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**DRAFT – Not For Immediate Release:**

**The NJ State Library Partners with the U.S. Library of Congress’ Division for the Blind and Physically Handicapped**

*NJ Libraries to Provide Online Access to Audio Books Offered by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS)*

**Trenton, NJ, January 28, 2013 –** Eleven New Jersey libraries have been selected to participate in a pilot project, initiated by the New Jersey State Library Talking Book & Braille Center (TBBC), to assist eligible residents with accessing and downloading audio books and magazines from the Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) web site, a national database made available by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, a division of the U.S. Library of Congress. The goal of the project is to allow public libraries to provide local assistance to TBBC members and their caretakers with the complicated BARD downloading process. NJ residents who are affected by a physical impairment, a reading disability, or a visual impairment may be eligible.

“This initiative will help us expand the services of the Talking Book and Braille Center to new, underserved populations in New Jersey,” said Adam Szczepaniak, director of TBBC. “It will help to make a difference for those who, for whatever reason, have difficulty reading printed material. This is an important partnership for TBBC.”

A wide range of free services are currently available to registered TBBC members, including digital audiobook players and audiobook cartridges, braille books, downloadable audiobooks and audio magazines. Users also have access to news reading services such as [Audiovision](http://www.audiovision-nj.org/), TBBC’s very own NJ newspaper reading service, and the National Federation for the Blind’s [Newsline](https://nfb.org/audio-newspaper-service), which offers over 300 newspapers, magazines and wire services.

Participating pilot program libraries include: Atlantic County Library, Galloway Township Branch; East Brunswick Public Library; Jersey City Public Library; Johnson Public Library (Hackensack); Kenilworth Public Library; Monroe Township Public Library (Middlesex); Morris County (Whippany); Mount Laurel Library; Pequannock Township Public Library; Scotch Plains Public Library; and Somerset County Library, Bridgewater.

For more information about the BARD pilot project and other TBBC services, visit <http://njsltbbc.org/>.

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**About the New Jersey State Library**

The New Jersey State Library, an affiliate of Thomas Edison State College, connects people with information and resources through its service to libraries, government and people including those with special needs. The State Library's mission has expanded since its establishment in 1796 to lead in the provision, promotion and support of high quality library and information services to all the people of New Jersey. Led by State Librarian Mary Chute, the State Library coordinates, promotes and funds the New Jersey Library Network by providing advisory and technical information and services to support New Jersey’s libraries in the fulfillment of their missions. The State Library also provides support for public, school, academic, and special libraries, and continues to promote services for learners of all ages, including key areas of continuing need such as digital literacy, business outreach, workforce development, and summer reading programs. The State Library continues its focus on innovation and future trends, and seeks out exemplary models and technologies that can help assist the New Jersey library community in remaining relevant and essential community anchors. For more information, visit [www.njstatelib.org](http://www.njstatelib.org).