



# BTBL News

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

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## A Message from Mike Marlin, Director

A fabulous and festive fall greeting to you from BTBL headquarters in Sacramento, the farm to fork capital.

If you are reading this newsletter in large print you will find a BTBL patron survey in the center with several questions about our service. We sincerely hope you will take the time to fill it out, detach it and mail it back to us or call us and request your Reader Advisor to assist you in completing it by phone. You may also choose to fill out the survey online at [surveymonkey.com/r/BTBLSURVEY2017](https://surveymonkey.com/r/BTBLSURVEY2017). Newsletter readers using other

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formats (audio, braille, email) should contact us or use the SurveyMonkey website. Thanks for helping us with your feedback so that we may make improvements to our service.

Since the last edition of *BTBL News* I had the privilege of traveling to Wroclaw (pronounced Vrotzlav), Poland in August to attend the World Library and Information Congress hosted by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. The committee I serve on, Libraries Serving Persons with Print Disabilities, met with representatives from the nonprofit Electronic Information for Libraries and Accessible Books Consortium, the organization set up through the United Nations to provide the mechanics of exchange for countries who have ratified the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled.

As a counterpart to the World Blind Union whose advocacy played a major role in the passage of the Marrakesh Treaty in 2013, our coalition has begun work on a Marrakesh implementation set of guidelines geared toward individual countries and/or language blocks of countries. The guidelines will cover processes and procedures to successfully implement Marrakesh on the ground, including steps for borrowing, lending, and distributing alternate format books in various languages. Although the United States Senate has yet to ratify the treaty, librarians and other stakeholders in the U.S. are working diligently with colleagues around the world in advancing knowledge and best practices for implementing the historic treaty.

When I wasn't attending meetings at the Centennial Hall, my guide dog Vivaldi enjoyed taking me around the city and weaving around more than 300 low-lying statues of gnomes (also called dwarves) engaged in various activities such as baking, listening to music, orating, and more! We explored Wroclaw's Old Jewish Cemetery where we encountered tombstones with bullet holes from World War II battles, climbed the Wroclaw University clock tower, visited the newest public library branch in the main train station, and of course made a pilgrimage to the opera house and symphony hall in honor of Vivaldi's namesake. The librarians and citizens of Poland were very warm and hospitable.

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The next California Statewide election, a direct primary, takes place on June 5, 2018. BTBL will be offering a navigable audio version of the Secretary of State's *Voter Information Guide* for download or for loan on digital cartridge. Contact your Reader Advisor in May 2018 if you would like to borrow the digital cartridge, or check our web site for the downloadable audio version.

Finally, we know how so many appreciate our service because you let us know, and that makes what we do here at BTBL even more fulfilling. One way to give back to the library, in addition to all the great comments and suggestions we receive by phone and email, is to join our advisory council. BTBL's User Advisory Council consists of patrons and other stakeholders who advise us on a number of service, programming, and operational issues. Please consider applying any time. We welcome all applicants and are keenly interested in U.S. veterans, patrons with physical and organic reading disabilities, patrons of color, and patrons living north, south, and east of the Greater Metropolitan Sacramento Valley/Bay Area. All expenses for quarterly meetings are reimbursed. For more information about the advisory council or to apply please visit our website at [btbl.ca.gov](http://btbl.ca.gov)

## **BTBL's First Summer Reading Program Comes to a Close**

BTBL's first ever Summer Reading Program started June 1<sup>st</sup> and ended on August 31<sup>st</sup>. Participants were asked to submit the titles of books they had read during this period for the chance to win fun prizes. Four lucky adult readers won \$20 gift cards for Starbucks and all children who participated received a \$5 gift card for either Baskin-Robbins or Dairy Queen. Everyone was sent a large print certificate of achievement. Participants read and reported over 350 books this summer! We hope to continue the Summer Reading Program in the future and invite all BTBL patrons to join in next year.

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## Bookshare Pilot Project Launches

As we anticipated in our last newsletter, the four National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) network libraries in California were successful in a bid to obtain a grant to launch a one-year pilot project offering Bookshare - an accessible book download service - to library patrons. Thanks to the Institute for Museum and Library Services, a federal agency, and to our fiscal agent Califa, a California-based library consortium, we received a grant for 325 seat licenses. The seats have been dispersed with 140 to each regional library (BTBL and Braille Institute) and BTBL's two sub-regionals, Fresno Talking Book Library for the Blind (20 seats) and San Francisco Library for the Blind and Print Disabled (25 seats). Depending on the success of the project, which runs from September 1, 2017 through August 31, 2018, we will look to increase the number of seats for a potential second grant year to accommodate patrons who might end up on a waiting list. Thus far the response to a message sent to all email addresses on file has been overwhelmingly positive, and we are quickly filling up BTBL's seats.

Because Bookshare is an online, download service, patrons who are comfortable and experienced with computers and file management are most encouraged to partake of this ordinarily \$50 per year service. It is very important to note that, unlike NLS talking books, Bookshare books are not narrated by human beings. The books are available in: 1. electronic braille files that can be read on refreshable braille displays; 2. text-to-speech (TTS) DAISY files; and 3. TTS MP3 audio files that can be played on the NLS digital talking book machine in addition to several third party commercial players. There is free online DAISY player software to listen to DAISY TTS files on one's computer as well as several apps for listening on mobile devices. Please visit [bookshare.org](http://bookshare.org) to learn more about the service.

To read more about the grant visit our website at [btbl.ca.gov](http://btbl.ca.gov) or Bookshare's parent company Benetech's page at [benetech.org/news/press/benetech-partners-california-state-libraries-for-blind](http://benetech.org/news/press/benetech-partners-california-state-libraries-for-blind). If you would like to add your name to the Bookshare list of interested BTBL patrons, please contact us by phone or email.

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## New Audio Magazine Available

The audio version of *Kiplinger's Retirement Report*, produced by volunteers at the Florida Bureau of Braille and Talking Book Library Services, is now available for download from the Braille & Audio Reading Download (BARD) service or through a mailed Magazine on Cartridge subscription. Published monthly, the *Report* covers practical strategies to help grow retirement savings, how to make money last during retirement, maximization of Social Security and Medicare benefits, and other retirement-related topics.

A complete list of all available audio magazine subscriptions appears in every issue of *Talking Book Topics*. To subscribe to magazines, contact your Reader Advisor.

## "BTBL Updates" Email Service

Although BTBL circulates our newsletter two or three times per year, and publishes timely items of interest to 300 followers (and counting) several times each week on our Facebook page ([facebook.com/BTBLSacramento](https://facebook.com/BTBLSacramento)), we only reach a fraction of our nearly 10,000 individuals and institutions that way. To remedy this situation, we are preparing to launch a "BTBL Updates" email service to occasionally share timely or relevant information of interest to BTBL patrons.

Patrons who already receive our newsletter (*BTBL News*) via email will automatically receive the new "BTBL Updates" email service. We encourage any of you who would like to be added to the "BTBL Updates" email list to contact us at [btbl@library.ca.gov](mailto:btbl@library.ca.gov) and type "BTBL Updates Sign-Up" in the subject header. In the near future, you will be able to sign-up online by visiting [library.ca.gov/mailling-lists](https://library.ca.gov/mailling-lists) to fill out a brief form selecting "BTBL Updates" among other possible email newsletters. Links to online management of your email service preferences (including unsubscribing from "BTBL Updates") will be included at the bottom of every "BTBL Updates" email. We hope to get the service started in early 2018. Thanks in advance for your interest!

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## **Each One Tell One (or More!)**

Here at BTBL and also at NLS much effort is made to publicize our service to those who qualify for it. But we know we are falling short of reaching all who need it. Within the limits of our resources we use as many avenues as possible, from presentations and health fairs to social media posts and public service announcements - and many things in between - to get the word out. It is very difficult to measure the success of any marketing or outreach attempt in terms of immediate effect so we can't say precisely which methods are the best - with one exception. We know from many years of experience that word-of-mouth referral from a satisfied patron is still a powerful way to make eligible folks aware of the program and to convince them to sign up.

Would you please, as you read this, pause for a moment to consider if you know someone who might make use of our service? They might have newly diagnosed or worsening low vision or could be coping with arthritic hands, head or hand tremors, chronic fatigue or a host of other ailments making it difficult, if not impossible, to read standard print materials. They can live anywhere in the U.S. and be of any age. If you think of someone, please tell them about us. If they live outside our service area and happen to contact us, we will cheerfully get them in touch with the right library. If you have told them about us once before and they didn't act on it, try telling them again - they may be more receptive to your recommendation after a second or even third mention.

We know there are many unserved potential patrons out there - please help us get them back to reading!

## **Breath Switch Hardware Now Available**

For patrons unable to use the buttons on a digital talking book machine NLS now has a breath switch adaptor. The switch attaches to the machine through the USB port next to the headphone jack. Using a combination of short and long sips and puffs of air, the breath switch provides control of all functions of the digital player except power on and off. A separate application form

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with certification is required to obtain the switch. You may download and print the form at: [loc.gov/nlsold/networkdocs/forms/breath.pdf](http://loc.gov/nlsold/networkdocs/forms/breath.pdf) or you may contact us and we will send you a copy.

## Spotting Fake News

(Adapted from Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh materials)

The term "fake news" has been on everybody's lips for a few months now. Here are some tips to understand what fake news is and some strategies to deal with it in the changing media landscape that we live in.

What is fake news?

- Fake news is misinformation. It can be intentionally misleading or the result of inadequate research and reporting.
- Fake news may not be 100% untrue. It may contain true but incomplete information, giving an unbalanced view of an issue or topic, or it may be a mixture of real and fake information.

How does fake news spread?

- Social media platforms give fake news an opportunity to be shared, "liked," and spread within communities very quickly.

How can you determine if a story is fake news?

- Check multiple sources. Does the story in question show up anywhere else or only in one place? If you can't corroborate it, it might be fake!
- Consider the source. If it is an organization, what is its mission? This can give you a clue about possible bias.
- Is it an advertisement or "sponsored content?"
- Check the date! Old, "recycled" stories make the rounds, sometimes after they've been disproved or new information has come to light.
- Use fact checking websites like [Snopes.com](http://Snopes.com), [FactCheck.org](http://FactCheck.org), or [Politifact.com](http://Politifact.com) if you doubt a story. These sites aren't infallible, but they can be an excellent tool in your fight against fake news.

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## **Personal Use Blank Book Cartridges Once More Available**

It has come to our attention that blank book cartridges are again available for sale to individuals (after months of scarcity in the market). These are cartridges that fit into the front slot of the NLS-issued digital talking book machines (DTBMs) and are used to transfer downloaded audio materials from a computer to the DTBM for playback. To date, we know of only one vendor - Perkins School for the Blind (who is using Amazon as their storefront for cartridge and DTBM accessory sales). You can search Amazon with keywords "NLS cartridge" to find available items for purchase.

## **As Certain As Death and Taxes**

Since tax season will be upon us sooner than our next newsletter edition, we wanted to take the time now to remind folks that the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) offers free assistance to people who are unable to complete their tax return because of a physical disability. You may seek assistance at their Tax Assistance Center (TAC), Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) or Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) sites. To find a TAC near you, visit [irs.gov](https://www.irs.gov) and select the link "Contact Your Local Office". You can find a nearby VITA or TCE location by calling 1-800-906-9887.

The IRS also provides popular federal tax forms and publications for download in braille, large text, and accessible PDFs. Helpful tax topics are discussed in online videos that include captions, audio description, American Sign Language, and text transcripts. Visit [irs.gov/accessibility](https://www.irs.gov/accessibility).

## **Free 2018 Braille Calendars Available**

Compact, spiral bound braille calendars are available while supplies last. Please contact your Reader Advisor to request one.

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## NLS Website Gets a Makeover

Last July, NLS launched a new and improved look to their website at [nls.loc.gov](https://nls.loc.gov). The new website is designed to accommodate blind and reduced-vision users, while providing every visitor with an easy-to-navigate educational experience about the program. It is navigable by all major screen-readers and incorporates special features, such as embedded text-size and contrast controls.

If you had any of NLS's old webpages bookmarked, you may find your bookmarks need to be updated. There are two tools to help you find old content on the new website. The first is the "Search NLS Site:" textbox in the upper-right corner of every page of the NLS website. You can type in keywords (e.g. "Talking Book Topics" or "BARD") and select the "GO" button to find relevant content on the new site. Another tool is the "Site Map" link on the home page at <https://www.loc.gov/nls/site-map> which gives a text overview of the new organizational structure of the NLS website.

You can share your feedback on the new website right from the new NLS home page with their link "Share feedback on this site!" And if you are having difficulty navigating the new website, or have any questions, your Reader Advisor at BTBL is available to help.

## BTBL Staff Picks

*Downfall* by J.A. Jance

DB 88022

"Sheriff Joanna Brady has another mystery on her hands. A call comes in about two female bodies found at the base of a nearby peak. The two women appear to have nothing in common. Sheriff Brady, her team, a neighboring law enforcement agency and the FBI work to solve the mystery that leads very close to home. A quick-paced story with a strong female lead that I enjoyed very much."

- Donna, Reader Advisor Supervisor

\*Contains some violence and some strong language

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*Hillbilly Elegy* by J.D. Vance

DB 85796

"This is a memoir of a boy who rose out of poverty and toxic family issues and ended up at Yale University. Raising my sons on a limited income, and having my oldest graduate from Yale, I can relate! The author points out the cultural restrictions that can keep success from happening: eating unhealthy foods, not sleeping well, not valuing education, and not having money or resources to move up."

- Johanna, Circulation

\*Contains some strong language

*Uprooted* by Naomi Novik

DB 81693, BR 21282

"This fantasy novel has it all, yet manages to not feel overly busy or unapproachable as high fantasy with heavy world building can tend to. The beginning is deviously typical: a kingdom in peril, a young girl indentured and unwittingly learning about magic, a dark forest lurking in the corner of your eye, creeping closer each night. Villains are expected in fantasy... but this one will surprise you! If you enjoy a well-rounded fantasy novel or just want to try something new and exciting, *Uprooted* won't disappoint. It appropriately won both the Nebula and Locus awards."

- Melissa, Reader Advisor

\*Contains some violence and some descriptions of sex

*The Daughter of Time* within *Four, Five and Six* by Josephine Tey

DB 13754

"Read this as a youngster with no knowledge of British history and couldn't understand why mystery readers thought Tey was so great. Recently revisited this book and enjoyed it immensely. If Tey's historical facts are correct, Richard III really may have gotten a bad rap about the boys in the Tower. Detective Alan Grant 'solves' the case from his hospital bed. The story makes the 'fake news' folks of today look like amateurs by comparison."

- Mary Jane, Librarian



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

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Office closures: We will be closed Nov. 10 (Veterans Day observed), Nov. 23-24 (Thanksgiving), Dec. 25 (Christmas Day), Jan. 1 (New Year's Day), Jan. 15 (MLK 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 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 345, Sacramento, CA, 95814-4809. Donations can also be made online at: [csbfdn.org](http://csbfdn.org). Follow the link to "Join/Donate Online." There is a place to designate BTBL as the recipient.