Library hosts DRS Commission

For the second time in as many years, OLBPH hosted a monthly meeting of the Commission for Rehabilitation Services on Feb. 10. Hosting the meeting for our parent agency is part of the library’s larger outreach effort to let more people know about our services for visually and physically disabled Oklahoma citizens. “‘Preaching to the choir’ can prove very useful in getting the word out,” Library Director Kevin Treese said.

Highlights of the meeting included a presentation by librarians Andrew Shockley and Erin Byrne on the history of OLBPH and the National Library Service, as well as ongoing library services.

Superintendent Chris Dvorak of the Oklahoma School for the Deaf shared and described a video simulation of how OSD’s Aquatic Activity Center and Safe Room will look. Officials broke ground on that project in January.
Director’s Column

As you may have noticed in our most recent issue of Bright Future, NLS, the national program, the “mother ship” of ours and all other network libraries, became the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (versus Physically Handicapped) on October 1, 2019. One month later, November 1, 2019, the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services division that includes the library became Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (versus Visual Services).

With both our “masters,” if you will, changing names, the time has come for the Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped to follow suit. This proposition has been presented in various forms already to include the 2019 Patron Satisfaction Survey. As one might guess we’ve had several different responses to include “why change our name in the first place?” Okay, one very good reason is the outdated word handicapped. The connotations associated with that word make it simply not acceptable in today’s contemporary language.

We need to move forward with the times and emphasize who and how we serve. We also need to market ourselves in such a way as to be easily discovered. Consensus thus far does not suggest we follow the “print disabled” template. Many network libraries use some form of “Talking Book Library” in their names. For us that would look like OTBL (Oklahoma Talking Book Library). One of the first suggestions made was Harris Accessible Library of Oklahoma with the acronym of HALO. While that name honors the memory of an important leader in the library’s past, few know the connection to the man for whom the library
building is named. Further, the word accessible has several different meanings to a mixed audience.

So, we need your help and who better than our library patrons and supporters to weigh in? After all, it’s your library and any name change will be long-term. Please give us your suggestions by calling 405-522-0526 or email olbph@okdrs.gov.

--Kevin Treese, Library Director
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.

Garth Brooks and Reba McEntire are the King and Queen of modern country music. The iconic stars are also native Oklahomans and are widely beloved for their character as well as their talent. The biographies of Garth Brooks and Reba McEntire are enjoyable reads for their many fans.

**DB 48788 – Garth Brooks: The Road out of Santa Fe by Matt O’Meilla**

Between 1989 and 1996 Garth Brooks sold over sixty million albums. This book provides a powerful biographical sketch of the country music artist and examines his early influences and his early roots.

O’Meilla was a drummer in Brooks’ band in the 1980s. His background gives a sympathetic insider’s view of the beloved performer and the strategies that won him success.

**DB 38856 – Reba: My Story by Reba McEntire**

In this bestselling autobiography, McEntire writes of her childhood in
Oklahoma working cattle with her ranching family, her days on the competitive rodeo circuit, her early days as a performer in honky-tonks, her many awards and a sold-out appearance at Carnegie Hall. With heartfelt emotion she relates the lowest points of her life, the breakup of her first marriage and the plane crash that took the lives of eight of her band members. She writes of the high points of her life, her second marriage and the birth of her son, Shelby.

With her trademark good humor and honesty, Reba shares her resilience, faith and determination in this very readable book.

* DBC 12213 – *The Buffalo Train Ride* by Desiree Morrison Webber

Although millions of buffalo once covered the plains, the animals were hunted almost to extinction in the 1800s. President Theodore Roosevelt opened the way for conservationists to establish a wildlife preserve in Oklahoma Territory. Fifteen buffalo from the New York Zoological Society were loaded onto a train to Oklahoma in order to replenish the lost herds. Bad brakes, Texas fever, wolves and the not-so-willing attitude of the buffalo stood in their way! For grades 2-6.

* DBC 12214 – *Bone Head: Story of the Longhorn* by Desiree Morrison Webber

*Bone Head* tells how longhorns once ran wild through the thickets of Texas. Men hunted them just like deer, elk and buffalo. Then, in the 1850s, ranchers began thinking of roping, branding and driving these creatures to market. If not for these unique animals, we may never have had the American cowboy, trail drives and the Wild West! For grades 4-7.

--Sammie Willis, Librarian
Remembering Randy Bolliger

Long-time Oklahoma Telephone Reader (OTR) volunteer Randy Bolliger passed away November 30, 2019. For many years, Randy battled limb onset ALS, a slow progressing form of the disease that starts at the arms and legs and gradually weakens other muscles. He gradually lost the ability to turn newspaper pages, dial the phone, and click the computer mouse, yet Randy found ways around all those obstacles. He was one of our most faithful, dedicated, and talented volunteer readers.

Becky Bates, who supervises our OTR service, wrote a tribute on Randy’s Legacy page and wanted to share those thoughts with you.

“Randy was a long-time volunteer for the Oklahoma Library for the Blind & Physically Handicapped's telephone reader service. He recorded the bulk of the Tulsa World on a daily basis for the enjoyment of patrons all around the state. Although his main preference was the sports, Randy was particularly adept at reading the comics, political cartoon, Scrabblegram, and Cryptoquote. I had the opportunity to meet Randy in person a couple of years ago when it was my great pleasure to present him with the JoAnna Peter Award for volunteer excellence. Randy's absence will be felt by many for a long time to come. My heart goes out to his wonderful daughter and family. May you find comfort in knowing that he brought joy to many, many people. Rest in peace, my friend, and I'll see you on the other side.”
OLBPH’s Scott See honored by DRS Commission

The honors don’t get much bigger than this within the Department of Rehabilitation Services. At its December meeting, the agency’s governing body presented Scott See with an Oklahoma Commission for Rehabilitation Services Award for outstanding job performance and productivity. He was given an Oklahoma flag that flew over the State Capitol.

Scott serves in the library’s Digital Recording Studio. He was nominated by Studio Director Jill Streck. Way to go, Scott!

Studio technician Scott See (center) poses for a photo while accepting the Oklahoma Commission for Rehabilitation Services Award on Dec. 9, 2019, in Oklahoma City. Also pictured are Commissioner Emily Cheng at left and Commissioner Wes Hilliard at right. Photo by Brian King
Volunteer spotlight: Jon Womastek

It is a nice coincidence that this spotlight is shining so close to Valentine’s Day. “Love” has multiple meanings for Jon Womastek and his volunteer experiences in the OLBPH digital recording studio. The long-time narrator truly loves his role in informing and bringing enjoyment to our readers. The studio is also where he found the love of his life.

Jon started volunteering here in 2009. “It was a newspaper article (about OLBPH) that got me to come in,” he said. “It was like a calling. I just had to do it. Touched my heart.

“I have loved reading out loud my whole life. I always listened to broadcasters. I liked listening to the information, but their delivery as well.”

He knows a good story when he reads it thanks to his degree in professional writing from what is now the University of Central Oklahoma. Jon also incorporates his many years of on-stage experience as an actor in local theatre productions. “This was kind of an extension,” he explains, “building on that, doing something where I could perform in a different way.”

In his career, Jon puts the focus on others, recording testimony and producing segments for his video deposition company, Courtroom Video.
Although he has done a handful of books at OLBPH, Jon now spends most of his volunteer time narrating articles from the two magazines the studio produces, *Cowboys & Indians* and *Oklahoma Today*. In fact, he was featured in the photograph that accompanied *Oklahoma Today’s* article about the recording studio in its January-February 2020 issue.

“Once he started doing the magazines, it was clear that this was a really good fit,” Studio Director Jill Streck said.

Others who work with Jon here have plenty of good things to say, as well.

“His rich, expressive voice, attention to detail, and focused interpretation hold attention and help bring the authors’ words to life.” – Chris Mundy, Quality Assurance Specialist.

“He reminds us, without trying, why we are here, and re-energizes our efforts for the session by making each of us feel appreciated.” – Studio technician Scott See.

“Even if you are a stranger meeting him for the first time, talking with him is like having a conversation with an old friend.” – Studio technician Heather Bateman.

As for the “love of his life” portion of Jon’s story... after several years of working together on audio productions, he and Jill developed a personal connection and are planning to get married. “I never expected that we would form a relationship,” Jon said. “Now I’m telling everybody I know. Strike up the band!”

There is no doubt we all love Jon and are very happy to have him in the OLBPH family.

--Brian King, Editor, with contributions from the studio staff
**Book Corner**

**DB 79605 — Perfidia by James Ellroy**
The hellish murder of a Japanese family in 1941 Los Angeles brings together four people: an ambitious, hard drinking LAPD Captain; an ex-IRA killer turned war profiteer; a Japanese police chemist; and a twenty-one-year-old adventure seeking dilettante. What could go wrong?

**DB 96025 — Inland by Téa Obreht**
1893. Frontierswoman Nora waits for her husband and eldest sons to return to their Arizona Territory home. Meanwhile, her youngest son is convinced that a mysterious beast is stalking the land around their house.

**DB 87308 — Sun, Moon, Earth by Tyler Nordgren**
Astronomer examines the many ways humans have reacted to and interacted with the phenomenon of a total solar eclipse. Discusses the scientific discoveries that eclipses have helped make possible.

**DB 80502 — Grandma Gatewood’s Walk by Ben Montgomery**
Biography of Emma Gatewood (1887-1973) who left her family in Ohio in May 1955, saying only that she was going for a walk. Four months later she completed a solo hike of the Appalachian Trail—the first woman to do so. Details her trip and subsequent celebrity.

**DB 96528 — The Institute by Stephen King**
In the middle of the night, intruders silently murder Luke Ellis’s parents and take him to the Institute. He wakes to find he is among
other kids like him with psychic gifts that the Institute wants to exploit.

**DB 94175 – Daisy Jones and the Six by Taylor Jenkins Reid**
Daisy Jones, the daughter of a painter and a model, comes of age on L.A.’s Sunset Strip in the 1960s. She falls into the rock ‘n’ roll scene and joins forces with an up-and-coming band, The Six.

**DB 97136 – Blowout by Rachel Maddow**
Emmy Award-winning TV host examines the lucrative and corrupt oil industry with black humor while traveling around the globe from Oklahoma to Russia. She calls for transparency and a stop to industry subsidization.

--Sammie Willis, Librarian

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**NLS announces magazine changes**

Readers of two popular national magazines will notice some changes starting this month. *Money* magazine discontinued print publication after its June/July 2019 issue. After researching the market, NLS identified *Kiplinger’s Personal Finance* as a comparable alternative and is adding the publication to BARD.

NLS previously received a free, abridged audio version of the *New Yorker* from a third-party producer, but that was discontinued in the fall. Now, NLS has a contract with a new producer to narrate the *New Yorker*. Upcoming editions will include content that had not previously been available to NLS patrons.
AIM Center updates

Each year we see new faces in the public schools as Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs) move or retire. This year we have served more new TVIs and students than ever! Along with those changes, we have had changes in the Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) Center. This seems like the perfect time to acquaint or in some cases, reacquaint yourself with our staff and mission.

Meet the staff:

**Sheldon Moglia** has been with the AIM Center for 15 years. He handles orders for our Aids & Equipment and assists with getting our new students set up in our database. Sheldon attended a week-long workshop in 2017 at Perkins School for the Blind in Boston to learn to repair our Perkins Braillers. He is tech savvy and instrumental in researching new products for our center. Sheldon handles most of our walk-in patrons and has outstanding customer service skills. He and his wife have two children.

**Cynthia Stokes** has been with the AIM Center for 13 years and is our “gal behind the scenes”. Every single volume of every book and every piece of equipment from the largest to the smallest is processed by Cynthia. She is our shipping and handling guru, receiving, labeling and barcoding all of our items for tracking purposes. When asked about her position, Cynthia replied, “I am still so impressed with what we do. It’s an honor to serve the children and families of Oklahoma.”

**Pepper Watson** has been employed in the AIM Center for 19 years, serving the last 10 years as Director. She is a former
Math and Science teacher with degrees in Education and Applied Mathematics. Pepper is in charge of the Federal Quota Registration for the Blind/VI students in Oklahoma, serves as the Ex Officio Trustee to American Printing House for the Blind (APH) for Oklahoma, and is in charge of purchasing and maintaining the AIM Center collection. Her day-to-day activities include ordering textbooks and all equipment, answering emails from TVIs, compiling reports and stats needed for state reports and balancing the AIM Center budget.

The AIM Center is currently serving 1,232 students between birth and 12th grade in 516 schools across Oklahoma. We are funded on both the federal and state levels to provide Large Print and Braille textbooks as well as all types of Aids and Equipment (A&Es), including technology items. Materials provided by the AIM Center assist the TVIs and our visually impaired or blind students perform on a level playing field with sighted students. At present the AIM Center has 2,049 LP titles, 533 BR titles, 218 Twin Vision (both print and Braille) titles and 964 different types of A&Es.

We have exciting changes coming to the AIM Center in late spring/early summer. I am in the process of revamping our online catalog to include short descriptions of products, URL addresses for quick reference to the APH site, Categories to assist finding materials for specific eye conditions and eventually pictures of each product. When this is complete, ALL orders will be placed on-line with a few strokes of the keyboard! This should streamline the ordering process for TVIs and enable the AIM Center to become paper-free!

--Pepper Watson, AIM Center Director
Recent praise of the AIM Center

“Our AIM Center and its employees are the best in the nation. The endless work and sacrifice to get materials and assistance to our visually impaired students is amazing to me. Our VI students would not be able to attend, participate, and excel as students in public schools without their dedication. They continuously search ways to expand funding so that more students benefit from materials, technology and services from the AIM Center. After 21 years in the field of vision, I still get emotional when I see my students see something more clearly or access instruction easier due to a piece of technology or materials that was provided by our AIM Center. I would not be able to do my job without our AWESOME AIM Center. My students would not be successful without our AMAZING AIM Center.

“Shouting from the rooftops a BIG thank you to the best in the Nation.... Oklahoma AIM Center ROCKS!!”

--Nikki Keck, TVI, COMS

“The materials from the AIM Center are an integral part of a student's day! Most, if not all, of the students I serve have equipment on loan to allow them to perform what is required of them in the classroom. The staff at the AIM center are QUICK to meet our needs, provide feedback, and/or secure items from other resources that may not be on their shelves. I truly rely on them for so much of my planning and meeting students’ needs! We are blessed with their dedication and active involvement on behalf of students with visual impairments!”

--Debby Ferrel, Elk City PS
I recently attended a national conference for people who work in the “State Use” program. This program is designed to provide relevant jobs for people with serious disabilities, largely developmental in nature. It was so energizing to meet with about 80 people whose life’s focus is doing good.

So now I am back in my office, working with a dozen or so people who have the same focus. For the past nine plus years it has been my distinct pleasure to learn from the good people who work for the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services. Whereas most of my career has been spent, also with good people, but with a more commercial focus of delivering goods and services for a profit, this vocation has much more rewarding personal dividends in the form of better lives for many people.

What we do every day becomes our defining feature, doesn’t it? I am of an age where many people have retired and are volunteering for some worthwhile activity, going fishing, traveling, and many other things to stay engaged and to keep their vitality. In my case, in all seriousness, I love my work so much that it would be very hard to retire. Mark Twain said “find a job you enjoy doing, and you’ll never have to work a day in your life.”

So here we are; it is winter in Oklahoma. Right now as I write this, there is some snow left from yesterday’s snowfall. It may be cold outside, but I have a wonderfully warm feeling from being a part of something so much greater than myself. The bottom line to me is this: devote yourself and your resources to something greater than yourself. Keep your eye on the mission. Give it your best efforts. In this way, you will cause outward-moving ripples of kindness, the extent of which you may never know.

--Jim Kettler, Contract Monitor/Training Associate
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.

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

FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND