

Date: September 22, 2005

To: Darlene Staffeldt, State Librarian  
Montana State Library Commission

Fr: Christie Briggs, Supervisor  
Montana Talking Book Library

Re: Request for Trust Funds for Purchase of Electric Perkins Braille  
Estimated Cost: \$1,000. (plus S & H)

For the past 15 years, the Montana Association for the Blind (MAB) has loaned to the Talking Book Library a manual Perkins Braille for use by our volunteer/patrons and staff. The MAB has been generous in letting us borrow this piece of equipment with the understanding that we relinquish our loan for 2 months each summer for the equipment to be used at the Montana Association for the Blind's Summer Orientation Program held in Bozeman for newly blind individuals to learn Braille.

A Patron/Volunteer using the manual Perkins Braille at our library had an ergonomic evaluation done by staff from Vocational Rehabilitation. It has been recommended that an electric Perkins Braille, having a much lighter touch, be considered rather than using a manual one. We also have staff that use the manual Perkins Braille. The MAB does not have an electric Perkins Braille. However, another patron volunteer has loaned us one to test. This has been found to be acceptable and preferred by volunteers, patrons and staff.

There are several differences between a manual and electric Perkins Braille. The touch is the equivalent of the difference between a manual and electric typewriter. Most individuals learning Braille for the first time start out using a manual Braille. There are only nine keys on a Perkins Braille but they must be pressed in such a way and hard enough that embossed dots can be properly felt on heavy stock paper or clear plastic sheets.

The cost of a manual versus an electric Perkins Braille is \$300.00 versus \$1,000.00 (plus shipping and handling).

Discussion was pursued regarding the potential purchase of a computerized Braille software and hardware system (which requires a computer Braille printer). This discussion concluded that the expense was far above what an electric Perkins Braille could provide (\$5,000-10,000 versus slightly over \$1,000); space is a major issue; the amount of noise projection is of major concern.

The pace at which Braille is produced by an electric versus manual Braille is two to three times faster. The use of an electric Perkins Braille would be providing patrons with direct benefits in several ways. We can provide faster twin vision Braille books to juvenile patrons and better book container production through faster labeling of our current book containers (especially Montana recordings). We will be better prepared to produce "customized requests" for Braille cards, other labels and communications to patrons and volunteers.