

TBC Newsline

News from the Alaska Talking Book Center

December 2007



Digital Talking Book Player Update

The National Library Service (NLS) will introduce new playback equipment and a new digital format for talking books in late 2008. The transition from cassette to digital talking books will be phased in over

a four year period. NLS intends to produce enough digital machines for all patrons nationwide by 2012. This goal depends on whether or not the NLS budget request for the transition plan is fully funded by Congress. NLS policy requires that machines go first to veterans, then to patrons over 100 years of age. Once these needs have been met, we will start distributing new players to other patrons. The Talking Book Center will continue to provide cassettes for many years to come.

The digital players have many great features. The player weighs only two pounds. The machine controls will be large, color-coded and in different shapes to enhance tactile recognition. There will be all the same functionality as the current machine with tone and volume controls. The Speed control will change the speech from 50% to 300% of normal, with no change in pitch. It will have a Sleep button that can be set to shut off the machine automatically. This feature is one of the most requested additions to the machine. The machine has a pull-out handle, headphone jack, a rechargeable battery with a longer charge cycle than the present machine, speakers, and a power cord.

The player has a USB port so that patrons can play other audio files, such as MP3 files, and which repair personnel will use for diagnostic

Digital Talking Book Player Update (Continued)

information. There will be no moving parts in the new machine, which means that they should last much longer before needing repairs.

The digital talking books will be slightly smaller than a cassette with the following features: the end of the cartridge has a thumbhole to make loading easier, the cartridge will only load one way, and no rewinding will be required. Most cartridges will contain an entire book, so no more changing tapes or getting tapes out of order. The cartridge shipping container is slightly longer and wider than a green cassette container, but only half as thick.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions. You can find articles about the transition in the front of the *Talking Book Topics* and *Braille Book Review*, as well as updates on the NLS website at <http://www.loc.gov/nls>.

What You Told Us: Talking Book Center Survey Results

You told us this summer that you remain quite satisfied with the service that you receive from the Talking Book Center. More of you have computers that you are using for e-mail and searching for books and other information.



Every two years, we contact our adult patrons to determine your satisfaction with our service. We just tabulated the results of the mail survey that was conducted during July 2007. These results show us the areas that we need to work on to improve our service to you. Briefly:

- 98% of our patrons once again rated our overall library service as good or excellent, the same number as in 2005

Talking Book Center Survey Results (Continued)

- 92% of our patrons once again rated the ease of contacting us as very easy or easy, the same number as in 2005
- 53% of our patrons have a computer with access to the Internet, a 10% increase since 2005
- 16% of our patrons have used the National Library Service online catalog at <http://www.loc.gov/nls> to search for books, a 5% increase since 2005
- 35% of our patrons are aware that they can request books from the Talking Book Center via e-mail, a 13% increase since 2005
- 42% of our patrons wanted to learn more about ListenAlaska, a web page from which you can download audio books to your computer or MP3 player
- You told us we should use donated funds (once we are able to collect such funds) to buy: portable 4-track tape players for checkout (22%); lightweight headphones (15%); MP3 players (14%); and large print books (12%).

Our thanks go to the 125 patrons who responded to the survey. We appreciate your time and energy and plan to act on your ideas.

New Address for E-Mail

Our e-mail address has changed to: tbc@alaska.gov. If you contact us by e-mail, please make a note of this change.

Are You A Veteran?

Please call the Talking Book Center at 1-800-776-6566 and let us know if you are a veteran. We need to add this to your patron file. Thanks!

ListenAlaska: A New Way to Get Books

How would you like to download audio books to your computer or burn them to CD-ROM? ListenAlaska is a new service available to patrons of the Alaska State Library's Talking Book Center and thirteen other libraries in Alaska. Over 2,000 books are currently available at the ListenAlaska homepage: <http://listenalaska.lib.overdrive.com/>

In order to access ListenAlaska, you will need to call us at 1-800-776-6566 to get your library card number. We can help you learn how to access this exciting new library.

Calling All Students!

If you need to access textbooks, then take a look at the Bookshare service which: "enables people with visual and other print disabilities to legally share scanned books. It is designed for the use of the blind and other individuals with print related disabilities."



The U.S. Office of Special Education awarded \$32 million for use over the next five years to Bookshare. This funding will provide students from kindergarten through college who experience disabilities reading standard print FREE access to the textbooks in Bookshare. As of October 1, 2007, all membership fees for qualifying students and their schools have been eliminated.

Visit the Bookshare web page at: <http://www.bookshare.org> for more information on this service and on other changes that are planned because of this windfall.

Remember, all books on tape and cassette players always travel as **Free Matter for the Blind and Physically Handicapped**. If you make your own mailing label, put this phrase where the postage would be affixed.

Did You Know?

DisabilityInfo.gov is the federal government's one-stop Web site for twenty-two federal agencies who serve people with disabilities, their families, employers, veterans and service member. **DisabilityInfo.gov** connects people with disabilities to the information and resources they need to actively participate in the workforce and in their communities. Take a look at: <http://www.disabilityinfo.gov/>

Holiday Update

The Talking Book Center will be closed Christmas Day, December 25 and January 1, New Year's Day. We plan to mail all monthly and weekly shipments on the regular schedule in December. We will process requests from request-only patrons and turnaround patrons as usual.

Sometimes, during the holiday season, there is a backlog in mail deliveries. Keep that in mind when making any special requests. If you do not want to receive your usual December shipments or would like to change the quantity to be sent because of holiday plans, we need to know as soon as possible.

**Please call us at 269-6575 or 1-800-776-6566
if you live outside of the Anchorage area.**

Rewinding the tapes is greatly appreciated.

If you find a stray cassette that you need to return, please mail it back to us, either with tapes from another book or in a plain envelope.

If you are without mail cards for any book containers that you need to return, contact us. We can send you additional mail cards.

Do you have any machines needing repair that you may have forgotten to return to us? If so, and you do not have the box for it, please contact us. We will mail you a box in which to return it.

Recent Books about Alaska

RC 57162 *Minuk: Ashes in the Pathway*, by Kirkpatrick Hill. Minuk's traditional Eskimo way of life changes in the 1890s when Christian missionaries arrive in her Alaskan village. After an influenza epidemic sweeps through the area killing most of Minuk's family, she must choose whether or not to leave with the white people. (For grades 6-9).

RC 59082 *The Last Frontier: Incredible Tales of Survival, Exploration, and Adventure from Alaska Magazine*. Includes compelling tales of survival, exploration, and adventure published between 1935 and 2002.

RC 63675 *The Refuge: A Maxie and Stretch Mystery*, by Sue Henry. Maxie McNabb and her dog, Stretch, interrupt their Alaskan reverie after a friend calls and asks for help. Maxie investigates after a prowler tries to break into her friend's house.

RC 62498 *A Taint in the Blood*, by Dana Stabenow. PI Kate Shugak is hired by Charlotee Muravieff to vindicate her imprisoned mother, convicted of killing Charlotte's brother in a house fire years earlier.

RC 59843 *Birth & Rebirth on an Alaskan Island: the Life of an Alutiiq Healer*. Midwife Mary Peterson, an Alutiiq elder, recalls her life in the remote village of Akhiok on Kodiak Island.

Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic

For 60 years, Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic (RFB&D), a national nonprofit volunteer organization headquartered in New Jersey, has been the leading producer of accessible educational materials for students with disabilities such as visual impairment or dyslexia. With titles available in every subject area and grade level from kindergarten through graduate studies, RFB&D's digitally recorded textbooks are effective learning tools for students. RFB&D currently produces textbooks just in compact disk (CD) format; it is no longer distributing books in cassette format. For more information about RFB&D, call 1-800-221-4792 or check out their website at <http://www.rfbd.org>.

New Holiday Arrivals at the Talking Book Center!

For Adults:

RC 63665 *Under The Mistletoe*, by Mary Balogh

RC 63808 *Letters From Father Christmas*, by J.R.R. Tolkien

RC 63343 *Santa Cruise: A Holiday Mystery at Sea*, by M.H. Clark

RC 63087 *A Covington Christmas*, by Joan Medlicott

RC 59472 *The Gift*, by Nora Roberts

RC 60483 *Holiday in Death: Eve Dallas Mystery*, by J.D. Robb

RC 62028 *Hanukkah Lights: Stories of the Season*, by S.Stamberg

RC 55427 *Joy of Cooking Christmas Cookies*, by Irma Rombauer

RC 52929 *Skipping Christmas*, by John Grisham

For Children:

RC 56279 *Merry Christmas Everywhere!*, by Arlene Erlbach

RC 60212 *It's a Miracle: Hanukkah Storybook*, by S. Spinner

RC 60693 *Kwanzaa Karamu: Cooking & Crafts*, by A. Brady

RC 58706 *Horrible Harry and the Holiday*, by Suzy Kline

RC 57539 *Jingle Boy*, by Kieran Scott



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FREE MATTER
FOR THE BLIND
AND PHYSICALLY
HANDICAPPED

Happy Holidays!

