

## Enjoy The Reading Experience - Celebrate Talking Books Week March 3-8

by Janie Rutherford, Communications Specialist

Celebrating 65 years of service to Kansans who are print impaired is a pretty big event! Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius and State Librarian Christie Brandau joined in congratulating the Kansas Talking Books Division of the State Library of Kansas and its six Talking Book Centers as they mark the anniversary of free audio library services for the blind.



The federal Pratt-Smoot Act, enacted on March 3, 1931, established free library services for blind adults, administered by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) in the Library of Congress. For many years, services were offered to Kansans through the St. Louis Library and the School for the Blind Library in Kansas City, KS. In 1971 the Kansas network serving the print-impaired was established.

Today this program is a division of the State Library of Kansas, serving more than 7,000 patrons through a network of six local service centers located in Emporia, Norton, Great Bend, Manhattan, Topeka and Wichita.

Governor Sebelius signed a special proclamation for the State Library of Kansas and the Talking Books Division on February 19, 2008. Framed copies have been distributed to the regional Talking Book Centers.

State librarian Christie Brandau noted, "More than 40,000 Kansans are eligible for this service. We are working hard to reach more patrons and to keep them connected with their great love of reading. More than 100,000 titles are available including books, magazines, newspapers, and descriptive videos."

As part of the week-long celebration of Talking Books, Kansas dignitaries will provide an audio clip of their favorite literature to share with Kansans. Governor Sebelius will kick off the week as our first Celebrity Reader. It will be posted to the State Library website, [www.kslib.info](http://www.kslib.info). Additional pieces will be contributed by Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh, State Treasurer Lynn Jenkins, State Insurance Commissioner Sandy Praeger, and Kansas Supreme Court Justice Kay McFarland.

Special media packets were compiled to help local public libraries celebrate Talking Books week in a manner that fits their community. In addition, handouts focusing on the A to Z of the Talking Books program have been developed for distribution to Kansas residents and potential patrons statewide.

*“Because reading is more than a visual experience”*, the Kansas Talking Book Library network provides library resources in specialized formats free-of-charge to Kansans unable to use standard print. For additional information, call toll free 800/362-0699 or visit [www.kslib.info/talking/](http://www.kslib.info/talking/).