

# **OLBPD DIMENSIONS NEWSLETTER**

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## **Spotlighting NLS' 90th Anniversary: Founding Years**

**In celebration and recognition of the 90th anniversary of the National Library Service (NLS) for the Blind and Print Disabled, here is part one of a three part series acquainting readers with NLS, highlighting their accomplishments through the years.**

**The concept of a national library for the blind was developed in 1897 by John Russell Young, the Librarian of Congress, when he established a reading room for the blind with about 500 books and music items in raised characters. In 1913, Congress provided that one copy of each book in raised characters made for educational purposes under government subsidy by the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) in Louisville, Kentucky, was to be deposited in the Library of Congress. In 1930, identical bills were introduced in Congress by Representative Ruth Pratt and Senator Reed Smoot to provide adequate service on a national scale through an appropriation to be expended under the direction of the Librarian of Congress.**

**The Pratt-Smoot Act became law on March 3, 1931. On the following day, a Joint Resolution was passed appropriating \$100,000 for fiscal 1932 to carry out the provisions of the act to provide books for blind adults, and the program that would become the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS/BPD) was established. The Librarian of Congress was authorized to arrange with other libraries to serve as local or regional centers for the circulation of such books.**

**The book project for blind adults began operating on July 1, 1931. Its primary concern was selecting titles to be embossed. The Clovernook Printing House for the Blind in Cincinnati was one of four American presses contracted to produce fifteen titles selected as an experimental group. The first order was for Woodrow Wilson's "George Washington" to meet a demand created by the commemoration of the bicentennial of Washington's birth.**

**The designation of distributing libraries was less difficult. After consultation with the American Library Association and American Foundation for the Blind (AFB), the Librarian selected eighteen libraries, in addition to the Library of Congress, because of their ability to provide adequate service and regional coverage of the country. The Cincinnati and Cleveland libraries for the blind were part of that original network of charter libraries.**

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## **Availability of Advance Talking Book Players**

The State Library of Ohio (SLO) is currently reporting a very short supply of advanced digital talking book players. Due to the short supply, OLBPD is limiting the amount of reserves by patrons for advanced players. Patrons waiting on an advanced player can expect delays. The standard player is in stock and ready to ship for those requiring a suitable replacement.

All of the advanced players are reissued machines. The National Library Service (NLS) stopped making new talking book players in anticipation of the next generation digital talking books machine. Therefore, we are not expecting any more first-generation advanced players from NLS other than those returned from repair.

The difference between the standard and advanced digital talking-book machine is that the standard has eight controls and provides basic functionality for the playback of talking books, including volume and tone control, rewind and fast-forward, and variable speed. The advanced digital talking-book machine has additional controls for setting bookmarks and navigating through the structured levels (chapters, sections, etc.) of a book. Both machines are capable of playing audio cartridges, including those with more than one book bundled on it.

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## **COVID-19 Quarantine Procedures**

Some public libraries throughout the State have reduced or removed quarantining returned materials. Furthermore, the news is reporting that the COVID-19 virus is more susceptible to warmer temperatures typically experienced in the summer. Naturally, patrons are asking us about changes to our quarantine of returned materials.

Although conditions are more encouraging, OLBPD will continue to quarantine returned library materials received by the United States Postal Service for 96-hours before staff process returns. Materials returned or dropped-off at the Library will remain in quarantine for seven days. Quarantining returned materials will continue as long as conditions persist, for the ongoing protection and safety of employees and patrons, based on the research performed as part of the REALM Project (<https://www.oclc.org/realm/home.html>). Patrons needing more books because of the quarantine should contact the Library.

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## **NLS Braille e-Reader Pilot Update**

In the last newsletter, we shared that NLS postponed the pilot to analyze and investigate technical concerns that were discovered with the testing units. The pilot is still on hold while these concerns are addressed. We appreciate all the interest and enthusiasm from patrons about participating in the pilot, and hope to have news soon about the pilot resuming later this year.

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# Field Tests Underway for NLS Digital Book Reader

Eight network libraries began a field test in April of a digital book reader. The eight regional libraries—in Arizona, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, Pennsylvania (Pittsburgh) and South Carolina—are each testing the book reader with 18 patrons, plus staff.

RealSAM, an Australian company that provides a similar product for the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) of the United Kingdom, built the book reader, which resembles a smart phone. The NLS book reader is a single-purpose device designed for searching the catalog and reading books. A key component of the book reader is its voice user interface (VUI), which allows patrons to browse the NLS catalog, search for specific titles, and navigate within a book using voice commands. The same VUI technology is also part of a NLS smart speaker under development and possibly ready for field tests in the near future. Likewise, upcoming versions of BARD might also use VUI as well.

Unlike smart devices using the BARD Mobile app, the book reader streams audio, permitting playback to begin immediately rather than waiting for the whole book to download. An option to download books for offline use will be a future enhancement. The field test units also require Wi-Fi access.

NLS is evaluating how these types of devices work, their usability, and patrons' acceptance of the voice interface and satisfaction with other device-related issues, such as the need to charge them and the audio quality of the small speaker. Participating libraries are collecting feedback from patrons as the field test goes along. Data gathered from this field test will help NLS determine how to proceed with both the device and the new interface.

Besides the digital book reader and smart speaker, NLS is also working on a new model of the DTBM with online capabilities, with pilot units planned for this coming winter. NLS believes that in the not-too-distant future, there will be not just one or two methods of delivering service to patrons, but they may have several for patrons to choose from—smartphone, smart speaker, BARD Mobile, and second-generation talking book player.

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## Reminders about Using and Returning Borrowed Items

As a reminder, playback equipment and reading materials are provided to eligible patrons on extended loan. When these items are no longer being used by the person they were issued to, then they need to be returned to the Library. These items are the property of the federal government. Eligible patrons who borrow NLS materials from network libraries accept responsibility for using materials with reasonable care, returning them to the lending agency. Patrons may not lend NLS or network-produced books, magazines, and equipment to non-eligible persons nor should non-eligible persons be using patron equipment or reading materials. Eligible people not registered with OLBPD can contact us for an application to become registered patrons.

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# The OLBDP Summer Reading List

Pour a tall glass of lemonade and catch up on some reading this summer from the following list of recommended books. These titles are available now for download through BARD or by request. Books in the list may contain descriptions of sex, strong language, or violence.

1. "Before She Disappeared" by Lisa Gardner – DB 102104 – Mystery
2. "Revenge" by James Patterson – DB 100059 – Suspense
3. "The Midnight Library" by Matt Haig – DB 100906 – Science Fiction
4. "Troubles in Paradise" by Elin Hilderbrand – DB 100979 – Paradise Trilogy
5. "Greenlights" by Matthew McConaughey – DB 101312 – Autobiography
6. "A Promised Land" by Barack Obama – DB 100966 – Political Biography
7. "Killing Crazy Horse" by Bill O'Reilly – DB 100515 – U.S. History
8. "Mindfulness Meditations for Anxiety" by Michael Smith – DB 97954 – Health

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## Family Fun and Learning Day 2021

OLBDP will not be hosting Family Fun and Learning Day in 2021.

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## Go Paperless!

Electronic versions of the OLBDP Dimensions newsletter are available from our website in audio, braille, and large print. Patrons can be added to our email list to receive notice when the next edition is available.

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