

From the Pen of the Editor

January 4th 2009 marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of Louis Braille. Braille became blind in one eye at the age of four while working at his father's shop. Braille was sent to the Royal Institute for the Blind in Paris for his studies. In 1821 an officer in the French Army, Charles Barbier, shared with Braille a secret "night writing" code system the army had devised for communicating in the dark at night without speaking. It was this series of raised dots that Braille at the age of fifteen in 1824, that he turned into the now famous system of writing and reading. Braille taught his system at the Institute until his death from tuberculosis at the age of forty-three in 1852.

The North Carolina Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NCLBPH) circulates materials for individuals who cannot use regular printed materials. Their materials are in large print, Braille and audio formats and are available at no cost. The Library publishes a newsletter *Tar Heel Talk* which can be viewed here: <http://statelibrary.dcr.state.nc.us/lbph/THT.HTM#COM> (*Tar Heel Talk* is available on Braille and cassette). This fall the Library will, a little earlier than the Braille anniversary celebration, celebrate their 50th birthday. NCLBPH was founded in September 1958 by the Sir Walter Lions Club of Raleigh with the help of the Raleigh Host Lions Club and the NC Lions Association for the Blind. The following year the library operation was taken over by the State Library and by 1960 had six employees and 28,000 books loaned to 1,000 patrons. The staff now numbers thirty and the library circulates a half million books to over 28,000 patrons. So much individual mail is handled that NCLBPH has its own zip code.

North Carolina Libraries congratulates both the NCLBPH and Louis Braille on their anniversaries! Countless North Carolina citizens no doubt appreciate the many hours of reading enjoyment that can be directly attributed to the work of Louis Braille and NCLBPH.

Letters to the editor should be addressed to the editor and sent to Joyner Library, East Fifth Street, Greenville, NC 27858, or by electronic mail (scottr@ecu.edu). We reserve the right to edit all submissions. If you are interested in writing for *North Carolina Libraries* or would like consideration for news and product information, please send brief information to the editor at the above address.

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