

# Dots & Decibels

Vol. 8 No. 1

PERKINS BRAILLE & TALKING BOOK LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

FALL 2003

---

## Laura Bridgman Author to Visit Perkins

Are you ready for another great book talk? Elisabeth Gitter, the author of The Imprisoned Guest: Samuel Howe and Laura Bridgman, the Original Deaf-Blind Girl (**RC51840 & BR13353**), will be speaking at the Perkins School for the Blind on Monday, November 3, 2003.

Half a century before Helen Keller was born, a young girl named Laura Bridgman became the first living proof that a deafblind person could learn to read, write and communicate with others. She was educated at the Perkins School for the Blind, originally located in South Boston, by educational reformer and abolitionist Samuel Gridley Howe. Bridgman's accomplishments were so amazing that people from all over the world came to see her, and Charles Dickens recounted her story in American Notes.

Despite Bridgman's fame in the 19th century, by the time she died in 1889, she was more or less forgotten and eclipsed by nine-year-old Helen Keller.

Reading some of Charles Dickens' letters, in the Perkins archives, Gitter, an English professor specializing in the Victorian era at City University of New York, discovered previously unpublished letters and manuscripts relating to Laura Bridgman. From this research, Gitter assembled a compelling book on a feisty, though difficult, human being; her dedicated and conflicted teacher Howe; and an era during which attitudes towards the care and status of people with disabilities were beginning to change.

The Imprisoned Guest has won numerous awards, including the prestigious Massachusetts Book Award for Non-Fiction in 2002. Come join us for an enthralling book discussion with Elisabeth Gitter, on Monday, November 3, 2003, at 3:30 PM, in the Hilton Building Auditorium, Perkins School for the Blind, 175 N. Beacon St., Watertown. To reserve your spot or for additional information or directions, call 617-972-7240 or 1-800-852-3133.

---

**Library Hours:** Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

**Phone:** 1-800-852-3133 or 617-972-7240 **Fax:** 617-972-7363

**Website:** [www.Perkins.org](http://www.Perkins.org)

---

## Reference Reminder

Need some help locating information for a school paper or are you just plain curious about something? Whether your information need is large or small, Reference Services Librarian, Linda Rossman, can help you get answers. She'll provide you with the materials in various formats – large print, email, diskette, or for shorter documents, braille. Feel free to call her with any reference questions you may have: 617-972-7245 or email [linda.rossman@perkins.org](mailto:linda.rossman@perkins.org)

---

## Bookshare.org

Bookshare.org is an online service that offers people unable to read standard print due to blindness, visual impairment, physical or reading disability, access to legally shared scanned books. More than 14,000 titles are available in digital format online. Readers can download electronic books through their computers and read them with adaptive technologies such as refreshable braille displays, speech output or large print magnification.

There is a \$25 one-time sign-up fee and an annual \$50 subscription charge for use of this service. This new service uses volunteers and members

to scan copyrighted books for download. The books come in either the NISO/DAISY digital book format, or contracted digital braille files. A copy of the special Victor Reader software for reading the NISO/DAISY format books is included with membership.

For more information about bookshare.org, visit [www.bookshare.org](http://www.bookshare.org), or email [info@bookshare.org](mailto:info@bookshare.org). You may also contact them at 650-475-5440 or write: Bookshare.org, The Benetech Initiative, 480 California Ave., Suite 201, Palo Alto, CA 94306-1609.

**Dots & Decibels is also available on cassette and in braille. To change the format you receive, give us a call at 1-800-852-3133 or email [library@perkins.org](mailto:library@perkins.org)**

## **READ! THINK! CREATE! @ Your Library**

Children with big imaginations and lots of curiosity joined the Library's Summer Reading Program. This year's theme was READ! THINK! CREATE! @ Your Library. There were forty-three participants in the program, reading 530 books!

---

After participants read and reported on a certain number of books (five for younger children, three for older library borrowers), the Children's Librarian sent a small prize to each reader. These prizes, paid for by the Friends of the Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library, were small tokens to encourage and reward reading.

Through a very successful collaboration between the Perkins Library and the Watertown Free Public Library, our closing event was a special concert held in July featuring The Tail-Spinners. This group of adults and children told stories and sang songs to an audience of Perkins students, Summer Reading participants, and patrons from the Watertown Free Public Library.

The following were the Grand Prize Winners who received gifts for reading the most books:

- Grades K-3: Juna Gjata (26 books)
- Grades 4-6: Scott Varga (60 books)
- Grades 7-8 & Braille: Kayla Bentas (38 books)
- Young Adults: Francisca Stenbuck (25 books)

Our Honorable Mention winners were:

- Sasha Ericson (56 books)
- Lauren Madruga (34 books)

It was a busy summer of reading, thinking, creating and storytelling. Our summer readers had fun, learned a lot

and *enjoyed reading* – just what one should do during the summer.

---

## **New Outreach Campaign Underway**

Last fall, the Library, in cooperation with the National Library Service in Washington DC, ran a publicity campaign to encourage more seniors who are eligible to use talking books to sign up for our services. The campaign was very successful.

This fall, the Perkins Library is launching a major publicity campaign targeted at all potential users of the Talking Book Program, who don't know about our free library service. Public service announcements (PSA's), featuring well known Oscar-winning actress Rita Moreno, have been sent to most radio and TV stations across the Commonwealth to help get the word out.

Please let us know when you hear one of our PSA's. It will help us in monitoring the stations that are airing them. More importantly, it will allow us to "thank" those stations that are being supportive of the Perkins Library.

Another way you can help us with our outreach campaign is to refer people you know to the Library. As borrowers yourselves, you know how

---

important talking books are in your life. Tell your friends, neighbors, an acquaintance from church, book club, work, or senior center, about the Library.

Anyone who is not able to read regular print because of a visual, physical, or reading disability is eligible for the service. If you know someone who may be interested in our service, please have them contact the Perkins Library at 1-800-852-3133 or 617-972-7240, or email [library@perkins.org](mailto:library@perkins.org). Urge your doctor, ophthalmologist, minister, senior center or activity director to promote the free talking book program by running a notice in the church bulletin or agency newsletter. We can send the text of an announcement or send materials, brochures, posters, and other handouts for literature racks or displays.

We appreciate your efforts on our behalf and encourage everyone to be on the lookout in your daily lives for those who could benefit from using the services of the Perkins Library.

Word of mouth is the most tried and true method of getting the word out, so keep talking about the Perkins Library and talking books!

---

*“A library is not a luxury but one of the necessities of life.”* — Henry Ward Beecher

## **Thanks for Your Show of Support**

Thank you to those of you who wrote letters, sent email messages, or called your senators and representatives at the State House expressing your concerns for adequate funding and support for the Perkins Library. I believe that it was because of your great advocacy that the budget for the Library, which went into effect for fiscal year 2004 in July, received an increase of \$110,000, which was the same amount we were cut so dramatically last year. Your advocacy efforts were successful in restoring funding to the FY 2001 level. Congratulations to all of you for your help, understanding, and encouragement as we struggled to continue to provide you with services through a very difficult funding year.

Once again, the challenge of next year's budget process is about to begin. Your assistance will be invaluable again to preserve vital talking book services for Massachusetts. I will keep you posted on legislative developments since your advocacy for funding for the Perkins Library will be equally as important in the upcoming months. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at 1-800-852-3133 or email me at [kim.charlson@perkins.org](mailto:kim.charlson@perkins.org). Thank you again for your support!

Kim Charlson, Director

## Just A Reminder

Free one-day passes are available for the year 2003/2004 to visit Mystic Seaport in Connecticut. Mystic Seaport contains many historic ships and buildings, which create a delightful 19<sup>th</sup> century maritime atmosphere. To borrow a free pass, contact Linda Rossman, Reference Librarian, at 1-800-852-3133 or 617-972-7240, or email [library@perkins.org](mailto:library@perkins.org)

**DV000480** Wild Discovery's "Clever Critters"

**DV000481** Touching Lives: Portraits of Deaf-Blind People

**DV000482** Chicago

**DV000483** Bob the Builder

For a complete listing, a free catalog is available in large print, braille, or cassette by calling the Library at 1-800-852-3133 or 617-972-7240 or email [library@perkins.org](mailto:library@perkins.org).

## Don't Forget WEB-OPAC

The online public access catalog (OPAC) is available to borrowers of the Library, via the internet, to provide catalog search capabilities as well as access to personal borrower information, such as books currently checked out, requests on file, address and magazine subscription information and pending book orders. To use these features, visit the Perkins website at [www.perkins.org](http://www.perkins.org). Follow the link to the Braille and Talking Book Library, and the link to the Online Catalog is at the top of the Library's main page. You can also go directly to the Online Catalog by visiting [www.klas.com/talkingbooks/massachusetts](http://www.klas.com/talkingbooks/massachusetts).

You can find out your user ID and password or change your password, by contacting us at 617-972-7240 or 1-800-852-3133 or email us at [library@perkins.org](mailto:library@perkins.org).

## What's New in DVS Movies?

Our new audio described video service has been well received by patrons. With over 400 titles to choose, borrowers are sure to find an evening's entertainment. A standard TV and VCR are all one needs to view the videos. Videos are loaned for fourteen days and are sent and returned through the mail free of charge to registered, active users of the Library. The most recent arrivals are:

**DV000471** Signs

**DV000472** Runaway Universe

**DV000474** Harry Potter & The Chamber of Secrets

**DV000475** Two Weeks Notice

**DV000476** Minority Report

**DV000477** Gangs of New York

**DV000478** The Color Purple

**DV000479** Daredevil

---

## **Large Print Books Now Available at the Library**

We are pleased to now be able to offer a new service – large print books. In collaboration with the Worcester Talking Book Library, we are able to provide this valuable service to our patrons.

The large print collection includes both fiction and non-fiction. Biographies, romance, westerns, bestsellers, mysteries and children's books are just a sampling of the types of books available in large print to patrons.

There are over 3,000 titles in the large print collection. Interested patrons may borrow two large print books at a time and the loan period is 4 weeks. When those are returned to the Library, then more will be sent. A list of titles is available in large print or online at [www.perkins.org](http://www.perkins.org). To start receiving large print services, obtain a list; or for more information, call 617-972-7240 or 1-800-852-3133, or email [library@perkins.org](mailto:library@perkins.org).

---

## **Braille Awareness Kits**

Over the years, the Library has received many requests for information about braille. These requests are usually from schools and community organizations interested in

learning about braille as part of their disability awareness curriculum and students who are preparing a report about braille for a school project.

With funding from the Friends of the Braille and Talking Book Library, we have developed a special braille awareness kit.

Judi Cannon, the Library's Braille Services Specialist, helped develop and is responsible for loaning these kits. There is a four week loan period and the kit can be returned to the Library postage-free since the box is marked "Free Matter for the Blind."

Items in the kit include braille alphabet cards, A to Z braille posters, braille children's books, a braille/print bingo card, braille Red Sox schedule, braille calendar, and a braille timer. The kit also contains a biography of Louis Braille, a bibliography of books about Louis Braille, a list of internet resources, and braille games, puzzles and riddles. There is a check-list so that the borrower can make sure everything is returned into the kit before mailing.

These kits were developed in order to heighten awareness about braille and how braille makes a difference in the lives of people who are blind.

For more information or to borrow a braille awareness kit, call Judi Cannon at 617-972-7646 or 1-800-852-3133; or email her at [judi.cannon@perkins.org](mailto:judi.cannon@perkins.org).

---

## **Nominations Sought for Outstanding Postal Carrier**

The Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library relies on the support of the U.S. Postal Service to allow for the free delivery and return of your books and equipment. The "Free Matter for the Blind" mailing classification has been in existence since 1904 to provide for the mailing of braille, talking books, and the equipment needed to listen to our materials.

As a way to recognize the contribution of the Postal Service, and particularly the contribution of those dedicated mail carriers who deliver the books, magazines and equipment directly to borrowers homes or schools every day, regardless of the weather, the Library is launching the Talking Book Mail Carrier of the Year Award. What better way to recognize the contribution of the U.S. Postal Service, than to acknowledge the important role of the individual mail carriers.

If you would like to nominate your mail carrier as an outstanding Talking Book Mail Carrier, just send a letter to The Perkins Library with your name, address, and phone number, along with the name of your mail carrier. If you don't know your carrier's name, feel free to call your postmaster and tell them that you want to nominate your carrier for a special award. In your

letter, tell us what your carrier does to make you feel that he/she is an exceptional mail carrier. The award will be presented at a special ceremony in 2004.

Send your letter of nomination for your postal carrier to the Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library, ATTN: Postal Carrier Award, 175 North Beacon Street, Watertown, MA 02472. You can also email your nominations to [kim.charlson@perkins.org](mailto:kim.charlson@perkins.org). Be sure to provide your explanation of why you feel the person being nominated is deserving of this award. Help us to honor the significant contribution of the U.S. Postal Service to our program by nominating your carrier for this recognition.

---

## **Cassette Magazine Additions**

The Library is pleased to announce a few additions to the list of shared subscription magazines. These magazines must be returned to the Library after you finish reading them, so that they can be sent to others.

- Disability Issues (quarterly)
- The Lantern – The semi-annual Perkins Newsletter
- National Geographic Traveler
- Saturday Evening Post

Anyone interested in these magazines may call the Library to subscribe.

# How to Contact the Library

Here are several ways to contact the Library, whether you want to send a book request list or have comments or questions.

**Write us:**

Send print or braille letters to:  
Perkins Braille and Talking Book Library  
175 North Beacon St.  
Watertown, MA 02472

**Call us:**

617-972-7240  
1-800-852-3133

**Email us:**

[library@perkins.org](mailto:library@perkins.org)

**Visit us:**

We are open 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM  
Monday through Friday

**Fax us:**

617-972-7363

**Visit us on the web:**

[www.perkins.org](http://www.perkins.org)

Free Matter  
for the Blind  
or Handicapped

## Dots & Decibels

PERKINS BRAILLE & TALKING BOOK LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

Perkins School for the Blind

175 North Beacon Street

Watertown, MA

02472-2790