

STAYING CONNECTED

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State Library
of Oregon
**Talking Book
and Braille Library**

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TRANSITIONS IN THE OREGON TALKING BOOK AND BRAILLE LIBRARY: CELEBRATING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF ELKE BRUTON & ANDREA CLARKSON

It is with mixed emotions that we announce two long-time staff departures at the Oregon Talking Book and Braille Library. Elke Bruton has transitioned to a new role managing the Government Information & Library Services Division of the State Library, and after 20 years of dedicated service, Andrea Clarkson is retiring from her position as a Talking Books Reader's Advisor.

Elke Bruton: A Journey of Leadership and Innovation

Elke Bruton's journey with Talking Books began in 2006 as a student worker. She quickly moved through the ranks, starting with her work as a student, focusing on shifting the collection and customer service, then advancing to the role of Librarian, and ultimately Program Manager. Elke's visionary approach to planning, along with her ability to prepare for multiple outcomes, has positioned Oregon at the forefront of new technology and processes in the Talking Books world.

Joel, our Fund Development and Volunteer Coordinator, reflects on his years working with Elke: "She is an unabashed leader who made the Oregon Talking Book and Braille Library a powerhouse of camaraderie and efficiency. Elke's leadership has been instrumental in ensuring our programs run smoothly, and her ability to bring people together has had a lasting impact on all of us."

Elke's leadership has shaped our library in countless ways, and we are grateful for her many contributions to our team and our patrons.

Andrea Clarkson: Two Decades of Impactful Service

Andrea Clarkson began her career at Talking Books in January 2005, and since then, she has been a central part of our team. With her attention to detail, big-picture thinking, and unwavering enthusiasm for training and helping others, Andrea has positively impacted our patrons for the past 20 years. Her dedication to providing exceptional service has made her a cherished member of our staff.

Reader's Advisor Jennifer G. shared her thoughts on Andrea's influence: "It has been such a pleasure working with Andrea every day. I have learned so much from her ability to tackle unexpected problems and her commitment to serving our patrons. Her willingness to step in and help when needed, along with her drive to keep improving, has been truly inspiring. I'm so grateful for all she has contributed to our team."

Andrea's retirement marks the end of an era, but her legacy of service and dedication will continue to inspire us all. We wish Andrea the best in her next chapter!



A VISIT FROM OREGON AUTHOR, DANE LIU – INTERVIEW AND NEW BOOKS FOR THE CATALOG

Back in September of 2024, we welcomed Portland Children’s Book author, Dane Liu, to our Talking Books offices in Salem. It was a special treat, as, in our capacity as the Oregon Center for the Book, we selected Liu’s buoyant intergenerational tale, *Laolao’s Dumplings*, as our Kids Book pick to represent the state at the National Book Festival in Washington D.C.

As part of her visit, Dane Liu read her book for us in our studio, giving us the opportunity to create a beautiful new recording for families and children nationwide to enjoy. We recorded Liu’s first book, *Friends Are Friends, Forever*, earlier in 2024. Claire Diehl did a fabulous job narrating the book. Enriched with a dumpling recipe and snowflake-making activity, these two books together are sure to bring smiles and laughs to all.

Wrapping up her visit to the library, Dane sat down with our librarian to discuss her recent and upcoming books, the importance of grandparents in families, and Oregon’s supportive creative community. The interview will be on the Oregon Center for the Book website soon!



IMPROVING HOW WE SUPPORT YOU: INTRODUCING OUR NEW CONTACT FORM

Here at Talking Books we’re always looking for ways to provide you with the best possible support. For a while now, we’ve used a voicemail system to help patrons, but we’ve realized it doesn’t work as efficiently as we’d like. We are glad you trust us when we say, “Consider it done!” but we also want to have the capacity to let you know your question was received and have more time to call you back if we need to discuss something.

That’s why we’re excited to announce some changes that will improve our response time and support efforts.

Forms and Email: A Better Way to Reach Us

To make things easier for everyone, we'll soon be launching a new "Contact Us" form on our website. This form will allow you to submit your questions directly to us, and it will send us an email so we can get to work on your request right away. Unlike voicemail, email allows our whole team to work on your question simultaneously, helping us respond more quickly and efficiently. If you'd rather email us directly, without filling out a form, you can do so at talkingbooks.info@slo.oregon.gov

Forms and email help us do our best work in supporting patrons, and they offer added convenience for you, too. When you submit a form or email, you'll receive a confirmation notification, so you can feel confident that we've received your inquiry and are already working on it.

Why We're Making This Change

By using forms and email, we can stay organized and ensure that no question goes unanswered. These tools help us handle a higher volume of inquiries, and we can collaborate as a team to make sure you get the answers you need faster.

For Those Without Email or Web Access

We understand that some of our patrons may not have easy access to email or our website. For these cases, our voicemail system will still be available for those who need it. However, if you do have the ability to fill out a form or send us an email, we kindly ask that you use those methods for the fastest and most efficient service.

We're Committed to You

No matter how you choose to contact us, our goal remains the same: to provide you with excellent support. Forms and email help us track inquiries, ensuring we don't miss a thing and can follow up as needed. We're here to help, and we appreciate your trust in us.

Thank you for being part of our community. We look forward to continuing to assist you!

COLLECTIONS CONNECTION: A NEW OFFERING FROM NLS!

With hundreds of thousands of audio and braille books and magazines available from NLS, sometimes it's hard to know where to start when searching for your next book. *Collections Connections*, a free email newsletter from the NLS Collection Development staff, can help! Each month it highlights fiction and nonfiction titles focused on a timely theme. To sign up, send your name and email address to the Collection Connections team at connections@loc.gov. You can unsubscribe yourself from the list at any time.

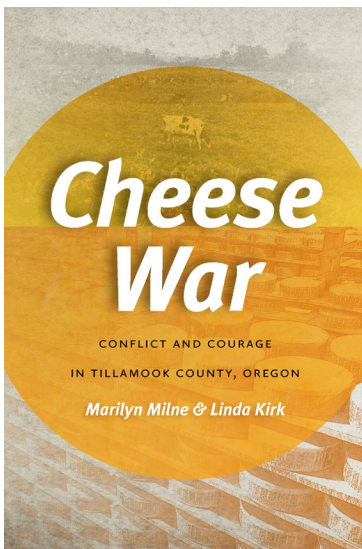
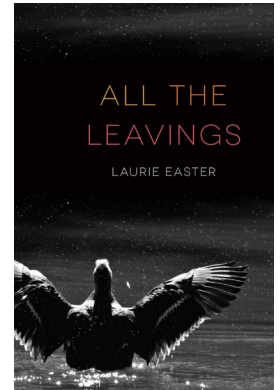


NEW TO THE CATALOG IN 2024 – OREGON RECORDED BOOKS

Our recording studio had a busy and full year, leading to a wonderful array of freshly narrated books by Oregon authors. Here is the list of our six brand new titles:

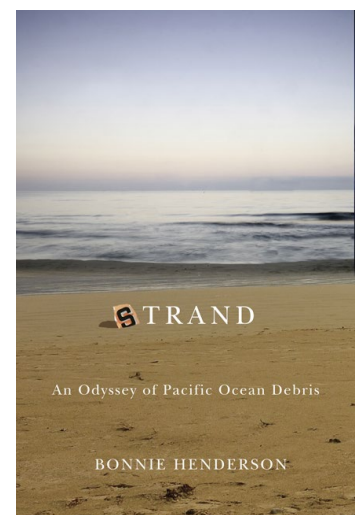
ADULT TITLES

All the Leavings by Laurie Easter. **DBC08810**. In *All the Leavings*, Laurie Easter deftly navigates both the rugged terrain of the human heart and life on the edge of the wilderness. Her contemplative, often experimental essays explore love and loss, drawing from a reverence for the natural world that is deeply rooted in wild Oregon. Adult. Unrated.



Cheese War by Marilyn Milne and Linda Kirk. **DBC08809**. In the 1960s, Tillamook County, Oregon, was at war with itself. As the regional dairy industry shifted from small local factories to larger consolidated factories, and as profit margins for milk and cheese collapsed, Tillamook farmers found themselves in a financial crisis that fueled multiple disputes. The ensuing Cheese War included lies and secrets, as well as spies, high emotion, a shoving match, and even a death threat. As Americans become ever more interested in food supply chains and ethical consumption, here is the story of the very human factors behind one of Oregon's most iconic brands. Adult. Unrated.

Strand: An Odyssey of Pacific Ocean Debris by Bonnie Henderson. **DBC08806**. In *Strand*, travel writer Bonnie Henderson traces the global wanderings of ocean wrack washed up on a mile long stretch of Oregon beach. From athletic shoes and fishing floats to a sunken ship, Henderson takes the reader around the world as she unravels the stories behind her “found objects”. She weaves in observations on current issues, evolution, and ecology. As she closes the chapter on one object, she flows seamlessly as an ocean current into her next adventure, uncovering the mystery behind a newly found piece of flotsam. Adult. Unrated.

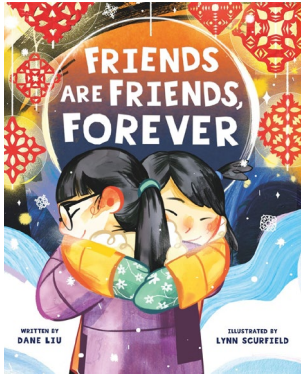


MIDDLE-READER TITLE

Sarah Journeys West: An Oregon Trail Survival Story by Nikki Shannon Smith. **DBC08812**. During the California Gold Rush, twelve-year-old Sarah and her family are living in the North as free Black people. Seeking a better life, Sarah's parents decide they will venture west on the Oregon Trail. On the trail, Sarah and her family face all kinds of hardship. Will Sarah and her family endure the trail and make a new life out west? For grades 6-9. Unrated.



CHILDREN'S TITLES



Friends are Friends, Forever by Dane Liu. **DBC08813**. On a snowy Lunar New Year's Eve in China, it is Dandan's last night with Yueyue. Tomorrow, she moves to America. The two best friends have a holiday tradition: crafting paper-cut snowflakes, freezing them, and hanging them as ornaments. Saying goodbye, Yueyue gives her a gift to carry on their tradition. But in her new home, Dandan has no one to enjoy the gift with until a new friend comes along. For grades K-3. Unrated.

Laolao's Dumplings by Dane Liu. **DBC08814**. Millie loves to help Laolao cook, especially her favorite dish. Dumplings! Full of humor and heart, this story is a timeless celebration of family, food, community, and the different ways we share love. For grades K-3. Unrated.



BEHIND THE CURTAIN – THE “MAGIC” OF AUTOMATIC BOOK SELECTION

The Oregon Talking Book and Braille Library is full of options, including over 150,000 titles. These options don't end with our catalog. Every patron also has the choice to select their own books or use our autoselect program. If wading through our immense catalog seems overwhelming, autoselect may be just the right thing for you. The program finds books based on your tastes. You tell us your favorite authors, genres, and subjects, and we add that information to your account. The autoselect program goes ahead and picks out some great new books for you! Other preference options are available as well. These include selecting things that you don't want in your books, such as violence or strong language. Then, just like magic, autoselect does the rest.

A large part of the magic comes from our specially crafted list of subjects and genres that we use to sort our books. Sometimes the broad subjects don't completely match what users want to read. In response to this, we are building a new system that will be more descriptive and contain clickable links to help everyone find more of the right books in the right places. Ultimately, our hope is that these changes will lead to better automatic book selections, and an easier way for our users to find more of the books they want to read!

EVERYTHING EVERYWHERE ALL AT ONCE: DESCRIPTIVE AUDIO FOR VIDEOS

Watching a movie or a TV show is something everyone should be able to enjoy. Here at the Oregon Talking Book & Braille Library, we use donation funds to buy DVDs equipped with Descriptive Audio so our users can take part in this pastime. We make use of the Audio Description Project (ADP), a project of the American Council of the Blind (ACB), to help us select movies that are equipped with audio description.

So, what exactly is audio description? According to the ADP, "it is a narration service (provided at no additional charge to the patron) that attempts to describe what the sighted person takes for granted - those images that a person who is blind or visually impaired formerly could only experience through the whispered asides from a sighted companion."

Descriptive audio is offered in many movie theaters and museums and has found its way into online video as well. Most popular streaming services and network television providers offer descriptive audio via Smart TV functionality and/or apps. And it's not just for people with low vision or blindness! Descriptive audio can be beneficial for people with learning disabilities, English Language learners, and fans of complex science fiction or fantasy shows with new words that may be unfamiliar to viewers.

Visit the [Audio Description Project's website](#) for listings of movies and shows available on streaming services, in theaters, and airing on network television. They also maintain an exhaustive list of videos with described audio in languages other than English.

Thanks to the generosity of donors and great resources like the Audio Description Project, we are proud to offer equitable entertainment to our users. Currently, we have over 800 DVDs in our collection and are adding more each quarter of the year. Just like our other services, Talking Books users can call or email to have a DVD sent to them for free, via USPS mail. Browse our DVD collection online today at TalkingBooks.Oregon.gov, then select Optional Extras, then Descriptive Videos.

HOLIDAY CLOSURES

Talking Book & Braille Library will be closed on the following holidays:

- President's Day on Monday, February 17
- Memorial Day on Monday, May 26
- Juneteenth on Thursday, June 19
- Independence Day on Friday, July 4

Holidays can delay mail service deliveries, so it may take extra time for books to make their way to you. We recommend putting book requests in a little earlier if you want new books to read over the holiday!

This newsletter is available in large print, audio, Braille, or on our website. Contact the Talking Book & Braille Library if you would like to change how you receive this newsletter.

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