# LUA LEDGER

LIBRARY USERS OF AMERICA, INC.Spring 2022

President: Judy WilkinsonEditor: Sharon Strzalkowski

Treasurer: Adam Ruschival

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### Library Users of America: Let us Live Up to Our NameBy Judy Wilkinson, President

The messages out there are so mixed! Are we still wearing masks? Despite airport announcements seemingly every five minutes, my friend who was at the Boston Airport just last week (first days of April) reported many folks not wearing masks at Logan. My sister just told me this morning her family is not yet ready to go to restaurants. On his birthday Sunday April 3, my husband Steve took a bus for the first time in two years. The driver would not let him pay; there were no other passengers. I’ve just returned from getting my new Seeing Eye Dog. In the middle of our class, New Jersey lifted most rules so after wearing masks in the house including the dining room, in vans, in stores, we were finally able to be mask free. It felt amazing! New staff hired during the past two years, had lunch in the dining room for the first time.

But what about libraries? For recent history many of our NLS libraries were closed and some people did not even receive books unless they had access to BARD. during the early days of the pandemic, a friend told me about the elaborate procedures for borrowing books from the Oakland library even to the point of having books wiped as they were returned and handed to patrons in sealed plastic bags. Now folks who would go to all that trouble to borrow (and distribute) materials are truly devoted to the concept of free public libraries. When we lived in New York, I’d spend hours at our local branch with my assistant, deciding what CDs to borrow. I would visit the Andrew Heiskell Talking book Library and load my backpack with little boxes of cassettes. But that was years ago.

My state talking book library in Sacramento has long had public hours for patrons to walk in, and sub regional libraries have had such privileges as well, but few patrons ever show up.

So not to put too fine a point on it: when were you last in a library, NLS or otherwise? We’ve all had good reason to stay away for perhaps the past two years, but before that. I know I went a little over two years ago to test out AIRA at my local library. It was the first time I had been there for years! Not since I attended a Knitting Circle and a Book Discussion Group—where I finally tired of the same predictable voices and same predictable points of view. At the end of one summer, my sister and I attended a dinner for all of us who had participated in a summer reading program: we met such interesting people! Who knew a library would actually provide dinner!

I suspect few of us take advantage of the miracle of the public library. I have been thinking of this as Brian Charlson has proposed a discussion for our LUA presentations at the ACB convention of all the services our libraries offer which we might not be aware of such as baking pans and tools for loan. Almost every town has a public library. Some cities have specialized libraries such as San Francisco’s Mechanics Library, originally founded in the early 20th century so poor working “men” (yes mostly men) could get books for free.

Might we lose it if we do not use it? NLS officials tell us membership is down, despite the rising number of print disabled persons! And if folks don’t use NLS, do they use their public libraries? Might we lose them?

So, getting back to our name! It is a fairly pretentious name when you think about it: “Library Users of America”. The least we can do given such a grandiose name is start living up to it. If you are a braille reader and haven’t borrowed a braille book lately: do it! If you never use BARD, use it! If you never use other services like BookShare: use it. Yes, I know it can cost, but just today I received a notice that California Seniors can now borrow books from BookShare for free! n And I know many states have sponsorships for the service. I wonder how many will take advantage of this wonderful resource. And, if we keep thinking our local public library is not for us and we don’t go then sooner or later, there won’t be anything there for us. Those reading machines will at best be put in some basement storage room, and at worst, will be dumped. I pledge here and now that before I write to you again, I will walk the six blocks (with my new Seeing Eye Dog Echo) to my San Leandro Library. the people of my city voted to build a library around 10 years ago when citizens were not funding any spending initiatives. We now have a beautiful library. And if the name is grandiose, the least I can do as your president is check it out! And I hope you will join me and go to your local library to see what they have. If they do not know we’re here, they can’t provide services and events which include us. And when you do take that journey; write the LUA list about your experience.

In short, let us live up to our name!

### A Note from the EditorSharon Strzalkowski, Editor

It has been my pleasure to serve as the editor of the LUA Ledger for a couple of years now. I have much appreciated all the articles and ideas for articles that have come my way from LUA members. I hope that the issues presented have been of value and entertainment. I look forward to what comes next and am sure that a new editor will surprise and delight us all with engaging material. Thank you.

### LUA at the ACB Conventionby Judy Wilkinson, President

You will not want to miss the four LUA sessions at this year’s ACB convention. Come in person or join us via Zoom in the hybrid settings for all our sessions.

1. Up close and personal with Jason Broughton, newly appointed director of NLS. Those of you who joined our LUA Link call held jointly with the Multicultural Affairs Committee know what an engaging and personable man Mr. Broughton is. At the point of that February call, he let us know that he was still in the process of assuming the job of NLS Director. He will be a lot more experienced when our convention participants meet with him following his presentation to the entire convention. We will have a full session Sunday July 3 at 1:15 (CDT) to ask further questions and participate in a more in-depth experience with Mr. Broughton.
2. Later that afternoon in the next session (2:30 CT) join Brian Charlson and me to discuss all the things you did not know your library might provide: from specialty cooking pans to DIY tools and more.
3. On Tuesday, July 5 the yet to be chosen talking book narrator will present to the entire convention in the morning, but we will have our own time at 1:15 (CDT) for a more in-depth intimate gathering and will be able to ask our own questions.
4. One Book One ACB has real meaning this year in that this event is co-sponsored not only by our usual partner BRL, but also The Association of Blind Teachers, Friends in Art, Blind Pride International and the Multicultural Affairs Committee. the book “There Plant Eyes: A Personal And Cultural History of the Blind” by M. Leona Godin DB 104014 BR 23825.

Partially sighted, Ms. Godin reads her book and states that she is using JAWS to help her read the text. Frankly, I am as interested in how she did that as anything else. Not to mention the title: “There Plant Eyes”? This promises to be a lively discussion.

And LUA members: don’t forget our business meeting prior to the official convention on Friday, June, 24, at 2:30 (CDT) via Zoom only.

We hope you will pay the $10 registration fee when you register for the entire ACB convention. Remember, this is to help defray LUA’s convention costs and is not part of your LUA membership dues. For years now, LUA has sponsored the narrator as a Pearl sponsor (or whatever they are calling the thousand dollar sponsor these days.)

We had wonderful attendance at our sessions last year. Help us do even better this year.

### NLS releases BARD Mobile for Android version 1.4The BARD Support Team

NLS is pleased to announce the release of version 1.4 of the BARD Mobile Android app, which allows patrons using Android devices running operating systems 7 through 11 to read contracted braille with supported refreshable braille displays via the BrailleBack app from the Google Play store. Supported displays are listed in the description of the BrailleBack app in the Google Play store at <https://bit.ly/3r9T71g>.

Version 1.4 of BARD Mobile for Android includes the following:

* Braille Reflow adjusts formatting for displays shorter than forty cells
* Braille Auto-scroll allows users to move through braille text automatically based on adjustable time increments
* Adjust User Account Settings to show audio and/or braille content based on reading preferences
* Troubleshoot and reset the app to delete data, including downloaded content or all data from the device
* Various bugs fixes under the hood.

Users who have enabled auto-updates for the BARD Mobile app in the Play Store will get version 1.4 on their mobile device seamlessly. Others will need to manually update the app through the Play Store. Users can identify the version running on their devices by checking the bottom of the Settings screen.

While NLS eReader pilot devices are not currently compatible with the Android platform, NLS is working on a solution to achieve full compatibility between NLS eReaders and Android devices.

Additional details on features and set-up for BrailleBack can be found in the BARD Mobile Android User Manual at BARD Mobile Android User Manual or in the BARD Mobile How-To Series of videos. The manual will be updated soon to include a new section on connecting a refreshable braille display.

### New Magazines Available on BARDThe BARD Support Team

Over one hundred braille and audio magazines are available to download from BARD. The latest titles added to the collection are Dogster, Interweave Knits, Dell Sunday Crosswords, and Popular Science.

Dogster offers ideas for interacting with dogs, lifestyle stories, new products, and advice on caring for dogs.

Interweave Knits replaces Knitscene, which is no longer published. Interweave Knits is similar in scope, covering articles and patterns on knitting.

Dell Sunday Crosswords is an excellent way to hone your solving skills while matching wits with today’s top puzzle constructors.

Popular Science. Published quarterly, Popular Science is the world's largest science and technology magazine, reporting on the intersection of science and everyday life and delivering a look at the future now.

Dogster, Interweave Knits, and Dell Sunday Crosswords can be downloaded in formatted braille. Popular Science has been available in braille on BARD for some time, and now it is available in audio as well.

Each of these magazines are available to download from BARD. Subscribe to any or all these titles and find the latest edition on your Wish List when the next issue becomes available on BARD.

If you have any questions or would like assistance subscribing to these magazines, contact your regional library.

### A Library and Much Moreby Brian Charlson

Like most of you, I get nearly all of my library books from my state Braille and Talking Book Library. Some come in those little blue boxes, others in big, strapped ones but these days, I get them online through BARD.

In addition to braille books and magazines, I listen to Talking Books, borrow audio described movies and take part in online activities such as trivia contests and book clubs. All in all, quite an array of content and services.

Like some of you, I also take advantage of services such as those offered by Bookshare, Audible and Learning Ally, but only if I cannot find what I want at the Perkins Braille and Talking Book Library. I must admit that I prefer human voice recordings over synthetic voices. Even with the improvements over the years, there is still something missing in listening to a synthetic voice reading poetry or a heartfelt scene in a novel. What can I say, I am a bit old school.

While I have a library card in my wallet for my town free public library, I do not turn to them when I think of looking for something to read. They do have a limited collection of audio books and even an occasional audio described movie, but I do not take the time to browse their holdings when it is so easy for me to call my reader advisor or go online and look through the new books on BARD.

As a card holder at the Watertown Free Public Library I do get their electronic newsletter. It is there that I learn about book readings, art exhibits and concerts being held either at the library or at the park next door. It was through their newsletter that I learned about what else the library loaned; much more than just books and movies.

I went online and looked around to see what other libraries have to offer. Here is what I found.

1. if you’re trying to decide whether you’d really use an e-reader enough to justify the expense, check one out for a few weeks and take it for a test drive before buying one of your own. Not all such devices are accessible but some are and this is an affordable way to test one out. You will need to do a bit of preliminary online research to see if those available for loan have speech or magnification features you can turn on and off.
2. Wi-Fi hotspots, to increase Internet connectivity in rural or economically disadvantaged areas or if you want to access BARD while on vacation where the B&B may not have Wi-Fi. This will connect you on a temporary basis.
3. Many libraries now lend tools. Not everyone wants to buy a tool they’ll only use once, either because of budget constraints or because it feels wasteful or unnecessary. Enter the tool-lending library, where library patrons can check out any number of tools from their public library.
4. Toys can be pricey, and as children grow and lose interest in them, they can languish unused, taking up precious storage space in your home. Instead of buying a new toy or puzzle each time your child changes their mind about what is “cool”, check out the public library or a toy lending library in your town and get involved in the sharing economy.
5. One of my problems in using PowerPoint has been getting my hands-on free images. The New York Public Library (NYPL), the second-largest public library in the United States behind the Library of Congress, has over 200,000 free images that you can download from your home or wherever you happen to be. You don’t even need to have an NYPL library card; this perk is available for anyone with an Internet connection. Called the Public Domain Collections, these high-resolution images run the gamut from old photographs and maps to fashion illustrations and public service posters from the turn of the century.
6. Museum passes are available from my local library branch and maybe from yours. I don’t always know what I want to do and these little gems can both inspire and keep down the cost of a weekend adventure.
7. The “Living Library” is one of the newest and most exciting offerings libraries now have. Essentially, people “check out” an individual who’s willing to talk to them about their personal experience on a specific topic. You may want to talk to someone who is making a living you are considering changing to, or maybe you just want to talk to someone who knows more about a subject than you do. It’s a great way to learn about different cultures, experiences, and time periods as well as foster greater community interaction.
8. Sporting equipment may be more your kind of thing. At some libraries you can leave with the winter gear you need to traverse icy sidewalks and snowy lanes safely. Both the Yale Lillian Goldman Law Library and the Readfield Community Library in Maine offer snowshoes, snow shovels, and sleds on loan. At one point, both the Chicago Public Library and the Erie County Public Library of Pennsylvania had fishing pole and tackle box check-out policies. Some libraries around the country are even checking out hiking and sports equipment. Examples include the Fontana Regional Library in North Carolina and the Washington Trails Association’s Gear Lending Library.
9. You may be in the mood for a little dress-up. For years, Bolivar County Library in Mississippi has offered Santa suits to its patrons. According to library officials, they’re in high demand. Maybe you are looking for a way to keep down the cost of Prom night. Then see if your local library is checking out or giving one away. The Dallas Public Library, Gilbert Public Library, and the Elmwood Park Public Library in Illinois have all done this, making teens and cash-strapped parents very happy. It shouldn’t surprise you that some libraries loan out Halloween costumes too. The Ann Arbor District Library in Michigan, Saline Public Library in Arkansas, and Lisbon Public Library in Iowa all offer hundreds of different costumes to choose from—and they’re not the only ones!
10. We all want to DIY, but tools can be expensive (and difficult to store)! Fortunately, there are tons of libraries all across the US that lend out thousands of tools. The Oakland Public Library in California has a dedicated Tool Lending Library of up to 5,000 items, while the Hands-on New Orleans Tool Lending Library has 3,000 (though you do have to pay a fee).
11. If you’re like me, you love trying out weird new recipes. Unfortunately, some of those funky recipes can involve equally funky tools that you may never use again. Fortunately, there are now libraries that lend out cooking supplies. Several libraries offer cake pans, including the Keokuk Public Library in Iowa and the Coventry Public Library in Rhode Island. For other kitchen-related items, you can try Kitchen Share in Oregon or scan a tool lending library like the Maine Tool Library.
12. If you or your loved one has ever thought about picking up a musical instrument but don’t want to spend the hundreds of dollars upfront, why not see if your library will loan you one? The Forbes Library in Massachusetts offers several different kinds, including the banjo and dulcimer; the Ann Arbor District Library of Michigan offers some unusual instruments and equipment like the otamatone digit and the Bass Station II.
13. Another fast-growing collection is seed libraries, which are collections of seeds that patrons can “check out” (take) and bring back additional seeds when the growing season is over. To learn more, check out the Seed Library Social Network or learn more from the Pima County Public Library in Arizona.

I would think that many of you are saying to yourselves “OK, but I don’t live in the big city where these kinds of things are available.” If you have been paying attention to my list, you should have noticed that most of these libraries are located in middle or even small sized cities and towns. The more important the local library is to your town, the more likely it is that they have stepped out of the box and are trying out new things.

I would also suggest that you ask about inter-library loans and library networks. It may take you a little longer to get your hands on what you are looking for, but it will be worth the effort.

In closing, let me say that the best way to get these kinds of services is to ask. Libraries want to stay relevant. They depend on public support both through taxes and donations. Who knows, you might just want to get involved in your local library and bring to them your skills and time and expand their services to your community.

For now, please take the time to look around you and see just what a library means to you and what you mean to them.

### Audiobooks, AI, and humans – where do they stand?Reprinted from, Good e-Reader - Thursday, February 3, 2022David Goldfield, Assistive Technology Specialist

The audiobook segment is easily the most lucrative at the moment. With demand ever on the rise, one might have the impression the voice artists are having a field time reading out the books and bringing home fat pay cheques. After all, it’s a fairly simple job, at least it seems so, one that does not require any special skills. It’s something that any book lover with a good voice will love doing. Unfortunately, that isn’t the case as there is competition brewing on the horizon, and it’s not from fellow voice narrators of the human kind but robots with a human-like voice. Here are how things stand at the moment.

Typically, producing an audiobook can take months with the cost easily stretching into thousands of dollars. Much of that involves studio time as well as paying the voice artist. Plus, there is significant post-production work involved too. All of this makes producing an audiobook quite an arduous as well as an expensive affair. No wonder, this has created the space for the AI-enabled text-to-speech tools that can prove to be an exact replica of the human voice.

The benefits are many, with the biggest positive of the automated audiobook production process being that it cuts both the production cost as well as time by a significant margin. The entire process is also greatly simplified as well, so much that an entire audiobook can now be produced within just days or even hours. Compare that to the months that it could take to produce a similar audiobook via the manual process and the difference should be immediately perceptible.

Advances made in the text-to-speech domain in the last couple of years have also been really awesome so that it can often be impossible to make out the real from the artificial. Just listen to the most recent iterations of Siri or Alexa and you will know what is being implied, and they are able to come up with the relevant answers because they are scanning the web and reading the answers from some site. The same philosophy applies to the automated audiobook production process where a text-to-speech software is at work, and creating magic, it can be said.

That said, it just isn’t a standard text-to-speech software that is at work here narrating the audiobook. Rather, it has to be smart enough to inject just the right dose of emotions to make it sound like being narrated by a real human. For a book can have portions that are describing a sad event while on the next paragraph itself, things can become exciting, joyous, and fun. Similarly, there are times when a high-pitched tone is needed, or a fast-paced narration which can be common when narrating horror or thriller stuff and such. Then, there is that momentary pause that too is important to build suspense.

The challenge for the synthetic voice is to have all of the above qualities and apply those according to the text being narrated. It is only then that the artificial voice will be able to hold on to human attention for the duration of the audiobook. Otherwise, it can begin sounding monotonous within minutes, when the average audiobook can stretch for eight hours. Also, while the general perception is that the synthetic voice is for the non-fiction segment, some of the players here have taken it upon themselves to break the barrier.

So, where do the real humans fit in? Humans narrating the stories make for the best-case scenario from the listener’s perspective. Unlike the machines, the humans will need little to no guidance on how to narrate the text, modulating the tone and pitch to match the emotion that the story dictates. However, while that is great, the cost of production and the time it takes to produce an audiobook aren’t conducive to producing audiobooks in sizeable numbers. That would mean a backlog of titles that could take years or even decades to be converted into audiobooks. Plus, there are new titles getting added every year.

It is here that synthetic voice makes a strong case for itself. It’s cheap and fast, which makes it best suited to those with a limited budget or the self-publishers who lack the deep pockets needed to have a human voice actor read out the text. Add to that the hundreds and thousands of titles that need to be converted to audiobooks and all of that makes fertile ground for the synthetic voice to thrive.

Will that mean the end of the road for human voice actors? Not really as there still is a market for specially made hand-crafted stuff even in the age of industrial automation. That said, the problem – if that is the right word to describe the scenario – is that it has been reduced to a niche market. Chances are that the voice actors too might end up being that and such audiobooks would sell for a premium.

On the other hand, there could be the relatively cheaper audiobooks that have been mass produced via automated tools. With the advances that synthetic voice has made over the years and the way it is progressing, soon it could be really hard to make out if it has been narrated by a real human or a synthetic voice, unless explicitly stated. Till that happens, there still is a market for human voice artists.

Another scenario that might emerge is the hybrid model of audiobook production where the voice actor lends his or her voice only in certain portions of the text while his voice is artificially regenerated for the rest of the book. That said, it is just plain speculation at best.

Also, while synthetic voice goes on to capture much of the market, as it seems likely given the current pace of development of test-to-speech tools, the one question that demands an answer is how is the voice owner compensated, if at all. If yes, is there a standard compensation rate or is every company playing as per their own rules.

In other words, what is amply evident is that the entire audiobook production industry is still at its nascent stages and there could be several upheavals before things settle to a rhythm.

<https://goodereader.com/blog/audiobooks/audiobooks-ai-and-humans-where-do-they-stand>

### One Person, One AccountReprinted from NLS on the Move, October 2021The BARD Support Team

The NLS BARD rule of "one person, one account” is easy to remember and offers many advantages. Here are a few scenarios, drawn from questions asked by patrons, which can help clarify this point.

1. You usually use BARD Mobile on your iPhone, but you need to take your iPad to a medical appointment that will involve hours of waiting. Could your books be loaded to the iPad without compromising your account and downloads to the phone?

Absolutely. If you use BARD Mobile, you are allowed to add up to five mobile devices in a 365-day period. That could be one phone and one tablet, or, if you have them, a mix of iOS and android devices. Of course, most people find just one or two devices to be sufficient, but your account has room to grow if you need it. Within each 30-day period, you are allowed to download up to 100 books with BARD Mobile. If you want to spread them out over two or three mobile devices, you can. If you download the same book to two devices, so you can start it on your iPhone and finish it on your iPad, for instance, it will only count as one book against your 100 books for the 30-day period.

1. You decide that you want to change your email address. Do you need to close your BARD account and get a new one with the new address?
No. You can keep your BARD account and change your email address/login ID to your new one. BARD communicates with users via email. If you cannot receive email messages from your current email address, you must change your email address/login ID in BARD. You can do this yourself by following the instructions below.
2. Click the Account Settings link on the BARD main page.
3. On the resulting page, follow the link to update your email address. (Note that a change in your email address will prompt a password reset.)
4. Follow the instructions in the email BARD sends you that contains a temporary password that is to be used to log into your BARD account.
5. Once you’re logged in, follow the prompts to create your new password.

Or you can write to us for help if needed. And remember, when you write to us, if your login address is different from the address on your message, be sure to tell us.

1. You are moving from one state to another, but you still want to download your BARD books and magazines. Do you need to close the account in one state and open another?
No. The account is your account, and it can go with you throughout the United States or even abroad. If you move out of your regional library's service area, just call or email them with your new address. They will transfer your account to the new library. You do not even have to change your email login ID or password.
2. Your daughter has been downloading books for you, so you used her email address to log in. She is moving away, and your neighbor is going to help. Can you change the login email to be your neighbor's email address for his convenience?
Yes, you can. Changing the email login means changing the password, too, for your protection, but your account does not change. Remember: One person, one account.

If you need help with any of the above scenarios or any other, we are here. Just send a message to us at nlsdownload@loc.gov.

### Rare Book Collection from AFB AcquiredNEWS PROVIDED BY, Library of Congress October 28, 2021

The Library of Congress has acquired the M.C. Migel Memorial Rare Book Collection from the American Foundation for the Blind, comprised of over 750 items dating from 1617 to the present, including books by and about Hellen Keller and other blind authors. The collection is a treasure trove of seminal books on blindness, maps, rare pamphlets and many volumes of poetry, biographies and autobiographies.

Among the rare finds in the collection are books that provide a historical perspective on changing social attitudes toward the blind and innovations in the treatment and education of the blind over the past 300 years.

“The acquisition of the collection from the American Foundation for the Blind expands in a significant way the Library’s coverage of the historical responses to the practical, social and institutional needs of the blind,” said Mark Dimunation, chief of rare books and special collections at the Library of Congress. “This is a most welcome addition for researchers as well as those who rely upon the Library for services and support.”

Jason Broughton, director of the Library of Congress’ National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled, added: “The Library’s acquisition of this collection reinforces our long-standing commitment to serving blind and disabled communities. NLS works daily to ensure that all may read, and the Migel collection provides an excellent historical foundation as to why our work has been, and continues to be, so necessary.”

Kirk Adams, president and chief executive of the American Foundation for the Blind, said the acquisition of the Migel collection by the Library of Congress “is a wonderful step forward towards disseminating the history of blindness and recognizing the importance of disability history.”

“These volumes reflect centuries-old stigma surrounding blindness, and societies’ efforts at progress in the form of work opportunities for blind men and women, innovative teaching methods, and the twists and turns in the development of tactile books,” Adams said.

There are books by or about Samuel Gridley Howe (1801-1876), considered the founder of education for the blind in the United States and whose activism included advocating for the abolition of slavery, prison reform, support for refugees from Crete and caring for intellectually disabled children. The collection includes a copy of Howe’s “Atlas of the United States Printed for the Use of the Blind” published in 1837 and written in raised roman type.

Robert Irwin, the first director of the American Foundation for the Blind, began the collection in 1926 with a $1,000 grant approved by the board to create a definitive reference library for the blindness field. As the library donations grew from around the country, the foundation hired librarian Helga Lende to manage the collection. Lende expanded it by traveling to Europe and acquiring volumes in English, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Esperanto, Dutch, Polish and Norwegian.

Highlights from the M.C. Migel Rare Book Collection

The earliest book in the collection, published in France in 1617, concerns Louis Grotto, an Italian ambassador and orator who was blind, and is titled “Les Harangues de Louys Grotto, Aveugle D’Hadrie Admirable en Eloquence” (The Speeches of Louys Grotto, A Blind Man Famed for His Eloquence).

The first landmark book in the library is Denis Diderot’s “Lettre Sur Les Aveugles À l'Usage de Ceux Qui Voyent” (A Letter Regarding the Blind for the Attention of Those Who See), published in 1749. Considered radical in its day, the book explores the effect of all five senses on the intellect and what happens when there is loss of sight.

Nicholas Saunderson’s “The Elements of Algebra,” published as a series of 10 books in 1740, a year after his death, is also in the collection. Saunderson became blind as an infant after contracting smallpox, but his intellectual powers earned him a job as professor of mathematics at Cambridge University.

Works in the collection also highlight the expansion of tactile methods of reading beginning in the late 18th century. The Migel library includes the 1839 edition of Louis Braille’s book explaining his invention of a tactile six-dot reading and writing system rather than raised letters of the alphabet.

The collection contains two copies of the rare first edition of “Essai Sur L'Education des Aveugles” (Essay on the Education of the Blind) by Valentin Haüy, published in Paris in 1786 using embossed letters of the French alphabet. Haüy founded the first school for blind children in Paris and a similar school in Russia, spearheading the creation of others in many European countries. His work reportedly sparked the beginning of modern methods in the education of blind people.

The rarest book in the collection is “Précis Sur L’Histoire de France” (A Summary of the History of France), published in Paris in 1837. This volume is one of only three known copies of the first edition of the first book embossed using the braille system. The other two copies are located at the Perkins School for the Blind in Boston, and at the Haüy Museum in Paris.

While Diderot, Hauy and Braille were the main proponents of modern methods of reading for the blind in France, the Migel library includes works from directors, inventors and writers who furthered their education and understanding in other countries. Among them was William Moon, an English inventor who lost his vision at 21 and in 1845 created the Moon Type, an embossed printing that used the outline of letters derived from the Latin alphabet and was considered easier to use than braille.

The more than 60 boxes in the rare collection include a letter from Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians written in raised type; other scripture passages; a picture book for the blind and a pamphlet describing musical notation for the blind.

### Escape from the Headline News:A Book Review: “French Braid” by Anne Tyler and “Lessons in Chemistry” by Bonnie Garmus Penny Reeder

Are you looking for a good book? An escape from news of horrible war, COVID surges, the price of groceries, subway shootings, trumpeting Senators? I have two wonderful novels to recommend. Neither is long. I read them both this week (yes, because they are great, and also, yes, because I’m craving escape [See above summary of headline news])!

“French Braid is Anne Tyler’s newest novel. It is wonderful.

I especially love reading Ms. Tyler’s novels because they usually take place in Maryland, and getting to know the families she writes about and hearing in my head all the conversations her families exchange feels to me like visiting my own family from 40 years ago when we all shared our lives with one another on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. Anne’s teen-aged heroines get summer jobs in Rehoboth, all the guys ask one another, “How was the traffic?” Moms shop at the Giant, and everyone loves Silver Queen Sweetcorn. It’s just like a visit back to the 1960s (or 70s or 80s or 2000s – with all of the people I love, and miss.

And, this story perfectly captures every family I know – or at least most of them – with each separate family member doing their best to thrive as an individual, and every individual thoroughly, but unintentionally, connected to every other family member. Just like in real life! Just like in my family too (back in the day, and still!)

Ms. Tyler is right: A family? A French braid? The same thing!

The second novel I read, Lessons in Chemistry, by Vonnie Garmus, took me back even further in time – to the late 50s and early 1960s – to a reality that captures exactly every single thing that was wrong with the way our culture treated women—and everyone else – then, and, too often, still! Poor Elizabeth, tilting at those 20th Century windmills of academia, and capitalism, and misogyny, and racism, and religion, and intolerance, … we can keep going… But, the thing is, this novel is laugh-out-loud funny!

And, in the end, Elizabeth, the scientist who refuses to buy into the cultural definitions that attempt to keep her in line, wins! Fairy tales can come true – at least in Ms. Garmus’s novel – and you should run out and get this book right now because you will love it!

My thanks to the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled for making so many of Anne Tyler’s wonderful novels available on BARD, and to BookShare.org, for releasing an accessible copy of “Lessons in Chemistry” the very week it was published and so happily reviewed in Ron Charles’ Friday column in the Washington Post – and to Audible.com, where, I have to admit it, I actually read the book this time (I had a credit I needed to use), the narration was fabulous!

### Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library Named Finalist for 2022 IMLS National Medal for Museum and Library Service

WATERTOWN, Mass**.**—The Institute of Museum and Library Services announced on April 7, 2022, that the Braille & Talking Book Library located on the campus of the world renown Perkins School for the Blind, is among 30 finalists for the 2022 National Medal for Museum and Library Service. The Perkins Library is the only institution in Massachusetts to be selected as a finalist for this award.

“The Perkins Library is a leader in the delivery of accessible library services, information access, specialized format reading materials, assistive technology, braille literacy, and audio description and accessible programming for patrons who are blind, have low vision, reading disabilities and other physical conditions that make it difficult or impossible to hold a book, turn pages, and read or process the printed word. We are so proud to have our programs and services recognized and acknowledged as a valued library service,” said Library Director Kim Charlson.

“What our dedicated Library staff provide is access to printed information through the widest possible range of accessible formats – digital audio, braille, large print, adaptive technology, the internet, eBooks, audio description, and other emerging technologies. Now, more than ever, access to the printed word for people with all types of disabilities is possible in so many ways, and the Perkins Library champions all forms of access to information, through engagement with many industry and library partners, fostering inclusion of people with disabilities into the mainstream of our culture and society.”

The National Medal is the nation’s highest honor given to museums and libraries that demonstrate significant impact in their communities. For more than 25 years, the award has honored institutions that demonstrate excellence in service to their communities by recognizing 15 library finalists and 15 museum finalists. Five finalists will be selected as winners of the medal in June. Representatives from winning institutions will be honored for their extraordinary contributions during a virtual National Medal Ceremony this summer.

“So many libraries have done such good work over the last two very difficult years. We are proud to present the 30 finalists for the IMLS National Medal,” said IMLS Director Crosby Kemper. “Their work is emblematic of the response of the library and museum worlds to simultaneously fulfilling their mission and serving their communities.”

For more information, please visit perkinslibrary.org. To see the full list of finalists and learn more about the National Medal, visit imls.gov.

About the Institute of Museum and Library Services

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's libraries and museums. We advance, support, and empower America’s museums, libraries, and related organizations through grantmaking, research, and policy development. Our vision is a nation where museums and libraries work together to transform the lives of individuals and communities.

About the Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library

The Perkins Library provides free accessible public library services to people with print disabilities in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and throughout New England through the delivery of audio and braille books, magazines, large print materials, playback equipment, described videos, and other accessible programs and services.

# LIBRARY USERS OF AMERICAOFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERSJULY 2021

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### Vice President: Paul Edwards, 2021/2023 (second term) 20330 NE 20th CourtMiami, FL 33179-2202Home: 305-692-9206Cell: 305-984-0909Email: Edwards.paul955@gmail.com

### Secretary: Ralph Smitherman, 2021/2023 (second term) 514 Edgewood LaneBrandon MS 39042-3300Home: 601-825-8076Cell: 601-672-0973Email: redbird26@bellsouth.net

### Treasurer: Adam Ruschival, 2021/2023 (seventh term)148 Vernon AvenueLouisville, KY 40206-2237Home: 502-897-1472Cell: 502-303-7078Email: carla40206@gmail.com

## BOARD MEMBERS

### Rhonda Trott, 2021/2022 (first term)1018 East StreetTalladega, AL 39160-291Home: 256-362-5649Cell: 256-493-9137Email: rhondatrott@charter.net

### Jane Carona, 2021/2022 (first term)3511 Forest Edge Drive, Apt 1GSilver Spring, MD 20906Home: 301-598-2131Cell: 301-922-2994Email: jane.e.carona@gmail.com

### Leslie Thom, 2021/2022 (first term)7414 Mooncrest WaySacramento, CA 95831Home: 916-429-8201Cell: 916-995-2135Email: thomleslie37@gmail.com

### Carla Ruschival, 2021/2022 (second term)  148 Vernon AvenueLouisville, KY 40206-2237Home: 502-897-1472Cell: 502-303-7042    Email: carla40206@gmail.com

### Sharon Strzalkowski, 2021/2022 (second term) LUA Ledger Editor5 Suburban Road Apt 606Worcester, MA 01602Home: 508-363-3866Cell: 508-410-9142Email: strzal@charter.net

### Immediate Past President: Brian Charlson57 Grandview AvenueWatertown, MA 02472Home: 617-926-9198    Cell: 617-831-3272  Email: briancharlson@comcast.net