



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

Benetech Partners with California State Library to Bring Bookshare to Patrons who Read Differently

Library Offers 565,000 Accessible eBooks to Expand Reading Opportunities for All

Palo Alto/Sacramento, California, September 12, 2017—[Benetech](#), the leading software for social good nonprofit, and the [California State Library](#) announced a new partnership today which makes over 565,000 ebooks available for free to patrons who cannot read printed books due to a disability such as dyslexia, blindness, low vision, or certain mobility impairments.

[Bookshare](#) will be available through the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) libraries in California. These libraries provide library services for California residents who need books in different formats such as digital, audio, or braille. The four libraries are the California State Library’s Braille and Talking Book Library in Sacramento, its two sub-regional NLS libraries – the Library for the Blind and Print Disabled (San Francisco) and the Fresno County Public Library-Talking Book Library for the Blind (Fresno) -- and the Braille Institute Library (Los Angeles).

Beginning today, [qualified Californians](#) who are registered with one of the four libraries now have free access to Bookshare’s vast online library including bestsellers, literature, nonfiction, picture books, educational texts, career guides, and much more. A limited number of memberships are available.

“We are very excited about increasing access to alternate format materials for Californians who are unable to read conventional print and are grateful to the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) for this opportunity through a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant,” said Mike Marlin, Director of the California Braille and Talking Book Library. “As an enthusiastic reader of Braille and audio books and magazines myself, I know that patrons in all our service areas will benefit greatly from access to an exponential number of titles and authors in myriad genres.”

With Bookshare eBooks, members can customize their reading experience to best meet their needs. They can listen to words read aloud with high quality text-to-speech voices, read with enlarged fonts, see and hear as spoken words are highlighted, or read in braille. In addition, members can read on a wide variety of devices including tablets, smartphones, computers, assistive technology devices, and MP3 players using a selection of free and paid apps.

“Today’s announcement helps ensure that qualified Californians can access the content they need when, where and how they want it, in order to succeed. We are proud to partner with the California State Library and it is our hope that this partnership will continue to serve as a model for libraries across the country that seek to broaden their services to their constituents no matter if they read with their eyes, ears, or fingers,” said Brad Turner, VP of Global Literacy, Benetech. “We look forward to continuing our collaboration with the State Library so that all individuals with disabilities have full access to the world of books.”

Currently, all U.S. students with qualifying disabilities can access Bookshare’s library for free. The partnership with California State Library serves eligible California residents who have a disability and are not students.

Californians with qualifying disabilities who wish to sign up for free access to Bookshare should visit the [California Library Services for People with Print Disabilities](#) website where they can choose their county of residence and be directed to their respective California NLS Network Library for more information, including contact email addresses and phone numbers.

About Benetech

Benetech is a nonprofit that empowers communities through software for social good. Our work transforms how people with disabilities read and learn, makes it safer for human rights defenders to pursue truth and justice, and connects people to the services they need to live and prosper. We’re constantly pursuing the next big social impact. Visit www.benetech.org.

About the California State Library

Founded in 1850, the California State Library is the central reference and research library for the Governor’s office, Legislature, state employees, and the general public. The State Library leads and promotes innovative library services by providing and managing state and federal funding programs to ensure all Californians have access via their libraries to information and educational resources. www.Library.ca.gov

About the NLS Network Libraries in California

[The Braille and Talking Book Library](#) (BTBL) is a section of the California State Library and as the NLS Northern California Regional Library cooperates with the Library of Congress, National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS). The books and players are provided by the Library of Congress. The California State Library directly administers the program in Northern California, and [San Francisco](#) and [Fresno County](#) Public Libraries serve residents with audiobooks directly in five of forty-eight Northern California counties. The [Braille Institute Library](#) in Los Angeles, under the auspices of the nonprofit Braille Institute of America, serves as the NLS regional library for residents in ten Southern California counties.

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