



BTBL News

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

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A Message from Mike Marlin, Director

It may seem obvious, but the Braille and Talking Book Library staff will never forget how challenging the past year has been for the blind and otherwise print disabled readership of Northern California. The coronavirus pandemic has impacted the entire National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS) network of libraries in a number of ways, and it took hold as a number of innovations were about to get underway. We hope BTBL's first full-length newsletter since October 2019 will rekindle warmth and inspiration just as a good book does for the soul!

On March 20, 2020, as coronavirus interrupted the "Old Normal", BTBL staff quickly pivoted to a strictly telework existence as the California State Library ceased its physical operations and mail service. Although able to

communicate with patrons through email, our virtual services reached only a small fraction of our total patrons. Therefore, we were elated in August 2020 when staff were able to return to the library in downtown Sacramento and resume, albeit in a limited fashion, circulation of braille and talking books on cartridge through the U.S. Postal Service.

While we ramped up to roughly half of our pre-pandemic circulation numbers, began procurement of a new internet-based phone system, and planned to expand on-site staffing further, public health advisories once again intervened and we returned to stay at home in the second week of December 2020. During this second temporary suspension of physical circulation, we enlisted the assistance of the NLS Multi-state Center in Salt Lake City to provide limited book loans to many patrons. But we know our efforts were simply not enough to satisfy the needs of our readers. In February 2021, we were able to resume our limited in-person operations and, knock on wood, will continue mail service and be able to expand it going forward.

Farewells are in order for three longtime staff members. In early 2020 after 14 steadfast years serving BTBL library patrons and as a trusted colleague and wise counsel to BTBL staff, Outreach Librarian Mary Jane retired from BTBL but also as a reference and research librarian for 40 plus years. We bid so-long and congratulations to Circulation Assistant and 20-year BTBL veteran Tanisha who moved on from the library to a new career in late 2019, and Reader Advisor Valerie who in August 2020 retired after 32 dependable years of service to many grateful patrons. We will miss all of their contributions and friendship!

Finally, we welcome on board new Outreach Librarian Laura who served as a Reader Advisor from 2011 to 2013 and, after graduating from library school worked in local libraries for seven years before returning to her new role in BTBL in October 2020. BTBL is renewing our outreach efforts emphasizing virtual programs and presentations until it is safe for in-person events again.

As we all adjust to the "New Normal" and look forward to an even "Better Normal", we will continue to update you with service developments. As always, feel free to contact us with questions or suggestions. Please stay safe.

Phones Are Back: 800-952-5666 or 916-654-0640

After a long hiatus, we are gradually approaching our pre-pandemic levels of telephone service. Thanks to the implementation of a new internet-based phone system, BTBL phone calls can now be answered from within the library building as well as by staff working from home. We apologize for the long phone outage and any frustration it caused. Give us a call during business hours or leave a voicemail and we look forward to speaking with you!

Where Are My Books?!

Recently, the most frequent question Reader Advisors are asked here at BTBL is "Why is it taking so long for my books to come to me?" There are a few reasons for the delay:

1. We are quarantining returned books before checking them back in. This means that, although your books might be back in our building, the computer will not know you need a new book for at least 24 hours.
2. The U.S. Postal Service has been experiencing delivery delays nationwide due to budget shortfalls, regulation changes, and the pandemic.
3. Due to COVID-19 safety measures, there are a limited number of library staff allowed in the building at one time. We'll do our best to keep up with the work despite the limited staffing, but there may be delays to your shipments!

If you are wondering what you can do to make sure that you don't have to wait too long for your books, here are some tips:

1. Don't send ALL your books back at once! Send each book back as you finish it. Once a book is checked in for you, another goes out to replace it. Sending each book back when you're done with it creates a more steady flow of books from us to you.
2. Ask us to increase the number of books you are set up to receive. Instead of 4 books checked out at a time, 8 books at once might be needed for a time.
3. CONTACT US! Before you run out of all your books, give us a call! Your Reader Advisor will work with you to ensure you have plenty of books on hand.

Contribute Your Experience to The COVID Diaries

Have you been documenting your experience of living through COVID? Have you been writing in a journal, recording your thoughts, or discussing your experience with friends and family? If so, we want your observations!

The California State Library is pleased to announce the launch of a community-based archival project called The COVID Diaries. The goal of this project is to document everyday Californians' responses, thoughts, and feelings about the COVID-19 pandemic so that future generations will better understand what it was like to live through the COVID experience.

Who can contribute? Anyone. This project is meant to collect a diverse array of experiences. What can you contribute? Anything, whether virtual or physical. Some examples would be: a diary entry, a blog post, a photograph, a drawing, an audio recording, or any other method of storytelling. You can tell your own story, or interview a friend or family member about their experience. To learn more about this project and see sample material, please visit: covididiaries.library.ca.gov. Have a submission? Email it to: covididiaries@library.ca.gov.

Announcing New Program: Sheltering in Place Conversations

Are you looking for a way to connect with others about your experiences of sheltering in place during the pandemic? Or are you just looking for a good conversation? BTBL and the San Francisco Talking Books & Braille Center are co-hosting a new program: Sheltering In Place Conversations.

Initially hosted by San Francisco and designed to discuss personal experiences of city residents sheltering in place while blind, this program is being expanded to include all Northern California BTBL patrons. While initial conversations may still be concentrated on the pandemic experience, we plan to explore more general topics of interest to our patrons, like music, food, hobbies, travel, recreation, and pets.

Mark your calendars for the 2nd Wednesday of each month, 12pm-1:30pm. Call in to 1-888-788-0099 and then enter Meeting ID: 4155574253, or join us on Zoom at sfpl-org.zoom.us/j/4155574253 Join Meeting ID: 4155574253.

It's Almost Summer Reading Time!

BTBL is pleased to announce that we are continuing our Summer Reading Program for 2021!

How it works:

1. Read library books (**any** audio or braille book borrowed or downloaded) between June 1st and August 31st.
2. Submit your completed reading log by August 31st by email, fax, or mail.
3. Win prizes!

All adult patrons who complete the Summer Reading Program will receive a \$5 Starbucks gift card. Adult participants must read at least 10 books for the Summer Reading Program to qualify for their participation prize. You can let us know what you read several ways: filling out your large print reading log and sending it to us in the mail, emailing us a list of the books you read, or faxing that information to us. Unfortunately, we cannot accept your list of books over the phone.

Patrons 18 years or under will receive a \$5 gift card for Baskin-Robbins Ice Cream upon completion of the Summer Reading Program. For younger patrons, there is no set number of books to read in order to win. Your Summer Reading Program reading log will have a place to mark the books you are reading and how much time you spent reading them. You can challenge yourself to read more than you did last summer! Youth patrons may also submit the titles of the books and their reading times through email or fax.

If you'd like to participate, contact us to request a large print Summer Reading Program packet for either an adult or younger patron. Each packet will include a summary of the event, some recommended reading lists, a reading log for adults or youth patrons to help keep track of your books, and an envelope addressed to the library to help you easily return your reading log. Schools may request multiple packets for their eligible students. Program packets are not necessary for participation. You can simply submit your name and books read by email or fax by August 31st. Our Summer Reading Program is only open to active BTBL patrons.

Need help finding the perfect summer read? Consider these selections from the Californiana Collection, which is growing every day. Volunteers and staff of our Californiana Studio have been hard at work recording local books—California authors and subjects not covered by the NLS talking book collection. Here are the recently completed talking books:

God's Hotel: a doctor, a hospital, and a pilgrimage to the heart of medicine
by Victoria Sweet DBC 16160

This autobiographical account chronicles the compassionate practice of "Slow Medicine" offered to the disenfranchised at San Francisco's Laguna Honda Hospital, the last almshouse in the U.S. Stories from this off-the-grid institution encapsulate how inefficiencies were actually quite efficient when one's metric was healing patients, until a consulting firm over 20 years forced the painful transition from the practice of medicine to the delivery of health care and brought about suffering for patients and caregivers alike. 2012.

16 hours, 7 minutes. Narrated by: Sandra Swafford.

Run River

by Joan Didion DBC 16725

Set in the Sacramento River delta, the author's first novel portrays marriages gone wrong, a murder and betrayals that offer a consideration of the life style of the heirs to California pioneer families in the years after World War II. Descriptions of sex, some strong language, and some violence. 1994.

8 hours, 4 minutes. Narrated by: Linda Goman.

Kiss the Sky: my weekend in Monterey at the greatest rock concert ever
by Dusty Baker DBC 16724

A collection of memories from California native Dusty Baker begins with a description of how his mom financed his trip to the first Monterey Music Festival and goes on from there to reminisce about his life in professional baseball and how it was intertwined with and influenced by his music interests. 2015.

3 hours, 17 minutes. Narrated by: Caro Marks.

The Harvest Gypsies: on the road to 'The Grapes of Wrath'

by John Steinbeck

DBC 16465

Here is the power of Steinbeck's pen employed journalistically in a set of seven articles on migrant farm workers' lives in squatters' camps as they eke out an existence in depression-era California. These news reports formed the basis for Steinbeck's understanding of migrant laborers' working and living conditions when he set out to write his masterpiece, 'The Grapes of Wrath.' 1936.

1 hour, 50 minutes. Narrated by: Phil Torres.

Rush for Riches: Gold Fever and the Making of California

by J.S. Holliday

DBC 19522

The birth of modern California, framed between the gold rush years and the 1890s, is grandly told in this important book. Many factors contributed to California's early image as a rough, careless, risk-taking place, populated by adventurers of every sort. Inevitably, there were conflicts, particularly between miners and the farmers who settled in the state, leading to a dramatic legal battle over hydraulic mining in 1884.

18 hours, 37 minutes. Narrated by: Sandra Swafford.

The Lemon Orchard

by Luanne Rice

DBC 16722

Two people both suffering from loss of children find each other when Julia, whose daughter has died, travels to California to stay in the Pacific coast beach home of her family while they are away. The home has a lemon orchard, tended by Roberto. The two get closer and begin to search for Roberto's daughter who disappeared during a border-crossing attempt. Some explicit descriptions of sex and some strong language. 2013.

9 hours, 10 minutes. Narrated by: Caro Marks.

Life in a California Mission: Monterey in 1786: the Journals of Jean François de la Pérouse

by Jean François de la Pérouse

DBC 16727

The first foreign expedition to visit Spain's California colonies arrived in Monterey in 1786. La Perouse, commander of this expedition, wrote about mission life, the people he met there, the wildlife and the land he saw. His observations provide a unique portrait of the beautiful places he visited and of the isolated life of its inhabitants.

4 hours, 10 minutes. Narrated by: Barbara Reider.

Indian Summer: Traditional Life Among the Choinumne Indians of California's San Joaquin Valley

by Thomas Jefferson Mayfield

DBC 19534

Mayfield, adopted as a boy by the Choinumne Yokuts of California's San Joaquin Valley, spent several years with them in the 1850's. This book describes in wonderful detail the rich life and natural beauty he shared with them in that time and place.

3 hours, 50 minutes. Narrated by: Ray Flinn.

Simpler Certification for Those With Reading Disabilities

NLS has recently implemented a long-awaited change: simplifying the certification requirements for potential patrons with reading disorders.

Estimates indicate that up to 15% of Americans have a reading disability, which can take many forms: dyslexia, dysgraphia, hyperlexia, alexia, trouble with word decoding, or another data processing disorder. Until recently, potential patrons interested in receiving BTBL services due to a reading disability were required to obtain a signature from a doctor of medicine or osteopathy, proving that their disability was "the result of organic dysfunction." This created an additional barrier to obtaining services, especially since a 2016 Government Accountability Office report noted that it is now widely accepted that a medical diagnosis is not necessary to determine if a person has a reading disability.

Over the past several years, NLS has worked to amend its legislative language in order to broaden the scope of who can sign as a certifying authority for individuals with reading disorders. Now, NLS is pleased to announce that all requirements have been met. Several new categories of certifying authorities that work in K-12 and academia are able to sign off on the application, including certified reading specialists, psychologists or school psychologists, librarians or school librarians, speech pathologists, and other types of professional educators.

BTBL will be focusing outreach efforts toward schools, reading specialists, and reading disorder associations across California to sign up eligible individuals for library service. If you know someone with a reading disability, please invite them to visit btbl.ca.gov/apply to complete an application for library service.

Patron Spotlight: Roslyn McCoy, BTBL User Advisory Council Chair

In the 1970's, Roslyn McCoy was a 13-year old Colorado middle school student struggling to read. When her mother encouraged her to learn braille, Roslyn quickly mastered the skill. This ultimately led to her enrollment as a sighted patron in the NLS program.

When Ros was diagnosed with dyslexia at age six, educational systems were not fully prepared for students with print disabilities. Legal protections for those students didn't appear until the mid-70s. Utilizing print, Ros says she never reached higher than a 2nd grade reading level. But when she discovered braille, she successfully surpassed a 7th grade reading level in less than two years.

Despite many challenges, she graduated from high school, but lost access to her NLS materials upon leaving school. At that time, Roslyn was not made aware of any way to continue an accessible education or continue to access NLS materials. Although Roslyn read braille, she ran into roadblocks from educational authorities who didn't understand why a sighted person would need accessible or alternative materials. This, along with discrimination she

later experienced in the workplace, led her to become a tireless advocate for persons with reading disabilities.

After high school, she spent several years working as a general laborer in the California mountains, traveling around the United States, and ultimately starting a family. Although reading print was still tedious, she became adept at reading instructional manuals, learning enough to expertly repair cars and work as a seamstress.

Ros moved back to California in 1989, settling in Mount Shasta. While raising her two kids, including a dyslexic son, she decided to go back to college. Assistive technology was in its formative stages, and she remembers the dictation and text-to-speech software often crashed the computers of the day. She persevered and received an A.S. degree from The College of the Siskiyous and a B.A. with honors (cum laude) in Psychology from Humboldt State University. Later she worked for the Army Corps of Engineers.

Ros has continuously advocated for persons with print disabilities, using screen reader software to research online legal resources and participate in local legislative efforts. Due to her own experiences, she believes it is particularly important for children exiting the educational system to have transitional planning and education on all of the resources available to them, including the NLS program. In rejoining the NLS network, Ros is able to express her passion for reading. She is especially fond of the Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) service, accessible through her Android smart phone.

In 2020, after serving six years as a BTBL User Advisory Council (BUAC) member she "took over" and continues as BUAC Chair. Her mission is to ensure that the print disabled population in Northern CA is aware of and able to take advantage of BTBL's services. She is pleased that NLS is working to ease eligibility restrictions for the print disabled population in the near future. When not serving on BUAC, she spends her spare time on home improvement projects and raises chickens. Whenever possible she visits her kids and grandchild.

100,000: NLS Digital Books Reach 6 Digits!

You may start noticing our digital book (DB) collection has six digits now versus the five you were used to. For example, instead of a five-digit book number of DB 99876, you may now discover books listed with six digits such as DB 100101. That's because NLS has reached over one hundred thousand book titles in our collection! There's no need to do anything different when requesting books, whether you're calling us or downloading through BARD Mobile, but just be mindful of that extra digit.

Affordable High-Speed Internet Access for Californians

Do you want to get connected to high-speed internet access? Do you want access to online job applications, your doctor, or social networks? Are you low-income and want affordable internet service?

If you answered yes to any of the above, you can qualify for low-cost internet through the Digital Access Project, a program through the California Foundation for Independent Living Centers. To learn more, please visit www.digitalaccessproject.org or call 1-800-390-2699.

Vaccination Appointment Telephone Assistance

The California COVID-19 Hotline, hosted by the California Department of Public Health, can connect Californians without access to the internet, an email address, or mobile phone with COVID-19 information, resources, and now...vaccination appointments! Call the CA COVID-19 Hotline at 1-833-422-4255 (M-F 8AM-8PM, Sa-Su 8AM-5PM) for assistance.

The California Department of Rehabilitation at (916) 324-1313 is also available to assist individuals with disabilities age 16+ who are encountering difficulty navigating any websites related to vaccines.

Your local health department, medical provider or local pharmacy may also be able to help you schedule a vaccine appointment. Community pop-up vaccination clinics in your area, often hosted by non-profits, churches, or local government are another opportunity. If you are unsuccessful, keep trying--additional appointments are being added each week!

Braille and Talking Book Library
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Free Matter for the
Blind or Handicapped

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

BTBL News is written and edited by staff of the Braille and Talking Book Library at the California State Library. It is available in braille, audio file, through email, and in large print upon request, or through our website.

916-654-0640 or **800-952-5666** (toll-free in CA)

Email: btbl@library.ca.gov Website: btbl.ca.gov Catalog: btbl.library.ca.gov

Library Service Hours: 9:30 AM - 4:00 PM, Monday-Friday

Office closures: We will be closed May 31 (Memorial Day), July 5 (Independence Day), September 6 (Labor Day), November 11 (Veteran's Day), November 25-26 (Thanksgiving).

Donations to BTBL are accepted at any time and are used to enhance and improve library services. In the case of memorials or donations in honor of a particular person or event, please include the name(s) and address(es) of those to be notified. Checks should be made payable to the California State Library Foundation and should include a note that the donation is for the Braille and Talking Book Library.

Donations should be sent to: California State Library Foundation, 1225 8th Street, Suite 345, Sacramento, CA, 95814-4809. Donations can also be made online at: csbfdn.org. Follow the link to "Join/Donate Online." There is a place to designate BTBL as the recipient.