
Dots & Decibels

Vol.11 No. 1

PERKINS BRAILLE & TALKING BOOK LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2006

Massachusetts joins Unabridged Downloadable Book Project

The Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library has joined a consortium of eight other talking book libraries from across the country to offer downloadable audio books to patrons.

Unabridged is a program that provides a web-based library of narrated, digital audio books to library users for downloading.

Unabridged utilizes the content resources of the Overdrive company which produces downloadable materials in protected Windows Media Audio format (WMA).

Registered library patrons in Massachusetts can self-checkout and download digital audio books, then either play them back on PCs using Windows Media Player 10.0 and the accessible Overdrive Media Console, transfer the content to WMA-enabled portable playback devices, or burn the content onto CDs for playing on a CD player.

Interested patrons should contact the Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library to sign up for Unabridged and receive a library card number and a pin code. A "Getting Started Guide" will be sent immediately via e-mail; and hard copies of the guide in large print or braille are

also available. Online training and workshops at pre-scheduled times will be provided for anyone interested in trying out this new service. You must have the ability to download content from the internet in order to participate. If you would like to sign up for this exciting program, call the Perkins Library at 617-972-7240 or 1-800-852-3133 or send an email message to library@perkins.org.

Portable Player Available for Purchase

The Perkins Online Store carries the MuVo Mix 512 MB, which is a small, compact device that allows users to transfer downloadable audio book files (Protected Windows Media files) from the Perkins Library's Unabridged Project. These files can be placed on the MuVo for convenient listening on the go. You can sign up for the Unabridged Project and begin using downloadable digital audio on this small, portable, 6.4 ounce player. This lightweight, robust device plays your audio books (or MP3 music) with high-quality, skip-free sound fidelity. With its USB port, you can quickly transfer your audio book files from your

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

TTY: 617-972-7690 **Website:** www.perkinslibrary.org



computer. Simply connect the MuVo to your computer, and transfer your files with the Overdrive Media Console. With only five buttons, it is easy to navigate through the book files. This unit has a nice audio feature in fast forward and rewind that allows you to hear "chatter" as it moves forward or back, just like on a cassette player, to assist you in finding your place. The unit comes with earphones, 1 AAA battery, neck strap, print instruction booklet, and a CD with demonstration software (not required to use the device as a player). Braille and large print instructions for the MuVo are available upon request from the Perkins Library. The MuVo sells for \$50.99 and can be ordered online, along with other talking book accessory products at www.perkinsstore.org or by phone at 877-4-Perkins (877-473-7546).

Spotlight on New Personalities

Have you heard a couple of new voices when calling the Library lately? Joining the BTBL team recently are Rachel Gould, Children's Services Librarian, and James Gleason, Reader Advisor. James and Rachel both graduated in 2005 from Simmons College in Boston with Master's Degrees in Library and Information Science. We are fortunate to have added these two very skilled professionals to our library staff.

Children's Corner: Rachel attended Brown University in Providence, earning a BA in the History of Art before pursuing her degree in Library and Information Science. In addition to

library experience in both reference and technical services at Emerson and Wheelock colleges, she has had a number of volunteer experiences before coming to Perkins, assisting visually impaired children and adults.

Rachel has already assumed an active role, working with young people of all ages and helping them choose titles they love to read. She has been running a story hour for some of the younger Perkins students, and she has been enthusiastically conducting this year's Summer Reading Program, with the theme: "What's Buzzin' at Your Library."

Reader Advisor Corner: James comes to his Reader Advisory position at Perkins with terrific people skills as well as excellent foreign language speaking abilities, which are true assets in his role at the Library. His language skills enable our Spanish speaking patrons to gain much better access to our services and collection. In addition to Spanish, James speaks French, Italian and German. Before coming to Perkins, James worked at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell Library as an Access Services Assistant and also has worked as an interviewer at the Center for Survey Research. He received a Bachelor of Liberal Arts degree in Art History and Music Performance from UMass, Lowell. Both Rachel and James are welcome additions to the Perkins Library staff.

Library Wins James Patterson Page Turner Award

The Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library was honored to receive one of the inaugural James Patterson Page Turner Awards. Selected from a field of over 1,500 nominations, the Library was chosen in recognition of the work we do to spread the opportunity and excitement of books and reading to people who are unable to read regular print – those who thought that reading could no longer be a part of their lives. James Patterson stated that he "was very proud to be honoring the Perkins Library – that goes to such extraordinary lengths to spread the joy of books and reading." The award included a \$1,000 cash prize to be used by the Library.

James Patterson is an award-winning American author. Formerly an advertising mogul for J. W. Thompson in the early 1990s, Patterson came up with the slogan "Toys 'R' Us Kid." Shortly after his success with *Along Came A Spider* (**RC 35894**), he retired from the firm and devoted his time to writing. Alex Cross, a black forensic psychologist formerly of the Washington, DC Police Department, who now works for the FBI, is one of the most popular characters among Patterson readers.

Patterson is the author of more number one bestselling titles in the past

five years than J.K. Rowling, Tom Clancy, and John Grisham put together. Patterson has been hailed by *Time* magazine as the "man who can't miss."

For a complete list of James Patterson books available from the Perkins Library, please call 1-800-852-3133 or email library@perkins.org

Talking Book Program Celebrates 75 Years of Service

During 2006, talking book libraries from across the country have been celebrating the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the Library of Congress program. The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) talking book library program started with the passage of the Pratt-Smoot Act, which, with little fanfare, was signed into law by President Herbert Hoover on March 3, 1931. Originally, only braille reading materials were provided; by 1934, a record player and long-playing disc records became available.

The Perkins History Museum includes a display of historic reading materials and one of the first talking book machines produced.

Watch your mailbox for a special invitation later in the fall for a Book & Author event to be held at Perkins to celebrate our 75-year affiliation with the Library of Congress program.

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

NLS Librarians Tour Perkins Library

On May 4th the Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library hosted a group of 70 librarians from other talking book libraries all over the country as part of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) 2006 Annual Conference for Librarians. Participants traveled by bus from Portland, Maine, site of the 2006 conference to attend this special tour of Perkins and to hear Denise Bergman, author of *Seeing Annie Sullivan: Poems Based on Her Early Life*. The poems portray some of the early struggles and experiences of Annie, who escaped a Massachusetts almshouse to attend Perkins and later gained worldwide fame as the innovative teacher of Helen Keller.

The tour highlighted aspects of the Perkins Library of interest to this group, such as our patron drop-in browsing area, accessible technology resources, local digital recording

studio, and shipping and warehouse operations. The participants were also treated to a tour of the Perkins Horticultural Center, and the sun shining through the many varieties of flowering and non-flowering plants provided a perfect ending to the conference activities. After visiting the new History Museum chronicling Perkins through the years, the librarians listened to a greeting and introduction by Steven Rothstein, President of Perkins School for the Blind, and then heard Denise Bergman read selections of poetry from her fascinating book.

Afterwards, the group mingled with library staff at a reception in their honor. It was an enjoyable occasion for all involved and a wonderful opportunity for networking and communication with other talking book librarians.

Seeing Annie Sullivan: Poems Based on Her Early Life was recorded by Denise Bergman right here in our studio. To order a copy on cassette (**RCM 876**) or braille (**BRM 1284**), just call 617-972-7240 or 1-800-852-3133, or email library@perkins.org.

Quality Expert Speaks at Perkins Studio Workshop

The Perkins Library held a luncheon workshop for its Recording Studio volunteers last December. The guest speaker was Chris Mundy, Quality Specialist from Library of Congress Multi-State Center East in Cincinnati. Chris is a consultant available to all volunteer recording studios in the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) network.

Many of the volunteers who record books in our studio attended the workshop. Library staff, Kim Charlson, Shelley Patterson, and Barbara Atwood, participated as well. Chris answered questions about pronunciation, what makes a good narration, and the “how-to’s” for producing excellent recordings.

Chris complimented the Studio and its volunteers, saying that their books, which he has reviewed, compare favorably with professional recordings. He has recommended many of these Perkins-produced titles to NLS for acceptance as Quality Assurance books.

The workshop provided a valuable opportunity to benefit from Chris’ expertise and also for everyone to get better acquainted. The volunteers requested more workshops in the future.

Mystic Seaport and Museum of Science Passes Available!

The Perkins Library can help you plan the perfect summer outing in a cost-effective way. We are now offering passes to two different museums—a free day pass to the Mystic Seaport Museum in Mystic, Connecticut and a discounted day coupon to the Boston Museum of Science (\$5.00 per adult). The usual cost per person for the Museum of Science is \$16 per adult, so this \$5.00 coupon offers our patrons a great savings.

Mystic Pass Program:

Our Mystic Seaport pass program has been sponsored by the Perkins Library since 2002, and the patrons who have traveled to visit the Mystic Museum have given it rave reviews. The Mystic pass entitles up to four people free admission to Mystic Seaport on the day printed on the card. Immediately after use, the passes must be returned to the Library. Passes are now valid all year round.

The historical ships and buildings, stone sidewalks and gravel roads create a fascinating 19th century atmosphere. The staff at Mystic Seaport works hard to provide access to everyone wherever possible and tailors presentations and demonstrations to the needs of all visitors. A *Guide to Access* and braille information guides are available at the

Visitor Reception Center. Guided tours are also available for special needs audiences through the Museum Education Department. For more information about the Mystic Seaport, check out their website at www.mysticseaport.org.

To borrow a free pass to Mystic Seaport, call the Library at 1-800-852-3133 or email your request to library@perkins.org.

Museum of Science Program:

With more than 600 permanent exhibits, an active roster of traveling exhibits, and a friendly crew of science interpreters, the Museum's exhibit halls are never the same place twice. They appeal to a variety of learning styles and feature a fun, hands-on approach that encourages visitors to think like scientists.

You'll start by looking, listening, and touching—from dinosaurs to electricity to mathematical models, the Museum of Science exhibits offer something of interest to all ages.

The coupons allow up to four people \$5.00 admission per person. Admission to special exhibits, the planetarium, or the Omni Theater is an additional charge.

To get a coupon, contact the Library at 1-800-852-3133 or library@perkins.org.

Visit Accessible Museum on Perkins History

Samuel Gridley Howe's dream of "teaching students to see the world using the eyes in their fingertips" lives on at the Perkins History Museum. The unique aspect of this museum is its total accessibility to people with all types of disabilities. Each display on the history of Perkins has a visual, audible, and tactile component, making it possible for all visitors to learn about the story of Perkins—how it began, what scientific advancements took place, and the story of how blind people have been educated since its founding.

The Perkins History Museum was created as part of the events commemorating the 175th year of Perkins School for the Blind. Creating the museum was a large project, taking about 2 years to complete with the help of Perkins staff and museum professionals.

Throughout the Museum there are explanations of the displays in braille, as well as many things that other museums would have behind glass right out in the open for all to enjoy. Braille typewriters, tactile maps, one of the earliest talking book machines, and even a large restored globe built in 1837 and used to teach Helen Keller are available for people to touch and feel. Museum Curator, Betsy McGinnity, and staff browsed through archives and

hundreds of writings saved through history to create the displays.

The Museum is located in the Howe Building, which is the main building on the Perkins campus and is open to the public for self-guided tours on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2 – 4 pm. Guided tours or group visits can be arranged by appointment. For more information, please call 617-972-7767 or email HistoryMuseum@perkins.org.



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To sign up, or for a brochure, call 1-800-852-3133, or e-mail library@perkins.org.

Talking Information Center (TIC Network)

The Talking Information Center (TIC) is a non-profit radio reading service that broadcasts live readings of newspapers, magazines, books and special consumer information 24 hours a day, seven days a week. TIC provides timely access to 15 newspapers and 73 magazines for your listening pleasure. Scheduled programming includes daily and weekly readings of national and regional newspapers and magazines such as the *Boston Herald*, *USA Today*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Newsweek*, and *Time*. In addition, TIC broadcasts obituaries, medical updates, job opportunities, stock market updates, sports, supermarket specials as well as news items of local interest. It also includes nightly book readings and cultural programming.

There is no charge for the service. Most listeners need special radio receivers pre-set to the TIC network. These are provided on loan or can be purchased for \$50. The service is also streamed live over the internet at www.ticnetwork.com. To request further information on this service, call 1-800-696-9505 or email general@ticnetwork.com.

New Audio Described Video Catalog Available

A new supplement to the Audio Described Video Catalog is now available. This update includes described videos added to the collection since the publication of the original Described Video Catalog in November, 2003. The new publication is available to all interested patrons in large print, cassette, braille or on computer disk.

To order any videos on this list, just call the Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library at 617-972-7240 or 1-800-852-3133, or e-mail library@perkins.org.

Here is a sampling of just a few new additions to our video collection:

DV 000901 *Cinderella Man* (PG-13) Dramatization of legendary depression-era comeback of famous boxer, Jim Braddock.

DV 000903 *Fever Pitch* (PG 13) Romantic comedy with a Red Sox theme.

DV 000582 *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (PG) Harry has new adventures as a teenager, mastering advanced magic classes, crossing time barriers and changing lives as he faces escaped prisoner, Sirius Black with his friends.

Dots & Decibels

PERKINS BRAILLE & TALKING BOOK LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

Free Matter
for the Blind
or Handicapped



Perkins School for the Blind
175 North Beacon Street
Watertown, MA
02472-2790

All we see is **possibility**.