

The Talking Book Program was established by Congress in 1931 to provide free library services to people with disabilities. Specially mandated Talking Book Libraries operate at state and local levels nationwide in cooperation with the Library of Congress / [National Library Service](#) (NLS) to share the costs of the program.

Potential patrons must formally apply for services and must prove that they meet the Talking Book Program's eligibility requirements such as legal blindness, visual impairment, and/or a physical disability or reading disability which significantly impairs their ability to use conventional print materials. Institutions such as schools, nursing homes, hospitals and public libraries which serve people with qualifying disabilities are also eligible to receive this free service.

The network includes the National Library Services, Multi-State Centers, Regional Libraries, Subregional Libraries and Machine Lending Agencies which cooperate to meet the mission of the program. NLS and the Multi-State Centers distribute federally produced Braille and audio materials and playback equipment to the regional and subregional Talking Book Libraries and machine lending agencies. They in turn loan those materials to registered readers in their service jurisdictions.

Although the activities of each Talking Book Library is monitored by its own administrative/funding agency, NLS also regularly reviews each library's compliance with the services guidelines established by ALA's [Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies](#) (ASCLA). The cooperating libraries also submit annual, bi-annual, monthly and on-demand reports to NLS for statistical analysis and program review.

## **What do they do?**

Talking Book Libraries are the direct service provider for registered Talking Book Program patrons. All Talking Book Libraries maintain collections of NLS alternate format materials for free loan. Many also offer large type, descriptive video, and locally produced Braille and/or audio materials.

Each library encourages readers to place orders for specific titles from announcements or online searches. Most also offer reader advisory services and will select materials automatically, if desired, from the reader's subject preferences or favorite authors. Most also

inventory, loan and repair the playback equipment required to read the audio books. Materials are delivered and returned via postage-free mail.

Staff also assist readers with obtaining special-format magazines from alternative-format producers and/or downloadable titles from the NLS website or elsewhere. Many Talking Book Libraries also offer programming for young readers, telephone reference services, book clubs for adult readers and other service enrichment programs.

**[KLAS for Talking Book Libraries](#)**

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