



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Who is Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic® (RFB&D®)?

Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic, a nonprofit volunteer organization, is the nation's educational library of recorded textbooks for students with a visual impairment, learning disabilities or other physical disabilities that make reading standard textbooks difficult or impossible. RFB&D serves more than 185,000 students from kindergarten through graduate school and beyond with its one-of-a-kind collection of more than 35,000 educational titles on CD or four-track cassette. Students rely on RFB&D's unique accommodation to access the printed page and to achieve educational success. All of RFB&D's accessible titles are recorded by volunteers working in 29 RFB&D recording studios nationwide.

Our mission is to create opportunities for individual success by providing, and promoting the effective use of, accessible educational materials. Our vision is for all people to have equal access to the printed word.

Recording for the Blind® (RFB®) — as we were originally known — was founded in 1948 by New York City philanthropist Anne T. Macdonald in the attic of the Yorkville Branch of the New York Public Library. Macdonald's idea to record textbooks for students who are blind was inspired by a number of letters received by the library from veterans who were blinded during World War II. They wanted to pursue a college education through the GI Bill of Rights, but could not because college texts were not readily accessible. From those beginnings, RFB grew to include textbooks and other educational materials at all educational levels. In 1995, we changed our name to Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic to reflect the growing number of people with learning disabilities who are able to realize their potential by using our audiobooks as an accommodation.

What are print disabilities?

Print disabilities are impairments that prevent people from reading standard print due to a visual, perceptual or other physical disability.

How does RFB&D help people with dyslexia and other learning disabilities that affect reading?

Dyslexia is the most common type of learning disability and refers to difficulty with reading. RFB&D's recorded textbooks are successful because they encourage a multisensory approach to learning. Research indicates that hearing the words while reading along greatly enhances content acquisition, comprehension, reading speed and retention. Recent studies have confirmed that people with dyslexia show greater activity in the part of the brain that processes sound and less activity in the area where the written word is processed. A study by Johns Hopkins University found that students with learning disabilities showed a 38 percent increase in content acquisition after using RFB&D's AudioPlus® digitally recorded textbooks.

How are RFB&D textbooks different from other audio books?

There are more than 35,000 recorded titles in RFB&D's CV Starr Learning Through Listening® Library, ranging from *Dr. Seuss* to *Introduction to Biology* to *Quantum Physics*. Unlike other companies that offer popular titles and periodicals, RFB&D provides educational textbooks as well as literary titles to people with print disabilities. Another difference is the book format. RFB&D's AudioPlus® digitally recorded textbooks on CD provide members with unprecedented independence through their extraordinary portability and ability to be navigated by page, chapter or section at the press of a button. RFB&D's Classic Cassettes™, which are played on special four-track analog tape players, are recorded on four tracks rather than the standard two and subsequently hold more information. Additionally, we're different from other available recorded textbook resources because often we use experts in various fields to record our books. Our accessible recorded textbooks also include knowledgeable and detailed descriptions of graphic elements.

How is RFB&D keeping pace with advances in technology in education?

RFB&D has made the transition from analog to digital recording with a core collection of more than 35,000 digital titles now available. These audiobooks require a special portable CD player equipped to play RFB&D's audiobooks or a standard multimedia computer equipped with a CD drive and specialized software. RFB&D's AudioPlus[®] digitally recorded textbooks on CD help level the playing field for students with print disabilities by providing immediate access to information and unprecedented navigation by page or chapter. These functions make our CDs a more effective learning and study tool. RFB&D's AudioPlus[®] digitally recorded textbooks on CD also offer new convenience for students. The content of a typical textbook, which used to require 10 cassettes, now fits on one or two CDs.

How are titles selected for RFB&D's library?

RFB&D's market research title selection program helps identify potentially high circulating core textbooks in anticipation of members' needs; librarians work directly with book publishers to select new and upcoming titles. In addition, the librarians review K-12 and college publisher catalogs and websites; state textbook adoption lists; and professional journals for books that support curriculum needs. RFB&D member requests are also a very important part of the title selection process. RFB&D members, both individual and institutional, may make suggestions and requests for titles that are currently unavailable in our collection.

How are textbooks recorded?

More than 7,000 trained volunteers in 29 studios across the United States record, edit and produce the textbooks used by RFB&D members. While any reader is welcome, there is always a need for readers specializing in math, the sciences, computers, foreign languages, fine arts and music. RFB&D requires that readers have expertise in the subjects they are reading to ensure fluent, accurate and consistent presentation of material as well as detailed descriptions of any visual material in the book, such as formulas, equations, graphs, charts, maps or diagrams. A training period is required for all volunteers, who may also help with Educational Outreach, fundraising, public relations and computer coding of reference books.

How is RFB&D funded?

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, RFB&D relies on the generosity of private donations from individuals, corporations and foundations. RFB&D also receives funding from the federal government and some state governments. As of fiscal year 2005, 78 cents of every dollar in revenue was put back into direct services for RFB&D members.

Who can use RFB&D's services?

Individuals with a documented print disability — including visual impairment, learning disability or other physical disability — are eligible to use RFB&D's audio textbooks. In order to access RFB&D's library, individuals must become members or be served through their school's institutional membership. RFB&D's Learning through Listening[®] Individual Memberships require a \$65 registration fee and a yearly membership fee of \$35. These fees are charged to cover a portion of costs — RFB&D incurs no profit from these fees. Alternatively, students may access materials through their school if it has an RFB&D Learning Through Listening[®] Institutional Membership, which is available to any school, college or other educational agency. In addition, RFB&D's Educational Outreach initiative provides personalized support and assistance to schools. Teachers, students and parents are instructed on using RFB&D's audiobooks more effectively and incorporating the program into the classroom and at home.

Does RFB&D recognize students who benefit from its services?

RFB&D's Mary P. Oenslager Scholastic Achievement Awards are given annually to nine seniors at four-year US colleges or universities who are blind or visually impaired. The Marion Huber Learning Through Listening[®] awards are presented annually to six high school seniors with learning disabilities. Awards total more than \$50,000. The top three winners in each category are recognized at an annual RFB&D celebratory event.

How can I contact RFB&D?

For information about volunteering, becoming a member or making a donation, contact RFB&D's National Headquarters at 20 Roszel Rd., Princeton, NJ 08540; call toll-free 866-RFBD-585; or visit RFB&D's accessible website at www.rfbd.org.