

Florida Library History Project

The Bureau of Braille and Talking Book Library Services

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Before 1941, Braille and Talking Book Library Services were almost inaccessible and unknown to many Floridians with visual and physical impairments that prevented them from using conventional printed materials. In 1941, Helen Keller addressed a joint meeting of the Florida Legislature; House Bill 153 was passed and enacted as Chapter 20714 of the Laws of Florida, Act of 1941, which created the Florida Council for the Blind as a State Board under the Welfare Board.

One of the first concerns of the Florida Council for the Blind was to register individuals with visual impairments and provide assistance as deemed necessary. One of these was to start talking book and Braille library service for those eligible. Books were on rigid discs and Braille books were loaned free of charge from the Kriegshaber Library for the Blind in Atlanta, Georgia. Talking book machines were available through the Florida Council for the Blind which was designated as a "distributing agency for talking book machines in Florida." The standard talking book machine was electric or spring driven record player, reproducer of recordings, with an amplifier. At this time Braille and talking book library services were only available to individuals who were visually impaired and 18 years old or older. The only charge for services was the \$ 1.00 delivery charge for the talking book machine.

In 1950, the Library of Congress authorized the establishment of the Florida Talking Book Library. The Florida Council for the Blind designated a 4,000 square foot WWII WAC's barracks in the Welch Complex in Daytona Beach. A staff of six served 900 Floridians with visual impairments. Braille library service continued from Georgia. In 1975, the Florida Talking Book Library became the Florida Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. The library was enlarged to accommodate a circulating Braille collection. Passage of Federal legislation opened talking book and Braille library services to qualified individuals under 18 and those with physical disabilities which made it impossible for them to

use conventional printed materials.

Since 1970 the Braille and Talking Book Library has endeavored to bring Talking Book Library Services to customers in their own county through the founding of Subregional Libraries which can bring library service to the customer with a more personal touch. In order for a Library System to qualify there must be at least 1,000 customers registered in their service area. The Library System must allocate personnel and space as required in the Revised Standards and guidelines of Service for the Library of Congress Network of Libraries for the Blind and Physically Handicapped 1995, Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies, American Library Association. There are now eleven Subregional libraries:

1971	Bradenton	Manatee and Sarasota Counties
1972	Orlando	Orange and Osceola Counties
1973	Riviera Beach	Palm Beach County
1975	Jacksonville	Duval and Nassau Counties
	Tampa	Hillsborough County
1976	Miami	Dade and Monroe Counties
1978	Ft. Lauderdale	Broward, County
1987	Ft. Myers	Lee County
1988	Cocoa	Brevard County
1990	Pensacola	Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties
1993	Largo	Pinellas County

For more information about Recorded books and magazines

on cassette and in Braille call 1-800-226-6000.