

# READING MATTERS

Summer  
2020



**WASHINGTON TALKING BOOK & BRAILLE LIBRARY**

2021 9th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98121-2783

8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday - Friday

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**That All May Read**

# FROM THE DIRECTOR

BY DANIELLE MILLER



I would like to thank all of you who called or emailed over the past few months letting us know what an essential service you feel the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library provides. As many of you know, following the governor's stay-at-home order, the WTBBL building closed March 25 and staff started working from home. While we were unable to deliver audiobooks, braille, equipment or other materials to you, we were returning calls, responding to email messages, supporting BARD and BARD users, and promoting BARD and helping set up new BARD accounts. Staff members at home were also working on projects supporting the WTBBL mission, continuing to edit local audio and braille books in the production queue, uploading locally produced books to BARD, and doing professional development training.

It was incredibly difficult not to be able to send out our books, and we understand

that people have been more isolated than ever from friends, families and neighbors by the COVID-19 pandemic and were in need of their special form of entertainment and escape. Also, we are aware that many WTBBL patrons do not have any access to the internet, and the period of closure was particularly difficult. The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the digital divide and the importance of libraries, and emphasizes the importance of access to books and technology more than ever.

During the closure, we advocated for permission to begin circulating our books. Secretary of State Kim Wyman wrote a letter to Gov. Jay Inslee requesting a waiver for us to get back in the building to start limited operations. The governor approved our waiver, and we resumed circulation June 4. We are now able to send out books and equipment. We are thrilled to be back serving our patrons after being gone for over two months. We can receive mail, so books and equipment can be returned, and circulation is proceeding normally. All staff handling books and equipment are wearing gloves, and all machines are cleaned before they are mailed.

Thank you to everyone who helped to get us back to WTBBL and circulating books! Your support is so valuable and your voice makes a difference. We know what a vital service WTBBL provides and are grateful to be able to serve you.

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Washington Talking Book & Braille Library

# STATE LIBRARIAN UPDATE

BY CINDY ADEN



I write you after a week of dire state budget news: Washington is projected to have a budget deficit of \$8.8 billion between now and 2023. All state agencies and offices have been asked to tighten their belts. The Office of the Secretary of State, in an effort to forestall more serious budget measures, has put the entire State Library staff on a temporary layoff. Every staff member will take one day a week without pay, starting the week of June 29 through Aug. 7.

Meanwhile, in Olympia, where Thurston County is about to begin Phase 3, library staff is returning to the building to work. In King County, where WTBBL is located, staff will begin a Phase 2 plan. Thanks to the Governor's Office, WTBBL received permission to bring the shipping staff back in Phase 1 so we could resume shipping out audiobook

cartridges and players. We are grateful to Secretary of State Kim Wyman for writing the Governor's Office and asking for this special consideration.

Over the next year it's going to be tough statewide, but we are optimistic that we will continue to provide the services our patrons so dearly need. The months of March and April were trying for all of us, for we knew how much our patrons depended on their audiobooks. King County was completely shut down as the virus took hold, and no one was permitted into the building to ship materials. Your phone calls and letters to the Governor's Office and your legislators were undoubtedly helpful in emphasizing how important it was to have your library services resume.

I am so proud of our staff, who were willing to go back to work early and who worked hard to check in two months of materials and get them checked out to patrons in record time. I think we broke our own records, but we were motivated! The staff at WTBBL is without parallel. They are devoted to serving all of you, and they have been tireless and resourceful in figuring out what they can do even while out of the office. WTBBL Director Danielle Miller has been exemplary, personally

(continued on next page)

# STATE LIBRARIAN UPDATE (CONTINUED)

returning hundreds of calls and emails to make sure you knew your pleas for service were being heard.

Speaking of a dedicated staff, this brings me to my last piece of news. It has been my honor and joy to serve as the state librarian and to support and promote the work of WTBBL and its amazing staff. And with challenging times ahead, it's very tough for me to choose to leave my post, but an opportunity that started nearly a year ago has arrived, and I will be leaving to take a position at the University of Washington. July 17 is my last day.

About five years ago the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation endowed a chair at the university's Information School, the distinguished practitioner of residence. There have been two such professors of practice — it's a two- to three-year appointment — and I will be the third. In this new position, I plan to continue some of the outreach I have undertaken as state librarian, with a particular focus on digital equity and broadband access across the state. I believe librarians have a role to play as stakeholders in broadband build-out, and happily the state's Broadband Office and many legislators agree. There will be lots of opportunity in the coming years, and I intend to make sure libraries are prepared to take advantage of federal and state funding.

When I consider my past four years, I am amazed at some of WTBBL's many accomplishments: winning its second Network Library of the Year from the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled; hosting a 75-year anniversary party for our beautiful, nearly historic building; taking part in pilot projects to be the first to offer better services for duplication-on-demand cartridges; implementing new audiobook-production software; identifying new titles available as a result of the Marrakesh Treaty; and taking part in a Bookshare pilot to offer more titles to our users. Finally there is our facility in the heart of the fastest-growing part of Seattle. We made countless building improvements — from lighting and wiring to carpet and furniture — and found a new tenant who will pay market-rate for our upstairs space. The new revenue will be welcome especially now.

I cannot thank all of you enough for your commitment to WTBBL and all that you do as appreciative patrons, generous volunteers and donors and advocates for our services. What an incredible experience it has been to serve at the helm of an institution with such a strong community of supporters.

It has been a stellar four years, and it has flown.

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# YOUTH SERVICES NEWS

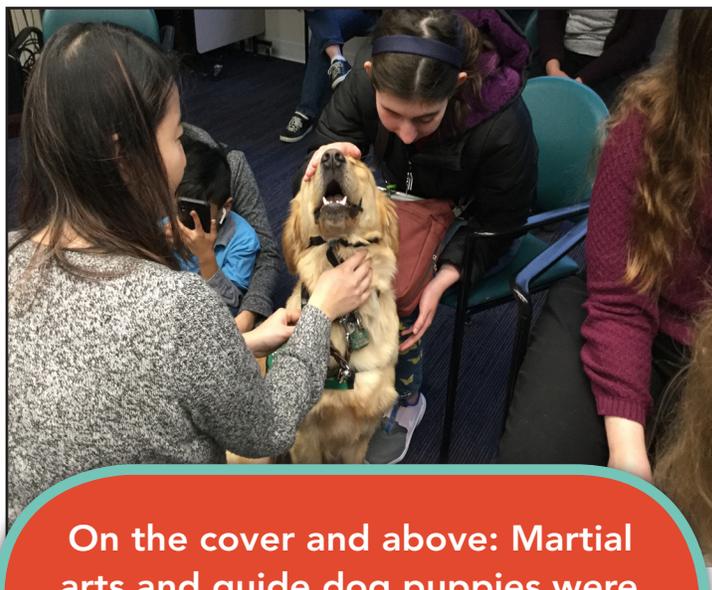
BY ERIN GROTH

It seems like so long ago now, but 2020 started off with two exciting Braille Challenges, with the Seattle event becoming the most successful yet. We hosted 16 students in the braille literacy competition, and over 50 guests attended the day's programs. It was a great day full of braille, guide dog puppies, martial arts and community engagement. A traveling team of talented braille readers came from the Washington State School for the Blind to compete in Seattle this year. Special thanks to the Washington Council of the Blind for providing prizes and lunch, United Blind of Seattle for a generous cash donation, the Arvidsons of Anacortes, Soo Bahk Do for the amazing self-defense lessons for the blind and visually impaired, and to Guide Dogs for the Blind's Seattle Puppy Raisers for the cuddly and informative presentations. We can't wait to do it again next year!

Unfortunately, due to interruptions in service during the COVID-19 closure, we have had to postpone our Spring Pen-Pal Program. The program will start up again when school resumes in the fall. In the meantime, summer is here, and the by-mail Summer Reading Program is as robust as ever! Youth patrons in the early literacy, children and teenage groups started receiving weekly activity packets this month. Each packet contains book recommendations, challenges, and art or STEM activities with the theme of

"Imagine Your Story." Be on the lookout for accessible digital escape rooms to be shared on WTBBBL social media! The first will be "Escape from WTBBBL," and is open to patrons of all ages with access to the internet and the ability to fill out Google Forms. Sadly, there will be no in-person events this summer, but we are happy to send books and activity packets through the mail and host online events as well.

Want to stay in the know and keep up to date on all things Youth Services? Remember to sign up for DOTS: WTBBBL's Youth Patron Newsletter, our bimonthly email bulletin. The link to sign up can be found on the Youth Services page of WTBBBL's website.



**On the cover and above: Martial arts and guide dog puppies were among the activities at the Braille Challenge.**

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# DUPLICATION ON DEMAND

BY ALCIA ENSMINGER



**Readers' Advisors Shannon and Alan are here to help!**

At WTBBL, we are always looking for innovative ways to serve our patrons. This year, we will partner with NLS to introduce an enhanced service model to ensure every patron can access every book in the library collection at all times. No more waiting! Your individual requests will be fulfilled with multiple books on a single cartridge. This new service is called duplication on demand.

Duplication on demand provides customized digital cartridges based on your preferences and requests, with multiple books per cartridge. The digital talking-book player will move from book to book, or you can use the bookshelf feature to select the book you want to read. The duplication on demand talking book cartridges come with a folded, two-piece mailing card that lists the titles of the books on the cartridge. Instead of turning over the mailing card

to return the book, just remove it, as the library's address is printed on the container.

To help us send you books you want to read, please call WTBBL to update your favorite authors, subjects, series and narrators. The more information you provide, the better your duplication on demand service will be at selecting books for you.

If you have questions when you receive your first duplication on demand cartridge, please call the library at (800) 542-0866. We are excited to be able to provide access to the entire library collection for you!

Don't forget to make sure YOU'RE counted in the the 2020 census!

This year it's easier than ever: you can respond online, by calling a toll-free number, or by mail! If you have questions, visit [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) or contact WTBBL at (800) 542-0866.

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**Washington Talking Book & Braille Library**

# BOOK CLUB STARTING AT WTBBL

BY AMY RAVENHOLT



**Librarian Amy will lead the first book club**

We are launching a statewide, quarterly patron book club and invite you to join us. The WTBBL Book Club will be a fun, entertaining and lively discussion of a book by a Northwest author or with Northwest interest. The titles we read will be available in audio and braille, both on BARD or for you to order from the library.

The first meeting of the book club will be Wednesday, Aug. 26, from 2 to 3 p.m. Patrons can participate by telephone using our free conference-call service. You can join the discussion by calling (800) 920-7487, participant code 39258344#.

Our first book will be *Trial By Fury* by J.A. Jance (DBC 504/BRC 708). Revisit Seattle circa 1985 in this police procedural mystery. The body, lying naked and dead in a dumpster, was a shock. But even more shocking was the way in which the victim died. The victim, a popular basketball

coach, was lynched, leaving behind a pregnant wife with a dangerous secret. As homicide detective J.P. Beaumont and his partner look into the murder and sordid doings at Mercer Island High School, the mystery deepens. Extramarital affairs, threats, a wife who has no alibi... it all adds up to the wrong kind of love and the worst kind of justice.

J.A. Jance mysteries are the most-requested titles that are recorded (or brailled) at WTBBL. This is the third book in the series, but can be read as a stand-alone novel. Whether you're a fan of Beau or not, there is plenty to discuss: the mystery itself, infidelity, changing views on race and domestic violence, and the good old days when you could grab a drink at the Dog House, then drive to Bellevue in no time at all. As the *Seattle Times* said, "San Francisco has Dashiell Hammett, Boston has Robert B. Parker... Seattle has J.A. Jance."

Let us know if you would like to participate so we can contact you with any updates or schedule changes. You can request a copy of the book or let us know you will be joining us by calling (800) 542-0866 or emailing [wtbbl@sos.wa.gov](mailto:wtbbl@sos.wa.gov). We look forward to talking about books with you!

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# STAFF SPOTLIGHT ON SHIPPING:

**Hello! My name is Shane Lavers, and I work in the Shipping Department at WTBBL.** It's a lot of fun working with Ryan Gelskey and our supervisor Sally Jo Hagen. I feel a lot of camaraderie with them, and we each bring a pretty unique perspective to Shipping. I started here last summer and I love it. One of the best parts about WTBBL is working with our volunteers. Every day we send out over a thousand books. I've been very grateful to work alongside volunteers like Jessie, Ian, Vaughn, Andrew, Kevin, Benjamin, Rick, Dametries and many more to make sure we can send out all of these books to the right people and keep an accurate record of the ones returned to us. Their enthusiasm makes every day feel important.

I've lived in Seattle for about three and a half years. I moved here after getting an interdisciplinary undergraduate degree from Montana State University. I studied political science, gender, film, creative writing and sustainability. In my free time I play in a few bands and help organize shows in the DIY music community. I moved here on a whim knowing almost no one. So the music scene has felt, with slight hyperbole, pretty life-affirming. Seattle's been a great home to me. It's a nice feeling to want to stay in one place.

I grew up next door to my public library and have spent my whole life frequenting

and working in libraries. I worked for four years at my university's library and got hooked. I started as a student employee but during my time there joined the library's development committee and worked with a student liaison team to help widen the net of people who felt they had a stake in their library. I am very happy to continue that career path here. I love being able to tell friends that I work at WTBBL, and I'm excited to continue with the library as the future brings advancements in the tools we use and the service provided.

**Hi! I'm Ryan Gelskey, and I joined the WTBBL team last October as a circulation and shipping technician.** I value libraries as vital public institutions for equitable access to information and third spaces where all are welcome. It is a great honor to be a part of serving the patrons of WTBBL, helping to ensure their information and literary needs are met. On a daily basis in Shipping, Sally Jo, Shane and I process incoming mail and check in returned materials, while pulling and checking out new materials to send to patrons. We also load the custom cartridges — single book cartridges with multiple titles on them — and are very excited to switch over to duplication on demand later this year. It will enable us to better serve our patrons in a faster manner. Shane and I also switch between processing and sending out braille, talking-book players and

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# SHANE LAVERS AND RYAN GELSKEY



Ryan, Sally Jo and Shane

accessories. Lately I have been primarily in charge of machines, ensuring that patrons' requests are fulfilled, ordering enough accessories from NLS to ensure our supply meets demand, and rotating the players back and forth between refurbishment in Cincinnati and our warehouse. I also recently led a collection-management project in tandem with our youth services librarian. We reorganized the youth braille and large print materials in our lobby to be more intuitive to find, correctly labeled and standardized into holding codes based on reading level, genre and format.

My professional interests are reader's advisory, organization and classification, cataloging, collection management, community engagement and library administration. Each of these aspects of librarianship are paramount to keeping a library running efficiently, maintaining an up-to-date collection with accurate records

that is of use and interest to patrons, and providing patrons with the highest quality of service. My genre of choice is fantasy fiction, and I make a deep commitment to being an active resource for LGBTQ+ fiction, especially gay fantasy fiction. I believe everyone deserves to see themselves reflected in the stories available to them, and that diversity makes us stronger.

My mother cultivated a love of reading and actively encouraged early literacy with me from a young age. Her own path led her from shelving books at age 6 in our hometown public library to her becoming the director of that same library in 2008. Without her, and the impact that books had on my personal identity, I doubt that I would have gone on to earn my Master of Library and Information Science degree from the University of Washington in 2018. After earning the MLIS degree, I served as regional history librarian for The Community Library in Sun Valley, Idaho, my hometown of seven generations, before moving back to Seattle to begin my life with my partner. I am eternally grateful for the opportunities WTBBL has given me, including enabling me to make the transition back to Seattle and continue my career in librarianship.

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Office of the Secretary of State  
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Meet WTBL's new shipping staff  
Shane and Ryan on pages 7 and 8!

