



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Laura Parker
Public Information Officer
California State Library
(916) 651-6798

March 1, 2011

**National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped
Celebrates 80th Anniversary**

SACRAMENTO – On March 3, 2011, The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped--the Library of Congress' talking book and braille program--will celebrate 80 years of helping visually impaired and physically handicapped readers enjoy their favorite books and magazines.

Serving readers locally through a national network of 114 cooperating libraries, the National Library Service (NLS) provides free access to a collection of more than 400,000 books, including bestsellers, classics, and biographies, and more than 40 periodicals.

"Braille and talking books are indispensable for Californians who are unable to read conventional print due to blindness or other physical disabilities," said Mike Marlin, director of the California State Library's Braille and Talking Book Library. "The 80th anniversary of the NLS network is a real watershed for the Library of Congress and shows this country's commitment to provide reading access to the blind and otherwise print-disabled."

The California State Library's Books for the Blind Department, now called the Braille and Talking Book Library (BTBL), was founded in 1904. One of the first libraries in the nation to serve blind readers, the State Library joined 18 other libraries in the original NLS network of 1931. Today BTBL and its two subregional libraries in Fresno and San Francisco serve over 15,000 readers in 48 counties of Northern California, mail over 3,000 braille, cassette, and digital cartridge books daily, and provide downloadable digital audio files to library patrons via the Internet.

Now celebrating its 107th anniversary, the Braille and Talking Book Library will honor NLS' 80th anniversary with an event later this year.

For more information about the National Library Service, please visit www.loc.gov/nls/. Information about the State Library's Braille and Talking Book library is available at: www.btbl.ca.gov .

About the California State Library: Founded in 1850, the California State Library is celebrating its 160th anniversary as the central reference and research library for the Governor's office, legislature, state employees, and the general public. The State Library administers federal and state grants for programs in historical preservation, library construction, civil liberties education, literacy, volunteering, and broadband connectivity in public libraries. For more information, please visit www.library.ca.gov .

###