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for the Blind and  
Physically Handicapped

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## In this issue:

- Collection Development  
Advisory Group ..... 3
- StoryCorps interviews  
Chicago patron ..... 4
- ADA anniversary  
commemoration ..... 5
- Network-produced  
books on BARD ..... 6
- Network Briefs ..... 7
- New website and  
Facebook page ..... 8



Ann Arbor District Library director Josie Parker (left) and Washtenaw library manager of outreach and neighborhood services Terry Soave with NLS deputy director Isabella Marqués de Castilla and their Subregional Library of the Year plaques.

## NLS honors two braille and talking book libraries from the Great Lakes State

Josie Parker didn't let the formal occasion of accepting the Network Subregional Library of the Year Award from NLS check her excitement.

"To be a librarian and to get an award in the Library of Congress—this is about as cool as it gets," she said to laughter and applause during a luncheon ceremony at the Library of Congress (LC) on June 19, 2015.

The 10th annual event, which recognizes the exemplary work of libraries in the NLS network, was held in the Whittall Pavilion of the LC's historic

Thomas Jefferson Building. Librarians and NLS patrons from across the country heard from Jane McAuliffe, director of the LC's newly established National and International Outreach service unit, and from Kathryn Mendenhall, director of Partnerships and Outreach Programs.

Parker is director of the Washtenaw Library for the Blind and Physically Disabled at the Ann Arbor District Library (WLBDP@AADL), which was recognized for establishing a new model of service in its Michigan home.

**The Program**

The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Library of Congress, publishes books and magazines in braille and in recorded form for readers who cannot hold, handle, or see well enough to read conventional print because of a temporary or permanent visual or physical disability.

Through a national network of state and local libraries, the materials are loaned free to eligible readers in the United States and to U.S. citizens living abroad. Materials are sent to readers and returned by postage-free mail. Most books are also available for download on the NLS Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) website, <https://nlsbard.loc.gov>.

**Books and Magazines**

Readers may borrow all types of popular-interest books including bestsellers, classics, mysteries, westerns, poetry, history, biographies, religious literature, children’s books, and foreign-language materials. Readers may also subscribe to more than seventy popular magazines in braille and recorded formats.

**Special Equipment**

Special equipment needed to play the audiobooks is loaned indefinitely to readers. Amplifiers with headphones are available for eligible readers who are also certified as hearing impaired. Other devices are provided to aid readers with mobility impairments in using playback machines.

**Eligibility**

You are eligible for the Library of Congress program if

- You are legally blind—your vision in the better eye is 20/200 or less with correcting glasses, or your widest diameter of visual field is no greater than 20 degrees;
- You cannot see well enough or focus long enough to read standard print, although you wear glasses to correct your vision;
- You are unable to handle print books or turn pages because of a physical handicap; or
- You are certified by a medical doctor as having a reading disability, due to an organic dysfunction, which is of sufficient severity to prevent reading in a normal manner.

**How to Apply**

You may request an application by calling toll-free 1-888-NLS-READ or download one from the NLS website at [www.loc.gov/nls](http://www.loc.gov/nls).

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**Michigan Braille and Talking Book Library adaptive technology librarian Scott Norris and manager Sue Chinault with the Network Library of the Year plaque.**



Eligible patrons can receive services at any of five locations in the county—in person, by phone, or by e-mail. A training program that included videos on assisting people who are blind or physically disabled was developed for the 175 employees of the public library and new hires.

“We made a conscious decision to be inclusive and to be sensitive,” Parker said. “We didn’t take it lightly and we are proud of what we accomplished.”

Parker was joined by Terry Soave, Washtenaw manager of Outreach and Neighborhood Services, who is credited with increasing the library’s outreach activities. Presentations for other organizations, booths at expos and information fairs, and visits to schools and institutions have increased the visibility of the program.

In 2014, WLBPD@AADL served approximately 500 patrons and circulated talking books and magazines on 15,949 digital cartridges.

The Michigan sour cherry pie served for dessert wasn’t meant to honor only WLBPD@AADL. The Network Library of the Year Award went to the Michigan Braille and Talking Book Library

in Lansing, which undertook a reorganization requiring the centralization of circulation for braille and talking books while maintaining service for 11,442 patrons.

“It has been a heck of a year assuming responsibilities for nine subregional libraries,” director Sue Chinault said.

The library also established a download agreement with the Helsinki, Finland, library for the blind to provide the large Finnish-speaking population in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula access to thousands of Finnish titles. In addition, the library gave patrons a voice in its decision-making by offering a telephone and online forum, while tripling outreach activities.

“It is an eye-opener what people can accomplish when they are challenged,” Chinault said.

NLS created the Network Library Awards to recognize outstanding accomplishments of the more than 100 libraries serving people with visual and physical challenges across the country and in U.S. territories. Winners receive a framed certificate for the library and its administering agency and a cash award.

**Collection Development  
Advisory Group  
members**

**Organization  
Representatives:**

Steve Speicher  
(American Council of  
the Blind)

James Fleming  
(Blinded Veterans  
Association)

Marci Carpenter  
(National Federation of  
the Blind)

**Readers-at-Large:**

Katherine Schneider  
(Midlands Conference)

Stanley Greenberg  
(Northern Conference)

Robert Nazareus  
(Western Conference)

**Librarians:**

Laura Williams  
(Midlands Conference)

Donna Calvert  
(Northern Conference)

Lauren Abner  
(Southern Conference)

Susan Hammer-  
Schneider (Western  
Conference)

Stephanie Wambaugh  
(Children’s/Young  
Adult)

## More braille offerings a top priority for Collection Development Advisory Group

NLS should expand the scope of its braille offerings by producing more how-to books on subjects such as careers, gardening, and crafts; more books of puzzles and games; and more books in Spanish and other languages such as Arabic and Farsi.

Those were among the recommendations made by the Collection Development Advisory Group (CDAG) during its meeting May 20–22, 2015, at NLS headquarters in Washington, D.C.

The 12 members of the group, representing librarians, consumer organizations, and NLS patrons, get together every two years to provide guidance to NLS staff in matters relating to collection development.

“NLS is the public library for hundreds of thousands of people who are blind or physically disabled, and hopefully our group made recommendations that will help produce the best collection possible to serve its patrons,” said Lauren Abner, technology consultant for the Kentucky Department for Libraries & Archives, who served as secretary during the meeting.

The group urged NLS to help adults and children learning braille

by producing more easy-to-read uncontracted braille books, such as joke books and one-minute mysteries. Length should not be a limiting factor when selecting high-demand or high-interest titles for the braille collection, the group said. CDAG also reiterated its 2013 recommendation that NLS give preference to braille books in instances where braille offers advantages over audiobooks, such as recipe collections; hymnals, poems, plays, and books for adults to read to children; and indexed reference works.

“We spent a lot of time on braille selection,” Abner said. “We all agreed that length and complexity shouldn’t be barriers to adding titles to the braille collection and that it was preferable to have a smaller number of highly desirable or useful titles than more titles just for the sake of meeting quotas.”

For example, Abner explained, “We specifically mentioned *A Song of Ice and Fire* [a series of epic fantasy novels by George R. R. Martin] as a set many patrons want in braille, and now it’s in production. I’m thrilled they’ll be able to read it in their preferred format.”

Providing more books in braille “is



**CDAG members  
Lauren Abner (left)  
and Stephanie  
Wambaugh  
review CDAG’s  
recommendations at  
the conclusion of the  
three-day meeting.**

a goal we share, and one that we are taking steps to achieve,” NLS director Karen Keninger said. “The emphasis that CDAG placed on that at this year’s meeting tells me we are moving in the right direction.”

CDAG’s recommendations also highlighted lifelong learning. “We need tools to promote literacy, whether for a child learning to read for the first time or an adult learning braille,” Abner said. “We also need a diverse collection to interest people throughout their lives.”

To support literacy in children and young adults, the group recommended that NLS select more high interest/low vocabulary titles and uncontracted braille books and more books in both audio and braille on the subjects of sports, bullying, science, action/adventure, history, and geography.

It also recommended that NLS add more mysteries, westerns, Amish fiction, science fiction (particularly space adventures), and current affairs titles, as well as books dealing specifically with relationship advice for people

who have bipolar disorder, wedding planning, and coping with identity theft.

Other recommendations focused on improving the efficiency of BARD searches, changing the way numbers are assigned to books in a series and multiple books by the same author, and providing additional information about the braille and audio magazines available to patrons.

CDAG commended NLS for eliminating the indexes and categorizing books by subject in the bimonthly reader-selection magazines *Braille Book Review* and *Talking Book Topics*. CDAG was also pleased with efforts taken to speed production of new books, and commended NLS for partnering with the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to distribute iBill currency readers to eligible Americans.

Edmund O’Reilly, head of the Collection Development Section, found the CDAG members engaged and conscientious. “NLS appreciates their thoughtful recommendations,” he said.

## **Chicago patron commends BARD in StoryCorps interview**

When StoryCorps visited Chicago to record the stories of people whose lives are positively impacted by the Chicago Public Library, one of the people interviewed was Marcia Trawinski, a Chicago Public Library Talking Book Center patron.



**Trawinski**

Trawinski highlighted the recent technology advancements provided by NLS, including the BARD Mobile app. She also talked about the benefits of having a talking-book center that she can visit in addition to receiving talking books by mail. “It gave me the opportunity to meet other patrons because unless I stumbled onto them, it was a very solitary arrangement. It was me and the post office. Now I knew other people who read other books. We got to meet. We had actual book clubs that were at the talking-book center. So for the first time I could discuss books with my friends—just like a regular book club.”

A recording of her interview and a transcript are available at [www.ims.gov/news-events/upnext-blog/2015/02/storycorps-interview-chicago-public-library](http://www.ims.gov/news-events/upnext-blog/2015/02/storycorps-interview-chicago-public-library).

StoryCorps is a non-profit organization that has collected more than 50,000 interviews for its oral history project. Interviews are archived in the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.

## NLS staffers participate in ADA commemoration

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which became law 25 years ago, has made a profound difference in the everyday lives of millions of Americans.

But the ADA has shortcomings that still need to be addressed, according to Deborah Brown, NLS braille quality assurance (QA) specialist—particularly in dealing with new technology that did not exist in 1990. Brown, who is the secretary of the Library of Congress

(LC) Organization of Employees with Disabilities (OED), spoke to attendees of an LC program on the ADA in July.

“We believe it’s too hard to decrease the effect of a disability, so we should just accommodate the disability,” Brown said. “We need to rewrite the script. We’ve learned to design buildings with elevators and ramps so that public buildings are generally accessible. Let’s do the same for information technology. Accessibility must always be the first choice; accommodation must be the second option.”

The ADA prohibits discrimination based on disability, requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities, and imposes accessibility requirements on public accommodations. “While we realize that there is yet work to be done, we also recognize that strides have been made and opportunities have been gained that would not have been but for the passage of this law,” NLS Braille Development Officer Tamara Rorie, chairwoman of the LC OED, said in welcoming guests.



**NLS QA specialist Deborah Brown speaks at the LC ADA event.**

Photo by Shawn Miller

U.S. Rep. James R. Langevin, a Rhode Island Democrat, was the featured speaker at the 25th anniversary event. As a teenager, Langevin was left paralyzed by a gun accident. Over the following 35 years, he forged a career in public service and, in 2001, became the first quadriplegic ever to serve in Congress.

Langevin has lived with a disability both before and after the ADA. “I have experienced, as you can imagine, in a very personal way, firsthand, the profound changes this law has effected within our society,” he said. The ADA, he said, broke down barriers to education, employment and technology. It made public transportation more accommodating. It improved voting accessibility and expanded inclusion.

“At its core, this groundbreaking legislation codified the collective ideal that no one should suffer discrimination because of a disability,” Langevin said. “As we celebrate the silver anniversary of the ADA together, we must reaffirm our commitment to equal opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency for people with disabilities everywhere.”

That’s a goal people of all political stripes should be able to embrace, Brown said. “Disability rights is a nonpartisan issue,” she said. “There are leaders in both parties that have advocated for the rights of people with disabilities. In an age as partisan as ours, this is grounds for hope.”

*A version of this story, written by Mark Hartsell, originally appeared in the Library of Congress Gazette.*

## Network-produced talking books booming on BARD

In April 2014, the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library in Seattle posted the first network-produced talking book to BARD: *The Alpine Journey* by Cynthia Ellis. Fourteen months later, Deborah Stroup of the Wolfner Talking Book and Braille Library in Missouri approved the 1,000th: Lynda Mullaly Hunt's *One for the Murphys*, a children's book about a young girl who struggles to adjust to new foster parents.

"We're excited to see how eagerly network libraries have jumped at the opportunity to add books of local and regional interest to BARD," NLS Network Division Chief Richard Smith said. "It expands our collection in ways we could never do from here in Washington."

For Stroup, whose library is one of the most avid contributors of talking books to BARD, the milestone almost passed unnoticed. "We had no idea we were posting the 1,000th [network-produced] book to BARD," she said. "I was very excited. And it was great to be able to share this accomplishment with the volunteers who worked on the book."

Wolfner selected *One for the Murphys* (DBC01414) because it was on a list of books chosen by the Missouri Association of School Librarians (MASL) as a Truman Readers Award nominee. The award aims to encourage students in their early teens to express their unique voice through exploring new literary genres, communicating with their peers about young adult literature, and honoring authors writing for young teens.

"MASL has four award programs for students, and Wolfner produces many of the books," Stroup said.

Several of the books posted on BARD by network libraries have made

an appearance on the most popular download list, including *Taking the Fifth* (DBC05060), produced by the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library; *A Secret Gift: How One Man's Kindness—and a Trove of Letters—Revealed the Hidden History of the Great Depression* (DBC03759), produced by the Perkins Library, Perkins School for the Blind in Massachusetts; *Final Truth: The Autobiography of a Serial Killer* (DBC00074), produced by the South Carolina State Library Talking Book Services; and *The Unseen Trail: The Story of a Blind Hiker's Journey on the Appalachian Trail* (DBC02612), produced by the Minnesota State Services for the Blind, Communication Center.

Before they are allowed to post talking books to BARD, network libraries must complete a pilot program. "That's to make sure they are familiar with the requirements," Smith said. "For example, the name of the zip file that contains the book must be exactly right or BARD won't load it. The book has to be protected so it's in compliance with our copyright exception, and there has to be a catalog record."

Network libraries must familiarize themselves with the relevant technical specifications, participate in a video conference with NLS audiobook production specialist Phillip Carbo, and submit a pilot book for review by quality assurance specialist Chris Mundy of the Multistate Center East (MSCE). Libraries must also demonstrate that they can upload a book and verify that its bibliographic data displays correctly in BARD and that the book will download and play in a digital talking-book machine.

By mid-summer, 27 network libraries and one machine-lending agency had completed the pilot. According to

## Network Exchange

**California:** Dr. Alvin J. Harris (right), an award-winning author from Murder Mystery Press, greets Braille Institute



Library Services patrons Jane Jones (left) and Steven Echor at Meet the Author Day at the Institute's library April 15, 2015. Harris is the author of *Farewell My Country*, a biographical novel

set against the backdrop of the anti-communist witch hunts of the 1950s. Beside him is Yetta Harris of Murder Mystery Press.

**Pennsylvania:** The Philadelphia Regional Chapter of the Pennsylvania Council of the Blind honored the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped of the Free Library of Philadelphia with its 2015 Mae Davidow

Community Service Award. The award recognized the library's "outstanding contributions to the quality of life of blind and visually impaired citizens of the Delaware Valley." It is named after a longtime educator at Overbrook School for the Blind in Philadelphia who championed a range of causes for blind people.

**Colorado:** Longtime talking-book machine-repair volunteer Dick Iversen died June 14, 2015, at age 93. Iversen worked on NLS cassette talking-book machines in the shop at the Colorado Talking Book Library in Denver for 22 years. He managed the mailing database for the Pioneers volunteer group's *Fully Charged* newsletter from 1993 to 2002 and was a member of the NLS National Audio Equipment Advisory Committee. Born in Denmark, Iversen served in the navy in World War II and had a long career with Western Electric.

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Mundy, who reviewed all of the pilot books, several demonstrated exceptional overall quality. *Same Kind of Different as Me* (DBC00008), submitted by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission; *The Fifth Generation: A Nez Perce Tale* (DBC00781), submitted by the Idaho Commission for Libraries Talking Book Services; and *The Soprano State: New Jersey's Culture of Corruption* (DBC01861), submitted by the New Jersey State Library Talking Book and Braille Center, were among the standouts.

For the most part, library staffers—such as those at the Illinois State Library Talking Book and Braille Service (ISLTBBS)—have found the pilot process to be straightforward and the requirements to be minimal. Sharon Ruda, ISLTBBS regional librarian,

explained, "As complete novices we were able to complete our first book, easily fixing our simple mistakes. Any studio staff members who have experience will find the process quite easy."

NLS continues to offer pilot participation opportunities on a quarterly basis. The Network Division strongly encourages libraries to participate in the pilot and obtain certification for contributing titles to BARD.

"Don't underestimate your potential to contribute to BARD," Mundy said. "With access to new and user-friendly technology and the wealth of support offered by NLS and MSCE, there has never been a better time for libraries to showcase their local recording programs."

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## NLS gets social with new website and Facebook page

Have you visited the new NLS website and Facebook page? The website, [www.loc.gov/thatalldmayread](http://www.loc.gov/thatalldmayread), was unveiled this spring. It offers visitors easy-to-find information about the braille and talking book

program and invites those who want to learn more to fill out a short online form. The site includes a five-minute video that features patrons talking about their experiences with the program.

And in June, NLS launched its Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/thatalldmayread](http://www.facebook.com/thatalldmayread). NLS uses the page to

share news, highlight new books on BARD, post “Throwback Thursday” photos from its archives, and more.

“NLS has stepped into the 21st century!”

director Karen Keninger said. “The website and the Facebook page give us new platforms to share our story with eligible residents who may not have heard about us and to stay in touch with the hundreds of thousands

of people who are blind or have a disability who already use our services.”

More changes are on the way as NLS puts the finishing touches on a new logo and a new look for many of its products. Look for more in an upcoming issue of *News*.

