

Satellite Meeting #16: Libraries serving Persons with Print disabilities:
Creating an inclusive community of readers: Tailoring the Reading Experience to
Meet Individual Needs
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BARD Downloading for All!

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Abstract:

The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) at the U.S. Library of Congress offers an excellent service for its members to download tens of thousands of audiobooks, audio magazines, and Braille. It is called the Braille and Audio Reading Download site, affectionately known as BARD. The New Jersey State Library Talking Book & Braille Center (TBBC) has demonstrated national leadership by working with NLS to craft the BARD Pilot Project in the state of New Jersey located in the USA. The pilot project is a partnership with public libraries in New Jersey to assist TBBC members with print impairments to download from BARD, a task that can be difficult for numerous reasons. This project gives members access to more books and creates a closer relationship between TBBC members and their public libraries. We hope this project will be expanded nationally.

Keywords: Braille and Audio Reading Download, print disabilities, New Jersey State Library, National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, U.S. Library of Congress

The state of New Jersey in the USA has over 250 public libraries. Most of these are located in the heart of our many boroughs and townships. The New Jersey State Library Talking Book & Braille Center (TBBC) is providing national leadership by working on a pilot project with the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) at the U.S. Library of Congress. This pilot project is creating partnerships with public libraries to offer our members assistance with downloading from the Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) site, a service offered by NLS.

Before we talk about the pilot project, here is some background information. TBBC is a regional library of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) at the U.S. Library of Congress and a division of the New Jersey State Library. We serve children, teens, and adults in New Jersey who have difficulty reading standard print or holding a book because of a physical impairment, a reading disability or a visual impairment. TBBC offers its members the no-cost NLS service which includes:

- Long-term loan of the NLS accessible digital talking book machine.
- Access to the Braille and Audio Reading Download site (BARD) from NLS where our members can download audiobooks, audio magazines and Braille files.
- BARD Mobile app for smartphones and tablets.
- Postage-free home delivery of audiobooks, audio magazines, and Braille.

BARD is an extraordinary resource for our members. Our members have free access to download over 57,000 audiobooks, nearly 50 audio magazines and over 12,000 Braille files. The downloaded audio materials can be listened to on the NLS digital talking book machine or through the BARD Mobile app.

One day, we said to ourselves: many of New Jersey's public libraries help patrons use iPads, Nooks, Kindles, etc. Why not offer help with BARD downloading?

The need for downloading assistance is profound. Nearly two-thirds of the BARD titles are available exclusively on BARD and are not produced on digital cartridge for mailing. Our members dependent on the mail service only do not have access to many NLS titles. Also, many of our members need help downloading because they lack computers or have difficulty with the downloading process which can be cumbersome.

TBBC's national leadership is removing this disparity through the BARD Pilot Project, a partnership with NLS. TBBC members receive assistance with BARD downloading from their public libraries. TBBC is the only library in the NLS regional system to offer this service. 20% of New Jersey public libraries are now participating. Public librarians download BARD audiobooks and audio magazines to a flash drive that can be played on the NLS digital talking book machine.

This pilot project was designed by Maria Baratta, former Assistant Director of TBBC. She worked carefully with NLS to develop these parameters:

- The library must have an institutional account with TBBC before a library can join the BARD pilot.
- Training by TBBC is required for all public library staff on the copyright restrictions of this program, eligibility criteria, application process, and how to download from BARD.
- Each library staff member creates a BARD account under the library's larger institutional account.
- After training, TBBC mails its members in the service area of the library to inform them that this assistance is available.
- Proof of TBBC membership must be presented by all TBBC members before receiving any BARD books. A NLS book card or a TBBC library card must be given to the library to prove membership. A family member or friend can show the proof of membership if a TBBC member has difficulty travelling to the library.

The pilot project was implemented in 2012 and has been successful. Over 26,000 books have been downloaded by libraries for TBBC members.

The BARD Pilot Project offers numerous benefits for TBBC's members. It expands access to books and it connects our members to the wealth of services and programs offered at New Jersey's libraries. We hope that NLS will expand this project nationally and give public libraries across the U.S. access to BARD to offer this valuable service.

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