



# BTBL News

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

New Series no. 17 (Spring/Summer 2017)

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## A Message from Mike Marlin, Director

A blossoming spring greeting to you from talking book and braille headquarters in Sacramento, home of a new Summer Reading Program which you can read about in this edition of *BTBL News*.

Last issue we mentioned the RUB (Rating Unrated Books) project and several of you volunteered to participate. The project is still on track yet slightly delayed, so if you have not heard from us yet, you will soon!

We've been very busy processing a batch of 65 new descriptive videos (DVS) for your viewing and listening pleasure. You can find the latest DVS catalog on our web site: [btbl.ca.gov](http://btbl.ca.gov). We have also been filling in the digital audiobook collection with cartridge copies of titles previously available only on cassette.

You may remember reading in our last issue about BARD Express, a free and especially easy-to-use software program for Windows computers (alas, not

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for Apple computers). For those of you having difficulty with unzipping talking book files, BARD Express will be a great help. We encourage you to explore the program by downloading it once you are logged in to your Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) account.

Recently we sent an email to all of our inactive BARD subscribers - those folks who had not downloaded an electronic braille or talking book within the past 12 months - suggesting they may wish to contact us to reactivate their accounts and try BARD Express. We apologize for any confusion experienced by email recipients who may have thought their library account was made inactive. We were referring to BARD accounts only.

As we go to press, BTBL - along with the Braille Institute Library, Fresno Talking Book Library for the Blind, and San Francisco Library for the Blind and Print Disabled - are exploring the possibility of a grant to bring Bookshare (downloadable electronic braille and text-to-speech/synthetic audio books) to a portion of our patron populations. If we are able to secure funding the service will likely start prior to the publication of our next issue of *BTBL News* and be advertised then, as well as beforehand, through email, the BTBL web site, and Facebook. Stay tuned as we investigate this additional source for accessible, downloadable titles beyond the already extensive National Library Services for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) catalog of braille and narrated audio books and magazines.

Also as we go to press - on May 16 our advisory council, for the third consecutive year, is spearheading an orientation for California legislators, this time in the state capitol. We will "borrow" part of the library and take it across the intersection to the capitol and directly to our Assembly and Senate reps to show them how we read. We'll have demonstrations of braille production, talking books, assistive technology, and more. We hope it will be a revelation for these busy politicians and impress them with how their constituents with print disabilities read books and magazines. In these challenging times support from our lawmakers is critical.

I've previously mentioned the international Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled. The treaty was passed by the United Nations

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World Intellectual Property Organization in 2013 and ratified by enough (20) countries so that it went into effect on September 30, 2016. The treaty allows for cross border sharing of alternate formats (braille, audio, and synthetic voice) between ratifying countries and would allow for sharing of materials for language groups, e.g. 60+ countries in the world with English as a first language, international exchange between French speaking countries such as France and Canada, Spanish materials exchange between Spain and Latin America, etc.

In countries that do not have copyright exceptions in place, there are efforts underway to establish such legislation and pave the way for the treaty. As a member of the Library Services to Persons with Print Disabilities international committee of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), I was fortunate to attend a Symposium on "The Way Forward for the Marrakesh Treaty" in Egypt at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (Library of Alexandria) this past February. The symposium brought together stakeholders from government ministries, the University of Cairo, publishers, Egyptian blindness organizations, and the National Library of Egypt to discuss the push for enabling legislation and to strategize about the future implementation of cross border sharing of Arabic materials in alternate formats.

I toured the Taha Hussein Library for the Blind, the national library for the blind for Egypt (housed within the Bibliotheca Alexandrina). It produces braille, text-to-speech, and narrated books for its patrons. The difference between it and other national libraries for the blind is that, due to copyright restrictions, patrons are unable to physically borrow, receive by mail, or download the materials. Instead, patrons must use braille and audio materials in the library only. Ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty in Egypt would alleviate many of these restrictions and make life easier for Egyptians with print disabilities.

Here in the United States, the Obama administration sent the treaty to the U.S. Senate in the spring of 2016. It stalled in the Senate Judiciary Committee, prompting negotiations between publishers, consumer blindness, and library groups. A tentative agreement among these stakeholders was recently reached to facilitate debate on the treaty within the Senate Foreign

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Relations Committee, but with Executive and Legislative branch priorities focused elsewhere, it is hard to predict when the treaty might make it to the full Senate for a ratification vote in 2017. For more information, visit [wipo.int/treaties/en/ip/marrakesh](http://wipo.int/treaties/en/ip/marrakesh), or follow BTBL's Facebook page for further updates about the Marrakesh Treaty.

Finally, on a sad note, we say farewell to Shannon Ramsay, a member of BTBL's Advisory Council and a talented attorney from the Davis area. She passed away suddenly and unexpectedly in March. Her intelligence, modesty, upbeat attitude and willingness to confront all manner of challenges impressed her colleagues and friends. BTBL staff members send their heartfelt condolences to her family.

## **BTBL's Summer Reading Program for All Ages!**

Like books? Love ice cream and treats? Then we've got the summertime activity for you! BTBL is pleased to announce our first summer reading program for patrons of all ages. Here's how it works: Read books between June 1 and August 30 and win prizes. Any book, audio or braille, which you borrow or download from the library, can be reported towards your summer reading goal.

Juvenile and young adult patrons 18 years and younger receive a \$5 gift certificate for their choice of Baskin-Robbins or Dairy Queen upon completion of the summer reading program. Youth patrons can undertake a 3, 5, or 10+ book challenge, but all will receive their ice cream prize.

Adult patrons who complete their summer reading challenge will be entered into a raffle for one of four \$20 gift cards for Starbucks. Adult participants can read 5, 10, or 15 books and receive an additional entry for the gift card raffle for every tier above 5 books, not to exceed 3 entries per person. So reading 5 books gets an adult patron one entry into the raffle, 10 books 2 entries, and 15 books 3 entries. All participants will receive a large print BTBL Summer Reading Program participation certificate.

If you'd like to participate, contact us and request a large print Summer Reading Packet for either an adult or younger patron. Each packet will include

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a summary of the event, some recommended reading lists, a reading log to help keep track of your books, and an envelope addressed to the library to help you easily return your reading log. Or you can read about the program at [library.ca.gov/services/summerreading.html](http://library.ca.gov/services/summerreading.html) and submit your reading log online. Return your completed reading log by mail or online by August 30 to be eligible for your prize. Patrons are responsible for keeping track of what they read and submitting their reading log by the end date of the program. Our summer reading program is only open to active BTBL patrons.

To help you on your summer reading challenge, new book lists have been added to the Ravenous Readers' Corner ([library.ca.gov/services/rrcorner.html](http://library.ca.gov/services/rrcorner.html)). These include:

- National Book Award Winners (Fiction, Nonfiction and Poetry)
- President Obama Recommends: 8 Years of Presidential Book Recommendations
- Popular and Contemporary Fiction Favorites 2015-2017
- Young Adult Action and Intrigue
- Young Adult Contemporary Realistic Novels
- Children's Animal Stories

If you can't access the book lists online, contact us and we can send you a few in large print. Happy reading!

## **BTBL Summer Reading Recommendations**

*A Tale for the Time Being* by Ruth L. Ozeki

DB 76696

"I couldn't put this original, quirky, and catastrophically moving book down! It jumps between the story of a young girl, Nao, raised in California but who returns to Japan with her family following the .com bust. She is bullied horrifically and keeps a journal with the intent of recording the thrilling life story of her great-grandmother, an anarchist, feminist Buddhist monk, and she confides in the journal that she will conclude the work by taking her own life. But the journal washes up in Canada after the 2011 tsunami and an author suffering writer's block begins to unravel the mystery surrounding Nao and her fate. Four years later, and I still can't believe this didn't win the Booker prize!" - Melissa, Reader Advisor

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\*Contains some strong language.

*Big Little Lies* by Liane Moriarty

DB 79622

"I just finished a really good book. A great story about housewives and their little secrets that have shocking results. A murder!! Great book! Well written, funny and suspenseful!!" - Joan, Circulation

\*Contains strong language

*Dealing with Dragons* by Patricia Wrede.

DB 33457

"Princess Cimorene runs away from her 'traditional' princess training/future and goes to live with dragons. She is constantly fending off princes who think they must rescue her. A youth book that adults can enjoy with great one-liners such as a dragon who apologizes for using the phrase 'by George!' in front of other dragons." - Mary Jane, Librarian

*Where'd You Go, Bernadette* by Maria Semple

DB 75351

"This is a quirky, quick read. I liked the precocious narrator and the mysterious disappearance of her mother kept me reading. Highly entertaining and a perfect read for traveling or to devour at the beach!" - Sarah, Reader Advisor

\*Contains some strong language.

*Stolen Innocence* by Elissa Wall.

DB 66943

"Ever wonder what it would be like to grow up in a fundamentalist Mormon sect? This autobiography is sobering in its depiction of life for women in this community. It is surprising that these challenges still occur in modern day America." - Valerie, Reader Advisor

*Hawaii* by James Michener

DB 37111, BR 17263

"This author describes the history of Hawaii starting with the formation of the islands themselves. This family saga managed to engage my interest for days. A long book in which it sometimes seemed that the end was close, and then a new generation came along to keep the book going. When we are told to 'read the books our fathers read,' I think of a book like this: births, journeys, love, education, success, failures, illness, death, and ancestors." - Johanna, Circulation

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*Shantaram* by Gregory David Roberts

DB 63923

"This is a very exciting book. It is full of suspense, adventure, romance and humor and more... It is set in Bombay, highly rich in spice and characters, and explores a culture in the most vivid of color. It is truly a work of art and a book of exceptional beauty. I truly enjoyed this long book. It is a must read!" - Peggy, Reader Advisor

\*Contains violence and strong language

*Supreme Courtship* by Christopher Buckley

DB 68046

"If you're looking for a timely yet hilarious 'art imitates life' summer read, this 2008 comedy of errors by a member of a well-known political family will keep you chuckling as you escape from the real world, sort of. After unsuccessful hearings for his previous nominees, President Donald Vanderdamp chooses TV judge Pepper Cartwright of Texas, whose television show is Number 1 in America, while Congress has an 18 percent approval rating. I thoroughly enjoyed all manner of plot twists and a cast of wacky and/or inept characters who appear throughout the novel in bizarre court cases brimming with irony. Unlike the fictitious president who concludes his nomination with, 'Good night. Sorry to interrupt your TV shows,' I recommend interrupting the evening news and reading this barnburner!" - Mike, Director

\*Contains strong language

## **NLS Music Section and Online Blog**

The Music Section of NLS oversees and circulates a music collection for all NLS patrons. It has the largest collection of braille music (music annotated in a special braille code) in the world and is international in scope. The large-print component of the collection, though smaller than the braille, is also substantial. The audio component contains thousands of titles, most of which are designed for the blind and require no written materials, ranging in subject from instructional materials on how to play a particular instrument to music appreciation. (Note: The library does *\*not\** offer recordings of music for leisure listening.)

In 2014, the NLS Music Section created an online blog "NLS Music Notes" which is available at [blogs.loc.gov/nls-music-notes](https://blogs.loc.gov/nls-music-notes) on the Library of Congress

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website. The music staff in the NLS Music Section post to the blog weekly, and guest bloggers also contribute. Areas covered include the Music Section's latest acquisitions, established music collection, and features on music patrons and blind musicians - past and present. Upcoming music events and activities are also announced - sometimes even music score giveaways!

If you are a current library patron interested in borrowing materials from the Music Section, please contact them directly at "Music Section, National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Library of Congress, Washington, DC 20542" or Toll-Free at 800-424-8567. You can also visit their website at [loc.gov/nls/music](http://loc.gov/nls/music).

## How to Reach Us When You Can't Reach Us

Odds are good that if you regularly call up the Braille and Talking Book Library with your questions and requests, at some point you're going to reach our voicemail rather than a live person. The library serves thousands of patrons, so it's not uncommon to call in while we're on the line with someone else. Here are a few tips to make the best use of our voice mail:

- Don't hang up! We know that you would probably prefer to talk to a person rather than a machine, but if you don't leave us a message when you reach our voice mail, we won't even know you called, so we won't be able to help you. Leaving a message is your best bet to get prompt assistance from us.
- Be sure to leave us your name! Also, spell your last name for us and leave us your phone number to make sure we're able to find you. If you are calling on behalf of someone else, please leave the name of the patron.
- Let us know what you need in the message. If you have a list of requests, feel free to leave those in your message. If you have a question for us, go ahead and ask it in the message and give us as much information as you can so, when we call you back, we can try to have an answer ready for you.
- Given the large number of calls we receive, for simple requests, like having an available title sent out or adding a few books to your request

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list, we will generally take care of the request without a return call. If you want us to call you back, please let us know in your message.

- For those patrons with email access, sending a message to us at [btbl@library.ca.gov](mailto:btbl@library.ca.gov) can be a convenient alternative to trying to reach us by phone...but the same tips apply! Include your full name in your email along with the reason you're writing so we'll know who you are and what you need.

## **Hadley Offers Free Adult Courses**

Reprinted from Nevada Talking Book Services *Silver Lining* Spring 2017

Hadley Institute's Adult Continuing Education (ACE) Program offers a variety of courses for the blind or visually impaired. Anyone age 14 or older, who is blind or meets vision eligibility requirements and can understand written English at the high school level, is eligible to enroll.

Materials and instruction in the ACE Program are free. Learn at your own pace at home. Courses are offered in audio, braille, large print and on the Internet. Hadley offers year-round enrollment. Some advantages of the program:

- Learn to read and write braille
- Adjust to life after vision loss
- Enhance independent living skills
- Improve employability and business skills
- Discover the joys of lifelong learning

Parents of children who are visually impaired or blind are eligible for courses in their Family Education Program. Topics in this program are designed to educate and empower parents.

Visit their website at [hadley.edu/default.asp](http://hadley.edu/default.asp) or contact Student Services weekdays, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Central time, to determine eligibility:

- 800-526-9909 (Toll-free in the U.S., Puerto Rico & Canada)
- 847-446-8111 (Others)
- 847-446-9820 (Fax)
- 847-441-8111 (TTY hearing impaired callers)
- [Student\\_services@hadley.edu](mailto:Student_services@hadley.edu)

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## Comcast XFINITY Accessibility Support Center

XFINITY customers who rely on accessibility services - including video description and voice guidance - now have direct access to a specially trained support team via Comcast's Accessibility Support Center for Customers with Disabilities. The Support Center assists with:

- Enabling video description on your TV box through XFINITY X1.
- Using voice guidance, the talking guide feature on X1.
- Requesting braille bills, channel lineups, or XFINITY User Guides.
- Requesting a large button XFINITY remote control.
- Obtaining operator services/directory assistance exemptions.

You can reach the Support Center between the hours of 8:00 AM and 12:00 AM Eastern time, seven days a week, by calling 866-668-6703 or emailing [accessibility@comcast.com](mailto:accessibility@comcast.com). For more information or online support, visit [xfinity.com/accessibilitysupport](http://xfinity.com/accessibilitysupport).

## CTEBVI: Lots of People Stop By!

BTBL sponsored a table at the California Transcribers and Educators for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CTEBVI) Conference in Burlingame for two days of outreach in mid-March. We were glad to connect with so many teachers and their students. Teachers were often unaware that, in addition to signing their school up for an institutional account, they should also sign students up for their own individual accounts with home addresses. This keeps books flowing to students when school is not in session and sets them up for a lifetime of free service from NLS - just as long as they let us know when their addresses change (and check out at least one item per year). Both students and teachers were excited to learn that the BARD Mobile app costs nothing to download. BTBL's life-sized stuffed dog mascot, Louis Braille, was a big hit with attendees as he was about the only dog at the conference that could be touched and petted (even some of the live dogs were fooled by him). He helped bring people close to our table so we could get them interested in our services and just plain made folks laugh.

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## Service Animals: From Pup to Companion

Article adapted from Georgia Libraries for Accessible Statewide Services (GLASS) Summer 2016 newsletter

When we hear the term "service animals," we often think of guide dogs for the blind and visually impaired. Most don't think about the extensive training required for a guide dog. Guides are trained to lead their handlers safely from one place to another and to adapt to changes in the physical environment.

Socialization and training for guide dogs can begin as soon as a puppy is 8 weeks old. Many puppies are placed with a puppy raiser who focuses on house and obedience training for the puppy. Another big part of their training is being exposed to public access environments such as businesses, stores, doctors' offices and mass transit stations. Doing this creates a sense of normalcy for the animal.

At age 13 to 15 months, the dog usually leaves the raiser and returns to the training facility to be matched with a handler and receive task training. After "graduation" it is off to begin its new life as a guide dog.

No matter the age or type of service animal, working guides should not be distracted. When observing a guide dog team, go about your normal routine and interact only with the handler. When encountering a service dog, most people want to engage with the animal. However, it is important to ask for the handler's permission before petting or engaging a guide dog.

For books about service animals and those who raise them, check out *Two Plus Four Equals One: Celebrating the Partnership of People with Disabilities and Their Assistance Dogs* (DB 74137). Another good book is *To the Rescue: Found Dogs with a Mission* (DB 70466, BR 18838), which profiles 52 rescue dogs (and one cat) that were trained to be therapy and service animals. We have many more books on service animals, just ask your Reader Advisor for more suggestions!

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

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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, audio file, through email, and in large print upon request, or through our website.

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

Office closures: We will be closed May 29 (Memorial Day), July 4 (Independence Day), Sep. 4 (Labor Day), Nov. 10 (Veterans Day), Nov. 23-24 (Thanksgiving), Dec. 25 (Christmas)

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. Donations can also be made online at: [cslfdn.org](http://cslfdn.org). Follow the link to "Join/Donate Online." There is a place to designate BTBL as the recipient.