



Kentucky Talking Book Library Newsletter December 2018

Happy Birthday KTBL!

Fifty years ago, Kentuckians received braille and talking book service from the Cincinnati Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Patrons appreciated the service, but it took 3-4 weeks to get books. On April 1, 1969, the Kentucky Talking Book Library opened its doors with a collection of 4,000 books. Its patrons could now get books in one week instead of three. In those days, talking books came in boxes of heavy vinyl records to be played on a special record player. That is hard to imagine when today you can download a book in minutes and carry dozens of books on a single cartridge or smart phone in your pocket!

We know what changes in technology have occurred over the years, but we want to hear how Braille and Talking Books have affected your life. Please drop us a note or send us an email; include a photo of yourself if possible. We know some of you have been with us from the start, and we especially want to hear from you. We will be celebrating our **Golden Anniversary** with an **event on April 1**. It is still in the planning stages, but we hope everyone who is able to will join us in Frankfort.



Photo captions. Left: a red record player from 1977 plays a vinyl record, while three orange record mailing containers sit beside it. Right: a yellow cassette player and 4-track cassette books in green mailing containers.



Photo captions. Left: a standard digital talking book player with a blue mailing container opened to show a book on digital cartridge. Right: an iPad, an iPhone, and a Kindle Fire playing talking books downloaded from BARD Mobile.

Next, Please

Most users love the convenience of having several books on a single cartridge, but not everyone is comfortable using the Bookshelf to move from book to book. Good news! The NLS has released a **new software upgrade** for talking book players that **will make it easier to go to the next book**. This update is included on all multiple-book cartridges and will install itself automatically when inserted into your player. The player will tell you an update is in progress and ask you not to remove the cartridge or turn off your player. It will beep until the update is complete. Most of you have likely already done this.

Once your player is updated, here is how you move from one book to the next. Play (or fast forward) the book past the closing announcements until you hear the "End of Book" message. You will then hear the instructions, "Press Play/Stop to go to the next book." Tap the square, green Play/Stop button and the next book will automatically start playing. If 10 seconds go by with no button press (for example, because you have fallen asleep), the machine will repeat the prompt the next time you press Play/Stop.

Remember; you must play the book until the "End of Book" announcement, and you can only move to the next book. You can still use the Bookshelf feature to move back and forth throughout all the books on your bookshelf in order to select the one you want to read. We hope this will make it easier for everyone to play multiple books on a cartridge. If you have been getting only one book per cartridge and want to try getting more, please call us at 800-372-2968.

Reader's Digest

We are pleased to announce the addition of ***Reader's Digest*** to the free NLS audio magazine program. This magazine was previously available from the American Printing House for the Blind, but they recently discontinued it after an unexpected loss of funding. Luckily, NLS can now provide this popular magazine along with the rest of its audio magazine selections. Just like your talking books, it comes on digital cartridge and is on loan for a month. Call KTBL at 800-372-2968 to request a subscription to *Reader's Digest*, or to see what other magazines are available in audio or braille formats. And don't forget—you can also download magazines using BARD and BARD Mobile.

Ain't Too Proud to Beg

Whether you want a large tax deduction or just want to show a little appreciation, KTBL happily accepts **donations**. We use these funds to purchase supplies, books to record, and equipment for our recording studio. Wish you could make a large donation but cannot afford it? Break it up and send a little each month. Don't need any Christmas, birthday, or anniversary gifts? Name KTBL as a recipient of donations in lieu of gifts. You can even make donations in memory of a loved one or include us in your estate planning. No amount is too small—just don't send cash in the mail. We will send a letter of thanks and acknowledgement that you can use for tax reporting.

To contribute, make checks payable to the Kentucky Talking Book Library and mail to:
Kentucky Talking Book Library
PO Box 537
Frankfort KY 40602.

We wish to express a very big **Thank You** to everyone who gave to KTBL in 2018!

NLS News

Most of you know that the Kentucky Talking Book Library is part of a nationwide network of similar libraries administered by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS), which is a branch of the Library of Congress. From braille books, to record players, to cassette tapes, to digital books, to downloadable books from BARD and BARD Mobile, NLS has used innovation and technology to make your books more accessible over the years. Here are some ideas NLS is working on for the future. "We're excited about the potential of each of these

ideas,” NLS Director Karen Keninger said. “But first we need to determine if they really will improve our service, assess how patrons will react to them, and, of course, figure out how much they will cost.”

- **Braille eReader**—NLS has always provided audiobook players to its patrons, but braille users who wanted to read electronic braille had to provide their own very expensive refreshable braille displays. NLS is planning to purchase and provide easy-to-use braille eReaders designed specifically to read NLS braille materials. A small pilot project will take place over the next two years to test all aspects of this plan, including distribution, tech support, and maintenance.
- **Modified smartphone**—NLS is developing the next generation talking book player, and is studying the feasibility of using a modified smartphone. The process includes evaluating smartphones currently on the market, what modifications they would need in order to search the NLS catalog and play talking books, how difficult they would be for patrons to set up and use, and of course, what costs will be involved. These smartphones will probably not have all the same features and apps you would find on a commercial smartphone.
- **Voice User Interface**—NLS is developing a voice user interface (voice UI) for use in searching its catalog and playing talking books. This is similar to Siri, Alexa, Google Assistant, or Cortana. Instead of searching for a book to play, imagine simply saying, “Hey You, play *To Kill a Mockingbird*.” NLS will study the technical requirements of voice UI, what patrons would expect it to do, and come up with a better name than Hey You.
- **Streaming service**—There is the possibility that NLS may offer streaming as a way to access books from BARD. Streaming is an alternative to downloading an entire book to play later. Streaming begins playing a book immediately, without having to wait for the entire item to be downloaded and stored on your device. Many of you may already stream movies, music, or TV shows from sources such as Netflix, Amazon, Pandora, or Hulu. There are technological issues NLS must investigate before this becomes a reality.
- **Synthetic speech**—another innovation NLS is pursuing is using synthetic speech to produce audio magazines. This means that instead of a real, live human recording a magazine, a computer would read it. The advantage to using synthetic speech is that magazines could be produced faster and at a lower cost. One likely candidate for this technology is the Talking Book Topics. Synthetic speech sometimes mispronounces words, especially proper nouns, so NLS must determine whether patrons would be willing to trade mispronunciations for more timely access.
- **Self-Service tools**—NLS will explore self-service tools, such as a virtual agent to interact with patrons on the NLS website or on BARD Mobile. This would help reduce the workload of librarians and reader advisors in Talking Book libraries around the country.

The Weather Outside is Frightful, Making Reading More Delightful

Winter weather means it's time to snuggle into a comfy chair, cover up with a blanket, and grab something to read. Whether you prefer braille or audio, here are some suggestions from the KTBL and State Library staff. Get your mug of cocoa ready!

DB 21198, BR 11325 *The Long Winter* by Laura Ingalls Wilder. Growing up within 60 miles of South Dakota, my Iowa countryside was not that different from what the Ingalls family experienced in the Little House books. The winter of 1880-81 set many records, so the author did not have to use her imagination in writing that book. Often the blizzards we had in the 1960s lasted more than a day, so the story was REAL to me.—KTBL Librarian Janet Chisman

DB 30805 *Pawn of Prophecy* by David Eddings. One of my favorite things to do during the winter is curl up with a long fantasy series. There's nothing like escaping the cold nights by diving into another world entirely. The Belgariad Series by David Eddings is one of my go-to favorites, because my father read it to me as a child. The story follows the young farm boy Garion as he is dragged into an epic quest to fulfill an ancient prophecy. The world building is fantastic and the characters are thoroughly enjoyable.—KTBL Librarian Tracey Mania

DB 91545 *Noir* by Christopher Moore. I love Christopher Moore's books; his wit is sharp, his characters irreverent, his plots absurd, and he usually throws in some kind of supernatural element. I even read his Vampire Love Story trilogy, even though I can't stand blood. Set in 1947, *Noir* involves a bartender named Sammy Two Toes, a blond bombshell, and an Air Force general from Roswell, NM. As the book jacket states, "Think Raymond Chandler meets *Men in Black*, with more than a dash of Looney Toons All Stars."—KTBL Branch Manager Barbara Penegor

DB 47868, BR 10517 *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte. When I think of winter reading, the first book that comes to mind is *Jane Eyre*. Charlotte Bronte's crowning work is a Victorian era bildungsroman that follows the moral and intellectual maturation of young Jane Eyre, who comes of age in a world that is bleak and harsh, yet possesses an inner moral strength and intellectual passion that I find inspiring. The individualistic voice of the heroine, and purely inward focus on her character were unique for its time. This is a slow and absorbing read, perfect for a snowy day.—KTBL Librarian Susan McGinnis

DB 70101 *Mrs. Miracle* by Debbie Macomber. I like her Christmas books. This time of year makes me want to read something that brings up a lot of fun holiday traditions. There is usually a love story that you know will have a happy ending. I enjoyed reading

Mrs. Miracle and then watching the Hallmark movie adaptation of it. Her books are always an easy read with a warm & fuzzy feel.—Administrative Specialist Mitzi Gray

DB 44525 Into Thin Air by Jon Krakauer. This is a book you think wouldn't interest you, but after the first few pages, you can't put it down. My reading wish list is very long, so I almost never reread a book, but I've read this book 3 times. In May 1996, Jon Krakauer was on assignment with *Outside* magazine, climbing Mt. Everest with a team lead by Rob Hall, when a storm trapped them near the summit. Several other expeditions were on the mountain during the storm, and 8 climbers lost their lives. Four more climbers died that same season, making it one of the deadliest years on the mountain.—Electronic Technician Michael Gilbert

DB 50083, BR 11912 The Complete Chronicles of Narnia by C.S. Lewis. I'm continuing on with Tracey's fantasy theme, and I suggest *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Although much debate has been made about the order in which to read the series, I would start with *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, which introduces the reader to the magic and adventure in the mysterious land of Narnia. The winter setting is also appropriate for the season.—Librarian Cathy Crum

DB 69864, BR 18588 All New Square Foot Gardening: Grow More in Less Space! By Mel Bartholomew. This time of year, I like to peruse gardening catalogs and books in anticipation of warmer weather. This book is good for basic information; it advises growing in six-inch-deep boxes of soil and using vertical frames for climbing plants. This eliminates the need for digging and fertilizing, and wide aisles and elevated boxes allow easier access for those who may have physical limitations. It gives good plant-by-plant suggestions for extending the growing season.—Studio Manager Brian Bertucci

DB 92500 Washington Black by Esi Edugyan. This critically-acclaimed work of fiction follows George "Wash" Black, a Barbados slave turned free by escaping with his ex-master, naturalist Christopher "Titch" Wilde, in a 19th-century-inspired adventure story. I really enjoyed the intersection of early naturalist scientific theory and the evolution of identity against an unjust society. Check it out if you like thought-provoking novels that mix the horrors of slavery, coming of age character development, and early forays in the field of scientific exploration. —KTBL Administrative Assistant Devon Stivers

DB 72664, BR 06356 A People's History of the United States by Howard Zinn. I like reading history because I feel it wasn't taught well in my school. I like this book in particular because it is very extensive and presents an alternative view by covering American history from the perspective of indigenous people, slaves, immigrants, and others who have been exploited or whose history is missing from most accounts.—KTBL Administrative Assistant Gary Harmon

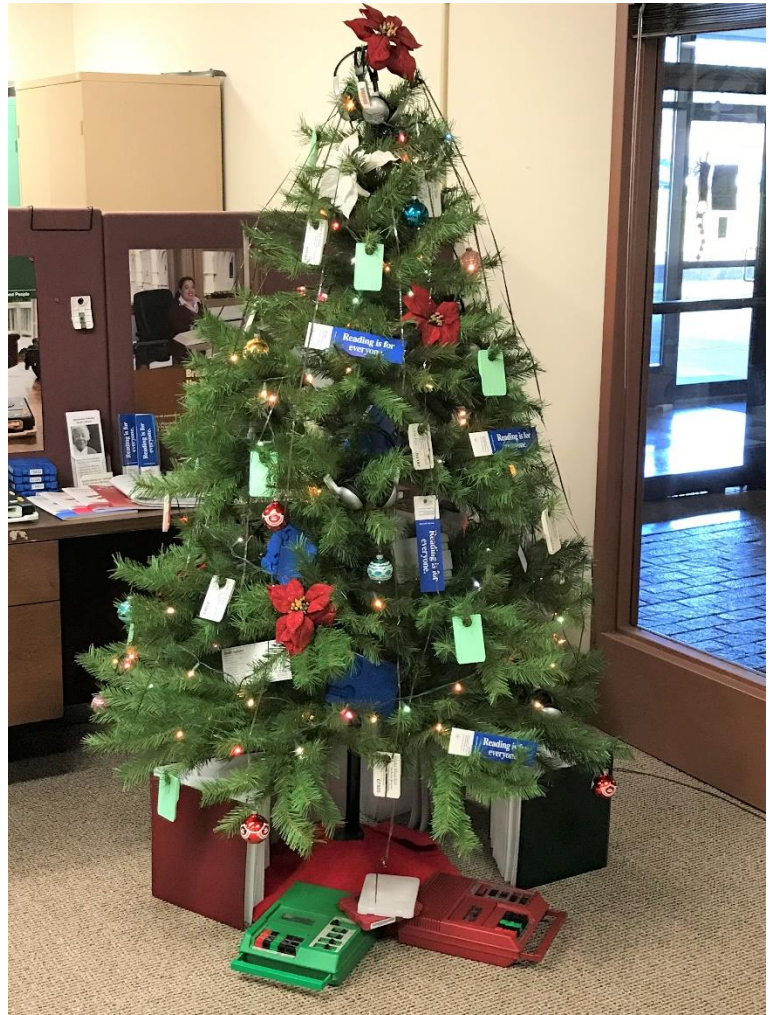
DB 67119 Carved in Bone by Jefferson Bass. I have just started reading the Body Farm mystery series written by Jefferson Bass (writing team of Dr. Bill Bass and Jon Jefferson). These novels follow forensic anthropologist Dr. Bill Brockton on homicide cases throughout western Tennessee. Not for the squeamish, but high in suspense and forensic science. –Librarian Nancy Houseal

DB 76801 The Golem and the Jinni by Helen Wecker. Chava, a golem brought to life by a disgraced rabbi, and Ahmad, a jinni made of fire, form an unlikely friendship on the streets of New York until a fateful choice changes everything. New York City is one of my favorite places on earth. I'm also a fan of historical fiction and fantasy fiction—this combines both, in an *almost* believable way. The friendship of an ancient Arab devil and a Jewish monster gave me hope for the future!—Librarian Bill Shrout

Happy Holidays!

However you celebrate the season, the entire staff of the Kentucky Talking Book Library wishes you peace, joy, and a wonderful New Year!

Photo caption: the KTBL Christmas tree, decorated with green and white digital book cartridges, blue digital book mailing containers, headphones, braille alphabet cards and bookmarks, and festooned with cassette tape "tinsel". Beneath the tree are red and green braille books, old red and green cassette players, and red and white magazine and book containers.



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This newsletter is available in large print, braille, audio, and electronic formats. Contact KTBL to request a different format.

**Kentucky Talking Book Library
PO Box 537
Frankfort KY 40602**

**Free Matter for the Blind
and Physically Handicapped
DMM 703.5**