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Digital Talking Book Players and Books Debut in North Dakota

The digital age for North Dakota State Library Talking Books has begun, with a transition from four-track analog players to new digital players. Since October, 2009, digital talking books and players have been distributed to visually and physically handicapped readers throughout North Dakota. The digital player has many new features including a sleep button, smaller physical size, longer battery life, faster battery recharge, and audio-prompted buttons. The most exciting new features include improved audio quality and increased cartridge capacity, with the large majority of books able to fit on a single flash memory cartridge. This eliminates the need to change, flip, or rewind cassettes and creates a more user-friendly experience for talking book readers.

Currently, over 500 digital players have been distributed and over 7,000 digital talking books are available. In addition to the digital talking books available from Talking Books, digital talking books may also be downloaded via an Internet portal created specifically for Talking Books patrons.

The new digital format represents a major transition and advancement in technology. Susan Hammer-Schneider, head of Talking Books says, "This is the biggest change that has taken place in the last 35 years of the program. We're very excited about the opportunity to provide increased quality and ease of use." And talking Books patrons are very satisfied with the digital players and books. "Digital talking books are such a great service. I don't know how I would survive without them," relates one Talking Books patron.

The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS), a division of the Library of Congress, administers the free program that loans materials to residents of the United States who are unable to read or use standard print materials because of visual or physical handicaps. These materials include Braille and recorded books and magazines, music scores in Braille and large print, and specifically designed playback equipment.

For more information, please contact North Dakota State Library Talking Books at 800-843-9948 or tbooks@nd.gov.