

LBPH Assumptions v. Facts

The Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (LBPH) is a unique aspect of the State Library's mandate; the inner workings of this long-standing federal-state partnership often cause confusion for both patron and supporters alike. Below is a comparison of recent assumptions made about the service, followed by the facts of its operation. *See the LBPH Budget Comparison document for the financial facts.*

*Assumption: **LBPH is closed or was at risk of closing.***

*Facts: LBPH is a unique federal-state partnership that provides reading materials to patrons by mail order and digital download. **It remains fully operational and was never at risk of closing.*** (The LBPH building, like all state facilities, did close briefly at the start of the pandemic but patrons were still able to download materials directly to their devices. LBPH was able to resume normal activities more quickly than most due to its service model and provided full service not only to its patrons but those in New Jersey, whose own library remained closed.)

*Assumption: **LBPH is understaffed, and patrons are not receiving full services due to staff shortages.***

*Facts: **LBPH is fully, adequately staffed.*** While it no longer employs the same number of staff it used to, the shift in technology and the way materials are delivered to patrons requires far fewer staff, many of whom used to focus on the physical processing of items now delivered electronically.

*Assumption: **Patrons are unhappy with LBPH services.***

*Facts: According to a recent patron survey, 98% of our patrons rated overall quality of service as adequate or above, with 89.9% of patrons rating service as good or excellent. **Less than 2% of patrons rate the service poor.*** We value the opinions of all our patrons, but **an entire service should not be altered to suit an extremely small, vocal minority.**

*Assumption: **There is a high demand/unmet need for Braille materials.***

*Facts: **Demand for print Braille materials is in steep decline, in Connecticut and beyond.*** At present, 17 people in Connecticut are registered to receive print Braille materials (down from 33 in 2014); in an average month, 6-8 people (0.32% of our users) request print Braille materials for mail order delivery. Braille materials are also available via digital download. **LBPH patrons have access to more than 70,000 Braille items in print and digital format; patron usage of these materials accounts for less than 0.76% of our monthly service.**

*Assumption: **The State Library has gotten rid of items patrons were using.***

*Facts: Our federal partner (NLS) buys and maintains the LBPH collection. In 2019, NLS implemented a national recall for many older materials that were in a format no longer supported by NLS. Thanks to Duplication-on-Demand technology, patrons now have access to the entire NLS talking book catalog and the waitlist for popular titles has been eliminated. **Items are available via instant download to playback devices and equipment that can deliver, via USPS, literally tenfold what it could in the past.***

*Assumption: **LBPH had a browsing library, and it was taken away.***

*Facts: **LBPH has operated since its inception (1968) as a mail order, delivery-on-demand service.*** Unlike traditional print books, the physical aspect of these materials has changed over time as technology advanced. For example, books would be added to specialized cartridges and sent to a patron; upon return, that cartridge would be wiped and used for a new request of a different book. **There was no standing collection to browse.** Staff operate the equipment necessary to process materials and deliver them to patrons, either by mail or download.