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## Braille and Talking Book Library Service Now More Efficient for Qualifying Michigan Residents

The Bureau of Services for Blind Persons, Braille and Talking Book Library (BTBL) provides books in alternative formats to Michigan residents who cannot read standard print materials due to a visual or physical disability. BTBL is a regional library, part of a network of libraries throughout the U.S. working with the Library of Congress to serve this population.

**Faster Response:** Circulated 23% more books and took 20% more phone calls for the reader advisory service  
**Reduction in Paper:** Issued 24% more digital playback machines to Michigan residents who qualified  
**Customers who Benefit:** 11,300

Sub-regional libraries throughout the state work through BTBL to provide localized reader advisory and outreach services. Until 2014, another regional library served all of Wayne County independently of BTBL. At that time, the Wayne County Regional Library and the Detroit Public Sub-regional Library merged into the BTBL region. As a result, demand for BTBL services dramatically increased over the past year. The number of incoming phone calls will continue to rise as the Wayne County Library is expected to completely close down in 2015.

Beginning in 2012, BTBL began centralizing the storage and circulation of books to create efficiencies at the local level across the state. Books that were previously shipped from each sub-regional location now are shipped directly from BTBL. This has created more time for local library staff to do outreach, programming, and reader advisory activities.

In order to absorb the collection of books previously circulated by sub-regional libraries, BTBL adopted a new shelving system, allowing for numerous additions to the existing collection without having to reshelv books. The new system also reduced the time it takes to shelve and check books in as they are returned from the patrons who borrowed them. BTBL circulates an average of 2,000 books per day through USPS as “Free Matter for the Blind.”

Because of the closure of several USPS sorting stations this past year (including Lansing) and the centralization of circulation functions, BTBL collaborated with state Department of Management & Budget (DTMB) Mailing Services and several USPS managers to formulate best practices for shipping materials to and from patrons. Downloading additional copies of books eliminates the backlog of people waiting to read the same book. BTBL downloads and ships roughly 600 books per week, as needed, when there is not a copy on hand to ship.

Production of locally recorded books about Michigan and the Great Lakes, and by Michigan authors has enhanced the selection of titles available to not only Michigan readers, but anyone in the country who qualifies for this service. Sixty-six locally produced books were uploaded to a Library of Congress website in the past year for the first time, making them accessible to all registered patrons across the country. BTBL moved to an automatic call distribution (ACD) system to manage the high volume of incoming calls. As a result, staff has answered 95 percent of all incoming calls this year as compared to 88 percent last year. At the same time, incoming calls increased by 20 percent.

**11,300**  
**Customers Benefited**