

CIVIC LIFE

CRIS RADIO, STATE LIBRARY, AND IDEAL GROUP LAUNCH VOICES OF WORLD WAR I

New, first-of-its-kind audio service of historic documents for all abilities

CRIS Radio, the Connecticut State Library, and IDEAL Group are working together to offer a first-of-its kind service that provides access to historic records and documents with human-narrated recordings for people of all abilities, including those who are blind or unable to read due to other print disabilities.

State officials, historians, educators, and CRIS Radio (Connecticut Radio Information System), volunteers recently convened at the Connecticut State Library where the collaborative pilot project, called "Voices of World War I," was introduced.

Individuals with print disabilities have limited access to historic records and documents. The goal of this project is to demonstrate that people who are blind or print disabled can have access to the same historic documents that other students, researchers and citizens enjoy.

CRIS Radio a 39-year-old nonprofit radio service for people who are blind or print challenged, led the project, which features human-narrated audio versions of historic documents archived by the Connecticut State Library. CRIS Radio volunteers recorded the historical documents, which are now available at the CRIS Radio website, www.crisradio.org.

The project also features the development of new technologies to help teachers, librarians, and archivists render hard-copy historical documents into accessible formats for individuals with print disabilities. The new technology tools were developed by IDEAL Group, an Ohio-based company that makes accessible mobile applications for people with disabilities.

More than 100 historic documents, which include first-person accounts of the WWI gathered from servicemen's diaries, their letters to home, and questionnaires completed upon their return to the United States, have been selected from the State Archives for this project.

Government-produced pamphlets also were included, such as "Cutting Your Meat Bills with Milk," and on Americanism by

"being neighborly with immigrant families."

In addition, newspaper articles published in Connecticut from that era were recorded for this initiative, which is funded in part by a grant from the National Historic Records & Publications Commission, [NHPRC] the funding arm of the National Archives and Records Administration [NARA].

State Officials Praise "Voices of World War I"

Although the goal of the project is to provide access to historical documents for people with disabilities, it also is available to students of all abilities.

"We must provide as many resources as possible to help students understand this critical event," said **Stephen Armstrong**, a social studies consultant for the Connecticut State Dept of Education. "Voices of World War I is a fabulous project because it provides these resources in a usable form that all teachers and all students can use."

Secretary of the State Denise Merrill agreed. "As a former educator, I am very happy to see historical records brought to life and made more



State officials, historians, educators, and CRIS volunteers recently convened at the Connecticut State Library Museum where "Voices of World War I" was introduced. From left, Denise Merrill, Secretary of the State; Brian Sigman, director, Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind; Diane Weaver Dunne, executive director of CRIS Radio; Paul A. Young, chairman of the CRIS Radio Board of Directors; John Monahan, commissioner of the World War I Centennial Commission; Steven Armstrong, social studies consultant for the Connecticut State Dept. of Education; and Kendall Wiggins, State Librarian..

accessible and available to everyone in Connecticut," she said.

Amy Porter, commissioner of the Connecticut State Dept. of Rehabilitation Services, also praised the project. "Connecticut has a rich his-

tory and impressive archival records, which are now being made more widely available to people with varied disabilities through the use of new technological tools and human narration," Porter said. "I appreciate that this project makes history accessible for all of us!"

The introduction of the project is very timely, said **John D. Monahan, commissioner of the United States World War One Centennial Commission**, who noted that the United States officially entered World War I on April 6, 1917. Monahan also agreed with Armstrong, the social studies consultant, about the importance of World War I for setting up the modern world as we now know it.

"Voices of World War I honors those who served and sacrificed, in whatever capacity, during the war," Monahan said. "CRIS and all those involved in bringing these stories to public attention deserve sincere thanks."

Additional recordings and

more details about the technology developed for this project will be updated on the CRIS web site during the next several months.

About CRIS Radio

CRIS (Connecticut Radio Information System) is a 39-year-old nonprofit based in Windsor and is Connecticut's only radio-reading service providing audio access to news and information for people who are blind or print-handicapped, including those unable to read due to physical, learning, intellectual or emotional disabilities. CRIS Radio, through its CRISKids program, also provides audio access to children's classroom materials and children's magazines. In addition, CRIS offers Spanish-language recordings of newspapers and magazines, as well as audible tours for museums. CRIS operates with nearly 350 volunteers at its broadcast center in Windsor and four satellite studios.

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Windsor Animal Clinic, 46 Poquonock Avenue, Windsor CT, and
Fidelco, 103 Vision Way, Bloomfield CT.
All proceeds from the sale benefit Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation.
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