

# TBC Newsline

News from the Alaska Talking Book Center

July 2005

## **We're Back! *TBC Newsline* Back in Print Again**

The last issue of *TBC Newsline* was distributed in 2001, and then no additional issues were published. *Newsline* was lost in the daily rush of work and projects underway at the Alaska Talking Book Center.

Recently, David Whittall visited the Talking Book Center. David is the consultant from the National Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. His job is to visit talking book centers in many states and make recommendations for improvements to service. He noted that we were not communicating on a regular basis with our patrons and urged us to return to a regular schedule of publishing *Newsline*.

Here is our first issue in four years. We hope you enjoy it and find something useful in the following pages. We certainly have had fun putting the newsletter together for you.

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## **Calling Harry Potter Fans! You Will Not Have to Wait Too Long**

Harry Potter fans served by the Alaska State Library's Talking Book Center can rest assured that they won't have to wait months to read the eagerly-awaited sixth book in the series.

*Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, by J. K. Rowling, will be released on Saturday, July 16. The State Library has ordered two copies of the complete book on commercial audiocassette and one large print copy so that our visually-impaired patrons will have the same access to the book as patrons who borrow the title from their local public libraries.

## Calling Harry Potter Fans! (Continued from page 1)

The Talking Book Center gets nearly all of our audiocassette books under a partnership agreement with the Library of Congress' National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Even though the publication date for the latest Harry Potter book is July 16th, the Library of Congress has said that their talking book version won't be available until sometime late this summer.

Acting State Librarian Kay Shelton heard that another state library was buying commercial copies of the book for their patrons due to the delay in receiving the title from the National Library Service. She forwarded this information to staff at the Talking Book Center and quickly approved our request to purchase early copies to meet the needs of Alaskan readers who are visually-impaired.

The audiocassette edition will be shipped to the State Library on July 16. The large print edition should be shipped to us in August. Due to high demand for these titles, we are setting a two-week limit for checking these books out of the Talking Book Center.

If you want to buy your own copy of the recorded version, you can order an unabridged copy of the book on audiocassette from Amazon.com. The cost is \$35 and shipping is free.

If you want to save your money, but would like to read *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* this summer, simply call the Talking Book Center at 1-800-776-6566, tell us which format you want (audio or large print), and add your name to the request list.

We may all be muggles, but we can still have Harry, Ron, Hermione, and the Hogwarts students in our lives. ABRA-CA-DAB-RA!

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## You Can E-Mail Book Requests to: [tbc@eed.state.ak.us](mailto:tbc@eed.state.ak.us)

We have recently set up a new e-mail address for book requests. The address is: [tbc@eed.state.ak.us](mailto:tbc@eed.state.ak.us). Some of you are already sending e-mail requests directly to either Rachel Garner or Beverly Griffin. We would appreciate it if you would use the above address instead.

## **What You Told Us: Talking Book Center Survey Results**

Every two years, the Talking Book Center contacts our adult patrons to determine their satisfaction with our service. We just tabulated the results of the mail survey that was conducted during June 2005. These results show us the areas that we need to work on to improve our service. Our thanks go to the 156 patrons who responded to the survey. We appreciate the time and energy you took to complete the survey. Briefly:

- 98% of our patrons rated our overall library service as good or excellent
- 92% of our patrons rated the ease of contacting us as very easy or easy
- 43% of the respondents have a computer with access to the Internet
- 11% have used the National Library Service online catalog at <http://www.loc.gov/nls> to search for books
- 22% are aware that they can request books from the Talking Book Center via e-mail
- 79% expressed interest in switching to digital talking books as soon as this new format is available (For more information about digital talking books, please read the next article in *Newsline*.)

We will be contacting those patrons who need to make changes regarding frequency of service, reading interests, address, or other service needs, as indicated on their surveys. Once again, thank you for responding!

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## **What are Digital Talking Books? New Player and Book Format to Debut in 2008**

As indicated in our recent patron survey, many of our patrons are eagerly anticipating the arrival of digital talking books. Quite a few patrons also

## **What are Digital Talking Books? (Continued from Page 3)**

asked for more information about digital talking books, the new playback machines, and how this change will be implemented.

The National Library Service will introduce new playback equipment and a new digital format for talking books in 2008. The books will be digitally recorded and delivered via a flash memory cartridge that will be about the size, but slightly thicker than a credit card. Each flash memory cartridge will hold an entire book, which means patrons will not have to change tapes any longer. The cartridge will be plugged into the side of the playback machine, which eliminates many moving parts and should decrease the amount of damage to the cartridge.

The new playback machine is estimated to be about one quarter of the size of the current cassette player provided to patrons at the Talking Book Center. The result will be a lighter, more portable player with better sound quality. Another aspect of the new digital player is that there will be no side selector switch. This means that continually turning over tapes and hitting switches to listen to the rest of the story will be a problem of the past. Overall, patrons should find the new players and flash memory cartridges easier to use than the traditional audiocassette tapes.

The new digital books and players will be phased into use over a period of four years until the transition to digital equipment is complete. The Talking Book Center will continue to circulate cassette books during and after this transitional period, so that patrons who want to continue using cassette tapes will be able to do so.

In the meantime, all NLS books are being recorded digitally so they can be easily transferred to the new flash media when the time comes. As a result, NLS plans to have 20,000 digital talking book titles ready for use in 2008 as well as 60,000 individual playback units.

## **New Service Under Discussion - Let Us Know What You Think**

In June, David Whittall, our consultant from the National Library Service, suggested that we might want to purchase descriptive videos for our patrons. Beverly Griffin and Rachel Garner said that they had received requests from our patrons and that over 100 descriptive videos can be checked out from the Alaska Independent Blind in Anchorage. Descriptive videos contain movies and television programs that have an audio track added in which a voice describes what is happening on the film. Descriptive videos can be played on standard VCRs.

We proposed this new service to Acting State Librarian Kay Shelton. Kay asked us to query the patrons of the Talking Book Center concerning their interest in this new service. If you would like to check out descriptive videos from the Talking Book Center, please call us at: 1-800-776-6566. Kay will decide whether we can afford this new service.

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### **Recent Arrivals at the Talking Book Center:**

RC 58732 – *Carole Lombard: The Hoosier Tornado*, by Wes D. Gehring (Biography)

RC 58033 – *Rug Hooking for the First Time*, by Donna Lovelady (Crafts)

RC57934 – *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000*, by Stephen Kotkin (History)

RC 57974 – *Secret Soldiers: The Story of World War II's Heroic Army of Deception*, by Philip Gerard (History)

RC 58040 – *The Gourmet Zombie*, by Paul Zindel (Juvenile)

RC 59519 – *No Place Like Home*, by Mary Higgins Clark (Mystery)

RC 58888 – *The Sunday Philosophy Club: An Isabel Dalhousie Mystery*, by Alexander McCall Smith (Mystery)

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FREE MATTER  
FOR THE BLIND  
AND PHYSICALLY  
HANDICAPPED