

Washington Talking Book & Braille Library  
A program of the Washington State Library  
and Office of the Secretary of State

**Reading Matters**  
Fall/Holiday 2010  
*David Junius, Editor*

**A Message from Danielle Miller, WTBBL Program Manager**

Happy Holidays! Now it's time to take the WTBBL survey! One of the best ways you can help the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library is by giving us your feedback. We often wonder what the future will hold, and here is a way to help shape it. With ever-shrinking resources, we need to work to make the most of what we have and ensure our ability to provide you with high-quality library service. Your feedback is invaluable to WTBBL!

Please go to [www.wtbbl.org](http://www.wtbbl.org), and click on the first link to take the general library services survey. If you know of WTBBL patrons who do not have Internet access, we would be grateful if you could help us get as many responses as possible by helping them to take the survey, or by encouraging them to call WTBBL to request a print copy or give a staff member their confidential answers over the phone.

We have had some response to the survey thus far, and answers to one of the questions indicate that this newsletter, *Reading Matters*, isn't as good as it can be. We use *Reading Matters* as a way to communicate important information about library service and to let you know about newly produced books.

Due to budget cuts, we've had to eliminate mailing physical copies of *Reading Matters* and recognize that electronic delivery potentially limits the number of readers. We created a very short survey about the newsletter in order to help us focus our production. The survey is at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WTBBL-RM>. Please take a moment to let us know what you think about *Reading Matters*.

I sincerely appreciate you taking the time to let us know how we can best meet your needs. Again, a very happy holiday season to you and yours! I look forward to seeing you in the New Year and always

enjoy hearing from you. Feel free to contact me at [danielle.miller@sos.wa.gov](mailto:danielle.miller@sos.wa.gov) or (206) 615-1588.

All the best,

*Danielle*

## **A Word from the State Librarian by Rand Simmons**



Recently I had the pleasure of joining other state librarians in Kansas City, Missouri. They were so welcoming to those of us who were new to our positions. I was the second-newest, the newest being appointed two weeks after I became Acting State Librarian for the Washington State Library.

Of the 48 states represented, all but one or two reported they would be facing severe budget cuts this coming year. I reported that the Washington State Library had already taken over \$400,000 in budget cuts as of this fall. With any luck this will be sufficient to get us through June 30, 2011, the end of this fiscal year. We don't yet know what to expect for the next biennium.

Throughout the four days of meetings I kept hearing variations on an idea -- challenges bring opportunities. As you know, we've suffered deep budget cuts during the past eight years, including laying off 31 people last spring and discontinuing our Preservation and Access Program. Our staff and managers are stretched and stressed. And yet, somehow, we continue to offer great service to our customers -- witness the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library.

"Working Smarter" has become my theme this year. We can sit back and view the world with a victim's mentality or we can find ways to work smarter and move forward. We are doing strategic planning to outline our preferred future. We are investigating further use of volunteers at the main State Library building in Tumwater, seeking more grants, cross-training staff, and looking to increase donations. We are also searching for areas where we can lessen expenses.

Every one of us is faced daily with challenges. The opportunity before us is to take the challenges and arrive at a positive result. I wish

you the blessings of the coming holiday season. Thank you for your continuing use and support of WTBBL.

*Rand Simmons*

Acting State Librarian, Washington State Library

## **PAC Corner by Sue Ammeter, Chair**

Greetings from the Patron Advisory Council (PAC)!

At the end of 2010, I will be stepping down as chair of the PAC, though staying involved as past chair while Mike Mello takes on the mantle of chair for this wonderful group of volunteer leaders. At our October 9th meeting, the PAC also elected its 2011 slate of officers: Norma Jean Campbell, vice chair, and Karen Johnson, secretary.

During my time as chair, the PAC accomplished several things of which I am very proud. First, I was honored to be able to attend the gala luncheon in Washington, D.C., when WTBBL received the Network Library of the Year award from the National Library Service. That was an event I will never forget.

The PAC demonstrated its leadership in working collaboratively with other consumer organizations of the blind in our efforts to reverse cuts made to WTBBL's budget. More than 7,800 letters were sent to patrons and you responded with calls and letters to your legislators. Our work was rewarded and funding for two positions was restored to WTBBL.

Another memorable experience was the first Braille Day, held in Olympia this past March. Over 40 people heard speeches from Secretary of State Sam Reed and others about the importance of braille in the lives of blind persons. Attendees also enjoyed seeing the Louis Braille exhibit, which was on display for two weeks in the Capitol rotunda.

Finally, I was privileged to be one of the speakers at the swearing in of Sam Reed as Secretary of State for another term. It gave me the opportunity to showcase the services and programs of WTBBL, and to illustrate the importance of the library's services to blind and visually impaired Washingtonians.

I want to thank outgoing PAC members Terry Atwater, John Buckmaster, Maria Edelen and Lynette Romero, whose terms are ending on December 31. They have made a huge difference by serving on the PAC and improved WTBBL through their involvement, especially through their hard work with outreach and advocacy.

We are currently reviewing the applications for new members of the PAC that were submitted between September and November, and look forward to introducing our new members early next year!

The following individuals are current members of the Patron Advisory Council. As always, please contact the PAC member in your area of the state with any questions or ideas you may have.

Sue Ammeter (Port Hadlock) 360-437-7916  
Terry Atwater (Olympia) 360-754-8193  
George Basioli (Edmonds) 425-771-6299  
John Buckmaster (Spokane) 509-327-1132  
Norma Jean Campbell (Richland) 425-802-8662  
Maria Edelen (Spokane) 509-928-2405  
Karen Johnson (Seattle) 206-632-6160  
Kevin Larose (Tumwater) 360-539-7016  
Jenny McDaniel-Devens (Coupeville) 425-328-9820  
Mike Mello (Seattle) 208-301-0565  
Mary Anna Mohrman (Seattle) 206-363-0636  
Lynette Romero (Olympia) 360-915-9030  
Janice Squires (Kennewick) 509-582-4749  
Emily Stevenson (University Place) 253-564-1704

## **Changes by Theresa Connolly and Gregg Porter**

For many months, we have been working on a major overhaul of the digital audio systems used by the book recording and radio reading services. Book Wizard Producer, our digital book formatting software, and WireReady, our new automated radio scheduling system, are now fully tested and operational. This brings us to the final phase.

We will retire Dalet, our decade-old recording, production, and broadcasting software, and the computers that run it. Ten years is a long time for computers to chug along, and many advances in software have been made. We are amazed that the equipment lasted and

grateful that the Dalet software existed to launch us into the digital age a decade ago. Amazed and grateful, we are moving on.

As of September, ERRS has been running all programming on the WireReady automation system. The program was designed originally for commercial radio stations, but the wife of the company owner was a volunteer at a radio-reading service. Through her, he learned that no one was designing automation and radio production systems with their needs in mind, so he adapted their product to serve radio reading services like ERRS.

In November, our 10 recording-production booths and the radio control room were rewired and new computers with Adobe Audition installed. Audition is one of the most widely used professional recording programs on the market. All three programs, Audition, WireReady and Book Wizard, are more blind-friendly than Dalet, too. Their accessibility was an important factor in our selection of the replacement software programs.

Our testing shows that Audition works easily with Book Wizard Producer and WireReady. Above all, it will simplify our recording and production efforts and improve the quality of our books and radio programs substantially. These steps are being taken to ensure the best quality talking books and uninterrupted radio programming for our 10,000 patrons.

As with all things at WTBBL, this would not be possible without our volunteers. In December, over 150 volunteers will begin training on the new software. Their willingness to take on this new challenge is a testament to their diligence and a tremendous gift toward our mission. We thank them all: book readers and radio program narrators, book reviewers and production assistants.

## **NEW Books Available at WTBBL by Herrick Heitman**

Here are some of the audio and braille books we have recently produced. These descriptions and the downloadable audio books are added to our website as each book is completed. Digital cartridge copies are available for checkout.

## **Audio: Adult Fiction**

*Renegade River: Western Stories* by Giff Cheshire.

A collection of 12 short stories set in the Pacific Northwest first published in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Includes tales of back-country ranchers, outlaws in the Siskiyou, and steamboat captains on the Columbia. Narrated by Ed Kennedy. 1999. 9 hours, 37 minutes. Cassette Book CBA 7979. Digital Book DBW 7979.

## **Audio: Adult Nonfiction**

*The Life of the Skies: Birding at the End of Nature* by Jonathan Rosen.

Chronicling his bird watching adventures, and researching those of John James Audubon and other famous birders, the author discovers literary, philosophical, scientific and spiritual interconnections. He shares his thoughts on birds, bird lore, natural history and the literature of birds. Narrated by Janet Polata. 2008. 10 hours. Digital Book DBW 8169.

## **Braille: Adult Fiction**

*The Eye of the Heron* by Ursula LeGuin.

Modern Science Fiction. The Victoria Colony was a savage, lawless prison world dominated by criminals. A woman called Luz leaves her father to lead the People of Peace in a perilous quest to discover a new world of hope, a place they would call Heron. Some violence. 1978. 3 volumes. Braille Book BRW 1275.

## **Braille: Adult Nonfiction**

*Puget's Sound: A Narrative of Early Tacoma and the Southern Sound* by Murray Morgan.

From Vancouver's visit on May 19, 1792, to the 1950s, Mr. Morgan provides us with "a narrative of early Tacoma and the southern Sound." 1979. 9 volumes. Braille Book BRW 1294.

## **Newsline is Here by Tyler Kaye**

By phone or online, WTBBL patrons now have free access to over 300 newspapers and magazines. Newsline, a service of the National Federation of the Blind, makes available the text of five Washington publications: the *Seattle Times* and *Post-Intelligencer*, *Spokesman-*

*Review, News Tribune, and Tri-City Herald.* TV listings customized by city are also just a fingertip away. Additionally, Newsline provides the text of a number of popular magazines like *Time, Glamour,* and *Smithsonian.*

Newsline's toll-free telephone service uses a synthesized voice to read articles chosen by the caller. Within each publication, stories are arranged in menus based on sections such as local news, business and entertainment. Telephone keys can be used to skip or repeat articles as well as to make speed and volume adjustments to the reading voice. Users can also set favorite publications and search for articles by keyword.

For Internet users, Newsline offers even more customizable services. "Web News on Demand" allows searchable access to articles on the Newsline site or in DAISY files by e-mail. "Newsline in Your Pocket" creates downloadable audio files that can be played using the Victor Reader Stream, BookSense, Book Port Plus, Icon, or Braille+. "Podable News" can be used to build a custom newspaper from sections of multiple publications, delivered daily in MP3 or DAISY format.

To get a Newsline packet with directions on using the service, as well as the toll-free telephone number and access code, please call the library. We will be glad to get you started.

## **Meet Our Staff: Amy Ravenholt**

Amy Ravenholt wasn't born a librarian, but once she learned to read her fate was sealed. The children's librarian in her small Wyoming home town would send her home from each visit with a stack of new books and instructions to "Read these and tell me what you think." Despite Ms. Nakako's promotion of good literature, Amy found time to squeeze in every series at the public library. She rode the Black Stallion with Alec, solved mysteries with Nancy Drew and travelled the world in adventures with Rick Brant, teenage scientist.



At the University of Wyoming she took introductory courses in almost every subject, from astronomy and calculus (not a favorite), to

linguistics and philosophy. She majored in English because those classes were the most fun, but couldn't picture herself teaching. When she walked into the Laramie public library to pick up a Dick Francis mystery, she realized THAT was what she wanted to do with her life — work in a library and loan people books they would enjoy reading.

Library school at the University of Washington drew her to Seattle, and she made this state her home. She worked with branch libraries and outreach in Yakima County for over 20 years, and learned about talking book services from patrons she met on homebound visits. In 2008, when WTBBL transitioned to being administered directly by the Washington State Library, she jumped at the chance to move back to Seattle and work as the library's assistant program manager.

Amy enjoys contra dancing, home renovation, travel, family, friends, and good food — for which she does penance by walking the occasional half-marathon. Most of all, she loves a good book that grabs her and doesn't let go until the last page.

## **A Letter from Signe Rose**

Dear Friends:

This is the time of year that we give thanks for the many blessings in our lives.

One of the blessings in my life is the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library.

Each time I push the play button to start a new audio book, I anticipate being entertained, educated, amazed, moved to laughter or to tears. My world is enriched by the experiences I have through books. I can't imagine not having books in my life.

Every year, I like to show my appreciation to WTBBL by giving back. Because I live in Seattle, I can volunteer at WTBBL and I really enjoy that. I can also give a small gift. It may not be a great deal, but I know that every gift is appreciated and every gift is not only put to good use, but encourages the wonderful staff and volunteers at WTBBL because they know donors are grateful for the work they do.

At this time of thanksgiving and looking back over the past year at the good things in our lives, I hope you will join me in making a gift to WTBBL. It is easy to do. Just send a check to WTBBL at 2021 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Seattle, WA 98121-2783. Or you can go online at [www.wtbbl.org](http://www.wtbbl.org) and make a gift on your credit card.

Thanks for taking a few minutes to read my letter.

I wish you a happy holiday season and a book-filled new year.

Warm regards,

*Signe Rose*

WTBBL Patron since 1964

P.S. Danielle reminds me to tell you that your gift is tax deductible. You will receive a receipt to use for your tax preparation.

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM  
WTBBL!!!**

