



Carnegie
Library of
Pittsburgh

Library for the Blind and
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For Immediate Release

Library for Blind and Physically Handicapped Announces New Digital System

(Pittsburgh, PA— December 22, 2009) Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh's Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (LBPH) has announced it is beginning distribution of new digital audio books and digital players to its customers. The digital books and players will eventually replace the now outdated analog audio cassette books and cassette book machines which library customers have used since the 1970's.

LBPH loans audio books, audio players, and large print books to approximately 10,000 readers with visual and physical disabilities in 36 Western Pennsylvania counties. The books are sent through the mail to library patrons postage-free.

LBPH is a member library of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS), part of the Library of Congress. After years of planning, testing and soliciting feedback from users, NLS has developed a digital system that marks an exciting new phase for readers with visual and physical limitations.

The digital system has many advantages. Slightly larger than a credit card, the digital audio book is a flash cartridge that provides clearer sound quality. Most books will fit on a single cartridge that will play to completion without flipping sides. The format is highly reliable since the cartridge has no moving parts that can break or tapes that can tangle.

Smaller and lighter than the audio cassette machine, the digital player is more portable. The player has an internal battery that holds a charge for 30 hours as compared to 6 hours with the cassette player. It also has enhanced navigation features that allow the reader to jump to various sections. Consumers who tested the digital player appreciated its superior sound quality, tone, volume responsiveness and variable speed capability as well as its index and bookmark features.

(more)

LBPH Director Kathleen Kappel explained, “Digital talking books are the most revolutionary change to LBPH services since Thomas Edison’s ‘talking record’ in 1934. Readers get better sound, the ability to skip to other sections and a practically indestructible format. We hope to attract thousands of eligible Pennsylvanians. No one should be denied reading.”

To utilize LBPH services, readers with disabilities must first register with the library. Individuals who cannot read standard size print, hold books steady or turn pages qualify. Many LBPH customers are older adults with illnesses such as diabetes, Parkinson’s disease, macular degeneration or severe arthritis. Those with reading disabilities caused by conditions such as dyslexia or stroke also qualify. Nearly 160,000 Pennsylvanians with disabilities are eligible for these library services, and the number will increase dramatically as the baby boomers age.

Residents of the western half of Pennsylvania can learn more about LBPH and its new digital services, by calling 800.242.0586 or e-mailing lbph@carnegielibrary.org. They may also visit the LBPH Web site at www.carnegielibrary.org/lbph or stop by the library located at 4724 Baum Boulevard in Pittsburgh. Residents of the eastern half of the State can obtain the same services by calling the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, part of the Free Library of Philadelphia, at 800.222.1754 or emailing them at flpblind@freelibrary.org. Their Web site is <http://lbph.freelibrary.org> and their address is 919 Walnut Street, Philadelphia.

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About Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

To Engage our Community in Literacy and Learning

Established as a public trust in 1895, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh serves the citizens of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County with a distinguished history of leadership among the country’s great public libraries. Through its 19 neighborhood locations, including Main Library and the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh is the region’s most visited asset, with 2.6 million visitors in 2008. Each year the Library provides valuable resources, programs, classes and training opportunities that engage the community in literacy, and life-long learning.

About Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh’s Library for the Blind & Physically Handicapped (LBPH)

Provides free library services to eligible Western Pennsylvania residents with visual or physical disabilities. Audio books and magazines, equipment to play the recordings, large print books, described videos and Braille materials are mailed and returned postage-free to registered readers.