Librarian.

No Boundaries In Sight.
Introducing our Newest Service: 
Books-on-Demand

The Braille Institute Library offers two great options for book lovers to borrow high-quality audiobooks and magazines for free. The first way is through BARD, a mobile app that lets you download books to your smartphone, tablet, or computer.

The second option is a service we call “Books-on-Demand.” We will load up to 15 books for you on a custom personalized cartridge and mail it to your home. There are no more waiting lists, and new books can be sent to you as soon as they become available through the National Library Service.

Changing to “Books-on-Demand” also means fewer trips to the mailbox and less time searching for the books you want to hear. It might take a few minutes to learn how to move between the multiple titles, but once you get comfortable with the new cartridge, you won’t want to go back to waiting for books to arrive one-at-a-time. We’ve also included the audio instructions on your cartridge along with your books!

To make the switch, or for assistance using your new cartridge, please call a Reader Advisor at 1-800-808-2555.
Instructions for Using Your Book Cartridge

Below are instructions for how to listen to multiple books on a single cartridge. To order books, or if you have any other questions, please call a Reader Advisor at 1-800-808-2555.

1) Turn on your machine by pushing the POWER button. You will hear: “Player on. Press any button to learn about its function.”

2) Insert your book cartridge. You will hear how many books you have on your cartridge, and then the first book on your cartridge will begin playing automatically.

3) To move to a different book on your cartridge, press and hold the PLAY/STOP button until you hear “Bookshelf.” Release the button. You will hear how many books you have and your current position.

4) To move to the next book, tap the FAST FORWARD button once. To move to a previous book, tap the REWIND button once.

5) When you find the book you want to listen to, tap the PLAY/STOP button to begin playing that book.


7) When you are done listening for now, the machine will remember where you stopped. When you return, follow the above steps to continue listening to the book or to choose a new book from your cartridge.

8) When are done with these books, please return this cartridge to the Braille Institute Library.
Volunteer Spotlight

Sofia Besharati
San Diego Volunteer

My name is Sofia Besharati and I am a volunteer at the Braille Institute Library in San Diego. I have been volunteering at the Braille Institute since my sophomore year of high school.

I lived in Hobart, Tasmania for the first ten years of my life. After hearing about the Braille Institute Library through a teacher and looking more into the organization, I realized that the concept of literature and reading literature that I valued so dearly did not come so easily to others. I had never truly pondered the impact that impeded access to reading could have on one’s life experience.

The fact that thousands of visually impaired and blind people in my community were unable to access the stories that they love due to a lack of adequate resources stunned me and I knew that I wanted to help the place that provided these resources to those in need: Braille Institute. In my time volunteering at Braille Institute, I have truly seen the positive repercussions of providing access to books.

“I realized that the concept of reading literature that I valued so dearly did not come so easily to others. I had never truly pondered the impact that impeded access to reading could have on one’s life experience.”
– Sofia Besharati

The ability to have access to tens of thousands of books not only provide patrons a leisurely activity, it also gives them access to an abundance of information and it can restore a sense of normalcy to their lives in times where things seem to be ever-changing.
James Haug  
Machine Repair Volunteer

Machine Repair volunteer James Haug is a skilled technician and valuable member of our library community. In 1982, Jim retired from Pacific Telephone (now AT&T) after 35 years. A decade later, at the suggestion of a friend, he began reconditioning our now-obsolete cassette machines as part of the Telephone Pioneers of America (TPA) program. TPA is a group of thousands of active and retired telecommunications-industry employees who generously donate their time and expertise to help their communities (Alexander Graham Bell received membership card number one in the TPA).

Jim has been repairing complicated electrical and mechanical devices from his home workbench in Vista, California for 26 years. He has disassembled, reconditioned, and reassembled our Telex 4-track Talking Book Machines over 3,100 times, which averages out to nearly 120 machines per year! Each analog cassette machine has several hundred parts and many of those parts are very small. Because of the increasing difficulty in handling tiny components, Jim has recently put away his soldering iron and tools. We at the Braille Institute Library are deeply indebted to Mr. Haug for his tireless work keeping our Talking Book Machines in good working order through the years, and for his service to the grateful library patrons of Southern California.
Visit our Newest Neighborhood Center in Riverside

Our new Riverside Neighborhood Center is open for business! We offer free technology training, low vision consultations, independent living skills classes, library service, and more. The center is located at 6974 Brockton Avenue, Suite #100, in Riverside. Call 1-951-787-8800 to schedule your first visit today.

Upcoming Changes in the Coachella Valley

The Rancho Mirage Center will close by the end of 2019. A new Coachella Valley Neighborhood Center will open in early 2020 in a nearby location that will be announced soon. Library service will continue uninterrupted, and the new center will provide core programs including low vision rehabilitation, orientation & mobility, independent living skills, and technology training. For more information, please contact Lisa Jimenez, Associate Vice President of Programs and Services, at 1-714-821-5000.

New Class in Anaheim – Zines!

Zines (pronounced “Zeens”) are independent self-published booklets. Our first-ever Zine class in Anaheim will teach students how to write and record their own stories – everything from fantastical adventures to real-life experiences. At the end of the class, student work may even be available for check out at our own Anaheim Library! For more information, contact Christian Oleo, Literacy Services Coordinator, at 1-714-503-2123 or ckoleo@brailleinstitute.org.

The National Library Service has a New Name

Effective October 1st, 2019, the new name of the organization that provides books and magazines for the Braille Institute Library will be the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (still known by the abbreviation NLS). According to NLS Director Karen Keninger, the new name is “patron-centric” and “puts the emphasis on the people we serve.” Furthermore, the new name “removes a word - ‘handicapped’ - that has become dated and that some find offensive.”

Help Us Keep Your Account Active!

Please keep your account active by ordering at least one book a year and by ensuring that your address and contact information are up-to-date. Please call a Reader Advisor at 1-800-808-2555 to order books or change your account information.
Centennial Exhibit at Braille Institute

Throughout 2019, our Los Angeles center is showcasing an exhibit of artifacts and documents that highlight our 100 years of successfully empowering Southern Californians living with blindness and low vision. The exhibit is located in our Vistas store and features audio narration and tactile features.

Book Clubs in Santa Barbara and Laguna Hills

Join us every Wednesday morning from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. in Santa Barbara for the “On the Same Page” Book Club! Braille Institute volunteer Lillian Palermo has led the club for over five years! One recent hit with the entire group was Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens.

“I love the discussions, everyone comes from different backgrounds and can give different information about the book.”

– Lillian Palermo, Braille Institute volunteer

To enroll, contact Tracy Alfino at 1-805-898-8302 or t alfino@brailleinstitute.org.

Join us at the Laguna Hills Neighborhood Center on the first Wednesday of every month from 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. for a new book club! Suggestions for titles are welcome. For more information, contact Bob Aghaaskary, Literacy Services Coordinator, at 1-949-330-5062 or baghaaskary@brailleinstitute.org.
New Book Recommendations

Big Sky
by Kate Atkinson (read by Jason Isaacs)
11 hours, 22 minutes
One of our most revered contemporary fiction writers returns with a new mystery novel featuring world-weary Private Investigator Jackson Brodie. The story kicks off with Jackson on a routine case to trail an unfaithful husband. What starts out as a typical day in a seaside English town quickly takes a sinister turn into a web of dark secrets surrounding powerful men.

The Sixth Man: A Memoir
by Andre Iguodala (read by the author)
7 hours, 11 minutes
NBA champion Andre Iguodala recounts his childhood in Illinois, his basketball career, the relationship between competition and brotherhood in sports, and what motivates him even after he’s achieved so many of his dreams.

Once More We Saw Stars
by Jayson Greene (read by the author)
7 hours, 3 minutes
Faced with the devasting loss of his young daughter in an accident, music writer Jayson Greene and his wife try to find a way to move forward with their lives. Greene’s memoir can be challenging to read, but his resilience and courage in the face of unimaginable grief is inspiring.
Normal People
by Sally Rooney (read by Aoife McMahon)
7 hours, 36 minutes
Hailed by critics as “the first great millennial novelist,” Irish writer Sally Rooney’s second novel made a big splash in early 2019. Her complex love story of two young people moving through high school and college doesn’t chart any new territory in terms of plot or themes, but the atmosphere and tension that Rooney creates with her characters is extraordinary. See for yourself what the hype is about! Be aware that Normal People contains some explicit language and content.

Disappearing Earth
by Julia Phillips (read by Ilyana Kadushin)
11 hours, 17 minutes
Named a “Best Book of 2019 So Far” by Entertainment Weekly, Vanity Fair, and USA Today, Disappearing Earth is the story of two sisters, aged eight and eleven, who go missing one afternoon in remote northeastern Russia. When the police investigation turns up nothing, echoes of the disappearance reverberate across a tightly woven community.

The Dreamt Land: Chasing Water and Dust Across California
by Mark Arax (read by the author)
25 hours, 34 minutes
Comprehensive and intelligent, The Dreamt Land examines the substantial environmental changes made since the late 18th Century to increase the amounts of available water, arable land, and minerals in California. The story circles around politics, California characters, and a deep respect for our native landscape. Despite its length and challenging subject material, this book is recommended for California history buffs and aficionados of the natural world.
On January 28, 2019, President Trump signed the Marrakesh Treaty into law. The treaty allows printed works in accessible formats (such as braille and digital audio) to be shared across international borders and without copyright restrictions.

What does this mean for Braille Institute Library patrons? The National Library Service is currently creating a way for our patrons to access books from other countries, including titles in foreign languages. Through a partnership with the Accessible Books Consortium, a public-private organization that represents people with print disabilities around the world, the NLS and the Braille Institute Library will soon be able to offer much more than just a few translations of English-language books. This change is particularly beneficial for us in Southern California, where so many different languages are spoken.

As more audiobooks are created in countries outside the United States, our patrons will have more material to choose from. Working together, we can help make all books accessible. Please be on the lookout for new developments with this exciting new initiative!

For more information, please contact Reed Strege, Director of Library Services, at 323-906-3185 or rwstrege@brailleinstitute.org.
“Charlize has taught her family how to see life colorfully as she is such a powerhouse; though she cannot see the world, I am confident she will someday teach the world how to see her rainbow.”

–Parent Tiffany, about her daughter Charlize, who has a rare genetic disease that affects the retina of the eyes.

Child Development at Braille Institute

Braille Institute’s Child Development Program offers a free comprehensive early intervention program designed to enhance the developmental needs of children who are blind or visually impaired, and to educate the families about the developmental needs of their children.

Our trained Child Development Consultants do a preliminary assessment based on standardized curricula taken from best practices in the field, parent interviews, and observation. The assessment is used to determine the child’s strengths, challenges, and interaction with his or her environment. Once the initial assessment is completed, our consultant works with the parents to better help them understand how their child’s vision could impact cognitive, physical, language, and social/emotional development; how to strengthen their observation skills so they can track their child’s progress over time; and how to modify the home to ensure their child’s safety. We see children from birth to six years of age.

If you know a child with visual impairment, please call 1-323-906-3112. We must have the parent consent for services.
“

I want to share how much joy, opportunity, and value the audiobooks provided by Braille Institute have added to my life.

With my declining vision, many of my experiences have been disappointing and frustrating. But the audiobooks finally gave me something new and positive to look forward to. I am very grateful!

Jim Estes
San Diego Patron"