Partnership enhanced
Oklahoma Today writers become narrators

Listeners of Oklahoma Today magazine are hearing some new voices on the recordings. After writing their articles, Editor-in-Chief Nathan Gunter and Research Editor Greg Elwell are now also narrating them in our Digital Recording Studio.

During a recent visit to OLBPH, Nathan and Greg were very impressed by how much work the studio staff and volunteers do with their magazine and how well-produced it is. They also had no idea OLBPH makes Oklahoma Today available to National Library Service patrons nationwide.

The partnership is a two-way street. The May/June issue includes a letter to the editor from a reader experiencing vision problems. Nathan responded with an editor’s note informing readers of the audio version available to OLBPH patrons.
Director’s Column

In my Winter 2019 column I referenced the phrase “preaching to the choir” to describe sharing with our Department of Rehabilitation Services colleagues the services the OLBPH provides. In a similar way I now take this to another level, or to continue the earlier metaphor, a larger choir.

In recent years, OLBPH Public Information Officer Brian King and I have made a concerted effort to reach out and partner with public libraries across Oklahoma. We all share the common goal of providing the best possible reading services for our citizens. One success story in particular involves the Southeastern Library System and its director, Michael Hull. He gave us the opportunity to speak to 70 librarians at an in-service training in Poteau. About a year later, we stopped by to visit him again at his office in the McAlester Public Library while making other outreach stops. This resulted in an upcoming opportunity to speak at the McAlester Rotary Club in June. Mr. Hull says this group is really interested in what we have to offer.

We have engaged with many other libraries in our travels and we’ve really enjoyed getting plugged in to this professional network. My joy peaked at this year’s Oklahoma Library Association (OLA) conference banquet as I accepted the OLA Library Excellence Award for
OLBPH. The award recognizes outstanding library services over an extended period of time. Obviously, this is a team award and reaches back 86 years into our storied past. Yes, 86 years! Many people are surprised to learn Oklahoma’s regional library in the National Library Service (NLS) for the Blind and Physically Handicapped started in 1933.

I know this newsletter is sent to many libraries around the state, so to all the librarians and staff members who do so much for people in our communities, I offer our sincere appreciation. Thank you for your continued support and for recommending us to your patrons and neighbors who need a different way to enjoy books, magazines, and newspapers.

Congratulations to all employees and volunteers present and past striving to “Share Our Vision...That All May Read.”

--Kevin Treese, Library Director

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**Contact Information**

Have you moved, changed your phone number, or email address? Don’t forget to tell us! Without accurate and up-to-date contact and mailing information, it is difficult for us to keep providing you with great service. So if your physical address, phone number, or email address changes, just remember to let us know. Thanks!

--Andrew Shockley, Administrative Librarian
Books with an asterisk (*) next to the title were produced by our own digital recording studio. Other titles are books produced by The National Library Service, a branch of The Library of Congress.

**DB 54082 – Seldom Disappointed: a Memoir by Tony Hillerman**

Blessed are those who expect little, said Hillerman’s mother; they are seldom disappointed and often pleasantly surprised.

In this affectionate and unvarnished account of his life, mystery writer Tony Hillerman looks at seventy-six years spent getting from hard-times Oklahoma farm boy to bestselling author.

Hillerman was born in 1925 in Sacred Heart, Oklahoma and grew up in a house that his father assembled out of oil-field shotgun houses. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1943. Combat in France in WWII earned him the Silver Star, Bronze Star and Purple Heart. Following military service he earned a degree in journalism at The University of Oklahoma and climbed his way up to bureau manager of the United Press in New Mexico. There he often visited the Navajo Reservation and witnessed the Navajo curing ceremony that made a lasting impression. He completed a Master’s Degree in creative writing and became a professor of journalism at The University of New Mexico.
His first novel, *The Blessing Way* (DB 49586), gave birth to the popular and award winning series of Navajo mysteries, featuring Joe Leaphorn and Jim Chee. Through these two characters Hillerman explored the uniqueness of the Southwest, especially the relationship between culture, landscape and the individual.

He created a genre of mysteries that center on American Indian cultures of the Southwest. These books expanded the field of mystery writing and enlarged the scope of Western American literature.

*Seldom Disappointed* is touching, modest, hilarious and yet powerful. Critics praised it as being “laced with humor and worldly wisdom, a splendid remembrance of things past.”

A patron recommended that I read this autobiography of a talented Oklahoman and I’m glad I did.

**Oklahoma Today**

Oklahoma Today is a magazine featuring in-depth articles, giving its readers the best of Oklahoma’s people, places, travel, culture, food and the outdoors. The beautiful photography and engaging writing celebrates the Oklahoma experience.

Published bimonthly since 1956, Oklahoma Today is produced by the OLBPH Digital Recording Studio and is available for download on BARD or by subscribing to the Oklahoma magazine cartridge, which also features Cowboys and Indians, Guideposts and Reader’s Digest. This cartridge is produced and mailed to patrons several times a year. If you would like to receive this cartridge, call the library and ask for a librarian to subscribe.

**DBC 12207 — Tulsa Burning by Anna Myers**

The day he buried his pa, Nobe Chase lost everything—his father, his home and his dog. Then he has to move into town to live with Sheriff Leonard, the man who had shot and killed his dog. From that moment, hate burns in Nobe’s heart. But he learns how dangerous hate can be

*(Continued on next page)*
when it sparks a race riot in nearby Tulsa. When the violence spreads to his hometown, Nobe must decide what kind of man he is going to become—one driven by vengeance or one driven by courage and honor.

Based on true events in Tulsa during May of 1921, Anna Myers has written a powerful novel about a young man who must wrestle with his past and find the strength to pull free from the grip of hatred and abuse.

Author Anna Myers was born in west Texas, but her family moved back to Oklahoma when she was an infant. She has lived here ever since. Myers has received four Oklahoma Book Awards as well as a Lifetime Achievement medal from the Oklahoma Center for the Book. She is a member of the Oklahoma Writers Hall of Fame. Myers lives in Tulsa.

--Sammie Willis, Librarian

**Spring Outreach highlights**

Even though bad weather derailed some of our outreach plans in the late winter and early spring, we still managed to let a lot of people know about the great, free services provided by your library.

One highlight was a series of presentations to volunteer foster grandparents in Ardmore, Lawton, and Duncan. A couple of weeks earlier, Director Treese and I made a southeast swing through Holdenville, McAlester, Hartshorne, and Wilburton.

March and April are popular months for big events, and we participated in DRS’s People with Disabilities Awareness Day, as well as annual conferences for LeadingAge, the Oklahoma Library Association, and the Oklahoma Association of Optometric Physicians.

Nicer (or at least warmer) weather means more opportunities to drive. If there’s a place you want me to visit, call and let me know!

--Brian King, Public Information Officer
Watson adds new role on APH products committee

Good news for Oklahoma teachers of the visually impaired (TVIs) and other supporters of students with print disabilities. You now have direct representation on an important national education committee at the American Printing House for the Blind (APH). Pepper Watson, director of the Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) Center at OLBPH and Oklahoma’s Ex Officio Trustee, has been appointed to a three-year term on the Educational Products Advisory Committee.

The committee serves numerous functions, including advising APH in establishing priorities, standards, and policies regarding publications and products. It also reviews research and development, provides critiques and suggestions as needed, and keeps APH staff informed on trends and important discussions and debates occurring in the field. Pepper recently spent a week at APH’s headquarters in Louisville, Kentucky, working with her colleagues and peers from other states on these and other important issues.

We congratulate Pepper on this new role and look forward to the improvements she will continue to help lead.

At left: Pepper Watson (front row, center) poses with members of the APH Educational Products and Services Advisory Committees.
OLBPH Librarian helps educate children in Myanmar

Last month, I had the privilege of visiting friends in Myanmar, formerly known as Burma. My friends, Kristy and Jim, are primary school teachers in the country’s largest city, Yangon. For two weeks, I experienced their life in this complex country and I spoke to their kindergarten classes about blindness and library services to the blind and visually impaired.

For background’s sake, let’s talk about the country first. Myanmar is a Southeast Asian country of 55 million tucked between India, Thailand, and China. Though rich in natural resources, its economy is not well developed thanks to nearly 70 years of ongoing ethnic strife and a government dominated by a military bureaucracy. As a result, Myanmar’s economic inequality is among the widest in the world with most of the economy...
controlled by a very small number of supporters of the military regime.

It can be fairly said, then, that library services in general are poorly established there, though they do exist in a rudimentary sense. Library services for the blind, visually impaired, and physically handicapped, as you can imagine, essentially do not exist. Even though Burmese Braille (and Karen Braille, Karen being a minority language) has existed since 1918, there is no apparent systematic access to it or basic literacy in it among blind Myanmar people.

All of this background information is to say that you can imagine the very low degree of understanding of the concept of blindness among Myanmar children, not to mention the alien nature of a tactile writing system to them. This is the reason my friends encouraged me to speak to their kindergarten classes.

The kindergarteners of Yangon International School already spoke fluent English, as most of their classes are in English. So I didn’t have to communicate through an interpreter. The kids gathered after lunch in Kristy’s classroom and seemed excited to hear what the tall foreign guy had to say. I explained blindness by having them close their eyes and attempt to read a print book. I then handed out NLS-produced cards of the braille alphabet and they had fun feeling the braille cells and attempting to read the letters by touch. Finally, I emphasized how blind and visually impaired people need to read, too, and the need for library services to all people, whether they are sighted or not. We can only hope the kids left that day with a new appreciation for the many different ways people can and do read.

--Andrew Shockley, Administrative Librarian
Volunteer Spotlight shines on OTR duo

This spring, we highlight two long-time volunteers for the Oklahoma Telephone Reader, Suzanne Parker and Fran Harbert. Fran grew up in Tishomingo. Despite the fact that Tishomingo had no public library, her love of libraries and books began early. She fondly recalls visiting the Ada Public Library with her cousins when visiting family in Ada. As an adult, Fran joined the Metropolitan Library System (MLS) in Oklahoma County as a librarian in 1985. She retired from MLS in 2011, although she continued to work in various branches for another three years.

As she approached retirement, Fran “began thinking of places I’d like to volunteer.” A coworker provided contact information for Jay Doudna at the Oklahoma Library for the Blind.
and Physically Handicapped. “I started volunteering at [the] Library for the Blind the very week after I retired from the Del City Library.” Fran originally began her tenure as a fill in for other volunteers. “It was a few months before Jay had a regular time slot for me, and he teemed me up with Suzanne Parker, who is a fun person to be with! I soon will hit the eight year mark volunteering for the Library for the Blind! So, you’d have to say I enjoy volunteering here!!!”

Suzanne is an Oklahoma native and a retired early childhood educator who taught reading. With her passion for literacy, she joined the Library’s volunteer crew seven years ago.

“I have especially enjoyed learning more about the news and history from the northeast part of the state. I...knew very little about the northeast of our state, so I have certainly benefitted from my volunteer time.”

Fran and Suzanne began their volunteer tenure as readers for OTIS, the OLBPH’s former online radio station. They worked in the recording studio with Jay Doudna until OTIS merged with the former Older Blind Telephone Program to become the Oklahoma Telephone Reader (OTR). The pair easily made the transition from recording in a studio booth to recording and self-editing using a telephone headset.

You can hear Fran and Suzanne each week on OTR as they read local news, opinions, and history articles from the Muskogee Phoenix. Other recordings from the pair include Ghost-Town Tales of Oklahoma: Unforgettable Stories of Nearly Forgotten Places by Jim Marion Etter and Life Among the Rivers by Jonita Mullins.

--Lacey Downs, Administrative Assistant
Here are a few fiction title ideas for your late spring.

**DB 74558 – Sanctuary Cove: A Cavanaugh Island Novel by Rochelle Alers**
Suddenly widowed bookstore owner Deborah Robinson returns with her children to Sanctuary Cove on Cavanaugh Island, South Carolina. She meets Dr. Asa Monroe and they begin to fall in love. But Asa is hiding secrets about his past.

**DB 90559 – Among the Dead: A Rachel Carver Novel by J.R. Backlund**
Rachel Carver left the Bureau of Investigation after a case went horribly wrong. Former police partner Danny Braddock asks for her expert assistance with a murder investigation.

**DB 65217 – Fragrant Harbor by John Lanchester**
This work of historical fiction spans from the 1930s to the beginning of the 21st Century. Tom Stewart leaves Depression era England for Hong Kong. On board the ship he meets a Chinese nun, who teaches him Cantonese. Tom becomes established in Hong Kong and remains in contact with her over the decades, until tragedy strikes.

**DB 80945 – Silver Thaw by Catherine Anderson**
To escape her abusive husband, Amanda and her daughter flee to Mystic Creek, Oregon. The fresh start is rough, however, and Amanda copes by writing her thoughts down and tossing them into the wind. Neighbor Jeb discovers them and helps the pair.
DB 88637 — Summer Harbor, Books 1-3 by Denise Hunter
Three novels, written in 2015 and 2016, of inspirational romance set in the small Maine town of Summer Harbor. Includes Falling like Snowflakes, The Goodbye Bride, and Just a Kiss.

DB 92373 — The Two-Plate Solution: A Novel of Culinary Mayhem in the Middle East by Jeff Oliver
When an American cooking competition TV show decides to film a season in Israel, things soon go wrong. The show plans to pit the competitors against actors hired by the producers to pretend to be terrorists, but then a group of real terrorists invades the set. This seemingly odd combination of reality television and terrorism actually turns out to be a page-turning work of farcical humor.

DBC 13547 — Anathema by Colleen Coble
Visitors come to Parke County, Indiana to buy Amish quilts and to experience the peaceful ways of the Amish families who live there. But when a double murder rocks this quiet community, the Amish residents resolve to forgive even this unfathomable offense. Hannah however finds forgiveness out of reach, both for the murderer and herself.

DB 86950 — Wild Ran the Rivers by James Crownover
This Western title is a story of pioneers, kidnappings, natural disasters, mayhem, drama, and how the second generation of a Cherokee family found a home on the Little Red River in the early 1800s.
Serendipity. That’s the word that comes to Jill Streck’s mind when she reflects on her journey with the OLBPH (Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped). As unlikely as it may sound, she was pursuing a career in fine arts when she took an internship with the Library, funded by a grant for the new digital studio established by former Library director Paul Adams.

Jill, herself, is now the Studio Director for the OLBPH’s digital studio. What happened in between is, to some, an intricately designed, step-by-step masterpiece of timing.

A friend of Jill’s was friends with a librarian at OLBPH when the need for interns arose, and she was invited to participate. Jill enjoyed the project although she had no thought that she might end up being employed there full-time in the future.

More school work, summer camp in Pennsylvania teaching art, then back home working in the family business, and rocking along wondering what her career might be, OLBPH came to mind. She decided to give Paul Adams a call. By this time, Paul was no longer the studio director; he was the Library Director.

A request for a full-time studio employee had just recently been approved by DRS leadership (OLBPH is a division of the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services). Paul let Jill know they were taking applications to interview for the position in the studio. She went through the lengthy official process every state employee follows, had her interviews and was hired back
at the place where she originally interned. Although “the rest is history,” there is more to this story today.

One recent year, Jill was the recipient of the “Employee of the Year” award at OLBPH. Her comment, upon receiving the award was “How exciting! I did not see this coming. I love my job...and it loves me back!”

Loved by her co-workers, the Library patrons and volunteers, and then being recognized for her efforts is so appropriate. Jill has taken what was created earlier in the studio and has further developed it into one of the leading such studios in the nation. Quality has been continually pursued and improved upon, and over the years the studio has had three children's books and two magazines meet NLS Quality Assurance standards, gain full acceptance into the NLS Collection, and be made available on BARD.

Jill gives credit to Paul Adams for establishing at the Library the new era of digital technology in the studio. She gives credit to Bill West of NLS (National Library Service) and Chris Mundy of MSCE (Multi-State Center East) for their early and continued guidance. And last but not least, Jill is emphatic that she must give credit to the people who volunteer their services at the OLBPH Studio. “Time is precious and we all have busy lives. Seeing how people give their time to be here, and really work hard at it, is super motivating for me.”

In fact, Jill is very reluctant to accept credit for the progress made under her own guidance, hard work, talent, and skills. But the evidence is clear; her mark has been made on the very remarkable digital studio at OLBPH. For the record, Paul gives Jill credit for taking what was originally established and bringing it to a much higher level.

We are proud and fortunate to have Jill Streck as a member of the OLBPH team. Her contribution and legacy at the Library are so much more than what is discussed here. You really have to know Jill to get a credible glimpse at the scope of what she has done, and continues to do, for the people of Oklahoma by serving so faithfully the community of OLBPH.

After more thought, it really isn’t so unlikely that Jill was pursuing a career in Fine Arts when she came here. What a work of art her hard work, talents, and dedication have created! A masterpiece! Serendipity!

--Jim Kettler, VS Contract Monitor
Oklahoma Telephone Reader

Oklahoma Telephone Reader (OTR) is an on-demand dial-up information service. It is intended for use by people with disabilities that prevent them from reading standard print materials. You must be a library patron in order to register for OTR.

Volunteers record articles and other content from The Oklahoman, Tulsa World, Oklahoma Gazette, Bright Future, and other publications on a daily basis. Such content includes news, editorials, sports, grocery ads, obituaries, as well as a variety of other types of articles. Listeners can access these using the key pads on their telephones and navigate directly to the publication of their choice.

For more information, please call the library at 1-800-523-0288 or 405-521-3514 and ask for Becky Bates or Steve Dowdy.

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FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND

Bright Future is the official publication of the Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. It was printed by Heritage Solutions in El Reno, OK. It is published four times a year. Kevin Treese is the Library Director and Brian King is the Editor. In providing information to readers of Bright Future, the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services does not endorse any product or service referred to by this newsletter. This publication is authorized by the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services in accordance with state and federal regulations, with copies deposited with the Oklahoma Department of Libraries Publications Clearinghouse. Cost of printing and distribution was $2,834.48 for 4,700 copies. DRS does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability in employment or the provision of services. For additional copies, contact the Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, (405) 521-3514.