Cabinet secretary narrates for OLBPH

Fresh off our Regional Library of the Year Award from the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS), OLBPH received another honor this fall. We were privileged to have our cabinet secretary narrate for us in our Digital Recording Studio.

Justin Brown, Secretary of Oklahoma Human Services and Early Childhood Development, oversees our agency, the Department of Rehabilitation Services. Sec. Brown recorded two articles from Oklahoma Today magazine, which is published by the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department. His narration will be included in the audio version of the magazine that is produced by OLBPH and available not only to Oklahoma patrons, but also to NLS users nationwide.

(Continued on next page)
Cabinet secretary narrates for OLBPH (continued)

Sec. Brown gave voice to two *Oklahoma Today* articles on October 15. The articles, “Something in the Woods” and “Point of View,” are part of the September/October issue. “Something in the Woods” is about Bigfoot, the legendary creature long rumored to be stalking the woods from the state of Washington to Southeast Oklahoma. The article concentrated on how the creature is big business in the Sooner state’s Southeast corner. It was written by Greg Elwell.

Brown also voiced a short, one-minute article at the beginning of the magazine called "Point of View" about a mural honoring essential workers, located at 9th and Walker in downtown Oklahoma City.

Digital Studio Director Jill Streck directed and produced the studio sessions. Studio Technician Heather Bateman researched pronunciations and edited the recordings. When asked for her assessment of Brown’s narration on the article about Bigfoot,
Heather said, “He has a warm tone and pleasant delivery, lending a sense of quiet disbelief and uncertainty. He is telling you what he knows, matter-of-factly, and he wants you to determine whether or not you believe. It made it a little eerie.”

Jill agreed, “I believe he has a natural talent for reading aloud, coming across clear and conversational, with a pleasant, smooth delivery—and punching it up a bit in the scarier parts of the story.” Jill also said Brown came prepared, bringing his articles printed out, and spoke of having practiced ahead of the recording session. Sec. Brown said he truly enjoyed the experience and looks forward to reading for the OLBPH again.

Jill, Library Director Kevin Treese, and Tracy Brigham, DRS Administrator of Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired, sent their thanks to Sec. Brown for volunteering his time and invited him narrate again when his schedule allows.

--Jody Harlan, DRS Communications Director, and Brian King, Public Information Officer
Director’s column

In our last issue, I got to break the news of our 2019 NLS Library of the Year award. This issue I highlight our award-winning patrons. 2020 certainly has brought challenges to everyone involved in keeping our patrons supplied with reading materials, including the COVID restrictions and October ice storms. The customer piece of this circulation process is very important, as well. Even though library staff are on the service end of the process, when we receive encouragement from patrons we get an extra charge/boost to keep doing our best. Positivity during trying times is so very helpful. My patron interaction is just a small sample in comparison to that of the reader advisor staff. So, I asked Andrew to share some thoughts here on behalf of our librarians.

*   *   *

Throughout this grim year we have tried our best to keep you supplied with audiobooks. They may not arrive at your mailbox as fast as they used to but, through it all, each

As a COVID-19 precaution, returned talking books and other materials are being held in quarantine for seven days before being shelved or recirculated.
of you have been beyond understanding and patient. Such forbearance has come to our attention via a number of avenues: on the phone, through email, and postal mail, among others. Each day we hear deeply felt “thank yous” over the phone from you, many of whom are homebound and whose sole source of entertainment is audiobooks. We receive many letters and cards, too, which express the same sense of gratification. After an elder patron is no longer with us, the family often sends a note of thanks to library staff, letting us know just how important our library service was in keeping their beloved family member happy and mentally active.

This is why we are here – to serve you and improve your quality of life in some small way. Libraries are for everyone, even during difficult times, and that includes those Oklahomans who are blind or visually impaired or have physical conditions that make traditional books inaccessible. We are so fortunate to have you all to serve, so thank you! If there’s anything we can help you with, do not hesitate to call or email us and ask for a librarian. You can also ask for us by name: Andrew, Erin, Kayla, Sammie, or Marka.

* * *

Awesome editorial from Andrew. Now to bookend this piece, we have much to be thankful for as the Thanksgiving holiday approaches. On behalf of all of “Team Library,” I wish to thank all of our patrons for affording us this very special opportunity to serve.

--Kevin Treese, Library Director, and Andrew Shockley, Administrative Librarian
Billie Letts was the New York Times bestselling and award-winning author of *Where the Heart Is*, *The Honk and Holler Opening Soon*, *Shoot the Moon*, and *Made in the USA*.

A native Oklahoman, she died in 2014. Her son, Tracy Letts, won The Pulitzer Prize for his play, *August: Osage County*, which became a movie filmed in Oklahoma.

Billie Letts was in her fifties when she published her first novel, *Where the Heart Is*. She had been teaching college English for more than two decades and writing in her spare time, with little success. At a writer’s conference she was encouraged to expand her short story about a pregnant teenager abandoned by her boyfriend at a WalMart into a novel. It was published and received mixed reviews. But Oprah Winfrey loved it and decided to make it one of her Oprah Book Club selections. At the time of Letts’s death, *Where the Heart Is* had sold over three million copies and had been made into a motion picture.

Fans of authors Fannie Flagg, Richard Russo, Anne Tyler, Kristin Hannah, Ann B. Ross, Sue Monk Kidd, Alice Hoffman and Jane Hamilton should add Billie Letts to their Must Read Author List.
DB 47380 – *Where the Heart Is*
Novalee Nation is seventeen, seven months pregnant, and thirty-seven pounds overweight when her boyfriend abandons her at a WalMart store in Sequoyah, Oklahoma. While living secretly in the store she befriends several of the town’s quirky residents who help her after her baby is born. Letts has created memorable characters in this novel that celebrates the life affirming qualities of reading, the importance of education and the power of love to change lives.

DB 48105 – *The Honk and Holler Opening Soon*
Caney Paxton, a Vietnam vet who has lost the use of his legs, runs a small, roadside café in Sequoyah, Oklahoma. He surprises the regulars of The Honk and Holler when he hires a Native American waitress and a Vietnamese chef. The two newcomers bring life to the humdrum life of the café.

DB 67942 – *Shoot the Moon*
In 1972 the tiny town of DeClare, Oklahoma, was terrified by the disappearance of Nicky Jack Harjo. When he was no more than a baby, his pajamas were found on the banks of Willow Creek. Nearly thirty years later, Nicky mysteriously returns in this book filled with genuine Heartland characters.

DBC 17054 – *Made in the USA*
Fifteen-year-old Lutie and her eleven-year-old brother Fate live in South Dakota with their father’s obese girlfriend, Floy. When Floy dies in a WalMart, Lutie and Fate flee to Las Vegas to find their father. They are rescued by a mysterious circus performer.

--Sammie Willis, Librarian
Volunteer Spotlight

Spend a little time getting to know Breanne Loving-Méndez, and you realize she was born to be in the recording booth. Many volunteer narrators’ involvement with OLBPH comes from happy coincidences. They will say they didn’t expect to be contributing their time and talents in this valuable way. With Breanne, though, you think, “Of course she does that! She’s a natural.”

“When I was three years old, my mother gave me for my birthday a blue Fisher Price tape recorder with yellow buttons,” Breanne explained. “She handed me a bunch of children’s storybooks and blank tapes that changed my life forever. I was fascinated with different voices and tried to mimic all that I heard on television, radio, and in real life. Growing up I spent most of my spare time recording mock commercials and books on tape.”

That childhood passion has only grown over the years. Breanne earned a bachelor’s degree in Communications Radio/TV at Cameron University in Lawton. She worked as a radio host and is now a professional voice-over artist as well as a commercial and print actress.

“I record fun scripts all of the time,” Breanne said. “I could be reading a script about chemistry and pharmaceutical drugs for a medical training video one day, and record an advertisement for
brain-freezing icy drinks for convenience stores the next day. It’s pretty crazy!”

She records many of those scripts from a small studio set-up in her home in Oklahoma City. It is a resource that has become very valuable to the OLBPH Studio team in recent months. Limitations made necessary by the COVID pandemic have kept many of our devoted studio volunteers from being able to contribute lately. Thanks to her ability to record from home, Breanne has continued to provide new studio-quality audio.

Recording Studio technician Heather Bateman has edited several of Breanne’s OLBPH narrations in recent issues of Oklahoma Today and Cowboys & Indians and has a lot of praise for her work. Reflecting on a series of poems about the Tulsa Race Massacre in Oklahoma Today’s May/June 2020 issue, Heather said, “She gave me goosebumps on every poem, and I was tearing up, too. She deserves a standing ovation. I think the authors would be extremely pleased with her narration and interpretation. Listening to her made me truly understand what the poem was about.”

“When I read an article, I feel as if I am performing it, and not just reading it,” Breanne explained. “It is a very intimate and vibrant experience for me. Every word has so much meaning.”

Patrons who use our Oklahoma Telephone Reader service can also hear Breanne read The Oklahoman on most Mondays.

“I love to know that I am helping people!” Breanne said. “I like to imagine the audiences enjoying the articles we read. I hope we are bringing them joy by helping them explore new territories through what we read.”

--Brian King, Editor
DB 92241 — *Texas Ranger: A Texas Ranger Thriller Book 1* by James Patterson
Texas Ranger Rory Yates has been named an honorary Ranger after years of service in Highway Patrol. Then he is named as a suspect in the murder of his ex-wife. Yates fights to find the real killer, vowing to never surrender as he fights for his life, his freedom, and the town he loves.

DB 100054 — *The Splendid and the Vile* by Erik Larson
The author, whose nonfiction reads like fiction, gives us an account of Winston Churchill and London during the Blitz. This dark year in London history is presented through the domestic drama of Churchill and his family’s day-to-day experiences. An inspiring look at true patriotism and leadership under the most intense pressure.

DB 69500 — *The Strain: The Strain Trilogy, Book 1* by Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan
A mysterious Boeing 777 lands at JFK and sits on the tarmac with all its systems dead, shades down and no signs of life. Then an unimaginable and horrific vampire virus begins to spread rapidly through the night.

DB 92839 — *The Inn at Angel Island: an Angel Island Novel Book 1* by Thomas Kinkade
Liza Martin inherits an inn on Angel Island after her aunt dies. She lists the inn for sale, but a budding relationship with handyman Daniel Merritt causes her to reconsider her decision to return to the hectic life she left behind in Boston.
**DB 84610 – *It Can’t Happen Here* by Sinclair Lewis**

Written in 1935, during the Depression, this novel follows “Buzz” Windrip, a populist who wins the U.S. Presidency on a platform of reform and traditional values. Once elected, he institutes totalitarian rule with the aid of a ruthless paramilitary force.

**DB 66502 – *The Blight Way: A Sheriff Bo Tulley Mystery Book 1* by Patrick F. McManus**

Bright County, Idaho. On his father’s seventy-fifth birthday sheriff Bo Tulley is called to ex-con Batim Scragg’s ranch, where a well-dressed corpse has been found on a fence. As a present Bo brings along his dad, Pap, the former sheriff. They discover two more bodies at the scene of an apparent shootout.

**DB 95083 – *Climbing Back* by Mark Wellman**

Mountain climber Wellman recounts his comeback after a fall in the Sierra Nevada left him paraplegic at twenty-two. He devised a way to continue climbing mountains—including El Capitan and Half Dome—and also became a Yosemite Park ranger and member of the U.S. Disabled Ski Team.

**DB 96800 – *Wonton Terror* by Vivien Chien**

Lana Lee is convinced that the explosion of a food truck at The Cleveland Asian Night Market was no accident and the death of a family friend inside was murder. But her sleuthing needs to be kept secret from her detective boyfriend.

--Sammie Willis and Andrew Shockley, Librarians
Mismatched digital books and containers

We are noticing an increase in the number of books coming back from patrons who have mismatched the book with its proper container before sending it back. Please ensure that the number on the book matches the number on the box before returning it. This will help us get books processed and on their way to you faster, and will reduce the number of “mistake” books you receive. We appreciate your careful attention to this matter.

--Marka Will and Andrew Shockley, Librarians

Library staff member honored as ‘Amazing Oklahoman’

Congratulations to longtime library technician Mable Stripling, who was recognized by TV stations KOTV and KWTV in early November. She was named an “Amazing Oklahoman” for her work to keep as many Oklahomans healthy as she possibly can. Since the pandemic started in March, Mable has made nearly 600 face masks and given them away. Mable has worked for the library for 23 years and was nominated for the honor by a church friend.
Under construction

Visitors to the OLBPH will soon notice a big difference just inside our front doors. We’re updating our security protocols and bringing the reception counter up to date with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. We enlisted the architectural services of John Robison and Associates. John is the same architect who designed our beautiful facility in the early 90s. He has a special fondness for the building and is thrilled to be with us through this change.

To meet ADA requirements, the reception counter has been lowered to 36 inches. Glass is being installed from the counter to the ceiling and will contain a sliding window for the receptionist to use as needed. We’re also adding doors to either side of the counter, so access to the building can be better controlled. Visitors will have a lounge area to sit inside the vestibule until they can be met and escorted in. The new area will be bright and airy with lots of glass and still offer views of the beautiful atriums within.
Using Bookshelf to find magazines and book titles

Locating specific magazine or book titles on a cartridge containing multiple titles is easy if you use the Bookshelf feature on your digital player. It allows you to navigate back and forth through the cartridge to find the magazine or book title you want to read.

Follow these steps to locate the magazine or book you want:

1. Insert the cartridge into the digital player.
2. Hold down the green Play/Stop button until you hear the word “Bookshelf.”
3. Release the Play/Stop button and tap down on the white arrow-shaped Fast Forward button to the right of the Play/Stop button to move through the titles on the cartridge until you hear the title of the magazine or book you want to read.

To move back through the titles on the cartridge, follow Steps 1 and 2. Then tap down on the white arrow-shaped Rewind button until you hear the title you are seeking.

--Sammie Willis and Andrew Shockley, Librarians
Well, it’s Fall! Or at least it is when it’s not Summer, Spring, or Winter. It seems we have one season on Monday, then another season on Tuesday, with maybe even another season on Wednesday. Is that your experience? Whatever the season, though, I’m glad to be in Oklahoma.

Our state has a lot going for it. If you haven’t travelled Oklahoma for a while, it is worth taking some trips around the state. Even a day trip can be refreshing, especially during this Coronavirus era. We have so many different types of landscape in Oklahoma that you can start your day in deep forests and end it in sand dunes. Or stop along the way at a lake, rest in a roadside park (there are a few left), and drive on the “Mother Road,” Route 66.

Fall is an excellent time of the year for these trips, all within the state. While the weather can get disagreeable during the Fall, it is less likely to be hot as an oven, cold as a deep freeze, or a washout than other times of the year. And you may even see some of the beautiful Fall colors.

Thanksgiving will be here soon, then close on its heels, Christmas. Are you ready? Has Coronavirus kept you locked in? How have you adjusted? I hope you have caught up on your reading. After all, the Library has thousands of titles you may not have had a chance to read.

At a loss for what to read? I have good news for you! The reader advisors at the Library can help you. Call today at (405) 521-3514.

--Jim Kettler, Contract Monitor
Do you know someone who could use OLBPH?

Think for a moment about the people you know – relatives, friends, neighbors, people in church and civic groups, and so on. There’s a good chance one or more of them needs a different way to enjoy books, magazines, and newspapers. They may have worsening low vision, eye diseases, or could be dealing with conditions that make holding traditional books difficult or even impossible.

Tens of thousands of Oklahomans are eligible for OLBPH’s free statewide audio books service, but they don’t know about us. That’s where you can help. Even with all our outreach efforts, a word-of-mouth referral from a satisfied patron or supporter is still one of the most powerful ways of raising awareness. Please encourage the person you thought of to contact OLBPH so he or she can enjoy reading again.

FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND

Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped
300 N.E. 18th St.
Oklahoma City, OK 73105