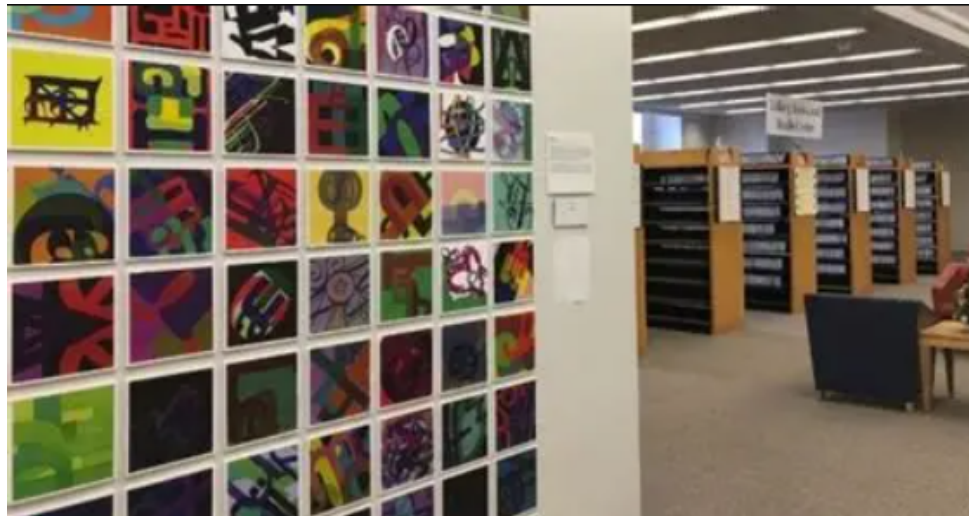




Blindness and Low Vision Support Group:

August 19, 2026 Recap



SF Public Library's Talking Books and Braille Center

Overview

This meeting had two parts. We opened with our usual 30-minute community discussion, where members shared tips on paratransit, rideshare apps, and screen reading tools. Then, our guest speakers from the SF Public Library's Talking Books & Braille Center (TB&B) presented their reading services, access technology resources, and social programs.

Topics covered:

- Community discussion: paratransit vouchers, rideshare accessibility, screen reader and magnification tips,

Waymo's accessibility features

- TB&B presentation: reading services (Talking Book player, BARD Mobile, Victor Reader, Newsline, Libby)
- Access technology: JAWS, ZoomText, magnifiers, Tech Talk sessions
- Braille equipment: braille displays and typewriters
- Community programs: book clubs, a writers' group, SF Symphony, and other activities

Community Discussion (First 30 Minutes)

We started by discussing paratransit vouchers, which provide a discount for cab rides (not Uber/Lyft). The application process was easy — it's done in person near Van Ness and Market and includes a short interview. You get a photo ID card to show the driver. One downside: some cab drivers don't have GPS and require directions. Another member mentioned that if you have an appointment, book early since rides can run late, and schedule your ride at least a week in advance.

A few other tips came up:

- BlindNewWorld.org — a site where you can read and share personal stories, filtered by diagnosis and topic
- Lumin — an app for reading and managing emails

[BlindNewWorld Website](#)

[Lumin](#)

Lyft and similar apps:

On iPhone, you can use the built-in dictation feature to speak instead of typing. A participant asked whether the Lyft app supports voice commands — the group confirmed it works with VoiceOver and Voice Control (an iPhone accessibility feature).

We learned that iPhones offer a few font size options in Settings, and that the Magnifier feature is helpful.

A SKERI team member suggested screenshotting the screen and zooming into the image when the app itself doesn't support zoom, and confirmed that it is possible for Siri to take a screenshot.

Apple Accessibility
Phone Number

Magnifier App
(iPhone)

Another member mentioned GoGoGrandparent, a phone service where you press 1 and can request a Lyft or Uber by dialing in (comes with an added fee).

GoGoGrandparent

Presentation: SF Public Library's Talking Books & Braille Center

Our speakers were Alex Bergman, Dr. Liz Phillips, and Ricardo Cisneros.

Reading Services

The Talking Book player is about the size of a large cassette player and uses cartridges (also cassette-sized) that can each hold up to 30 books. It has a sleep timer, doesn't require waiting for a book to become available, and newer models can connect via Bluetooth to hearing aids.

Newspapers and magazines are also available, and books can even be recorded on request if they're not already available. Note: most books are available in English and Spanish, with a few available in Russian, French, Italian, Cantonese, and Mandarin.

Other reading tools mentioned:

- Newslane — an app that reads newspapers aloud
- Libby — works well for audiobooks but requires solid familiarity with VoiceOver
- BARD Mobile — a free app and service through the National Library Service with no download limits or due dates; lets you browse by bookshelf, search for new books, and adjust playback speed, sleep timer, and bookmarks; also includes comics, newspapers, and magazines
- Victor Reader — an MP3 player that can auto-download books once you're signed up for Talking Book service
- Money readers — a small handheld clip-on device that identifies bill values by speaker, beep, or buzz

Access Technology

The library offers computers with JAWS and ZoomText, scanners for reading inaccessible print, and standalone magnifiers. They also run a weekly Tech Talk session on Wednesdays at 1pm covering a different topic each month (the last Wednesday is hybrid), plus one-on-one help learning VoiceOver, Zoom, and typing skills.

Braille Equipment

The center has braille typewriters, printers, and electronic braille displays. If you sign up for the National Library Service, they'll provide an e-reader at no cost, which can also connect to a computer or phone to save documents.

Community Programs

The library also hosts a few social and enrichment groups, including Tom's Talking Book Club (last Thursday of the month at 12pm), Aaron's Writer's Salon, and occasional SF Symphony performances, plus casual activities like crochet and yoga.

Want to Learn More or Sign Up?

The next step — for any questions or information — is to call or reach out to the Talking Books & Braille Center directly.

They're located on the 2nd floor of the Main Library:

- 100 Larkin Street San Francisco, CA 94102

Call: **(415) 557-4253**

TBBC Phone Number

TBBC Website

Upcoming Meetings Logistics:

Date: Wednesday, September 16, 2026

Time: 3:30 PM — 5:00 PM PDT

Location: 2318 Fillmore Street, San Francisco, CA, 94115

Format: In-person with Zoom link to follow along virtually

Support Group Website

Smith-Kettlewell Eye Research Insti | Smith-Kettlewell Institute 2318 Fillmore Street | San Francisco, CA
94115 US

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