

Newsletter of the Talking Book & Braille Library

# Staying Connected

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## From the Director

**Welcome to 2026!** We hope fall and winter have brought you comfort and plenty of great stories.

The past year has been a big one for Talking Books. We traveled across the state to connect with communities and share how Talking Books can make reading more accessible and enjoyable. We represented Oregon nationally, traveling to Washington, D.C., and Watertown, Massachusetts, to take part in the National Book Festival and the Regional NLS Network Library Conference. Along the way, we introduced new services like Bookshare, welcomed three new people to our team, and worked behind the scenes to improve our service to you. None of this would be possible without the dedication of our volunteers and the generosity of donors who support our mission.

Last spring we had an incredible response to our Customer Satisfaction Survey: over 1,000 of you responded, telling us how much Talking Books means to you and what you want from us.

We're deeply grateful for your honest feedback. You told us you wanted books that better match your reading interests, more access to staff, and a way to find out what books are available. We heard you loud and clear! Several projects are underway to address these concerns. One improvement you may already be noticing is clearer subjects and genres, which help us select books that better match your interests. If you haven't received a new cartridge in a while, we encourage you to return an old one so we can send you a fresh selection.

New “self-serve” options in our voicemail menu and an improved system for organizing and responding to questions will help us be more efficient and will hopefully result in more contact with you. Lastly, an updated online catalog will help show what’s available and allow you to order books on cartridges more easily.

Thank you for being part of the Talking Books community! Your feedback, enthusiasm, and love of reading inspire us as we continue working to make library service more accessible for everyone.

## **Welcoming New Faces to Talking Books**

Over the past year, staff transitions have opened the door for three wonderful new team members to join our Talking Books staff. We’re thrilled to introduce them and excited for you to get to know the people supporting patrons every day!

### **Chris Hamilton (she/her), Reader’s Advisor**

Chris brings more than 20 years of experience from public school libraries across the Portland area. In her first year here, Chris has helped hundreds of readers navigate our library and get books and equipment they can use and enjoy.

### **Tiff Bowers (she/her), Talking Books Librarian**

Tiff joins us from Newberg Public Library, where she focused on outreach and homebound services. Her dedication to inclusive library service makes her the ideal person to spread the word about Talking Books to organizations and libraries throughout Oregon.

## **Clover Thomas (he/him), Part-time Customer Support Assistant**

Clover is in his first year of the Chemical Engineering program at Chemeketa and brings curiosity and a calm, thoughtful presence to his role as Customer Support Assistant.

## **Our Invaluable Talking Books Volunteers**

“I take great pleasure in knowing I am able to help those who are print disabled enjoy reading as much as I do.” – Matt, studio volunteer

Talking Books wouldn’t be the same without its dedicated volunteers. Every day, volunteers check in returned books and send cartridges of new books to readers all over Oregon. Volunteers also help organize materials, clean and repair equipment, and call users for feedback.



Five studio volunteers give their time and skills to the Oregon Stories and Voices program. They narrate books and other materials, and review and edit audio.

Volunteers do more than just help with tasks. They also give staff helpful feedback to make our services better. When asked about spending her afternoon at the State Library, narration volunteer Theresa shared “I enjoy working with knowledgeable, patient staff, where I can learn and grow in personal adventure each week.” Thank you, volunteers!

## An Endowment Founded in Love and Purpose

Thomas Price of Grants Pass, Oregon, loved his wife, Irene, dearly. When he passed in 1988, he left a large portion of his estate to the Talking Book and Braille Library in fond memory of Irene, who enjoyed using the library throughout her lifetime. This bequest established the Talking Book and Braille Library Endowment Fund honoring their vision of a bolstered future.

### **What is your legacy?**

Now at well over *three million dollars*, the Talking Book and Braille Library's Endowment Fund means Oregonians with print impairments will continue to benefit from this special library meant just for them well into the future. The fund amplifies the impact of estate gifts from people just like you through an annual drawdown of earned interest spent on service enhancements. By carefully investing the fund's principle, contributions become an annual gift forever!

Please consider joining the legacy of Thomas and Irene, as well as dozens of other generous visionaries. Take action and consult with your family, friends, and financial advisor or attorney to find the best way for you to allocate an estate gift to the Talking Book and Braille Library. And please feel free to share your plan with us so we can say thank you!

Together we can make sure reading is for everyone.

## Out and About with Talking Books Outreach

This year Talking Books outreach took us from Toledo, Oregon to Washington, D.C.! We took part in resource fairs, expos, professional conferences, book festivals, and more! We met with library staff at statewide conferences, shared updates with partners including:

The Oregon Commission for the Blind (OCB), American Council of the Blind of Oregon (ACBO), and National Federation of the Blind of Oregon (NFBO), and the Oregon Textbook and Media Center (OTMC).

All-in-all, we travelled 13,119 round-trip miles connecting with current and potential library patrons, community partners, and Oregon library staff members. We heartily thank each and every person we met last year and look forward to getting to know many more of you in 2026.

If you or someone you know would like to invite Talking Books for a presentation or training, please reach out! Librarian Tiff Bowers is always eager to "talk" Talking Books. You can send her an email at [tiff.bowers@slo.oregon.gov](mailto:tiff.bowers@slo.oregon.gov).

## What to Read

Are you out of good books or just looking for something new? Here are some books we think you might enjoy. For more recommendations, try one of these great resources from the National Library Service:

- [Talking Book Topics](#) features audio titles recently added to the collection. You can read *Talking Book Topics* online and you can also download it from BARD or get it on your cartridges.

- [International Language Quarterly](#) lists popular international language books recently added to the collection. You can read *International Language Quarterly* online and access books featured via links to BARD.
- [Collections Connections](#) is a new, monthly online newsletter that highlights the complete collection. Books are curated based on different themes, and the newsletter links directly to BARD.

## **STAFF PICKS**

Of monsters and mainframes by Barbara Truelove (DB131418)

The last cuentista by Donna Barba Higuera (DB105729).

The ten thousand doors of January by Alix E. Harrow (DB096852)

## **BOOKS INTO FILM**

Hamnet by Maggie O'Farrell (DB100166)

The housemaid by Freida McFadden (DB114201)

The woman in cabin 10 by Ruth Ware (DB085729)

Wicked by Gregory Maguire (DB055810)

Wildwood by Colin Meloy (DB075397)

## **NEWLY ADDED FICTION**

Miss Eliza's English kitchen: a novel of Victorian cookery and friendship by Annabel Abbs (DB129532)

Appalachian Song by Michelle Shocklee (DB129145)

Last port of call by Jean Grainger (DB128716)

The dog thief by Marta Acosta (DB128468)

## **NEWLY ADDED NON-FICTION**

Children of radium: a buried inheritance by Joe Dunthorne (DB129412)

The Mesopotamian riddle : an archaeologist, a soldier, a clergyman, and the race to decipher the world's oldest writing by Joshua Hammer (DB129256)

The ride : Paul Revere and the night that saved America by Kostya Kennedy (DB129115)

Taking Manhattan : the extraordinary events that created New York and shaped America by Russell Shorto (DB128917)

## **Holiday Closures**

Talking Book & Braille Library will be closed on the following holidays:

- President's Day on Monday, February 16
- Memorial Day on Monday, May 25
- Juneteenth on Friday, June 19
- Independence Day (observed) on Friday, July 3

Holidays can delay mail service deliveries, so it may take extra time for books to make their way to you. We recommend putting book requests in a little earlier if you want new books to read over the holiday!

This newsletter is available in large print, audio, or Braille. Contact the Talking Book & Braille Library if you would like to change how you receive this newsletter.