



BTBL News

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

New Series no. 5 (Fall 2010)

A Message from Mike Marlin, Program Manager

Like a reliable steamroller that chugs along our streets paving the way, BTBL has continued to weather the economic climate and roll forward to lay the groundwork for your literary journeys!

We have served everyone in good standing on our Digital Talking Book Machine waiting list. We are sending digital players to new borrowers and beginning to send them out to the remainder of our patrons (please see the article following these opening remarks). And we have helped patrons to access downloadable books with their computers, as well.

At present, staffing shortages are leading to uncommonly long delays in the provision of readers advisory service. We are working diligently to overcome these delays whenever possible and we apologize for the inconvenience.

In order to streamline access to reader advisors and other BTBL staff via local and toll-free telephone lines, we have begun a process to develop an Automated Call Distribution system which we hope to implement later this fall. I wanted to give everyone a heads-up not to be surprised when you call in and hear menus with numerical options for getting to the right person. We are looking forward to the automated system and fully expect it to increase efficiency and provide better service for you, our valued patrons.

Many of you have asked when descriptive VHS videos and DVDs of movies and television programs will be available. The rollout of this new service is taking longer than we anticipated due to staffing shortages, but

we hope to be able to begin circulation early in 2011. Thank you for your patience.

Last May I attended the biennial conference of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) in Des Moines, Iowa. I collected much valuable information from NLS staff and from other NLS network libraries and came back reinvigorated about our vital mission to ensure “That All May Read.” Much of the conference concerned digital and downloadable books. Highlights of things to come include production of magazines on digital cartridge, local administration of BARD (Braille and Audio Reading Download service), and the digitization of the NLS foreign language collection.

Currently, we publish our newsletter in large print, braille, and cassette formats, and on our website in .mp3 audio, .pdf and Word. BTBL is seriously examining the cost of publishing our large print edition. Other libraries for the blind and physically handicapped (LBPH) have ceased print publication altogether, with some libraries opting for electronic versions only, but we are not faced with this prospect – yet. Continuing a large print version of this newsletter after this year may become too cost-prohibitive in these tough economic times. It is possible that in the future we may be able to circulate our newsletter on digital cartridge as well, though there are some logistical hurdles to clear before that happens.

In order to conserve resources, we need to know your newsletter format preference. Please e-mail, mail, fax, or call us and let us know which of the following formats you would prefer for your copy of BTBL News: audio cassette, braille, e-mail, large print, website, or none of the above. Please specify only one format. We will continue this survey for the next few issues.

Thank you so much for supporting BTBL through the lean times and the plush times! We look forward to working with all of you as new and exciting technological innovations make their way into the library and into your lives. Feel free to contact me if you have questions or ideas for the library. You may call me at (800) 952-5666 or email me directly at mmarlin@library.ca.gov .

Exciting and Important News for Northern California Talking Book Readers: Digital Talking Book Machines are Now Available for Everyone!

We have recently begun and plan to continue to send a new Digital Talking Book Machine (or Player) (DTBM) to active readers who do not yet have one and whose accounts are in good standing.

Good standing means patrons with fewer than five overdue books who have checked out books in the last year. For the last two years we have sent out overdue reminders to patrons to encourage them to send back overdue material. These notices serve two purposes - first as a reminder and second as a mechanism to clean up patron records. We understand that, at times, books have been sent back and either never made it to the library or have not been checked in properly. If you believe this is the case, call the library and have a reader advisor check your patron record.

We want you to join the many satisfied readers who have discovered the wonderful sound quality of digital books, and the simpler operation of a digital machine. There are two types of DTBM – standard and advanced. If you have questions about which one is right for you just give us a call or read the explanatory article on “Navigation” from our Winter 2009-10 newsletter available on our website.

Just think of it! Your entire book will fit on one cartridge! No more changing tapes or turning them over! No more problems with defective tape cassettes! Just a beautiful, rich tone from a machine that is smaller, lighter, and easier to use.

There are two ways to receive digital books. You can receive digital books by mail, or you can download them from the Internet over a high-speed connection (dial-up service will not work). With the download option you will not need to wait for someone else to return a book, or for the postal service to deliver it. More than 19,000 books and 48 magazines are available immediately, and more titles are added every week! The reader advisors and librarians at BTBL are available to talk

you through the downloading process by phone, or to meet with you, by appointment, in person at the library for a training session.

Don't like computers? Don't have a computer? Don't worry! We're happy to send you your books through the mail on digital cartridge. They are the same size as a cassette to handle, and they will slide easily into the front of your new player.

No new books on cassette tape will be recorded by NLS after September 2010 and no completed cassette books are expected to arrive at the library beyond Spring 2011. Tapes will continue to be available for older titles that have not been transferred to the digital format, but soon you will need to have a digital player to keep receiving the latest and most popular titles. We already receive more digital copies of new books than we do cassette copies!

Once you hear the new Digital Talking Book Machine, you may be tempted to return your cassette player: the sound is that good! Even so, we encourage you to keep your cassette machine so that you will have access to older titles that may not be available in digital format. Also, you will need your cassette machine to receive NLS-provided magazines on tape for a while longer.

As great as the Digital Machine is, and despite the fact that by early next year all new titles will be digital books, some people may just not want one. We understand. If you really do not want to receive this player, please contact us at the library and we will not send you one. You can always change your mind later.

We are confident that most people will enjoy the ease of use and improved audio quality of your new digital talking book machine. Expect yours in the mail soon!

Digital Book Update

Due to heavy demand, we have just raised the DB circulation limit from 4 to 6 items, and as we continue to grow our digital book inventory we

may be able to raise the limit again later this year. Please notify your reader advisor if you want to borrow up to 6 digital books at a time.

One issue that has come up with the digital books on cartridge is that many blue DB containers are coming back to the library empty. Please make sure there is a cartridge in the correct box when you are returning digital books. Conversely, when cartridges show up without their container or mail card we do not know which patron has returned it. This will result in incorrect information in the patron record and cause overdue reminders to be sent.

We would also like to remind patrons that to stay in active status, you must check out at least one book or magazine a year either by borrowing from the library or by downloading from the BARD service.

We are now able to provide our institutional borrowers with one to two digital players. Please contact us if you are an institution with or without a deposit collection and we'll activate your DB status. We hope that by next year we'll be able to fulfill institutional requests for larger numbers of multiple digital talking book machines.

Volunteer News

BTBL wishes to thank Vicky Simms, a Peace Officer with the Vacaville Correctional Facility who has supervised the Volunteers of Vacaville (VOV) program for the past 2 years and now moves to a different position at Vacaville. VOV participants, among other services provided to the vision-impaired community, clean approximately 800 refurbished cassette book machines for BTBL each year. Officer Simms has been a responsive, warm, and devoted advocate and we will miss her. Officer Simm's replacement, Patrick Sahota, has been very helpful thus far and we are glad he is on board.

For National Volunteer Week (established in 1974 as the third week in April as a way to honor volunteers everywhere), BTBL thanked its volunteers this year by providing special treats for several days and then topping it off with a pizza party.

BTBL currently has over 65 volunteers who donate over 10,000 hours of work per year, equivalent to 5 full time employees. BTBL volunteers work in Circulation, Book Narration and Production, Inventory, Machine Repair, and other projects – and we are always looking for new volunteers!

If you are interested in volunteering at BTBL in machine repair, book inspection, audio narration/production, braille inspection, telephone surveying, or special library projects, please contact us via phone or email and let us know your skills and volunteer desires. We plan to have volunteer job descriptions on our website later this year.

Staff News

We are pleased to welcome two new temporary, albeit incomparable, staff members in 2010: Student Assistant Tiffany Mair and Receptionist Jill Ching. We say an "official" farewell to longtime BTBL reader advisor Valerie Ries (27 years of state service) even though she still provides BTBL patrons with readers advisory service part time as a State of California Retired Annuitant. And we also bid a fond farewell to reader advisor and BTBL registrar Clarissa Perez (36 years of state service). We know many patrons will miss her expertise and we wish her the best.

Fresh Out of Your Favorite Author? Try a "readalike!"

Danielle Steel:

Many BTBL readers are fans of Danielle Steel, the prolific author who often focuses on the relationships and personal obstacles of her typically female protagonists. While not all of her books are considered to be of the romance genre, many of her novels tend to be romantic and dramatic in nature. Some of her most popular titles include *Southern Lights* (*DB or RC 69429 and soon to be in braille) and *Matters of the Heart* (*DB or RC 69350 and soon to be in braille).

BTBL readers who enjoy books by Danielle Steel (and have already read all of her books available through BTBL) may want to check out books by Fern Michaels, who also writes domestic fiction focusing on family,

relationships, and wealth. Michaels has written several popular series, including the Texas Series, beginning with *Texas Rich* (RC 25391), the Vegas Series, beginning with *Vegas Rich* (RC 44137), the Captive series, beginning with *Captive Passions* (DB or RC 35469), as well as the Cisco Family series, beginning with *No Place Like Home* (*DB or RC 55943). Many of her titles are available on cassette and select titles are available in digital book or braille formats.

Another author of interest is Eileen Goudge, who often writes about young women and their challenges in life, while including elements of mystery and suspense. Some of Goudge's recent well-known titles include *Woman in Red* (*DB or RC 66176) and *Otherwise Engaged* (*DB or RC 61185).

John Grisham:

For those who enjoy John Grisham's fast-paced legal thrillers, Steve Martini might be an author of interest for further reading. A few of Martini's popular books include *Guardian of Lies* (*DB 69461) and *Shadow of Power* (*DB or RC 66953), suspense genre novels focusing on Cold War secrets and the Supreme Court, respectively. Grisham fans may also like Brad Meltzer, author of *The Zero Game* (*DB or RC 57375 or braille from another network library) and *The Book of Lies* (*DB or RC 67532).

*DB numbers are given, but some of them may only be available right now as downloadable DBs from the BARD system and where ONLY a DB number is given, there will not be an RC equivalent for that book.

(Author suggestions based on recommendations from Joyce Saricks and the Anniston-Calhoun County Public Library.)

Furlough Fridays To [Probably] End

With the passing of a budget and union contract ratification pending, Friday, October 22, 2010 should have been the last "Furlough Friday." Patrons will no longer have to calculate which number a particular Friday is in a given month before calling us for assistance.

Braille and Talking Book Library
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Free Matter for the Blind and
Physically 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, on cassette, through e-mail, and in large print upon request, or through our website: www.btbl.ca.gov

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E-mail for customer requests or contact information: btbl@library.ca.gov

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

State holiday closures for November 2010 -- February 2011: We will be closed on November 11 (Veteran's Day), November 25 and 26 (Thanksgiving), January 17 (Martin Luther King Day), and February 21 (Presidents' Day).

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