



Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library's Katie Malloy  
Interviewed on 5/5/2020

Jean: Hi, I'm Jean Kalscheur, a member of the visual services team at the Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired. The Council is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to promote the dignity and empowerment of the people in Wisconsin who are blind and visually impaired by providing services, advocating legislation, and educating the general public.

Legislative advocacy has been a cornerstone of the Council's mission since its founding in 1952. This spring executive director Denise Jess has been busy sharing your voice on issues related to voting and transportation.

Our educational programs cover many topics. We speak to low vision support groups, as well as the general public to encourage efforts to integrate persons with vision loss into all aspects of our communities.

Our vision services team provides one-on-one and group rehab services to those with vision loss. Our Sharper Vision Store continues to take phone and online orders.

Talking books has been our number one question from people calling the Council since safer-at-home went into effect in mid-March. Today I'm talking with Katie Malloy, the outreach librarian for the Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library. The Talking Books Library is part of a national network cooperating with the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled. The Talking Books Program and its libraries are housed at the Milwaukee Public Library.

Welcome Katie!

Katie: Thank you!



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Jean: What has been happening at Talking Books since mid-March?

Katie: A lot has been happening since March. At the beginning of March, the Milwaukee Public Library, unfortunately, had to close to the public. So that was the beginning of our pandemic effect, and when that happened, the Talking Book and Braille Library started to quarantine their books. And we began delaying our mail check-in because there was some possibility that the virus was going to stay on hard services. So that slowed down how quickly we were getting books out to people where a lot of people who are on automatic selection weren't getting books nearly as fast as they had been because we were letting the return mail sit in the bins for a couple days. So, we were getting a lot of calls with concern about that. But then as we kind of started getting more geared up to completely shut down, we tried to get out as many books as we could before we had to leave the building completely.

And then, of course, when the order went into place we could no longer go into work, we started working from home and really encouraging people to download books from BARD. We could no longer send out materials.

Unfortunately, we don't have any way to answer phone calls. We do answer emails. So, if people want to get in touch with us, email is really the only way to do it right now.

We will be back in the office next week (May 11) and we will be answering the phones the week after that (May 18). So, we're kind of doing a gradual restart. So our current plan is to go back into the office starting next Monday (May 11) and what we're going to mainly work on is getting the backlog of books in the mail checked back in, and what that does is clear the backlog. That's going to trigger all these people who have automatic selection books to go out again. So that first week that we're in there, really all we're going to be doing is



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working on getting books out to people. So we're going to work on clearing the backlog of mail the first week, and then the following week (May 18) we're going to continue working on clearing the backlog of mail but then we're also going to open it up for reference from 1:00 to 4:50. So that means people can start calling in and requesting specific books. People who aren't on the automatic selection or who have a specific title that they're looking for or just have questions, they can start calling us. And then the week after that following Memorial Day (May 26), we will be back up and doing regular service.

Jean: You had mentioned about not knowing if coronavirus stays on flat surfaces. Do we know anything about the books, both those that are coming back to you and for the librarian's safety as well as for you all to be sending them out again?

Katie: The only thing I've heard about that is that it can potentially stay on hard surfaces for up to two days after direct exposure. Of course when we're checking in material, the hard cover books, we're, you know, wearing face masks and gloves so that we are not potentially exposing the material and also, you know we don't want to send out material that we've, you know, sneezed on or something like that. So, and we do also try to, you know, make sure the materials are as clean as possible. I know a lot of our circulation staff wipes down the material if it looks dirty or anything like that. It's not always possible to wipe down everything, but they're pretty good about sanitizing as much as possible.

Jean: So, it also sounds like you're taking some protection for both yourselves as well as for getting the books out in terms of wearing face masks and gloves?

Katie: Oh yeah, definitely. I think one of the biggest factors in the delay and why we had, we didn't open right away with the curbside service is because the library director and everybody in the city want



to make sure that if people are coming back into work, they're safe. And that's true, of course, for the patrons too.

Jean: But luckily the mailers are pretty easy to wipe off if people do have concerns about that. And that like a Lysol wipe or something would not hurt that plastic box?

Katie: Oh no, yeah, you could totally wipe that off, yeah.

Jean: If patrons have cartridges that have backed up or videos or Braille books, are you asking them to start sending those back in at this time?

Katie: Yes. They can start sending them back in. We were asking people to hold onto them because we weren't open. We didn't want them sitting, you know, at the mail site. But yes, they can start to send them in now.

Jean: One of the things that has come up is BARD. Several talking book users I talked to did not know about the benefits of BARD. Can you explain BARD?

Katie: Yes. So, BARD is a great resource especially right now. It stands for Braille Audio Reading Download. And what it is, it's the National Library Services' online digital library. On the website, it provides access to, I think, almost all of their audio collections and a huge collection of Braille books and they're all downloadable. You can download them either onto a flash drive or a cartridge if you have a blank cartridge. You can download them onto a smartphone, iPad. You can, there's so many ways you can access them.

To use the site to get access to all this material, you just have to be a member of the Talking Book Library and then you can register to use it. It's pretty straightforward. Downloading the books onto like a smartphone on your app, once you do that, you can, you can



download them pretty quickly, like with one touch. Once they're on there and the screen when you're on there looks like the digital player. So, it's fairly easy to use especially if you have a screen reader reading with it.

But the best thing about it is that you can get books immediately. It's completely contactless. You don't have to wait for any delivery. There's no delay in getting the newest books. You can get them often before the library even has copies of them. It's a great app and resource and a lot of people don't know about it. And we're happy to walk people through using it once they get it, call and there are tutorials online that we can recommend.

Jean: So, if they want to register for BARD, do they call you or can you just register online?

Katie: So, they can do a couple of different things. They can call and we can help them get signed up. If they want to register online, the website is just <https://nlsbard.loc.gov/>. And then they go, there's a link that says, apply for BARD. You have to select on your library which, of course, would be the Wisconsin one and then fill in all your information. The main thing that you need to do is have an email address and you do have to be a member of the Talking Book Library. You don't have to be checking out books all the time, but you do have to already be a member. And we can do this over the phone, you know, if you want help registering, but you do need to have an email set up because the email will be your username.

Jean: Okay. I was on the BARD site just last week and I noticed that there are different mobile or BARD Express versus BARD mobile?

Katie: Yes. BARD Express is, it basically makes it easier to download material when you're using a computer and you're downloading material to a flash drive. There's less steps.



Jean: Just as a reminder for people, where is the little USB port located if you're using a flash drive?

Katie: So, if you're using the flash drive with your player, the little USB port is next to the headphone jack and it has a cover on it, a little plastic cover. So, if you kind of run your finger over it and feel with your finger, you can pop the cover off.

Jean: Once your programs are back up and running, are there any programs you'd like to highlight? The three I often get questions about are your book clubs, access to magazines and the Wisconsin collection.

Katie: Those are all ones we also get a lot of questions about. The book clubs, we are, we actually had an open book club meeting today, which went really great. I just had a bunch of people call in and they all shared different books that they had read. And we're doing our next book club again in June which is, it's going to be June 9<sup>th</sup> and we're reading *Haben* the story of a deafblind woman who conquered Harvard Law.

We do have summer reading and I always like to encourage people to have their kids sign up. Our younger patrons, all they have to do over the summer is keep track of their hours and then send in the log that's how many hours they read. And they'll get a prize at the end of the summer.

Jean: How do people find out about the book clubs?

Katie: Usually I try to put it in the newsletter and email parents and teachers that we have signed up. But the biggest way is, of course, getting word out in the newsletter. And then if anyone is interested, they can contact me either through email or phone call. And I can send them more information.



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Book clubs are over the phone. Yes. We use Uber conference, which is just a toll-free conference line where everyone can call in.

Jean: What about magazines?

Katie: That's a little bit of a harder one because I'm not sure what the status is right now of the Missouri Library that they come out of. They will have to check back in and see if I can find out more about whether or not they're open and sending out material. From what I have heard from people, they have not been receiving anything. So, I believe that they're probably closed right now.

Jean: And then just a little bit about your Wisconsin collection?

Katie: As far as I know, the Wisconsin collection has been put on hold because ABLE (Audio and Braille Library Enhancement), of course, is our main source of recording those books and they have not been able to get into the building to work on materials.

Jean: Anything else you'd like to share today, Katie?

Katie: I know a lot of our patrons have been very frustrated that we have not been able to send out material, and to tell the truth, we have been frustrated too. So, we're just very pleased that we're going to be able to get back to work safely.

Jean: Well, thank you very much, Katie, for letting us interview you. It's definitely a program that's so important to many people with vision impairment. And it's exciting to hear that you are starting up again and will be getting books out to people. That will make many, many very happy in the next few weeks.

So, stay well. Thank you all for listening. Bye now.