Reading Remains Fundamental with the Help of NFB-Newsline - AccessWorld® - February 2016

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While it may be true that newspapers are rapidly losing readership, these publications still hold a great deal of value, especially in small towns where

the only news source is the local daily or weekly. The

New York Times, Washington Post, USA Today, and other national and international news sources are also essential tools for keeping up with current affairs

and trends. The good news is that having a visual impairment doesn't mean you can't read your favorite publications--and you don't even need a computer

to do so!

While you're at it, you can check out the latest local forecast and weather alerts, consult your TV listings, and even search for a great new job. It's

all made possible by the National Federation of the Blind's free service, NFB-Newsline. Here's how it works (even if you're an NFB-Newsline subscriber,

you may want to read on for a new development in the iOS mobile app).

Getting Started with NFB-Newsline

NFB-Newsline is available to anyone who is unable to read printed newspapers because of vision loss. The service is sponsored by state chapters of the

NFB, and currently it's available free to qualified residents of every state except North and South Dakota, Wyoming, and Alaska.

There are three ways to sign up for NFB-Newsline:

list of 3 items

• Contact your regional Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

• Call the National Federation of the Blind directly, toll-free at 866-504-7300 to request an application.

• Download an application or complete an application online at the NFB-Newsline homepage.

list end

After your registration has been processed, you'll receive a letter containing your activation code and instructions on how to set up your account. Once

you've completed the account setup, you can access over 400

publications

, including local, regional, national, and international newspapers, magazines, and breaking news channels such as CNN and ESPN Online. Read all you want

for free; the number of publications you access is limited only by the number of hours in the day you have to read them.

Subscribers also have access to local weather conditions and forecast, a jobs hotline, and a daily TV schedule, with program names, times, and channels

customized to your local over-the-air availability or location and cable/satellite provider.

Accessing and Reading NFB-Newsline Content

There are many ways to access and read newspapers, magazines, and other print content using NFB-Newsline.

Over Your Phone

NFB-Newsline offers a toll-free call-in number, 888-882-1629, as well as a direct toll number, 646-600-6969, to call to hear the news read aloud. There's

also a

search page where you can enter your phone number and retrieve a local call-in number, where available.

Add this number to your speed dial, and be sure to use a local number, whenever possible, to help conserve program funds. Note: If you are using a mobile

phone, remember, access charges may apply. If you plan to do a lot of listening on the go, consider upgrading to an unlimited calling plan.

The NFB-Newsline call-in lines use synthesized speech to announce menu choices and to read content. The default voice is extremely clear and easy to understand.

There are also volume, pitch, and speed controls you can adjust to your liking and save in your account preferences.

At the beginning of your first call you will be asked to enter both your six-digit account number and four-digit Personal Identification Number (PIN).

Subsequent calls from the same number only require that you confirm that you are the caller.

After you sign in, you are presented a series of numbered options. Press the appropriate digit on your phone's dial pad to make your choices, search for

magazines and newspapers and have various articles read aloud, create a favorite publications list for quick access, check local weather, browse local

TV schedules, and see what's on sale at your local Target store. NFB-Newsline can also help you find employment. Enter your Zip code and desired search

radius and you can review mainstream job postings being advertised in your area. And if you don't catch every word of an article or job listing the first

time, fear not. At any time you can have the material reread, or have a text copy sent to your registered e-mail address.

On Your Computer

As mentioned above, you can have individual articles sent to your e-mail inbox. You can also subscribe to various publications and have new issues e-mailed

to you automatically first thing every morning so you can enjoy them with your morning cup of coffee. Alternatively, simply log onto

NFB-Newsline Online

. You can access the same content at any time using your Web browser paired with your favorite screen access software.

On Your Portable Player

If you have a National Library Service Digital Talking Book (NLS DTB) player, you can install a small downloader application

 onto your PC. Downloaded publications will be converted from text to audio, DAISY III audio files, which you can then copy to a standard USB flash drive

or special, writeable NLS cartridge. You can listen to these files using either the Standard or

Advanced model

 of player. However only the Advanced model allows you to jump instantly among newspaper sections and individual articles so you can skip around and read

just what you want.

Various notetakers and third-party DAISY audio players can also download and play NFB-Newsline content. Two of the most popular players are the Victor

Reader Stream from HumanWare and the Book Port Plus

 from the American Printing House for the Blind. Each of these players is small enough to fit inside a purse or pocket, so it's easy to take your reading

with you anywhere. Click either of the device names above to learn more.

On Your Mobile Device

If you have a smartphone or tablet, you don't even need a portable DAISY player to access Newsline content on the go. Simply point your smartphone's browser

to

NFBNewslineOnline.org

 and access your favorite content using Talkback for Android or VoiceOver for iOS. Even more convenient: set up e-mail subscriptions to your favorite periodicals

and use your device's e-mail app to read them.

Apple iPhone and iPad users have an exciting, additional option: you can get quick, one-stop access to your NFB-Newsline account by downloading and installing

the

NFB-Newsline app

, available free from the iOS App Store. The app is completely accessible using VoiceOver. Just make sure the "Navigate by Headings" option is enabled

on your VoiceOver rotor, as this is the element used to skip ahead or back from article to article. (Note: to learn more about this feature and other VoiceOver

commands, check out the AFB Technology Guide: Cell Phones, Tablets, and Other Mobile Technology for Users with Visual Impairments

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The NFB-Newsline app offers the same publication options as the call-in number and website. You can browse for your hometown newspaper or other publication,

then access the latest issue, or add it to your favorites list. This way, the next time you open the app you can access your daily must-reads even quicker.

Do you have a specific topic you'd like to read about in depth? The latest app version, 2.1, includes a Global Search feature, located in the Publications/Settings

menu. There, you can create and edit global searches by entering search words or phrases. Select if you want to search newspapers, magazines, or channels,

and whether you wish to conduct your search on the complete Newsline library, or limit your search to your list of favorites. Lastly, you can specify the

time range: today's issue, the previous issue, major issues, and all issues. What's being said about your hometown team across the country? Use the NFB-Newsline

mobile app to find out.

TV listings are also available on the app. Configure the list with your favorite channels for a shorter and easier to navigate program name/time/channel

grid.

The last mobile app feature we'll discuss here is local weather. Double tap the Weather icon and you'll be offered information useful to the blind and

which is not usually included in a weather report: whether it's day- or nighttime. This is followed by the current conditions for your local region, or,

if you enable the app to use your device's location services, it will tell you current conditions for whatever vacation spot or grandchild's college town

you happen to be in. Current conditions are followed by a detailed, hour-by-hour forecast for the next twelve hours, and the daily forecast for the next

seven days.

A Lifetime of Reading

In this article we've demonstrated that it's possible to keep up with the local news and other current affairs with a visual impairment. Of course your

ability to keep reading doesn't end there. In the AFB technology guide

Using Technology for Reading: Solutions for People with Visual Impairments and Blindness

, we discuss several other reading resources, including:

The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

: The NLS Digital Talking Book program is a free service that allows patrons to borrow recorded books and magazines through the mail to be played on an

on-loan Digital Book Player, or to download them and listen on a compatible DAISY player or mobile phone or tablet.

Bookshare

: This membership service offers access to a repository of over 200,000 titles, including many of the latest best sellers, playable using either a DAISY

player or mobile device.

Amazon Kindle : These commercially available titles can be played using either an iOS or Android mobile device running VoiceOver or TalkBack.

Audible

: This Amazon subsidiary is the largest purveyor of commercially available recorded books, including most of the latest best sellers. Recorded books can

be played on your computer, or downloaded and played on your mobile device and most DAISY players.

Learning Ally

: Life scholars will appreciate this subscription service where volunteer readers record books, describing images, charts, and other data usually missing

from recorded books.

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