

## **Library of Congress Braille and Talking-Book Program Releases Book Download App through Apple**

People who are blind, visually impaired or have a physical disability may now download audio and braille books to their iPhone, iPad or iPod touch, if they are registered with the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) in the Library of Congress.

The Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) Mobile app is now available through the Apple App Store. The app, which is free, allows readers to download audio and braille books from their NLS BARD accounts. Access to BARD is provided through local cooperating libraries. BARD contains nearly 50,000 books, magazines and music scores in audio and braille formats, with new selections added daily.

NLS Director Karen Keninger said, "The BARD Mobile app allows searching, downloading and reading braille and talking books and magazines on one fully accessible, mainstream device. It's a library in your pocket."

She explained, "With BARD Mobile, patrons can play talking books and magazines on their iOS devices. Patrons may also read electronic braille books, magazines and music scores using a refreshable braille display connected to their iPhone, iPad or iPod touch through Bluetooth." Patrons will be able to receive their reading materials faster and won't have to be weighed down with bulky volumes or playback equipment.

NLS has provided free library service for people who have visual disabilities for more than 80 years and for people with physical disabilities since 1966. Best known as the talking-book program, NLS upgraded its analog program to digital in 2009.

"Audiobooks are provided on cartridges for use with digital playback equipment that provides high-level navigation capability, high-quality sound and other features, which are provided without cost to the reader," Keninger said. "Around the same time, NLS launched BARD, which permitted patrons who had access to high-speed Internet to download their audiobooks, as braille readers had been doing with the Web-Braille system since 1999. BARD now merges the two systems.

"BARD Mobile is another benchmark in our use of technology to enhance the delivery and reading experience of NLS patrons," Keninger said. "NLS developed the BARD Mobile app in response to demand from our borrowers. Blind and disabled Americans are as keen as everyone else to use mobile devices. Our younger patrons are particularly eager to use the same gadgets as their peers."

BARD Mobile will make reading not only more accessible, but more portable. "We anticipate that significant numbers of readers will adopt the app as their primary reading device," Keninger said. "As a growing percentage of blind and disabled Americans adopt mobile devices, the app will provide a highly valued avenue to NLS materials."

Eligible users may even find the free braille and talking-book program more attractive. Keninger explained, "This new, instant and convenient package will increase the appeal of audio and braille reading."

NLS is also working on an app for Android devices.

NLS, which is part of the Library of Congress, administers the braille and talking-book program, a free library service available to residents of the United States and its territories and American citizens living abroad whose low vision, blindness or physical disability makes reading regular print difficult. Through its national network of cooperating libraries, NLS mails digital audio players and books and magazines—in audio and in braille—directly to enrollees at no cost. Music instructional materials are available in large-print, braille and recorded formats. Select materials are also available online for download. To learn more, call 1-888-NLS-READ or visit [www.loc.gov/nls/find.html](http://www.loc.gov/nls/find.html).

The Library of Congress, the nation's oldest federal cultural institution and the largest library in the world, holds more than 155 million items in various languages, disciplines and formats. The Library serves the U.S. Congress and the nation both on-site in its reading rooms on Capitol Hill and through its award-winning website at [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov).