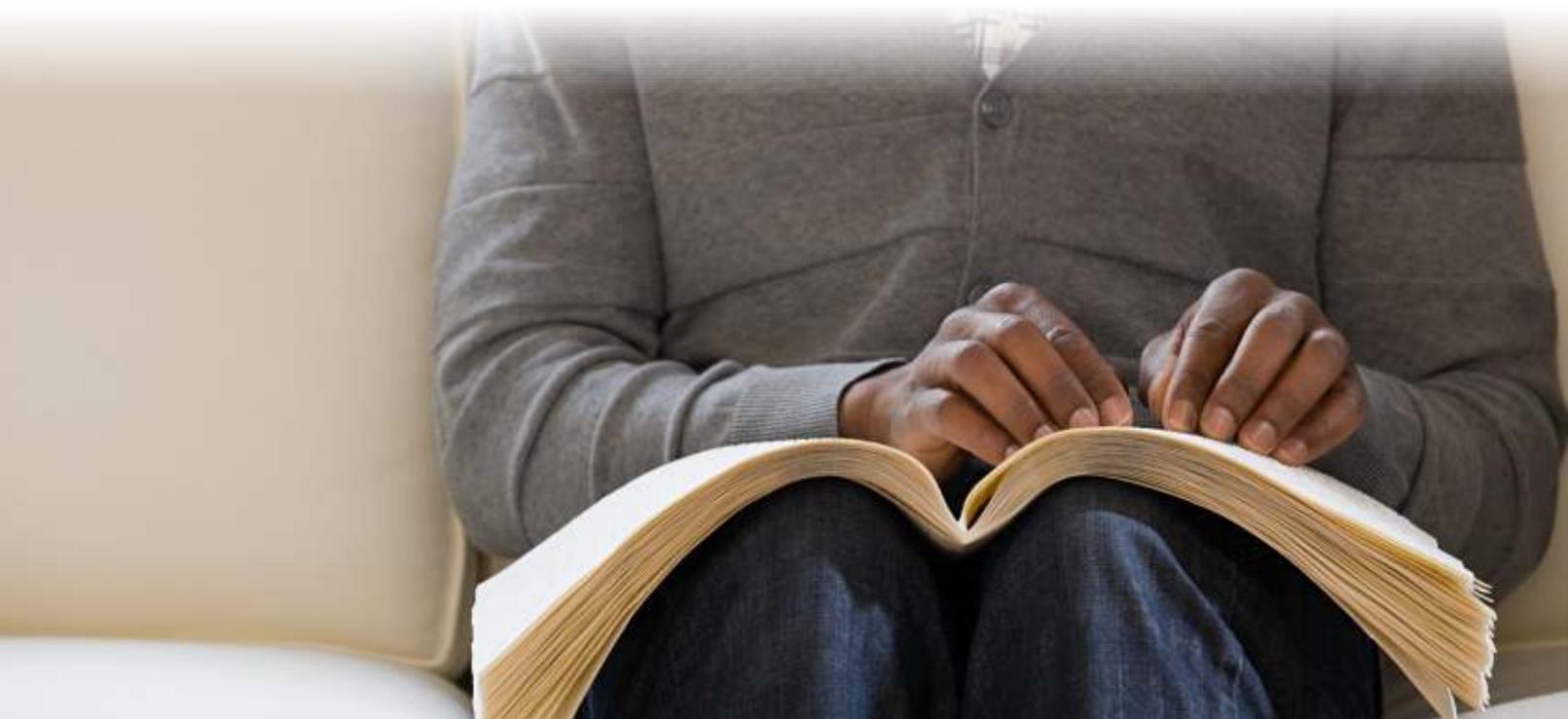


# Librarian.



No Boundaries In Sight.



Braille  
Institute®  
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## Complimentary Braille e-Readers Available!

Braille Institute Library is delighted to partner with the National Library Service to provide brand new braille e-Readers, to any and all interested Braille Institute Library patrons on long term loan.

**What is an e-Reader and do you want one?** If you read braille, then the answer is a big yes, you want one. A braille e-Reader means any e-text – books, articles, recipes, poems – in existence can be translated into braille code. It opens the world to reading in unprecedented ways, expands what's available to read and makes it immediately available.

**Don't read braille?** We have wonderful braille teachers here at Braille Institute happy to welcome you into their classes.

It's never too late to learn braille and it's a life changer.

View braille classes and workshops online at [www.brailleinstitute.org/classes-events](http://www.brailleinstitute.org/classes-events) or call **1-800-BRAILLE (272-4553)** to learn more.

If you're interested in getting started with a Braille e-Reader, please contact the library at [bils@brailleinstitute.org](mailto:bils@brailleinstitute.org) or **1-800-808-2555**.

We will be reaching out to all braille reading patrons to share more details over the coming months.



# Librarian.

The *Librarian* newsletter is published in large print, braille, and audio formats to share information about Braille Institute programs and services with our clients and community of partners. It is also available on our website, [brailleinstitute.org/Library](https://brailleinstitute.org/Library), and on the Telephone Reader Program. Braille Institute is a nonprofit providing free programs and services to people with vision loss since 1919. For more information about the *Librarian* newsletter, or about library services, please call 1-800-808-2555.

## The Library Has a New Director!

It is with pleasure I sit to write my first column for the *Librarian* as the new Director of Library Services. I'll mostly use this space to talk about books because there is little I like more, but also to give you news on the Braille Institute Library: programs, people, workshops, new technology, filling you in on the latest events.



I was an academic librarian for 14 years and enjoyed it immensely. The Braille Institute Library allows for a different experience, equally dynamic and rewarding, supporting patrons on the blind spectrum, supporting a spectrum of readers. I have much respect for the dedicated staff, and recognize the Library's role in the lives of our patrons.

When my sons were small, wherever we went, we'd look for libraries. We'd note how different libraries could be depending on the city or town or country, but also how similar, how familiar. We pretty much liked them all. But there is no library system in the world that is as good as the one we have in the United States, that is as dedicated to a people's right to read. I'm grateful for your support of the Braille Institute Library.

— Lisa Lepore, Braille Institute Director Library Services

# Read Braille, Read Everything:

A conversation with Monique Mariani, instructor of braille at Braille Institute

Monique Mariani doesn't want you to fear those little raised dots, she wants you to love them, because in combination, those dots form a code we know as braille that allows you to be literate. Literacy matters. Being literate facilitates intellectual and professional engagement in the world. Monique is particularly vested in children knowing how to braille. It is crucial to their academic success. So why, Monique asks, are blind and partially sighted children not expected to be literate? In a 2009 study, the National Federation of the Blind warned, "Nearly 90 percent of America's blind children are not learning to read and write because they are not being taught braille or given access to it. There is a braille literacy crisis in America."

If they knew braille, Monique says, blind children could read alongside their sighted peers, keep up academically, learn syntax, grammar, rhythms of written storytelling, benefit from the cognitive, critical, creative thinking that comes directly through literacy. We would never assume for a sighted child that learning to read is an option, and yet we do that with blind children all the time, she points out.

"There should not be a choice between reading and not reading. Our purpose, our intention, will always be for the reading child," Monique says. "It's our



duty as educators to teach them, even if, at first, they show reluctance to learn for fear of not looking 'normal.'"

In 2018, Daniel Willingham, a psychologist at the University of Virginia, wrote in the New York Times that once an individual can decode written language, the effects of reading by sight, by listening, or by touch are the same.

"Once you've identified the words (whether by listening or reading), the same mental process comprehends the sentences and paragraphs they form," Willingham writes. Even though Willingham's position is not without detractors, it does support Monique's position that braille literacy, which is the ability to decode, is a must for blind children. To effectively comprehend an audiobook, being able to read braille is helpful.

Advocates of braille like Monique Mariani are a small, dedicated group. While braille is not a language, it does have this in common with many languages the world over: it's threatened. But a key difference is that braille is the only mode of literacy for the blind. Monique likes to emphasize that learning braille is not just for the young, but for anyone on the blind spectrum. True, for adult learners used to sight reading, learning braille isn't easy. The eye is much more synthetic than the finger, Monique explains, and when sight reading, one encompasses the whole page with their eyes, but braille requires a much more sequential way of reading. Add to that a new use of touch, a tactility requiring a different kind of attention.

"You have to be a snail on a leaf of lettuce before you'll become a mountain goat," Monique tells her students. In the end, scope will be replaced by speed, but at the beginning, adult learners will "have to deconstruct in order to reconstruct." The learning curve can feel daunting initially, but is well worth the effort.

"We are living in a generation of euphuisms," Monique says. "One does not euphemistically read. One is not euphemistically literate. There is only one way for a blind or partially sighted person to be literate, and that is to know braille."

If you're interested in learning how to read and write in braille, contact Braille Institute.



## **SUMMERTIME STORYTELLERS CLUB**

**Braille Institute  
Library and Youth  
Programs Presents**

**SUMMERTIME  
STORYTELLERS CLUB**  
**July 10 - August 12, 2022**

Kids ages 5 to 18 are invited to join our summer reading and writing club.

Listen to professional storytellers, attend writing workshops, and win prizes!  
*Join today by calling*

**323-210-2604**

*or e-mail*

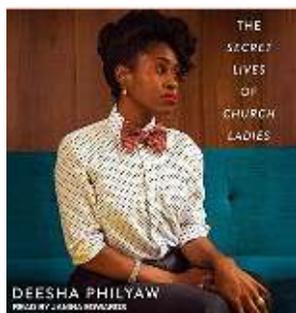
**[bils@brailleinstitute.org](mailto:bils@brailleinstitute.org)**

# A Bibliography of 5 Good Books

Here's a snapshot of five books, all available from the Braille Institute Library. Do let me know what you think; I like to hear how my recommendations land. And feel free to send me yours!

— Lisa Lepore, Braille Institute Director Library Services

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## Secret Lives of Church Ladies

by Deeshaw Philyaw

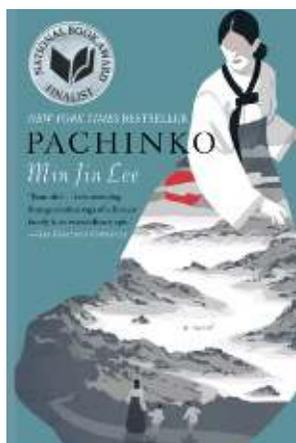
DB 103631

Narrated by Adrean Rivers

4 hours, 30 minutes

*Secret Lives of Church Ladies* by Deeshaw Philyaw is a sharp, funny, lovely collection of short stories about women and the intricacies of their day to day lives.

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## Pachinko

By Min Jin Lee

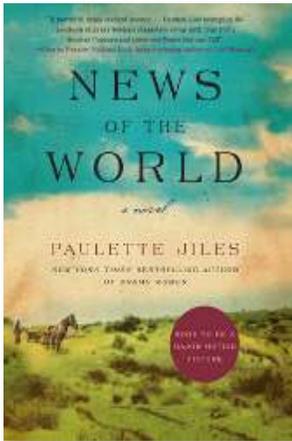
DB 86934

Narrated by Allison Hiroto

18 hours, 18 minutes

Min Jin Lee's novel *Pachinko* follows one woman from rural Korea to Japan. Detailed, atmospheric, I got happily lost in the storytelling of this epic novel. It digests historical infamy tracking one nation's violence over another. It's also a tale of love, romantic and filial, examining how loyalty both liberates and imprisons people.

If you've enjoyed a good book recently, tell us about it at  
[bils@brailleinstitute.org](mailto:bils@brailleinstitute.org)

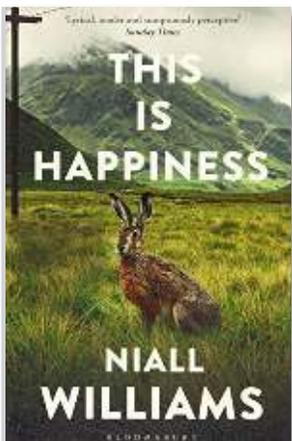


## News of the World

By Paulette Jiles  
BR 21741  
DB 86668  
Narrated by Clay Teunis  
6 hours, 16 minutes

The novel *News of the World* journeys through post-civil war Texas with captivating characters and well-placed period detail, linguistic and artifactual. I think this is Paulette Jiles' finest work, characters moving amidst violence and treachery while finding redemption, kindness, and love.

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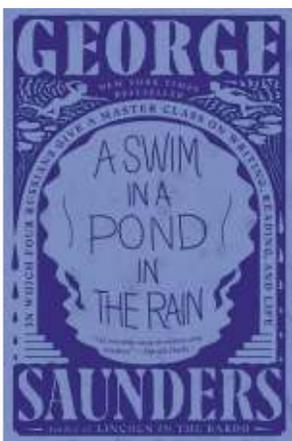


## This is Happiness

By Niall Williams  
DB 99125  
Narrated by Dermot Crowley  
14 hours, 29 minutes

*This is Happiness* is a coming-of-age story about connections, stories, the quirks of an old Irish village pressured by change. Many of us will relate, even if not from a small place we'll recognize how change comes upon us, some of us thrive, some struggle, sometimes both at once. *This is Happiness* is lyrical, funny, and endearing.

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## A Swim in a Pond in the Rain: In Which Four Russians Give a Master Class on Writing, Reading, and Life

By George Saunders  
DB 103448  
6 narrators: Nick Offerman, Glenn Close, Phylicia Rashad, B.D. Wong, Keith David, Renee Elise Goldsberry  
15 hours, 30 minutes

Based on the class he gives to MFA creative writing students at Syracuse University, George Saunders' *A Swim in a Pond* is a delightful experience. In each chapter, you read a short story, say, Chekhov's "In the Cart," and then Saunders discusses how and why the story works.

# My Braille Story

by Kelly Hill



My story illustrates why the new library eReaders that will be going out are a good thing.

At first, learning braille was a struggle and I was held back in first grade for pretty much refusing to read it. By 5th or 6th grade I was an avid braille reader but I suddenly moved from a school district with a lot of support for blind children to one where I was the only blind child in the whole town so through junior high and high school I really had no braille support. My books were on cassette or read to me by someone else.

**The arrival of digital assistants like Apple's Siri and Amazon's Alexa which are supposed to easily turn dictation into text has not helped as much as one might expect because dictation still makes the same kinds of mistakes non-braille readers are prone to.**

I did get one of the first braille displays that came out, but it quickly broke becoming unusable. It was heavy and inconvenient by today's standards. When the computer revolution happened, I began using a screen reader and now I'm no longer as proficient with braille

as I could be, preferring speech.

Part of literacy is having an understanding of how things are written, including proper spelling. Frequent braille users absorb this information with little trouble while people who rely solely on speech have always had to work harder to master good writing skills. Was that to or two?

They sound the same. Reading them, you immediately know the difference without even having to think about it but when you use speech you have to infer which spelling of the word was used or go through extra steps to check. The arrival of digital assistants like Apple's Siri and Amazon's Alexa which are supposed to easily turn dictation into text has not helped as much as one might expect because dictation still makes the same kinds of mistakes non-braille readers are prone to.

Braille displays have always been very expensive and many blind people simply can't afford them. The new eReader program will put braille displays on extended loan in the hands of people who want to read rather than listen, and this is a huge step forward for braille literacy. I look forward to supporting our patrons when the new units roll out.

## Read for Life with Bookshare

Get access to millions of ebooks from Bookshare for FREE. California seniors (55+) are invited to join the world's largest talking ebook library for people with blindness, low vision, and other disabilities for a special complimentary year.

Braille Institute Library has just 100 licenses available, so please call **323-906-3154** or email **[Therbison@brailleinstitute.org](mailto:Therbison@brailleinstitute.org)** today if you would like to sign up. Plus, if you also sign up to test the new Bookshare Reader app for smart speakers, the first 50 volunteers will get a free Alexa device!



## A New Resource to Protect What You Love Most

Braille Institute serves to better the future of our community – and that starts with you. We are excited to introduce a new resource that will support you and your loved ones' future: a free estate planning tool.

**F R E E W I L L** 

We've partnered with FreeWill to help you write a legal will or trust for free. Nearly 70% of Americans don't have an updated estate plan, despite it being a powerful way to protect the people you love. This resource makes the process simple, quick, and free. And you can complete the process in the comfort of your home.

Get started at **[FreeWill.com/Braille](https://FreeWill.com/Braille)** to create your free plan and get peace of mind for the future.

# Anaheim Center's New Literacy Service Coordinator, Erica Navarro-Rodriguez



For over 15 years, Erica Navarro-Rodriguez has been an educator. After earning her first master's degree from California

State University Long Beach, she entered the world of education to explore her passion for teaching and co-creating knowledge. Erica believes in empowering students to see themselves as scholars and architects of knowledge. She also believes that literacy and critical thinking skills are not only a fundamental part of academic excellence, but also building blocks in creating access to equity and diversity in all formal and

informal learning spaces. In addition to managing a curriculum, she also provided one-to-one tutoring for students with disabilities. Erica is also trained in English Language Arts/English Language Development assessment standards for K-12 curriculum, outreach, and database management. She continues to develop and refine her professional knowledge and will attend the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign to pursue a second Master's Degree in Library and Information Science for the Fall 2022 term.

She currently lives in Chino, California with her husband and her Boston Terrier, Hersheys. When she's not busy with providing library services to patrons, you can find her reading, running, or gardening.



## Books-on-Demand – Sign Up Today!

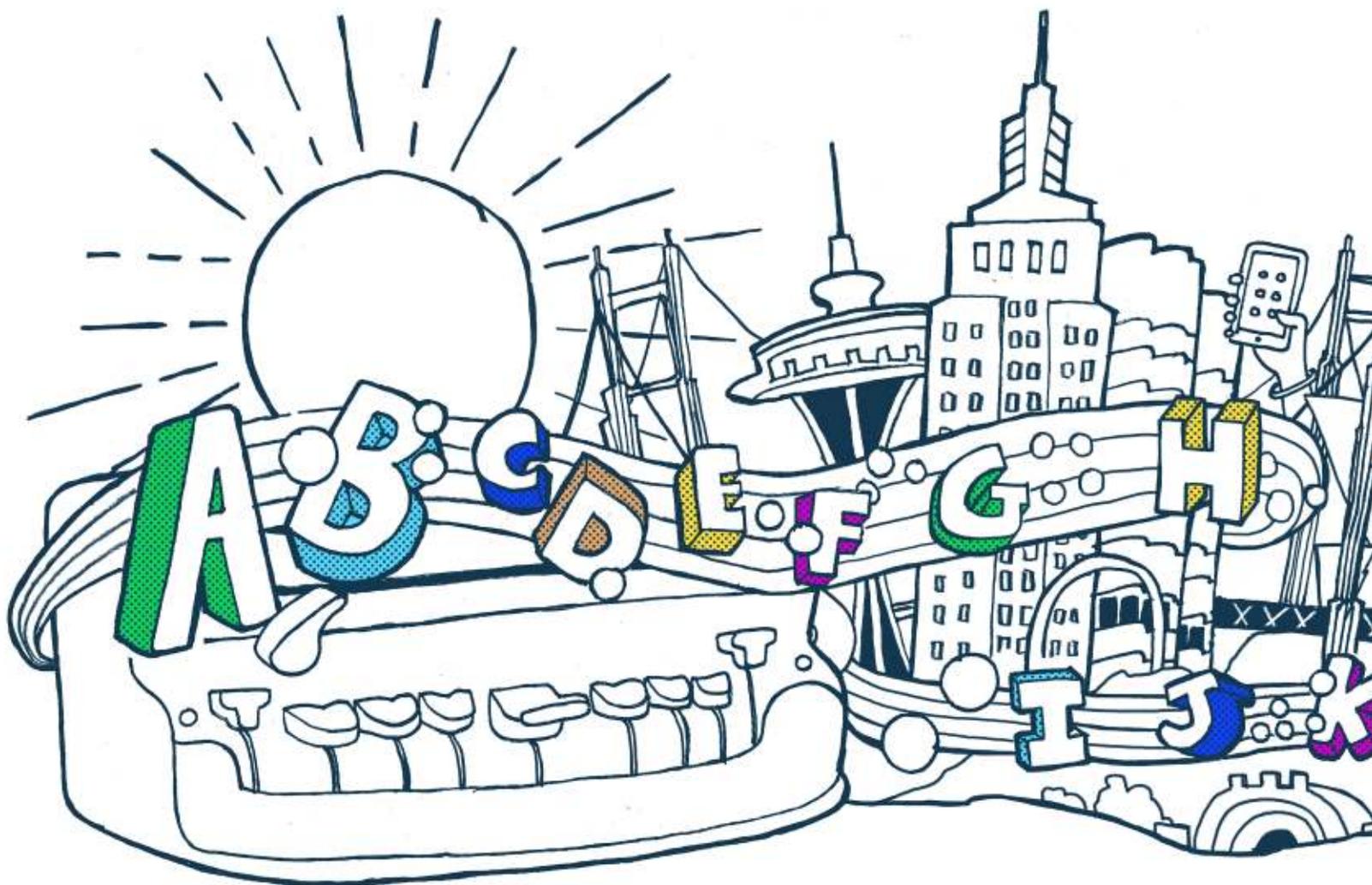
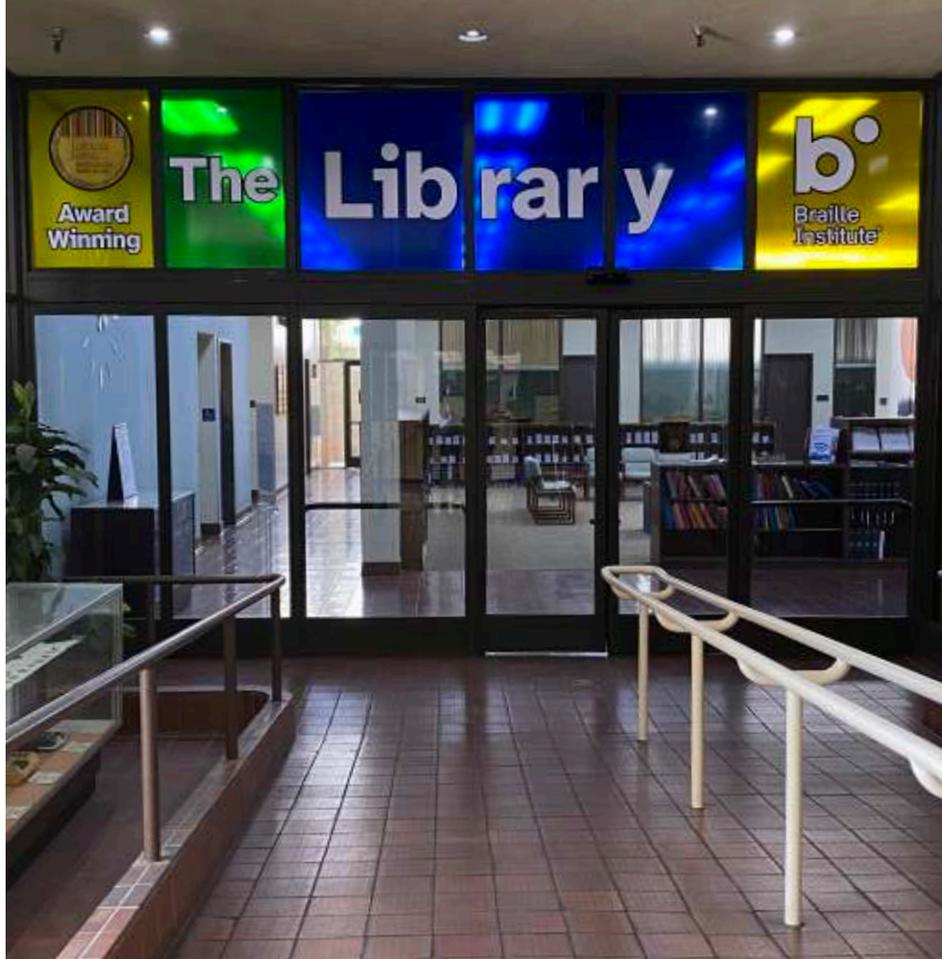
Single book cartridge service is going to end soon at the Braille Institute Library. You can have a custom-made cartridge featuring books that you want to read – that means no more waiting for someone to return a book. When you call, let us know your reading preferences so your account will be current and ready for your books-on-demand cartridge service.

Call **1-800-808-2555** or email **[bils@brailleinstitute.org](mailto:bils@brailleinstitute.org)**.

## Refreshed Library Space Coming Soon!

Braille Institute Library in Los Angeles is currently refreshing its space. Although we cannot accommodate visitors yet, please stay tuned to learn when the revamped library will be complete.

The revamp includes comfortable new furniture, new services, and a new look. We look forward to welcoming you back to our new space!





**Library Services**  
741 N. Vermont Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90029

Free Matter  
For The  
Blind

## **Good News! Braille Institute Centers Are Now Re-Opened**

Braille Institute centers and libraries have re-opened for in-person services. Library services are available to library patrons including pick up of books, as well as utilization of the library area and computers in most centers except Los Angeles.

**Patrons must be fully vaccinated and show proof of vaccination.** All individuals are required to wear a surgical/medical grade, N95, KN95 face mask while onsite.

The main library in Los Angeles is not quite ready for patrons visits yet but in the meantime, you may continue to call and email for service.

Remote library services will remain available for any patrons not fully vaccinated. You can receive multiple book titles on one cartridge or conveniently download books digitally using BARD. If you need assistance with BARD, please email [therbison@brailleinstitute.org](mailto:therbison@brailleinstitute.org) or call **1-323-906-3154**.

Please visit our website at **[www.brailleinstitute.org/reopening](http://www.brailleinstitute.org/reopening)** for additional information on our COVID-19 safety protocols when visiting a Braille Institute library. If you have questions or would like to speak with someone from the library, please call us at **1-800-808-2555, Monday - Friday 8:30am - 5:00pm (PT)**.