



FACTS & STATS ABOUT BRAILLE INSTITUTE OF AMERICA

Braille Institute was founded by John Robert Atkinson, a Montana cowboy who was blinded by a gunshot wound. He learned to read braille, but found reading materials for blind people to be scarce, so he started the Universal Braille Press in 1919.

Now known as Braille Institute of America, Inc., the organization has grown to include not only the production of braille reading materials, but also integrated educational, social and recreational programs and services.

The Institute offers all of its services free of charge and is operated and funded almost entirely through private individual and foundation sources.

Braille Institute has regional centers located throughout Southern California, in Los Angeles, Orange County (Anaheim), Rancho Mirage, Santa Barbara and San Diego. Free services also are offered through nearly 200 Community Outreach programs.

More than 5,000 adult students a year benefit from a curriculum of more than 200 courses in areas such as reading and writing braille, home management, sensory awareness, independent living skills and learning how to get around safely (orientation and mobility).

Our Career Services staff teach job-preparedness skills that help working-age adults to keep current jobs or find new and meaningful employment. Access technology subsidies, which can defray up to 50 percent of equipment costs, also are available.

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Braille Institute also offers low vision rehabilitation consultations to help people with fading vision learn how to maximize their remaining vision using closed-circuit televisions, magnifiers and talking computers.

Braille Institute's Library offers a collection of more than 900,000 titles covering a variety of topics and provides reading material in braille and on cassette for nearly 34,000 patrons throughout the 10 counties of Southern California.

As the largest braille publisher of its kind on the West Coast, Braille Institute embossed more than 13.2 million brailled pages last year. Our special collection programs offers free braille literature to blind children in the U.S. and Canada.

Braille Institute's Youth and Child Development programs help more than 500 blind and visually impaired children build the self-confidence they need to succeed in the sighted world. The students take part in independence-building activities, such as skiing and surfing, to give them the confidence to overcome obstacles later in life.

More than 5,800 volunteers lend their time and energy to performing a variety of duties, including teaching classes, transcribing brailled materials and assisting blind and visually impaired students.

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If you would like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview with Courtney Goines, Media Relations Manager, please contact her at (323) 663-1111, Ext. 3176, or by email:

Braille Institute is a private, nonprofit organization whose mission is to eliminate blindness and severe sight loss as a barrier to a fulfilling life. Through educational training, programs and services, Braille Institute helps tens of thousands of people each year regain and maintain their independence. Thanks to generous donations, Braille Institute services are available free of charge. More information can be found at www.brailleinstitute.org.

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