



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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CONTACT: Randy Nehrt
CONTACT: Pat McGuckin

White Announces Illinois State Library Participation in Digital Talking Book Project

SPRINGFIELD — Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White has announced that the Illinois State Library Talking Book and Braille Service will oversee and participate in a one-year, multi-state pilot project offering digital talking books to visually impaired and physically challenged library users.

White said the Lobe Library will offer digital talking books to readers from July 2003 to June 2004. Patrons participating in the TBBS Talking Book program who have a temporary or permanent physical or visual inability to read regular printed material are eligible to participate in the pilot program. They will receive a free handheld MP-3 type player loaded with a digital audio book, headphones, an instruction sheet and an evaluation survey. Patrons will be able to test the player for three weeks. In June 2004 a national electronic book expert will write an evaluation report based upon the experiences of readers who participate to determine if and how the service will be continued and whether it should be expanded nationwide.

"The state of Illinois is honored to be serving as project director for this exciting digital talking book pilot program," White said. "Right now patrons receive talking books on cassettes and use cassette recorders. Digital talking books would allow users to access more modern and convenient technology. It is only fair that our print disabled population has the same access to new technologies as sighted persons. I am hopeful that this pilot program will be a success and will eventually allow us to offer digital talking books on a permanent basis."

White said three of Illinois' regional Talking Book Centers located in Pekin, Carterville and Geneva are also participating in the program, along with libraries in Hawaii, New Jersey and Mississippi.

Persons interested in signing up for the pilot program may contact the Illinois State Library Talking Book and Braille Service at 1-800-665-5576, extension 5, or psalamon@ilsos.net. For information about the Lobe Library, visit <http://www.lobelibrary.org/page/page/438618.htm>