# **Talking Books: Reading Never Sounded So Good LogoTouch and Listen**

***The Newsletter of the Florida Braille and Talking Book Library***

***Winter 2021***

## **NLS News You Can Use**

**NLS Virtual Conference Spotlights “Access, Discovery, Engagement”**

The 2020 National Conference of Librarians Serving Blind and Print Disabled Individuals (NLS) originally was scheduled for this past spring in Lincoln, Nebraska. It finally took place December 1 through 3—on Zoom.

The biennial event brings together staff members from NLS and its network of nearly 100 cooperating libraries around the country. This year’s virtual format allowed some 400 people to attend—more than double the attendance of the 2018 conference in Nashville!

The theme of this year’s conference was, “Access, Discovery, Engagement” and it spotlighted the ways NLS is using the latest technology to modernize its operations and expand access to the program.

In her opening address, NLS Director Karen Keninger told librarians that when faced by challenges such as the pandemic, the question is, “Do you succumb or do you surmount? You each rose to the occasion and kept the books flowing. As a program we did surmount and in some ways are coming out more resilient and creative than when we started.”

Technology has played a big part in that. Libraries using NLS’s Duplication-on-Demand technology can put multiple books on a single cartridge—loading up avid readers with extra books and reducing the number of items the libraries have to handle and the staff needed on-site. With a little encouragement, many patrons who had been getting their books delivered by mail for years discovered BARD, the NLS Braille and Audio Reading Download website, and the BARD Mobile apps.

But libraries also practiced old-fashioned customer service, calling patrons just to say hello and offer a friendly, caring ear.

“The network has exhibited creativity, resilience and resolve during the pandemic by adopting new processes, forging new alliances through collaborative sharing of resources, discovering potential for growth and finding innovative ways to provide books and programming to patrons,” NLS network consultant MaryBeth Wise said.

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The conference’s keynote speaker was Haben Girma, author of *Haben: The Deafblind Woman Who Conquered Harvard Law* (available in Braille and audio to NLS patrons as BR22702 and DB96188). Girma described various barriers she had encountered during her life and how one in particular set her on the path of activism.

During her freshman year at Lewis & Clark College in Oregon, the cafeteria manager refused her request to provide menus in Braille, saying he didn’t have time to accommodate students with special needs. “Just to be clear,” Girma said, “deaf-blindness isn’t a special need. Everyone has to eat.” At first she didn’t challenge him; she just went to different food stations in the cafeteria and took whatever the servers offered.

“I told myself, at least I have food. Many people around the world struggle for food. Who was I to complain? Maybe I should just be grateful and accept inferior service. But then, “Friends reminded me—it’s my choice. It’s our choice to accept unfairness or advocate for justice.”

She researched the Americans with Disabilities Act, then went back to the cafeteria manager and said she would take legal action if he didn’t make the menus accessible—even though at age 19, “I had no idea how to do it.” The next day the manager apologized. And from then on, any blind student who enrolled at Lewis & Clark had immediate access to Braille menus. The lesson Girma learned: “When I advocate, I help everyone who comes after me.”

You can learn more about Haben Girma at her website, **HabenGirma.com.**

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**New Initiatives Shared by NLS Staff:**

* NLS will begin to implement the cross-border exchange of Braille and audio books under the auspices of the Marrakesh Treaty. The treaty will help NLS expand its foreign-language offerings, particularly in Spanish but also in French, Tagalog/Filipino, Vietnamese and more. You can read more about NLS and the Marrakesh Treaty at **Go.USA.Gov/x7JJC**.
* NLS is developing a new digital talking-book machine (DTBM) that would meet patron demand and serve as a bridge between the current DTBM—introduced in 2008—and a next-generation device. The new DTBM would play talking-book cartridges like the current model, but it could also download books from BARD. Meanwhile, NLS is considering options for a next-generation device—perhaps a voice-controlled, locked-down smartphone—and exploring ways to make BARD available on smart speakers.
* Distribution and pilot programs of Braille eReaders will expand during 2021, fulfilling NLS’s longtime goal of providing a device to patrons who read Braille but can’t afford expensive commercial refreshable Braille displays.
* BARD is moving from Library of Congress servers to cloud servers. This will give it the capacity to handle growing demand and provide faster download speeds. Meanwhile, the BARD Mobile apps for iOS and Android devices will be getting an improved search feature and expanded subscription options for book series. And soon patrons will be able to download eBraille books on the Android app, as they already can do on the iOS app.
* NLS is researching ways to provide data connectivity to patrons who live in areas where there is no broadband service, so they can download books from BARD.
* NLS is taking steps to diversify its pool of narrators to represent a wider group of voices. NLS’s in-house studio and its outside contract studios will tap into this pool for both new recordings and re-recordings of older titles.

### **News from Around the Network**

#### **DB100000 and Beyond:** You’ll very soon start to see new books with a 6 digit ID number. Up until now, all of our books have had a prefix of “DB0” followed by a 5 digit ID number. That “0” placeholder will finally become a “1” for the newest titles, so be sure to include all 6 digits when ordering. Books recorded by the various local libraries around the country will continue to have a prefix of “DBC” followed by a 5 digit ID number.

**To provide accessible information online** to over 29 million passengers every year, Orlando International Airport now provides an inclusive experience on their website. Passengers with disabilities spend billions of dollars a year on travel, and many say they would travel more if impediments were eliminated. The importance of online accessibility is greater than ever. Effective online communication is critical and being able to provide personalized assistance online gives everyone the ability to research and book travel arrangements in a way that works for them.

**A Braille discussion group** is now available from Hadley, a free distance learning institution for individuals who are blind or have low vision. Patrons with a passion for Braille may enjoy the weekly discussion group which offers transcriptions and audio of past discussions covering topics from Braille technology to Braille services around the globe. Call Hadley at 800-323-4238 for more information on this and other groups, andfor resources on how to use Zoom.

**Choice Magazine Listening (CML)** is a free audio magazine for adults with impaired vision or other disability. Four times a year, listeners can download or receive by mail 12 hours of great stories and articles chosen from 100 of the finest magazines, absolutely free of charge. All CML’s selections are wonderfully read by some of America’s top audiobook narrators. If someone you know would enjoy this free service, please call 1-888-724-6423 or visit **choicemagazinelistening.org**.

#### **On the Library Bookshelf**

### **Fresh from the Recording Studio: New Books**

Books with the DBC designation are available in BARD for immediate download. Books beginning with the FDB designation must be ordered through your reader advisor. If you aren’t able to access BARD, please call your reader advisor.

***Survival Tails – Endurance in Antarctica* by Katrina Charman DBC17118**. A diverse herd of sled dogs is on the verge of making history when disaster strikes. Can they band together to save themselves and their humans? For grades 4-7. Narrator: Dave Archard. Reading time: 4 hrs. 50 min.

***The Unicorn In The Barn* by Jacqueline K. Ogden DBC17136*.*** When a veterinarian moves in next to Eric Harper, he finds a job, strange new friends, and mysterious patients. Over time, he learns about family, loss, and a little bit of magic. Narrator: Susie Baldwin. Reading time: 5 hrs. 15 min.

***For All the Saints? Remembering the Christian Departed* by N.T. Wright DBC17139.**A series of meditations composed during the author's time serving Westminster Abbey. Narrator: Ellen Rabin. Reading time: 2 hrs. 25 min.

The Bureau of Braille and Talking Books Library Services are part of the

**Florida Department of Education, Division of Blind Services.**

Visit our websites at www.dbs.fldoe.org or www.fldoe.org

**Contact us at 1-800-226-6075 or via email at** [**OPAC\_librarian@dbs.fldoe.org**](mailto:OPAC_librarian@dbs.fldoe.org)