

The Benefits of a Book Group

Debby King, Library Outreach Coordinator
Perkins Library

Perkins Library

Perkins is the free public library for people who have difficulty reading regular sized print. This includes people who are blind, visually impaired, physically unable to hold a book, or reading disabled. Audio, braille and large print books are delivered by US mail right to your door, no postage needed. Everything is free.

Perkins Materials

Patrons of the Perkins Library can borrow materials in braille, audio, and large-print formats. Many braille and audio titles are available for download, making it easy for patrons to stay connected with their book groups.



Other Book Groups

The Library now coordinates or provides support to nine groups, some in assisted livings, one for "women in wheelchairs" at Boston Medical Center and two run by Perkins Library staff. The key to success is for the coordinating party to check with the Perkins Library to see if a book is available in the National Library Service audio format.



Benefits of a Book Group

The Perkins Library has sponsored a book group on the school campus since 2000 for elders who are visually impaired and this year has started two additional groups, one in Newton and one in Lexington. The benefits of these groups include:

- A constructive forum for people who are visually impaired or physically disabled to meet.
- Many friendships have developed. One participant mentioned that, while she would not have chosen to be dealing with vision loss, she also never would have met her new friends.
- A time to get out of the house meeting in an understanding and supportive environment.
- Exposure to titles and authors which participants may never have read on their own. Sometimes people don't like the book but their interest is piqued by the discussion and they are inspired to try reading the book again.



Library Without Walls

The Perkins Library has big plans to become the "neighborhood library" for patrons across Massachusetts who are blind or print-disabled- without a single reader having to leave the comfort of home. Starting in January, the new Library without Walls program will host a series of call-in events where patrons can discuss books and hear guest speakers over the phone.

"This is our way of replicating what a local library offers," Perkins Library Outreach Coordinator Debby King said. "We're offering programs so anyone from Pittsfield to Provincetown can participate."

At a typical town library, local residents can drop in to discuss a bestselling novel at a book club or listen to guest speakers in person. However, the Perkins Library serves a much more geographically diverse audience, and many of its patrons have limited access to transportation.

"A lot of our borrowers are pretty isolated," Perkins Library Director Kim Charlson said. "They can't drive. So being able to bring an author into their homes via the telephone no matter where they live in Massachusetts really lowers that barrier, so they can have those same library opportunities."

From January to June, the Perkins Library will host the call-in and discussion series. Authors and expert speakers will discuss various topics, including health and life enrichment, with Library patrons listening in and asking questions.



Perkins
LIBRARY

175 North Beacon Street
Watertown, MA 02472
617-972-7240
Fax 617-972-7363
www.perkinslibrary.org