud.

Reading aloud introduces children to the sounds of written language, helps them understand its structure and demonstrates its phrasing.

That's one reason many book lovers are celebrating the golden anniversary of Listening Library, a producer of unabridged children's audio books.

Listening Library's first recording in 1955 was "Around the World in 80 Days" by Jules Verne. Today, the company offers everything from *The Cat in the Hat* to Harry Potter.

As a former teacher, Anthony Ditlow, who co-founded the company with his wife Helen, knew all about good books but he also knew that he was losing his eyesight.

He was familiar with the Talking Book recordings at the Library of Congress and other sources and he envisioned a broader audiobook market.

The first years of the business did not generate much of a profit but the company became one of



Audiobooks can inspire and support young readers.

the first to distribute audiobooks to schools, libraries and hospitals. During the early years, Listening Library recorded the classics—from Shakespeare to Virginia Woolfe. Isaac Asimov read "Today and Tomorrow." Ray Bradbury read "Fahrenheit 451."

In 1986, the Ditlows' son, Tim, acquired the company and began to focus on buying the rights to children's and young adult novels, including many Newbery Medal winners.

In 1998, he began publishing J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series narrated by the legendary Jim Dale. In 1999, Listening Library became a Random House imprint with Tim Ditlow as publisher.

Listening Library now pub-

lishes 100 titles annually and in honor of the anniversary, recently completed a commemorative recording of "Around the World in 80 Days," also narrated by Jim Dale.

According to Tim Ditlow, audio books are more important than ever today, especially for children. While children spend little time reading—about 1.3 hours a week on average—those who read more, achieve more than those who don't read at all or who read very little.

Audiobooks are not meant to replace printed books or the experience of a parent reading to a child, but there are times when it's not practical to read, such as during a car trip or while doing chores.

Audiobooks can expose young readers to new vocabulary and invite children into the world of reading and literature.

According to Tim Ditlow, there is no such thing as a child who hates to read; there are only children who have not found the right book. Audiobooks can lead a child into a lifelong imaginative adventure which may not have otherwise happened with the printed word alone.

For more information, visit www.listeninglibrary.com.