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**CONNECTIONS:** YOUR LINK TO THE  
State Library of Oregon



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**AGENCY NEWS**

## **Digital Highlight Celebrates Oregon State Parks Centennial**



By Kate Anderson, Digitization Specialist for Government Services, and Heather Pitts, Cataloging Services and Digital Collections Librarian.

One hundred years ago, in 1922, Sarah Helmick, her son James, and her daughter-in-law Amanda deeded land south of Monmouth, Oregon to the State of Oregon that became the **first state park**. Today, the park system includes 254 properties that span the state, from **Iwetemlaykin** in Eastern Oregon to **Fort Rock** in Central Oregon to the **363 miles of the Oregon Coast**. In celebration to coincide with the **Centennial Birthday Party**, the State Library has curated a digital exhibit for Oregon State Parks. This exhibit includes a **coloring book**, maps, brochures, photographs, reports, and videos spanning from when Parks and Recreation Department was first with the Highway Commission to the modern day.

Please browse the [digital highlight](#) containing over 100 different items on the State Library's Digital Collections website.



LIBRARY SUPPORT & DEVELOPMENT  
SERVICES

## Library Support Forging Exciting Path to the Future

By Buzzy Nielsen, Library Support Program Manager

The [Library Support & Development Services division](#) has a new (draft) roadmap to the future! Every five years, the division creates a plan to help direct the use and distribution of the approximately \$2.5 million in grant funds it receives annually through the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. After much thought and minimal tears, the division has [new priorities and objectives](#) that will govern its work from 2023 through 2027.

These priorities were established thanks to the mounds of feedback the division received through surveys, interviews, focus groups, and town hall meetings held to both evaluate the [LSTA 2018-22 Plan](#) and, more importantly, to hear from library workers and supporters about the changing priorities of Oregon's libraries. You can view the results of this feedback in the [Evaluation of the 2018-22 Plan](#) and

**Future Focus Report** about how Library Support can better serve Oregon libraries going forward.

The 2023-27 LSTA Plan's five primary priorities demonstrate the critical work that 21st century libraries do to serve their communities and the ways that the Library Support division can assist them.

- Oregon libraries break down systemic barriers
- Oregon libraries close the digital divide
- Oregon libraries support students, youth, and lifelong learners
- Oregon libraries build relationships to foster community
- Oregon libraries have the training and resources they need

Oregon libraries are committed to equity, diversity, inclusion, and antiracism (EDIA). They are key institutions promoting digital equity in their communities. They help people of all ages be engaged, educated, and have better quality of life. The relationships libraries form within their communities and with each other make this work possible. And Library Support & Development Services at the State Library is committed to helping achieve these laudable goals through consulting, training, funding, and making connections.

These new LSTA priorities and objectives will receive final approval at the State Library Board meeting in June. The Library Support division welcomes you to **review the priorities** and provide any comments you have. Please feel free to direct your thoughts to Buzzy Nielsen, Program Manager for Library Support, at [buzzy.nielsen@slo.oregon.gov](mailto:buzzy.nielsen@slo.oregon.gov) or 971-375-3486.

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## Notable Transcript Awards

By Jennifer Cox, Answerland Coordinator



*(Pictured: Liz Paulus, Adult Services Librarian/Web Services at Cedar Mill Library)*

On May 6th, Oregon's statewide virtual reference service, **Answerland**, recognized Liz Paulus at Cedar Mill Library for her excellent virtual reference work while staffing the service in October 2021. Liz was nominated for the Notable Transcript Award. The Notable Transcript Award gives Oregon librarians the opportunity to nominate their colleagues for providing quality virtual reference service. Nominations are reviewed by the Answerland Quality Team. The Quality Team is made up of volunteer librarians from around Oregon and the United States. Each nomination requires a transcript of the virtual conversation between a library patron asking a question and a librarian providing them with information and

assistance. These nominations are then evaluated by the Answerland Quality Team against the **quality standards** that librarians aspire to achieve with each chat session.

This year's winning transcript nomination began with a question from college student. The college student was looking for some help finding peer-reviewed sources about vaccines within the last year. This student had questions about "how they work, effectiveness, past successes and failures, and hesitancy" regarding vaccines. Right away, Liz validated the patron's own attempts to find information on their own by asking about where they had looked already. Then she proceeded to ask clarifying questions.

Liz learned that the student needed five total credible sources to complete their research paper. The student was frustrated, noting that all the sources they tried to look at through EBSCOhost "seemed to be too dated." Liz explained that the older articles did have relevant information on vaccine technology. She noted with the exception of a recent tweak to the vaccine process involving mRNA, the process was the same. Liz then walked the patron through the tricky topic of current study information versus the peer-review process. She noted how the information may be reliable but not technically peer reviewed from the past year. She did an outstanding job of making sure that the patron understood each part of the search process and application of the information in their paper. With gusto, Liz then invited the student to come along on the journey to find the needed information.

At the end of this instruction, Liz reiterated the steps to make a research appointment at their home institution. She also opened a ticket in the Answerland system so librarians at the student's college would know reach out to them. She made a final offer for any more help to verify that the patron's needs had been met and they had enough information to get started on their assignment.

The Quality Team is impressed with Liz's work with this patron from start to finish. She asked clarifying questions throughout the interaction; she had a welcoming

tone; she asked follow-up questions to make sure that the patron understood her and that the patron's needs were met. It can be hard not to dump a lot of information on students, but Liz did a great job of breaking down new information into easily digestible chunks without complicated lingo. She also ensured that the interaction would be followed up so the patron's question could be fully answered. Liz also demonstrated excellent virtual reference service when she taught the patron how to make a research appointment request and empowered the patron to make decisions about incorporating many types of credible sources in their paper.

As an expression of our gratitude, Liz was presented with a gift of appreciation and a certificate in a small surprise ceremony organized between Answerland Coordinator Jennifer Cox and Cedar Mill Library staff. Please join us in congratulating her!

The Answerland Quality Team

Valerie Florez, Answerland Volunteer

Heidi Senior, University of Portland

Alissa Renales, Answerland Volunteer

Clare Sobotka, Answerland Volunteer

## **Answerland-SUNYLA Midwinter Conference Presentation**



By Jennifer Cox, Answerland Coordinator

In February, one of Answerland's most active volunteers, Andrea (Andie) Marshall, reached out to program staff about presenting at a conference. The topic: Answerland, as a reference success story! We are always thrilled to support our volunteers in their personal and professional endeavors, and fully encouraged her to embrace the opportunity. Andie has been a volunteer with us for over two years, and recently she graduated into a role as an Answerland mentor. As someone who staffs all three of our reference queues (the Answerland Cooperative, Global Public Queue, and Global Academic Queue) we wonder, what can't she do?!

Her conference session for State University of New York Librarians Association (SUNYLA) was well planned and researched, featuring a literature review on the benefits, capabilities, and advantages of virtual reference. Andie discussed the structure and software used for the interactions from a volunteer perspective. At the end of the presentation, microphones were unmuted, and State Library staff were able to field questions about the funding, software, and logistics of the program. While not the primary intent of the session, this ended up being an excellent marketing opportunity for not only our services but also the recruitment of volunteer librarians outside of Oregon. Answerland boasts volunteers from all continental U.S. time zones and is expanding our cadre of talent constantly. This volunteer opportunity both trains and equips new grads as well as helps in creatively retooling established informational professionals. In turn, libraries around the nation then become the beneficiaries of candidates primed with technical skill and expertise in chat reference.

Answerland is not a new program, but it is a relatively recent acquisition under the administration of the State of Oregon as of 2016. Since then, the program has built a vibrant volunteer corps full of dedicated and loyal team members. The reward is seeing volunteers that become self-actualized through the program and sing the praises of Answerland, like Andie. In championing Answerland during her



presentation, she voiced to librarians in attendance that “[her] experience as a volunteer with Answerland continues to be rich and rewarding and [she has] learned some powerful lessons about creative problem solving and collaborative brainstorming with our community.”

Andie reflected on her service, “I’m constantly reminded by fellow volunteers and fellow staff at Answerland how crucial librarians are to everyday information seeking... and how critical librarians are to bridging gaps through collaboration. Librarians are people of diverse perspectives, practices, and protocols; we are adept at thinking outside of the box and innovating in the moment. We apply creativity to our reference work since we are constantly bombarded with opportunities to construct dynamic information-seeking processes with patrons. We deploy collaboration during reference interviews to build communal information infrastructures with patrons that are adaptable and porous. Librarians are experts at critical thinking and our intellectual empathy allows us to contextualize information seeking, connect with one another and patrons to support information seeking as accessible goal setting and to collaborate with each other and our communities through creative brainstorming and innovative practices. I've gained multiple insights into how librarians meaningfully contribute expertise and build community through dynamic engagement with one another and our patrons through serving as a volunteer with Answerland.”

An orange ribbon graphic with a folded end on the right side, containing the text "TALKING BOOK & BRAILLE LIBRARY" in white, uppercase letters.

**TALKING BOOK & BRAILLE LIBRARY**

# Continuing a Legacy of Empathy and Service

By Joel Henderson, Volunteer and Recording Studio Coordinator for Talking Books

A new user of the Talking Book and Braille Library, Mary-Ellen, shared an entertaining connection with us recently: she had once worked for the Talking Book and Braille Library as well! She graciously agreed to an interview, and her story highlights how while some things have changed, others are still the same.



*(Box for audiobook on records)*

During the summers of 1959 and 1960, Mary-Ellen worked for what was then called Books for the Blind at the old Albina branch of Multnomah County Library. The Talking Book and Braille program was administered by the Portland Library Association until it moved to the State Library in 1969. She was hired as a full-time traveling page and clerk at \$1.00 per hour (a fair bit above the \$0.80 prevailing wage for that type of position at the time) and was responsible for handling incoming and outgoing audiobooks, which were on LP records that traveled in heavy cardboard boxes. “Those boxes would get so dirty,” Mary-Ellen said. “When I started there, I was

wearing my nice clothes: cotton dresses and such. But after a while I changed to wearing different outfits; I was doing a lot of laundry!”

At the time, Books for the Blind was serving approximately 200 people. Users would call in and talk to Mrs. Williams, the department’s director, to request their books. Mary-Ellen remembers Mrs. Williams very fondly, saying, “She would often chat with users, and I think the chatting was very valuable to them. Mrs. Williams really got to know the users, and they felt comfortable sharing with her what they liked.” Mary-Ellen herself would talk to users on rare occasions, but she still felt connected to them in other ways. Many of the books users requested were titles she had read herself, and she was thrilled to be helping people with print impairments enjoy them. “At the time, disabilities were not really thought about in social services, and people with disabilities were very isolated,” said Mary-Ellen, “and this [program] just brought sunshine to their days. It was nice to know the books were being read and enjoyed, and that people with disabilities who were unable to get out much and weren’t thought of much could relive parts of their lives through the books they listened to.”

It is this attitude and motivation, wanting to deliver to users a personalized connection to the world around them, that still inspire the staff at the Talking Book and Braille Library today. While so many of the library’s details have changed (name, location, technology, etc.), why we do what we do has stayed the same: *That All May Read*\*. Mary-Ellen herself was extraordinarily thankful when she was told she too was eligible to sign up to get audiobooks. When she worked for Books for the Blind, only people with visual impairments were eligible, but in the years since then, eligibility has been broadened to now include folks like Mary-Ellen with a physical impairment. We are proud to be able to offer Mary-Ellen the same care and connection she was excited to provide to others over 60 years ago. “It feels like things have come full circle,” Mary-Ellen shared, “and I even live very near to where the library was located. I have always loved librarians and library employees because they have a sense of mission to improve the lives of those they serve. It’s

not just a love of books, but a love of serving others who love books just as much as I did.”

There was one thing we shared with Mary-Ellen during the interview that may have both surprised and delighted her more than any other detail. During her time with Books for the Blind, the library was staffed by just two people and occupied a quarter of the first floor of the old Albina branch building. “Because of limited funding, the library could only afford to have a certain level of book,” remembered Mary-Ellen (mostly feel-good titles she called them). “The space was just too small with too little area to spread out.” So when we told her our entire collection now contains over 100,000 titles for all levels of interest and fits on a single computer, she just about gasped.

Thank you very much, Mary-Ellen, for sharing your story with us, and for being part of the Talking Book and Braille Library’s legacy of empathy and service. You can be well assured the library is still in good hands.

*\*National Library Service’s motto*

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## **Talking Book and Braille Library TRIVIA TIME!**

We’re back with another Talking Book and Braille Library Trivia Time! But before we get to this month’s question, here is last month’s answer:

*The National Library Service has partnered with which government agency to pilot a Rapid Sign-up Project? **Veterans Affairs***

Thank you to everyone who submitted their answers, and feel free to keep participating each month. Here is this month’s question:

*Q: Oftentimes, you will find the described audio option on a DVD listed as?*

- English DVS
- English Audio Description
- English Descriptive Audio
- All of the above



Hint: you can find the answer in a [previous issue of \*Connections\*](#).

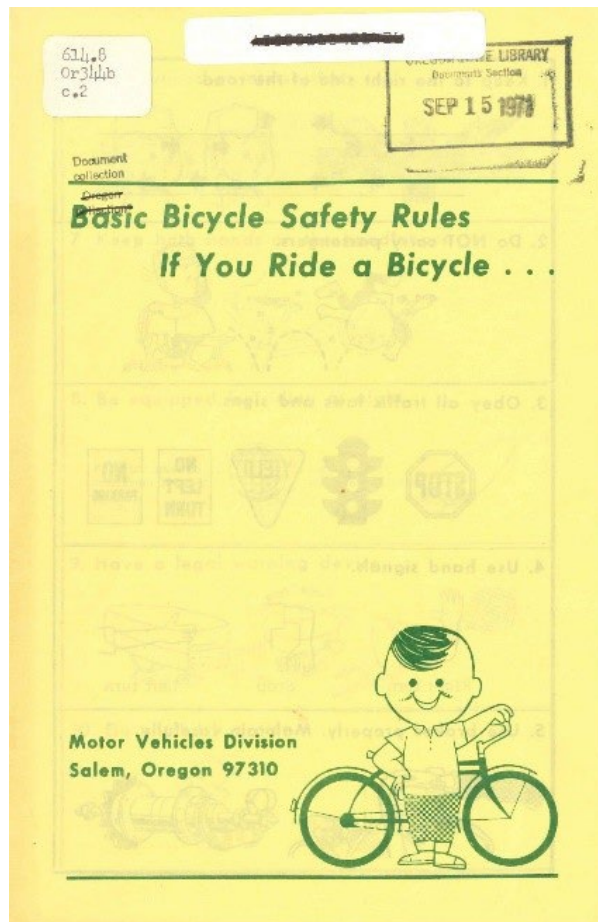
Click the button above to submit your answer to the trivia question. If you provide your name and contact information and answer the question correctly, **you may win a fun prize!**

Check back next month to see the answer, and we'll be back with more trivia in future *Connections* issues.

**GOVERNMENT INFORMATION &  
LIBRARY SERVICES**

## **OrDoc of the Month: Bicycle Safety**

By Jey Wann, Oregon Document Depository and Acquisitions Coordinator



Spring weather finally seems to be here, kids will be out of school soon, and it's time to think about bicycle safety.

In 1971, the Motor Vehicles Division published **Basic Bicycle Safety Rules**. Issued long before bicycle helmet laws, this pamphlet includes some whimsical illustrations of bicycling hazards.

There are many newer **publications about bicycle safety**, all part of the **Oregon Government Publications** digital collection.

Happy cycling!



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## Mission

The State Library of Oregon cultivates, preserves, and delivers library and information services to foster lifelong learning and community engagement.

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