



# BTBL News

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

New Series no. 3 (Spring 2009)

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## A Message from Mike Marlin, Program Manager

Greetings and welcome to the latest installment of *BTBL News*! The most recent development for our library has been the consolidation of two other library sections into our facility due to the renovation of the historic Stanley Mosk Library and Courts building. The renovation will last two to three years, and during that time the BTBL reading room is sharing its quarters with the Witkin State Law Library and Information Resources and Government Publications section.

In order to accommodate this temporary merger, most of our braille collection has been moved to a remote facility in West Sacramento. There will be no significant disruption of mail service for our braille readers. The major difference is that the braille browsing collection in our reading room is smaller, containing only the newest braille produced by the National Library Service (NLS) which we've received in the past few months.

In addition, our reference desk has moved further toward the back of the reading room and at times the room is a bit noisier due to the additional staff and customers. We still have two accessible computer work stations specifically set aside for BTBL customers and any customers with disabilities who can benefit by using assistive technology. (See the article below to learn about what technology is available.) The same friendly and helpful BTBL staff is on hand to assist you at any time during regular hours and looks forward to your next visit.

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We have been getting ready for the influx of digital talking book players and digital books, which we expect will begin arriving in August. For more information about how the new machines will be circulated, see the article below, "Lottery for New Digital Talking Book Players."

Even after you receive a digital book player, we encourage you to keep your cassette player. You may want to keep it for several more years since many older books will not be made available as digital cartridges and will only be available on cassette. Finally, I want to stress very clearly that you do NOT need to own or have access to a computer in order to listen to digital books. And you do NOT need to purchase any commercial talking book players to enjoy NLS books. I am grateful for all your comments and suggestions as the digital talking book program develops and encourage your continued feedback and participation.

## **Staff News**

We are pleased to welcome new Office Assistants Christopher Tom and Lakesha Johnson to the circulation staff and we are glad for the return of Circulation Office Assistant Tanisha Leslie who has been away on leave. Their presence will be invaluable as we begin the transition to digital talking books. We said farewell to Outreach and Programs Supervising Librarian Janet Coles who has left BTBL to manage the library for CALTRANS. We will miss Janet and wish her well in her new endeavors.

## **Lottery for New Digital Talking Book Players**

BTBL is anticipating our first shipment of digital talking book players in August. We are expecting more than 600 machines every month once the distribution begins. We will continue to ship out digital talking book players until every customer has received one.

Many of you responded to our Fall 2008 survey and let us know your desire to be added to the request list. If you didn't answer the survey but would like a digital talking book player you may call, write, or e-mail us to let us know you would like one of the new machines. We will put your name on the request list. The first batch of players will be assigned

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in order of priority to U.S. veterans, then centenarians, and then "easy cassette" (E1) machine users. After we have fulfilled requests from these groups we will put all remaining names into a lottery. We will draw names each month when we receive a new batch of digital players. When your name is drawn, we will check your record and send you a player if your record shows "active" status (see "Keeping Your Account Active and Current" article).

We will continue to draw names for each new batch of players until everyone on the request list who is eligible has a new digital talking book player. Then we will contact customers who were not on the list to see if they want a new digital player.

You will be able to keep your cassette player after you receive a digital player so that you can use books in both formats. Depending on federal funding for digital players and books, it will take up to four years to complete the digital format transition. Active borrowers have an excellent chance of receiving a digital player much sooner than that – as long as you contact us now to get your name on the list by calling 800-952-5666, or sending an e-mail to [btbl@library.ca.gov](mailto:btbl@library.ca.gov).

## Fall Volunteer Recognition Event

To honor its hardworking volunteers, BTBL hosted a "Fiesta de Gracias" last November 18. About fifty volunteers and staff attended the event; also present were Deputy State Librarian Stacey Aldrich and State Library Services Bureau Chief Tom Andersen. Addressing the audience, Stacey Aldrich acknowledged the hard work of BTBL volunteers. Live guitar music and a delicious spread of Mexican food were enjoyed by all.

BTBL volunteers include narrators, monitors, and reviewers for the California book narration program; inspectors and repair specialists who examine and repair audiocassette books and players; and volunteers who read letters, documents, and other materials for the blind (from braille or from print). We are always on the lookout for new volunteers so please contact us if you or someone you know is interested in donating their time to the library.

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## Volunteer Spotlight: Meet a "Bob-of-all-trades"

by Valerie Ries-Lerman, Reader Advisor

One of our most valued volunteer workers here at BTBL is Bob Pyle. Bob energetically takes on whatever needs to be done, jumping into any task our book circulation staff puts before him. You can find him welcoming our new volunteers in BTBL's book inspection area, diligently inspecting a broken cassette or damaged braille book, or trundling books around from department to department like the Energizer bunny. Despite his own health challenges, Bob has worked for us in excess of 6,500 hours since he began in 1997 and consistently exhibits warmth and enthusiasm to everyone with whom he works and meets.

Bob was born and raised in Sacramento. He spent time in the service as a U.S. Army enlisted man in Vietnam in 1966. Upon his return to civilian life, he moved into restaurant work and then spent seventeen years employed at the Libby's cannery before their closure in 1988.

Even though we would understand if Bob wanted to leave BTBL, slow down, and relax as he enters his silver years, Bob is committed to helping others and says volunteering means too much to him to retire now. We won't argue as we like having him around! Bob is an instrumental part of our team, and with his help talking books will continue to flow smoothly. We want to take this opportunity to thank Bob for his ceaseless dedication over the past 12 years.

## Assistive Technology Workstations at BTBL

BTBL is fortunate to have in its Reading Room at 900 N Street two computers outfitted with accessible software available for visitors who require the use of accessible technology. The tables, chairs and keyboard trays are adjustable. The computers are outfitted with the latest versions of Jaws and Window Eyes screen reader software, Zoomtext Level 2 and Magic screen magnification software, Open Book and Kurzweil Optical Character Recognition scanning software, and two scanners. We also have a brand new Juliet embosser for patrons needing to emboss braille documents from electronic files using Duxbury Braille Translation

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software, providing the jobs are within reason. Workstations A and B can be reserved ahead of time or by just dropping in and can be used for up to two-hour intervals or longer, if no one is waiting. We encourage BTBL customers to pay us a visit and make use of this free resource.

## Cassette Machine Shortages

Even though we are making the transition to digital players, we continue to need to issue cassette players to new customers and to those requiring a replacement player. Some of you may be aware of recent delays in this process. Libraries throughout the National Library Service (NLS) network are currently experiencing a shortage of well-functioning cassette machines due to three factors: 1) new cassette players are no longer being manufactured, 2) the fleet of cassette machines is aging and wear and tear is taking its toll, and 3) repair groups and technicians are unable to keep up with the demand for refurbished machines. Our repair staff and volunteers are working hard every day to repair worn cassette players and make them serviceable and available to meet the demand. Our hope is that the arrival of new digital talking book players will begin to fill the void for enough of you so that we can catch up with repairs. We apologize for this shortfall and ask for your patience.

## Taking Care of Your Machine

We know that the majority of our borrowers take good care of the cassette machines on loan to them. Taking good care of a machine makes a tremendous difference in its performance and longevity, and is even more important now that new cassette machines are no longer being manufactured. Here are some suggestions on how to keep your machine clean and in good working order:

- Keep the machine clean, dry, and away from food, drinks, and pets
- Don't put your machine next to sources of heat - such as the stove, cookers, or heaters
- Wipe the machine occasionally with a clean, dry cloth

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- If the dry wipe isn't enough, try wiping with a cloth moistened with a mild household cleaner or a window cleaner, but use it sparingly
  - Store the machine in a safe place – away from the table edge so that it doesn't fall and break if bumped
  - If possible, cover the machine when not in use to keep it clean and dust-free

## Keeping Your BTBL Account "Active" and Current

In order for you to receive services from BTBL (including those new digital machines and books), your account must be in "Active" status. If items are returned to us as undelivered we must put your account on hold. If it stays on hold for over a year, we will have to suspend and then eventually cancel your account. We will attempt to notify you by mail before we do this, but if the address is incorrect you may not get the notice. Once cancelled, you will have to re-apply for our service. That is why it's important to remember to call us with address updates.

It is sometimes the case that, even though your address hasn't changed, something we sent you has been returned. If you haven't received anything from us for a while, give us a call. Telephone number, e-mail address, and "other contact" updates are also helpful to us as they give us other avenues to try to contact you. A simple call to Clarissa, our registrar, can save all of us a lot of time and effort. She requests that if you reach her voicemail, please go ahead and leave the information changes. That way she doesn't have to call you back to get them.

## Download News

BARD (Braille and Audio Reading Download) has replaced the "Expanded Pilot Project" for downloading NLS-produced digital books and magazines, effective April 30, 2009. There is a new web location for it at: <https://nlsbard.loc.gov>. Those of you who had pilot project accounts should have received an e-mail about how to continue downloading books and magazines. If you did not, contact us at BTBL and we will assist you. BARD gives you unlimited downloads and an

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improved title, author, and subject search process. Newly interested customers may apply for BARD via the same web address. At this time, you still need to purchase or already own a third-party commercial player in order to use the service. BTBL does not have any "library loaners." For the present, braille downloads continue through the "Web-Braille" system, but will eventually become a part of BARD.

**Unabridged** (the sub-group of NLS libraries who make commercially-produced downloadable audio books from Overdrive available to our computer-owning patrons) have begun to add a few .mp3 file format books to the list of titles available. The majority of the books that may be put onto a personal player remain in "protected .wma" file format. The format is important as not all personal players play all formats. You don't have to have a personal player to use Unabridged books – you may listen to them straight from your computer. Contact BTBL for more information.

## Worthy of Notice

**Bookshare Now Free for Students:** As some of BTBL's most voracious readers look to expand their access to books beyond the current NLS catalog, Bookshare has made its collection of scanned books and periodicals available to qualifying students of all ages at no cost. Bookshare is an online community that allows people with print disabilities to legally download books and periodicals to be read as braille, large print or synthetic speech. Those with print disabilities include people who are blind or have low vision, severe dyslexia or a mobility impairment that prevents them from reading a traditional printed book. If you are an eligible student with computer access you may wish to take advantage of this online resource. For more information check out: [www.bookshare.org](http://www.bookshare.org).

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Free Matter for the Blind and  
Physically Handicapped

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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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, on cassette, through e-mail, and in large print upon request, or through our website: [www.btbl.ca.gov](http://www.btbl.ca.gov)

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

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E-mail for customer requests or contact information: [btbl@library.ca.gov](mailto:btbl@library.ca.gov)

Web catalog: [www.btbl.library.ca.gov/klasweb](http://www.btbl.library.ca.gov/klasweb)

Holiday closures for May-September 2009: We will be closed on May 25 (Memorial Day) and September 7 (Labor Day). (Independence Day is not a state holiday as it falls on a Saturday.)

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 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 345, Sacramento, CA, 95814-4809