



**State of Rhode Island  
Department of Administration  
Office of Library and Information Services**

## **Talking Books Plus Membership Survey December 2010**

### **OLIS Talking Books Plus Team**

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Report prepared by Ann Piascik.

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## **Introduction**

The Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS) Talking Books Plus (TBP) Team developed a survey to assist in evaluating and planning relevant and accessible library services to Rhode Island Blind and physically handicapped residents.

The survey was available online from December 13, 2010 to January 31, 2011 and was distributed in a variety of formats, including online, print and audio versions to 1,884 TBP members. 1,588 newsletter subscribers received a large print copy of the survey in the Fall/Winter 2011 Talking Times newsletter. 149 additional subscribers receive the newsletter in cassette format and a recorded version of the survey. Cassette subscribers were asked to respond to the survey either online or by filling in the large print copy included with their audio cassette. They also had the option to call Talking Books Plus and speak with a staff member to complete the survey. Online, the survey was made available through SurveyMonkey. The online version was announced to an additional 147 email subscribers of the Talking Times newsletter. Finally, a link to the survey was posted on the homepage of the Talking Books Plus webpage.

Interested parties may read the survey results and Talking Times newsletter at [www.olis.ri.gov/tbp](http://www.olis.ri.gov/tbp) to stay informed of TBP news and resources. Questions about the data analysis may be addressed to Ann Piascik ([ann.piascik@olis.ri.gov](mailto:ann.piascik@olis.ri.gov)).

## Overview

Of the 1,884 Talking Books Plus members who received the survey, 133 members returned the survey. This calculates to a 7% return rate. 109 surveys were returned in paper format, 11 were filled out online by respondents, and the remainder phoned in responses. While the online version required survey participants to answer questions, those filling in the paper version did not necessarily answer every question. As a result, not all questions recorded a 100% response rate.

74% of respondents, or 97 of 131, find digital talking books the most important service offered by TBP. 19.8% or 26 of 131 respondents find the digital download service called Braille Audio Reading Download (BARD) of most importance. In total, 93.8% or 123 of 132 of the respondents are using the digital service. 90.8% or 118 of 130 of respondents feel they received the reading materials they are interested in. In correlation, 115 of 126 members or 91.3% of respondents feel the most important benefit that TBP provides to them is pure enjoyment.

More than three quarters of the respondents (79.3% or 104 of 131) say they select books from TBP online and the National Library Services for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) print book catalogs. 59.5% or 78 of 131 use the Talking Book Topics catalog that is available in either large print or cassette format. Another 19.8% or 26 of 131 use the online catalog. A few members specify the use of the New York Times Book Review, radio and TV reviews, and suggestions made by friends on Facebook.

According to the survey responses, the most popular information that members like to receive in the newsletter are booklists. 65% or 81 of 125 individuals responded to this question and asked for bestsellers, mysteries, biographies and books in series. In addition, annotations were requested for booklists.

A fraction over 25% of the 127 respondents would like to receive the newsletter in the digital cartridge format. Over 44% or 56 of 127 respondents now like to receive the newsletter in large print. Over a third, that is 35.9% or 46 of the 128 respondents have access to a computer with high speed Internet service. 23% or 30 of 129 respondents

have downloaded books to a digital book machine. 31% or 40 of 129 respondents have ordered books from the online catalog. 8% or 11 of 130 respondents have or would use the public access computers at the public library. 75.4% or 86 of 114 respondents did not experience any problems with the digital talking book system. However, some have experienced problems ordering digital books by mail, with 19 of 114 respondents or 16.7% reporting that they have experienced difficulty.

Few respondents reported using assistive technology on computers. Of those who use assistive technology, 9.4% or 11 use Windows built-in features, 4.3% or 5 use Jaws, 1.7% or 2 use Mac built-in features, and .9% or 1 use Windows Eyes. Six (6) other respondents wrote in that they use ZoomText.

The Talking Books Plus Blog on the TBP website was read online by 13 of 125 or 10.4% of the respondents. (The TBP Blog is updated weekly and includes booklists, described movie lists, national and local library events, book sources and more.)

On average, 95% or 121 respondents found TBP easy to contact and TBP staff members are courteous and responsive in a timely manner. Overall, 99.2% or 126 respondents rated the TBP service from excellent to good.

93.8% or 122 respondents are at least 50 years old. 43.8% or 57 respondents are at least 80 years old. 80% or 104 of 130 respondents have been a member for at least 4 years. 38.5% or 50 respondents have been a member for over 10 years.

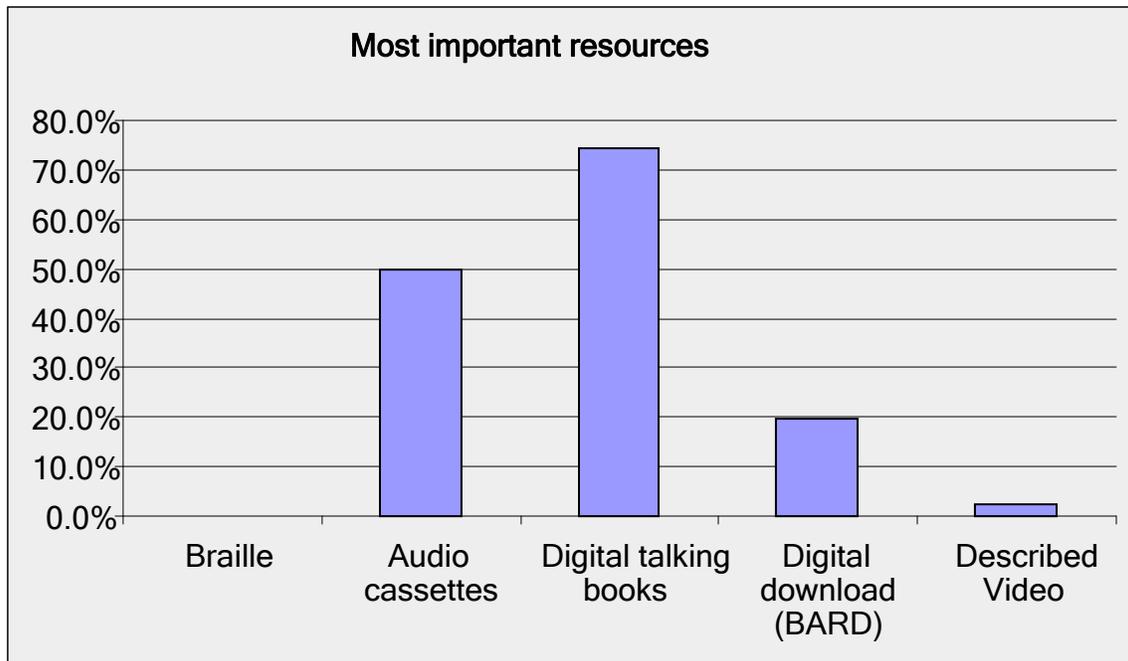
Many members first learned about Talking Books Plus from Insight, Services for the Blind and other Rhode Island agencies. Overall, more than 59% or 77 of 130 respondents received Talking Books Plus services through an agency referral.

Members commented that the Talking Books Plus program puts all the daily worries out of mind, has been a lifeline, and provides relaxation. Members said they recommend the program to others and that the program provides reading materials that members were not able to get on their own. According to survey respondents, reading Talking Books helps pass the time and ease their loneliness. Several respondents said they can't imagine life without Talking Books Plus. The actual survey questions and survey results follow.

# I. Talking Books Plus Resources

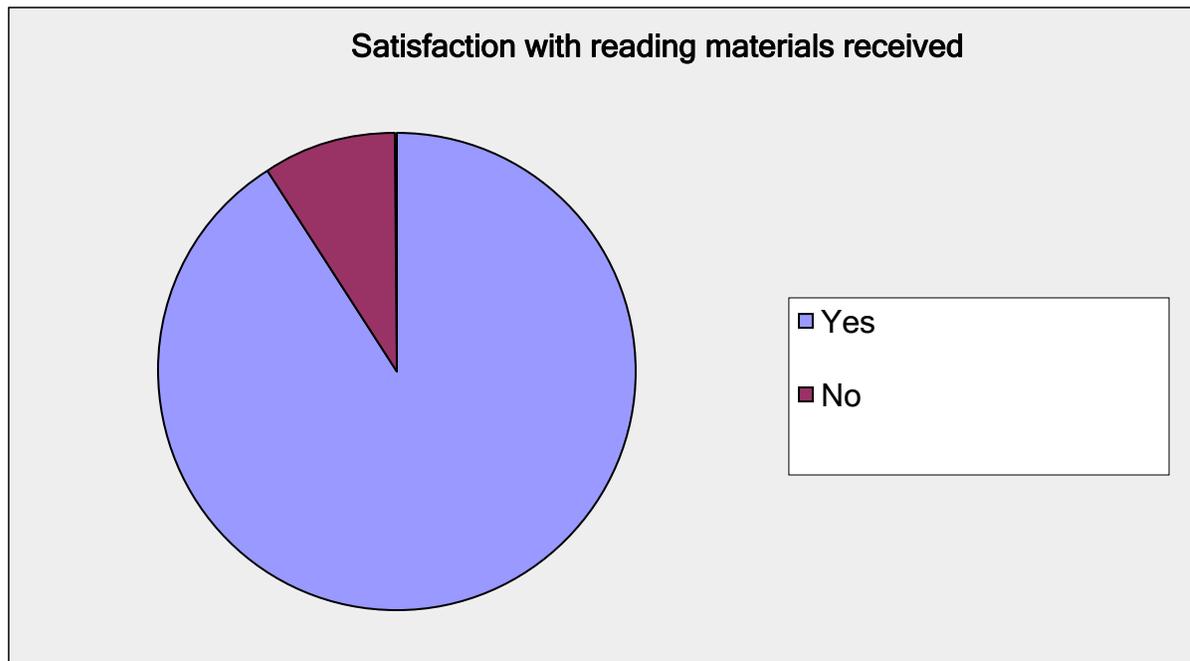
Q1. Which Talking Books Plus resources are most important to you? (Check all that apply)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Braille	0.0%	0
Audio cassettes	50.0%	66
Digital talking books	74.2%	98
Digital download (BARD)	19.7%	26
Described Video	2.3%	3
<i>answered question</i>		<b>132</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>1</b>



## II. Talking Books Plus Materials

Q2. Do you receive the reading materials that you are interested in?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	90.8%	119
No (call us to update your selection process)	9.2%	12
<i>answered question</i>		131
<i>skipped question</i>		2

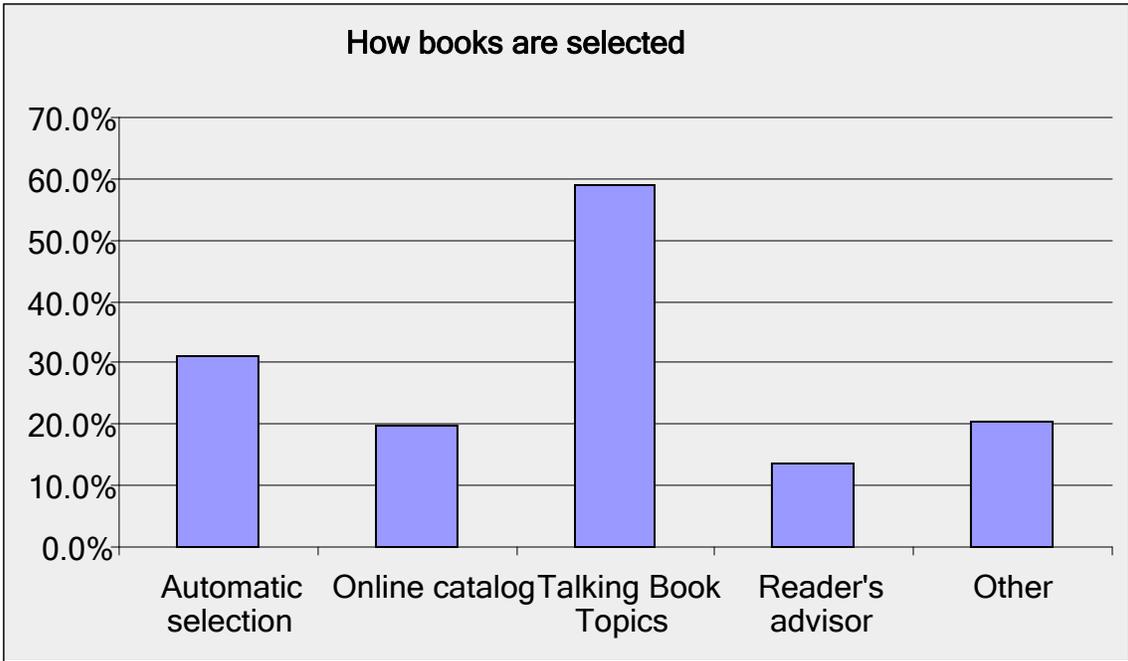


### III. Method of Book Selection

Q3. How do you select books? (Check all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Automatic selection	31.1%	41
Online catalog	19.7%	26
Talking Book Topics	59.1%	78
Reader's advisor	13.6%	18
Other (please specify)	20.5%	27
<i>answered question</i>		<b>132</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>1</b>

Other (please specify):

- By Author
- Catalogs
- NY Times bestsellers
- Call
- BARD New Releases
- My daughter selects them for me.
- BARD Recommended
- Call And Request Title.
- Call in when requesting a book.
- Through Friends That They Read, NY Times Book Review on tape.
- Books in catalog
- Radio book/TV reviews
- Also spoke to helpful Rep. from your office.
- Call to ask for specific titles.
- But rather receive automatic selection.
- Monthly catalog
- Wish we had more variety. How do we order more authors?
- Perkins catalog
- Recently added books on BARD.
- Read reports about new books.
- Paper catalog
- BARD download
- By phone
- Reference Best Seller list.
- Friends mention on Facebook.

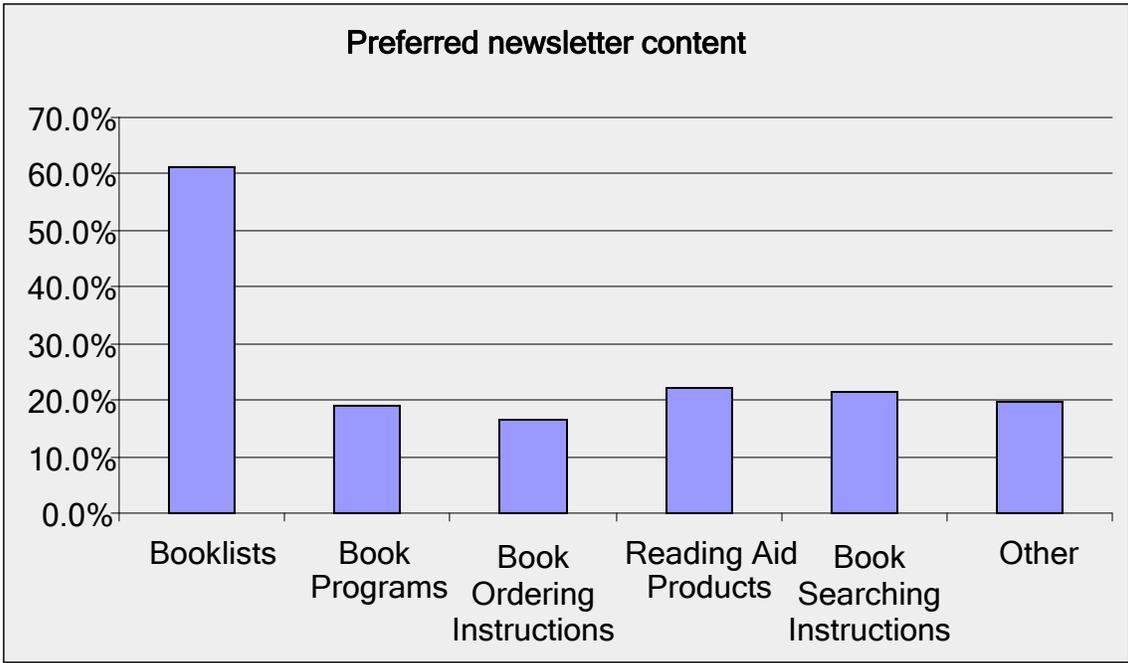


## IV. Talking Books Plus Newsletter Content

Q4. What kind of information do you like to read in the newsletter? (Check all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Booklists	61.1%	77
Book Programs	19.0%	24
Instructions for Book Ordering	16.7%	21
Reading Aid Products	22.2%	28
Instructions for Book Searching	21.4%	27
Other (please specify)	19.8%	25
<i>answered question</i>		<b>126</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>7</b>

Other (please specify):

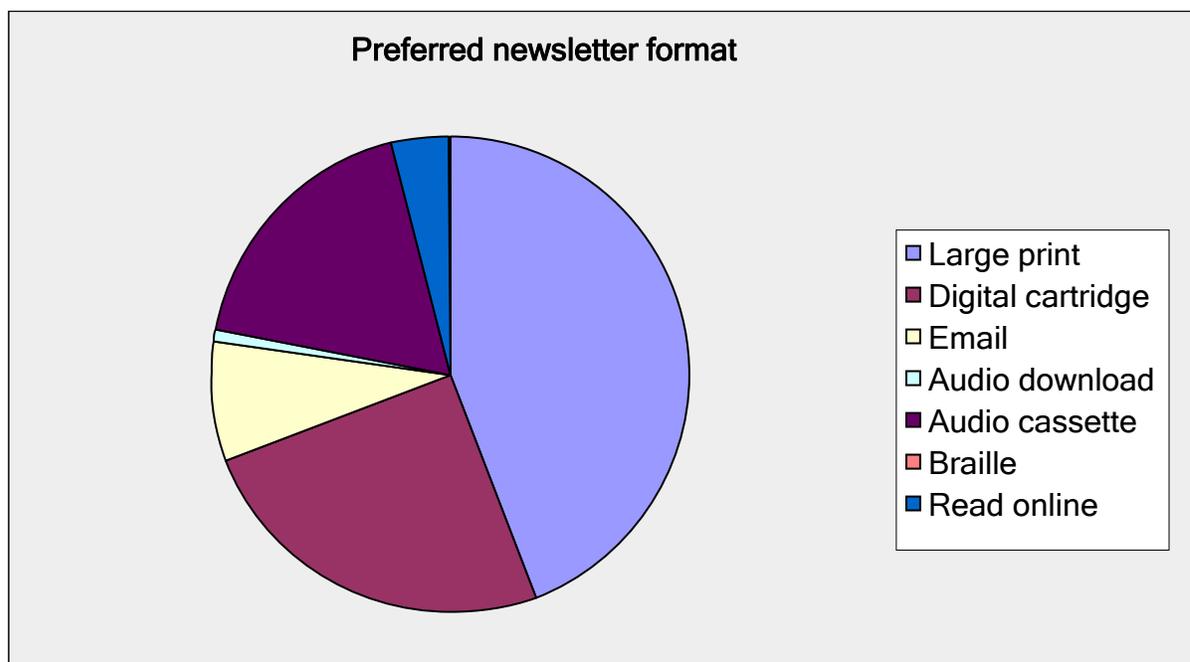
- Nothing don't read the newsletter.
- Cannot read newsletter.
- Do not read newsletter.
- Daughter & husband reads.
- Don't read - can't see.
- Not aware of any except Booklists.
- Actually all of the above but mostly booklists so I can pick books to listen to.
- Can't read.
- General information
- I can't read.
- Cannot read.
- Can't read newsletter.
- Can't read it.
- Bestsellers, Mysteries, Biographical annotations.
- BARD instructions
- Can't read newsletter.
- New books to be recorded and all books in a series
- None. I should cancel it.



## V. Talking Books Plus Newsletter Format

Q5. How would you like to receive the newsletter? (Call 574-9310 if you'd like to receive the newsletter in a different format than you are currently receiving.)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Large print	44.1%	56
Digital cartridge	25.2%	32
Email	7.9%	10
Audio download	0.8%	1
Audio cassette	18.1%	23
Braille	0.0%	0
Read online	3.9%	5
<i>answered question</i>		<b>127</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>6</b>



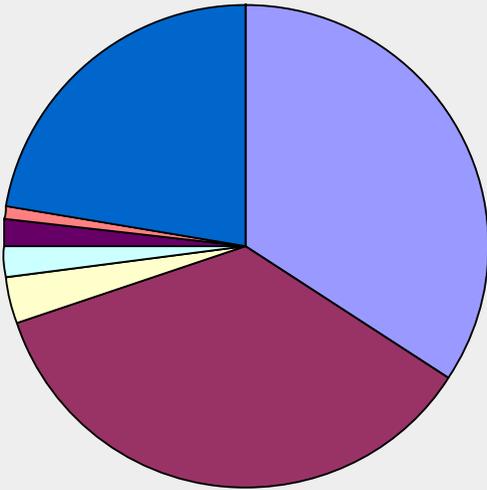
## VI. High Speed Internet Access

Q6. Do you have access to a computer with high speed internet service? (Please indicate where you most often use a computer if you do have access.)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
No	34.1%	44
At home	35.7%	46
At a friend's	3.1%	4
At work	2.3%	3
At a public library	1.6%	2
At a vision services agency (such as Insight, Meeting Street)	0.8%	1
Somewhere else? (please specify)	22.5%	29
<i>answered question</i>		<b>129</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>4</b>

Somewhere else? (please specify):

- Do not have a computer.
- Can't use a computer. Can't see.
- At a vision services agency and a public library
- Daughter has access.
- Sylvias 71 Verizon.Net
- At home, at work
- Have no computer
- At home, at work
- At home, a friend's and a public library.
- No, nursing home resident
- Daughter
- Grandson
- Parents home
- At home, at a public library, at a vision services agency
- At home and at a friend's
- My daughters

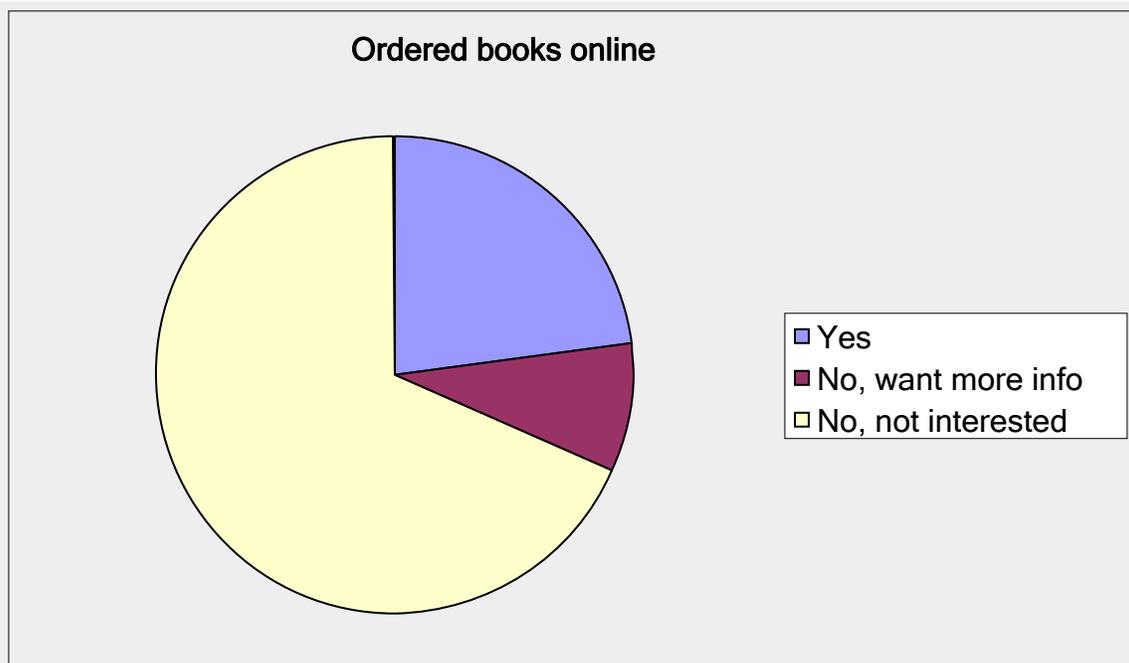
Access to high speed internet



- No
- At home
- At a friend's
- At work
- At a public library
- At a vision services agency
- Somewhere else

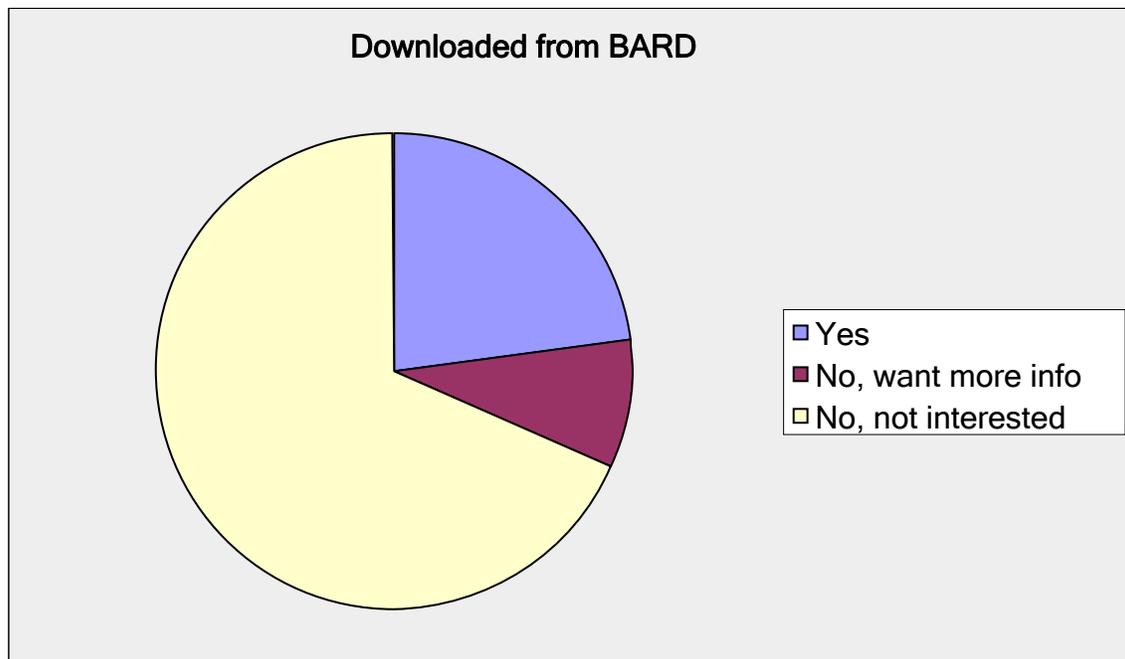
## VII. Online Ordering

Q7. Have you ordered books from the Talking Books Plus online catalog?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	23.1%	30
No, want more information	8.5%	11
No, not interested	68.5%	89
<i>answered question</i>		<b>130</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>3</b>



## VIII. Downloading Books via BARD

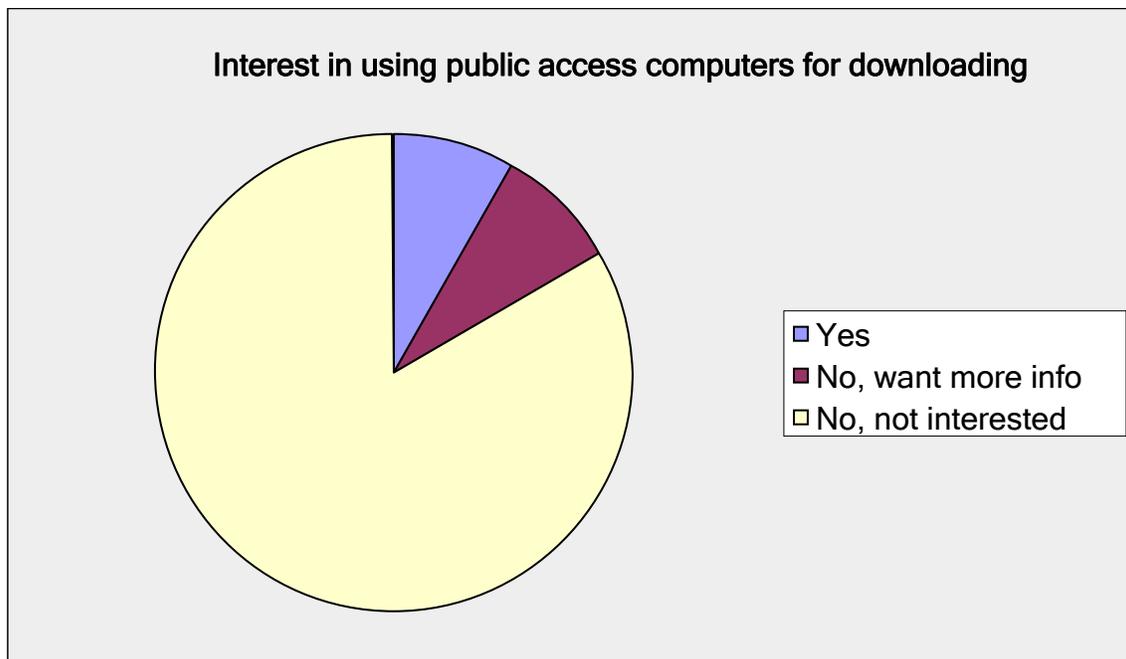
Q8. Have you downloaded books to a digital talking book machine using BARD?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	23.1%	30
No, want more information	8.5%	11
No, not interested	68.5%	89
<i>answered question</i>		<b>130</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>3</b>



## IX. Using Public Access Computers

Q9. Do you or would you use the public access computers at the public library to download digital talking books?

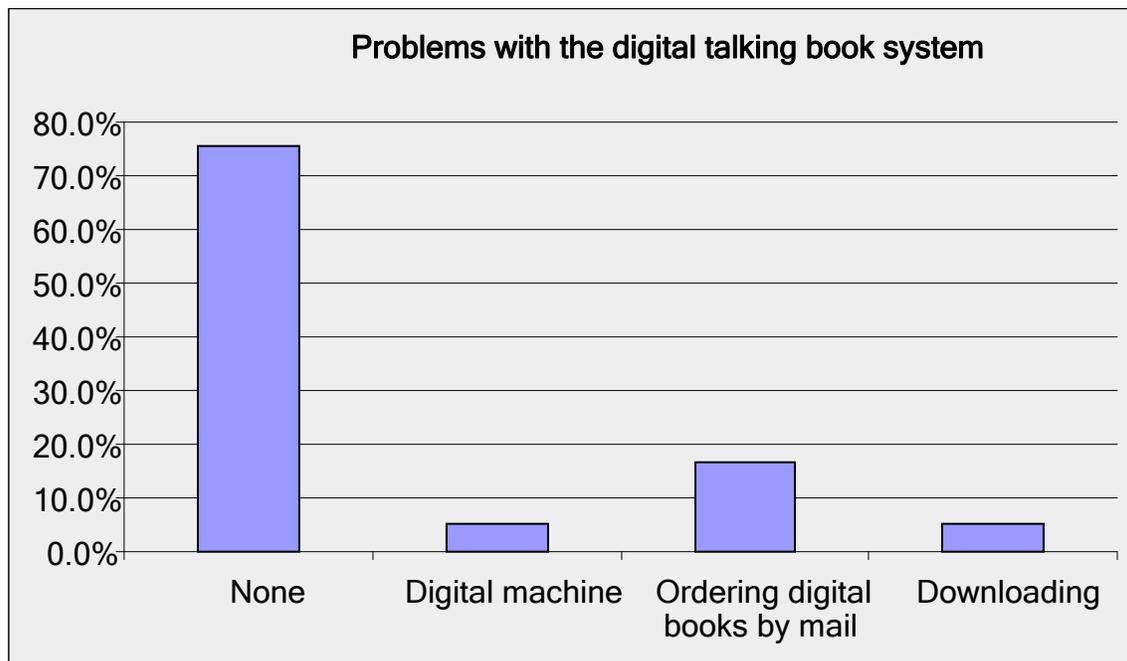
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	8.4%	11
No, want more information	8.4%	11
No, not interested	83.2%	109
<i>answered question</i>		131
<i>skipped question</i>		2



## X. Problems with Digital Talking Book System

Q10. Are you experiencing any problems with the digital talking book system? (Check all that apply)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
No	75.7%	87
Digital machine	5.2%	6
Ordering digital books by mail	16.5%	19
Downloading	5.2%	6
<i>answered question</i>		<b>115</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>18</b>

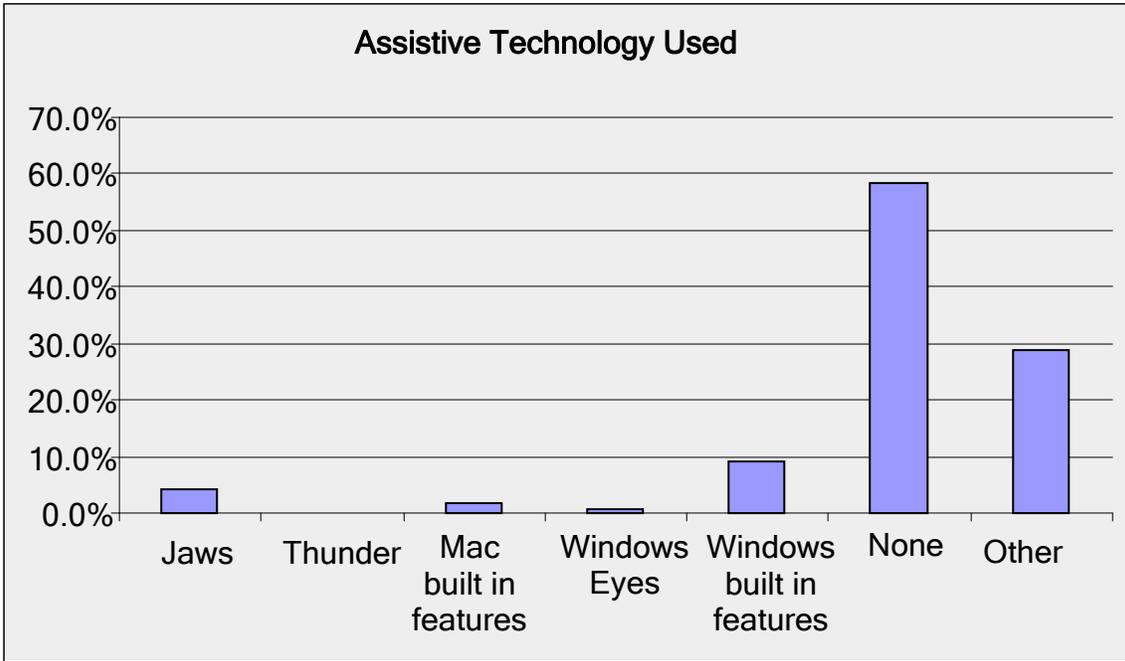


## XI. Use of Assistive Technology

Q11. If you use a computer, what assistive technology do you use? (Check all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Jaws	4.2%	5
Thunder	0.0%	0
Mac built in features	1.7%	2
Windows Eyes	0.8%	1
Windows built in features	9.3%	11
None	58.5%	69
Other (please specify)	28.8%	34
<i>answered question</i>		<b>118</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>15</b>

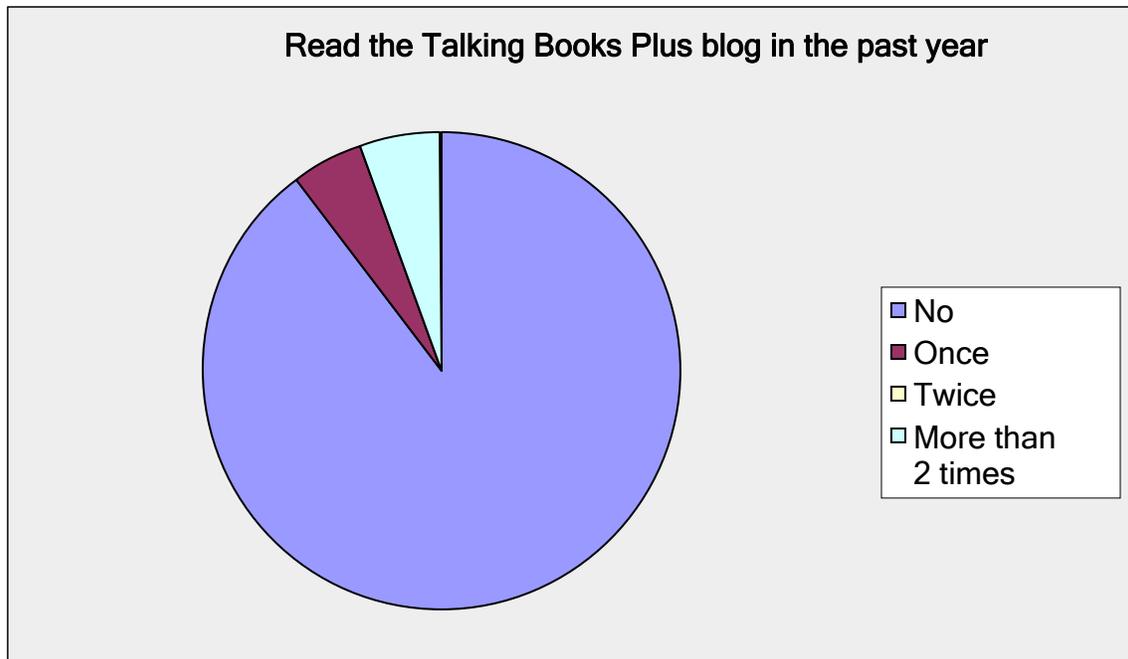
Other (please specify):

- Does not use computer
- No Computer
- Zoom Text
- Windows magnifier
- No knowledge of computers
- Don't know
- Tell me more about these in newsletter or email. Don't know of any Mac built in features.
- Father assists me.
- Do not use it. My husband does.
- ZOOM TEXT 9.1
- Not having any problems with #10 but there was no selection.



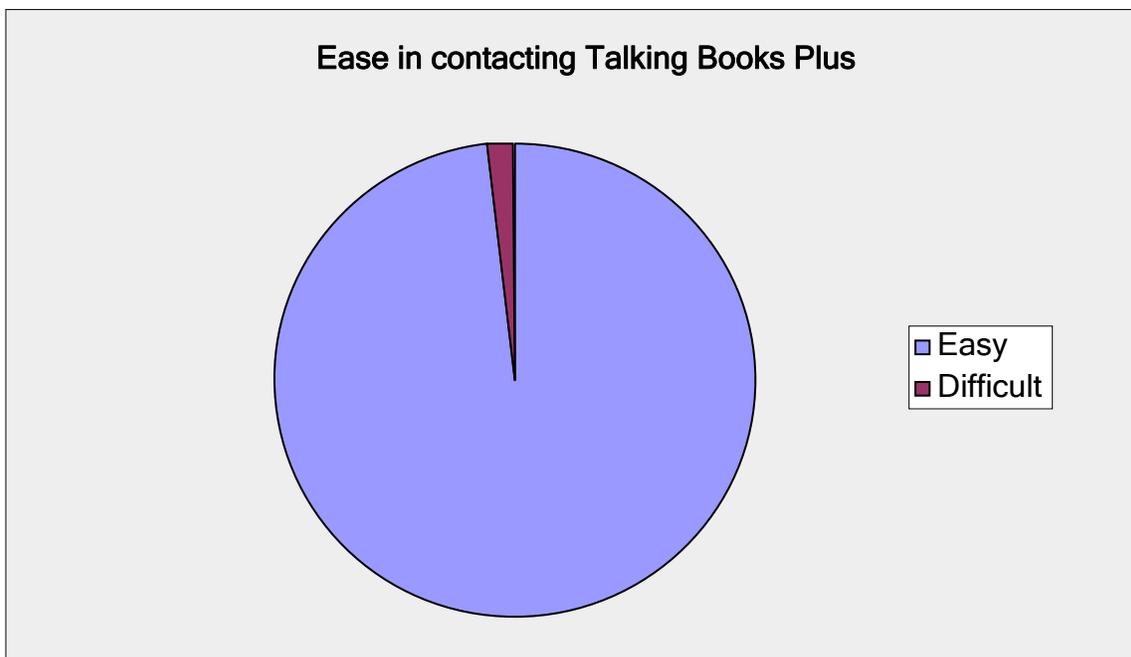
## XII. Talking Books Plus Blog

Q12. Have you read the online Talking Books Plus Blog in the past year?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
No	89.7%	113
Once	4.8%	6
Twice	0.0%	0
More than 2 times	5.6%	7
<i>answered question</i>		126
<i>skipped question</i>		7



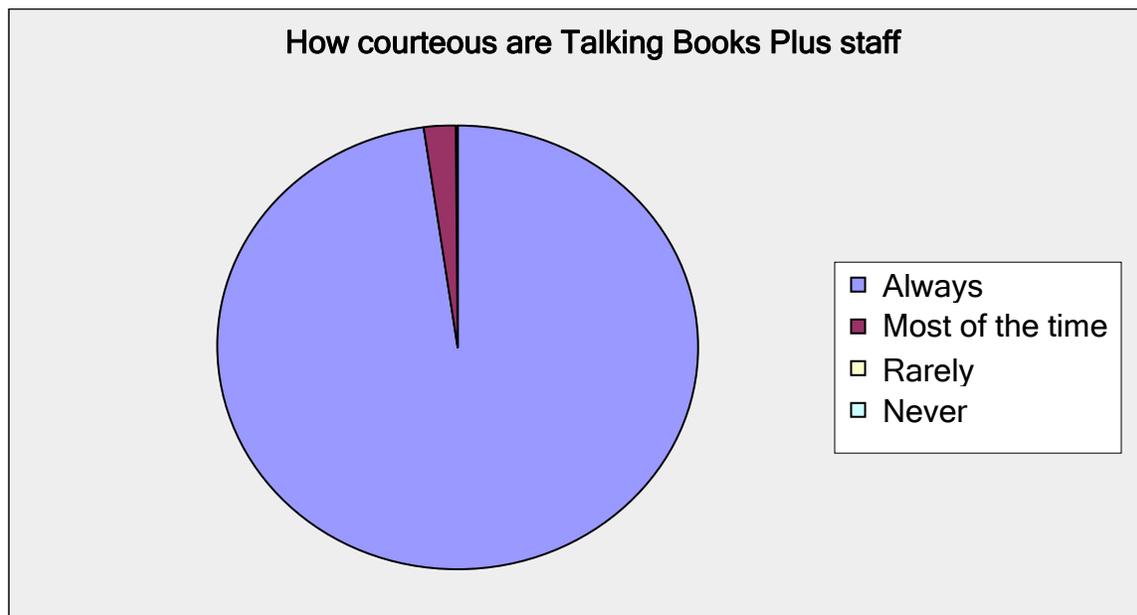
### XIII. Contacting Talking Books Plus

Q13. How easy is it to contact us?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Easy	98.4%	127
Difficult	1.6%	2
<i>answered question</i>		129
<i>skipped question</i>		4



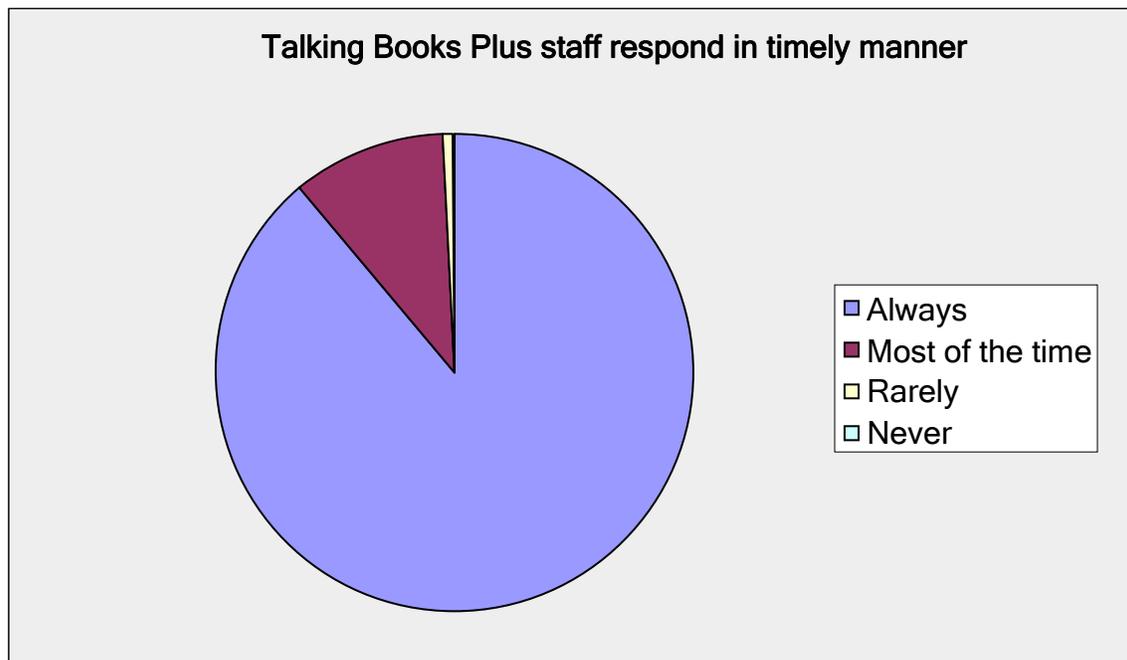
## XIV. Courtesy of Talking Books Plus Staff

Q14. Are our staff members courteous?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Always	97.7%	125
Most of the time	2.3%	3
Rarely	0.0%	0
Never	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		<b>128</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>5</b>



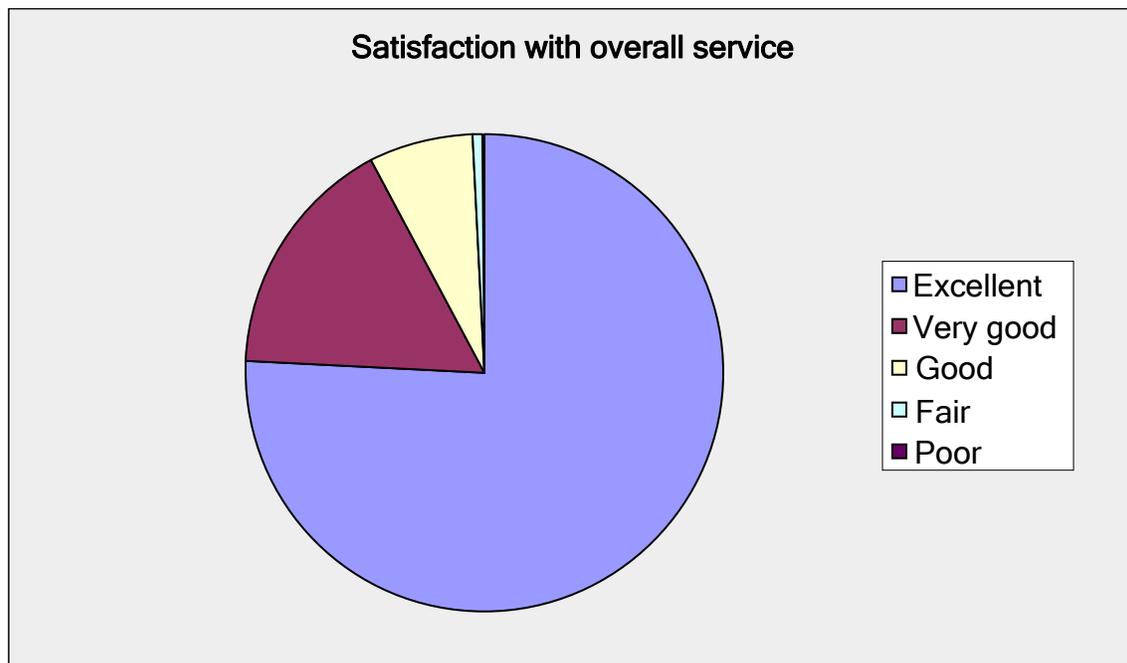
## XV. Talking Books Plus Staff Response

Q15. Does our staff respond to your questions in a timely manner?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Always	89.1%	114
Most of the time	10.2%	13
Rarely	0.8%	1
Never	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		128
<i>skipped question</i>		5



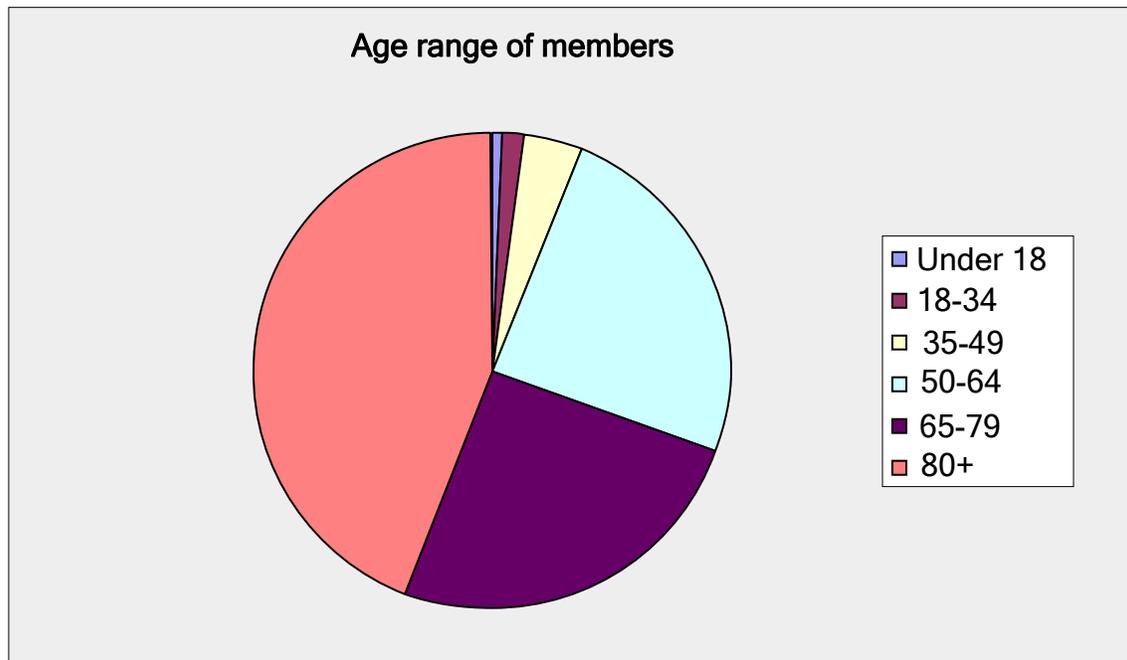
## XVI. Ranking Talking Books Plus Service

Q16. How would you rate the overall service from TBP?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Excellent	75.8%	97
Very good	16.4%	21
Good	7.0%	9
Fair	0.8%	1
Poor	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		<b>128</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>5</b>



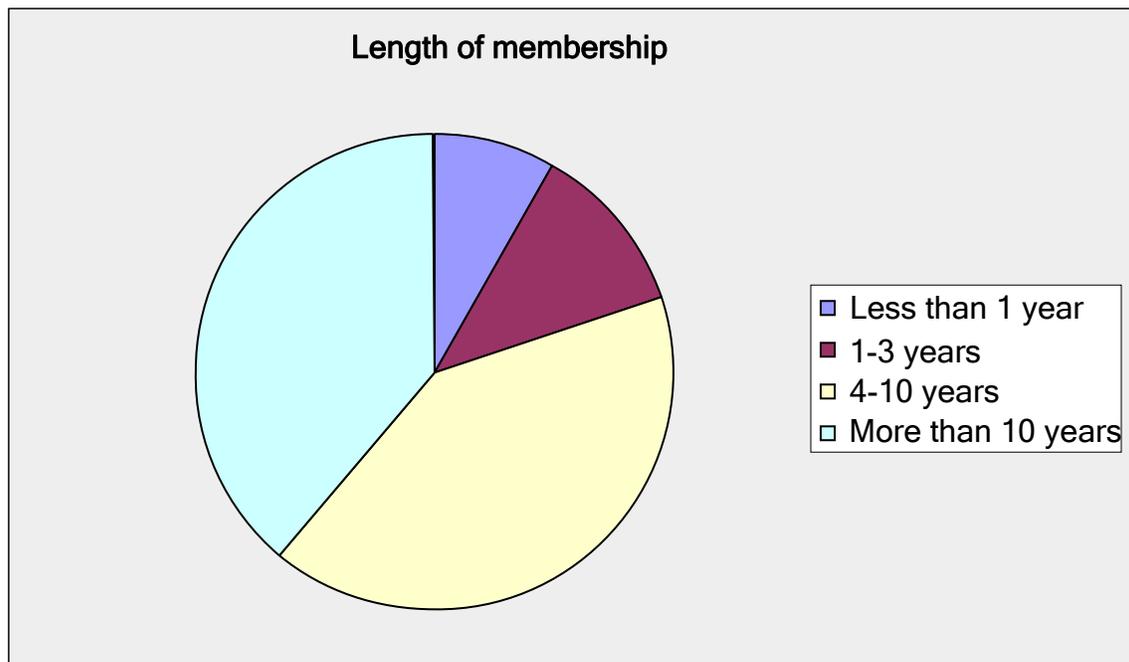
## XVII. Age Range of Members

17. Your age is:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Under 18	0.8%	1
18-34	1.5%	2
35-49	3.8%	5
50-64	24.4%	32
65-79	25.2%	33
80+	44.3%	58
<i>answered question</i>		<b>131</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>2</b>



## XVIII. Length of Membership

Q18. How long have you been a member of RI Talking Books Plus?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 1 year	8.4%	11
1-3 years	11.5%	15
4-10 years	41.2%	54
More than 10 years	38.9%	51
<i>answered question</i>		<b>131</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>2</b>



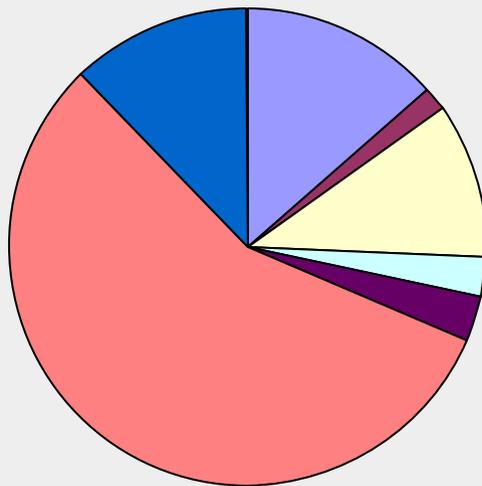
## XIX. Learning About Talking Books Plus

Q19. How did you first learn about Talking Books Plus?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Friend or Family	13.7%	18
Public library	1.5%	2
Nurse or doctor	10.7%	14
School	2.3%	3
Nursing home/assisted living	3.1%	4
Agency (e.g., Insight, Services for the Blind)	56.5%	74
Other (please specify)	12.2%	16
<i>answered question</i>		<b>131</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>2</b>

Other (please specify):

- Friend in apt. referred to Services for the Blind.
- Agency someone came to the house.
- Public library and agency
- Nurse or doctor and agency
- State Services
- Ophthalmologist
- Westhaven, CT rehabilitation
- Massachusetts Commonwealth for the Blind
- Social worker
- Insight
- VA
- Through St Elizabeth's Place
- RI for Blind
- State of Rhode Island

### How introduced to Talking Books Plus



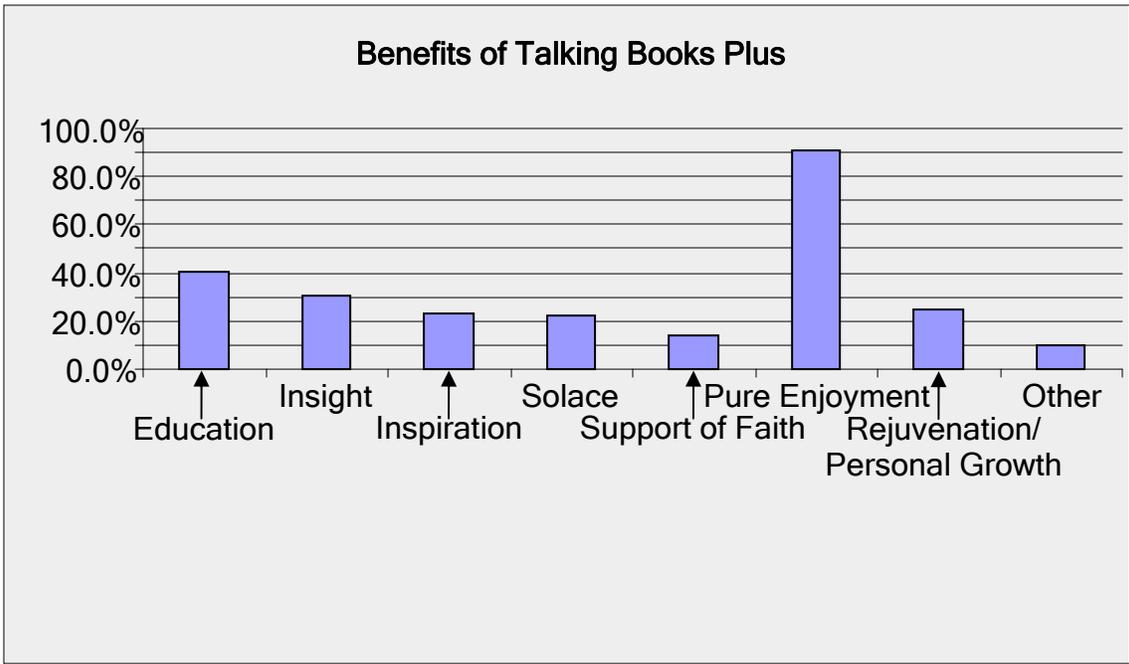
- Friend or Family
- Public library
- Nurse or doctor
- School
- Nursing home/assisted living
- Agency (e.g., Insight, Services for the Blind)
- Other (please specify)

## XX. Benefits of Talking Books Plus

Q20. What are the most important benefits that Talking Books Plus provides to you?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Education	40.9%	52
Insight	30.7%	39
Inspiration	22.8%	29
Solace	22.0%	28
Support of Faith	14.2%	18
Pure Enjoyment	91.3%	116
Rejuvenation/Personal Growth	24.4%	31
Other (please specify)	10.2%	13
<i>answered question</i>		<b>127</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>6</b>

Other (please specify):

- Relaxation
- Because I like to read and talking books help me.
- Good reading selections
- It often has been a lifeline. Thank you very much!
- Helps with sleep too – calm, interesting book puts all the daily worries out of my mind - that 15 minute switch is a life saver.
- Was an avid reader and it really saved my life.
- Mental activity & recreation
- Most helpful to fill long evenings that I had no other source of entertainment to enjoy, also hearing impaired.
- It's awful when a person can no longer pick up a book to read. TBP fulfills that loss and gives us comfort. Thank you!
- Sleeping aid
- Reading entertainment



## XXI . Other Comments

Q21. Please share any other comments you may have about Talking Books Plus:	
Answer Options	Response Count
	61
<i>answered question</i>	<b>61</b>
<i>skipped question</i>	<b>72</b>

Responses:

- This survey is useless because she cannot read this/ cannot fill in answers.
- I can be doing something and still read.
- Need more tapes for DB. Very few books that are ready for DB machine very frustrating. I have the DB machine with few tapes available.
- Thank you for your tremendous program and support of those with vision issues/challenges. We look forward to receiving books on tape in the mail!!
- Wonderful service thank you very much.
- You guys are great.
- Always reading every single day.
- Doing a good job Thank You.
- Just the use of talking books is my pleasure.
- You provide reading materials that I'm not able to get on my own.
- I really like this program. I have recommended it to others.
- Keep up the Good Work!
- Enjoy it.
- Q12 comment - Don't know what it is (Blog.)
- If I didn't have that I'd into the river.
- None
- If there was a rating higher than excellent that is where your department/program would be.
- Excellent service
- Like having the sound of a human voice. Compare to a machine voice. And the fact I can skip around to what interests me.
- No comments - continue your good work!
- Your staff has been great. The system has provided me with hours of enjoyment.
- Service is excellent.
- I think that the staff does service over and above the call of duty.
- I'm happy to have this service.
- No comments.
- Enjoy the books very much. Helps to pass the time. Helps ease the loneliness.
- I would enjoy also getting some magazines on tape, digital or on cassettes. Please excuse my penmanship. I use to have nice handwriting. Now I can't see what I'm writing. God bless you all for bringing some pleasure into our lives.

- All of your staff are fabulous. Thank you.
- My mom really enjoys the talking books - she has both old and new digital machines, but prefers the digital. It is easier (she is 86.)
- What is Digital download (BARD)? Not enough description of the books - at least a one-word category would help.
- It is nice for TBP to give us this service.
- I put none for the questions about problems with the system because my digital machine is working and I am not having trouble ordering books online. I do not download and at this time, do not have an interest in doing so.
- [Patron] says he is very satisfied, gets wonderful service. Used your services for about 39 years! Back to those records!
- I am fortunate, I can still read large print- But a good DB is also a pleasure. I wear special glasses for reading & TV.
- Love the staff. You have changed my life. I rely on Talking Books for entertainment & information. I can't imagine my life without Talking Books. Thank you so much.
- I would like to download books but I am little nervous using my computer.
- I would like more digital talking book tapes (small players.)
- Get rid of all defective tapes nobody wants them. It's inconsiderate. On whom ever part, TBP staff members are very patient. Learned about TBP from Services for the Blind. I'm not trained on computers = vision problem. Keep up the good work you're doing.
- I love the digital format.
- So happy to have your service!!
- Please change Preference to non-fiction 20th Cent History. American Heritage type articles- authors such as [John] Grisham - [Dick] Francis, D. Halberstam, David McCullough. I do not want private eye type murder mysteries for example author, Stuart Woods.
- Unable to read newsletters and book descriptions. Difficult to change profile. Patron profile becomes too restrictive. Automated cycle appears irregular. Non-digital (RC) too bulky/heavy. Prefer more digital.
- I'm writing for my son Rene. He cannot read or write. But he enjoys your digital & cassette. He loves true stories; news; race cars; sports.
- If you send me Chaffee's email address or phone number, I will contact him to increase your funding that was cut by current/previous governor. As already written to state governor, this is the only state service that I have. Nothing from DEA. Easy to contact because I always want Andy. No high speed connection.
- I order books for my mom who is currently in a nursing home. She thoroughly enjoys listening to the books and finds that she is able to relax because the headphones block out the noise in the building. I have found that the digital machine doesn't work for her since she only has 2 electric plugs and too many items needing electricity. Also I am only able to order 2 books at a time and she would read through those within days and have nothing more to listen to. Thank you for having this service available. It has been a godsend for my mom!!!!!!
- If think of something will call TBP.
- The service is excellent. Extremely happy with the service provided went ever requested.

- Great service for visually impaired. Be very sad to be without it.
- Who ever answers the phone is very helpful. They are polite and courteous
- Didn't enjoy books on missing children books and Homer's The Iliad, Books in RC. Prefer books written in this century.
- Superior, excellent, can't tell you how much my wife appreciates this service.
- Over the years that I have used the system the people have always been courteous and very helpful and the new digital reader is excellent.
- Have ordered books from TBP online catalog but want more information, too.
- The one problem we are having is in books being recorded as returned. For some reason even though we have returned every book we ever received, records show we have books outstanding from 2008. This has made receiving books really a slow process. Whenever my husband finishes a book, I have to call a TBP staff member with the date and number of books that has been returned. We have had no problem with the other mail delivery out going or to the home. The only thing I can think of is some kind of technical glitch. Sometimes now, I order books for my husband and he is waiting 1 to 2 weeks without books. He misses not having them.
- Question 2 Overall the online catalog is so big. I have difficulty finding the subjects I am interested in. This may sound silly, but I have trouble keeping all the acronyms straight in my mind.
- Would like to know more about different digital formats for various devices and digital players.
- All of the staff are wonderful, but Andy Eagan always makes me feel special as a client.
- Great program. My father enjoys it.
- Excellent service

## XXII. Suggestions for Improvement

Q22. How can we improve our service?	
Answer Options	Response Count
	50
<i>answered question</i>	50
<i>skipped question</i>	83

Responses:

- As far as I'm concerned you are perfect.
- I really don't know. I'm getting everything I need all I do is call and get what I want I love the digital very convenient, easy to carry.
- More tapes for the DB player.
- Provide old radio shows on tape/CD: Abbott & Costello, lone ranger, Jack Benny, superman, the shadow etc.
- Just be there when needed.
- The CD player is very fluffy and slow.
- Your services are excellent.
- Continue what you're doing!
- Better bookmarking on downloaded books.
- Happy with all the service. Thank you!
- You're perfect.
- I can't think of any other way other unless I could use a computer. I don't have the energy.
- Don't have to - Fantastic Program.
- Nothing! When you go all digital, what is going to happen to the audio cassette books. Will they be available to give away? Thank you for everything.
- Can't think of anything. Doing a very good job.
- Keep your steady-
- Having a problem with the machine. It's not working properly. Wondering if you could replace in with a better working one but I know how to use it now and would like the same one. Not interested in digital.
- It's the best it can be.
- Is good as it is.
- Not sure
- You do a wonderful job!
- Service is good the way it is.
- More description of the books. Author and title is very little help most of the time
- Nothing this service is good.
- Let us know if you need people to write to their congressmen for prevention of fund cut-backs.
- You are a great service and in the short time I have been dealing with the program I have had nothing but positive response from everyone I have had to deal with. This is a wonderful program. Keep up the good work!

- I am satisfied with your service.
- In my experience - it works fine - Pleasant people on phone is so important to low eye sight!
- You can't improve anything.
- The website is very difficult to navigate.
- Please stop sending old defective cassettes. Someone needs to be in charge of this job. There's no jobs? Give someone this job.
- I've said it all.
- Doing great tried to go on line - see page 2 wants me to join - check it out.
- It's great the way it is.
- It is difficult to leave a message- need to improve communication/message services. So calling to make changes is difficult. ? develop an automated service with book descriptions that can be read to individuals on the phone and can pick by pushing one button on the phone.
- Do not stop all cassettes in 2011. Use a bigger font on your web page because it is too small for me. Use double spacing as you do in Talking Times. Filled in by someone else for me.
- Don't see how you can.
- Just keep doing your usual excellent service.
- Have soft spoken staffers speak a bit louder.
- How can you improve on A1?
- No Way
- Detailed instructions for accessing and using online services and downloading. I'll call one of these days and ask questions...but I didn't even know these services existed until I read this newsletter.
- Seems good to me as it is.
- Thank you
- You are doing so well. I can't think of anything, except maybe having more links to relevant products.
- The change to digital is difficult for me and I am an experienced computer user. More instructions would be helpful. Reviews by other clients would be great! Is this stuff on the Blog that I've never seen? LOL
- The download using the zip files is a bit complicated
- I am not having any problems as stated in question 10, but your survey made me choose one answer. It should have a "no problems" option.