



# BTBL News

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

New Series no. 4 (Winter 2009/2010)

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## A Message from Mike Marlin, Program Manager

Happy New Year! Greetings from the Central Valley and your friendly neighborhood regional library. 2009 turned out to be a whirlwind year for us. In addition to the implementation of the NLS digital talking book program and a major move/merge with other California State Library departments, we – like everyone else – were hit by the economic recession. Yet, despite furloughs for state employees, budget cuts, and position cutbacks, the BTBL staff persevered and managed to move forward to continue providing the most excellent service possible.

In July and August we installed digital recording equipment in our narration studios, replacing old reel-to-reel tape recorders with computers and digital recording software. Our staff and volunteers have been learning the ropes, and in the coming year we will begin digitizing our masters and recording new items for this special collection that focuses on California-related authors and subjects.

In early September we received our first of several shipments of digital talking book machines (DTBMs), which we have been steadily distributing to U.S. Veterans and other patrons on the DTBM master waiting list. If you have not yet requested a digital machine, it's not too late. Review the article below about "navigation" and then contact your reader advisor and tell them you'd like to be on the master list, indicating whether you'd prefer a standard or an advanced DTBM. The process is still a lottery, and we continue each week to randomly generate lists of names for DTBM distribution. Of our nearly 13,000 individuals and

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institutions only 3500 have requested DTBMs, and we hope to fulfill those requests well before the end of 2010.

In September we also began to receive digital books (DBs) on cartridges in blue mailing boxes. At first, quantities were very limited and we were only able to circulate one DB at a time to patrons with digital players. Since then the supply of DBs has expanded and we have increased the limit to 4 circulating DBs per customer.

Another exciting highlight in 2009 was the award of a grant from the Kelly Foundation to BTBL for the purpose of starting a new service: descriptive movies and television shows on DVD. Descriptive video is the descriptive narration of key visual elements in movies and programs inserted in between and around dialogue. The \$10,000 grant has allowed us to purchase an initial seed collection of 110 titles from Audio Vision Canada and sturdy mailing containers. We will also be purchasing from other vendors in the future. We hope to start the service by Spring 2010. Check our website and future newsletters for an official announcement or give us a call in March or April to check on availability of the service.

## **Navigation: the Advantage of the Advanced Digital Talking Book Machine**

With its rollout of the digital book, NLS has produced two types of digital talking book machines (DTBMs): standard and advanced. Though both are very similar, advanced machines contain one extra row of buttons that are used for "navigating" – or getting around in – our books. This article attempts to explain navigation and its uses so that users can make an informed choice about which type of DTBM they would prefer.

You may recall the beeps or "index tones" used to mark front matter and chapters when fast-forwarding on cassette machines. Use of this feature on the cassette player requires manipulation of the play, stop, and fast forward buttons. The same is true when using both the standard and advanced models of the DTBMs.

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This simple way of progressing backward and forward through the book may be enough for you, but the advanced DTBM contains a row of white buttons (near the middle of the machine) which allow a user to choose a navigation level and then to skip forward and backward between items at that level. The specific levels vary from book to book and may include such levels as chapter, article, section, recipe, poem, phrase, page, bookmark, etc. Using the "menu" key, the reader selects from the levels in a particular book the level on which he/she wishes to go backward and forward. For example, choosing chapter and going forward will quickly jump chapter by chapter through the book. Once you are at the chapter you are seeking, you may use the menu key again to choose a different level (such as page or phrase) and continue to use the "next" or "previous" button to move through the chapter.

The advanced DTBM also allows a user to insert his/her own bookmarks with the "mark" button, and these bookmarks can be revisited at any point by using the navigation buttons at the bookmark level. The machine will store a thousand bookmarks and remember them so that any time the same book is played the bookmarks are retrievable.

The navigation feature on the advanced digital talking book machines depends upon the specific navigation elements placed in a book when it was being recorded. Many older books, especially those recorded before 2004, do not contain navigation because they were converted to the new digital format without the navigation features. However, it is still possible to insert bookmarks in these older digital books.

So, who needs a standard and who needs an advanced DTBM? If you mostly read your books from start to finish with little going backward and forward, a standard is probably fine. If you use cookbooks, read poetry or religious meditations, study history or anything involving going back and forth a lot in a book, you may need the advanced DTBM. If you have already received one type of player and wish to exchange it for the other type, please contact your reader advisor to initiate that process. If your name is on our DTBM waiting list and you have not yet indicated your preference for standard or advanced, feel free to call or e-mail us and let us know.

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## Staff News

We are pleased to welcome new Office Assistants Johanna Goodlin and Joan Krueger to the reader advisory support and circulation staffs. Their presence has already made a positive impact on our operation. We also welcome Lakesha Johnson as our new receptionist as of mid-November; we are delighted she transferred over from the circulation department. She replaces Brooke Hardin who has a new position in the State Library. We are grateful to intern Louisa Roberts, a recent library school graduate who has been helping us with preparation of the descriptive DVD project. Finally, we say farewell to BTBL reader advisor Marian Clement, who retired after 27 years of state service – 9 ½ of them with us at BTBL. We wish her the best.

## Newsletter Format Request

When we re-launched publication of *BTBL News* in Spring 2008, we decided which format to send you based on your *Talking Book Topics* format of record. We currently produce roughly 11,000 large print, 1600 cassette, and 1000 braille copies of *BTBL News*. With the current environmental and fiscal crises facing California, it makes sense to pare down the number of large print copies for each print run. We already post audio and several text versions of the newsletter on our web site, and also send it via e-mail to those who have specified a desire for that delivery method. With this issue, we will also make available a downloadable web-braille file.

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, none of the above. Please specify only one format. We will continue this survey for the next few issues and hope to achieve a vastly reduced paper print run by the end of 2010.

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## Cassette Machine Tips

Many patrons return their cassette machine/player because something goes wrong while trying to listen to a book. We know that it is very inconvenient and frustrating to have a machine fail, especially on the best part of the book. The player is often returned unnecessarily while the problem is something else. Always phone us before you mail (or bring) back a player. You can ask to speak to either your Reader Advisor or the Machine Technician.

Here is a list of a few common problems that can often be solved over the phone, saving the inconvenience and time of mailing cassette machines both directions:

- Cassette machine runs, but there is no sound
- Cassette machine will not play, but fast forward and rewind work
- Sound keeps fading out – even if the cassette machine is plugged in
- Speeds are too fast – even though you have all the player controls set properly
- Sound is muffled on some tapes and not on others
- Sound is distorted and sounds like a foreign language

If we cannot solve the problem over the phone, we can issue a replacement cassette machine at that time. You do not need to send your cassette player back before we issue the replacement, but we will eventually want the old player back. If you didn't keep the box from the first player, you can use the box the replacement came in for the return of the old machine.

## Changes to *Talking Book Topics*

If you receive the bimonthly *Talking Book Topics* (*TBT*) magazine, either in large print or on cassette, you will have noticed some changes in that publication, which started with the November/December 2009 issue.

*TBT* now includes a notation of which titles will be available in Digital Book format. The designation for Digital Books is DB.

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The number for the cassette (RC) and the digital (DB) editions of a book is the same. For example, *Silks* by Dick Francis is DB 67533 and RC 67533. *TBT* will list a book that is available in both formats with the prefix DB/RC and the number (DB/RC 67533).

The order form in the back of your *TBT* print magazine or included with the *TBT* cassette edition also reflects the ability to order certain books in either format. If you have a digital player and are ready to receive your requested titles on digital cartridge, please check DB; if you do not have your digital player yet, please check RC so we can send you the cassette version. If you are requesting the books by e-mail, please also be sure to specify whether you want RC or DB – don't just give it as DB/RC or we won't be able to tell.

## Volunteer/Patron Spotlight

If you've ever received a copy of a book that was produced right here at BTBL, chances are very high that our book duplication volunteer, **Richard Booth**, had a hand in making the copy. Richard has been faithfully coming to do this for us two days per week for just under 10 years, accumulating over 6000 hours of service! He will not let a bad copy go out the door if there is any way to avoid it. Richard is special because he is also a BTBL patron and an avid reader of anything to do with baseball (he is a Dodgers fan), crime fiction, the Navy, or a host of other topics which are fun to debate. It is always interesting to talk with him because he has great stories about such things as the joys of boyhood freedom growing up on a farm in northeastern Oregon or going to sea at age 18 with the U.S. Navy in a wooden-hulled minesweeper during the Korean War. His tours of duty took him to Japan, Korea, Hong Kong and the Philippines and he earned a China Service Medal. Richard's volunteer efforts have not been limited to BTBL – he has also taught orientation and mobility skills at the Society for the Blind. Since he is a U.S. Veteran, we were thrilled when Richard's name came up to be one of our first recipients of a new Digital Talking Book Machine and digital books, and he was a willing "guinea pig" while we practiced teaching how to use the new machine. Our thanks to Richard for his dedicated service!

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## Louis Braille Bicentennial

Throughout the month of September, BTBL featured an exhibit of the life and times of Louis Braille (1809 – 1852), in celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> birthday of the braille code inventor. The exhibit was on loan from Boston's National Braille Press. More than 400 blind and sighted visitors experienced the images and text depicting Mr. Braille's life, and BTBL augmented the exhibit with display cases featuring braille tools and books. In addition, C. Michael Mellor, author of *Louis Braille: A Touch of Genius*, spoke to a group of 60 at a September 9 author event and reception (with book-signing and bicentennial birthday cake) hosted by BTBL. Kathy Gaither, the California Undersecretary of Education, read a proclamation from the Governor in recognition of Louis Braille and his significance for California's residents.

## Census 2010

The Census 2010 questionnaire is going to be mailed to all California residents in mid-March. With only 10 questions, it's going to be the shortest one in history. The Census is safe, easy, and important. Your personal information cannot be shared with anyone or used against you. Census data is used to determine congressional seating, and California is in danger of losing a seat for the first time in its 160 year history. That makes your participation especially important this year.

Numbers from the Census are also used to determine how over \$400 billion in annual federal funding is divided between the states. This money is used for hospitals, designing facilities for people with disabilities, building schools and transportation infrastructure, creating job training centers, and many other important services.

Braille versions of the form are available. For assistance, call 1-866-872-6868 (after 2/25/2010). The lines will be open from 8 AM to 9 PM, seven days a week. If you would prefer a Spanish speaking operator, call 1-866-928-2010. And if you would like to contact California Complete Count, the state's Census outreach, call 916-327-1000 or visit their website at [www.californiacompletecount.org](http://www.californiacompletecount.org).

Braille and Talking Book Library  
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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 (except 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Fridays of each month, which are state furlough days)

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

Holiday closures for January – July 2010: We will be closed on January 18, February 15, March 31, May 31 and July 5 for official state holidays.

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