

Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library

Fund: 7000-9406

*The ability to read a book, magazine, or newspaper is something most people take for granted. But when vision loss or physical limitations make it impossible to read the printed word any longer, the **Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library** is there – ready to restore the ability to read in a new way.*

The Perkins Library has a long tradition of providing accessible library services beginning in 1837, making Perkins one of the first library programs in the country to serve people with vision loss. Today, through our partnership with the Library of Congress' National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS), and the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, we offer accessible library services circulated by postage-free U.S. mail and online via the Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) service.

Any resident of Massachusetts who has a disability that prevents them from using regular printed materials is eligible for free accessible library services. With an extensive collection of more than 250,000 audio and braille books and magazines, Perkins is committed to meeting the needs of as many people as possible across the state, including thousands of potential patrons who aren't yet aware of the Library's services.

Response to the Pandemic

While closed for eight weeks in the spring, the Perkins Library Zoom Team hosted multiple training sessions to allow patrons to learn how to effectively use BARD, our special download service. Whether it was downloading to a cartridge or our mobile app, or attending workshops via Zoom or the phone, patrons learned to download their own braille and/or audio materials. Realizing how powerful Zoom could be for staying connected to borrowers, they added a Trivia group, book clubs, Teaching Tuesday, Audio Described Movie Matinees, Easy Yoga, adapted Bingo, Library Without Walls author presentations, and Audio Dramas. Hundreds of borrowers are regularly participating in these events, feeling more connected to the Library, Perkins, and one another. During a time of isolation, Perkins has succeeded in delivering information, entertainment, companionship, friendship, support, and engagement.

