



Texas Talking Book News

Texas State Library and Archives Commission Winter 2012

Director's Report

Greetings! Here is the latest news:

Announcing a new Public Awareness Coordinator: Last time, we announced that long-time Public Awareness Coordinator, Stephen Biles, was retiring at the end of December 2011. With his retirement, TBP has a new Public Awareness Coordinator named Ruth Wedergren. She began her duties with TBP on December 15, 2011. Ruth has a strong background in public broadcasting and fund raising. She already has outreach events scheduled around the state, including Austin, San Antonio, Houston, and the Dallas area. If you would like to contact Ruth about an outreach event in your area, send her an email at tbp.info@tsl.state.tx.us or call 512-463-5458 and ask to speak with Ruth.

Calling the right number for assistance: If you need assistance with ordering books or fixing a problem with your machine, please call either the toll-free number 1-800-252-9605 or the local Austin number 1-512-463-5458. These numbers are the direct numbers into the Reader Services department. If you call any other number, your service request may not be handled as soon as it could be. When staff are away from their desks, they may not check their voicemail right away, and if traveling, may not check voicemail for a day or two. Many staff cannot access patron accounts and must pass messages back to the Reader Services staff. We want to assist everyone as quickly as possible, so please help us do this by only calling the numbers listed above. You also may send an email to tbp.services@tsl.state.tx.us. Staff are assigned to handle voice messages and email, so a reader consultant will contact you at the earliest opportunity.

Email addresses help: An email address is a very convenient way for TBP staff to communicate with patrons. We can save significant money by sending correspondence--including newsletters--via email. If you have an email address and would like to add it to your account, please call 1-800-252-9605 or send an email to tbp.services@tsl.state.tx.us and ask a reader consultant to add your email address to your account and change your preference for correspondence and newsletter to email.

If you change your email address, please contact us immediately to update your account. Out-of-date contact information will cause your account to be suspended, which can block you from services including BARD and Web Braille.

A fund raising project: A TBP patron, Mr. Jim C. Ames of San Angelo, is spearheading a campaign to raise money to purchase blank digital cartridges for TBP. Mr. Ames reads many books on cartridge, and knowing that state agencies are facing budget cuts and that blank cartridges cost between \$6.00 and \$8.00 apiece, he is concerned that some books will not be available if the program does not have enough cartridges. If you would like more information about Mr. Ames' campaign, you may contact him through his foundation at: Jim Ames Macular Degeneration Foundation, 4225 Billie Bolin Drive, Apt. 110, San Angelo, TX

76904; telephone: 325-223-5333; email: jcomes@verizon.net.

Newsletter by email: Do you want to receive our newsletter by email instead of on paper? If so, please call a reader consultant at 1-800-252-9605 or send an email to tbp.services@tsl.state.tx.us. Tell us that you want to change your newsletter preference to email and give us your email address. The newsletter also is available on our web page at www.texastalkingbooks.org and on the toll-free information line at 1-866-388-6397.

Until next time,
Ava Smith, Director, Talking Book Program

The Talking Book Program will be closed on the following holidays.

Monday, February 20 – Presidents' Day

Monday, May 28 – Memorial Day

Of course, you can leave a voicemail message or send e-mail on a holiday.

Charles Dickens Bicentennial 2012

February 7 marks the 200th anniversary of Charles Dickens' birth. He was born in Portsmouth, England but spent most of his life in London. Dickens' childhood experience working in a boot-blackening factory and his family's brief stay in a debtor's prison influenced many of his novels. He began his writing career as a legal reporter, then he became a political journalist. His novels were first published as monthly serials. Throughout his life Dickens contributed to and edited various literary journals. He died on June 9, 1870, and was buried in Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey, even though he wished to be buried in Rochester Cathedral "in an inexpensive, unostentatious, and strictly private manner." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Dickens)

Oliver Twist (1837) Dickens paints a grim but realistic picture of a commoner's life in nineteenth-century London. An orphan boy from an English workhouse runs away to London and falls into the company of a gang of rogues who train him as a pickpocket. Oliver's future looks uncertain and his struggle to escape the environment of crime is one of hardship and danger. **To order this book, call 1-800-252-9605. Also available for download from the BARD site.**

The Old Curiosity Shop (1841) Dickens' sentimental novel features Little Nell and her adoring grandfather. The latter gambles away the last of their funds in an attempt to extricate himself from his debts to the evil hunchback, Daniel Quilp. Nell and her grandfather are forced to wander as beggars when Quilp takes over their old curiosity shop. **To order this book, call 1-800-252-9605. Also available for download from the BARD site.**

Bleak House (1857) This novel satirizes the English judicial system and the idle aristocratic class of Dickens' time. It follows the fortunes of young Esther Summerson and her mother, Lady Dedlock, as the disposition of the Jarndyce estate drags on year after

Books Worth Revisiting: Three by Jane Austen

What can one say about the incomparable Jane Austen (1775-1817)? Considered one of the greatest authors in English literature, her six completed novels have been the source for numerous movies and television mini-series. Her novels are often described as “comedies of manners” and come laced with witty commentary and a keen sense of social satire. Books interpreting Jane Austen the writer and the woman abound. Surprisingly though, not much is known about Austen, as most of her personal papers were destroyed by herself or family members. As a brilliant observer of the world around her, however, she has left her avid readers—known as “Janeites”—an open door into early 19th century English society. While *Pride and Prejudice* is both the best-known and most popular of her novels, here are three others that are worth revisiting.

Sense and Sensibility. This was the first of Jane Austen’s novels to be published and was originally titled, *Elinor and Marianne*. Austen is known to have begun this book as early as the mid-1790s and to have revised it extensively before it was finally published in 1811. The novel follows the romantic travails of Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, who with their mother and younger sister Margaret, find their comfortable lives disrupted by the death of their father and their half-brother’s taking over of the family estate. Elinor represents “sense,” being quiet and thoughtful while keeping her emotional turmoil bottled up inside. Marianne represents “sensibility,” being outspoken, impetuous, and wildly romantic. Elinor falls in love with her sister-in-law’s elder brother, Edward Ferrars, but he seems to be hopelessly out of reach. Marianne, meanwhile, embarks on a whirlwind romance with a handsome young gentleman named Willoughby while ignoring the attentions of an older suitor, Colonel Brandon. As the two sisters struggle with their troubles, their bond as sisters is put to the test. **To order this book, call 1-800-252-9605. Also available for download from the BARD site.**

Mansfield Park. Published in 1814, *Mansfield Park* is different in tone and plotting from Austen’s other novels. It is an ensemble piece, more a soap opera than a romance with an engaging heroine. While most of Austen’s heroines are intelligent, sprightly, and self-sufficient, Fanny Price is so timid and self-effacing that she almost vanishes inside the story, just as she often vanishes into her isolated room at Mansfield Park. The ugly side of family life

also is on full display. As a child, Fanny comes to Mansfield Park as the charitable project of her two aunts. One aunt is indolent and only cares about her lap dogs, while the other aunt is an unpleasant busybody who never lets Fanny forget that she is a poor relation living at Mansfield Park on sufferance. Fanny's uncle, Sir Thomas Bertram, while not an unkind man, is so detached and preoccupied that he hardly notices the true state of his own family. Bertram's two daughters, Maria and Julia, grow up vain and idle with disastrous consequences; Tom, the eldest son and heir, is headstrong and careless. Only Edmund, the younger son, is steady and responsible, but he falls under the sway of the beautiful and cynical Mary Crawford. Fanny is in love with Edmund and watches this budding romance with pain and misgivings, while finding herself the object of unwanted gallantry when Mary's brother Henry decides to make Fanny fall in love with him. One point of interest is the character of Fanny's brother William, who is a midshipman in the Royal Navy. Austen here draws on personal experience for she had two brothers in the Royal Navy, both of whom eventually became admirals. **To order this book, call 1-800-252-9605. Also available for download from the BARD site.**

Emma. *Emma* is generally considered to be Austen's masterpiece and was certainly the first of her novels to garner serious critical acclaim. Published in late 1815, it was the last of her novels that was published before Austen's death in 1817 at the age of 41. Emma Woodhouse is a wealthy and self-assured young lady in her early twenties. She lives with her widowed father, who is something of a hypochondriac and always a worry-wart. Emma does not see herself ever marrying for fear of upsetting her father who constantly laments the marriages of her elder sister and of her former governess. While Emma is content to contemplate her own spinsterhood, she nevertheless thinks marriage a good thing for everyone else and spends most of her time maneuvering her friends and acquaintances into courtship and marriage. While she has the best of motives, her efforts often backfire, sometimes with very comical results. Emma's various attempts at matchmaking are under constant observation from her good friend and neighbor George Knightley. Emma is jolted out of her complacency when she realizes that someone else may have matrimonial plans for Mr. Knightley. This novel also contains two of Austen's best-drawn characters in the social-climbing vicar Mr. Elton and his obnoxious wife Augusta. **To order this book, call 1-800-252-9605. Also available for download from the BARD site.**

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Uncommercial Traveler (1869) Thirty-seven essays by Charles Dickens published in the weekly journal *All the Year Round* between 1860 and 1869. Dickens records his observations of people and places in "Traveling Abroad," "Arcadian London," "The Italian Prisoner," "Bound for the Great Salt Lake," "In the French-Flemish Country," "Aboard Ship," and others. **To order this book, call 1-800-252-9605. Also available for download from the BARD site.**

Here are books by people born abroad who moved to the U.S. You may enjoy the perspectives they share. Please call 1-800-252-9605 to order one of these books.

A Free Life by Ha Jin. Nan Wu, a political science graduate student in Boston, no longer feels his native China is home since the Tiananmen massacre. Nan drops out of school in hopes of becoming a poet, and with his wife Pingping and their son, slowly builds a life in America. Strong language. **To order this book, call 1-800-252-9605. Also available for download from the BARD site.**

Enemies: A Love Story by Isaac Bashevis Singer. A man whose family was wiped out by the Nazis in Poland learns that his first wife escaped and is still alive. Unfortunately, he is now remarried, living in Brooklyn, and involved with a beautiful young woman. The three women each propose a different solution to the dilemma. **To order this book, call 1-800-252-9605. Also available for download from the BARD site.**

After Dark by Haruki Murakami. Tokyo. At a late-night Denny's, a trombonist Tetsuya reintroduces himself to student Mari, the sister of fashion model Eri. Later, the manager of a "love hotel" asks Mari to translate for a Chinese prostitute who has been brutalized by a businessman. Some descriptions of sex, some violence, and some strong language. **To order this book, call 1-800-252-9605. Also available for download from the BARD site.**

Join us as we kick off our "phone in" book club, April 26th with **Wrinkle in Time** by Madeleine L'Engle. This classic celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. Come discover this book for the first time, or re-read it and discuss it with us. Please call **1-800-252-9605** and ask for Shannon to RSVP and find out more details. **Wrinkle in Time** by Madeleine L'Engle. Led by three whimsical characters, Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Who, and Mrs. Which, the children of a missing physicist manage their interplanetary search by "wrinkling" to span space and time. Available in all formats including download.

A reminder on call center hours: The call center is open Monday through Friday, except for holidays when the State Library is closed. The hours are 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 (noon) p.m. and 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. While the call center is closed during the noon hour, you may leave voice messages. Staff are assigned to handle voicemail (and emails, too), so someone will contact you as soon as possible.

**Texas Talking Book Program
Texas State Library and Archives Commission
P.O. Box 12927
Austin, Texas 78711-2927**

**Free Matter for the
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Handicapped**



Comments or complaints regarding programs and services of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission may be made to: Director and Librarian, PO Box 12927 Austin, Texas 78711-2927 Telephone: 512-463-5460 Fax: 512-936-0685

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Two vendors sell blank cartridges and USB cables to download digital books.

- The American Printing House for the Blind (APH) 800-223-1839 www.aph.org two gigabyte cartridge: \$12 and USB cable: \$5.
- Adaptive Technology / Perkins School for the Blind www.perkinsproducts.org One gigabyte cartridge without USB cable: \$10.99; with cable \$15.95. Two gigabyte cartridge without USB cable: \$11.99; with cable \$16.95. USB cable only: \$5.

Mention of a product or service in this news bulletin does not constitute endorsement by this library. Our intention is to increase an awareness of programs and items that may be helpful to our patrons.

Call the Disability Information and Referral Center toll-free at 1-800-252-9605 for information about disabilities and health conditions.