Winter 2007

Volume 1 Issue 3

Editor: Carrie Gors

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE LIBRARY
BRAILLE AND TALKING BOOK LIBRARY

PRAIRIE TRAILS MEMORANDUM

Notes from the Director, Dan Boyd

The big news at the South Dakota State Library is the change in the mission of the library. The SD State Library is going to return to providing the services it was originally established to provide. When the SD State Library was originally established by the legislature its mission was to be the research library for state government and the library for public libraries in South Dakota.

These changes will have very little impact on SD Braille & Talking Book Library patrons. You will still receive recorded books, braille books plus textbooks in braille, large print and audio from the SD State Library, Braille & Talking Book Program. The only change that will impact the SD Braille & Talking Book Library will be the changes in the circulation of large print books. Many of you along with nursing homes, assisted living centers and senior centers have been receiving a quantity of large print books direct from the SD State Library every few weeks. This service will be discontinued on December 29, 2006.

In early 2007 the large print book collection at the SD State Library will be disbursed to public libraries around the state. Each public library will decide if they want to participate in the new large print book program and the number of books they want.

These libraries will then form circuits (based on the number of large print books they receive). The circuits will be comprised of six libraries and they will receive a different collection of large print books from one of the other libraries in the circuit every two months.

Most public libraries already have a large print book collection. The books from the circuit will be in addition to their collection. You will now be able to receive large print books from your local public library rather than waiting for books from the Braille & Talking Book Library in Pierre. Your local public library will have a larger collection of large print books and will also be able to borrow large print books for you from other public libraries in South Dakota.

I would encourage you to visit your local public library and talk to them about your need for large print books. Talk to your library about the type of large print books you enjoy reading and the number of books you read on a monthly average.

If you community does not have a public library call the SD State Library and talk with us about other options that might be available to you.

If you have a library card from the SD State Library (the one you used to borrow large print books) this card will still provide you access to many electronic databases at the SD State Library.

If you have any questions or concerns about the changes please give us a call at 1-800-423-6665.

New Technology Provides Quick Access to Printed Materials

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB), in partnership with Ray Kurzweil, has created the first portable reading machine for the blind and visually impaired: the Kurzweil-National Federation of the Blind Reader. The Reader uses character recognition software combined with text-to-speech conversion technology. Weighing less than one pound, the Reader fits in the palm of your hand.

The user holds the Reader over a piece of paper and simply pushes a button to take a picture. The machine takes about thirty seconds to process the image and then begins reading the contents of the page to the user.

The Reader can be used to read your mail, a menu, a receipt, a newsletter or just about any printed item. James Gashel, Executive Director for Strategic Initiatives at the NFB, said, "I use the Reader everyday to read some kind of printed material. It is amazing how many items come before me that I need to read. The Reader has substantially increased my access to printed material and in doing so has given me a greater level of independence."

The portable Reader is the first device to provide rapid and easy access to a variety of printed information. Tasks that previously required a human reader can now be accomplished independently. For more information or to order the Kurzweil-National Federation of the Blind Reader at a special introductory discount, call the NFB at (877)708-1724.

Why You Haven't Received Books

If you haven't received any books in a while, here are some possible explanations. Take a look and see if any of these are appropriate to your own service. Remember that more than one may apply to you.

You haven't requested any books.
If you prefer the kind of service where we send you only the specific books you ask for, your service depends on you sending or calling in book orders. Make sure that your requests can adequately meet your reading needs, bearing in mind that some of your requests may not be available to be sent out. Contact us if you would like to switch to a service pattern where our computer helps choose your books.

Your request list is inadequate.
By this we mean that your list can't support your reading needs because, for instance, you have requested new and very popular titles that are constantly in circulation and hence rarely available. On the other hand, you may have requested many books that are old and for which we have few or no remaining copies (the lower the RC number the older the book is). Or it may be that all copies of the books you've ordered just happen to be on loan to others. When you choose all your own books, the more you like to read the longer your request list should be.

You haven't returned any books.
As with any library, you must return what you borrow. It's best to return each book as you finish it. The prompt return of books is not only a courtesy to other readers but it's essential for your own service by alerting us to your need for more books. When you keep books for many months or even years (as some unfortunately do), this blocks the process of replacing books

you've read with new ones you've ordered. It also keeps the books out of circulation.

Your basic book supply is too low.
You may have reached your personal maximum but this may be too small. This number of books checked out includes those in the mail, so it may well be that this number should be raised to counteract that.

Your reading interests are insufficient.
If you allow us to choose books for you whenever your list is empty or nothing you want is available, your subject list may be out of date or inadequate in some way, so you may want to review and add to the list of reading interests you originally gave us. It's possible, over the years, to read everything we have in a subject category. Also, you may have read all the books available by certain authors (remember, some of them may be dead and not likely to write more books.)

You've changed your address without telling us.
We may have sent you lots of books-all to the wrong address! Be sure to keep us up to date with your address changes.

Your service has been suspended for some reason.
We may have got something back in the mail that suggests that you may have moved or are no longer interested in the service. Did you refuse something we mailed you? Did you write "send no more" on a returning books mailing card? You may have meant "send no more westerns" but it could mean "cancel my service" too. We have to put your service on hold while we investigate.

Google for the Visually Impaired

What is Google Accessible Search?

Accessible Search is an early Google Labs product designed to identify and prioritize search results that are more easily usable by blind and visually impaired users. Regular Google search helps you find a set of documents that is most relevant to your tasks. Accessible Search goes one step further by helping you find the most accessible pages in that result set.

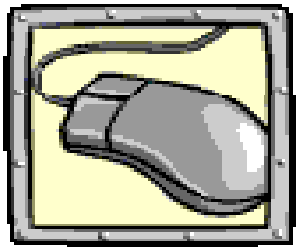
How does Accessible Search work?

In its current version, Google Accessible Search looks at a number of signals by examining the HTML markup found on a web page. It tends to favor pages that degrade gracefully—pages with few visual distractions and pages that are likely to render well with images turned off. Google Accessible Search is built on Google Co-op's technology, which improves search results based on specialized interests.

Why is Google offering this?

Accessible Search is a natural and important extension of Google's overall mission to better organize the world's information and make it universally accessible. Google Accessible Search is designed to help the visually challenged find the most relevant, useful and comprehensive information, as quickly as possible.

In the past, visually impaired Google users have often waded through a lot of inaccessible websites and pages to find the required information. Our goal is to provide a more useful and accessible web search experience for the blind and visually impaired.



How do you decide which sites are "accessible" and which are not?

Broadly, Google defines accessible websites and pages as content that the blind and visually impaired can use and consume using standard online technology, and we've worked with a number of organizations to determine which websites and pages meet those criteria. Our methods for identifying accessible pages and content are always evolving; currently we take into account several factors, including a given page's simplicity, how much visual imagery it carries and whether or not its primary purpose is immediately viable with keyboard navigation.

How can sites make their content more accessible to the blind?

Some of the basic recommendations on how to make a website more usable and accessible include keeping Web pages easy to read, avoiding visual clutter—especially extraneous content—and ensuring that the primary purpose of the Web page is immediately accessible with full keyboard navigation. There are many organizations and online resources that offer website owners and authors guidance on how to make websites and pages more accessible for the blind and visually impaired. The W3C publishes numerous guidelines including Web Content Access Guidelines that are helpful for Website owners and authors. Broad adherence to these guidelines is one way of ensuring that sites are universally accessible.

To try Google Accessible Search go to http://labs.google.com/accessible/

Source: http://labs.google.com/accessible/faq.html

Digital Talking Book Player

Recently the National Library Service has unveiled the design and specifications of the new, Digital Talking Book Player. While it's implementation and distribution is still two years away, we think it's important to keep our patrons up-to-date on this major change in their service. In brief description, the digital player resembles a CD or MP3 player, perhaps even a video game system. It has a dark surface with light colored, strategically spaced buttons. The book cartridge, which is robust and slightly smaller than an audio tape, slides into one end of the player with only a small portion sticking out. The speaker mechanism and its controls take up half of the player. The whole thing appears to be of compact, solid design.

Features of the new player:

- Approximately 1/3 the size of the current player
- Approximately 1/2 the weight of the current player
- CD-quality audio
- Twice the battery playing time
- Designed to last 10 years without repair
- A built in "sleep switch" to help customers find their place after they have fallen asleep

A Few Words About Exclusions

Exclusions are a term used by the Talking Book Library to describe the subject and other characteristics of a book that patrons do not wish to receive. For instance, if one of our patrons does not wish to receive any Science Fiction books, then we add an exclusion to their reading preferences so that they do not receive any Science Fiction books. The majority of exclusions on customer accounts are for a book's strong language, violence and/or sexually explicit material. The problem with these exclusions is that they are keeping customers from receiving books by their favorite authors.

The author Danielle Steel, who writes widely popular romance novels, has 62 titles in the South Dakota Braille and Talking Book Library catalog and only 15 without strong language or sexually explicit material. Another author of romance novels, Nora Roberts, who is just as popular as Danielle Steel, has 91 titles in our catalog, none of which are without strong language or sexually explicit material. So, if you've requested books by a favorite author and haven't been receiving very many it could be because your preferences have exclusions for these characteristics (strong language, violence and sexually explicit material). Please call your Reader Advisor at 1-800-423-6665 if this is the case so that we can reassess your reading preferences.

Multi-Part Books

Some cassette books are so long that they require two or more containers. When we send you such a book, we send all the containers together. When you send the book back, please do the same.

We ask that you be sure to replace all the cassettes in the correct green plastic mailing container before returning a book, and we suggest that you have only one container open at a time to avoid errors. Doing this right is trickier when it's a long book that comes in multiple mailing containers. Note that for a two-part book the containers are marked "A" and "B", the first four tapes, starting with sides 1, 5, 9 and 13, go in the part "A" container, and the rest go in the part "B" container. Note that the book number printed on each tape tells you which box it belongs in, for example, RC 51028A and RC 51028B.

CHANGES!?

If you happen to find that your reading preferences are changing or that you wish to increase/decrease the number of books that you are currently receiving, contact your Reader Advisor so that they may assist you.

If your last name starts with A through I, ask for **Mary**
If your last name starts with J through R, ask for **Carrie**
If your last name starts with S through Z, ask for **Brian**

MAGAZINES

We recently sent out a magazine order form to all of our talking book patrons listing the magazines that are available directly from the South Dakota Braille and Talking Book Library. These magazines come in a plastic case with a reversible mailing label and must be returned to the library when you are finished. Most of these magazines are recorded in other states and sent to us to copy and distribute.

In an effort to better serve our patrons we have changed how we send out our magazines. Now when we get a new issue of a magazine we make a copy for every patron signed up for the magazine. That way nobody has to wait for the newest issue. Please make sure that you are sending your older issues back to us so that we can send you the newest ones.

The magazines that are available through the South Dakota Braille and Talking Book Library are:

- AARP News Bulletin
- American History
- Arthritis Today
- Audubon
- Better Homes and Gardens
- Birds and Blooms
- Bishop's Bulletin
- Capper's
- Country
- Country Woman
- Cowboys and Indians
- Dakota Farmer
- Dakota Outdoors
- Deadwood Magazine
- Diabetes Life Lines
- Diabetes Self-Management
- Good Old Days
- Great Plains Game & Fish
- Healthy Exchanges Food Newsletter
- Humpty Dumpty's
- In-Fisherman
- Journal of Rehabilitation
- Midwest Living
- Modern Maturity
- National Geographic Traveler
- North Dakota Outdoors

- Redbook
- Reminisce
- Smithsonian
- SD Conservation Digest
- SD Electric Coop. Connections
- SD Lion
- SD Magazine
- Southern Living
- Texas Highways
- Time
- Us Weekly
- Walleye Insider
- Wild West
- Woman's Day

If you would like to receive any of these magazines or would like more information about them please call your Reader Advisor at 1-800-423-6665.

Book Club

Calling all patrons interested in joining a book club! We would like to start up a South Dakota Braille and Talking Book Library book club and are wondering who is interested?

We realize that it would be hard for everyone to get together in person, so we were thinking about an online book club or a book club that meets over the telephone. If anyone has suggestions, ideas or would be interested in joining a book club please call Carrie at the Braille and Talking Book Library.

Alaskan Hustle

Few of us may think of dog mushers as athletes, but of course, they are, just as jockeys are. I don't know if there has ever been a blind jockey in the Kentucky Derby, but Rachael Scdoris, a legally blind young woman, competed for the first time last year in the Iditarod, the Derby of dogsled races. The Iditarod commemorates lifesaving runs by dogsled teams that in 1925 brought desperately needed serum to the diphtheria-ravaged town of Nome. Covering 1,150 miles of Alaskan wilderness, the race takes place over approximately two weeks, through blizzards and subzero weather, across forbidding terrain. A team of 12 to 16 dogs pull a musher standing on a lightweight sled that he or she guides by leaning from side to side. Taking place around the clock, it is a grueling endurance event for dogs and mushers alike. There have been a handful of celebrated female Iditarod mushers, including Libby Riddles and Susan Butcher. Bidding to be included in their company was Scdoris, a 21-year-old Oregonian, who inherited her love of sled dog racing from her father, a musher.

Scdoris's story, which she tells in her autobiography No End in Sight, (RC 61948) is available at the South Dakota Braille and Talking Book Library. Call today to get a copy!

Or maybe you'd like to try (RC 51505) Touch the Top of the World: A Blind Man's Journey to Climb Farther than the Eye Can See.

(RC 60083) Love in the Lead: The Miracle of the Seeing Eye Dog.

(RC 48786) Coping with Blindness: Personal Tales of Blindness.

From our South Dakota collection
By Mary Sjerven, Reader Advisor

Karen Kingsbury is one of America's favorite inspirational storyteller's. We have recently added one of her series to our South Dakota Collection.

The Redemption Series
The Redemption Series, winner of the 2005 Retailer's Choice award for Inspirational Fiction Series, five books that follow a family with trials and triumphs like your own. The Redemption Series illustrates the relational teachings of Gary Smalley in a way that is changing lives across the world.
SD004067 Redemption
SD004068 Remember
SD004069 Return
SD004070 Rejoice
SD004071 Reunion

Other books by this author include:

Firstborn series:
Dayne Matthews is at the top of the Hollywood list, working on what may be his best movie yet. Still, he is empty and unfocused, aching for real love and the family he'll never know.
RC061505 Fame
RC062411 Forgiven

A Time to Dance Series:
Join John and Abby Reynolds on their journey.
RC057529 A Time to Dance
RC057509 A Time to Embrace

Individual titles are:
RC060320 A Thousand Tomorrows
RC060581 A Treasury of Miracles for Teens
RC061115 A Kingsbury Collection: Where Yesterday Lives, When Joy Came to Stay

Another series just added to the South Dakota collection:

Coming Home to Brewster by Roxanne Henke.
The series welcome's you to Brewster, the fictional little town that's not so different from yours…wherever you might live. You'll find people with families, friends and problems that might be quite similar to yours.
SD004062 After Ann
SD004063 Finding Ruth
SD004064 Becoming Olivia
SD004065 Always Jan

Newly added books by South Dakota authors include:

SD004053 Memories of the Millennium by Bob Bartos
SD004054 Dakota: An Autobiography of a Cowman by W.H. Hamilton
SD004055 Pebbles on the Prairie by Gloria K. Bauske
SD004056 Stagecoach Passage: Medora to Deadwood by Arthur Abbott
SD004057 The Harvest is Late by J. Hyatt Downing
SD004058 The Richest Man in Town by V.J. Smith

You, our readers also request titles unavailable through the National Library Service. Two titles that we are in the process of getting recorded are:

SD004058 March by Geraldine Brooks
SD004085 The Long Goodbye by Patty Davis

The Braille & Talking Book Library will be closed on the following holidays. Please place your book orders in advance so that you will have plenty on hand.

January 15 Martin Luther King Jr. Day
February 19 President's Day

The Prairie Trails Memorandum, published quarterly, is our means of communication with our patrons. The Prairie Trails Memorandum is available in braille, cassette or a computer diskette upon request and is also posted on our website.

If you wish to request this newsletter in an alternative format, please contact the Braille and Talking Book Library at 1-800-423-6665.

If you have any questions or comments that you would like to share with us about the library program, please contact us.

Write: South Dakota Braille & Talking Book Library
800 Governors Drive, Pierre, SD 57501

E-mail: talkbkreq@state.sd.us

Call: 1-800-423-6665

The Braille & Talking Book Library does not endorse any product or service listed in this newsletter.