AT HOME

- We are pleased to announce the recording of *Rockers*, a play by television luminary Sherwood Schwartz, for the Dr. Sylvia N. and Harold Friedman Audio Cultural Series. As one of JBI’s most popular offerings, the Cultural Series brings the best drama, music and lectures of Jewish interest to subscribers each month. Mr. Schwartz’s illustrious Hollywood career began in 1939 on *The Bob Hope Show*, though he may be best known as the creator of television favorites *Gilligan’s Island* and *The Brady Bunch. Rockers*, which is set on the porch of a retirement home, is a comic look at the interrelationship of three ladies — one Jewish, one Irish and one Southern belle — that is sure to bring pleasure and entertainment to our listeners.

- JBI continues to produce customized Braille at record speeds. For example, when William Gross’ mother passed away last November, he needed to have a Braille prayer book prepared immediately. Within hours, Pearl Lam, Director of Library Operations, and Arlene Arfe, one of JBI’s librarians, delivered the customized prayer books he needed so that he could lead services and say Kaddish. “As a subscriber since childhood, I have been associated with JBI for a long time. But even I was very impressed with the library’s rapid response. My family and I were very grateful,” said Mr. Gross. This is but one example of how JBI’s individualized services impact the lives of each and every subscriber.

- Ellen Wertheim, JBI’s Director of Outreach, introducing new subscribers to the JBI Library.

ABROAD

- The Dan and Gloria Schusterman Charitable Foundation has generously supported the expansion of JBI’s Mobile Screening Unit in Tel Aviv/Yafo, increasing the number of visits made to senior centers and sheltered housing for the elderly. The Mobile Screening Service was designed to bring professional eye care to home-bound and needy seniors who cannot, on their own, visit the JBI Low Vision Clinic at Sourasky Medical Center (Ichilov Hospital) for diagnosis and treatment.
need more complicated interventions. The JBI Mobile Screening Unit can make all the difference between an independent, enriched life, and living in isolation and loneliness.

- The David Berg Foundation is assisting JBI in a new program that serves visually impaired, blind and reading disabled English-speaking residents of Israel. (It is estimated that these number between 10,000 and 15,000.) We are actively reaching out to those older adults who might not know about JBI’s free library of Talking Books and Large Print materials. The JBI-AACI (Association of Americans & Canadians in Israel) Library, based in Jerusalem, functions as both a walk-in library for visually impaired subscribers who live in the Jerusalem area and as an integral part of JBI’s international direct service library that circulates materials to individuals worldwide.

- JBI’s Talking Books collection, which now numbers 13,000 titles, is expanding rapidly in response to ever-growing subscriber demand. The JBI Library includes foreign language recordings that truly enable us to serve all “the People of the Book.” For example, elderly Russian Jews who have relocated to Germany benefit from Large Print materials and Talking Books from JBI’s Russian Library, while Hungarian speakers in Slovakia and in Romania enjoy Hungarian Talking Books.

- JBI’s first Hebrew/Spanish Large Print Haggadot arrived in Chile, Argentina, Guatemala, Mexico, Columbia, Peru and Uruguay in time for Passover. (See JBI Introduces Spanish Language Recordings, page 1, for more information about our Spanish program.)

![A Visionary Legacy](image)

Marty Witkin grew up in Chicago during the Depression and later moved to California where he opened a small hardware store in San Fernando. As his store grew, Mr. Witkin prospered. During the late 1990’s, he and his dear friend, Michael Waterman, would sit together and talk about estate planning while discussing ethics and values. Together, they crafted a list of organizations that Mr. Witkin envisioned helping in a meaningful way. We were grateful to learn that this list included JBI. According to Mr. Waterman, "the selection of organizations for Mrs. Witkin was the result of her desire to create a legacy that celebrates and perpetuates the American dream for all Americans, including those who are visually impaired. She wanted to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to succeed and thrive, just as she did in her own life.”

Marty Witkin, whose planned gift to JBI will benefit over 30,000 visually impaired people.

![Streamlining JBI for the 21st Century](image)

Responding to the needs of the visually impaired and blind has always required that JBI make the best use of whatever technology is available — from the earliest Perkins Brailers to the provision of downloadable Hebrew texts in Braille on the Internet; from recordings made available to the blind on flexible disks in the 1950s to the digital wav files of the 21st century.

Today, the use of synthesized voice software brings Internet-based texts to many thousands of visually impaired and blind “readers,” and scanning creates new digital masters from long inaccessible books. Multiple copies of Braille can now be directly embossed from these digital masters rather than copied by means of the labor intensiveThemafomprocess.

After a year-long process of preparation and testing, JBI’s recording studios are fully digitized, and state of the art computer hardware — and software — have replaced the old reel to reel system. Our dedicated volunteer narrators and directors have harmoni
to Mr. Waterman, “Marty believed deeply in the Jewish concept of ‘Tikkun Olam,’ that each one of us has the obligation to ‘repair the world.’ He felt that [generously supporting JBI] was one way to pursue that goal.” Mr. Witkin is survived by his wife and two children. We hope they take pride in knowing that his legacy enriches the lives of over 30,000 blind and visually impaired individuals worldwide. 

**Become A Member of JBI’s Tikvah Society**

Membership in *The Tikvah Society* is open to anyone who makes a gift by will or enters into a life income arrangement (insurance policy, trust, IRA or gift annuity) with JBI. With their thoughtfulness and planning, such individuals help to ensure a bright future for the vision impaired and blind worldwide.

For more information or to become a member of *The Tikvah Society*, please visit our web site at [www.jbilibrary.org](http://www.jbilibrary.org) or contact Beth Rudich at 1-800-433-1531.

Even easier to use than the old one. In the not so distant future, the tape cassettes themselves, which JBI distributes to its subscribers, will be replaced by a digital cartridge the size of a credit card.
Letters of Thanks to JBI

A note received by Pearl Lam, Director of Library Operations, from a JBI subscriber in far away Bryansk, Russia —

Dear Pearl,

This is Yakov G. from Russia. (My daughter helped me contact you regarding audio books from your library.) Some time ago I received 10 audio books from Moscow. I really appreciate your help in this matter. Not everybody understands what an avid reader experiences when he suddenly becomes visually impaired. JBI is doing a great job helping people like me. I discovered audio books not long ago at a Jewish charitable organization. Within a few months, I had finished “reading” the limited number of books they had. Thanks to you I see new perspectives. You helped me improve my life quality. Bless you!

Very truly yours,
Yakov G.

And a note received by Meryl Miller,
Local Outreach Coordinator, from a new JBI subscriber in Tamarac, Florida —

Dear Ms. Miller,

I have attended “Low Vision” sessions for a little over a year. All of the programs were informative and worthwhile, but none so profitable and helpful to me as the one you conducted.

Reading had become a chore for me because of my macular degeneration. You may not recall my speaking of my problem to you, but our conversation is one I shall not forget. Your patience and concern filled me with hope in solving my problem. It goes without saying that my anticipation of receiving help was unbounded.

About two weeks ago, I received a package containing the “talking books machine”; included with it was a catalogue, order forms, training tape on using the machine, etc. I was amazed at the topics listed and the great number of selections offered in each topic.

Your help is greatly appreciated. Now I am on the road to great pleasure, contentment, ideas and entertainment. Thank you,

Sincerely,
The Chairman’s View (continued from page 1)

the Bronx! The growth in readership mandates a growth in production, and the growth in production, of course, requires more space. Our circulating library (which now numbers 13,000 titles) needs the best possible physical infrastructure in order to fulfill clients’ requests quickly and accurately.

Therefore, JBI has embarked upon a modest but much needed renovation. It will include a two-story addition at the back of the building to house a dedicated archival and storage center — what would be called the “stacks” in a traditional library. Changes will include more recording booths, quality control stations and duplicating equipment. We also plan to enlarge the lounge and reference library used by the hundreds of wonderful volunteers who make their way to our studios every week.

JBI is the fortunate recipient of a $1,000,000 capital grant from the Council of the City of New York and a $500,000 Challenge Grant from the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation. A gift from the LeRoy Moses Trust also has helped move us toward the required sum of $3.25 million to carry out the renovation. In the near future, JBI’s supporters will be asked to help us meet the Weinberg Foundation’s Challenge Grant so that, before much more time goes by, JBI will be poised to meet whatever new challenges the 21st century poses.

As it has for the past 74 years, JBI will continue to do everything in its power to meet the Jewish cultural needs of the visually impaired, blind and dyslexic members of our local and global community.

JBI Introduces Spanish Language Recordings (continued from page 1)

English and Hebrew-Russian. The first printing of the Haggadah was distributed to all interested communities in time for this year’s Seder.

JBI's Spanish collection is being built by a new cadre of studio volunteers — some narrating, some directing — all native Spanish speakers drawn from a variety of Spanish-language communities in New York. Many were introduced to JBI through volunteer Dorrin Lemesh, who leads a group called Judios Latinos. JBI is proud of its 200 studio volunteers who loyally and enthusiastically enrich the lives of our blind and visually impaired readers. To become a volunteer, callLisa Kirsch at 212-889-2525, ext. 300.

The Barbara and Stephen Friedman Talking Books Library of 13,000 titles serves over 30,000 people worldwide. In addition to Spanish, the JBI Library offers Talking Books in English, Russian, Yiddish, Hebrew, Hungarian, Romanian and Polish. Remember — if you know someone who could benefit from JBI's free library service — Talking Books, Large Print and, of course, Braille — call
The Chairman’s View by Judy E. Tenney

I have been serving as Chairman of the Board of JBI for six months and I am delighted to report to you that JBI is moving vigorously to address the challenge of serving the visually impaired and blind in the 21st century.

While the physical dimensions of a Talking Book may diminish (as discussed in the article Streamlining JBI for the 21st Century, page 3), the size of JBI’s Talking Books Collection is growing dramatically and JBI’s constituency is multiplying exponentially. People are living longer. That, too, is part of our new world. But, unfortunately, age-related vision disease often accompanies increased longevity.

Today, we serve many thousands around the world from the same crowded, double brownstone on East 30th Street in Manhattan that has housed the JBI Library for the past 40 years. It’s hard to believe that JBI once functioned from a small apartment in (continued on page 6)

Mission Statement

JBI International (established as The Jewish Braille Institute) seeks the integration of Jews who are blind, visually impaired and reading disabled into the Jewish community and society in general. We assist those whom we see to relate to the religious, educational, cultural and communal life of the Jewish people. Our scope is international and we serve those of all ages and backgrounds.

JBI Introduces Spanish Language Recordings

JBI launched its new Spanish-language recording program with Mas Alla Del 11 Del Septiembre: La Superacion Del Trauma by Dr. Luis Rojas Marcos, Professor of Psychiatry at NYU and former President of the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation. Dr. Marcos recorded the book especially for JBI’s “readers” in our recording studios. It tells an extraordinary story about his personal experiences in the World Trade Center on 9/11. The book, which was written in Spanish (Dr. Marcos is a native of Seville), has not yet been translated into English.

JBI initiated its Spanish-language program in response to requests from the Spanish-

and from fourteen Jewish communities across Latin America.

The second Spanish book recorded by JBI, Asalto al Paraíso, by Marcos Aquinis is thematically related to Dr. Marcos’ work. This novel is based on the March 1992 suicide bombing that destroyed the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

In progress are other books on a wide variety of subjects. Additionally, JBI has completed a Large Print Hebrew-Spanish Haggadah (with the help of Profesora Dora Isacharoff, a native of Buenos Aires), which will complement those already available in Hebrew.