



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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WHITE ANNOUNCES ILLINOIS NETWORK OF LIBRARIES SERVING PRINT IMPAIRED WINS NATIONAL AWARD

SPRINGFIELD—Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White has announced that the Illinois State Library Talking Book and Braille Service (TBBS) and its network of four Talking Book Centers (TBCs) have been named 2005 Network Library of the Year by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

The award was presented today in ceremonies at the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. to TBBS director Sharon Ruda; Karen Odean, director, Voices of Vision TBC, Geneva; Diana Brawley Sussman, director, Southern Illinois TBC, Carterville; Deborah Taylor, director, Chicago Public Library TBC; and Karen Stott Bersche, director, Mid-Illinois TBC, East Peoria.

“To be recognized as the best in the nation is an incredible honor,” said White. “We are immensely proud of the services our Illinois network of libraries offers to our print impaired patrons. More than 27,000 Illinoisans are registered with and use the wide variety of materials provided by our network of libraries. These individuals may choose from a collection of more than 400,000 items, ranging from audio books and braille materials to descriptive videos and magazines. These materials have the ability to greatly enrich the lives of citizens who cannot read regular printed material because of a visual or physical disability.

“This year marks the 75th anniversary of the beginning of free nationwide library service to the blind. The State Library Talking Book and Braille Service hosted a wonderful reception marking the occasion last month, and similar celebrations are taking place all over the country this year. For Illinois to be singled out as Network Library of the Year during this 75th anniversary celebration is doubly rewarding. I am proud to congratulate the hard working staff of our Illinois libraries serving the print impaired on receiving this well-deserved recognition.”

The award recognizes excellence, innovation and special achievement by an NLS library in providing library services to blind and physically handicapped individuals during a calendar year. The selection was based on three criteria: Mission support, creativity and innovation and patron satisfaction.

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In 2005, TBBS and the four Talking Book Centers coordinated more than 675 events to promote the services they offer. These events included orientation sessions, health fairs, exhibits, group talks, tours and presentations for low vision teachers and student teachers, workshops at library conferences that included patrons, teachers, activity workers, and other potential clients. A number of outreach events were conducted using OPAL, the online collaborative service reaching a growing online audience with software accessible to the visually impaired.

Last year Illinois was also the first state to pilot Playaway Audio Books, a digital audio book and player in one. In addition to a summer reading program for print impaired children, Illinois offered a winter reading program for adults. Illinois has also provided the leadership and coordination for the eight-state InfoEyes virtual reference service. This project grew from a pilot in 2004 to an ongoing collaborative service offered by talking book libraries in partnership with state library organizations.

Persons interested in more information, or wanting to register, may contact TBBS at 1-800-665-5576, option 5, or log on to the Secretary of State's website at www.cyberdriveillinois.com, clicking on "Services" and "Illinois State Library".

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