



Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library

7000-9406

The Perkins Library has a long tradition of providing accessible library services beginning in 1837, making it one of the first library programs in the country to serve people with vision loss. Today, through our partnership with the Library of Congress' National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS), and the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, we offer accessible services circulated by postage-free U.S. mail and online via the Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) service.

The ability to read a book, magazine, or newspaper is something most people take for granted. But when vision loss or physical limitations make it impossible to read the printed word any longer, the Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library is there – ready to restore the ability to read in a new way.

Any resident of Massachusetts who has a disability that prevents them from using regular printed materials is eligible for free accessible library services. With an extensive collection of more than 250,000 audio and braille books and magazines, Perkins is committed to meeting the needs of as many people as possible across the state, including thousands of potential patrons who aren't yet aware of the Library's services.

In FY2023, the Perkins Library is committed to making a major paradigm shift in how services are delivered to our borrowers. This transition will involve moving to a duplication on demand model, while providing our traditional services, and innovating and growing new programs to meet the needs of individuals with print disabilities.

Traditional library storage procedures have always relied on shelving that would hold books and other materials. Perkins is embarking upon a total shift in our operational paradigm from storing materials on shelving, to a hybrid model, utilizing shelving stack space for high demand items, and shifting our fulfillment of individual request to a duplicate on demand model. With this new process, that we will be phasing in over the next two fiscal years, patron orders will be filled by copying audio books onto a digital cartridge (similar in functionality to a thumb drive), and providing titles that the person wants immediately. No more reserve lists or long waits for copies to be returned by other readers. Now, a cartridge can be duplicated with all of the titles on it that the person wants, and sent out the next day.

As a leader in the delivery of innovative and cutting-edge services for people with print disabilities, Perkins realizes that this transition means many changes to our operations – from shelving reallocations, to patron re-education, to staff responsibility changes, and new duties for those working throughout the Library to fulfill new roles.

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Staff will also continue to work on, and develop the initiatives listed below:

- Continue its innovation on the “next generation” talking book player
- Identify and grow opportunities for patrons to connect, learn, and engage as a community through Zoom technology to deliver a wide range of content and programming;
- Continue to focus on raising awareness among potential users of the Perkins Library’s existing physical, digital, braille and large print materials;
- Grow and continue access to same-day text-to-speech streamed audio of newspapers and magazines through our Newslines Program;
- Grow and sustain the selection of audio described DVD movies with audio description which makes video content accessible by including added narration of key visual elements;
- Provide long-term equipment loans of talking book machines and both handheld and desktop digital audio players and magnifying devices;
- Continue to sponsor in-person and virtual book clubs, museum passes, Bookshare services, Aira Access, remote training, speakers, program activities, art appreciation, crafts, and more.
- Continue involvement in research and testing of expanded cellular access and smartphone technology for possible use with the next generation talking book player;
- Continue provision of in-home and remote assistive technology training for borrowers;
- Conduct a needs assessment and engage in user research and testing to identify other needs of our 25,000 borrowers – determining how we can better serve them within our mission.

Uppermost is making sure that as we transition, we ensure the continuation of responsive and quality services. Through these forthcoming changes, the Library will continue to lead the way in the development of new technologies, promising practices, programs, and services to meet the accessible reading needs of our borrowers. every day the Perkins Library continues to be a champion of access and inclusion, and represents an evolving 21st century library program.

www.perkins.org/library