

## 2014 WLBDP @ AADL Accomplishments

**Josie Parker, Director, Serves as Commissioner on the Michigan Commission for Blind Persons:** Library Director, Josie Parker, continues to serve as Commissioner for the Michigan Commission for Blind Persons. From Governor Rick Snyder: "Josie Barnes Parker, of Ann Arbor, is director of the Ann Arbor District Library and Washtenaw Library for the Blind and Physically Disabled. Under her leadership, the Ann Arbor District Library and Washtenaw Library for the Blind and Physically Disabled have received local and national recognition for adopting new technologies which provide special services to a broader population, including K-12 students."

**VISIONS 2014: What's New in Technology and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired:** A biennial vendor fair is presented by AADL (WLBDP@AADL) and is co-sponsored by the State of Michigan's Bureau of Services for Blind Persons and Washtenaw Community College. VISIONS 2014 had a record attendance of more than 500 visitors.

The event featured a variety of Michigan exhibitors who demonstrated and discussed the latest products and services for the blind and visually impaired. There was no admission charge and ample free parking was available.

### **VISIONS Highlights:**

**Presentation: The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped: BARD & Beyond!** Don Olson of the National Library Service for the Blind discussed the Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) system and the new iOS mobile application for apple mobile devices, and explained how these can benefit consumers.

**WLBDP@AADL – Celebrating Its 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** AADL Library Director Josie Parker presented service highlights from Washtenaw Library for the Blind @ AADL services, now in its 5<sup>th</sup> year operating out of AADL.

**What's New in Assistive Technology?** Participants learned about the latest technologies that could improve their quality of life. The presentation by A T Guys focused on accessible mobile phones and tablets including the iPhone and Android, the latest computer software, portable devices, and what's on the horizon. Participants were encouraged to come with questions.

**The University Of Michigan Kellogg Eye Center** Sherry H. Day, O.D., FAAO and Ashley Howson M.S., OTR/L of the U-M Kellogg Eye Center discussed the Center's vision clinic, low vision rehabilitation, and several new exciting technologies/implants now available at Kellogg.

**Hands-on demonstrations** and conversations with vendors: electronic readers, magnifiers, support services for the blind, Braille devices, library services, CCTVs, leader dogs, and transportation services are just a few of the many outstanding services and products that were on display.

A variety of **sandwiches, snacks, coffee and cold beverages** were made available on-site, sold by an entrepreneur licensed by the Bureau of Services for Blind Persons.

AADL staff from every department throughout the system, volunteered as **sighted assistants** for this event.

**American Printing House, Child in a Strange Country: Helen Keller and the History of Education for People Who are Blind or Visually Impaired Exhibit:** In 2014 WLBDP@AADL hosted this travelling exhibit from the American Printing House for the Blind Museum for eight weeks, and was seen by over 5,000 visitors.

To promote the exhibit and associated programming, we:

- Sent press releases out about the exhibit & reception to Ann Arbor and Detroit area newspapers, radio stations and monthly publications. This resulted in an Ann Arbor News article ([http://www.mlive.com/entertainment/ann-arbor/index.ssf/2014/06/ann\\_arbor\\_district\\_library\\_chi.html](http://www.mlive.com/entertainment/ann-arbor/index.ssf/2014/06/ann_arbor_district_library_chi.html)) about the exhibit and also to the exhibit being mentioned in the Observer, Current, Ann Arbor Family and other publications.

- Produced a color display ad in the monthly publication "The Ann" which, in addition to being available at locations around town gets distributed with the New York Times, Wall Street Journal & Ann Arbor News.
- Included the exhibit in AADL's monthly Observer Ad
- Highlighted the exhibit and related events on our website and in our brochures and in an early WLBDP mailing as well as on Facebook and Twitter.
- Created a postcard that was placed in all Library locations and also distributed at VISIONS 2014 and other AADL community events.
- Created and mailed special invitations to approximately 70 community leaders for the opening reception.
- Created a sign for the front of the Downtown Library and also had one inside the lobby.
- Discussed the exhibit on Ann Arbor's 107.1FM during our monthly radio spot.

A local Special Education Teacher was so inspired by her visit to this exhibit, she posted a blog about it to Ann Arbor Schools Musings: <http://a2schoolsmuse.blogspot.com/2014/06/guest-post-helen-keller-and-education.html#.VOOT5MZwP-m>.

#### **WLBDP@AADL Programs Offered in 2014:**

**Exhibit Lecture: Child in a Strange Country Or Why is Helen Keller At the Water Pump The Only Person Who Was Blind That Most Americans Know?:** Micheal A. Hudson, Museum Director at the Museum of the American Printing House for the Blind in Louisville, KY explored major advances made in learning and literacy for folks who are blind or visually impaired since 1784, and introduced a few interesting characters that most people do not know about. This event was planned for adults and teens grade 6 and up.

**Sensory Communication: Relaying and Receiving Information Through Touch:** How does touch help us communicate? U-M Performing Arts Technology Professor, Sile O'Modhrain, discussed sensory communication and relaying and receiving information through touch. She also focused on Helen Keller. This event was planned for adults and teens grade 6 and up.

**Film: "Going Blind":** Documentary film of personal stories about coping with vision loss, and bringing awareness to low vision therapy. This film was shown with the Described Video Service narration feature for people with low or no vision. This program was planned for adults and teens grade 6 and up.

**Read with Feeling:** Seedlings Braille Books for Children presented an overview of braille and the braille alphabet including the history of Louis Braille. There were hands-on activities and interactive tactile materials for children to explore. This program was planned for grades K-5.

**Annie Sullivan Speaks:** Veteran educator, award-winning actress, and motivational speaker Collette Cullen ventriloquized Helen Keller's teacher, Anne (Annie) Sullivan Macy, to present a historical and philosophical overview of America's most famous teacher/student duo. Annie's methods teaching Helen Keller to communicate was showcased as a metaphor for today's educators to consider teaching as the building of relationships rather than the imparting of skills that can be measured quantitatively, particularly when teaching reading and writing. Beginning with the story of Annie's impoverished early life, including how Annie overcame her own disenfranchisement during her days in an asylum, "Annie" promotes a student-based pedagogy that promotes excellence and heart, and which nurtures children's inner lives. This program was planned for all ages.

**Sign Language for Infants and Toddlers:** Participants learned to sprinkle family-friendly American Sign Language (ASL) into songs and play, making signing easy, fun, and successful! Kathy Brady, Certified Instructor of Signing Smart, presented. This program was planned for hearing infants and toddlers, 6 months-2 years, with an adult.

**Craft Your Name in Braille:** Braille alphabet cards and foam stickers were used to make a sign with the participant's name in Braille. This program was planned for grades K-5.

**WLBDP@AADL Patron Survey:** In 2014, WLBDP@AADL conducted our second patron survey. Please see attached WLBDP Patron Survey 2014 Results for the full survey results. In summary, the survey was mailed to 464 active WLBDP patrons in order to measure the value and effectiveness of WLBDP@AADL services. In total 137 surveys were completed for a 30% response rate.

### Survey Highlights:

- 94% rated their overall experience with WLBDP@AADL as excellent (64%) or good (30%).
- 97% rated the service they've received in-person as excellent (68%) or good (29%).
- 96% rated the service they've received by phone as excellent (73%) or good (23%).
- 97% would recommend WLBDP services to friends and family members.
- 32% reported learning about the service from a friend or family member, with 28% learning about it through the library.

*"Shortly after speaking with the library representative I received my digital player and since then I have been a happy customer."*

*"Thank you. So appreciate your services – made my life MUCH BETTER."*

*"This is the best service! It has enhanced my life. The people who are at AADL are fabulous!"*

*"Thank you so much! Our residents really enjoy books on tape."*

*"We are very happy with the WLBDP experience, and have always had pleasant people to contact."*

*"Service-talking book has been great. Occupies time and entertains. Always loved to read, but books are too difficult now even with CCTV – Excellent!"*

*"Thank you for coming to Silver Maples to speak to our residents – they were impressed. [Name of patron withheld] has signed up because of your talk and, hopefully, more did."*

*"Whenever I call, the service is always excellent. They are really helpful."*

*"Everyone I have ever talked to there has always been great. The BARD service is terrific and the DB reader is heaven! Thank you all for everything!"*

**Outreach to University of Michigan School of Information Students:** In 2014, Outreach Manager, Terry Soave, presented on WLBDP@AADL services to the University of Michigan, School of Information's SI 638 class. The presentation gained an even broader audience through one student's course blog (all students are required to maintain a blog to post reflections their readings, class experiences, and anything else that inspires them!)

The post reads: *"Bonus Post: Tech and Accessibility. Since we touched briefly on technology and accessibility last week, I thought I would post my reflection on a talk I attended last week that deals with this topic. The School of Information Social Justice (SISJ) presented a talk by Terry Soave, the Manager of Outreach & Neighborhood Services for AADL. She focused on the Washtenaw Library for the Blind & Physically Disabled, which the AADL took over in 2009 to continue a service that had originally been covered by the county (who had to pass it on due to budgetary constraints). The WLBDP is a subregional branch of the National Library Service, which provides reading materials for patrons who cannot read traditional print. They have some Braille texts, large-print books, and some descriptive DVDs (where a narrator describes what is happening visually in the movie when there is no dialogue). But their primary service is in giving users special digital players that can play special audiobooks provided by NLS that don't include the dramatic interpretation heard in the performances of regular audiobooks. They serve about 500 patrons a year, sending them the books they want to read!"*

*We got to actually see the cartridges and the players, along with some Braille books. It was really interesting! Only a small number of the books published every year get adapted for visually impaired audiences by the NLS, so I wondered what might make the cut. I was thinking about The Hunger Games and the other huge YA*

*dystopian novels that have been coming out as of late. Lo and behold, a cartridge of Divergent was on the table! A lot of popular literature makes the cut, which I think is cool because it means that everyone can access the hot new book and get in on the conversations and the excitement.*

*I'm really happy to hear about the NLS; it's a resource that I will be able to share with my future patrons. I want everyone to be able to read what they want, and accessibility services help our society move toward this goal of universal literacy."*

This is the link to her full blog: <http://molliehall638.wordpress.com/2014/03/23/bonus-post-tech-and-accessibility/>. The presentation description was also posted on the university's website, where it remains along with a link back to our website: <https://www.si.umich.edu/events/201403/sisj-talk-terry-soave>

Additionally, in spring of 2014, WLBDP@AADL staff worked with a group of University of Michigan, School of Information students who conducted an analysis of the WLBDP collection as the focus for a project for a collections development course.

## WLBDP @ AADL Ongoing Accomplishments

**32% of Patrons Registered for BARD:** The number of WLBDP@AADL patrons applying for BARD continues to grow, with 32% of our patrons currently registered for BARD.

**Large Print Promotional Stickers:** AADL continues to promote WLBDP@AADL services through stickering all of AADL's large print collection, and through providing stickers to all eight of the other public libraries located within our service area of Washtenaw County, to promote the service through their large print collections as well. Every public library in our service area enthusiastically participates in this promotion.

**Public Library Demonstration Accounts:** In an effort to further promote services, all eight of the other public libraries within the WLBDP@AADL's service area are set-up with a demonstration account, professionally laminated end-cap posters (a blown-up version of the large print book sticker), and offered brochures as well as custom-made laminated posters for their own promotional display purposes.

**LBPH Network Libraries Wiki Administration:** WLBDP@AADL continues to host, administer, and promote the Libraries for the Blind & Physically Handicapped Network Libraries Wiki. Providing a centralized repository for National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Network Library-generated information, the LBPH-NL Wiki serves to promote greater, more efficient, and more effective provision of services. This user-friendly open-source platform allows, for the first time ever, for all network library staff nationwide to review, share, and edit content on any LBPH-related topic - to whatever extent they want to participate. The LBPH Network Libraries Wiki is hosted, administered, and promoted by the Ann Arbor District Library. To date, the homepage has received upward of 6,000 hits and 30 libraries have contributed content. The LBPH National Libraries Wiki can be found here: <http://lbphwiki.aadl.org/>.