



FREE MATTER FOR THE
BLIND & PHYSICALLY
HANDICAPPED

Mississippi Talking Book Services Reading Light

Summer 2025

Patron Survey

Are you searching for an accessible book club, or do you need an opportunity to ask a question about your account? The Talking Book Services Department needs your opinion! Your participation in our survey is vital to improving Talking Book Services from your experience to additional services we can offer to you. Our patron survey contains about five questions and will take approximately five minutes of your time.

To access the online survey, click on or type in the link listed here: : <https://forms.office.com/r/zWmNpVNrNZ>. To take the survey by phone, please call 601-432-4151, and a TBS staff member will read the questions aloud and collect your answers.

Patron Tribute: Mr. Ed Hill

In April of 2025, Mr. Ed Hill, a compassionate patron and diligent individual within the visually impaired community, passed away. Below are statements given by a few professionals who knew him and of the work he proudly represented:

Michael Gandy, Friends of Handicapped Readers (FOHR) member, declares, "Dapper and dedicated. Many words could describe our friend Ed Hill, but these two certainly capture key aspects of this wonderful man. With his trim moustache, deft wit, and courtly manner, Ed was every inch the gentleman. By his very bearing, you knew who he was to the core. In his commitment to serving the needs of people living with sight loss, repairing Braille writers, and

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Library Service Hours: 8:00am - 5:00pm, Monday - Friday

Phone: 601-432-4151 or 1-800-446-0892 (toll-free)

Fax: 601-432-4476

Email: talkingbooks@mlc.lib.ms.us

Website: <http://mlc.lib.ms.us/tbs/>

WebCatalog: <https://tbsopac.mlc.lib.ms.us/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/mslibrarycommission/>

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Patron Tribute: Mr. Ed Hill continued

keeping the books for the Friends of Handicapped Readers, he gave untold hours of his time. This world is a better place because Ed Hill lived in it.”

Shellie Zeigler, previous Talking Book Services Director (2011-2018) and current Lead Library Consultant, expresses, “Ed Hill was a bright light in every room he entered and a beloved member of the Mississippi Friends of Handicapped Readers group, where his generosity and good humor left a lasting impact. Known for his mischievous twinkle in his eyes and infectious laugh, Ed was the kind of person who would do anything for anyone, always ready to lend a hand or share a joke. Ed adored his wife Toni deeply and spoke of her often with love and pride. His orange motorcycle was his signature ride, a reflection of his bold and joyful spirit. Ed’s kindness, warmth, and unwavering commitment to others will be remembered by all who were lucky enough to know him. I am fortunate to count myself among those people.”

Jane Harty, Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) and officer of both FOHR and the Mississippi Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (MAER), affirms, “Ed Hill’s legacy continues through Braille writer repairs. He dedicated countless hours to making Braille accessible for Mississippians. Ed didn’t just believe in the importance of Braille – he took real steps to support it. Years ago, he traveled to the Perkins School for the Blind in Boston to learn how to repair Braille writers.

Amazingly, Ed never charged a single person for his repair work... Thanks to Ed’s dedication – and Paul Harty’s [Jane’s husband] commitment to honoring that mission – these Braille writers are being brought back to life, one by one, and placed into the hands of Mississippians who depend on them [still free of charge]. Ed Hill’s legacy continues – not in words, but in action, access, and opportunity.”

TBS Director Miranda Loper concludes, “We will continue to celebrate Ed’s life and the commitment he upheld to the visually impaired community. Ed Hill cultivated a lasting impact through his actions and on each of us in the department which will be felt by countless others for years to come.”

Talking Book Services News

New Tutorial Videos Available for BARD Mobile and BARD Express

BARD is the Braille and Audio Reading Download service of Talking Book Services, provided by the National Library Service (NLS) for the Blind and Print Disabled of the Library of Congress. Recently, Talking Book Services staff member and BARD Specialist, Evan Theilman, created two new instructional videos for BARD users. BARD Mobile Basics covers primary operating functions for the mobile application, and BARD Express Basics covers the same information for the application on a Windows-based computer.

More information about BARD and the links to the tutorial videos can be found on our website at <https://www.mlc.lib.ms.us/tbs/bard/>.



Helen Keller Celebration at MLC

On June 27, 2025, Talking Book Services of the Mississippi Library Commission hosted a celebration in honor of Helen Keller’s birthday, honoring her historic achievements and advancement of the Deaf-Blind community. Many attended, and fellowship with one another was enjoyed by all. This event was made possible through a collaboration between the DeafBlind Community of Mississippi, the Mississippi Hearing-Vision Project of the University of Southern Mississippi, and Talking Book Services. In the middle photo above are attendees and partners of the celebration from left to right: Talking Book Services Staff J.D. Burns, Margaret Smitherman, and Miranda Loper; DeafBlind Community of MS Founder Andre Jarreau; and MS Hearing-Vision Project Director Toni Hollingsworth.

For more information on these organizations, call TBS Director Miranda Loper at 601-432-4116.

Talking Book Services News

BARD 2 Offers New Features for Patrons

BARD, the NLS Braille and Audio Reading Download website, now offers expanded functionality and will serve as a gateway to exciting new services in the future.

We are pleased to announce that if you use BARD on the web, you will have access to BARD 2 in late July. If you're not a BARD user, this is your chance to sign up for the service and get instant access to hundreds of thousands of audio and braille books and magazines for reading with an NLS digital talking-book machine, a personal smart device with BARD Mobile, a Braille eReader, or your PC with the BARD Express player. Contact us at 601-432-4151 to sign up for BARD.

Features of the new website include:

- Reorganization of the Wish List, Reading History, Subscriptions, and Account Settings under one menu.
- New sorting capabilities of book lists. You can now search through book lists and refine the results by format, language, and subject.
- An updated search engine, so finding books is easier and faster than ever before.
- Advanced search functionality.

Access to the new and improved BARD website requires a change in your login procedures. We will contact all BARD web users and provide instructions for the new login procedures. If you have any questions, need assistance, or just want to tell us about your experience with BARD 2, contact us at 601-432-4151.



Talking Book Services News

New Equipment Arrival from NLS

The advanced, second generation of Digital Talking Book Machines (DTBM) are here! This new equipment, called the DA2, is provided by the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled and distributed by Mississippi's Talking Book Services. Your TBS staff members have all been working hard to become certified in operating the DA2, and rollout of the new machine to interested patrons is expected in late summer. The DA2 combines our cartridge-based audiobooks with BARD access in one machine with numerous setting options per your preference.

If you are interested in signing up for a DA2, call a Reader Advisor at 601-432-4151 as new machines will be limited during the early adoption period.

TBS Staff Feature

Patron Services Librarian, Tanner May

Hello! I'm Tanner May, the patron access librarian with Talking Book Services. I started working with TBS in July of 2024. I handle the circulation side of TBS. I check in and check out book orders to patrons.

I send and receive talking book machines and other accessories to and from patrons. I catalog new Braille books as well as check them in or out to patrons. I am also responsible for the repair or replacement of any of the talking book machines and accessories that a patron may use.



I am originally from Clinton, Mississippi, but call Raymond, Mississippi, home. In my spare time, I play video games or read books. I have had a love for reading for as long as I can remember. My favorite genres are action, adventure, fantasy, and some science fiction, but I have read a little from other genres as well!

Reading Corner

Our Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) service allows you to download books to your personal device or computer instantly. BARD Mobile is available for Apple and Android devices. BARD express is available for Windows-based computers.

Recent Top BARD Downloads

- The Crash* by Freida McFadden, DB127213
- Open Season* by Jonathan Kellerman, DB126997
- The Texas Murders: Everything is Bigger in Texas* by James Patterson, DB126468
- The Amish Nanny* by Patricia Davids, DB125047
- Battle Mountain* by C.J. Box, DB127689
- Lethal Prey* by John Sandford, DB128112
- Partners: A Rogue Lawyer Short Story* by John Grisham, DB128075
- Sunrise on the Reaping* by Suzanne Collins, DB127954

Summer Picks

Discover what our Reader Advisors are reading this Summer!

Margaret’s Pick: *The Lathe of Heaven* by Ursula K. Le Guin, DB053261

George Or is a young man with a huge problem. As the story opens, he has just become aware that he is living in a world that he has literally dreamed up. He doesn’t know what to do about making everyone else live in his nightmares, so he is trying not to dream. The world he has dreamed up for all of us is an overcrowded and out of balance place. He seeks help from a doctor. Enter Dr Haber. The doctor sees this as an opportunity to solve the world’s problems, and though well meaning, he only complicates the situation. Margaret says, “This is one of my favorites. I first read this book when I was in my teens, and it left a mark on me that only Ursula Le Guin’s tales can.”

Reading Corner

Evan’s Pick: *The Song of Achilles* by Madeline Miller, DB074857

Evan says, “Madeline Miller gives us a fresh perspective on the most famous Greek epic in history, the Iliad, telling a heartfelt story of two young men who find solace in each other from the expectations and burdens placed on them by others. I find it to be an incredibly moving story that refuses to pull its punches when it comes to the darker and less glamorous sides of war, the parts not written about in stories of heroism and glory.”

JD’s pick: *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* by Seth Grahame-Smith, DB070658, LP F G742

JD says, “In all fairness, the only time I let the season dictate my reading, is around Halloween, but honestly, horror is a go-to genre, whether trying to get into the spooky season or enjoying an afternoon by the pool. Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter is a pulpy historical re-imagining that asks the simple question; What if, before and during his presidency, Abraham Lincoln hunted vampires? This thrilling concept, while a little silly, is engaging enough to keep the pages turning and an easy story to get through, that is, if history and fighting monsters is your thing. It’s a fun story to pass the time with, good enough to hold your attention, but not so heavy as to distract you from enjoying the season.”

John’s pick: *The Kansas City Cowboys* by Johnny D. Boggs, DBC026664, LP F B674

The summer will teach Silver King what it takes to be a baseball Cowboy and a working cowboy. And the Kansas City Cowboys and their rowdy fans will show the world how Western things can get on a baseball diamond. John says, “If you’re a reader of westerns and you’d like to take a seasonal break from snowy shootouts, you may enjoy this summery book.”