



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY,
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TO: Cultural Education Committee
FROM: Jeffrey Cannell
SUBJECT: Talking Book and Braille Library Update
DATE: May 23, 2011
AUTHORIZATION(S):

SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

Free reading material for New York's 385,000 citizens who are visually, physically or learning disabled is now available in digital format. The Library of Congress' National Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) implemented an enhanced digital talking books program two years ago. This transition to digital format presents opportunities to the New York Talking Book and Braille Library (TBBL) to increase and improve service.

Proposed Handling

The Cultural Education Committee will receive an update on the use of digital book services by New York's children and adults who are visually, physically or learning disabled.

Background Information

NLS migrated from audio cassette books to digital books with a replacement of reading equipment and the production of books on digital "memory sticks". Also, NLS offers a downloadable book service – Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD). BARD allows registered TBBL patrons to download audio books to their TBBL-issued reader. Use of BARD is increasing. In March 2011, BARD downloads accounted for nearly 20% of total circulation of approximately 31,000.

While there are some 385,000 New Yorkers with disabilities who are eligible for TBBL library services, only 30,000 are individually registered TBBL patrons. There are additional patrons served at nearly 500 deposit institutions such as nursing homes, hospitals, developmental centers, schools and libraries.

Recommendation

As the transition to digital formats accelerates and the use of the BARD download service increases, TBBL will decrease the use of cassette tapes for the distribution of reading material. In addition, TBBL will begin to reach out to local public libraries and systems to increase use of this service.