

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. 25 No. 1

Winter 2025

Holiday Closings

Dec. 31	New Year's Eve
Jan. 1	New Year's Day
Jan. 20	MLK Day
Mar. 4	Mardi Gras

Open Beta for My Talking Books Alexa Skill

NLS has opened beta registration for the new My Talking Books skill on Amazon Alexa-enabled smart speakers. NLS patrons who register for open beta will be onboarded on a first-come, first-serve basis until all 5,000 license seats are filled. Patrons registering for Open Beta after this limit is reached will be placed on a wait list for future access. To register, fill out the Patron Registration Form at www.surveymonkey.com/r/mtb-open-beta.

2025 Braille Calendars Available

The National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled provides braille and print/braille calendars to its patrons free of charge. Calendars are available in two sizes. The larger wall calendar is print/braille. The smaller pocket-sized calendar is braille only. If you subscribed to receive a calendar in 2024, you will receive a 2025 calendar automatically. If

you are not yet subscribed, call your TBBL reader advisor at 225-342-0035 to sign up.

NFB of Louisiana State Convention

The National Federation of the Blind of Louisiana invites you to the 2025 State Convention at the Baton Rouge Marriott on Friday, March 28th through Sunday, March 30th. Topics that will be covered include:

- How to become comfortable with my blindness
- How to deal with day-to-day activities
- How to obtain assistance from the Social Security Administration
- How the newest technology could benefit me
- How to get help for my blind child
- Presentations by successful blind professionals
- And so much more.

For more information, please visit:
<https://nfbla.org/affiliate-convention>
or call 800-234-4166.

Free Audio Bible From Xavier Society

The Xavier Society for the Blind is pleased to announce that the

New American Bible, a Roman Catholic translation, is now available in audio, free of charge. Contact Xavier to get your copy. 212-473-7800.

BEP Currency Reader App Available

EyeNote, a free currency reader mobile app for smart devices distributed by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, is now available for both Android and iOS. EyeNote uses image recognition technology and the device's integrated camera to recognize a Federal Reserve note and communicates the note's denomination back to the user. The currency reader mobile app does not authenticate a note as being either genuine or counterfeit.

For more information about the BEP currency reader program and Android and iOS apps, visit www.loc.gov/nls/services-and-resources/us-currency-reader-program.

BARD Express Adds In-Application Player

NLS is pleased to announce the release of BARD Express, version 3.1.0.1. This release improves the long-awaited BARD Express Player, which allows patrons to choose an audio book or magazine from their BARD Express bookshelf and listen to it directly on their PC. Much like BARD Mobile, with the BARD Express Player, users can adjust the narration speed; jump to navigation points such as part, chapter, and article; create bookmarks; and much more. Users can also create global settings for narration speed, auto-play, auto-rewind, and more.

Patrons using JAWS and NVDA can either use the tab key to move to each of the player's functions or tap a single letter assigned to that function. For example, they can type F for fast forward, R for rewind, and B for bookmarks. A complete list of commands can be found under the Help menu of BARD Express.

Scripts are built into the 2024 version of JAWS to optimize the BARD Express Player. Patrons using JAWS 2022 or 2023 can download the same scripts from the BARD Express page on the NLS website at www.loc.gov/nls/how-to-enroll/sign-up-for-bard-and-bard-mobile/welcome-to-bard-express and import them into their screen readers.

Accessibility Support Phone Lines

Ophthalmic Edge has compiled a list of specialized support lines for customers who are blind or visually impaired. Listed companies include Amazon, American Airlines, Comcast, Verizon, and more. To view the directory, visit <https://ophthalmicedge.org/patient/accessibility-support-phone-lines-you-should-know>. Here are some examples of helpful support lines from the directory:

Amazon's Accessibility Customer Service: 888-283-1678

Call to speak with an accessibility specialist who can help you buy books and other products, or get you directly to tech support for Amazon devices and services including Alexa, Kindle & Fire Tablet. For Amazon users who subscribe to Audible, the Audible support line is 888-283-5051.

Apple Accessibility Support Line 877-204-3930

For users of Apple's iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch, Apple Watch, or Mac – this is a gift. It is a special support line reserved for customers with vision, hearing, motor, and learning impairments. Senior AppleCare specialists are available 24/7 to help you get your Accessibility Settings right, answer your questions, and resolve your technical issues.

Microsoft Disability Answer Desk: 800-936-5900 or the Be My Eyes app

The features you need to make your PC 'vision friendly' are built right into Windows – unfortunately, many people don't know that. Microsoft recognized this as a significant problem and put in place a support team specialized in accessibility.

TBBL's BookTalks Winter Book Selection is:

DB 95745 *The Bookish Life of Nina Hill*
by Abbi Waxman

The father that shy bookstore clerk Nina Hill never knew has died, leaving behind a crowd of relatives who want to meet her. Between new family and the handsome trivia rival who seems into her, Nina is being forced out of her comfortable shell.

How to Join BookTalks

We hold our book discussions via an email discussion list. Members comment on the book by sending an email to the discussion list. All members then see the comments and have the ability to respond by email to the group.

If you want to join our discussion group, go to: <http://pelican.state.lib.la.us/mailman/listinfo/tbblbooktalks> and create an account by entering your name (make sure to put your name so we can verify you) and email address and make up a password; or, as always, you can call your reader advisor.

BookTalks Book Club

If you join BookTalks, we will add you to our mailing list and automatically send you a digital book copy of the newest selection. I hope that this will make it more convenient to read the book and participate in the discussion. Thank you, and I hope to hear from you soon!

Winter Book Recommendations

By Sneha Padumane

DB 119061 *Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage* by Alfred Lansing

Bound for Antarctica, the Endurance set sail from England in August 1914. In January 1915, the Endurance became locked in an island of ice. For ten months the ice-moored Endurance drifted northwest before it was finally crushed. But for Sir Ernest Shackleton and his crew of twenty-seven men the ordeal had barely begun.

DB 119801 *The Pursuit of Happiness*
by Jeffrey Rosen

The Declaration of Independence identified 'the pursuit of happiness' as one of our unalienable rights, along with life and liberty. Jeffrey Rosen, the president of the National Constitution Center, pro-

files six of the most influential founders to show how they understood the pursuit of happiness as a quest for being good, not feeling good -- the pursuit of lifelong virtue, not short-term pleasure.

DB 119624 *Why We Read* by Shannon Reed

In this uproarious exploration of the joys of reading, a long-time teacher, lifelong reader and *The New Yorker* contributor shares surprising stories from her life and the poignant ways in which books have impacted her students and shows us how literature can transform us for the better.

DB 119543 *It All Comes Back to You* by Beth Duke

Alabama, 1947. War's over, cherry-print dresses, parking above the city lights, swing dancing. Beautiful, seventeen-year-old Violet lives in a perfect world. Everybody loves her. In 2012, she's still beautiful, charming, and surrounded by admirers. Veronica "Ronni" Johnson, licensed practical nurse and aspiring writer, meets the captivating Violet in the assisted living facility where Violet requires no assistance, just lots of male attention. When she dies, she leaves Ronni a very generous bequest only if Ronni completes a book about her life within one year.

DB 120776 *The Book That Broke the World* by Mark Lawrence

The Library of Alexandria died in fire. Others fade away with less drama, ignored, forgotten, left to dust. To the athe-naeum though, the great library of which

all others are echoes, fires are merely a temporary inconvenience. The only true threat to the library's existence is a book—the one Livira wrote. Livira's book also brought her together with Evar, a young man who was raised in the library itself, and they discovered secrets that no one else had uncovered. But now they are separated—and something hunts them both.

DB 119863 *Many Things Under a Rock: The Mysteries of Octopuses* by David Scheel

A behavioral ecologist's account of his decades-long obsession with octopuses. How does a soft and boneless creature defeat sharks and eels, while thriving as a predator of the most heavily armored animals in the sea? And how does a solitary animal form friendships, entice mates, and outwit rivals?

DB 120247 *All Day and a Night: A Novel of Suspense* by Alafair Burke

When psychotherapist Helen Brunswick is murdered in her Park Slope office, the entire city suspects her estranged husband—until the District Attorney's office receives an anonymous letter. The letter's author knows a chilling detail that police have kept secret: the victim's bones were broken after she was killed. Her injuries were eerily similar to the signature used twenty years earlier by Anthony Amaro, a serial killer serving a life sentence for his crimes. Now, Amaro is asking to be released from prison, arguing that he was wrongly convicted, and the true killer is still on the loose.

DB 120971 *Never Leave the Dogs Behind: A Memoir* by Brianna Madia

In her debut memoir, *Nowhere for Very Long*, Brianna Madia reflected on her life as a nomad, free to roam some of the most beautiful land in America. Now the van life adherent faces the unfathomable darkness that comes from a life blown apart, her only solace the support of her dogs. In the wake of a painful, public divorce and the ensuing fallout, Brianna moves from a pared-down van into a pared-down trailer. She reckons with her decision to be alone in the desert, living on a nine-acre plot of undeveloped land on the dusty outskirts of a small town in Utah, accompanied only by her four precious dogs: Bucket, Dagwood, Birdie, and Banjo. Brianna wonders where, exactly, the road less traveled has led her.

DB 120671 *Life Unseen: A Story of Blindness* by Selina Mills

Imagine a world without sight. Is it dark and gloomy? Is it terrifying and isolating? Or is it simply a state of not seeing, which we have demonized and sentimentalized over the centuries? And why is blindness so frightening?

In this fascinating historical adventure, broadcaster and author Selina Mills takes us on a journey through the history of blindness in Western Culture to discover that blindness is not so dark after all. Inspired by her own experience of losing her sight as she forged a successful journalistic career, *Life Unseen* takes us through a personal and unsentimental historical quest through the lives, stories and achievements of blind people — as well as those sighted people who sought to patronize, demonize and fix them.

**Books and Beyond:
A Section for Children and Teens**

**Parental Acknowledgment Form
Deadline Approaches**

The Library of Congress has implemented a new policy that will require a response from the parents of all patrons under the age of 18 by the first of the year. In order to continue using library services, parents of all current patrons who are minors will need to sign and return a Parental Acknowledgement Form by January 1, 2025. This form is being sent out through email and regular mail and can also be found on TBBL's website at: <https://library.la.gov/tbbl/applyfor-services/> Contact the Children's and Teen Librarian, Charlene Moore, at 225-342-9563 for more information.

New Scholarship Opportunities in 2025

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 2025 National Federation of the Blind Annual Convention which is scheduled for July 8-13 in New Orleans. The application deadline is March 31, 2025. For more information, go online to <https://scholarships.nfb.org>, email scholarships@nfb.org, 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 for 2025

Each year at its state convention, the National Federation of the Blind of Louisiana (NFBL) 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, 2025. Winners will be notified prior to the NFBL state convention in Baton Rouge, March 28-30. For current information, and to receive an application, contact: Treva Olivero, Chairperson NFBL 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 two \$400 scholarships to graduating seniors in Louisiana. The deadline to apply is May 9, 2025. 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, 2025. The scholarship recipients will be announced in May, during the LCB convention. For more information and to receive an application, contact Gwendolyn King at 225-247-8748, or by email at hersheal2@yahoo.com or gwendolynking55@gmail.com

Statewide Braille Challenge

The 2025 statewide Braille Challenge will be Saturday, February 22, at the Louisiana Center for the Blind in Ruston, and Thursday, February 27, at the Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired in Baton Rouge. Louisiana – Accessible Educational Materials (AEM) collaborates with LSVI to host the yearly event.

Students from all over Louisiana compete and test fundamental Braille skills such as reading comprehension, spelling, speed, accuracy, proofreading, charts, and graphs.

The five score categories include Apprentice, Freshman, Sophomore, Junior Varsity, and Varsity.

For more information contact Nabiha Mujahid at nabiha@ssdla-aem.org or call 225-757-3469.

Don't Miss the 2nd Annual Gumbalaya Cookoff

The annual Affiliated Blind of Louisiana Gumbalaya Cookoff will be Saturday January 25, starting at 1:00 PM. The event is open to the public. Tickets are \$10 for adults. Children aged 12 and under are free. The cookoff will be held in Lafayette at 409 West St. Mary Boulevard near the UL campus.

For more information, contact Blanche Faulk at blanchefaulk@blindgrace.net or call 337-234-6492.

Support Our TBBL Friends Organization

The Jones Foundation acknowledges the following donors for their generous contributions:

Kirk Jones in memory of George and Klileen Jones

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 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, ext. 2
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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