

Braille and Talking Book Program

Access, Offerings, and Services



Library Service Is Local

The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS), Library of Congress, works with a network of regional and subregional libraries to provide a free library service to individuals who are unable to read or use regular printed material because of a visual or physical disability. Many popular titles are available in braille and/or audio formats. Braille and talking books and magazines are circulated to eligible readers by postage-free mail and are returned the same way.

Building on the basic collection of audio and braille titles that NLS provides, the network of cooperating libraries frequently adds books and magazines of local interest. Some libraries lend videos with audio descriptions designed for those who cannot see. During the summer, libraries offer reading programs for school-age children. Readers register with the library that serves their area and can take advantage of these local services in addition to the basic national collection provided by NLS.

Book Collection

Books are selected for the NLS collection on the basis of their appeal across a wide range of interests. Best sellers, biographies, fiction works, and how-to books are in great demand. The collection includes books in Spanish and a few titles in other languages. Books for youths — from preschool to young adult — are available in audio, braille, and print/braille formats.

Registered borrowers learn of new books added to the collection through two bimonthly publications, *Braille Book Review* and *Talking Book Topics*. The NLS book collection and other resources from cooperating agencies are listed in the NLS Union Catalog, which is searchable at www.loc.gov/nls.

Magazines

Magazines are selected for the program based on demonstrated reader interest. NLS produces more than 45 audio and more than 30 braille magazine titles. Readers may subscribe to such titles as *People*, *National Geographic*, and *Consumer Reports* in audio and *ESPN The Magazine* and the *New York Times Large Print Weekly* in braille. Magazines for children are also available.

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Apply for the service today!
Call 1-888-NLS-READ (1-888-657-7323)
or visit www.loc.gov/ThatAllMayRead.

Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) and BARD Mobile App

BARD is a web-based service that provides access to thousands of special-format books, magazines, and music materials. The same materials offered on digital cartridge are also available for download in compressed audio or braille formats. The password-protected service is operated as a partnership between NLS and its network of cooperating libraries. With the BARD Mobile app, readers may download and play talking books on their smartphones and tablets. Braille readers also may download and read materials using a refreshable braille display with a Bluetooth connection.

Music Scores and Books

Individuals who are interested in music materials may receive them directly from the NLS Music Section. The music collection consists of scores, textbooks, and books in braille and large print. Music appreciation materials on a wide variety of topics, along with self-instruction for voice, piano, organ, keyboard, guitar, recorder, accordion, banjo, harmonica, and other instruments, are available on cartridges. All audio titles and braille scores and books are available online through BARD.

NLS compiles and produces three music publications in accessible formats: *Musical Mainstream*; *Contemporary Sound Track: A Review of Pop, Jazz, Rock, and Country*; and *Popular Music Lead Sheets*. E-mail

the Music Section at nls@loc.gov or call 1-800-424-8567 for more information.

Equipment and Accessories

Patrons borrow playback equipment free of charge to use for talking books and magazines on cartridges or downloaded through BARD. Digital talking-book machines come in two models, standard and advanced. Both models provide high-quality sound, offer variable speed controls, and have built-in audio instructions. The advanced player also enables bookmarking and navigation, allowing readers to skip to different parts of a book. Accessories for the digital talking-book machines include lightweight headphones, a pillow speaker, adapters for commercial USB flash drives, and a breath switch. Readers with significant hearing loss may request amplifier headphones.

NLS Direct Services

While NLS provides some services directly, the basic collection of braille and talking books is available in the United States only through cooperating libraries. NLS offers:

- A national reference and referral service that provides information on issues related to blindness and disabilities
- Library services to U.S. citizens who are blind or have a physical disability, and live abroad
- Training and certification in braille transcribing and proofreading through the National Federation of the Blind

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