

Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped



BRIGHT FUTURE

SHARE OUR VISION, THAT ALL MAY READ.

Vol. 40, No. 2, Summer 2025



Jack repairs a braille for AIM Center students, one of the many functions of the OLBPH.



**OKLAHOMA
Rehabilitation Services**
Oklahoma Library for the Blind and
Physically Handicapped

Inside the Library: What do
the OLBPH staff do?
>> Page 4

Letter from the Director

Chilling Out

Greetings to all from a “chill” library,

Now that we are well into the summer, the Travis Leon Harris Building, home of the Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, has functional air conditioning! When winter is upon us, we will have sufficient heating as well. Yay! The building’s entire heating, ventilating and air conditioning system has been replaced.

As I’ve mentioned before throughout this one-year project, the library services patrons expect and deserve have continued uninterrupted, despite all the physical building challenges library staff have navigated.

In fact, in the recent biennial patron satisfaction survey, patrons continued the trend from past years of lauding library employees for their help and respect, reporting 95 to 100% satisfaction. What HVAC outage, right?

In the survey, patrons reported greater satisfaction with their auto-selected books. Of course, the evolution of patron-centric cartridges with multiple titles downloaded onto one cartridge is the main contributor toward this 10% uptick. With still less than 50% of respondents feeling comfortable with downloading their own books, the downloading service that the OLBPH provides through duplication on demand is paramount in keeping our patrons supplied with books.

In short this is what we do. We bridge the technology gap for our patrons, eliminate mobility barriers by delivering things to your door, and make sure That All May Read. Moving forward I anticipate even greater service advancements as Team Library reunites on-site to work together again in person.

Stay cool everyone.

- Kevin Treese, OLBPH Director

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Take a look inside the OLBPH
for a visit with our staff.

Cover Story

A Peek into the OLBPH

With heating and air conditioning issues this year, the Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped staff have worked to keep services going despite the challenges. Now that we have recently regained heat and air, this is a perfect time to take a look behind the scenes and talk a little about what each of us does to keep your services going.

First, I'll highlight the Accessible Instructional Materials Center, which lays the foundation of literacy by serving our patrons from birth to graduation. The AIM Center delivers a vast collection of instructional materials to schools and students across the state. The materials are stored in the AIM Center's warehouse in the OLBPH and are mailed or delivered to students.

Pepper is the director of the AIM Center and keeps everything running. She juggles staff schedules seamlessly and has worked hard to keep

everyone safe despite the heat and lack of air this summer. Her team states that she is dedicated, hardworking, and cares deeply for the AIM Centers' students, parents, and teachers, as well as her team.

Cynthia, with her many years of dedicated experience at the AIM Center, stays on top of the large collection of AIM Center supplies and incoming emails. She has even stayed in the heat longer than was expected to make sure students got the supplies they needed. She keeps a positive attitude and works hard to instill that in the rest of the team.

Dominique keeps up with AIM Center stock and has recently gone above and beyond to help with stock she is not directly responsible for, helping keep things running. She also communicates with teachers of the visually impaired. Her team says she has lent a new set of eyes to the AIM Center while being thoughtful, kind and intelligent.

Jack (pictured on the cover page) is the maintenance and repair tech for the AIM Center. If a student's equipment breaks, Jack is the one who works to get it fixed. He has lent a new way of thinking to the AIM Center and is always willing to lend a helping hand. Jack's team appreciates his quick thinking and problem-solving, his willingness to always help carry or move things, and his kind and helpful nature.

Taking it back now to direct library services, Kevin is the library director. He handles

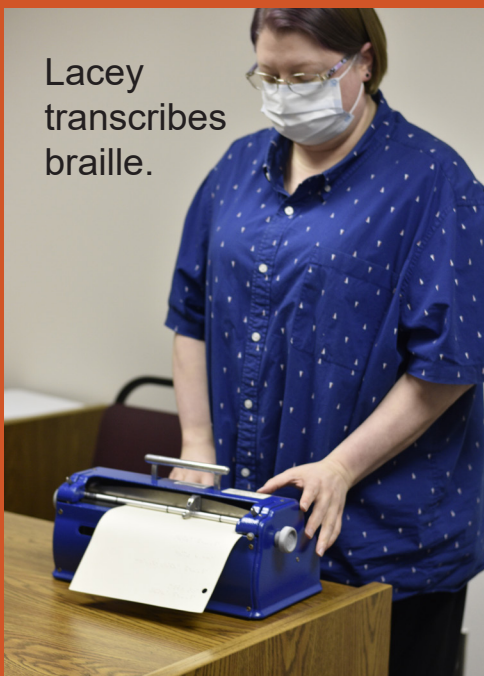


Kevin



the management of the library, including communicating information with library staff, signing off on purchasing, communicating with NLS and DRS, and the occasional public speaking engagement. He also enjoys traveling and attending outreach events, where he networks with other professionals in caregiving and public service to raise awareness of the OLBPH's services.

Lacey
transcribes
braille.



Kait, our public information officer, handles the majority of the outreach and speaking engagements for our library. She is also the editor-in-chief of this publication, along with writing press releases and manning our website and social media. She is the person to go to for all things library news-related.

Sarah is someone many of you have talked to in recent years. She is the pleasant voice that answers our phones and directs you to whom or what you need when you call the library. She also compiles monthly donation reports, weekly statistics, and tallies daily calls. She comes to the aid of many of our staff, covering some of those extra tasks we just don't have the time to get to, whether it be sending a quick email, printing some documents or answering patron questions.

Erin



Sarah's supervisor, Lacey, is the library's building manager. She does a lot of tasks that many of us do not want to do; including sitting in the heat all summer to make sure someone was still available for deliveries and drop-in questions. Lacey is literally tasked with keeping the lights on, keeping supplies well stocked,

scheduling any building maintenance and repair, and preparing requisitions for annual contracts. She is also our braille transcriber, transcribing materials not only for us, but also for DRS and its community partners.

We then have our library materials team. They are the backbone of our library services. They do everything from recommending books to making sure that players work correctly to play the books you receive.

Andrew is our administrative librarian and manages our other librarians and Mable in the machine room. Andrew processes prospective patron applications and transfer patrons, answers many of your calls, compiles statistics, makes sure the library software is working correctly, and troubleshoots any system issues daily. He also makes sure our services meet NLS standards and requirements so that patrons are getting the best services possible.

Erin is one of our librarians, and she spends much of her time speaking with patrons, fulfilling their book requests, and answering any questions patrons might have. She is excellent at book recommendations. She serves as our Braille Audio Reading Download administrator; helping patrons get started with BARD, troubleshooting technical issues, and making sure we are all aware of BARD updates and information. Erin also handles the creation of bibliographical records, occasional outreach, and oversees the magazine on cartridge distribution.

Marka is also one of our librarians and spends time speaking with patrons, fulfilling book requests, and answering general questions. She also oversees the circulation department to make sure all stays running smoothly, filling in any gaps in checkouts and check-ins. She reads patron notes included with returned books and makes sure the requested changes are adjusted in patrons' accounts, and fixes anything unusual, like broken cartridges, cases, mismatched pieces, and other anomalies.

Melanie is the person who makes sure every cartridge is prepared each morning to be sent out to patrons, including books and magazines. She also helps read through any notes and often catches things that shouldn't be automatically sent out. She makes sure we have ample stock of all



Andrew handles cartridges.



Collin checks in book returns.



Mable repairs DTBMs.



Troy and Kat work in the recording studio.

needed circulation supplies (mailing cards, printer ink, cartridges, etc.) and makes sure all the cartridges are properly labeled.

Collin checks in all of the returned cartridges each day. He inspects each cartridge and case to be sure it is clean and in an acceptable condition to be reused, and pulls out any notes or other objects included with the returned books so that they may be processed by the department supervisor. He labels digital book cases and cleans older cases so they can be made ready to reuse.

Last but certainly not least for this crew is Mable, who runs our machine room. She maintains our inventory of digital players, as well as the supplies necessary to keep them usable. She mails the players out to patrons and checks them back in when they are returned. She also cleans and repairs these returned players so they can go back into circulation. When available, Mable is always willing to help out in other areas in the library.

Another important part of our library is the recording studio, including our book narration recording studio and the Oklahoma Telephone Reader staff. The studio makes sure you have access to local news and contributes Oklahoma-centric books to the library's catalog.

Kat is the recording studio director, managing the rest of the studio staff. She fills the gaps to keep everything running smoothly and helps wherever needed, whether it be writing articles like this for Bright Future, manning the sound board, narrating, editing, reviewing materials, copying materials, helping with OTR, scheduling volunteers, or even speaking on behalf of the library and studio.

Scott brings his many years of technical knowledge to the studio. He has over four decades of experience in multimedia and technology and always enjoys a new challenge. He keeps all the studio hardware and software in top performing shape. He is also a patient and understanding coach to many of our new narration or sound editing volunteers. He brings out the best in everyone.

Troy brings unique skills to the studio team. Troy has an extensive background in music and is excellent with language and pronunciation. He is a fantastic narration coach, helping our narrators deliver material accurately and effectively. He is a great resource for vocal warm-ups and strategies. He also keeps the studio well organized, always having materials ready and prepared before recording.

Steve is responsible for the content and programming of the Oklahoma Telephone Reader. He manages, trains, and utilizes volunteers for recording Oklahoma news publications such as the Tulsa World and Oklahoman. OTR uses a phone/playout server to playback the recorded content to patrons when prompted through the phone. While Steve is part of the recording team, he is also fully responsible for the OTR service. While assisted when needed, Steve is the heart and soul of OTR.

So as you can see, we have some truly incredible people dedicating an amazing amount of time and effort to delivering you a broad range of library services. We are all always here to serve your library needs, no matter what the conditions. We understand the importance of these services to patrons and are continuously working to improve those services in any way we can.

-Kat Jensen, Recording Studio Director

Book Corner

Trouble and Triumph

DB 33685 – *Mean Spirit* by Linda Hogan

Oil is discovered on the land where Native Americans have been resettled, bringing violence, fraud, and betrayal. Nola Blanket, heir to a fortune, witnesses her mother's murder. She fears revenge if she reveals what she saw. Only years later does she seek to come to terms with the heartbreak that afflicts her people.

DB 44762 – *Cold Mountain* by Charles Frazier

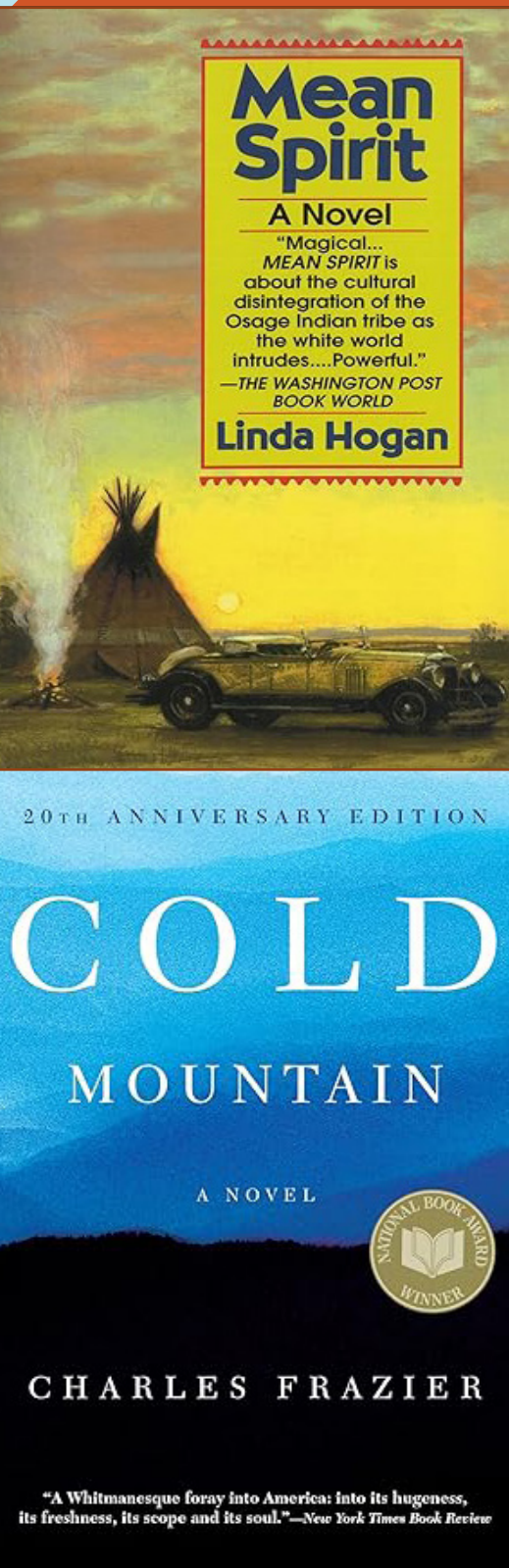
A wounded Confederate soldier leaves the war on an arduous trek to his mountain home and the woman he aims to marry. Meanwhile, his intended struggles to work her deceased father's hardscrabble farm.

DB 128093 – *A Map to Paradise* by Susan Meissner

1956, Malibu, California. Something is not right on Paradise Circle. With her name on the Hollywood blacklist and her life on hold, out-of-work starlet Melanie Cole has little choice in company. There is her next-door neighbor and her maid to choose from. But when the neighbor goes missing Melanie and her maid can't help trying to find out what happened.

DB 120063 – *James: A Novel* by Percival Everett

This novel is a retelling of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* told from the enslaved Jim's point of view. When Jim overhears that he is about to be sold to a man in New Orleans, separated from his wife and daughter forever,



he decides to hide on nearby Jackson Island until he can formulate a plan. Meanwhile, Huck Finn has faked his own death to escape his violent father.

DB 33197 – *Troubles* by J.G. Farrell

It is July 1919 and Major Brendan Archer, recovering from shell shock, travels by train to Kilnalough, Ireland. Archer's destination is the Majestic, a decaying hotel owned by his fiancée's father. The hotel becomes the center of life for the Major and the battleground for the Black and Tans and Irish rebels. The plot reaches its climax as the local gentry attend a great ball, all unaware their world is collapsing.

DB 107459 – *Berlin* by Pierre Frei

In occupied Berlin, the victorious Allies are in control of the streets. US military police Captain Ashburner and Inspector Klaus Dietrich are assigned the case of a young woman, believed to be American, who was found dead in a subway station. When other bodies are found, the men realize they are hunting a serial killer.

DB 047748 – *Writ in Blood* by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro

In the days before World War I, Czar Nicholas II asks his friend, Count Saint-Germain, to visit King Edward VII of England and Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany. The czar hopes this advocate for peace can convince his relatives to limit their production of arms. Unfortunately the count incites the wrath of an arms merchant.

About Oklahoma

DB 35647 – *Cimarron* by Edna Ferber

Oklahoma during the great land rush of 1889 is the background for this classic story. Yancey Cravat, dreamer, adventurer, and gunman, and his wife, Sabra, settle in Oklahoma. Sabra makes herself into a sturdy pioneer woman and eventually a member of Congress.

Oklahoma Insights

AIM Center Provides School Supplies

Finding the right school supplies for students can be difficult but even more so for those with low-vision children. The Accessible Instructional Materials Center can help with that!

We provide a variety of classroom aids and equipment for our low-vision and blind students, birth through 12th grade. Here are a few examples of items we carry: bold-line notebook paper, large-print and braille rulers, math drill cards, dome magnifiers, large-print word flash cards, bold line graph paper, tactile geometric shapes, power switches in various shapes and sizes, novels in large print and braille, tactile kits for drawing and many more!

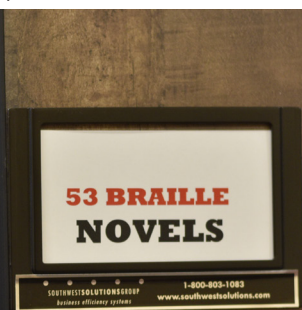
You may see a full catalog of our products at <https://media.aph.org/app/uploads/2025/07/Products-Catalog-2025-2027-accessible-UA.pdf>

The AIM Center operates much like a lending library in that our services are FREE to qualifying students. Large items may be checked out for the entire school year. Some of our materials are consumable and will be the students' to keep.

For more information about the AIM Center, please visit our website at <https://oklahoma.gov/olbph/aim-center.html> or email me at pwatson@okdrs.gov.

- Pepper Watson, AIM Center Director

The AIM Center has a variety of supplies and equipment available.



Volunteer Spotlight

A Thank You To Our Volunteers

Volunteers **Narrators**
Editors **Telephone Readers**

Thank You!

In this issue, instead of recognizing any one volunteer, I would like to take the time to thank all our library volunteers.

We have such a wide range of volunteers — from Miss Oklahoma candidates to professors, journalists, and even professional narrators — that we can be selective with whom we choose to

read materials. I know this is not the case with all network libraries, and I count us fortunate that so many amazing people want to come and give some of their free time to help us deliver high-quality material.

I would like to extend a special thank you to our volunteers for their continued support over the past year. Due to heating and air issues, we have experienced some connection problems with our OTR services, which have required patience. At times, we have also had a warm sound booth. Even after being warned away, our volunteers came (when safe) to sweat it out in the booth and make sure our patrons had new Oklahoma-centric books and Oklahoma Today magazines. On a side note, some of these volunteers have been with us for almost 20 years now. That is a kind of dedication you don't often see even with a paid position these days.

So thank you. Thank you for putting up with me and the studio team, thank you for sweating it out when needed, and thank you for a dedication rarely seen in any area these days. You all inspire me to do better daily.

- Kat Jensen, Recording Studio Director

Employee Spotlight

Keeping the Lights (and the AC) On

The Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped finally has air conditioning! This is thanks, in large part, to the efforts of Lacey Downs, the Library's building manager.

Lacey joined the Library in 2010, first in the Accessible Instructional Materials Center, then as the administrative assistant in 2018. She became the building manager in October 2023.

As the Library's building manager, Lacey oversees building operations, including scheduling maintenance and repairs, preparing requisitions for annual contracts, paying utility and other bills, and purchasing supplies and materials for the Library and the AIM Center.

The Leon Travis Harris Building, home of the OLBPH, was built in 1990. The building's footprint is over 40,000 square feet. Due to the extended absence of a building manager, Lacey had a lot of catching up to do to get the building back into tip-top shape when she stepped into the position.

She started by working to update lighting throughout the building and in the parking lots. She also removed safety hazards from the Library's garden on The Hill. She hired new staff to clean up the building's interior greenery atriums and worked to get the handicap buttons working in the bathrooms.

Then, in August 2024, less than a year into her tenure as building manager, Lacey had a crisis on her hands - the building had turned into an oven, the AC wasn't working and the whole staff were baking in their offices. The building was unusable and the staff were sent to work from home, except Lacey and the Library's director, Kevin, who stayed behind to man the front desk for deliveries and walk-ins.

Lacey took on the building's large and complicated, 34-year-old air conditioning system with a swarm of HVAC inspections, which quickly

lead to the realization that the whole system would need to be replaced. Next, she arranged bids from HVAC companies for the project, prepared reports for the department's commission to vote on funding the replacement, and hoped for good news.

Success! The department approved funding for a new HVAC system! Now came a series of steps in HVAC replacement, beginning with the removal of the previous HVAC system (a whole room's worth of piping and equipment). A roll-off dumpster was called in. The new HVAC system came together slowly. Special parts had to be ordered from out of state. They had to be manufactured especially for the project. There were manufacturing delays. There were shipping delays. Throughout it all, Lacey stayed on top of the project details and the contractors and communicated news about the HVAC system to the Library's anxious staff. Thanks to her efforts, staff now have a building to call home once again.



"To say Lacey is instrumental seems like an understatement," Kevin said. "She has guided this 11-month, \$1.3 million HVAC replacement project, on top of constant electrical, plumbing, building and grounds maintenance. She has literally kept us open and operating."

Lacey is the heart that makes the Library home for the staff. Outside of her role as the building manager, she also has a passion for books and for libraries. Lacey holds a Master's in Library Information Science from the University of Oklahoma. She has always enjoyed books and spent lots of time at her school library as a child. Some of Lacey's favorite books are *The Starless Sea* by Erin Morgenstern and *Firestarter* by Stephen King.

Lacey enjoys reading, as well as gaming, cross-stitch and visiting the Oklahoma City Museum of Art. She plays PC and console games, as well as tabletop games like Monopoly or Uno. She has two cats, Tiny and Lilith.

Talking Book Topics Update

The National Library Service notified network libraries in July that the March/April issue of the Talking Book Topics had been canceled. At this time, we do not have a date when publication will resume.

Patrons who are signed up for the TBT on digital cartridge will continue to receive it once publication resumes.

The TBT is always available on the NLS website at <https://www.loc.gov/nls/> and on BARD.

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FOR THE BLIND**