



BTBL News

Braille and Talking Book Library,
California State Library, Sacramento, CA

New Series no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2008)

View from the Crow's Nest

As the new manager for the Braille and Talking Book Library at the California State Library, I am pleased and excited to be able to greet you all in this inaugural issue of the reinvigorated *BTBL News*. For those unaware of it, I am a librarian who happens to be blind and I have been a user of this service for many years. The issues of concern to all of you are equally important to me and the devoted BTBL staff as well. This is a very busy year, both in our organization and at the national level. As the National Library Service (NLS) prepares its long-awaited transition from analog to digital technology, network libraries are faced with developing strategies for circulating new digital machines and audio books. We are also presented with the challenges of developing and providing new and better programs and services within the climate of budget deficits on the federal and state levels.

Our greatest challenge in fiscal year 2008-09 is the rollout of new digital talking book players and digital books being produced by NLS. We want to provide you with the best possible service. As always, your questions and feedback are welcome, and are in fact critical in the months ahead. We are looking for new and more effective ways to communicate with our customers and we expect to mail out a newsletter at regular intervals from this point forward. We will distribute a reader survey later this year. We plan to offer our communications in multiple formats, including large print, Braille, and audiocassette, and also on our web site. We are interested in distributing information via e-mail as well. If you are

interested in receiving occasional library announcements and future newsletters via e-mail, please send your e-mail address to us at btbl@library.ca.gov. All addresses will be kept confidential as is all other customer information, per BTBL and California State Library policy.

Thanks in advance for your patience and input as we traverse the high seas of digital web braille and digital talking books. Storm clouds come and go, but the journey toward clearer sound and easy reading moves forward. We have a talented crew aboard and we look forward to working in depth with you to provide the best library services possible.

– Mike Marlin, Navigator

Staff News

New staff

There have been a number of recent additions to the BTBL staff. Let us introduce you to:

BTBL Manager Michael Marlin. Mike started as the head of the Braille and Talking Book Library in October 2007. He came to us from the Pima County Public Library in Tucson, Arizona, where he worked as program coordinator and special needs librarian. Prior to his Arizona job, Mike worked as a librarian and Patron Advisory Council member at the Washington State Talking Book & Braille Library. Mike has had a series of jobs in public and special libraries, and brings a wealth of enthusiasm, experience and talent. Welcome, Mike!

Supervising Librarian Janet Coles. The most recent addition to our librarian team, Janet began her work in BTBL in February 2008. While new to BTBL, Janet has worked for the California State Library for the past 7 years and was previously the California documents specialist in the Government Publications Section. Janet's professional history spans an 18-year period and includes work in many different types of libraries.

Reader Advisor Supervisor Doug Coronado. Doug also started in BTBL in February 2008. Previously he worked for a number of years in the video center of the North State Cooperative Library System. Doug has an

affinity for all sorts of literature and an abiding interest in medieval and Renaissance history and culture. Welcome aboard, Doug!

Outreach and Reference Librarian Mary Jane Kayes. Mary Jane has worked with BTBL since February 2006. Many of you have already experienced her talent for reference and customer service for yourselves. Mary Jane has over 35 years' experience as a professional librarian in a myriad of settings, including corporate, public and special libraries.

Office Assistant Brooke Hardin. Brooke, our receptionist since February 2007, is usually the first person you speak to when you call us. She hails from Southern California, and this is her first state job. Although this is her first time working in a library, Brooke has over 15 years of customer service experience and a lifelong love of reading and books. Welcome, Brooke!

Lee Lor and Romulo Reyes are both recent additions to our Circulation Department, providing much needed support in getting books, cassettes and machines out to you. It's great to have Lee and Romulo on board.

Other staff changes

Reader Advisor Supervisor John Byrn retired in November 2007 after 28 years with the California State Library. Our best wishes to John for a happy and fulfilling retirement!

Long-time Reader Advisor Dede Ingle retired in December 2007. Much-loved by staff and readers alike, Dede is sorely missed and we wish her all the best.

Reader Advisor Assignments

Advisors are assigned to readers by alphabet, according to the first letter of a reader's last name. The alphabet is divided up amongst our reader advisors to even out their workloads. In light of Dede's recent retirement, and Doug's coming on board, some parts of the alphabet have been reassigned. Here's a new list of our reader advisors, and their assignments.

If your last name begins with:

A, B, C, or Z

Your reader advisor is: Valerie

D or R

Your reader advisor is: Clarissa

E, H, J, T, or V

Your reader advisor is: Sherryl

F, G, I, K, N, W, or Y

Your reader advisor is: Marian

L, M, O, P, Q, U, or X

Your reader advisor is: Diane

S

Your reader advisor is: Doug

To contact your reader advisor, please call us at 916-654-0640, or toll free (California only) at 1-800-952-5666, or e-mail us at btbl@library.ca.gov.

Digital Dilemma

NLS is planning to transition to the use of digital talking book machines and books. The new machines and books are smaller, lighter, sound better, and are easier to use than the audiocassettes and machines that have been in use since the 1970s. Many of you have already expressed an interest in receiving a digital machine.

NLS will begin to distribute the new machines to us early next year. However, in this fiscal year NLS received only about two-thirds of the funding requested to launch its transition to digital technology. This lack of funding means that, barring restoration of funds by Congress, there will be fewer digital machines available to our readers at the outset and that it will take longer to implement the digital transition, perhaps as many as 6 years, rather than the 4 years originally planned.

Here at BTBL, beginning in January 2009, we expect to receive a small monthly allotment of digital machines, the exact number of which we cannot predict at this time. We will distribute these machines as we get them until everyone who wants one has received one.

We are working on a plan to implement a fair distribution of the new machines and books. NLS program rules require that we offer the machines to veterans first. We are presently considering a lottery system to determine the order in which interested borrowers in good standing

will be issued a new digital machine. Veterans will be first on the list, but may also have to follow the lottery-style allocation.

As a first step, we will distribute a borrower survey that will ask, among other things, if you are interested in receiving a digital machine. This survey will be distributed as part of the next few issues of our newsletter, in September 2008 and then again in December 2008. We strongly encourage you to respond to the survey, which will also be available through our web site, even if you are a veteran and even if you have already told your reader advisor that you want a digital machine.

We realize that many of you have been eagerly awaiting the new machines, and our goal is to get them to you as quickly as possible. But we have a large user base and for some of you the wait may be significant. In the meantime we do offer free access to talking books in digital format through the Unabridged audio book program, and we would be happy to consult with you on other options for access to digital books and players. For more information on digital book machines and books, you can read *Flash*, the NLS digital book project newsletter, at <http://www.loc.gov/nls/newsletters/flash/index.html>. If you would like a large print copy of *Flash*, please contact the National Library Service at nls@loc.gov.

Tools n' Tips

From the Reader Advisor Section: Looking for Reading Choices? Give Us a Try!

Looking for ways to find book choices beyond *Talking Book Topics* or *Braille Book Review*? Your BTBL Reader Advisor may be of service—give us a call or send us a fax or an e-mail; see our contact information on the last page of this newsletter.

If you are someone who prefers to “do it yourself” and you have access to the Internet, you are welcome to search our web-based public catalog or that of the National Library Service (NLS). When you are logged into our catalog, if you have your patron ID number and have been assigned a password, you may also manage your own account; you may request

or reserve books, see a list of what you've already read, or find out what's currently checked out to you. You can't manage your own account through the NLS web catalog, but you CAN look to see what other regional libraries throughout the U.S. have produced in addition to those provided by NLS. We cooperate with all NLS network libraries and can borrow locally produced materials from them for you.

Did you know that you can get free subscriptions to magazines in either audiocassette or Braille format? The magazines are sent directly to your home address and need not be returned to us. Just let us know which ones you'd regularly like to receive. Contact your BTBL Reader Advisor for a list of available titles or look toward the back of each issue of *Talking Book Topics* or *Braille Book Review*. You can also find lists at the NLS website: <http://www.loc.gov/nls/reference/circulars/magazines.html>.

As digital downloading becomes more common, more and more people are getting their magazines this way, too. And if you don't mind a mechanical voice reading to you over your telephone there are more magazine titles available to you through the NFB Newsline service (call your Reader Advisor for more information) and also through Access News, a telephone reader service produced by volunteers at the Sacramento Society for the Blind. To sign up for Access News, call the Society at (916) 732-4010 or e-mail news@societyfortheblind.org.

From the Machine Repair Section: About Charging Your Machines

The C-1 machines which most of you use all have a rechargeable battery pack. To fully charge the battery it must be connected to an electrical outlet for about 12 hours, without playing the machine. Once fully charged, a machine will play about 4 to 6 hours before it needs recharging.

When the battery starts to lose its charge the sound will become faint and eventually fade away. When this happens, plug the machine into an outlet and the sound should come right back. If the machine doesn't play, try a different outlet in another room. The machine should play almost immediately when plugged into an outlet that has power. It is okay to leave the machine plugged into an outlet while listening. In the

past we recommended that you not leave the machine plugged in at all times. This has been changed, and now you may leave the machine plugged into an electrical outlet continuously.

If the machine fades out while you're listening to a tape, and the machine is already plugged into an outlet, most likely the machine is not getting any power from that outlet. Don't assume that if something else off the same outlet is working that the machine is getting power. Take the machine to another outlet, and try it again. You'd be surprised how often a bad outlet or connection is the problem. This is one of the most common calls Charlie Johnson, our machine repair technician, receives.

If you still can't get the machine to work, be sure to try another tape, and if all fails (by all means) please give us a call.

Volunteer Opportunities

BTBL is looking for volunteers to assist us in providing library services to our customers. Please consider joining our team! We need your skills, talents, and time. Volunteer positions include, but are not limited to: book inspectors who examine all outgoing books for missing or faulty cassettes; narrators and directors for our California book narration program; and machine repair volunteers who inspect, repair and clean audiocassette players and other equipment. Braille readers are always a great help too!

The emphasis in our volunteer program is not only on the services provided but also on volunteer training, interaction, involvement and satisfaction. A recognition event to honor volunteers is held twice a year, providing an opportunity for all the volunteers to get to know each other as well as to recognize the outstanding work they accomplish. We deeply appreciate the preparation and dedication volunteers bring to us, and their willingness to give the most important gift of all - **THEMSELVES!!**

If you are interested in volunteering, or if you would like more information, please contact us.

Braille and Talking Book Library
California State Library
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Free Matter for the Blind and
Physically Handicapped

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

This newsletter is available on cassette, through e-mail, and in large print upon request, or visit our website:

<http://www.library.ca.gov/services/btbl.html>

Library Service Hours: 9:30 AM-4 PM, Monday-Friday

Phone Numbers: 1-916-654-0640; 1-800-952-5666 (toll-free in
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E-mail for customer requests or contact information: btbl@library.ca.gov

Web catalog: www.library.ca.gov/klasweb

Holiday closures for May-September 2008: We will be closed on May 26 (Memorial Day), July 4 (Independence Day) and September 1 (Labor Day).
