



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

National Library Service
for the Blind and
Physically Handicapped

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Bureau of Engraving and Printing partners with NLS to distribute free currency reader

The Library of Congress is collaborating with the U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) to distribute BEP-provided currency-reading devices to eligible individuals who are blind or visually impaired. The collaboration is taking place under the government’s Meaningful Access Initiative to assist individuals who have difficulties identifying U.S. currency.

NLS patrons who participated in BEP’s pre-pilot and pilot have responded enthusiastically: More than 2,000 have received currency readers since July, and nearly 11,000 NLS patrons have pre-ordered the device through their local cooperating libraries. On January 2, 2015, the project will be offered nationally to all American citizens and legal residents who are blind or visually impaired as defined by the eligibility requirements.

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—NLS deputy director **Isabella Marqués de Castilla**

said NLS deputy director Isabella Marqués de Castilla, the project manager. “We have the expertise to reach those who want and need the commercial currency reader that BEP has made available free of charge.”

Representatives from NLS and BEP attended several conventions throughout the summer—including those of the American Council of the Blind (ACB) July 11–19 in Las Vegas, Nevada; the Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) August 18–21 in Sparks, Nevada; and the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) July 1–6 in Orlando, Florida—to announce the iBill Currency Reader Distribution Project and detail its schedule.



Users insert a banknote into the iBill Talking Banknote Identifier and press the button on the side to have the denomination identified by voice, tones, or vibrations.

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.

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The iBill Talking Banknote Identifier, created by Orbit Research, announces a bill’s value in one of three ways: voice, pattern of tones, or pattern of vibrations. Users insert a banknote into the 3" x 1.5" x 0.5" device and press the button on the side to have the denomination identified. The currency reader does not identify foreign or counterfeit banknotes. It operates on a single AAA battery, which typically lasts for more than a year. The initial battery is included.

During the pre-pilot this past summer, more than 2,000 certified individuals queued up to receive their currency readers during the ACB, BVA, and NFB

conventions. “The reception was beyond expectations,” said Marqués de Castilla. “Several people mentioned that they believed they had been taken advantage of by unscrupulous service vendors or merchants, and that if they’d had an iBill Currency Reader they would have avoided losing money.”

Eligible individuals who wish to order an iBill Talking Banknote Identifier should visit the NLS website at www.loc.gov/nls or the BEP website at <http://bep.gov/uscurrencyreaderform.html> to download a currency reader application. Individuals may also phone the BEP call center at 1-844-815-9388 to request an application.

Network Exchange

E.T. star among guests at Braille Institute open house



More than 400 people attended the **Braille Institute Library Services** annual open house on October 17 in Los Angeles. Director **Henry C. Chang** welcomed special guests including actor, author, and motivational speaker **Dee Wallace**, best known for her role as the mom in the 1982 movie *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*.

Scouts raise money for Arizona library

Eagle Scout **Eduardo Gamez** presented **Arizona State Braille and Talking Book Library** director **Linda Montgomery** a check for \$1,466 that he and his Boy Scout troop in Phoenix raised to purchase new print/braille books for children. Gamez and the scouts also volunteered at the library two days a month in February and March to assist with recycling books.



Justin Kauflin, who performed at the Library of Congress October 22, has been an NLS Music Section patron since he was in high school.



NLS and pianist make beautiful music together

Jazz pianist Justin Kauflin, 28, is quick to laugh and down-to-earth, taking his national success in stride. Kauflin is releasing an album of original music in January, is currently promoting a documentary film about his friendship with jazz trumpeter Clark Terry, and has toured with the likes of Quincy Jones, who also signed Kauflin to his production company.

On October 22, Kauflin took the stage at the Library of Congress Coolidge Auditorium in a special concert presented by NLS. His was the third concert presented by NLS to highlight the Music Section—which celebrated its 50th birthday in 2012—and its services. A Q&A session with Kauflin was held before the concert, and a reception in the Jefferson Building Members Room followed.

“Justin’s performance was everything I could have hoped for: an impressive interpretation of some standards and a moving presentation of his own composition,”

said John Hanson, head of the NLS Music Section. “As a colleague put it to me afterwards, ‘we expected him to be good, but he was really, really, really, really good.’”

While Kauflin’s accomplishments are noteworthy, his rise to acclaim hasn’t been without difficulty. The young musician had low vision his entire childhood, becoming completely blind by age 11 because of a rare eye disease. Despite these circumstances, he showed musical promise as early as two years old, playing the piano as soon as he could reach the keys. He also studied the violin.

“I was interested but not dedicated,” Kauflin admitted of his musical education. Still holding his attention were things like basketball, video games, and being a kid in general.

Once he completely lost his sight, music and the piano became central to his life. He shifted his focus from classical to jazz when he enrolled in

the Governor’s School for the Arts in Norfolk, Virginia, and began performing jazz professionally at age 15.

In 2004, Kauflin graduated as valedictorian at the Governor’s School and received a presidential scholarship at William Paterson University (WPU) in New Jersey, where he completed his music degree. While at WPU, he counted Terry and the late Mulgrew Miller among his mentors. Both helped him realize a full-time career as a jazz pianist.

“They both taught me that who you are as a person comes out in your music,” Kauflin said.

Miller passed away last year, but Kauflin and Terry’s relationship is stronger than ever. The two are featured in the 2014 documentary *Keep on Keepin’ On*, which has won multiple film festival awards.

Kauflin became an NLS patron while still in high school. He began borrowing instructional braille music materials and soon moved on to piano works in braille by classical composers. By 2007, he was playing more advanced material. Among his favorites then and now are works by Bach and Chopin.

“It’s been a wonderful process,” he said of using the NLS music services. “It

enabled me to work on what one should while studying the piano—how to interpret music and make it your own.”

Hanson has delighted in watching Kauflin’s development. “Justin’s use of NLS braille scores began like many others—basic scores at a beginning level,” he said. “Almost accidentally, I began to notice that the difficulty level of his borrowings was steadily increasing, up to advanced. But it was always classical music. So I was somewhat surprised to see that he had moved from classical to jazz in his professional activity. Yet, when he was warming up on the day of the concert, I was treated to an array of dazzling Bach.”

Kauflin is particularly excited about the NLS Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) app. “It allows me to sync up my iPhone with braille music scores,” he explained. “I’m thrilled at that because it’s another way of getting music.

“The service NLS provides is invaluable. The difference from before I used the service to now is staggering. There is so much more I can consume.”

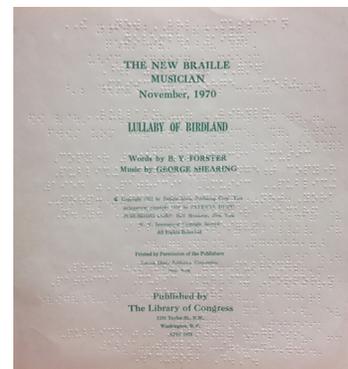
NLS staff added information to this story by Erin Allen, which first appeared in the Library of Congress Gazette.

Capitol Hill exhibit highlights NLS Music Section

In conjunction with the Justin Kauflin concert, the NLS Music Section put together an exhibit that was displayed in the North Gallery of the Library of Congress Jefferson Building—a prime spot to catch the eye of visitors.

“The NLS Music Section exhibit was a succinct presentation of the ways of learning and making braille music and the performing of music learned in braille,” Music Section Head John Hanson said. The exhibit included a braille score of the jazz standard “Lullaby of Birdland” (right), a braille slate and stylus, an electronic 80-cell braille display, and samples of Music Section publications. A program from the Kauflin concert and programs from previous NLS Music Section concerts by Enrico Lisi (2005) and Beth Bonnier (2006) were also presented.

The exhibit was displayed from October 6 until November 1.



Author discusses seen and unseen disabilities

When Sue Martin was 26, the failure of her first marriage and loss of her first job seemed like monumental setbacks from which she could not recover.

Deeply depressed, she tried to take her life with a gun. The bullet left her completely blind—but also led her to create a new life and save herself from the whirlpool of depression.

“I’ve learned that we don’t know the courage and determination that we’re capable of until we’re called on to use it,” Martin said. Now 58, she went on to completely reclaim her life: she earned a master’s degree in blind rehabilitation; remarried; took up hiking, skiing, horseback riding, and goalball, a team sport for blind athletes; had successful careers in vision rehabilitation and information technology; and has written a book about the physical and emotional adjustments of her rehabilitation titled *Out of the Whirlpool: A Memoir of Remorse and Reconciliation* (DB 78152). She shared her story during a visit to NLS and a National Disability Employment Awareness Month talk at the Library of Congress on October 7.

“In the early days of my blindness, I

searched out and read every single book on blindness I could find. I never found anything that conveyed what it’s like to have to learn to do almost everything all over again. There were manuals and guides but I never found anything in the literary style that I was looking for. So I wrote my own story,” she said.

“Once I started writing, there was no holding me back. My book ended up being about so much more than adjusting to new blindness. It’s about overcoming adversity, about living life to the fullest—a triumph really.”

Martin credits her rehabilitation instructors with instilling in her a renewed sense of independence and achievement. “Vera [her rehabilitation teacher] said to me, ‘I can teach you to do just about anything’. . . and I realized that I could learn skills from my teachers that would allow me to live independently,” Martin said. “The thrill of learning new things eased my emotional adjustment to blindness.” Martin learned to read three-letter braille words in a day. “I let myself feel the accomplishment,” she said. “The challenge of redefining myself helped me climb out of the whirlpool.

“When I realized that I was blind, I thought that I had lost my whole way of life. But now the life that I have built with Jim [her husband] is every bit as rich—if not richer, because it’s informed by both joy and adversity. It’s taken some adversity to get me to where I am now.”

Read Sue Martin’s blog post about her visit to NLS at <http://outofthewhirlpool.com/2014/10/that-all-may-read>

Author Sue Martin (behind lectern) answers a question from NLS patron and Organization of Employees with Disabilities member Debbie Brown (left) during her October talk at the Library of Congress. A sign-language interpreter (right) shared the stage with Martin.



For people who are newly blind, Martin suggests getting help from sites like visionaware.org that list vision rehabilitation services by geographic area. She also recommends taking up the philosophy espoused by Father Thomas Carroll in his book *Blindness: What It Is, What It Does, and How to Live with It* (BR 16701, DB 20473): To move forward with your new life with blindness, you have to let go of your sighted life, your sighted self.

For the past 12 years Martin has worked at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. She has also been on a personal mission to raise awareness of unseen disabilities like suicidal depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. She told her Library of Congress audience, “We have no problem discussing visible disabilities like cancer or blindness, but suicide and depression are hidden disabilities. If you have a hidden disability, no one is going to refer you to a professional

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline can be reached at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). The Veterans Crisis Line can be reached by dialing that number and pressing 1.

for help. You have to admit the problem and ask for help. We have to break the silence.

“More people in this country die by suicide than by homicide. Twenty-two veterans die every day by suicide. Ask for help. There is nothing shameful about being depressed and thinking about ending your life.

“In those early days,” Martin concluded, “blindness on top of suicidal depression and struggles with bulimia and prescription-drug addiction seemed insurmountable. But now, with a husband who loves and supports me and my lovable dog, I’m climbing mountains again.”

NLS 2015 Exhibit Schedule

- American Library Association Midwinter, January 30–February 3, Chicago, Illinois
- Texas Music Educator Association, February 11–14, San Antonio, Texas
- Music Library Association, February 25–March 1, Denver, Colorado
- Council for Exceptional Children, April 8–11, San Diego, California
- American Foundation for the Blind, April 16–18, Phoenix, Arizona
- American Occupational Therapy Association, April 3–6, Nashville, Tennessee
- Abilities Expo, May 1–3, Edison, New Jersey
- Assisted Living Federation of America, May 4–7, Tampa, Florida
- AARP, May 14–16, Miami Beach, Florida
- American Diabetes Association, June 5–9, Boston, Massachusetts
- American Optometric Association, June 24–28, Seattle, Washington
- American Library Association National, June 25–30, San Francisco, California
- National Federation of the Blind, July 5–10, Orlando, Florida
- American Council of the Blind, July 3–11, Dallas, Texas
- Blinded Veterans Association, August, TBA
- National Book Festival, August TBA, Washington, D.C.

Audio Equipment Committee forecasts changes

Representatives from consumer groups, network libraries, and repair volunteer groups gathered at NLS September 10–12 for the biennial meeting of the National Audio Equipment Advisory Committee (NAEAC). The committee has helped steer NLS since the 1980s, when it was known as the Ad Hoc Committee—but discussions at this year’s meeting suggested some major changes for its future.

“Beginning in 2015, the committee will be known as the Reading Technology Advisory Group (RTAG),” NLS Engineering Section head John Brown said. The name was proposed in 2012 to reflect the committee’s expanded focus, which includes the Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD), the BARD Mobile app, and e-braille.

The change in scope will require a revision in policies and procedures. The revised structure is still awaiting approval from the network library conference chairs, but the current proposal includes an expansion in membership and an increase from biennial to quarterly meetings.

“If we want the committee’s advice to be useful, it needs to be timely,” Brown explained. “Technology moves so quickly that in six months, past suggestions are obsolete.” To keep costs within budget, NLS plans to conduct the additional meetings remotely via telephone or Internet. The committee will continue to meet in person every other year.

Currently, the committee breaks into its three constituent groups to discuss issues and solutions. At the suggestion of this year’s members, future meetings may instead break into small groups that contain a cross-section of

consumers, librarians, and volunteers. “It’s a great idea that we hope will encourage cross-pollination between the subgroups and help generate fresh perspectives,” Brown said.

Many of this year’s recommendations involve improvements to the NLS digital talking-book machine (DTBM). “NAEAC recommendations provide the most focused feedback we get,” said NLS equipment specialist Kevin Watson. “They aren’t necessarily suggestions we can implement now, but they will help shape the next generation of machines.” Points of concern raised at this year’s meeting include the quality of printing on both the barcodes and the control labels, the built-in nature of the battery cables, the inaccuracy of battery time remaining announcements, and the lack of a remote control to operate the player.

The committee also explored its expanded mandate to consider BARD. Committee members discussed the need for improved search capabilities and the addition of a way for patrons to synchronize their bookmarks across devices and formats, allowing them to switch from reading on their iPad to their iPhone or from braille to audio without losing their place.

“Those ideas have been on our radar for some time,” Brown said. “We investigated the possibility of synchronization when we were first developing the app, but Apple’s infrastructure didn’t quite allow it. We hope to be able to improve this aspect of BARD in future versions of the app.”

NLS will release detailed responses to these and other committee suggestions in early 2015, and plans to hold the first RTAG teleconference meeting later in the spring.

Committee members

Consumer representatives

American Council of the Blind

Penny Reeder

Blinded Veterans Association

Peter Davis

Midlands Region

Roosevelt Perkins

National Federation of the Blind

Phillip Duffy

Southern Region

Abigail Cocanougher

Network library representatives

Midlands Region

Vanessa Morris

Northern Region

Marilyn Stevenson

Southern Region

Craig Hayward

Western Region

Ronald Bryant

Pioneers representatives

AT&T

Joseph Hodgson

Century Link Pioneers

Peter Boccuzzi

Frontier/Telecordia Pioneers

James Glass

New Outlook Pioneers

Stephen Austin

GE Volunteers representative

Keith Scammahorn

Sacramento Braille Transcribers answer questions at festival

How can you tell the color of your clothes? Why do you use a cane rather than a dog? How do you tell the difference between \$1 and \$5 bills?

These were some of the questions children asked Sacramento (California) Braille Transcribers Inc. member Armand Bakalian, who is blind, during the annual Scholarshare Children's Book Festival at the Fairytale Town theme park in



Armand Bakalian answers children's questions about blindness during the festival.

September. Sacramento Braille Transcribers has participated in the festival for the past 10 years.

"We also talked with parents about the importance of braille literacy," said group member Carla Blomo. "At these events, we often have teachers ask us about doing a presentation in their classrooms or at a PTA meeting, which we are always happy to do."

Eight members of the group provided information about braille and distributed items such as braille alphabet cards, bookmarks, and rulers received from NLS. The bookmarks also were used in a children's game. The names of various areas of the park were embossed in braille on the bookmarks, and group members added the names of the children in braille. Then, the group members explained the braille alphabet structure and encouraged the children to try to decipher the area of the park that was on their bookmark.

The group's table also had examples of braille books, a braille edition of *Reader's Digest*, a slate and stylus, tactile displays, and various items useful to blind people.