

# The Friends of the Colorado Talking Book Library Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2025 \*\* Prepared December 2025

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## Description of Programs and Activities

The Friends of the Colorado Talking Book Library (Friends of CTBL) is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that supports The Colorado Talking Book Library (CTBL) in its mission to provide books in alternative format—audio, braille, and large print—to Coloradans who are blind or print disabled. CTBL provides library services in every corner of the state, reaching every county in the state with books, magazines, and other media.

To evaluate the effectiveness of CTBL's services, a biennial patron satisfaction survey is administered by the Library Research Service, a unit of the Colorado State Library. This year there were 312 responses from a random sample of patrons. The results indicate consistently strong satisfaction with CTBL. This year's overall service rating was one of the highest on record: 85% of respondents rated the quality of service as "excellent," and an additional 13% rated it as "good," resulting in 98% of patrons describing the service as good or better. Not a single respondent rated the service as poor.

CTBL patrons tell us:

*"I appreciate the program more than I can express...your novels keep me sane. What a wonderful program."*

*"Almost every week she [my mother] tells me how happy she is with it. Since she lives alone and can't hear other media, talking books is the only thing she can listen to. With no mental stimulation her dementia was quickly getting worse. With talking books, her dementia has stabilized."*

*"Reading is a huge part of my life and being unable to read print was sad and depressing. Now I can still 'read'!"*

*"Your Reader Advisors are without exception, delightful individuals. They always make me feel like I'm talking to a personal friend."*

The financial support the Friends of CTBL provides is crucial to the success of CTBL's mission as the State budget does not provide sufficient funding for the complex nature of the services necessary for the library's success. Key programs the Friends of CTBL supports include an on-site recording studio, outreach to the blind and print disabled community, and volunteer program support.

The studio recording program at CTBL records books and magazines for CTBL patrons. The books CTBL records are of interest to the patrons, focus on local Colorado authors, and/or about the Rocky Mountain region. The Friends' funding supports the studio by providing the

equipment, software, and supplies needed to operate the program. In 2024, the Friends purchased three new recording booths for the studio, enhancing the sound quality of the audio recordings. All recording and post-production work is carried out by approximately 43 volunteers under the direction of the studio director. The program includes two distinct processes: recording and digital audio processing. The studio produces recordings of books and two local magazines and then formats the audio files that meet National Library Service (NLS) standards. The program also records the annual Colorado Legislative Blue Book and makes it available in MP3 format on the website.

Outreach is an ongoing priority for CTBL. As the Colorado population ages, the demand for audio and large print books continues to grow. As an organization, CTBL prioritizes outreach to ensure Coloradans that need the service can get it. Many organizations, including care facilities, libraries, and schools, were grateful they could provide their users with solutions that kept them connected to life.

The CTBL News, the triannual newsletter, is paid for by the Friends and is circulated to about 7,500 people in audio, braille, and large print formats. It is available on the website and notification is emailed to those requesting it. The Friends also support the software and embosser to create the braille version of the newsletter. The newsletter updates patrons and supporters on CTBL services and materials, keeping them informed about their library.

In addition, the Friends of CTBL supports the purchase of supplies for duplicating books for patrons which requires cartridges, mailing containers, labels and specialized printers, and braille embossers.

## **Key Accomplishments**

### **2025 Colorado Talking Book Library Patron Satisfaction Survey Report**

The Library Research Service report stated: The rating for the overall quality of service from this year was historically high. The vast majority (85%) of respondents said the overall quality of service is “excellent.” The only other time in the past 20 years that CTBL has been rated this highly was in 2007 (excellent ratings have never dropped below 78% over this time period.) Additionally, 13% of respondents rated the overall quality as “good,” which equates to 98% of patrons rating the service as good or better. Not a single respondent said the overall service was poor. Clearly, patrons highly value the library especially to continue reading for enjoyment, engage their minds, and prevent feelings of loneliness. Gratitude was one of the most common themes among survey responses.

One patron summed up their gratitude for CTBL’s services saying: *“I’ve always been a prolific reader. When my vision loss prevented me from reading print, I was bereft until I discovered CTBL. It’s hard to express how deeply I appreciate having access to books again!”*

### **Patron Programming**

The Colorado Talking Book Library (CTBL) collaborated with the Denver Public Library to offer “Winter of Reading,” an activity-based reading program for adults. Program participants could win prizes if they completed at least five activities. CTBL also collaborated with the National Library Service for Blind and Print Disabled (NLS) on a summer reading program. It was an all-ages program that tied into the national Collaborative Summer Library Program and NLS activities. The theme was “Color Your World.” Patrons who signed up for the program received a prize as an incentive. Participating patrons who completed the summer reading program received an additional prize. For both programs, CTBL staff adapted activities and reading resources to ensure access for all patrons. Prizes and incentives were supplied by the Friends of CTBL.

### **Recording Studio**

Last year, CTBL made 48 books available and 2 magazines—The Colorado Magazine and Colorado Outdoors—including 28 new books, 18 remastered books, 9 magazine issues, and 2 commercial conversions. The CTBL News was also recorded and made available in audio format.

In 2025, 48 books were posted to the NLS’s database of audio books (BARD) and made available to patrons in the national network. A total of 873 CTBL recorded books are on BARD.

### **Outreach**

During FY25, CTBL staff participated in 27 in-person outreach events. Staff engaged a wide range of audiences through activities such as older adult resource fairs, library training sessions, low vision support groups and special education resource fairs for school districts. Staff attended the Colorado Association of Libraries conference and participated in the National Federation for the Blind Colorado Annual Conference. Attendance at outreach events varied from several hundred to a dozen individuals. During these various events, staff promoted CTBL’s services, assisted new patrons in signing up, and connected with current users to discuss their experiences. Outreach activities have successfully disseminated information to hundreds of librarians and library staff, families and caregivers, and most importantly to potential patrons who express their gratitude for the library and the services it provides.

### **Patron Services**

Last year, Reader Advisors had more than 17,400 interactions with patrons, including 15,800 phone calls, 1,110 emails, and 238 pieces of written correspondence.

### **Volunteer Recognition**

The Friends of CTBL provide support for the volunteer program by funding volunteer recognition events, certificates/plaques, and breakroom supplies. The Friends have always supported the critical work the approximately 145 volunteers do for the library year in and year out.

Names and contact information for Friends Board leadership personnel Executive Board members for 2025 were:

David Dawson, President

Alice George, Vice-President/Secretary

Laura Hickey, Treasurer

Board members include:

Hank Braaksma

Jadwiga Brown

Peggy Chong

Pamela Newton

Alan Mackey

Frank Oldham

Nicolle Steffen, ex officio

### **Methods of solicitation for Donations**

The Friends of CTBL sends an annual giving letter to patrons, past donors, volunteers, and interested community members each year in November. There is a donation page on the Friends website - <http://www.friendsofctbl.org/donations.htm>. In the triannual CTBL newsletter there is a page about how to donate to the Friends.

### **Reporting and Transparency**

The Friends of CTBL maintains a website and posts the annual report there. The news about the library and its programs is reported in CTBL News which is distributed to 7,500 people 3 times a year.