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Georgia Library Spotlight - Georgia Library for Accessible Statewide Services

Stephanie Irvin
Georgia Libraries for Accessible Statewide Services (GLASS), sirvin@georgialibraries.org

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GLA SPOTLIGHT

Georgia Library for Accessible Statewide Services

GLASS, Georgia Library for Accessible Statewide Services, is a network library of the National Library Service for Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) program, providing talking book and braille materials to Georgians with print impairments since 1931. As a unit of Georgia Public Library Service, GLASS includes a regional library, a distribution center, and a subregional library. Free reading material is provided to Georgians who, due to a disability, are unable to see the printed word, hold a book, turn the page, or understand and interpret the printed word due to organic reading disability.

There are over 14,600 patrons, and over 1,900 institutions have accounts for demonstrating GLASS technology to potential patrons. Locations in Atlanta and Bainbridge provide a range of library services including telephone, e-mail, and walk-in services. In-person programming such as Zumba classes, chess clubs, and remote book clubs that meet by conference call allow patrons to connect with each other.

Most GLASS patrons use the service by receiving reading materials through the mail or by download. From June 2017 through July 2018, GLASS circulated over 436,000 items. Each weekday between 1,000 and 1,200 items are mailed to customers from NLS's collection of human-narrated talking books. These are supplemented by braille books for its small but passionate group of braille readers, and downloadable talking books, including Georgia-focused books created in the GLASS Recording Studio.

The popularity of digital content has increased over the years, as has the ways GLASS patrons can receive books. Patrons can download books through BARD (Braille and Audio Reading Download), which allows users to put books on a jump drive so they may be listened to on a talking book player. Patrons with braille displays can also download eBraille books using BARD. The BARD Mobile app lets patrons download books directly to a device they own, allowing further autonomy in selecting their own material.

Starting in July 2016, GLASS became the second talking book library in the country to offer patrons no-cost access to Bookshare's e-book collection. This collection of over 650,000 items includes not only text to speech books, but e-books for those who prefer text, with many ways to adapt text to make it more readable.

GLASS partners with PINES so patrons may get public library cards to receive large print books through the mail, as well as films on DVD and Blu-ray that contain descriptive audio tracks for

people with vision impairments. In cooperation with Georgia's 62 public library systems, GLASS provides basic assistive technology to each library system, which can also check out "tool kits" designed to create awareness of some of the options available for people with disabilities seeking ways to comfortably enjoy reading material.

For more information, visit www.georgia libraries.org/glass , subscribe to the GLASS newsletter by emailing hourglass@georgia libraries.org, or call 1-800-248-6701 to speak to a GLASS staff member or arrange a training visit by a member of our outreach team. You can also find GLASS on Facebook.