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Information Sheet #228
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[Welfare and
Rehabilitation]



On March 17, 2008 France issued a stamp for the “35th Anniversary of *Les Donneurs de Voix (People who give their voice)*” an association which represents 13 auditive libraries. This project is supported by Lions International.

The 0.55 euro stamp design shows “Les Bibliothèques Sonores (The Sound Libraries), on the left side an audio disc and an open book, on the right a person who is listening to an audio book, hand behind ear.

The sound libraries were created in 1972 on the initiative of the Association of the Donors of Voice in order to break the isolation of people with eye disorders. There are approximately 120 such libraries in all of France and they are free to people who are blind or partially sighted. Talking Books are recorded on cassettes or CD by voluntary "donors of voice". All the sound libraries carries out, with the agreement of the authors and editors, more than 300.000 loans per year of all kinds, detective novels or historical, classic works, books for youth but also conferences or discussions

Taken from information – French Postal Authority.

Other stamps related to libraries for the blind or audio books for the blind and visually impaired:

Argentina – 2000 Issued for *The Library for the Blind*. Shows hands reading a Braille book. Information Sheet #184

Greenland – May 19, 1983. Semi-postal. Issued for *The Handicapped*. Included in the

design is a cassette Talking Book. Information Sheet L-70

South Africa – August 9, 2004. Issued for *Volunteers*. One of the stamps was issued for *Tape Aids for the Blind* a national library service for the blind and print handicapped. Information Sheet #197

Switzerland – March 6, 2003. Issued for the *Centennial of the Swiss Library for the Blind and Visually Impaired*. Information Sheet #184

USA – April 14, 2000 Issued for the *Bicentennial of the Library of Congress*, included in the library is the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

Audiobook

An audiobook is a recording that is primarily of the spoken word as opposed to music. While it is often based on a recording of commercially available printed material, this is not always the case; nor is this required to fit the definition of an audiobook, which is why “audiobook” is one word rather than two. It was not intended to be descriptive of the word “book” but is rather a recorded spoken program in its own right and not necessarily an audio version of a book.

History -USA

In 1931 the congress [United States of America] established the talking-book program, which intended to help blind adults who couldn't read print. This program was called “books for the Adult Blind Project.” The American Foundation for the Blind developed the first talking books in 1932. One year later the first reproduction machine began the process of mass publishing...By 1935, after Congress approved free mailing of audio books to blind citizens, the Books for the Adult Blind Project was in full operation.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Library [Library of Congress] Takes ‘Talking Books’ Digital

The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped is a key player on a team that has been working for the better part of a decade to create a new generation of audiobooks for the library's more than 7000,000 registered blind and disabled users.

The goal is to make the digital format the backbone of the library's “talking books” program by transferring onto special digital flash drives the 60,000 titles that the library has on audiocassettes and giving patrons new machines on which to play them.

“The library system is here because free public library service is a basic tenet of our society”, said Judith Dixon...This program is providing access to people who would otherwise not have it”.

Under the program, blind and disabled users may obtain audiobooks through the mail from any of the service's more than 130 regional libraries throughout the country. There

is no charge for the books or the players, but to keep the machines, users must check out at least one book a year. The library plans to roll out the new machines and digital books by the end of the year.

One of the new digital cartridges can hold 46 hours of audio. In contrast, a single cassette tape holds six hours-and then only when recorded at half-speed on four tracks. Since the typical book is 15 hours long, the new format means all but the longest books can be contained on a single cartridge, Dixon said.

The transformation also is driven by necessity. The cassette tape belongs to a generation of technology whose time has passed. As the library-issued cassette players on which blind users play tapes fall into disrepair finding spare parts grows harder and harder.

“This transition is probably going to have to happen a lot faster because cassettes just aren’t going to be available much longer,” said Dixon, who is a consumer relations officer for the library.

The new players resemble the flat, dictionary-size cassette machines of old, with large buttons and a single built-in speaker. The digital cartridge is about the same size as a cassette tape, but it connects to the player via USB port rather than fitting over two rotating pegs.

Dixon and advocates for the blind say that relying on commercially available books on compact discs or in MP3 format is not an option. Many blind users have difficulty operating the tiny buttons on MP3 players, and the inventory of available books is usually limited to commercially popular titles.

Washington Post. March 5, 2008.

Note: The Library of Congress developed a special non-commercial format for recording and playing of talking books on records and later cassettes on machines that only the blind and physically handicapped can obtain and use. This format also reduced the number of records and cassettes and cost of production. Records over a period of time were reduced in size and thickness and record speeds to 16 2/3 rpm and 8 1/3. Also flexible plastic discs and in some cases as for magazines non-returnable discs. In the case of cassette books these are now played at 15/16 on four tracks. In most other countries long playing records, standard cassettes or long playing records, compact discs and the “Daisy” disc format are used.

The LC service is also available to American citizens living overseas.