Dear WTBBL Friends – When you have an open door and a desire to exchange experiences, unexpected things can happen, like developing new connections and making friendships 7,000 miles away. Hosting a participant in the Professional Fellows Program at WTBBL did just that when I was offered the opportunity to travel to Egypt this winter as part of a reverse-exchange program.

The trip was made possible by Hands Along the Nile Development Services, Inc. (HANDS), an administrator of a Professional Fellows Program (PFP) of the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. I traveled with a group of hosts from Seattle, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. I had hosted Samia Talaat, a Professional Fellow focused on disability advocacy, while my four colleagues had hosted women’s rights Professional Fellows.

My time spent in Cairo was filled primarily with site visits to nongovernmental organizations working in disability-related areas and attending presentations on issues of disability rights and women’s rights in Egypt. My colleagues and I also had the opportunity to present on proposal writing and our own organizations. We also had some time for sightseeing, and you can’t go wrong beginning an adventure with a trip to the pyramids.

Among the organizations I visited, the Al Hassan Foundation for Differently Abled Inclusion, provides customized wheelchairs and offers programs like accessible transportation, help with starting small businesses, and promotion of social awareness. I had the opportunity to see someone getting fitted for a customized wheelchair and saw the impact that access to prosthetics, improved mobility, and support has on people’s independence and lives.

Takfik Namati TV is a channel serving people with disabilities. Started by a blind photographer and run by a staff of many persons with disabilities, a broad range of programming is offered. The channel’s goals are seeking the rights of the disabled, linking people to education and employment, holding computer trainings for people who are blind, and much more.

The Federal Egyptian Association for Intellectual Disabilities has the vision of empowering and integrating people with intellectual disabilities into all levels of Egyptian society. One of the major
components of the association is “Work for All,” a training and employment program. I had the honor of meeting two young men who participated in Work for All and now work for a car manufacturer, one changing oil and the other washing cars. They take great pride in their work, and their employer attended our meeting, speaking very highly of their reliability, commitment, and quality of work.

As luck had it, one of the Professional Fellows worked at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, or Library of Alexandria, so we were able to arrange a day trip to tour the library as well. The Library of Alexandria has several specialized areas and collections, but the most directly related to WTBBL was the Taha Hussein Library for the Blind and Visually Impaired. This library-within-a-library provides computers with screen readers and magnification for patrons and audiobooks to read while in the library. Library programs include art education as well as orientation and mobility training. There is also a recording studio where books in Arabic are being produced in DAISY format for audio readers.

The hospitality and kindness I experienced in Egypt made for a wonderful travel experience. Meeting the people working in disability advocacy and going on the site visits were the high points of the trip, and I look forward to continuing new relationships and exploring opportunities for collaboration.

I am very grateful to the staff at HANDS, the Professional Fellows, and all the Egyptians who shared their time and knowledge with me. I deeply appreciate what I’ve learned from this exchange and from the culture, spirit and dedication of the people and organizations. Hopefully we will continue to share experiences and build bridges, and WTBBL can carry on as a good role model for library services for people unable to read standard print in the United States.

Doaa Mabrouk, of the Baseera Foundation for People with Visual Impairments in Egypt, visited WTBBL after Danielle returned to Seattle.
Here at the Washington State Library, we are in the midst of a library-wide strategic planning process. It is a good exercise to bring the staff together. All of the staff members who serve at WTBBL, in the nine prison and two state hospital libraries, and in the main, Tumwater-based, library that serves the Legislature and provides programming, services and training to all types of libraries across the state, are learning more about how they contribute to the success of all those we serve at the State Library.

Planning for new initiatives does bring up some uncertainty for us, too, for we are at risk of losing federal funding. The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), an independent federal agency established in 1996, provides federal funding to all state libraries. Part of the president’s 2018 budget proposal includes the elimination of IMLS. Funding from IMLS supports many of the activities and staff at WTBBL — the annual federal contribution is over $300,000 from a state library allocation of over $3 million. We will be working hard to get the message out about the importance of federal support for library services in this state. Part of that story is how all of you have been positively impacted by WTBBL. We have received some wonderful testimonials that we included in funding fact sheets we created for all Washington congressional districts. Feel free to share these fact sheets with your federal lawmakers if you want to tell your story of why this funding matters. The fact sheets are on our website at www.sos.wa.gov/library/ under “Publications.”

We have also created legislative district fact sheets for our state legislators, for this year we hope to get initial funding from the state Legislature to start work on a new building that will combine the State Archives and State Library. It’s a tough year to ask for capital money, but the need for new facilities is great. Having a new building will help staff work more effectively and protect our one-of-a-kind collections from damage and overcrowding.

So, we are planning, while casting a hopeful eye forward. Thank you for telling your stories. Your continued support and testimonials help underscore the value of WTBBL and the State Library.
Spring has arrived, and change is in the air at the WTBBL Youth Services Department. We’ve got many fun programs in store over the next few months. Summer is approaching quickly!

In February, I had the opportunity to volunteer for the Braille Challenge at the Washington State School for the Blind. It was great to see so many students having fun and promoting braille literacy. WTBBL also hosted a regional Braille Challenge event on February 18, with Oskar the Blind Cat as our guest of honor. An art show, Experience Art 2017, was on April 23, a wonderful celebration of multisensory art created by WTBBL youth patrons.

Over the past month, I’ve had the opportunity to present four multisensory story times to various elementary school classrooms in Seattle and Tumwater. Multisensory story time takes place every Friday at 11:30 a.m. here at WTBBL. In March, our once-monthly parent-infant playgroups for families of children who are blind or visually impaired, presented by King County Birth-3 Vision Services, merged with our multisensory story time program. I am looking forward to continuing this great partnership and promoting the importance of early literacy through play-based interactions.

Providing outreach services to the local community is an important part of what we do here at WTBBL. In March, I had the opportunity to present on WTBBL services to youth services librarians in public libraries across the state at a Youth Leadership Summit sponsored by the State Library. I also presented a multisensory story time training at an educators conference in Bellingham, as well as a BARD presentation in collaboration with Tyler, our registration and outreach specialist. I’ll be presenting multisensory story time workshops in the next few months at various conferences throughout Washington, as well as bringing our accessible gaming lab to several school districts.

Worried about what to do this summer? In April, the Youth Services Department welcomed Elena, a graduate student from the University of Washington Information School. Elena will be assisting me in creating our by-mail summer reading program, which is open to all WTBBL youth patrons, and planning our in-house summer reading events. Stay tuned for further information and summer reading registration forms!

In the meantime, please feel free to contact me at (206) 615-1253 or marian.mays@sos.wa.gov with any questions about our youth services and programs.
In 2016, the audio book production department of WTBBL successfully completed and uploaded over 200 new titles to BARD. There are usually about 240 titles in process at any time within the department, either in recording, reviewing, editing or uploading. It is exciting to be part of an efficient and dynamic production process. Several of the fruits of our staff’s and volunteers’ recent labor include:

DBC 195 Seattle Justice, the Rise and Fall of the Police Payoff System in Seattle by Christopher T. Bayley. Narrated by Bob Carlson.

This is the true story of one of the youngest county prosecutors in the country whose mission was to finally end the system of vice and corruption that had infiltrated Seattle’s police department, municipal departments, and even the mayor’s office. 2015.

DBC 334 Revenant, #9 in the Greywalker series by Kat Richardson. Narrated by Mary Schlosser.

In the most recent Greywalker novel, turmoil, sickness and destruction are sweeping through Europe — and their effects are being felt all the way across the world in Seattle. Harper Blaine and her lover, Quinton, suspect that Quinton’s father, James Purlis — and his terrifying Ghost Division — is involved. Following a dark trail of grotesque crimes and black magic across the Old World, the pair slowly draws closer to their quarry. 2014.


Still smarting from the very public breakup of his marriage and facing conduct complaints for the use of excessive force, embattled Detective Sergeant Mickey Dolan is at the end of his rope — and possibly at the end of his career — when he catches a case that just might turn things around: the disappearance of the wife and daughters of a powerful city councilman. 2016.

DBC 196 Too High & Too Steep: Reshaping Seattle’s Topography by David B. Williams. Narrated by John Ogliore.

Residents and visitors in today’s Seattle would barely recognize the landscape that its founding settlers first encountered. As the city grew, its leaders and inhabitants dramatically altered its topography to accommodate their changing visions. In the course of telling this fascinating story, Williams helps readers find visible traces of the city’s former landscape and better understand Seattle as a place that has been radically reshaped. 2015.
Recently, I discovered a young adult fiction writer who I think would appeal to readers of all ages while exemplifying what is good about the genre.

I read *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green (DB 74112). The NLS annotation says: A miracle drug may have given 16-year-old cancer patient Hazel a few more years, but she is still depressed. Then Hazel meets cute Augustus during a support group meeting and her world shifts in unexpected and inspiring ways. Some strong language. For senior high and older readers. Commercial audiobook. 2012.

It may be hard to imagine that a realistic book about two cancer patients falling in love would be cheerful and uplifting, but this book is definitely a joy to read. The two main characters’ humor and toughness in the face of terrible suffering come through on every page. The minor characters are all well-drawn, with not a flat or throwaway character in the bunch. Our hero and heroine visit Amsterdam to meet their favorite author, and this allows Mr. Green to make some satirical digs at his own profession.

As often happens in young adult fiction, the characters are a bit nerdy and precocious. This gives the book a satisfying philosophical heft, at the price of making most of the dialogue unrealistic. At the book club where I read this book, some of the members who were cancer survivors did not like the descriptions of treatment or the presence of death and did not find the book as cheerful as I did.

There is a blind character in this novel, but his troubles are portrayed very evenhandedly, and he is not portrayed as being better or worse off than the other patients. One of the virtues of young adult fiction is its conciseness. This talking book runs less than eight hours but is filled with incidents and ideas. A lot of longer novels don’t have this much variety. I am looking forward to more books by John Green.
On March 1, the Braille Authority of North America (BANA) announced the publication of *Braille Formats: Principles of Print-to-Braille Transcription, 2016, Pre-Publication Release*. This update of the 2011 edition is available for download from the BANA website, www.brailleauthority.org, both as print (PDF) and braille (BRF) files.

In April, WTBBL hosted a training for our volunteer transcribers and proofreaders, and teachers of the visually impaired from schools in the area to discuss the new BANA rules. This meeting and others like it that we host every year help us all stay on the same braille page and make sure we are doing our best work. Thanks to all of our braille volunteers! Here are seven recently added books available as embossed braille and digital braille files for download from BARD:

BRW 1385 *Light Fell* by Evan Fallenberg. Transcribed by Kathleen Baginski.
Joseph Licht left his wife and five sons after he fell in love with another man. Now, 20 years later, he has invited his sons to dinner in an act of reconciliation. Some sexual content. 2008.

BRW 1416 *Short Nights of the Shadow Catcher: The Epic Life and Immortal Photographs of Edward Curtis* by Timothy Egan. Transcribed by Carol Studer.

BRW 1422 *The Huckleberry Murders: A Bo Tully Mystery* by Patrick F. McManus. Transcribed by Tanya Allison.
Blight County, Idaho, Sheriff Bo Tully finds three young men, apparently farm laborers, lying by a huckleberry patch, each shot in the back of the head. Tully has his hands full with the rare triple murder as well as the disappearance of rancher Orville Poulson, whose so-called caretaker, Ray Crockett, has entrenched himself on Poulson’s property. 2010.

The third novel in the series finds Sheriff Tully with his hands full of elusive killers, eccentric backwoods characters, and irresistible women in this latest romp through the wilds of Blight County, Idaho. 2009.

BRW 1424 *Katie Gale: A Coast Salish Woman’s Life on Oyster Bay* by Llyn De Danaan. Transcribed by Gail Viscione.

Katie Kettle Gale was born into a Salish community in Puget Sound in the 1850s. With her people forced out of their accustomed hunting and fishing grounds, she sought her fortune in Oyster Bay. Steeped in sadness — with a lost home and a broken marriage, children dying in their teens, and tuberculosis claiming her at 43 — Katie’s story is also one of remarkable pluck, a tale of hard work and ingenuity, bad luck and gritty initiative. 2013.

BRW 1427 *Mink River* by Brian Doyle. Transcribed by Kathleen Baginski.

In a small fictional town on the Oregon coast there are love affairs and almost-love-affairs, mystery and hilarity, bears and tears, brawls and boats, a garrulous logger and a silent doctor, rain and pain, Irish immigrants and Salish stories, mud and laughter. It’s the tale of a town, written in a distinct and lyrical voice, and readers will close the book more than a little sad to leave the village of Neawanaka, on the west coast of Oregon, beneath the hills that used to boast the biggest trees in the history of the world. Some strong language and descriptions of sex. 2010.

**For younger readers:**

BRJ 1404 *Little Melba and Her Big Trombone* by Katheryn Russel-Brown. Transcribed by Joan Moritz.

Melba Liston grew up surrounded by music in Depression-era Kansas City and Los Angeles. All through her family’s home, notes stirred and rhythms bubbled. Even though her first trombone was almost bigger than she was, she couldn’t keep her hands off of it. Self-taught and determined, she ended up becoming a virtuoso who collaborated with many 20th century jazz greats, despite facing many barriers as an African-American woman. Grades 2-5. 2014.
Volunteer Spotlight on Brian Padgett

For many years I was an actor, though the cliché was true for me, as waiting tables paid my bills. I worked at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival for a couple of seasons before moving to New York City where my wife and I lived for nearly a decade. Along the way, I decided to forgo acting as a profession, and I attended law school and became an attorney.

Several years ago, we pulled up our stakes in New York and moved to Seattle where I continued to practice law. After being here awhile, I was working on a jury trial in Superior Court, which is always fun. It’s kind of like theatre of the law, and many of the same skills apply.

One day in court, I had to read the deposition of a medical expert who could not appear to testify. This is a difficult task. Jurors wonder why some attorney is reading to them instead of an actual doctor presenting testimony, but I will say that my background has given me the tools to be fairly engaging in what is too often a very boring section of trial.

Now, there is a rule in a jury trial — it’s perhaps the biggest rule — that the jurors do not talk to the attorneys until after they have given their verdict. The judge tells the jurors at the start, “If you see one of the attorneys at the coffee shop, don’t be offended if they see you and run out the door. Any contact is improper and could lead to having to do the trial all over again with a new jury.”

So imagine my surprise when at the end of a day of trial, in front of opposing counsel and the judge, the alternate juror (the extra juror they have on hand in case another juror has to be excused) approached me to ask me a question. I froze, and the bailiff informed the juror that she was not permitted to talk to me. That was a new experience, let me tell you.

At this point my interest was piqued! Once the verdict was read, we were free to speak with the jurors. I asked one of them why the alternate had tried to speak with me.

“She’s cool! She’s the executive director of a braille library, and it sounds amazing,” he said. “She thought you would be good at reading the books. That’s why she wanted to talk to you.”

That sounded interesting, and since there was no longer any problem with me talking to her, I did a little cyber-investigating, got her name and office number, and gave Danielle a call.
Danielle was great! She told me what WTBBL does and how I could contribute as a book recording volunteer. I was intrigued, looked into the library further, and set up an audition to give it a try.

That was about a year ago and I have enjoyed spending time reading books for WTBBL. It’s a great place with fantastic people who work together to do important things. I am lucky to be a part of this team and happy that I tracked down that unconventional juror to find out what she wanted!

My first two books were Star Wars Rebels: #1, The Rebellion Begins (DBC 352) and The Story Behind the Dragon Boat Festival (DBC 167), and I am currently working on Penpal by Dathan Auerbach (DBC 6896).

This time every year we send out our annual report, which highlights what we’ve done and says thank you to those who have helped us serve you, our patrons. We’re reminded each year of how remarkable our friends and supporters are and are extremely grateful for the gifts you’ve given to make the last year such a great success.

Since July 1, 2016, we’ve had more than 1,350 amazing friends donate more than $84,000 to WTBBL. Thank you! This is an incredible accomplishment, and we recognize that we couldn’t do everything we do without your support.

Thank you again for your continued support of WTBBL! If you ever have questions regarding a gift to our organization, please contact Laura Mott at laura.mott@sos.wa.gov or (360) 902-4171.
WTBBL’s 2017 Patron Advisory Council

Pictured are (left to right): Sharon Cordova, Ryan Bondroff, Meagan Holt, Tom Brown, Diedre Maxwell, Jonathan Blake, George Newberry, WTBBL’s Danielle Miller, John Buckmaster, WTBBL’s Rocío Vargas, Becky Bell, Frank Cuta, Chris Coulter, Washington State Librarian Cindy Āden, and Maida Pojtinger.

Not pictured: Nathan Brannon, Gary Mackenstadt, Betty Watson