LUA LEDGER

# Library Users of AmericaFall 2021

## Library Users of America Officers and Board Members, July 2021

### President: Judy Wilkinson

### Editor: Sharon Strzalkowski

### Treasurer: Adam Ruschival

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# President’s Message: This And ThatBy Judy Wilkinson

I'm writing this on the Friday of Labor Day weekend: a beautiful day here in the San Francisco Bay Area at the beginning of what promises to be a weekend in the low 80's! No wildfire smoke; air quality index 80 which is pretty good!

In this space I want to present a number of perhaps seemingly-random thoughts and ruminations!

By the time you read this, Jason Broughton, the first African-American state librarian of Vermont, will have assumed his duties as Director of NLS. This Jason is not to be confused with Jason Yasner who was the NLS representative who presented at the ACB national convention and spoke with our LUA members. See Sharon S's article about that session elsewhere in this issue. As soon as Mr. Broughton has had a few weeks to get acclimated, I will reach out to him and invite him to participate in one of our LUA Link calls, probably the one which has become the de facto slot for the NLS Director, the second or third Tuesday in February. Look for zoom info nearer the date.

Speaking of LUA Link, I'm hoping to gather our three LUA affiliate leaders from California, Kentucky and Texas for a discussion of their doings as affiliates and to discuss the idea of expanding our LUA network of state affiliates. No date yet, but watch for info.

And what a convention LUA had! Brian Charlson's moving presentation of the poems of Amanda Gorman. Elsewhere read his article with links to the readings he played for us. We had 6 sessions in all: on the first Friday of the convention, immediately following our presentation of Amanda Gorman's poetry, Debee Armstrong and Terry Pacheco hosted a wide-ranging discussion of book clubs.

We answered Seven Questions on Sunday and LUA members saw the extensive notes provided by Frank Welte highlighting the ins and outs of map availability.

Who knew narrator JP Linton would prove to be so interesting and entertaining! I for one was enthralled by his visit with our members.

And what would summer be without a new amazing book from our good friend Judy Dixon! I've just received my copy from National Braille Press of Audio Description: what it is, where to find it, and how to use it! Boy I can't wait to expand my horizons beyond Netflix!

After 40 years as NLS's Consumer Relations Officer, Judy is retiring. But she will be returning to NLS as a retired annuitant, meaning she gets to work half time on projects of her choosing: and you can be assured those tasks will relate to braille! We plan to provide a means for sharing memories of and paying tribute to Judy on a future episode of Tuesday Topics. Our vice-president Paul Edwards will be sure to give us advance notice so we can all get our sharing ready.

Just a few days after the close of the ACB convention, LUA held its business meeting, and I was gratified by the number of members who joined us. I want to take this opportunity to thank retiring board members Rebecca Bridges and Tracy George for their years of service. And as that door shuts another opens allowing me to welcome new board members Jane Corona and Leslie Thom. You know Jane from her work as Secretary for Braille Revival League (BRL) and for her work as scribe for Books Without Walls! I don't think we quite realize what work it is to hunt down the books we all present. Jane has even unearthed the recent books about the South. As always, Books Without Walls meets third Wednesdays of odd-numbered months hosted by the redoubtable Paul Edwards.

And if you think Jeff is the only "Thom" who is active in ACB (and my own California Council of the Blind), you'd be so wrong! Leslie Thom joins our board having served with the Families affiliate, with all kinds of education-relation entities, and not least, as donor extraordinaire at various fundraisers. Welcome to you both!

Because we couldn't hold elections last year (at least we thought so) all officers were re-elected this year: officers for two years and board members for one. In Omaha we'll elect board members and so will be back on track in terms of our Constitutional requirements.

I want to thank you members for electing me to serve my second (and given our constitution, my final) term as president. LUA is fortunate to have board members who have served the affiliate for a number of years, some moving from office to office! They definitely keep me in line. Moving forward I look ahead to developing our web presence. Thanks to Carla Ruschival we have purchased (for two years) the domain name "acblibraryusers.org". Now we need to develop the web presence to go with it! I have appointed a subcommittee to move this project forward, and we will be hearing from them at upcoming board meetings. And when the web site goes live: we'll of course sing it from the proverbial rooftops!

Once we have our web presence we can archive back issues of the Ledger, our lists from Books Without Walls, and so much more!

Remember our board meetings (the second Monday of every even-numbered month) are open to all: and we regularly send notices to our lists. Of course members are encouraged to communicate on our members list, as you did recently when discussing matters ranging from the braille version of Reader's Digest to reminiscing about the passing at age 91, of almost mythic narrator, Mitzie Friedlander.

As always, don't hesitate to reach out to me about anything LUA. Your board seeks any ideas you have about what your affiliate should be doing. So as they used to say on old time radio: "Keep those cards and letters coming boys and girls!"

# NEW NLS Director Appointed

Mr. Jason Broughton has been selected as the new Director of the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS) at the Library of Congress.

Prior to joining the Library of Congress, Mr. Broughton was the first African American to serve as Vermont State Librarian. In this role, he engaged in strategic planning for the Department of Libraries and establishing a long-term vision for the State Library. Previously, Mr. Broughton held numerous positions at libraries in South Carolina and Georgia.

Mr. Broughton earned his M.S. in Library and Information Science from the University of South Carolina, a M.S. in Public Administration from the University of South Florida, and a bachelor’s degree in Biology from Florida A&M University.

His first day at NLS is scheduled for Monday, September 13.

Please join us in welcoming Jason Broughton to NLS.

For more information, contact:

Kristen Fernekes

krfe@loc.gov

Head, Communications and Outreach Section

# National Library Service PresentationNational Convention of American Council of the Blind, July, 2021Submitted by Sharon Strzalkowski

President Judy Wilkinson welcomed Jason Yasner and Mark Santangelo of the NLS to provide an update on new programs and policies during the LUA convention in July.

Jason Yasner, interim director since Karen Keninger’s retirement on May 31, 2021, reviewed many aspects of NLS--which he had briefly presented at the general session earlier in the day. He explained that a general reorganization of NLS had occurred in October, 2020. He mentioned several modernization goals: increasing patrons, increasing the catalog of offerings, and content to be delivered wirelessly with new devices. Fred Cook is in charge of the modernization office.

New devices: The next generation player has not yet been fully developed. Ideas include a kind of smart phone, smart speaker type device to take advantage of speech recognition. How to deliver material wirelessly for those who currently do not have this service is a major concern.

BARD Updates: BARD is now in the cloud, which has allowed for much faster download speeds and more patrons to be served. As a result of the Marrakesh Treaty, there is much new material in various languages, and patrons will be able to take advantage of the resource, as well as to determine which languages they prefer when searching for material. Attendees suggested having a separate category for children’s books, and recording any preliminary material not included in the commercial recording. Having descriptions of book covers was another idea that seemed of interest. Jason is involved in an overhaul of the BARD application process, and is encouraging libraries to use duplication on demand as much as possible to facilitate books being sent to those not on BARD but who use the talking book cartridge. An Alexa skill for reading BARD books is being developed. Currently each patron can have five devices linked to their BARD mobile account, but can ask their regional library for more to be added.

Mark Santangelo heads the Patron and Network Engagement Division. There are 94 cooperating libraries in the network, and these are and will continue to be the initial point for patrons when using NLS. Mark wants to elevate the Library of the Year program, and emphasize superior customer service for patrons.

Mark does, however, wish for NLS to interact more directly with patrons. This is currently being done in the music section, which has 24,000 braille titles and an excellent log. The reference section is available and feedback can be sent by email to nlsref@loc.gov. Finally, he mentioned the Bureau of Engraving and Printing currency reader iBill, which NLS has helped to distribute. This program can be reached at 1-844-815-9388 or at meaningful.access@bep.gov.

There was much discussion of the braille display, E-Reader, and Jason mentioned that there have been delays in manufacturing and acquiring some of the needed components. There are two current contractors. The ZoomX E-Reader is being somewhat reconfigured at this point. The braille displays on both E-Readers have 20 cells, no editing capacity, and have a Perkins brailler keyboard. A question was asked about training on these devices, and Judy Dixon mentioned that a hard copy braille manual will accompany each E-Reader and that regional libraries will receive training on their use so as to be of assistance.

President Judy thanked the NLS staff for their participation in the discussion, and was glad about the excellent response by attendees.

## Where to find tactile maps and other tactile graphics resources.

Presenter: Frank Welte, Senior Accessible Media and Braille Specialist, Media and Accessible Design Laboratory, LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, San Francisco, CA

Email: fwelte@lighthouse-sf.org

National Braille Press

Phone: 800-548-7323

Email: orders@nbp.org

Website: [www.nbp.org](http://www.nbp.org)

### Products:

Princeton Braillists tactile map collection.

Periodic Table of the Elements

Touch The Stars

Tactile American Flag, and more.

American Printing House for the Blind

Phone: 800-223-1839

Email: sales@aph.org

Website: [www.aph.org](http://www.aph.org)

### Tactile maps and atlases

Drawing boards and tactile graphic supplies.

National Federation of the Blind

Independence Market

Phone: 410-659-9314 ext. 2216

Email: independencemarket@nfb.org

Website: [www.nfb.org/programs-services/independence-market](http://www.nfb.org/programs-services/independence-market)

### Drawing boards

LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired:

Phone: 415-431-1481

Email: info@lighthouse-sf.org

website: [www.lighthouse-sf.org](http://www.lighthouse-sf.org)

Media and Accessible Design Laboratory, MAD Lab:

[www.lighthouse-sf.org/madlab](http://www.lighthouse-sf.org/madlab)

Tmap:

Email: tmap@lighthouse-sf.org

Web page: [www.lighthouse-sf.org/tmap](http://www.lighthouse-sf.org/tmap)

Touching the News: [www.lighthouse-sf.org/ttn](http://www.lighthouse-sf.org/ttn)

Adaptations store:

Phone: 888-400-8933

Email: adaptations@lighthouse-sf.org

Website: [www.adaptations.org](http://www.adaptations.org)

### TMAPs

Tactile intersection diagrams

Braille/tactile/large print maps

BART system overview map

BART Station maps

San Francisco neighborhoods map

SF Bay Area highways map

SF Bay Area Cities map

SF Bay Area counties map

California map

USA map

Tactile literacy training materials:

Animal Watch Building Graphics Literacy materials Tactile Maps Training Book Apple Swift Playgrounds Tactile Puzzle Worlds - Learn to Code 1 and 2 Braille/large print greeting cards

Sources of tactile graphic files

APH Tactile Image Library

Benetec: Imageshare

BTACTILE

### Graphic embossers

Capsule (swell) paper printers

# One Poet, One ACBBy Brian Charlson

I don’t know about you, but I rarely find myself caught up in the lines of a poem; and then only when they find themselves as lyrics of a song or a clever quote in a speech. Short and to the point has always been my way.

When a poem does catch my attention, maybe even change my outlook on an issue or cause me to reevaluate a long-held belief, I feel compelled to share that poem with others.

This year my thoughts and feelings were completely stolen by the words of a young poet named Amanda Gorman. Her poem “The Hill We Climb”, read allowed to the world at the inauguration of President Joe Biden, echoed my thoughts and feelings as an American. Through her choice of themes, the cadence and rhythm of her lines, and the sincerity in her voice, she brought me to tears and swelled my chest with pride.

I took my thoughts and feelings to the LUA Board of Directors and asked if we might offer a program based on her poetry during the 2021 ACB Conference and Convention as part of the LUA program. To my delight, they agreed and I pulled together a one-hour program of recordings of MS. Gorman’s works read by her at a number of events held at the Library of Congress, from the top of the Empire State Building, from the privacy of her home and with musical accompaniment from the Boston Pops.

Please find below a list of those poems and links that will allow you to listen to them yourself. I know that you will come away feeling as enriched as I did.

**The Hill We Climb**

<https://tinyurl.com/f6f9th7m>

**Fury and Faith**

<https://tinyurl.com/6t5bb88h>

**An American Lyric**

<https://tinyurl.com/nxujt57m>

**Earthrise**

<https://tinyurl.com/3jjwvhwt>

**Using Your Voice As a Political Choice**

<https://tinyurl.com/8a6crdr7>

 **The Republic Rising**

<https://tinyurl.com/h5wkface>

# Focus Topic: Foreign Language Materials Through NLS

NLS continues to work on implementing the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled. The treaty provides for the exchange of accessible-format works across international borders by organizations (Authorized Entities, or AEs) that serve people who are blind, visually impaired, or print disabled.

NLS shared a few successes highlighting this important work. To date, there are 1,118 Marrakesh-obtained works (DBGs, BRGs, and BRTs) in eight languages on BARD. Patrons have downloaded them more than 19,600 times. NLS now has more than 101,000 titles (including DBCs) on the Accessible Books Consortium’s Global Book Service, by far the most of any Marrakesh AE. In early August, NLS simultaneously launched a new online publication, *Foreign Language Quarterly*, and new BARD searching-by-language functions.

Eight network libraries began a pilot program in mid-September to test a new interface developed by the Accessible Books Consortium’s Global Book Service. The pilot will enable NLS to gather information toward possible greater collaboration with the Accessible Books Consortium in the future, for the benefit of network libraries and patrons. The pilot will last through this calendar year.

NLS remains excited and very committed to the groundbreaking Marrakesh Treaty.

# CELA and NLS exchange thousands of titles in new agreement

The Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) in Canada and the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS), at the Library of Congress have partnered to exchange accessible books, thanks to the Marrakesh Treaty, which allows for the exchange of accessible books across national boundaries for people with print disabilities worldwide.

“We are delighted to be receiving more than 80,000 titles in audio and braille from our American colleagues at NLS and they have already added CELA produced titles to their collection. Thanks to the Marrakesh Treaty these types of exchanges are now possible, dramatically increasing the number of titles that accessible libraries like CELA and NLS can access” says Laurie Davidson, Executive Director of the Centre for Equitable Library Access.

Canada was the key 20th country to enter into the Marrakesh Treaty in 2016, bringing the treaty into force and allowing for world-wide exchanges. The US acceded to the agreement in 2019, laying the groundwork for this exchange of these materials with CELA.

As part of the exchange, NLS is adding more than 2000 CELA titles including audio and braille to their collection, and the books have already proved to be popular, with NLS readers downloading the titles more than 10,000 times.

“We could not be more pleased with this opportunity to work with CELA” said Jason Yasner, NLS Deputy Director. “We believe that partnerships such as this, which have resulted from the Marrakesh Treaty, will benefit blind and print disabled readers across the globe for a long time to come.”

Laurie Davidson also says that “the Marrakesh Treaty has the potential to have a profound impact on the number of titles available not only to CELA users but also to users with print disabilities around the world who have far less access to reading materials. Countries like Canada have an obligation to continue working towards a more equitable reading landscape, both at home, and for those around the world to help overcome the book famine for those who read in accessible formats. Reading is a fundamental right, and we know how important access to books is for academic, economic and social inclusion.”

The agreement between CELA and NLS is ongoing, and the organizations will continue to exchange new titles as they become available.

# Searching for Foreign-Language Titles in BARD

Since more foreign-language books are being added to BARD on a regular basis these days, NLS has implemented tools to help you get books in the language or languages you want, whether that be English, Spanish, or one of the other twenty-four languages currently available on BARD. You can specify a default language or languages for lists like Recently Added and Most Popular books, and you can choose a specific language when searching that is different from your default settings if you like.

Below is a brief description on using the new tools:

* Designate your default search language(s) by clicking the “language preference settings” link or the “Accounts Settings” link from the BARD main page.
* Check more than one default search language if you want to see titles in more than one language. (Your regional NLS library can also set these default language preferences for you if you would like.) You can update these settings at any time, or you can specify a different language while searching through the drop-down menu next to the search field on the BARD main page.
* Your default language settings apply to browsing options on the BARD main page, including Recently Added Books and Magazines, Most Popular Books, Browse by Author Last Name, Browse by Title, and Browse by Subject.
* If you choose multiple languages or do not set your language preferences, a language filter drop-down menu on search results screens will display the number of books in each language and allow you to filter results by language. The filters will only display when more than one language is present in the search results.

Setting language filters doesn't affect the options on the Get Books screen in BARD Mobile, such as Most Popular Books. A future update will fix this. In the meantime, if you want to see specific languages with BARD Mobile, you must use the web view.

* From the Get Books screen, tap “BARD Web Site”.
* Follow the above directions to set your preferred language.

For more information, contact your regional NLS library, or send an email message to nlsdownload@loc.gov

## List of Foreign Language Titles Available in NLS & BARD

Below is a list of languages and numbers of titles represented with Marrakesh content in the NLS collection and on BARD:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| English  | DB: 108,616  | BR: 27,769 |
| Arabic  | DB: 78  | BR: 0 |
| Bengali  | DB: 1  | BR: 0 |
| Central Khmer  | DB: 4  | BR: 0 |
| Chinese  | DB: 55  | BR: 0 |
| Croatian  | DB: 6  | BR: 0 |
| Dutch  | DB: 43  | BR: 0 |
| English, Middle (1100-1500)  | DB: 1  | BR: 0 |
| French  | DB: 679  | BR: 5 |
| German  | DB: 200  | BR: 23 |
| Greek  | DB: 45  | BR: 0 |
| Greek (Ancient to 1453)  | DB: 1  | BR: 0 |
| Gujarati  | DB: 1  | BR: 0 |
| Hindi  | DB: 14  | BR: 0 |
| Hmong  | DB: 2  | BR: 0 |
| Hungarian  | DB: 9  | BR: 0 |
| Italian  | DB: 68  | BR: 2 |
| Japanese  | DB: 19  | BR: 0 |
| Korean  | DB: 15  | BR: 0 |
| Latvian  | DB: 8  | BR: 0 |
| Lithuanian  | DB: 7  | BR: 0 |
| Navajo  | DB: 1  | BR: 0 |
| Nepali  | DB: 1  | BR: 0 |
| Norwegian  | DB: 47  | BR: 0 |
| Ojibwa  | DB: 1  | BR: 0 |
| Panjabi  | DB: 3  | BR: 0 |
| Persian  | DB: 1  | BR: 0 |
| Polish  | DB: 45  | BR: 0 |
| Portuguese  | DB: 29  | BR: 0 |
| Romanian  | DB: 1  | BR: 0 |
| Russian  | DB: 568  | BR: 0 |
| Serbo-Croatian  | DB: 5  | BR: 0 |
| Slovenian  | DB: 1  | BR: 0 |
| Spanish  | DB: 2756  | BR: 26 |
| Swahili  | DB: 1  | BR: 0 |
| Turkish  | DB: 5  | BR: 0 |
| Ukrainian  | DB: 41  | BR: 0 |
| Urdu  | DB: 7  | BR: 0 |
| Vietnamese  | DB: 50  | BR: 0 |
| Yiddish  | DB: 2 | BR: 0 |

## Anxious People by Fredrik BackmanBook Review by Linda Adams

What do you get when you mix a retired couple, a young lesbian couple, an embittered bank executive, a 90 year old woman, a real estate agent and a bank robber? Anxious People by Fredrik Backman, available on BARD (DB100531). While viewing an apartment for sale, the perspective buyers and the real estate agent are taken hostage by the bank robber. A father and son police team are sent to negotiate their release. Not only does the author infuse the story with humor and more twists than you can count, he develops each character with sensitivity and injects both mysteries and surprises up to the very end. Whose blood is on the floor, why is there wine hidden in a closet, and, where did the rabbit come from? By the end of the book, you know each of the characters well and would want them as friends. A story of love, friendship, self-forgiveness and the human heart.  Set in Sweden, one might expect it to be another case of the Stockholm Syndrome, but this is one of a different color with six degrees of separation Added to the plot.

## How to Borrow eBooks from a Library on a Kindle for FreeBy David Goldfield, Assistive Technology Specialist

You might think that the only way to get ebooks on your Kindle is to buy them from Amazon. But the truth is that you have access to a literal library of free books. All you need is a library card.

That’s right. Switching from physical to digital books doesn’t mean that you can’t enjoy the benefits of a public library. The process of checking out books isn’t quite as simple as walking into a library and getting lost in the bookcases, but it does work well once you get past the initial setup.

How does this differ from checking out physical books at a library? Well, actually, it’s quite similar. There are only a certain number of ebooks available. If they’re all checked out, you can place a hold. You are allowed to have the ebook for a set number of days, after which it’s automatically returned.

**What You Will Need**

* The most important thing that you’ll need is a Kindle e-Reader—such as the [Kindle Paperwhite](https://www.amazon.com/Kindle-Paperwhite-Waterproof-Storage-Special/dp/B07PS737QQ/?tag=hotoge-20)—or a device with the [Kindle app](https://www.amazon.com/kindle-dbs/fd/kcp/ref%3Dklp_mn?tag=hotoge-20). That could be a [Kindle Fire tablet](https://www.amazon.com/Fire-HD-8-tablet/dp/B07TMJ1R3X/?tag=hotoge-20) or an [iPhone](https://apps.apple.com/us/app/amazon-kindle/id302584613?tag=hotoge-20), [iPad](https://apps.apple.com/us/app/amazon-kindle/id302584613?tag=hotoge-20), or [Android](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.amazon.kindle&hl=en_US&gl=US&tag=hotoge-20) device.
* Second, you should check to make sure that your local library or any libraries that you’re interested in joining support lending with OverDrive. This is the service that’s officially supported by Amazon, and it’s what we will be using in this guide. [Head over to this page](https://www.overdrive.com/libraries) and search for your library.
* Lastly, you will need to obtain a library card from the library that you want to use. Some libraries allow you to get these online, but others require you to visit the physical location. Every library is different, so consult with yours.
* You need a Kindle or the Kindle app and a library card from a library that participates with Overdrive. That’s it!

**How to Find Ebooks from Your Library**

The first thing to do is find an ebook to rent from your library. To do this, you’ll need to visit the website for the library that you have a card with. The screenshots below are specific to my library, but it should be a similar process.

* Find your library on the [OverDrive search map](https://www.overdrive.com/libraries) [https://www.overdrive.com/libraries] using a desktop web browser such as Chrome and select “Visit Library Website.”
* This will take you to your library’s website or to the network that your library belongs to. Click “Sign In” and enter your library card number. You might have to select your specific library if you’re on a network website.
* Next, search for a book that you want to read. From the results, use the search filters to see only “Kindle Books.”
* Find a book that’s labeled as “Available” and select it.
* Now, simply click the “Borrow” button.
* Choose how long you want to borrow the book. The options are usually 7 or 14 days. Then, click “Borrow.”
* A confirmation pop-up will appear with some extra information. The next step is to click “Read Now With Kindle.”
* This will take you to the Amazon listing of the book. Make sure that you’re signed in with the same account as your Kindle e-Reader or app, and then click “Get Library Book.”
* Amazon will confirm that you have checked out the book, and it will appear on your Kindle devices and apps the next time they perform a sync.

**How to Borrow ebooks on Your Phone**

The process described above was done in a web browser on a computer, but you can also check out books with OverDrive’s handy “Libby” app. The process is similar, but we’ll show you how to do it.

* Download the Libby app on your iPhone, iPad, or Android device.
* Once it’s installed, the app will ask whether you have a library card. Tap “Yes.”
* Next, you’ll have a few options for selecting your library. The “Yes, Guess My Library” option will use your location.
* After you’ve selected your library, you’ll be guided through entering your library card number. Once that’s all taken care of, you’ll be ready to search for ebooks. Use the Search tab at the bottom to do this.
* Use the “Refine” tool on the results page to select “Kindle” in the “Supports” section.
* Find a book that says “Borrow.” Books that aren’t currently available will say “Place Hold.”
* Tap “Borrow” on the book information page.
* Select how many days you want to borrow the book, and then tap “Borrow.”
* From here, you’ll want to open the book with “Kindle,” which will take you to the Amazon website.
* Make sure that you’re signed in with the same account as your Kindle e-Reader or app, and then click “Get Library Book.”
* Amazon will confirm that you have checked out the book, and it will appear on your Kindle devices and apps. If you’re already on the device where you want to read the book, tap “Read Now in the Kindle App.”
* This all might seem like a complex process, but it’s pretty easy after you’ve finished all the initial library searching and signing in with your card. From here on out, it’s just a matter of finding books and sending them to [your Kindle](https://www.howtogeek.com/724066/how-to-set-a-book-cover-as-your-kindle-screensaver/). Happy reading!
* <https://www.howtogeek.com/735643/how-to-borrow-ebooks-from-a-library-on-a-kindle-for-free/>

**SF Lighthouse Introduces “Touching the News”**

Have you ever been reading a news item or watching it on TV, and thought to yourself: “I wonder what that picture is?” Ever witnessed a meme on social media go viral and want to get your hands on it to really understand what it is? As people who are blind or have low vision, we are surrounded by visual information there is no other way to experience without somebody else interpreting it for us, usually by describing it verbally. That, of course, is great. We love and appreciate the thought and effort that goes in to doing that. But what if you were delivered, into your mailbox, a tactile graphic associated with a news story. So you could then emboss it yourself, or have it raised on swell paper?

That very thing will be coming to you in the next couple of weeks. You will also get the opportunity to choose from a list of proposed graphics each time, and the one with the most votes will be the one produced that week.

You might find yourself thinking: “I wish I could get my hands on one of those Oscar statues”, well, now you just might, even without being at the Academy Awards. Space travel might be your obsession and you’re itching to know what the helicopter is like that recently took off from and landed on Mars.

There will be more in the coming days but if you are interested in subscribing to this new free service, send an email to ttn@lighthouse-sf.org.

# Who was Robert S. Bray Anyway?By Kim Charlson

Who is Robert S. Bray besides the guy that the American Council of the Blind named an award after in 1977? Have you ever wondered?

This article will attempt to provide readers with some background on who Robert S. Bray was and what he did to contribute to library services for people who are blind and have other disabilities in the U.S. Bray was the first director of what is now the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled.

His professional career began at the District of Columbia Public Library, and after 5 years, he moved over to the Library of Congress in 1940. With time out for naval service during World War II, Bray spent the remainder of his career at the Library of Congress. In 1957, he took over as the Chief of the Division for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (the precursor to NLS). He led the Division until his retirement in 1972.

During his tenure he oversaw the transition from a network of 28 cooperating libraries to more than 100. Readership increased under his direction from around 58,000 to more than 300,000.

Not only did Bray grow the service, experimenting with books on magnetic reel-to-reel tape, he also oversaw it during a technological transition. He took the program from records to cassettes, and he often spent time explaining to patrons how cassette tapes worked, and would personally assuage patron anxieties about the new medium and the transition to a new format.

Under his direction, Talking Book records speeds were reduced from 33-1/3 RPM (revolutions per minute), to 16-2/3 RPM, and finally to 8-1/3 RPM records.

Talking book machines were improved with the introduction of lightweight machines, variable speed controls, remote controls, rechargeable batteries, removable lids, and the initial introduction of cassette players.

Talking Book Topics, in large print only, was improved with the insertion of a sound sheet (or flexible disk) which gave a new dimension to the publication and a new independence to its users.

Under Bray’s leadership the program grew fiscally as well, starting out with slightly over $1 million appropriation for the year he started, to a budget of $9 million when he retired in 1972.

Bray was instrumental in getting the Telephone Pioneer program underway, whereby telephone retirees repaired talking book machines and performed other services in support of the activities of libraries.

Direct circulation of magazines was introduced on record for patrons requesting them, which both reduced the time in the mail as well as removing the workload for network library staff.

During his tenure, Robert Bray repeatedly demonstrated that he was expansion-and service-oriented, and one of the manifestations of this was the procurement of magazines and books in foreign languages, especially Spanish. Another accomplishment was the enlargement of the music section of the DBPH.

Two other initiatives he implemented were controversial at the time. First the expansion of eligibility to include visually impaired and physically disabled individuals. It was felt that this expansion would dilute service to blind readers, but it also provided DBPH with additional funding to support the services. To date, physically disabled readers still have not grown to a majority of the eligible readers served, only representing about eight percent of readership.

A second initiative was the initiation of the subregional library concept. It was felt by some at the time that this effort was misguided in that it diluted the already meager quantity of titles and copies that DBPH could provide to network regional libraries. This concern was addressed in the 1970s when the migration to books on cassettes proved cost effective enough to provide both the regional libraries and the subregional libraries with sufficient quantities to meet their readers’ needs.

In the 1970s DBPH also acquired, tested and recommended (cassette) tape duplication equipment that could be purchased by network libraries to not only repair broken cassettes, but to duplicate extra copies as needed. Eventually, the ability for network libraries to duplicate copies of NLS titles, as well as local recorded books, allowed these libraries to supplement what DBPH was providing.

Prior to 1957, there had only been two national meetings of the regional librarians. During his tenure, there were six, and the tradition has continued to the present. Now regional librarians, subregional librarians, advisory outreach center staff, separate machine-lending agency staff and some administrative agency representatives meet every other year in even-number years to discuss trends and developments in this specialized library field.

Bray was a co-founder of the Library Committee of the President’s Committee on Employment of the Handicapped, and in 1964, he became Chair of the Library Committee, a position he held until his retirement in 1972. He was also a member of the Board of Trustees of the American Foundation for the Blind.

Robert Bray died November 26, 1974 at his home in Florida. He was buried in Fort Myers Memorial Gardens in Fort Myers, Florida.

Bray was given many awards during his career, including the Francis Joseph Campbell Medal in 1968; the Library of Congress’s Distinguished Service Award in 1969; ALA’s Exceptional Service Award in 1973. He was also the recipient of the American Foundation for the Blind’s highest honor, the Migel Medal, and the American Optometric Association’s Apollo Award. Ironically, Robert S. Bray never received the award from the American Council of the Blind that now bears his name. ACB recognized Bray by naming their award in his honor and memory in 1977. This award is given to individuals and/or organizations that have made a significant contribution to improving library services, information technology or communication access. The award is not automatically presented each year.

Since its inception in 1977, recipients of the Robert S. Bray Award include:

**1977:** Charles La Casce

**1980:** Charles Gallozzi

**1982:** C. Stanley Potter

**1983:** James Chandler

**1984:** Jesse Anderson

**1988:** Cloetta Mullen

**1993:** William Wilson

**1994:** Stephen Dwornik

**1995:** Jim Stovall

**1996:** Mary Roatch

**1999:** David Andrus

**2001:** Schwann’s Enterprises

**2002:** Jim Fruchterman (Bookshare.org)

**2003:** Maxine Dorf

**2004:** Kim Charlson

**2006:** Adrian DeBlaey

**2007:** Norma Schecter and Frank Kurt Cylke

**2008:** Tuck Tinsley

**2009:** Barry Levine

**2010:** Judy Dixon

**2011:** Christopher Toth and the Qwitter development team

**2012:** Regal Entertainment Group

**2013:** Weight Watchers

**2016:** Apple and Sarah Herrlinger

**2017:** The Jerry Kuns and Theresa Postello Media and Accessible Design Laboratory

**2018:** American Printing House for the Blind

**2019:** Aira Technology Corporation

**2020:** Karen Keninger

# A little life: a novel by Hanya YanagiharaBook Review by Penny Reeder

Looking for something to read after enjoying this summer’s beach books, I found “A little life: a novel” by Hanya Yanagihara. It had been languishing among the “books I think I want to read someday” on the SD Card plugged into my (Victor Reader) ‘Stream.’

It had been there for a long time. Why, I wondered, hadn’t I gotten to this title? When I saw the reading time, 37 hours, I figured it out.

Deciding that I actually had 37 hours available, and remembering that reviews of the novel, written in 2015, were excellent (It was Shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, after all), I took the plunge. If I don’t like it after an hour, I’ll just delete it and move on through the rest of the list, I said. After the first page, though, I was hooked.

I am still surprised. This is not my usual kind of novel. It’s about four guys who meet and become friends in college and their subsequent lives and lasting friendship. It contains descriptions of unspeakable violence that the central character, Jude, experiences over the first 15 years of his life, after having been retrieved as a newborn from a dumpster, from inside a trash bag. The narratives interrupted my thoughts and my sleep and my summer contentment – Yet, I couldn’t stop reading.

The novel’s focus on the preoccupations of college boys, then young men, and finally guys who reach late middle age would ordinarily cause me to abandon the story almost as soon as I realized that I had little in common with Malcolm, or J.B., or Willem, or Jude. And how does Hanya Yanagihara, who is a woman presumably somewhat like me, know so much about the interior lives of young men who become friends while sharing a dorm suite at a prestigious university, and beyond? (That’s a question for a more knowledgeable reviewer than I!) So, even though women’s perspectives are barely – if ever – acknowledged within the pages of Yanagihara’s novel, and even though such a one-dimensional perspective would, ordinarily, cause me to roll my irreverent eyeballs with disdain and toss the book aside – I kept reading and kept right on loving nearly every one of the male protagonists (except, of course, for the obviously despicable villains!)

I really loved these guys! The tragedy of Jude’s unutterably horrific childhood caused me to realize – certainly not for the first time – that there are too many people in the world who endure lives so horrible that we can’t imagine how they manage to survive – and to remind myself that I may not really know anything about what a person has gone through before I judge them as this or that or the other kind of person, and to remind myself of that long-ago lesson from Sunday School … Judge not, lest you be judged.

The descriptions of Jude’s mental illness – and his thoroughly unacceptable methods for dealing with it – were, in fact, revelatory. Again that reminder: Judge not …

There were so many people to love – all of those people who loved Jude themselves and courted him, forgave him, painted him, befriended him, excused him, adopted him, enjoyed his company, mourned him. Their loyalty, their determination, and their love of a flawed but still loveable man are inspiring.

The love story of Willem and Jude is so beautiful. So worth reading. So worth vicarious experience. Such an undeniable justification for enduring all of those pages that describe so much cruelty and violence.

Finally, the book’s sub-focus on Jude’s disability, his denial of its resulting limitations, and his friends’ clandestine focus on the same are themes that are usually so off-putting to me as a person with my own disability that also involves undeniable limitations, that – again ordinarily – I might have abandoned the book just a few pages in! But I didn’t. I related. I empathized. I didn’t say, “Get over it!,” or “life isn’t fair!” I kept reading. I kept empathizing and sympathizing and cheering on all of those people who loved Jude with never waning efforts to persuade him to love himself as much as each of them loved him. I hope my recommitment to the promise to judge not … will be a resolution I can stick to, even when I interact with those people who ceaselessly bemoan the too many restrictions their disabilities impose on their lives.

The best thing about “A Little Life” is the love story. The worst things are the heart-stopping violence, the cruelty, the in-the-end losing struggle with mental illness.

Speed up the reading rate of your text-to-speech digital device if you like, and read all 30-plus recorded hours, because it’s the love, between friends, between lovers, and of humanity and life, that will move you, make you glad you read the book, and cause you to recommend “A Little Life, A Novel” to other readers and patrons of BARD.

**A little life: a novel DB 81645**

**BARD**

**Yanagihara, Hanya.**

**Reading time 37 hours, 21 minutes.**

**Read by Erik Sandvold.**

**A production of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Library of Congress.**

# Editor’s NoteSharon Strzalkowski

What a bonanza of topics we have in this issue! And it’s all because of you members who have contributed technical articles, book reviews, convention material and more. Thanks so much for caring about our library community enough to step forward to make a contribution. Please submit material for our next issue to me at strzal@charter.net, or call me at 508-363-3866. Thanks very much.

# Library Users of AmericaOfficers and Board MembersJuly 2021

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