



Greetings From the Regional Librarian

Happy fall everyone. I had the great pleasure to attend the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled Conference in Washington DC the beginning of September. This is the first time the conference has been held in DC since 1978 and all the meetings and sessions were in the Library of Congress John Adams building. It was a three-day conference, jam packed with information from both NLS staff and network librarians, so I can only hit the highlights.



Day one was updates from NLS staff and sessions covering advocacy, patron retention, and a great session about disability awareness. Our day ended with a reception at the Library of Congress Jefferson Building. Librarian of Congress Dr. Carla Hayden welcomed everyone and spoke about the importance of the Talking Books program. No slight to Dr. Hayden, but the highlight of the evening for me was the great hall of Jefferson Memorial Building which is, simply put, stunning. You can share the experience with an audio described tour, DB 121189.

Day two started with keynote address by Sheri Wells-Jensen, who is an advocate for reducing barriers for blind people to have careers in STEM fields. For those not familiar with the term, STEM is science, technology, engineering, and math. Wells-Jensen talked about the need to have accessible formats available to students taking STEM classes, especially the inclusion of tactile pictures and diagrams. She used the Big Dipper as a great example where a tactile page would be much more efficient than an audio description. She believes blindness should not be a barrier for space travel and talked about why using tactile signs is much more useful in zero gravity environments when there is no “down”.

The final day started with a demonstration of artificial intelligence (AI) enhanced accessible technologies. There have been some recent improvements but there is still a long way to go before it becomes seamless and invisible. The day’s keynote speaker was the Honorable David S. Tatel, retired judge for the DC circuit US Court of Appeals. He talked about and read excerpts from his new book *Vision: a memoir of blindness and justice*. The passage about reading to his grandchildren was especially poignant.

Continued on Page 2

Continued from Page 1

The audio, read by the author, is DB 22023. A Braille version is still in process. After a late lunch, the conference concluded with a few final remarks from NLS director Jason Broughton about what to expect from NLS in the coming months. Then it was back to the hotel to pick up my suitcase, a subway ride to Reagan International Airport, and late flight back to Bismarck.

I did have one other really cool experience while I was in DC. I received an invitation to visit and tour the National Federation of the Blind headquarters in Baltimore. I was absolutely blown away by all the resources available at the facility. I knew NFB did a lot of great things for the blind community but to get this extra look behind the scenes of everything they do was a real honor.

Please feel free to contact me directly with any issues or concerns. I cannot address problems I don't know about. My direct phone line is 701-328-4021 or email shammel@nd.gov.

Thanks Steve Hammel

Did You Know?

Did you know, the Library of Congress has the largest Barbie doll collection in the world? Copyright is a part of the Library of Congress and consequently receives a physical or design copy of each item in Copyright.

Did you know, the 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm record was developed in the 1930s for talking books? This was long before it became the standard for commercial record albums.

Did you know, you can learn a new language, even if you are visually impaired? Mango languages is available to all North Dakota citizens through the State Library. Mango's web and mobile platforms are designed to work with screen readers. For example, the iOS app works in conjunction with Apple's VoiceOver feature. For those who are vision impaired, text colors and fonts meet accessibility standards, so they can be more easily read. Mango's program is not as in depth as other products but it's great for learning the necessary vocabulary and conversational phrases to help you get around if you are taking an overseas trip. You can access Mango through your local public library or the North Dakota State Library with a card from either.

News From NLS

The Library of Congress instituted a new policy this summer stating all patrons under 18 years of age will need to have a parent signature tied to their account. Since NLS is part of Library of Congress, this will apply to both new and current Talking Books patrons under 18. Over the next month or so, our staff will be contacting all our teen and younger North Dakota Talking Books patrons informing them of the change and providing information for their parents or legal guardians including a form to sign. Please don't delay.

Additionally, per NLS, if we do not receive a parental signature before January first, Talking Books service will be suspended for all patrons under 18 until we receive the required documents, or the patron turns eighteen.

Winter is Coming, Here's A Helpful Tip

To make sure you always have a book to read, return a cartridge as soon as you finish it. Do not wait and send all your cartridges back at the same time. If you do, it will be at least a week before new books arrive. Ideally, you have one cartridge in your machine, one ready to go when the current one is finished, and one in the return mail. We can load more than one book on a cartridge. If you would like multiple books per cartridge please let staff know, it's a quick update to your profile.

What's New?

Lego Braille kits. The State Library has three Lego Braille kits available to all patrons. Kits come with 300 Lego pieces and activities. Grandparents, this would be a great sharing activity with your sighted grandkids or vice versa. You will need a North Dakota State Library card to check out a kit. Staff will be happy to help you get signed up and request a kit.

Six months ago, the State Library took over circulation of all magazines. If you have not been receiving magazines as expected, please give us a call. We have encountered an occasional issue (pun intended) of magazine subscriptions not being transferred correctly.

Speaking of magazines, we will resume recording local magazines soon. The number of volunteer reader plummeted during covid and have not recovered. To fill the gap, we are borrowing an idea used at several other regional libraries, text to speech software. Books will continue to be read by volunteer narrators.

FREE MATTER
FOR THE BLIND

North Dakota State Library
Talking Books
604 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58505-0800

DISCOVERY

4

FALL 2024

BARD Updates

NLS is nearing the completion of BARD 2.0. The update will provide enhanced functionality and interoperability which will allow the development of new products and services.

On September 8th, NLS announced the release of BARD Express Version 3.1.0.1. The biggest change is patrons can now download and play BARD books on their Window's compatible PC.



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