

Louisiana Hotlines



A Newsletter of the State Library of Louisiana
Talking Books and Braille Library
Office of Lt. Governor, Department of Culture, Recreation & Tourism

Vol. 26 No. 1

Winter 2026

Holiday Closings

Dec. 31	New Year's Eve
Jan 1-2	New Year's Holiday
Jan 19	MLK Day
Feb. 17	Mardi Gras

The NLS Alexa My Talking Books skill is officially available for service.

What is My Talking Books on smart speaker? My Talking Books is an Amazon Alexa skill that NLS patrons can use to access and stream English language audiobooks from BARD. Using the skill's voice-only interface, you can search the BARD catalog, manage your wish lists, book lists, bookshelves, bookmarks, preference settings, sleep timer, reading speed, jumping in time, and book-specific volume setting, as well as find book descriptions and review your streaming history.

For those of you who had existing My Talking Books accounts prior to October 2025, your profiles have been retained.

Those of you who are not using the NLS Alexa skill called My Talking Books, can begin using the skill by filling out the registration form found at the following web address:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/mtb-open-beta>

Patrons under the age of 18 will need to have a parent or guardian fill out the Parental Acknowledgement form at the following web address:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/mtb-parental-acknowledgment>

Talking Book Topics and BBR

Due to the 43-day federal government shutdown in October and November, NLS will not produce Talking Book Topics (TBT) and Braille Book Review (BBR) for November-December 2025. The TBT and BBR January-February 2026 issues are now in production and are scheduled to be on time for the new year.

You can use "Package Pickup" service to return library materials

When you are ready to return your Braille and talking books, you can easily schedule free pickups of those packages from your home or office through the United States Postal Service (USPS). This service can save you a trip to the post office!

Your letter carrier will pick up your package when your regular mail is delivered. You can arrange a next-day pickup or let them know when your package will be ready to go. Packages must be ready for shipment before your carrier arrives. Requests must be made by 4:00 a.m. on the day you wish for pickup to occur. Maximum weight per package is 70 pounds. There is no limit to the number of packages that can be picked up. When scheduling, mention that your items are "Free Matter for the Blind" library materials being returned to the State Library (or Utah Braille Library for Braille books).

To request a pickup of your talking or braille books, patrons can use the online form at <https://tools.usps.com/schedule-pickup-steps.htm> or call 800-ASK-USPS (800-275-8777).

Winter Book Recommendations 2026 by Sneha Padumane

DB 129256 *The Mesopotamian Riddle: An Archaeologist, a Soldier, a Clergyman and the Race to Decipher the World's Oldest Writing* by Joshua Hammer

The Mesopotamian Riddle tracks the decades-long race to decipher the oldest script in the world. It's the story of a swashbuckling young archeologist, a suave British military officer, and a curmudgeonly Irish rector, all vying for glory, from the ruins of Persepolis to the opulence of Ottoman-era Baghdad, in a quest to unearth the relics of lost civilizations and unlock the secrets of humanity's past.

DB 128910 *Lonesome Justice* by Donald L. Robertson

In Presidio. Jake Clay Barlow, Texas Ranger, never turned his back on a friend, and he wasn't starting now. After receiving the cryptic message from Jake Coleman, his good friend, and fellow Texas Ranger, he immediately headed west. But the reason he now finds himself staked out in a dry river bed in West Texas was his thoughts of the girl he met in Austin. He had ignored his first rule. Always be alert. His mind, occupied with smiling lips, blonde hair, and blue eyes, failed to register the desperados until they had the drop on him.

DB 128476 *The Counterfeit Countess: The Jewish Woman Who Rescued Thousands of Poles During the Holocaust* by Elizabeth White and Joanna Sliwa

World War II and the Holocaust have given rise to many stories of resistance and rescue, but The Counterfeit Countess is unique. It tells the remarkable, unknown story of 'Countess Janina Suchodolska,' a Jewish woman who rescued more than 10,000 Poles imprisoned by Poland's Nazi occupiers. Incredibly, she eluded detection, and ultimately survived the war and emigrated to the US.

DB 129032 *Moscow X: A Novel* by David McCloskey

A daring CIA operation threatens chaos in the Kremlin. But can Langley trust the Russian at its center? CIA officers Sia and Max enter Russia under commercial cover to recruit Vladimir Putin's money-

man. They pose as a couple to target Vadim, Putin's private banker, and his wife, Anna. As they descend further into a Russian world dripping with luxury and rife with gangland violence, Sia and Max's only hope may be Anna, who is playing a game of her own.

DB 128488 *Eat Your Age: Feel Younger, Be Happier, Live Longer* by Ian K. Smith

In *Eat Your Age*, acclaimed doctor and bestselling author Ian K. Smith shows readers the steps they need to take in their 30s, 40s, 50s, and beyond to increase longevity and stave off future illnesses and ailments. By eating the right foods, keeping tabs on the right numbers, moving the right way, and sleeping better, we can slow the hands on the proverbial clock. Since food is medicine, this book will teach you what to eat at every age to prevent life-threatening diseases.

DB 128632 *Topped Chef* by Lucy Burdette

Hoping for some good publicity, Hayley's boss at Key Zest magazine signs her up to help judge the Key West Topped Chef contest. Stakes are high as the winner could be the next cooking show superstar. When one of the other judges turns up dead, the police assume his killer is one of his business rivals. But Hayley wonders whether someone is taking the contest a little too seriously.

DB 129305 *Love and Let Die: James Bond, The Beatles, and the British Psyche* by John Higgs

The Beatles are the biggest band in the history of pop music. James Bond is the

single most successful movie character of all time. They are also twins. *Dr No*, the first Bond film, and *Love Me Do*, the first Beatles record, were both released on the same day: Friday, October 5, 1962. Told over a period of sixty dramatic years, this is an account of how two outsized cultural phenomena continue to define American aspirations, fantasies, and our ideas about ourselves.

DB 129034 *South of Nowhere* by Jeffrey Deaver

A small town in Northern California is at risk of being destroyed by a failing levee, and Colter Shaw has been hired to locate a family swept away by the raging water, with mere hours to survive. But is the levee at risk of failing from natural causes or is someone sabotaging it? With the help of his sister, Dori-on, the duo must save the citizens before the old town washes out at the hands of a secret conspirer.

DB 128906 *Resolute: How We Humans Keep Finding Ways to Beat the Toughest Odds* by Benjamin Hall

After suffering horrific, nearly fatal injuries while covering the war in Ukraine in 2022, Benjamin Hall was told he'd need to spend two years in a hospital learning how to walk again. Instead, he made it home to his family in just six months. Now with a greater degree of perspective, Hall analyzes the psychological aftermath of the Russian missile attack that profoundly altered his life.

DB 127419 *A Cowboy in Amish Country* by Patricia Johns

Ranching in Amish Country is both a challenge and a joy for Wilder Westhouse. Though he'll never be fully accepted, he relies on his neighbors. Hiring Amish runaway Sue Schmidt as a ranch hand could cause problems, especially since her family lives next door. And falling for the beautiful and pregnant cattlewoman will strain relations further and complicate both their lives, unless love can mend fences and families.

DB 129035 *Dimming the Sun: The Urgent Case for Geoengineering* by Thomas Ramge

Award-winning science writer Thomas Ramge's *Dimming the Sun* is his provocative, informative, urgent, and necessary exploration of this intriguing stopgap solution. Ramge shows us how the science works, what the risks are—both geophysical and political—and how the international community might come together to agree on and regulate a safe and effective plan for geoengineering.

DB 127136 *Hidden Star* by Nora Roberts

Private eye Cade Parris takes one look at the beautiful blond who walks unannounced into his office and falls in love. Unfortunately, Bailey James is there to hire him. Fragile and clearly vulnerable, she doesn't even know who she is. Nor does she know why she's carrying a tote bag filled with more than a million dollars in cash, a pistol, and a priceless blue diamond.

DB 127756 *Force of Nature: Three Women Tackle the John Muir Trail* by Joan Griffin

Three friends, women in their fifties, set

out to hike the John Muir Trail. From the outset, their adventure is complicated by self-inflicted accidents and ferocious weather, then enriched when they adopt a young hiker abandoned by her partner along the trail. The women experience the terror of lightning at eleven-thousand feet, the thrill of walking through a towering waterfall, and the joy of dancing among midnight moon shadows.

DB 126425 *Tales of Dune* by Brian Herbert and Kevin Anderson

Frank Herbert's magnificent *Dune* saga sprawls across countless planets and tens of millennia, but while the main novels concentrate on major events and major characters, a universe this complex begs for additional stories, filling in all the details that may sometimes get overlooked in the telling of the main saga. *Tales of Dune* collects eight such stories, ranging from the period of the Butlerian Jihad, to the time of young Paul Atreides, to a story set during the events of the novel *Dune*, to the very end of Frank Herbert's future history.

DB 126825 *Zeppo: The Reluctant Marx Brother* by Robert Bader

Zeppo was the Marx Brother who didn't want to go into the family business. A juvenile delinquent in his teen years before joining his brothers on stage, Zeppo balanced two careers: auto mechanic and petty criminal. He was, in short, a complex character, and his own family never quite figured him out. This biography gives a lively account of this checkered life and career.

Books and Beyond: A Section for Children and Teens

NFB Scholarships

The National Federation of the Blind annually offers blind college students in the U.S. and Puerto Rico an opportunity to win one of thirty merit-based scholarships worth between \$3,000 and \$12,000. Each winner will receive assistance to attend the 2026 National Federation of the Blind Annual Convention. The convention is scheduled for July 3-8 in Austin, Texas. The application deadline is March 31, 2026. For more information, go online to <https://scholarships.nfb.org>, or email scholarships@nfb.org or call 410-659-9314, at extension 2415, or write to: NFB Scholarship Program, National Federation of the Blind, 200 East Wells Street at Jernigan Place, Baltimore, MD 21230.

Louisiana Scholarship Information

Each year at its state convention, the National Federation of the Blind of Louisiana (NFBLa) awards three scholarships to recognize the achievement of blind scholars in Louisiana. Scholarships range from \$1,000 to \$2,000. The deadline for scholarship applications is March 1, 2026. Winners will be notified prior to the NFBLa state convention in Baton Rouge, August 21-23. For current information, and to receive an application, contact: Treva Olivero, Chairperson NFBLa Scholarship Committee; 101 South Trenton Street; Ruston, LA 71270, phone: 800-234-4166, email: tolivero@louisianacenter.org, or email scholarships@nfbLa.org

Blind Grace, a non-profit organization serving the Louisiana blind community, is offering four \$400 scholarships to gradu-

ating seniors in Louisiana. The deadline to apply is May 9, 2026. Applications are available through blindgrace.net. For more information, contact Blanche Faulk at blanchefaulk@blindgrace.net.

The Louisiana Council of the Blind is offering two \$1000 scholarships, the Vernon Daigle Award and the Paula Marshall Scholarship. The deadline to apply is April 1, 2026. The scholarship recipients will be announced during the LCB convention. For more information and to receive an application, contact Gwendolyn King at 225-247-8748, or by email hersheal2@yahoo.com or gwendolynking55@gmail.com

Statewide Braille Challenge

The 2026 statewide Braille Challenge will be Tuesday, February 10, at the Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired in Baton Rouge and Saturday, February 28, at the Louisiana Center for the Blind in Ruston. Louisiana – Accessible Educational Materials (LA-AEM) collaborates with LSVI to host the yearly event. Students from all over Louisiana compete and test fundamental Braille skills in five score categories. For more information call Nabiha Mujahid at 225-757-3469 or email: Nabiha.Mujahid@la.gov.

AEMing for Success is Back in 2026!

LA-AEM will host the 6th annual AEMing for Success on February 12-13 at the Crowne Plaza, located at 4728 Constitution Avenue in Baton Rouge. AEM focuses on professional development anchored in evidence-based learning strategies and utilizing the accessibility features of technology. For registration information, visit <https://ssdla-aem.org/>

aemingforsuccess2026/ or contact
Nabiha Mujahid at 225-757-3469.

Annual Gumbalaya Cookoff

The annual Affiliated Blind of Louisiana Gumbalaya Cook-off will be Saturday January 24, starting at 1:00 PM. Children aged 12 and under are free. The cook-off will be held in Lafayette. For ticket information, contact Blanche Faulk at blanchefaulk@blindgrace.net, or call 337-234-6492.

Louisiana Young Readers' Choice 2026 Nominees available at TBBL

(Vote by May 1 for your favorite)

Grades K-2

DB115320 *Real to Me* by Minh Lê

DB118389 *Try a Bite, Trilobite!* by Jonathan Fenske

Grades 3-5

DB130752 *The Curious Vanishing of Beatrice Willoughby* by G.Z. Schmidt

DB129557 *The Lost Library* by Rebecca Stead and Wendy Mass

DB115993, DB127743 *My Powerful Hair* by Carole Lindstrom

DB121499 *Penny Draws a Best Friend* by Sara Shepard

DB115907 *Yoshi, Sea Turtle Genius: A True Story about an Amazing Swimmer* by Lynne Cox

Grades 6-8

DB0118254 *Eb & Flow* by Kelly J. Bap-

tist

DBC31094 *Farther Than the Moon* by Lindsay Lackey

DB114088 *It's Boba Time for Pearl Li!* by Nicole Chen

BR026307, DB115141 *The Labors of Hercules Beal* by Gary D. Schmidt

DB120951 *The Lost Year: A Survival Story of the Ukrainian Famine* by Katherine Marsh

DB119002 *Mexikid* by Pedro Martín

DB121484 *The Ruby Code* by Jessica Khoury

Grades 9-12

DB117993 *America Redux: Visual Stories from Our Dynamic History* by Ariel Aberg-Riger

DB131962 *Bonesmith* by Nicki Pau Preto

DB117813 *Find Him Where You Left Him Dead* by Kristen Simmons

BR025172, DB116721 *Give Me a Sign* by Anna Sortino

DB116733 *The Luis Ortega Survival Club* by Sonora Reyes

DB113776 *Promise Boys* by Nick Brooks

DB113115 *Reggie and Delilah's Year of Falling* by Elise Bryant

BR025262, DB116930 *Rez Ball* by Byron Graves

DB117627 *Wrath Becomes Her* by Aden Polydoros

Support Our TBBL Friends Organization

Since 1981, the Mrs. W. Carruth Jones Foundation has acted as a friends group for the Talking Books and Braille Library in the State Library of Louisiana. It provides a mechanism for accepting donations to enhance and support services to the blind and physically handicapped community state-wide.

The Jones Foundation directly supplements the programs and initiatives of TBBL within the State Library.

It is a primary sponsor of the State Library's large print collection, TBBL's summer reading program, staff enrichment, and early literacy program. To contribute, make checks payable to the Jones Foundation and mail to the following address:

Mrs. W. Carruth Jones Foundation
1131 N. River Road
Port Allen, LA 70767

All donations are tax deductible. Anyone who makes a donation receives a one-year membership to the Jones Foundation. For meeting information, call Shelia Coleman at 225-342-4942.

TBBL Directory

Library address

Talking Books & Braille Library
701 N. Fourth St.
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Phone numbers

Baton Rouge: 225-342-0035
Statewide: 1-800-543-4702
Fax: 225-342-6817

Special services

Music section: 800-424-8567
Braille service: 800-453-4293

Email

tbbl@library.la.gov
tbblkids@library.la.gov

Walk-in hours

Monday – Thursday
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Phone and email hours

Monday – Friday
8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Library services

Audio books and magazines
Braille books and magazines
Large print books and big books
Online catalog
BARD download service
BARD mobile apps
Newspaper reading service

Eligibility

Any Louisiana resident who is unable to read or use standard print materials as a result of a temporary or permanent visual or physical limitation is eligible to receive free library services.

State Library of Louisiana
Talking Books and Braille Library
701 N. Fourth Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

**FREE MATTER FOR THE
BLIND OR HANDICAPPED**

Special format library materials are loaned
to qualified patrons by

Talking Books and Braille Library

State Library of Louisiana

Office of the Lieutenant Governor

Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

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