Program Update – June 2011

As the number of visually impaired individuals continues to rise due to the prevalence of age-related vision loss, JBI is busier than ever before in its eighty year history. Because your interest and support are essential to all that we achieve here on a daily basis, we want to take this opportunity to share with you just a few of the exciting things that are happening at JBI.

- **Braille Materials for Children** - With JBI’s assistance, blind and visually impaired children are rejoicing in the pleasure of summer reading. As one 9-year-old JBI library patron’s mother just wrote, “When I told Yael on the phone that the Braille story books had arrived, Yael said ‘please bring them with you when you pick me up from school so I can start to read immediately’—she was so excited.” We are now preparing for this year’s deluge of requests for Braille and Large Print textbooks needed for the upcoming school year.

- **Sisters Recapture the Joy of Reading** - Annette C., 93, of Hollywood, FL believed her reading days to be over when she developed macular degeneration. Then, last year, she saw an ad for JBI’s Large Print Haggadah prior to Passover. Just a short time later, Annette received her own copy. Then, a few weeks after that very special Passover, she received a call from our librarian who told her that she could get JBI Large Print books throughout the year as well. All she needed to do was request titles and they would be delivered—free—right to her door. That day, she ordered eight books. Since then, she has been receiving Large Print books on a regular basis. JBI’s Large Print is larger and clearer than that available in libraries and bookstores. Being able to read again was a gift she
never expected. Annette was so thrilled with her experience with JBI that she introduced her younger sister, Hilda, 90 and also visually impaired, to JBI. Hilda is now also an avid user of JBI’s Large Print library collection. Annette says that “JBI has had a tremendous impact on me and my sister—all because of one newspaper ad.”

- **THE SHIFT TO DIGITAL TALKING BOOKS** - Today, The JBI Library is faced with a very pressing programmatic need involving digital technology. An “Affiliated Library” of the Library of Congress’ National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS), JBI follows NLS protocols and JBI’s visually impaired patrons utilize free specialized playback machines provided by NLS. Last year, NLS began a complete platform shift by distributing new digital playback machines to patrons that can only be used with Digital Talking Books (DTBs), replacing the analog players that have been in use for 20+ years. This shift is happening rapidly, and JBI is already faced with great demand from its clients for DTBs. In order to ensure access to the broad scope of JBI’s vast Talking Books Library, JBI is working to create DTBs as fast as possible from its retrospective collection of 13,000 titles. In the past 6 months, we introduced the first 240 DTBs into circulation to begin addressing this challenge. Feedback from our library users has been overwhelmingly positive. The machines are a marked improvement over the analog players and JBI is committed to meeting this challenge.

- **LATIN AMERICA UPDATE** – JBI’s Spanish Program Coordinator, Cynthia Gurfinkle, based in Buenos Aires, reports that word about our services is spreading all over the Spanish-speaking Jewish world. In the last month, she received requests for JBI’s Spanish Audio Books from visually impaired individuals in Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Uruguay, Ecuador—and even from Holland! Of course, JBI’s Spanish/Hebrew Large Print Haggadot made participation in Seders possible for so many visually impaired elderly. Grisel Schon of the Jewish Hungarian Community of Uruguay writes, “Our members are so appreciative of the Pesaj Hagaddah they received so generously from JBI. Such valuable acts are priceless.”