

**National Library Service
for the Blind and
Physically Handicapped**

The Library of Congress

Approved by Director, NLS/BPH

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BACKGROUND

The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) of the Library of Congress administers a free library service to eligible residents of the United States and citizens living abroad who cannot hold, handle, or read traditional print media because of visual or physical handicaps.

Using federal funds, NLS annually publishes approximately 2,000 books and 70 magazines on cassettes, on discs, and in braille. Titles are selected to appeal to a wide variety of interests, and copyright permission is obtained from authors and publishers. Books and magazines are narrated and duplicated at a high-quality professional standard. The quantity produced of any title is dependent on anticipated reader demand.

Playback machines and their accessories are designed to facilitate convenient use by handicapped people and to provide maximum reliability under environmental conditions that are sometimes harsh and handling that may be technically unsophisticated or inadvertently abusive. The equipment plays program materials at noncommercial speeds: 8-1/3 rpm for discs and 15/16 ips, 4-track for cassettes. All materials and equipment in the program can be sent to users and returned to libraries postage free.

A cooperating network of 56 regional libraries and more than 100 subregional libraries circulates recorded and braille books to some 700,000 adults and children out of a potential three million eligible population. Magazine subscriptions are provided on a direct-mail basis from the manufacturers. Users must generally deal with service centers in distant cities with communication by mail or phone and little or no personal contact. Everything comes and goes through a mail-order system. Fifty percent of the users are over sixty-four years old, and many depend on the NLS program for their major source of entertainment and connection with the world; 95 percent read recorded materials, 5 percent read braille.

Users are informed about new books, magazines, and services through bimonthly publications, annual catalogs, and subject bibliographies produced by NLS, and through various publications produced and circulated by the regional and subregional libraries.

USER MATERIALS

Contractors who consider submission of a bid to produce books, equipment, or other program products should be cognizant of the consumer-responsive nature of the program, and that the specifications for these products have been developed to meet the special reader needs in the program. Materials are produced with those reader needs foremost in mind, and improved through constant monitoring and consumer input. Contractors are expected to familiarize themselves with the equipment-handling practices of blind and physically handicapped clientele and ensure that the equipment they produce will stand up under this type of use. A high degree of quality workmanship and product reliability is mandated by the product specification.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
1. SCOPE	1
2. APPLICABLE DOCUMENTS	1
3. REQUIREMENTS	1
3.1 <u>Narration Criteria</u>	1
3.1.1 <u>Voice</u>	1
3.1.2 <u>Speech</u>	1
3.1.3 <u>Aesthetic/Interpretative Requirements</u>	2
3.1.4 <u>Casting</u>	2
3.1.5 <u>Accuracy</u>	2
3.2 <u>Announcements</u>	3
3.2.1 <u>Beginning Announcements -- Side One</u>	3
3.2.2 <u>Beginning Announcements for Subsequent Sides</u>	5
3.2.3 <u>Ending Announcements</u>	5
3.2.3.1 <u>Odd Sides</u>	5
3.2.3.2 <u>Even Sides</u>	6
3.2.3.3 <u>Last Side</u>	6
3.3 <u>Recording Level</u>	6
3.4 <u>Program Material Placement</u>	7
3.5 <u>Recording Speed and Timing</u>	7
3.5.1 <u>Flexible-disc Books</u>	7
3.5.2 <u>Rigid-disc Books and C-90 15/16 ips Cassettes</u>	7
3.6 <u>Reissues</u>	7
3.7 <u>Children's Books</u>	7
3.7.1 <u>Announcements</u>	7
3.7.1.1 <u>Beginning Announcements</u>	8
3.7.1.2 <u>Ending Announcements</u>	8
3.8 <u>Foreign Language Books</u>	9
3.8.1 <u>Table of Contents</u>	9
4. QUALITY ASSURANCE REQUIREMENTS	9
4.1 <u>Contractor Inspection</u>	9
4.1.1 <u>Monitor</u>	9
4.1.2 <u>Review</u>	9
4.2 <u>Library of Congress Inspection</u>	9

NLS
Specification #300

5.	BOX LABELING	9
5.1	<u>Box Face</u>	9
5.2	<u>Box Spine</u>	10
5.3	<u>Reels</u>	10
	5.3.1 <u>Reel Labeling</u>	10
5.4	<u>Leader Trailer Requirements</u>	10
6.	NOTES	10

1. SCOPE

This specification describes the minimum acceptable requirements for the narration of print materials during production of original master recordings. It states the requirements for content and placement of program materials, recording level, and timing requirements. The following requirements, susceptible to subjective evaluations, must be fulfilled. NLS may reject any master tape recording which fails to meet the requirements specified herein. Specific artistic points not covered by these specifications are subject to judgement by NLS staff and also can be cause for rejection of a particular title.

2. APPLICABLE DOCUMENTS

Columbia Lippincott Gazetteer of the World
Current Biography
Kenyon and Knott Dictionary of American English Pronunciation
New Century Cyclopedia of Names
The New Columbia Encyclopedia
The Random House Dictionary of the English Language
Webster's Biographical Dictionary
Webster's Geographical Dictionary
Webster's New International Dictionary, Second & Third Editions

Other authoritative documents are acceptable. All documents will be the most recent revision date available.

3. REQUIREMENTS

3.1 Narration Criteria

The narrator shall meet the requirements stated below. These requirements are susceptible to subjective evaluation.

3.1.1 Voice

The narrator's voice, when recorded, must be: (a) clear, firm, and distinct; (b) flexible enough to avoid monotonous or repetitious vocal patterns; (c) free of strain or tension; (d) able to sustain energy over long periods of time; (e) free of any uncontrollable medical or physical conditions; (f) free of impure tonal characteristics (scratchiness, nasalness, raspiness, etc.).

3.1.2 Speech

The narrator's speech shall be: (a) free of excessive regional coloration or accents; (b) free of patterns not associated with correct American English; (c) free of mannerisms that detract from the text; (d) neither too rushed nor too slow for comfortable listening over extended periods of time.

3.1.3 Aesthetic/Interpretative Requirements

The narrator must be attentive to the sense of the book, skillful in securing proper emphasis, and must avoid a stilted, mechanical, monotonous delivery. The emotional content of the voice shall at all time be appropriate to the emotional level of the book. The narrator, by proper use of timing and inflection, must clearly differentiate between narrative and dialogue, and between various characters depicted. If character voices are utilized, each separate vocal characterization must possess the same ease, flow, and vocal range as the normal narrative voice. Character interpretations, dialects, and accents that are strained, unclear, inconsistent, or overplayed shall not be acceptable.

3.1.4 Casting

The narrator selected for each book must possess, as much as possible, the vocal qualities and personality most suited to the content and the intent of the author. The Director, NLS, must be sent written notification and must approve in advance, any solicitation of authors, agency administrators, or well-known individuals for narration of NLS materials.

3.1.5 Accuracy

Narration shall conform to the print edition in its entirety and include bibliographies, appendices and notes. (See Para. 6 Notes). Errors in the print text identified during the recording process shall be corrected, after consultation with the studio recording director and the editor of the book, as appropriate. Special instructions, if required by NLS, will accompany the book upon assignment and shall be returned to NLS with the book and tapes. Quotations from works such as the Bible, historical documents, and poems shall be word perfect.

The following points will be cause for immediate rejection:

- a. Mispronunciations

- b. Changing the original meaning of the text by improper inflection or interpretation.
- c. Failure to satisfactorily follow the text of the print edition.

Proper names and foreign words and phrases shall be pronounced with extreme care and accuracy.

3.1.6 Pronunciation

Pronunciation shall be appropriate to the style and period of the book and to the nature of the characters. For general vocabulary usage, any of the sources listed in paragraph 2 of this specification shall be used as an authoritative source. Specialized reference works (music, law, medicine, British speech, etc.) may be used for specialized requirements. Additional research is required if published sources do not give the needed pronunciations. In case of dispute, final authority rests with the NLS Quality Assurance Section Head.

3.2 Announcements

All titles except children's books (see Section 3.7) shall carry the following recorded announcements in the order stated:

3.2.1 Beginning Announcements -- Side One

The following announcements shall be recorded at the beginning of side one:

- a. "This is a new recording of (book number)". This announcement shall be used, along with the book number provided, only when the statement "rerecord of ___" appears on the Production Authorization Record.
- b. "This book contains up to four (4) sides per cassette." (When the master recording is made to produce a disc, do not use this statement when creating the stamper but retain it on the master tape.)
- c. "Side one"
- d. "(Book number) " Title (Use RC for all FD/RC books. Change designation only on masters used for disc duplication).
- e. Author

- f. "Copyright (date and holder(s))."
- g. "Read by_____." If the annotation contains a sequel note and the assigned narrator differs from the narrator of the previous book in the series, add the following statement: "(previous narrator's name) was unavailable to continue reading of this series."
- h. "This book contains_____ pages on_____sides."
- i. The following announcements are to be used only for cassette and intermaster production:
 - 1. Book with table of contents:

"If you would like to skip over any remaining announcements or introductory material, place your cassette player in fast-forward until a beep is heard. Stop at that point to hear the table of contents, or at the second beep to locate the beginning of the book."

(When the master recording is used to produce a disc, do not use this statement when creating the stamper, but retain it on the master tape.)
 - 2. Book without table of contents:

"If you would like to skip over any remaining announcements or introductory material, place your cassette player in fast-forward until a beep is heard. Stop at that point to hear the beginning of the book."

(When the master recording is used to produce a disc, do not use this statement when creating the stamper, but retain it on the master tape.)
- j. The following statements should be included only by specific instruction.
 - (1) Tone Index:

"This recording is tone indexed. The beginning of each (name of item) will be indicated by a beep audible when your cassette player is in fast-forward or rewind."

If the book is being recorded for use on disc, add the following phrase: "...or when your record player is set at the 33 rpm speed."

When the master recording is used to produce a disk; use the above statement when creating the stamper. Do not retain it on the master tape.

The index tone shall be 50 Hz at -12 VU, five seconds minimum, eight seconds maximum. The tone shall be recorded under the voice within the last ten seconds of the material preceding each indexed section.

(2) Voice Index: cassette recordings only

"This recording is voice indexed. Each (name of term) will be indicated with a spoken index term, followed by a beep, audible only when your cassette player is in fast-forward. To hear an indexed item, press the stop key after you hear the index term, but before you hear the beep."

In fast forward time, the index term shall not end more than three (3) seconds nor less than one (1) second prior to the item being indexed.

The index tone shall be 50 Hz at -12 VU, five seconds minimum, eight seconds maximum. The tone shall be recorded under the voice and begin exactly in time with the indexed item.

- k. "Library of Congress annotation: ..." (To be supplied by NLS.)
- l. "From the book jacket: ..." (Publisher's information about the book, excluding reviews. Information may be given in several locations. Narrator shall read the one most informative selection.)
- m. "About the author..."
- n. "Other books by (author)..."
- o. Dedication, introduction, preface, forward, acknowledgements, table of contents, etc., in the order in which they appear in print book. In table of contents, convert page reference to side numbers.

3.2.2 Beginning Announcements for Subsequent Sides

The following announcements shall be recorded at the beginning of all sides except side one:

- a. "Side ____ (Number) ____"
- b. Title
- c. "By (Author)."
- d. "Continuing on page _____."

(For books which are collections of short works, the narrator should substitute the following: "Continuing with (Title of selection being read) on page ____." The author of the selection being read is not included here).

3.2.3 Ending Announcements

3.2.3.1 Odd Sides

The following announcements shall be recorded at the end of each odd-numbered side; except the last side:

- a. "End of side (1, 3, 5, 7, etc)."
- b. "To continue, turn the cassette over." (When the master recording is made to produce a disc, do not use this statement when creating the stamper but retain it on the master tape).

3.2.3.2 Even Sides

The following announcements shall be recorded at the end of each even-numbered side in the order specified below, except the last side.

- a. All even sides, except last side - "End of side (2, 4, 6, 8, etc.)."
- b. Sides 2, 6, 10, 14, etc. - "To continue, change side selector switch and turn the cassette over." (When the master recording is made to produce a disc, do not use this statement when creating the stamper

but retain it on the master tape).

- c. Sides 4, 8, 12, 16, 20, etc. - "Change side selector switch. This book is continued on the next cassette." (When the master recording is made to produce a disc, do not use this statement when creating the stamper but retain it on the master tape).

3.2.3.3 Last Side

The following announcements shall be recorded on the last side at the end of the text, in the order stated:

- a. "End of ____ (Title) ____ by (Author and spelling of author's name)." e.g. "End of Troubling a Star by Madeleine L'Engle, M-A-D-E-L-E-I-N-E , L-'-E-N-G-L-E "
- b. "Read by _____ in the studios of _____ for the Library of Congress, (Month and Year) ."
- c. "Published by: (publisher's name and address if it appears in the print edition.) Further reproduction or distribution in other than a specialized format is prohibited."
- d. "If you found any cassette in this book to be defective, please place a rubber band or piece of string around that cassette for identification. Place it in the container on top of the front stack of cassettes."

3.3 Recording Level

- a. The recording level shall be uniform on all soundtracks.
- b. The average recording level shall be -3 VU (± 3 VU).
- c. No recording shall reach a level that causes the narration to be distorted.

3.4 Program Material Placement

The soundtracks shall be placed so that the beginning of each side shall coincide with the ending of the previous side. Masters for flexible discs are exempt from this requirement.

3.5 Recording Speed and Timing

All master recordings submitted to NLS for QC review shall be recorded at 3-3/4 ips (inches per second) on two tracks. Flexible discs must be recorded at 3-3/4 ips but are exempt from the two track format.

3.5.1 Flexible-disc Books

The recorded time for each soundtrack shall be 60 minutes +0, up to -1 minute, except the last side. All soundtracks shall be enclosed within a tape length of 1125 feet.

3.5.2 Rigid-disc Books and C-90 15/16 ips Cassettes

The recorded time for each soundtrack shall be 88 minutes +0 up to -1 minute, except the last side. All soundtracks shall be enclosed within a tape length of 1650 feet.

If the use of the final side could have been avoided by conforming to the above timing requirements, the book may be rejected or the cost of the last side charged to the contractor.

3.6 Reissues

Titles reissued from existing tapes shall be edited to conform to the announcement and timing standards specified in this document.

Before the beginning announcement on side one of reissued titles, the following statement shall be read: "This is a reissue of (book number supplied by NLS.)"

3.7 Children's Books

The following specifications apply only to books flagged with the notice ... "Children's Book Format. Announcements as per Section 3.7 of specification #300."

3.7.1 Announcements

All announcements will be as described in Section 3.2 with the exception of the beginning announcements for side one and the ending announcements for the last side.

3.7.1.1 Beginning Announcements

The following announcements shall be recorded at the beginning of side one:

- a. "Side one."
- b. Title
- c. Author
- d. "Copyright (date and holder(s))."
- e. "This book contains _____ pages on ____ sides." If pages are unnumbered, omit any reference to pages and say "This book is on _ ____ side(s).
- f. Table of contents as it appears in text. Convert page references to side numbers.
- g. Dedication, foreword, etc.

3.7.1.2 Ending Announcements

The following announcements shall be recorded on the last side at the end of the text, in the order stated:

- a. "End of ____ (Title) ____ by (Author and spelling of author's name)." e.g. "End of Troubling a Star by Madeleine L'Engle, M-A-D-E-L-E-I-N-E , L-'-E-N-G-L-E "
- b. "About the Author..."
- c. "Other books by (author)..." if given.
- d. "Read by ____ in the studios of ____ for the Library of Congress, ____ (Month) __, (Year)."
- e. "Published by: (publisher's name and address if it appears in the print edition). Further reproduction or distribution in other than a specialized format is prohibited."

- f. "If you found any cassette in this book to be defective, please place a rubber band or piece of string around that cassette for identification. Place it in the container on top of the front stack of cassettes."

3.8 Foreign Language Books

3.8.1 Table of Contents

If the table of contents appears at the end of the print book, it shall be read at the beginning of the recorded book, following items "a" through "n" listed under section 3.2.1 of this Specification but preceding any items (foreword or introduction, for example) listed within the table of contents. If the table of contents is printed at the beginning of the book, it shall be read where it appears.

4. QUALITY ASSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Contractor Inspection

The contractor is responsible for inspection and surveillance of production to ensure that the recorded book complies with all of the requirements specified.

4.1.1 Monitor

The narrator shall be continuously monitored by a second person using another copy of the book to detect errors and control the recording process.

4.1.2 Review

Each master tape shall be proofread in its entirety by a third person. Errors, overdubs, and improper erasures shall be corrected.

4.2 Library of Congress Inspection

The NLS reserves the right to inspect each original master tape for compliance with the specified requirements, and also reserves the right to reject any master tape that fails to meet these requirements. Each master tape shall be forwarded to NLS for inspection for specification compliance and/or narration approval.

5. BOX LABELING

Strict attention should be given to the assigned wording. Any announcements or program material not specified are prohibited.

5.1 Box Face

Each individual master reel box shall have a red label overlay. If an additional copy of the master is requested by NLS, a white label overlay shall be placed on it. The overlay shall be printed in black with the following legend: "This is an 88 minute, pre-recorded, two-track master for four-side cassette duplication. Speed 3-3/4 ips."

5.2 Box Spine

The box spine shall have a white, pressure-sensitive label stating the following information, in the order given:

- a. Book number
- b. Title
- c. Author/s (last names)
- d. Number of reels in the book (1 of 3, 2 of 3, etc.)
- e. Contractor symbol
e.g. RC 33131 Clocks for the Ages
 Silverberg 1 of 3 AFB

5.3 Reels

Each individual master reel shall be red or identified with a red dot. The reel shall be a first line product. If an additional copy of the master is requested by NLS, the copy reel or identifying dot shall be white.

5.3.1 Reel Labeling

Each individual master or copy reel shall have a white, pressure sensitive label stating the following information:

- a. Title (abbreviated if necessary)
- b. Author's last name
- c. Number of reels in the book (1 of 3, 2 of 3, etc.)

5.4 Leader Trailer Requirements

Each open-reel tape master and copy shall have a 72-inch white polyester leader and a 72-inch red polyester trailer. Leader and trailer measurement shall not be inclusive of the tape measurements of 1650 feet.

6. NOTES

6.1 Unless otherwise instructed by NLS, studios may omit:

1. Material that labels, credits or lists a visual item or is a repetition of text material.
2. Source notes.
3. Index and index references

Illustrations, captions or charts not immediately necessary for clarity, may be gathered at the end of a chapter or end of the book as appropriate to the style of the text.

Any relocation of material must be accompanied by the following narrator's note to be placed following the beginning of the book tone:

"Reader's note: (name of material) located throughout the book have been gathered at (appropriate location)."

- 6.2 When notes are being read within the text, they shall be read as near as possible to the point where they occur, but always at the end of a sentence or in such a manner as not to interrupt the flow of the text. They shall be set apart from the text by the notation, "footnote...end of footnote," or, "footnote...return to text." ("Note" shall be used instead of "footnote" if more appropriate).
- 6.3 When notes are to be read as a group at the end of each chapter, the narrator shall so inform the reader at the point where the first note number occurs in the book

saying, "Note 1. (Reader's note: All notes will be found at the end of the chapter in which they appear. End of note)." Thereafter, only the note numbers shall be read within the text. The notes themselves shall be introduced at the end of the chapter by saying "Notes for _____," if no other heading exists.

- 6.4 When notes are to be read as a group at the end of the book, the narrator shall so inform the reader at the point where the first note number occurs in the book, saying, "Note 1. (Reader's note: All notes will be found at the end of the book. End of note)." Thereafter, only note numbers shall be read within the text. The notes themselves shall be introduced at the end of the book by saying "Notes," if no other heading exists.
- 6.5 When footnote numbering begins anew with each page, the narrator shall omit the numbers when reading the footnotes.
- 6.6 If reference notes are omitted by instruction of NLS, each explanatory note found among them shall be read (without note number) at its appropriate place in the text. Explanatory notes are those which primarily expand on information given in the text, rather than explaining where or how the information was obtained. Each explanatory note shall be read in its entirety, including any source material in it.
- 6.7 When reference notes are omitted by instruction of NLS, the narrator shall so inform the reader at the end of the table of contents.
- a. For books in which the notes are grouped together, either at ends of chapters or at the end of the book:
- "The (total number of pages of notes) pages of reference notes found in the print edition are not included in this recording." If appropriate, add the following: "Explanatory notes have been retained."
- b. For books in which the number of pages of notes cannot be determined:
- "The reference notes found in the print edition are not included in this recording." If appropriate, add the following: "Explanatory notes have been retained."