

ALBUM [WEEKLY REFLECTION: HOW DO THOSE WHO ARE BLIND OR WHO HAVE LOW VISION ACCESS LITERATURE?](#)

Album Description


Hi everyone! As I move forward in my internship, I will be posting weekly to share some thoughts and resources in connection with my experiences onsite at the Library.

This Saturday, as I worked in the Library's Young Readers Center and Programs Lab (YRCPL), I noticed many children showing a keen interest in the resources on display that relate to the [National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled](#) (NLS). The YRCPL has a table that displays Talking Books, books in Braille, and information about how people who are blind or have low vision access literature. The NLS is also part of a collaborative effort to help plan for future youth spaces in the Library.



I wanted to learn more about the history of the NLS and look at primary sources related to the creation of the NLS and accessible literature. The Library of Congress first developed a concept for a national library for the blind in 1897, when Librarian of Congress John Russell Young established a reading room for the blind containing about 500 books and music items in raised characters. The [Pratt-Smoot Act of 1931](#) authorized the Library of Congress to establish a program to distribute books for blind adults, which would develop over time to become the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled. (For more information on the history of NLS, visit <https://www.loc.gov/nls/about/organization/history/>). In 2009, the Library created an [exhibition in honor of Louis Braille's 200th Birthday](#), which is still available online and contains various images related to braille and print accessibility. The images and articles that I found through the Library might be a good way to introduce learners to how literature was made accessible to people who are blind or people with low vision in the past. The [Observe, Reflect, Question](#) method would be a great start in analyzing these sources. You might ask your students if they notice anything about how braille is read and how it was created. This could also spark conversation with students about accessibility aids for people with disabilities, and where they see accessibility aids like braille in their daily life (public restrooms, signs, etc.)

Do you know of any other sources related to the NLS? How do you discuss accessibility in your schools/organizations and with your students? How could you envision using these sources to start a conversation with your learners?

If this topic interests you, check out the posts from former Junior Fellow  [Ellie Kaplan](#), who compiled resources on teaching disability history.

Further Resources:

- Blog Post from Teaching with Primary Sources Blog: [Exploring Disability Concepts through Primary Sources on the Built Environment](#) (Published just this week, how serendipitous!)
- [Disability History Group](#) in the TPS Teachers Network
- [History of NLS](#)
- [Free to Use and Reuse: Disability Awareness](#)



Teaching Notes:

Here is a photograph of the table at the Young Readers Center and Programs Lab that I referenced above. Notice the copy of "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" as a Print-and-Braille Picture book, as well as a copy of "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix" and the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution written in Braille. The table also has examples of talking books, a description of the NLS, and hands-on activities for children to learn more about how braille is created and read.



Teaching Notes:

Here is a photograph of the Reading Room for the Blind at the Library of Congress, taken around 1920. What might be different about this reading room compared to other reading rooms in the library at the time? What pieces of technology do you notice in the photograph?

Reference Link: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2005694707/>

Created / Published

- ca. 1920.

Notes

- - This record contains unverified, old data from caption card.
- - Caption card tracings: Copyright; Physically handicapped; DC, Wash. LC Interiors Div.; Libraries; Blind; Shelf.

Repository

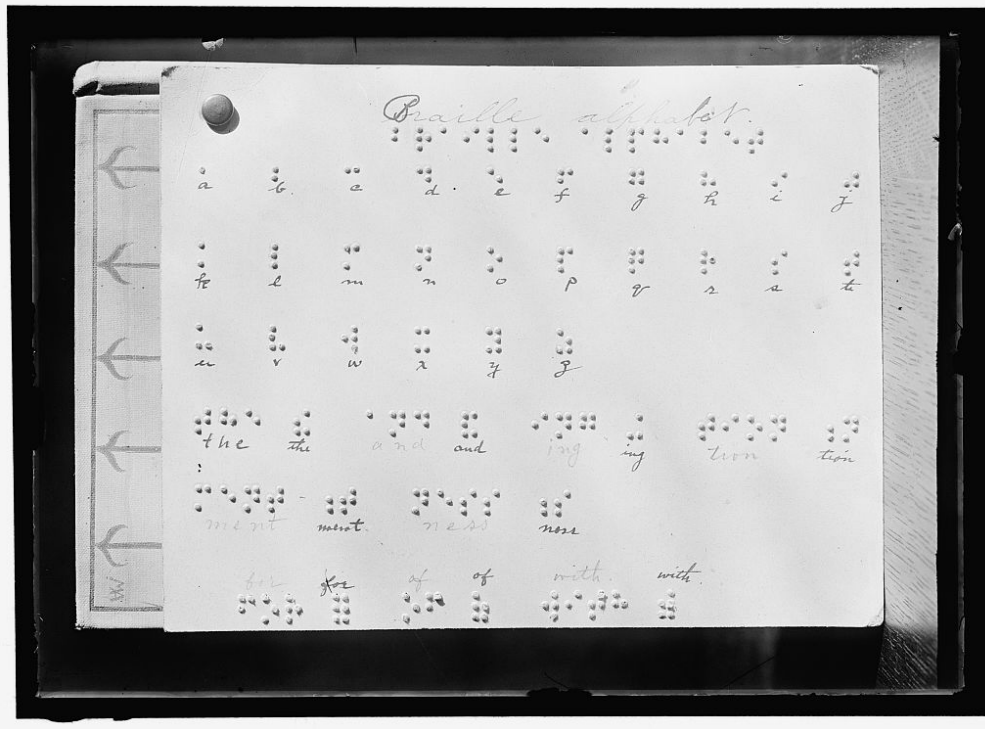
- Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print>



Digital Id

- [cph 3b07020 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3b07020](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3b07020)

BLIND, THE. BRAILLE ALPHABET AT LIBRARY FOR THE BLIND. INSTITUTE OF THE



Teaching Notes:

Here is an example of the Braille Alphabet. The YRCPL has a similar card that we give away to children who visit the space. What is the pattern used for the braille alphabet? How was this created? Who do you think is the intended audience for this image?

Reference Link: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2016864181/>

Contributor Names

- Harris & Ewing, photographer

Created / Published

- 1912.

Genre

- Glass negatives

Notes

- - Title from unverified caption data received with the Harris & Ewing Collection.
- - Gift; Harris & Ewing, Inc. 1955.



- - General information about the Harris & Ewing Collection is available at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.hec>
- - Temp. note: Batch one.

Repository

- Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA
<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print>

Digital Id

- hec 01837 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/hec.01837



Teaching Notes:

This would be a great image to try Observe, Reflect, Question:

- What is this woman doing?
- What is the time period? How do you know?
- Why was this image produced?

Reference Link: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2016889835/>

Contributor Names

- Harris & Ewing, photographer

Created / Published

- [1931 or 1932]

Subject Headings

- - United States

Genre



- Glass negatives

Notes

- - Title devised by Library staff.
- - Date based on date of negatives in same range.
- - Gift; Harris & Ewing, Inc. 1955.
- - General information about the Harris & Ewing Collection is available at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.hec>
- - Temp. note: Batch seven.

Repository

- Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA
<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print>

Digital Id

- hec 36683 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/hec.36683

NEW YORK, NEW YORK. CHARLOTTE ROHR OPERATING THE BRAILLE PRESS AT THE
LIGHTHOUSE
H STREET



Teaching Notes:

This woman is using a Braille Press to create pages of braille text. How might braille be created today? How has the technology for accessibility aids, like braille, changed over time?

Reference Link: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017864845/>

Contributor Names

- Boyer, Richard, photographer

Created / Published

- 1944 Mar.

Subject Headings

- - United States--New York (State)--New York

Genre

- Safety film negatives



Notes

- - Title and other information from print in lot.
- - Transfer; United States. Office of War Information. Overseas Picture Division. Washington Division; 1944.
- - More information about the FSA/OWI Collection is available at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.fsaowi>
- - Temp. note: owibatch5
- - Film copy on SIS roll 19, frame 1983.

Repository

- Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA
<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print>

Digital Id

- fsa 8d42045 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/fsa.8d42045

NEW YORK, NEW YORK. MISS LOUISE KINTNER, HEAD OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT (LEFT) DICTATING TO RUTH ASKENAS, WHO IS TAKING IT DOWN ON A BRAILLE MACHINE AT THE LIGHTHOUSE, AN INSTITUTION FOR THE BLIND, AT 111



Teaching Notes:

This is another way that braille was created--using a "braille machine." What other piece of technology from this period does this machine look like? (Perhaps a typewriter) Knowing that braille is made from a pattern of six dots, why might this machine have six keys? This image would be good to pair with the "Braille Alphabet" image from this album.

Reference Link: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017864847/>

Contributor Names

- Boyer, Richard, photographer

Created / Published

- 1944 Mar.

Subject Headings

- - United States--New York (State)--New York



Genre

- Safety film negatives

Notes

- - Title and other information from caption card.
- - Title and other information from print in microfilmed lot.
- - Transfer; United States. Office of War Information. Overseas Picture Division. Washington Division; 1944.
- - More information about the FSA/OWI Collection is available at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.fsaowi>
- - Temp. note: owibatch5
- - Film copy on SIS roll 16, frame 924.

Repository

- Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA
<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print>

Digital Id

- fsa 8d34719 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/fsa.8d34719




Teaching Notes:

What a unique and informative post. The photos require close examination and thinking. I can see students getting very involved in a “what do you see?” And “what do you want to know” activity using these photos.



Teaching Notes:


Thank you,  [Mary Alice Anderson](#) ! I had to do a lot of close examination of these sources myself, and I hope they can be used in a learning environment to build those skills and, as you said, to spark questions about "what do you want to know" and discussion about accessibility and disability history.



Teaching Notes:

Thank you for sharing and posting. This is great information. Have you used this resource from NLS [Fun with Braille Activity Sheet](#) and if so what suggestions do you have on to use it or what resources to pair with it? After your experience in the lab, would you use this to start the conversation or to enhance a later lesson?

Teaching Notes:

Hi  [Carrie Veatch](#) , what a great question! Yes, we use that [Fun with Braille Activity Sheet](#) in the YRCPL, often sending it home with families after they show interest in the NLS Table. I wonder--**Do any educators have thoughts: How do you see using the Fun with Braille Activity Sheet along with the primary sources above in your classrooms, libraries, or educational settings?**

I could see that worksheet being used in a couple of different scenarios--

- With very young students, I might use that worksheet along with a physical copy of a braille book to introduce students to what Braille is and how it is used. This is often how we introduce children in the YRCPL to Braille and they enjoy seeing a physical representation of what a Braille book looks like. A couple of the primary sources from this album could be used as well.
- With slightly older students (keeping in mind that this activity page might not be appropriate for learners in higher grades) I would introduce the set of primary sources first, using the Observe, Reflect, Question method with each of the images and some of the other reflection questions I listed in the Teaching Notes for each image. Then, I might use the Activity Sheet as a fun way to wrap-up the lesson.

I hope that this helps to answer your question! As stated above, anyone is welcome to jump in with their suggestions of how to use these resources as a classroom activity!



Teaching Notes:


Siobhan - These are terrific resources and learning ideas!

Students can learn about the tools used to make film and sound files accessible through the Tools of the Film activities posted with the educational materials for the film *Becoming Helen Keller*. [Keller materials from PBS Learning Media](#).

Teachers should consider how students who are themselves blind or print disabled (or have other disabilities) will experience this investigation. Some students may be happy to share their own experiences. Other students may want to avoid getting any attention for a disability. Early in the school year, it is vital to learn how each student can best experience discussions of ability. It is also important early to set the expectation of respect for every person, of all abilities. These activities can help to strengthen that respect!



Teaching Notes:

Thank you so much for your contribution to this post,  [Rich Cairn](#) ! I appreciate your thoughts about implementing this learning activity in a classroom and the resources that you shared related to the film *Becoming Helen Keller*. I particularly liked the "[Advocate for the Blind](#)" video, which talks about Keller's advocacy for standardized use of braille. What fantastic resources, thank you!