

Talking Book Voices Podcast Transcript: Episode 2

NARRATOR:

Welcome to Talking Book Voices, the podcast. Get ready to embark on an adventure with us as we dive into and celebrate the magic of the Texas Talking Book Program. Let's raise our voices together and make the world of literature accessible to all. The Texas Talking Book Program is a division of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, and it serves as a regional library for the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled, a division of the Library of Congress. The Talking Book Program provides specialized library services to individuals who have qualifying visual, physical, or reading disabilities, such as dyslexia.

In each episode of Talking Book Voices, we will delve into the heart of this program, uncovering its history, sharing inspiring stories, and exploring the vast collection of materials it has to offer. We will bring you the latest updates, interviews with program experts and patrons, and useful tips to make the most of this invaluable program for Texans and beyond.

So, whether you're an avid reader, someone with a print disability seeking accessible materials, or just curious to learn more about this great program, this podcast is made for you!

Don't forget to visit us at www.texastalkingbooks.org for more information. So, let's begin Texas Talking Book Voices, a podcast by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

JACLYN:

Hi and welcome to this episode of the Talking Book Voices podcast.

My name is Jaclyn Owusu, and I am the public awareness coordinator for the Talking Book Program. And joining me here today is Dina, the Talking Book Program Disability, and Information Referral Center Coordinator.

Hi Dina! Thank you for joining today. Tell me a little bit about yourself. How did you come to be in this position at TSLAC? What is your background?

DINA:

Hello everyone. Hello Jaclyn.

Thank you for having me on today. I came to Austin in 1993 to attend library school, and I never left. I worked at the University of Texas in a paraprofessional position for two and a half years after graduation, and then I was exceedingly fortunate to find this position through the library school employment listserv. On August 23rd I will have been the DIRC coordinator for 24 years. My undergraduate degree is in education because I originally planned to be a school librarian.

JACLYN:

Oh nice. Somehow, I did not realize that you have been with the agency that long and also happy early almost anniversary date for your position. So, can tell me what is the DIRC? But hold on, let me not use acronyms. What is the Disability and Information Referral Center?

DINA:

Okay, the Disability Information and Referral Center of the Talking Book Program houses information and materials on types of disabilities and health conditions, as well as related organizations, publications, products, and technology.

This is a free reference service provided for anyone with a disability-related question. You do not have to be a member of the Talking Book Program in order to use the services provided by the DIRC.

JACLYN:

Nice, so, these are not just resources for people with visual disabilities? But what type of disabilities do you provide information and services for?

DINA:

I always say that if it's a disability or health-related question, I can help. I am not an ADA Coordinator, and I am not a lawyer, a doctor, or a Medicare or Social Security expert. What I do is provide contacts, information, and resources for people about a disability or health-related topic. A few years ago, I received a CHIS which stands for Consumer Health Information Specialist certification from the National Library of Medicine. People can think of me as their personal google. I do the research and give you the information you need to learn about a medical condition or contact agencies and organizations related to that condition.

JACLYN:

Nice, that sounds like such a great tool and such a resource for Texans. The Talking Book Program's Disability Information and Referral Center is available to assist people who have questions pertaining to disabilities. So, what are some new or interesting assistive technologies out there that you're really excited want to share with us?

DINA:

There is so much out there, and it's constantly changing! Free and lower cost technology, and also technology for people with disabilities that is available on devices that everyone uses, like cell phones, tablets, and smart watches, are trends that I think are very important. One cool thing I'll mention is the newish field of virtual assistants. There are two kinds, virtual assistants such as Amazon Alexa, smart devices that can help with answering questions, setting reminders, and even controlling things like the temperature and lighting in your home, all using just your voice. Then there are virtual assistant apps for people with vision loss. Be My Eyes and Aira are two of these. You download the app, and then a person can remotely tap into the

camera on your smartphone to help locate missing items, help you read something, or provide sighted guidance if you are in an unfamiliar public place. Amazing what technology can do!

JACLYN:

That is kind of amazing and I work with you, so it is always interesting to find out some of the new assistive technology that is out there. So, what would you say to someone who wants to reach out but is nervous to share about their disability with someone they don't know?

DINA:

So, Disclosure about a disability or health condition is a personal decision. But know that if you call the DIRC, information is kept confidential. The call center only asks for your name to determine if you are a patron of the program before you are transferred to me.

JACLYN:

Okay, so can I get in touch with the DIRC for somebody else, like my child or parent or friend, or does it have to be just for me?

DINA:

Absolutely! Anyone can contact me for disability and health-related information. I provide information and resources at the national, state, and local level. I have had adult children who live out of state contact me on behalf of their parents living in Texas. So you can call if you live outside of Texas for someone who is living in Texas. I also have information on subjects related to health and disability, such as caregiving, avoiding social isolation, general well-being, and things like that.

JACLYN:

Nice. Do you loan out any books about disability or assistive technology through the DIRC? And how do I get them if I don't live in Austin?

DINA:

Yes. The DIRC has a small collection of books and some DVDs on health-related topics. Books are available on loan for a period of five weeks, and DVDs for three weeks. Borrowers are responsible for the return postage by fourth class mail. We don't loan assistive technology, but I know an organization that does, so contact me if you need that information.

JACLYN:

So, let's say that I live in Dallas? I am new to the disability world in regard to my vision and mobility. And I am looking for resources. Can you provide specific resources for a city or agency?

DINA:

Yes, I currently have city lists for Austin, Corpus Christi, Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston, Longview, San Antonio, and Tyler. Some organizations provide state-wide programs, either in person or virtually. For example, iBug in Houston offers iOS and Android device training at both in-person events in the Houston area, virtual events through online platforms such as Zoom, and recordings of their trainings if you can't attend at the scheduled time.

JACLYN:

Very nice, So, what is the most requested resource that you are able to provide from the DIRC? So, I get a lot of calls from people who have recently lost their vision or are still adjusting to vision loss. I have a fact sheet specifically for older Texans with vision loss that has information about state agencies and organizations, other programs they would qualify for, technology vendors, other sources for books in alternative formats, and more. I also have a similar fact sheet for young adults and children with vision loss.

JACLYN:

I love that you help provide a wealth of information for people. I guess that is why you are a librarian and the source of information, so to speak. What are some of the things that the DIRC does not do, for example if someone calls and asks if maybe they qualify for Social Security? Is that something you can tell me?

DINA:

Right, I can't tell you if you qualify for programs, but I can give you phone numbers for agencies such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, etc. I also can't help you find a doctor or deal with insurance problems. I can't provide technical support for your equipment, but if you can tell me what it is and how you got it, I can probably give you contact information for the manufacturer or distributor, as well as the state agency that provided it, if applicable.

JACLYN:

Awesome. So, how do I get in touch with you at the DIRC.?

DINA:

Calls for the DIRC route through the call center for the Talking Book Program. Once again, you don't have a member of the program. In Texas, you can call the toll-free number: 1-800-252-9605. If you have an out of state number or you live in the Austin area, call 512-463-5458. You can also send an e-mail to [tbp.services@tsl.texas \(spelled out\).gov](mailto:tbp.services@tsl.texas (spelled out).gov), and it will get forwarded to me. Our web site is www.TexasTalkingBooks.org

JACLYN:

Thank you, Dina. Do you have any final words you would like to share.

DINA:

Get in touch if you need information. I'm here and happy to help. Thank you so much Jaclyn.

JACLYN:

Thank you, Dina. Do you have any final words you would like to share.

JACLYN:

For more information about the Talking Book Program visit our website at www.texastalkingbooks.org.org or give us a call toll-free at 1-800-252-9605. And if you are interested in more information and services at the Texas State Library and Archives Commission visit us at www.tsl.texas.gov.

Well, that's it. Let's say bye.

DINA:

Bye!

JACLYN:

Bye!