

## About the Talking Book and Braille Library

### What is the NYS Talking Book and Braille Library?

The New York State Talking Book and Braille Library (TBBL) lends braille and recorded books and magazines, and the necessary equipment, to residents of the 55 upstate counties of New York State who are unable to read standard printed materials because of a physical disability. TBBL is the Regional Library for the upstate region in the nationwide program coordinated by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS), a division of the Library of Congress, in Washington DC. TBBL is also a unit of the New York State Library.

**Libraries:** Promote TBBL services to eligible youth and adult patrons within your library. Here's a [sign](#) in PDF to print and display near your audiobook collection.  
([Text](#) of sign.)

TBBL was established in 1896 as the New York State Library for the Blind, providing embossed books to blind adults. In 1931 it became one of the original Regional Libraries in the Library of Congress' national program. "Talking" books on long-playing record were introduced, and in 1952 the service was extended to blind children. Physically disabled and reading disabled individuals were made eligible in 1966. In 1974 the library was renamed the New York State Library for the Blind and Visually Handicapped, and we became the New York State Talking Book and Braille Library in 1995.

### Who May Join the Library?

#### Eligibility

You are eligible for this library service if you are a resident of one of the 55 counties of upstate New York, who meets one of the following requirements.

- **You can't see well enough to read conventional print.** Specifically, you must:
  - Be legally blind, with vision in the better eye of 20/200 or less with correcting lenses, or:
  - Have a visual field no greater than 20 degrees in diameter, or:
  - Be unable to see well enough to focus long enough to read standard print, even with corrective lenses, or:
- **You have a permanent or temporary physical limitation which prevents you from holding a book or turning its pages.** Physical disabilities which may prevent the ability to read include:
  - multiple sclerosis,
  - stroke,
  - cerebral palsy,
  - severe arthritis,
  - paralysis,
  - a missing arm or hand,
  - lack of muscle coordination, and
  - prolonged weakness.

- **You have a physically-based reading disability.** You must be certified by a **medical doctor** as having a reading or learning disability due to an organic dysfunction severe enough to prevent reading in the usual manner.

## Geographic Location

TBBL serves residents of the 55 upstate counties of New York.

New York State Talking Book and Braille Library  
[Cultural Education Center](#)  
Albany, NY 12230-0001  
Phone: (518) 474-5935 and (800) 342-3688  
Web: [www.nysl.nysed.gov/tbbl/](http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/tbbl/)

If you live in New York City or on Long Island, contact the Andrew Heiskell Library, a unit within the New York Public Library, for information and service:

Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library  
40 West 20th Street  
New York, NY 10011

Phone: (212) 206-5400  
Web site: <http://talkingbooks.nypl.org/>

If you live in another state, contact the [regional library](#) for that state.

## Children and Youth Service

Children and young adults from ages 3 and up may register and receive free library service at home even if they are already using materials from the NYS Talking Book and Braille Library during the day at school. Parents may register their child for home service in order to:

- Encourage additional reading.
- Help the child participate in their public library's [summer reading program](#).
- Provide back-up to reading required for school assignments.

Parents who call for an [application](#) will also be offered help on how to get required school reading in special format---including information on sources of textbooks---for their student. Parents should ask to speak to a member of the youth services staff when they call.

Schools may call for a special educator's registration and information packet. Included will be an application for school service, student certification forms, information for parents on sources of textbooks in special format, and a sample braille alphabet card and bookmark. E-Mail: [tbblkids@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:tbblkids@mail.nysed.gov)

## Schools

Schools in upstate New York may register for service if they have eligible students enrolled. This includes students who are reading or learning disabled as well as those with visual or other physical disabilities. Schools may borrow library books on tape and

cassette players for use in the school building. Each school building in a school district must register separately. Books which may be borrowed include fiction and nonfiction, required school reading (excluding textbooks), and recreational reading. E-Mail: [tbblkids@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:tbblkids@mail.nysed.gov)

## **Institutional Service**

Borrowers may receive the library service through an individual registration at home, or through the institution where they reside or attend. TBBL provides service to nursing homes, hospitals, schools, colleges, correctional facilities, retirement homes, adult care facilities, rehabilitation centers, and many other kinds of institutions.

## **What Services Are Available?**

### **Recorded and Braille Books and Magazines**

Eligible adults and children may borrow books on recorded cassette and in braille. The book collection consists of popular fiction and nonfiction---general informational and recreational materials for all ages and tastes, similar to that found in a public library. We have bestsellers, classics, poetry, westerns, travel, history, biography, romance novels, mysteries, religious literature, cookbooks, children's books, historical novels, science, philosophy, short stories, humor, politics, adventure, current events, plays, historical fiction, sport, foreign language material, and a great deal more. Many magazines are also available in braille and recorded formats. Textbooks and books in large print are not available from our library.

### **Cassette Players**

TBBL lends these special cassette players for use with its recorded books. The books are recorded at a speed which is slower than commercial recordings and on four tracks instead of the conventional two. This is both for economy and to preserve copyright. A number of accessories, such as headphones, may be requested.

### **Free Mailing**

Because we serve a 55-county area, almost all of the library's service is handled through the mail. Books, magazines, machines, and catalog book orders are sent via the US Postal Service without cost, thanks to a Free Matter for the Blind or Handicapped mailing privilege. Not only is there no direct charge to use the library, but borrowers don't have to pay postage to return the books.

### **Catalogs**

Two bimonthly magazines ([Talking Book Topics](#) and [Braille Book Review](#)), annual cumulations, and subject bibliographies are available to library users in special formats to help them choose books. Library staff have access to computer, and Internet Union Catalogs to assist borrowers in identifying and locating the books they need. Our library is also able to obtain materials through Interlibrary Loan.

### **Newsletter**

Library users receive [Upstate Update](#) every three months. This newsletter keeps borrowers informed about developments at state and national levels that affect the service, provides advice about how to use the library and obtain the best service, and suggests other sources of information, products, and services for people with physical disabilities.

## Public Service Center

TBBL's Public Service Center is located within the New York State Library on the 7th floor of the Cultural Education Center on Madison Avenue in Albany. Here borrowers may browse in a small braille and cassette book collection, consult with library staff regarding service needs, and make use of a variety of special format reference books and electronic equipment. Reading aids include a color closed-circuit television enlarging system, a braille embosser, voice and large print output for computers connected to the TBBL and State Library catalogs and the Internet, and a Reading Edge computer that converts print into synthetic speech.

## Reader Advisory Services

The library offers borrowers a variety of reader advisory services, including: help choosing books, subject bibliographies, investigation and correction of book supply and other service problems, locating and obtaining books through interlibrary loan, referral to alternative resources, and reference services.

## Machine Sublending Agencies:

Throughout upstate New York, 21 Sublending Agencies (mostly public library systems, along with some associations for the blind) help TBBL provide service. These agencies work with TBBL at the local level, promoting the program, forwarding completed applications, and helping library borrowers use the service. They have a small stock of recorded books for emergency loan, and a supply of cassette players so that borrowers can exchange non-working machines locally. Library users obtain their basic service from TBBL in Albany, but these local contact-points serve a number of valuable needs.

## Music Services

TBBL has books **about** music, but musical recordings are not part of our collection. Borrowers can be referred to the [Music Section of NLS](#) which offers braille and large print scores, instructional books, and music reference services.

## What Does This Service Cost?

Nothing! This service is provided without direct charge to the user. The library is supported by your tax dollars. In addition, books, magazines, machines, and catalog book orders may travel without charge through the mail thanks to a Free Matter for the Blind or Handicapped mailing privilege.

## How to Join the Library

To borrow recorded or braille books, you have to "register" with the library. Write to us or call us and request an application form and information packet. ([Applications](#) are also

available online.) Complete the application and return it to us. To confirm eligibility, the application must be signed by a professional person acceptable to the library and familiar with the applicant's disability. If you have a reading or learning disability, the application **must** be signed by a Medical Doctor or a Doctor of Osteopathy.

When we receive your completed application, we will register you for service and send you the requested equipment and a "new reader packet" containing a welcome letter, sample catalogs of our books, and a **Guide to Library Services** which explains how to use the library and how to get the best service for your own particular reading needs. If you asked us to choose books for you, you will also receive books in subject areas you told us you like. For every book returned to the library, we will ship out a replacement, selected from either the borrower's own request list or from the general collection, based on each borrower's expressed reading interests. We encourage all our borrowers to keep in regular contact with us to fine-tune their library service, and look forward to hearing from you by phone or e-mail.

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Web: [www.nysl.nysed.gov/tbbl/](http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/tbbl/)



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URL: [http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/talk\\_2.htm](http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/talk_2.htm)