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Alumni join hands to raise funds to help upgrade Jadavpur University's accessible library

The group wants to add facilities like tactile pathways, equipment and software to produce audiobooks and soundproof audiobook cubicles to the library

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The accessible library at Jadavpur University

- f** Some former students at Jadavpur University joined hands to raise funds to upgrade the university's accessible library used by visually impaired students.
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- Q** The alumni who have so far extended help to renovate and upgrade the university's laboratories have now stepped forward to have the accessible library upgraded as part of their drive to foster inclusive education.

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The group wants to add facilities like tactile pathways, equipment and software to produce audiobooks and soundproof audiobook cubicles to the library.

So far, ₹40 lakh has been raised for the project.

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Workshops are being planned to train library staff and senior students how to use the new tools and technology, said a former student associated with the project.

“The alumni and other individuals will bear the operational cost of running the library for the next five years. The software to produce the audiobooks has worn out. The university, amid a funds crunch, is not in a position to have the software replaced. So we have come forward to renovate the library. Visually impaired students use the university,” said Ranjit Chakravorti, president of the Global Jadavpur University Alumni Foundation, based in California, USA.

Chakravorti was felicitated as a distinguished alumna on the occasion of the university’s first alumni day celebrated on January 4.

This project will benefit 152 visually impaired students and research scholars at Jadavpur University.

“Furthermore, it will extend its impact to visually impaired students from other universities, fostering inclusive education and accessibility for all,” said JU professor Rajyeshwar Sinha, joint director of the accessible library.

The accessible library is located inside the central library on the campus. As part of the upgrade, tactile pathways will be installed in the entire library.

A tactile pathway is a pavement with raised lines, domes, or other textures to communicate safety information to persons with vision impairment.

The library will be provided among other things Basic-D V5 braille embosser with translator software and braille papers, Dolphin Publisher which is a special software that creates audiobooks, an A-3 laser printer, Sparsha transliteration software, a scanner and video magnifier and Braille eMotion, which is a

multimedia 40-cell braille display with new dimensions in braille connectivity and innovation.

Jishu Debnath, a visually impaired PhD student pursuing a doctorate in Bengali at JU, said many of the facilities in the accessible library set up in 2018 have worn out.

Debnath, a former member of the Forum for Students with Disabilities (FSD), JU, told **The Telegraph**: “Given the funds’ constraints the university is encountering, it was not possible to renovate the laboratory. We are happy that former students have thought of reaching out to us. The universal standard protocol demands that a part of the infrastructure be made accessible to those who are differently abled”.

Alokaprna Ghosh, the project manager of the library project, said: “It is a collaborative effort between the Rotary Club of Sycamore in the USA, Rotary Club of Belur in Bengal and several partner Rotary Clubs in Calcutta. The foundation is feliciating the project.”

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