# LUA LEDGER

## LIBRARY USERS OF AMERICA, INC.

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## President: Judy Wilkinson

## Editor: Sharon Strzalkowski

## Treasurer: Adam Ruschival

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## President’s Message

You Could Look It Up!

Or Could You?

Judy Wilkinson

My husband Steve who celebrates two seasons a year, winter and baseball, tells me that the above phrase was immortalized by the great Casey Stengel who gave that response when questioned by reporters about the stories and statements he regaled them with. I bet there are other sources for the phrase's origin, but the A Lady didn't have any ideas! Which brings me to my musings for this column: the scarcity of serious in-depth reference resources available to nonprint readers.

Don't get me wrong. There are a great number of decent reference works in the two popular catalogs most of us can access: BARD and Bookshare. NLS has the greatest number and in-depth reference-type resources in its music collection. Without consulting the full-time librarians in that Section, I found nearly 200 braille resources and several hundred in audio.

I am an amateur student, hobbyist, dabbler in classical music. I'm not interested in scores or in-depth musical theory (The Music Section has a number of more technical references). I like books that describe a work and tell me what to listen for. And I want to read such works in braille! I have a bias in favor of the late Michael Steinberg who was the program notes writer for the San Francisco Symphony, whose concerts I have attended for decades now. (Okay he wrote for Boston and New York symphonies too!) No surprise then that my go-to reference volumes are Steinberg's 3 guides: "The Symphony", "The Concerto" and "For the Love of Music: Invitation to Listening to Choral Music". I also refer frequently to the Guide to Chamber Music by Melvin Berger. Quite recently the audio work "The Classical Music Lover's Companion to Orchestral Music" by Robert Philip was added to the collection, but I wanted it in braille which Bookshare fortunately had. We'll return to the issue of which is preferable: audio or braille.

Let me pause here to deal with thoughts some might be having: "Be realistic! With the five books you've named, how long would it take you to study all the music available to you right now? With Bookshare's numerous references, how many could you study in a lifetime?" Of course you know the answer: ideally I want as many choices as sighted folks have, and short of that, I still want as many choices as possible, never mind that at best I only have a couple of decades left!

Soapbox aside, there are two problems with braille reference works: space and formatting!

Another big hobby of mine is cooking! So imagine my joy when NLS released "The Joy of Cooking",--all 30 volumes! I remember how shocked my California Talking Books Librarian was when he ordered 2 copies, not quite accounting for just how much shelf space those 60 volumes would occupy. Not to mention the challenge of shipping that many volumes to the borrower: think of the hapless post office delivery person! I'd love to know just how many times this hardcopy tome has actually been shipped out to a real borrower!

I have my very own copy of "Joy" on my braille device where it takes up relatively little space on my 4 GB drive where I store all things braille.

Formatting is a huge challenge: back to "Joy" with its 30 different files (volumes). I've spent a lot of time quickly opening, checking print page range and contents of a number of volumes before finding the recipe or category I was seeking. I first encountered this multi-volume challenge when my elementary school resource room acquired “Webster's Vest Pocket Dictionary": 7 volumes! I never saw a print version that in fact would have fitted into a pocket! In high school we got the World Book Encyclopedia: 160 volumes. I vowed to read the entire tome and was thrilled upon reaching "basketball"! (My future alma mater, UC Berkeley won the NCAA championship in my junior year). Imagine my delight finding a braille diagram of the layout of the basketball court!) I can assuage my guilt at not in fact reading the entire encyclopedia by realizing how much data would now be hopelessly dated! This multi-file difficulty will remain a problem as long as NLS is mandated to produce hardcopy braille volumes. At least with Bookshare, if one has a device with sufficient memory, the work is in a single file.

As to formatting, a reference work with multiple entries is only as good as the formatting allows navigation from one entry to the next, as I can attest from my experience struggling to explore The Grove Dictionary of Music, and the grandmother of all cooking references, "La Rousse Gastronomique" both from Bookshare.

Did I mention dictionaries?

Another problem with reference works, dictionaries in particular, is that relatively few people want or need them. So it doesn't make sense for NLS to invest vast funds into producing huge works that only a few would use.

BUT!

What if one day, all NLS braille patrons possessed a device which could receive a relatively immense electronic file, eliminating the necessity of multi-volumes? Presumably the cost of producing such a file would be minimal; perhaps if someone had to have a hard copy version (of any book) it could be produced on demand: I suspect the total cost would still be a lot cheaper than the other way around. I am currently lucky to be a beta tester for the 2 refreshable braille devices NLS is exploring. Whichever one is ultimately selected, NLS braille patrons should within a very few years, possess a wi-fi-enabled E-reader with at least 16 Gb onboard memory, with a relatively low per unit production cost.

Did I mention dictionaries? The first problem I mentioned, whether audio or braille, becomes important. NLS has few if any in-depth dictionaries: no language ones! Even Bookshare has limited dictionaries: a series with the 5 thousand most popular words: granted I can get one for Turkish-English! But while that might be sufficient for most language study needs, it wouldn't suffice for intermediate, let alone advanced study.

Bringing us to another problem: drill down not too far and you find that the reference materials available to us are very limited. NLS lists a Spanish grammar published in 1988, but I couldn't find a substantial Spanish-English-English-Spanish dictionary, presumably the most popular language, much less any others. Bookshare did have multiple grammars, workbooks, specialty dictionaries (like slang or one on modern idioms). A sighted person of course can choose among multiple language tools, including dictionaries.

And I'm only scratching the surface about this lack of depth, with my limited, Eurocentric, western culture perspective!

Now to the issue of when a reference book should be available in braille! I successfully argued that if NLS published Michael Steinberg's "The Symphony, a Listener's Guide" in braille, the same should happen for his work about concertos. NLS agreed, this being only a 6-volume endeavor. But is audio enough? As I stated earlier, my Classical Music Guide was available from Bookshare, allowing me to have braille. Let me be clear: I know one can navigate intricacies of spelling with a screen reader, but if one can read braille, when should a reference be in both? When spelling is crucial: words, names.... Jacques Barzun's "From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life, 1500 to The Present" comes in both formats, though much as I love Lou Harpenau, the old 2000 recording (originally for cassette) is not navigable.

Admittedly, a whole new world of reference apps is available to those with smartphones, and braille output is possible for those lucky enough to have braille devices which can connect with those phones. By the way, the E-reader connects beautifully. But that reference resource option belongs in another article.

To sum up then: we need more reference works! They must be in-depth and specialized; they should be in both audio and braille when the ability to "see" how things are spelled is crucial! They must be formatted so navigation is easy.

A brave new world of access to reference works may be coming, but our library services reaching the greatest number, can and must do better in the here and now!

## Who are the most popular authors on BARD?

“Courtesy of the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled”

BARD, the NLS Braille and Audio Reading Download service, has more than 100 subject-search categories, including the recently added LGBTQ+. We were curious about the most popular subject and author searches on BARD and pulled the stats from the first half of 2020.

The most popular search subject, by far, was Mystery and Detective Stories, followed by Western Stories, Bestsellers and Romance. (Most books on BARD are assigned multiple subject categories.)

The most frequently searched-for authors were Nora Roberts, Danielle Steel, James Patterson, John Grisham and Stuart Woods.

If you’re an NLS patron and aren’t signed up for BARD, it’s easy to get started! Find out more at [www.loc.gov/nls/braille-audio-reading-materials/bard-access](https://www.loc.gov/nls/braille-audio-reading-materials/bard-access).

## More NLS patron surveys are on the way

**By Mark Layman**

Last year, NLS teamed up with the Gallup polling and research company to survey current and potential patrons—more than 5,000 in all—about a variety of topics, including their access to and ability to use technology.

Now NLS is planning two more surveys with Gallup to follow up on what it learned last year.  
“A lot of really good stuff came out of last year’s survey,” said David Spett, NLS’s data analyst. “For instance, we learned that our patrons are pretty evenly split between those who are very tech-savvy, not tech-savvy and somewhere in between.

“A majority of our patrons have technology that would enable them to use BARD (the NLS Braille and Audio Reading Download service)—a computer or smartphone or tablet with Internet access,” he said. “But most of those people are not using BARD. We had previously believed that lack of technology or Internet access was the problem, but that seems to not necessarily be the case. A lot of people said they don’t use BARD because they prefer mail delivery or aren’t comfortable with newer technology.”

The first of the upcoming surveys will seek to determine patrons’ satisfaction with various facets of NLS service, their technological preferences and capacities and their willingness to use—or barriers that keep them from using—BARD and the BARD Mobile app.

In the second survey, Gallup will interview former patrons, or current patrons who have stopped using BARD, to gain insights into why they discontinued their NLS or BARD service.

“Findings from these surveys will improve our understanding of the best way to modernize and improve our operations,” Spett said. “And by also surveying former patrons and former BARD users, we hope to learn how we can reduce attrition from the program.”

Gallup will also survey the patrons taking part in a pilot test of two refreshable braille displays, or eReaders, commissioned by NLS. Participants in the pilot are testing the ease of use and reliability of the two e-Reader models—one produced by HumanWare, the other by Zoomax. Besides measuring participants’ satisfaction with the e-Readers, Gallup will also ask about the adequacy of the training they received and how that training could be improved.

NLS hopes to start loaning e-Readers to patrons who read braille next year. In 2016 NLS’s enabling legislation was changed to allow it to loan refreshable

braille displays in addition to audio playback equipment. Patrons with a refreshable braille display can download and read digital braille files instead of receiving bulky volumes of hardcopy braille through the mail.

## Archive.org: Yet More Accessible Books

By Deborah Armstrong

If you are one of those bookworms who uses Bookshare, Bard, and your local libraries to get audio and e-text, yet you want another source, let me share

my adventures with archive.org.

I'm an alternate media specialist sheltering in place. When my students started clamoring for books that I couldn't get from publishers, I discovered I

could sometimes find them on archive.org.

Archive.org is most famous for the Way-back machine which shows you older websites, some of which no longer exist.

But they also have podcasts, music, movies, and some but not all of it is in the public domain.

When you search it's hard to find anything because everything is searched through, unless you enable filters, which for a screen reader user seemed to

me very confusing. Maybe if I had a library science degree it would make more sense. But using search filters on Walmart is much easier.

But you can also go to just their e-text collection at

<http://www.openlibrary.org>

which is a little easier to search. Again, there are many things in the public domain, including obscure stuff like "What You Should Know About Communism"

a cold-war pamphlet for middle schoolers that paints a dreadful picture of the menace for us kids of the late fifties and early sixties.

But there are also rare textbooks; today I found "A History Of Far Eastern Art" which was never issued as an e-book, is not on Bookshare, and which one of my low vision students was desperately seeking.

Many, though not all of their e-books are in DAISY format - encrypted DAISY which I'll explain in a minute. Most are also available in encrypted PDF or encrypted e-pub.

The OCR on these books varies from perfect to not so great. And often if it's on Bookshare  that version on Bookshare is a better quality copy.

But when it's not on Bookshare, especially if it's obscure, it could be on [www.openlibrary.org](http://www.openlibrary.org). That’s the direct link to their book collection.

To borrow a book for an hour you don't need to have an account. To borrow for fourteen days you do need an account, but signing up is free. There's a horrid

audio captcha you have to get through if you use Firefox; if you have Chrome and are logged into your Google account, Google will helpfully take care of the captcha for you.

Once you have that account, you can search for something and borrow it. When you borrow it, the book reader appears. It lets you page through images of the book or hear it self-voiced. It's not the friendliest thing to use with a screen reader, and you can't see the pages in braille, but you can determine if it's something you actually want.

You then need to go to the button for "My Account", the button for "loans" and move through the list of books you have borrowed. Press Enter on one, and the book's information page appears. Look for DAISY or PDF, and you can download the book.

It takes some maneuvering with your screen reader to accomplish all this despite their claim that the site is accessible. There is lots of extra clutter

on each page, but after you learn their layout you can more quickly navigate to what you want. Though confusing, the layout is standard across all their pages.

The DAISY books are encrypted with the BARD public key. This means you need a device that can play BARD books to read the DAISY book. Because many devices with the BARD private key won't open text-only DAISY, you'll find you can't read these books with devices like the NLS player. Instead, you'll need something like the Victor Reader Stream, PlexTalk Pocket, Book Sense or similar device.

The BARD public key that archive.org has connects digitally with the private key stored inside the read-only memory of the player. So you can copy the

book anywhere but only play it on an authorized device.

To get some of the Daisy books, you need what they call "special disability access". But that's easy. You simply go to the page to sign up for it here:

<https://archive.org/details/printdisabled&tab=about>

Then supply your password for BARD, Bookshare or Learning Ally; you need to have the same email address on that account and your archive.org account. You

are automatically granted special disability access in just a few minutes.

If you want to read on your phone, Mac  or PC, you'll need Adobe Digital Editions - also free. You can then choose to download a PDF and you'll download

a very small authorization file named "URLLink.acsm"

When you press enter on that file, Adobe Digital Editions opens and authorizes you to use the file for 14 days. This is the same as borrowing a protected

e-book from your local public library.

Once the book is open you can read it but you can't do much more like save it as text or copy passages.

But you can remove DRM with Codex.

This tool is legal for two reasons. First, it only removes DRM from books that are actually on your computer which you are authorized to read. Secondly

any person with a disability or serving disabled persons can remove DRM for purposes of accessibility.

I used to run Codex on all my Kindle books but it can't defeat their newest drm. It can however clear the DRM from PDFS stored in Adobe digital editions.

Find codex here:

<http://jscholes.net/project/codex/>

Not only can it remove DRM, but it can also convert, so you can turn a PDF into an epub you can read on your phone with iBOOKS, many Android tools, and in the Windows Edge or Safari browsers.

If I want really good OCR, I can get a better scan using K1000, An Open Book OmniPage and in some cases the JAWS OCR on these PDF files as well.

Have fun exploring Archive.org!

Braille, graphics and digital –aids A conference for practitioners and academics

Welcome to Tactile Reading 2021Digital conference and pre-conference

The Tactile Reading conference on 29th and 30th April 2021 will digitally bring together: • practitioners, developers, and innovators in the field of tactile reading• academics in various research areas• commercial companies

You can follow parallel sessions within the field of tactile reading, such as: • Early intervention• Braille and literacy for children and adults• 3D• Braille and universal design

Please also note the pre-conference on Technology and Aids for the Blind and Visually Impaired on 28th April 2021. We are excited to see you all!

For updated information and details about the conference and pre-conference, including upcoming registration: www.tactilereading.org

Tactile Reading 2021 is arranged by Statped, The Norwegian Library of Talking Books and Braille, The Norwegian Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted, and The Norwegian Braille Authority.

Keynote speakers:

• Diane Wormsley: The Bumpy Road to Literacy• Silvija Seres: New Technology, New Opportunities

## LAMP: Library of Accessible Media for Pennsylvanians

We are very excited to announce that in December, the Free Library of Philadelphia’s Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped is officially changing our name to LAMP: Library of Accessible Media for Pennsylvanians. With the assistance of our colleagues in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvanians with print disabilities will access services under this new brand from a new central website at MyLAMP.org starting in December.

This rebrand has been in development for the past two years and is the combined effort of the

Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, and the Pennsylvania Office of Commonwealth Libraries, along with guidance from our consultant Wall-to-Wall studios. The goal of this change is to make services for Pennsylvania’s growing print-disabled population more discoverable, accessible and inclusive. LAMP removes disability from our name and focuses entirely on the service.

The new website at MyLAMP.org will provide a singular service point to aggregate, grow and communicate all of Pennsylvania’s services to persons with print disabilities.

Although our name will change, our commitment to excellence will not. We will continue to implement the Library of Congress’ National Library Service program throughout the state of Pennsylvania to patrons who can not access standard print due to blindness, visual, cognitive or

reading disabilities, and to those who are unable to hold a book or turn its pages, as we always have.

Additionally, under this new brand, we will explore ways to provide resources beyond the

traditional - such as assistive technologies and accessible programs to this underserved

population.

When Congress passed the Pratt Smoot act in 1931 and funding was allotted to the Library of

Congress to purchase books for the blind, they looked for libraries to distribute these materials.

The Free Library of Philadelphia and Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh were chosen as two of the

original 19 national locations to distribute books for the blind.

Pennsylvania libraries, through state funding, have a long history of pioneering innovative

services to the print disabled in our state. We look forward to building on that tradition under

LAMP. Thank you for being our brand ambassadors and going forth to share this news with

people in your networks who may no longer be able to access standard print, and thank you for supporting this work.

Keri E. Wilkins graphicDirector, LAMP: Library of Accessible Media for Pennsylvanians

[wilkinsk@freelibrary.org](mailto:wilkinsk@freelibrary.org)

Mark Santangelo Named Chief of

NLS’s New Patron and Network Engagement Division

NLS is pleased to announce the appointment of Mark Santangelo as chief of NLS’s new Patron and Network Engagement Division. His first day of work was Monday, November 9.

Santangelo comes to NLS from the Fred W. Smith National Library for the Study of George Washington at Mount Vernon, where he was chief librarian and archivist since 2012, the year before it opened. The Library houses thousands of books, journals, manuscripts, and artifacts related to our first president’s life and legacy. Before that, Santangelo was the associate museum librarian who oversaw the Onassis Library for Hellenic and Roman Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, where he worked for eleven years.

A native of Marcellus, New York, Santangelo received a Masters of Library Science degree from Rutgers University. He also has a Masters in Theology from Princeton Theological Seminary and a B.A. in Religion and Philosophy from Roberts Wesleyan College in Rochester, New York.

The Patron and Network Engagement Division was created as part of the NLS reorganization that took effect in October 2020. It includes the Reference, Patron Engagement, Network Services, and Music sections, as well as the Bureau of Engraving and Printing Currency Reader program.

In recommending Santangelo for this position, Deputy Director Jason Yasner noted his management and supervisory experience, his familiarity with acquisitions and budgeting, and his success in creating strong networks of libraries, librarians, research constituents, and donors.

## A Novel in Verse

Reviewed by Deborah Armstrong

Poetry has never had much appeal to me. The only poem I remember memorizing was Fog by Carl Sandburg, probably because it is short and I like cats. Then, a couple of years ago I attended a Slam competition at my local library. The performances were captivating and opened a new door for me.

A few months ago I heard about “The poet X” by Elizabeth Acevedo which sounded interesting, decided to give it a try and am so glad I did. The book’s extended title is “a novel in verse.” Most novels are written in prose, so what’s the difference? Verse has a set rhythm like poetry whereas prose is most simply described as how we talk. The author is also the narrator which is a bonus for us as she gives the story the pace and emotions as experienced by the protagonist.

Xiomara, a 15 year old daughter of Dominican immigrants, lives in Harlem and finds solace in her poetry. The book is her journal, so it is in first person. The journal entries describe the difficult relationship with her mother, the close relationship with her twin brother, and the awakening of her sexuality.

The advantage of the audio version is somewhat offset by the disadvantage of missing the printed word. For example, she gives herself the name “Poet X” because her Christian name begins with the letter “X” thus the title of the book, and her best friend’s name is Caridad, explaining the conversations between X and C.

Xiomara rebels against attending confirmation classes at her Church in order to join a poetry club at school, and visits a club with open mike poetry performances. It may not sound like your cup of tea, but here’s a couple of reasons to give it a try: it’s short and has a happy ending.

An Author’s Note at the end of the book explains and demonstrates contrapuntal, how one can read a poem two ways.

Available on BARD, “The Poet X” DB92221 and BR22420

**Accessible information on COVID-19**

## Reprinted from the January-February 2021 “Talking Book Topics”.

Patrons seeking authoritative information about COVID-19 in accessible formats may find useful the resources produced by Center for Inclusive Design and Innovation (CIDI) at Georgia Tech. Subjects include symptoms, testing, use of masks, and how to protect your service animal. Materials are available in accessible Word documents, PDF, and hardcopy braille.

For more information and to request braille copies, visit [http://cidi.gatech.edu/covid *External*](http://cidi.gatech.edu/covid).

**Maryland LBPD offers monthly meetings on assistive technology**

## ****From**** the January-February 2021 “Talking Book Topics”.

Patrons curious about technology that can aid in education, employment, and access to information may want to join the Maryland Library for the Blind and Print Disabled Technology User Group’s monthly conference call. The call is generally held at 10:00 AM Eastern on the second Saturday of the month and can be joined by dialing 319-527-4994. Past topics have included Food Delivery Apps, OrCam, and Assistive Technology Gifts. For more information and to listen to recordings of previous calls, please visit [www.marylandlibraries.org/Pages/Technology%20User%20Group.aspx *External*](http://www.marylandlibraries.org/Pages/Technology%20User%20Group.aspx).

### Library Users of America Officers and Board Members, July 2020

President: Judy Wilkinson, 2019/2021 FIRST TERM

1550 Bancroft Avenue #113

San Leandro, CA 94577-5264

Home: 510-357-1844

Cell: 510-388-5079

Email: [jwilkins@panix.com](mailto:jwilkins@panix.com)

Vice-President: Paul Edwards, 2019/2021 FIRST TERM

20330 NE 20th Ct

Miami, FL 33179-2202

Home: 305-692-9206

Cell: 305-984-0909

Email: [Edwards.paul955@gmail.com](mailto:Edwards.paul955@gmail.com)

Secretary: Ralph Smitherman, 2019/2021 FIRST TERM

514 Edgewood Ln

Brandon, MS 39042-3300

Home: 601-825-8076

Cell: 601-672-0973

Email: [redbird26@bellsouth.net](mailto:redbird26@bellsouth.net)

Treasurer: Adam Ruschival, 2019/2021 SIXTH TERM

148 Vernon Avenue

Louisville, KY 40206-2237

Home: 502-897-1472

Cell: 502-303-7078

Email: [carla40206@gmail.com](mailto:carla40206@gmail.com)

Immediate Past President: Brian Charlson

57 Grandview Avenue

Watertown, MA 02472

Home: 617-926-9198

Cell: 617-831-3272

Email: [briancharlson@comcast.net](mailto:briancharlson@comcast.net)

### Board Members

Rhonda Trott, 2019/2020 FIRST TERM PARTIAL

1018 East St.

Talladega, AL 39160-2913

Home: 256-362-5649

Cell: 256-493-9137

Email: [rhondatrott@charter.net](mailto:rhondatrott@charter.net)

Carla Ruschival, 2018/2020 FIRST TERM FULL

148 Vernon Avenue

Louisville, KY 40206-2237

Home: 502-897-1472

Cell: 502-303-7042

Email: [carla40206@gmail.com](mailto:carla40206@gmail.com)

Tracy George, 2018/2020 FIRST TERM FULL

1940 Johnson Ferry Rd APARTMENT I

Brookhaven, GA 30319

Home: 404-375-3101

Cell: 404-375-3101

Email: [tgeorge3101@gmail.com](mailto:tgeorge3101@gmail.com)

Sharon Strzalkowski 2018/2020 FIRST TERM FULL

5 Suburban Rd Apt 606

Worcester, MA 01602

Home: 508-363-3866

Cell: 508-410-9142

Email: strzal@charter.net

Rebecca Bridges, 2018/2020 FIRST TERM FULL

3105 14th St

Arlington, VA 22204

Home: 703-655-2474

Cell: 703-655-2474

Email: [bridgesrj@gmail.com](mailto:bridgesrj@gmail.com)