

Access and Usability Series

Talking Book Library – January 13, 2026



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Webinar Recording

- Recorded on January 13, 2026
- [Watch the Video](#)
- [ASPeN Event](#)

Purpose of the Webinar

- First session in a series on **Access and Usability in Libraries**.
- Focus: **Montana State Library Talking Books (TBL)** program.
- Goals:
 - Raise awareness of barriers for people with disabilities.
 - Connect libraries to ideas/resources for improving accessibility.
 - Encourage brainstorming solutions for local barriers.

About Talking Books Program

- **Free service** for Montana residents unable to use standard print due to:
 - Blindness or low vision.
 - Physical disabilities (e.g., tremors, muscle weakness, TBI).
 - Reading disabilities (e.g., dyslexia, ADHD).
- Available **for all ages** (birth to death).
- Partnership:
 - Montana State Library.
 - National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (Library of Congress).
 - Utah State Library (handles shipping and some recordings).

Eligibility & Certification

- Four categories: blindness, low vision, physical disability, reading disability.
- **Good faith approach:** If you think someone qualifies, they likely do.
- **Certifying authorities** include:
 - Medical professionals, educators, social workers.
 - **Librarians and library staff** (confirmed later in chat: assistants can certify too).
- Certification is simple: sign application stating eligibility.

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How to Sign Up

- Complete application (online or paper).
- Include certifying authority signature.
- Submit via mail, email, or online.
- Once processed:
 - Patron receives either **downloadable access (BARD app)** or **physical player and cartridges by mail**.

Delivery & Equipment

- **Two options:**
 - USPS mail (Free Matter for the Blind postage).
 - Digital download via **BARD app** (works like Libby, no holds).
- **Equipment:**
 - Audio players (basic and advanced).
 - New **Wi-Fi-enabled player** (downloads books directly, but no Bluetooth yet).
 - Refreshable braille e-reader.
 - iBill currency reader.
- All services and postage are **free**.

Library Role

- Libraries can:
 - Certify applications.
 - Request **demo accounts** for training and outreach.
 - Provide internet access for patrons to download books.
- Outreach ideas:
 - Senior centers assisted living facilities.
 - Schools and homeschool groups (for students with reading disabilities).
 - Summer Reading Program (accessible version available via NLS).

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Highlights from Alissa (Lewistown Public Library)

- Uses demo equipment for **Senior Outreach Program**.
- Success story: Patron with low vision + hearing loss uses **BARD app + Bluetooth hearing aids** → life changing.
- Suggests promoting **short-term use** for temporary disabilities (e.g., stroke recovery).
- Advocates for **school partnerships** for students with dyslexia or ADHD.

Additional Resources

- Montana Talking Books: <https://msl.mt.gov/tbl/>
- Catalog: <https://montanatbl.klas.com/>
- NFB Newsline: <https://nfb.org/programs-services/nfb-newsline>

Key Takeaways

- **TBL is not just for blindness**—includes physical and reading disabilities.
- **Library staff can certify** applications (including assistants).
- **Free service**, easy sign-up, customizable equipment.
- Huge opportunity for outreach to seniors, schools, and isolated patrons.
- Promote during **summer reading** and other community programs.

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Getting Started Checklist

- Visit the TBL homepage: <https://msl.mt.gov/tbl/>
- Review the Patron Guide and eligibility requirements.
- Bookmark the catalog: <https://montanatbl.klas.com/>

Understand Eligibility

- Patrons qualify if they have:
 - Blindness or low vision.
 - Physical disability preventing reading standard print.
 - Reading disability (e.g., dyslexia, ADHD).
- Temporary conditions count (e.g., stroke recovery, broken arm).

Certification

- Confirm you (or library staff) can act as a **certifying authority**.
 - Librarians and library assistants are eligible.
- Familiarize yourself with the **application form** (online or paper).
- Remember: Certification is a **good faith process**—no medical records required.

Sign-Up Process

- Help patrons:
 - Complete the application (online or paper).
 - Add certifying authority signature.
 - Submit via email, mail (use **Free Matter for the Blind** postage), or online.

Library Setup

- Request a **demo account** for your library:
 - Includes a physical player and sample cartridges.
 - Optional BARD demo account for digital access.
- Display demo equipment during outreach events.

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Promote the Service

- Share information during:
 - Senior center visits.
 - School outreach (students with reading disabilities).
 - Summer Reading Program (accessible version available).
- Use **community partnerships** (PTA, assisted living, disability advocates).

Support Patrons

- Offer help with:
 - Using the **BARD mobile app** (works like Libby, no holds).
 - Setting up devices (including Bluetooth hearing aids for audio).
 - Understanding equipment options (basic player, Wi-Fi player, braille e-reader).
- Suggest **Bluetooth adapters** for Wi-Fi players if needed.

Contacts

- Contact Marilyn Bennett:
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