



# indow to the World

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Ed Byrne, Editor

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**Newsletter of the Tennessee Library for the Blind & Physically Handicapped**

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## Your Tax Dollars at Work

We recently received a memo from the National Library Service (NLS) in Washington. It gave the average cost of NLS-supplied items for the fiscal year 2005. We thought you might be interested in seeing these figures, since they will give you some insight into the economics of our services.

As you probably suspect, the most expensive item that NLS supplies to us is the standard cassette player. This device costs \$280.00. On average, the spare parts needed to maintain a player cost \$17.76/year. This total doesn't include costs of labor donated by our Telecom Pioneers, the retired Bell South volunteers who keep our player fleet in service. NLS estimates the value of their services at just over \$39 per player per year.

The average cassette ("RC") book costs \$5.84, while the average Braille ("BR") title costs \$100.95, more than 15 times as much. (No wonder we have a lot more copies of RC titles.) The average cassette magazine costs \$0.62 per copy, while the average braille magazine weighs in at \$3.50. You might want to compare these costs to prices at your local newsstand or book store, where print magazines start at \$4

per issue and audio book prices usually exceed \$30.00.

On average, our patrons check out about 50 items per year from the library. That's \$300 worth of materials at a minimum. Throw in an annual large-print catalogue (\$1.04) and a subscription to *Talking Books Topics* (\$1.74 in large print, \$3.12 on cassette), and the average value of all NLS materials loaned to each patron in a year rises to well over \$600.

These costs are all paid by your federal taxes. In addition, the Tennessee Secretary of State's organization spends an annual average of slightly more than \$150 per patron for our operations, and for our collections of large-print books and descriptive videos.

So what's our point? As a patron you receive our materials and services completely free of charge. But, as a taxpayer – and in Tennessee everyone is a taxpayer – the total cost of our programs to you averages about \$750 per patron per year.

You can help control these costs in a variety of ways: by reading and returning books promptly; by treating our

books and players as carefully as you would your own; by making sure that players are sent back promptly for refurbishment and reuse; by making sure that talking book cassettes go back in the right cases.

Practices like these will help us provide more efficient service while keeping our costs (and your taxes) low. Remember: the tax dollars you save may be your own.

### **PAVEing the Way for Tennessee Kids**

Speaking of tax-supported programs, there's a new one in Tennessee aimed at visually-impaired kids from ages 3 to 21. Project PAVE (*Providing Access to the Visual Environment*) is a joint effort of Tennessee School for the Blind (TSB) and Vanderbilt University's Special Education Department. Funded by the Tennessee Dept. of Education, the program aims to provide comprehensive low-vision services to young Tennesseans through TSB and local educational agencies.

PAVE will provide clinical low-vision evaluations for students with visual impairments, as well as appropriate optical devices and instructions on their use. The ultimate goal is to prepare children for independent visual functioning. To learn more about this program, call Project PAVE at 343-8783 (Nashville area) or 1-877-269-6294 (toll-free long distance).

### **The Lion Talks Tonight**

For you fans of live musical theater, the Tennessee Performing Arts Center (TPAC) has arranged two special "accessibility" performances of Disney's *The Lion King* this fall. The two shows, at 1:00 PM on Sunday, Nov. 5 and at 7:30 pm on Thursday, Nov. 16, will feature a narrated audio description for the blind and visually-impaired as well as an American Sign Language translation for the deaf and hard of hearing.

Playgoers who want to make use of these special accessibility services should purchase their tickets in person or by phone, making sure to specify the service they want at the time of purchase. For more information, contact Melissa t 615-782-4000.

### **Staff Profile**

There's probably only one thing that all the cassette, braille or large print books you receive from us have in common: they've all been checked out to you by Carmelita Esaw.

As Computer Specialist for TLBPH, Carmelita arrives each morning at 7:30 AM to start the computer routines that print out the hundreds of mailcards we use every day. After feeding the printed cards through a burster to separate them, Carmelita forwards the day's batch up to the circulation staff, who pull your requests from the stacks, insert mailcards into the cassette cases, and

bring the pulled items down to the first floor for check out and mailing.

That's when Carmelita really gets busy. With a hand-held scanner, she will scan the bar codes and patron IDs for every single one of the thousand or so books and DVs we send out in a day, automatically checking out these items to the appropriate patron. The READS system alerts her if we try to send the wrong item to any patron, and Carmelita in turn alerts the circulation staff to correct the error.

In addition, Carmelita must insert all our outgoing LP books and DVs into their mail bags or cases, check all our returned LP books and DVs back in, and route any damaged DVs to repair.

As part of this routine, Carmelita also maintains the mailcard printer and burster, our two crankiest and most essential pieces of equipment. And, at the end of the month, she generates a number of vital operating and circulation reports.

As you may have already guessed, Carmelita doesn't tolerate inactivity very well. A 20-year veteran of TSLA, she took on her present responsibilities more than 17 years ago, after serving two years as a microfilmer in Technical Services.

A Nashville native, Carmelita is an alumna of Nashville Tech and Stratford High School, where she met her then-sweetheart and now husband Buddy Esaw. They've been together for 30 years and have two children: seventeen

year-old daughter Kiara, a senior at Hunters Lane High, and son Willie, 12, an artist and student at John Early Paideia Magnet School. Her favorite leisure activity is dance skating at the Skating Rivergate Rink, where she and husband Buddy like to show the kids a new move or two.

Carmelita says that her ambition is to retire from the Library in a few years and work with the elderly. It sounds a little on the slow side for her, but by that time she may be ready for a break.

## **Mailcard Blues**

Speaking of accessibility and mailcards (you like that transition?), we've had an accessibility problem of our own lately. It concerns the mailcard holders on the zippered Large Print mail bags. These holders are designed so that patrons can slip the mailcards in and out (or, more accurately, out and back in) though the open edge at the top of the holder. That is, the edge closest and parallel to the zipper.

It sounds a lot easier than it often proves in practice. So a few frustrated patrons have opted for an alternative method; cutting out the clear plastic insert that covers and protects the mailcard. Unfortunately, this practice makes it easier for the mail card to slip out, be torn, or rendered illegible. Carmelita has to replace the plastic film before we can re-use the mail bags.

We're asking all our LP readers to take note and stick with the orthodox method

for removing and reversing mailcards. It will help us control costs and prevent lost books.

Samples and tables of contents are posted at <http://newsreelmag.org>.

## **Swell News Stuff**

For some additional choices in magazines, LBPH patrons may want to check out the *Recorded Periodicals* list at Associated Services for the Blind (ASB). ASB's bookstore provides audio versions of some 26 popular periodicals, including *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *Time*, *New Yorker* and *Oprah*. These recordings will only play on four-track cassette players like the ones we provide. Annual subscriptions begin at \$28.00 for *Civil War Times Illustrated* and range upward from there. If you've been looking for the perfect gift for that rich, elderly, visually impaired relative, you might want to visit their website at <http://www.asb.org/services/recording.htm>.

*Newsreel Magazine By and for the Blind* bills itself as "a unique monthly interactive audio cassette magazine" that is produced and recorded by its own visually-impaired subscribers. Subscriber/contributors record their own articles on topics as diverse as adaptive technology, travel, recipes, poetry and sports. Each issue consists of two 90-minute cassettes in NLS four-track format, and averages between 50 and 60 articles. Subscription prices vary from \$20.00 to \$50.00. For more information, call 1-888-723-8737 or e-mail the editor at [ishott@gcfn.org](mailto:ishott@gcfn.org).

## **LBPH Recommends**

For election-year readers interested in politics and leadership, your editor recommends *Lincoln's Virtues: An Ethical Biography*, by historian William Lee Miller (RC 57259). Just when you think that no one could say anything new about Lincoln, Miller does. It leaves you thinking, "Oh, so *that's* why they called him 'Honest Abe'."

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### **Administration and Staff**

The Honorable Riley C. Darnell, Secretary of State; Jeanne Sugg, State Librarian & Archivist; Ruth Hemphill, Director; Janie Murphree, Assistant Director; Carmelita Esaw, Computer

Specialist; Ann Jones, Administrative Assistant.

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Reader Advisors: Ed Byrne, Annette Hadley, Clara Ledbetter, and Francine Sharpe.

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