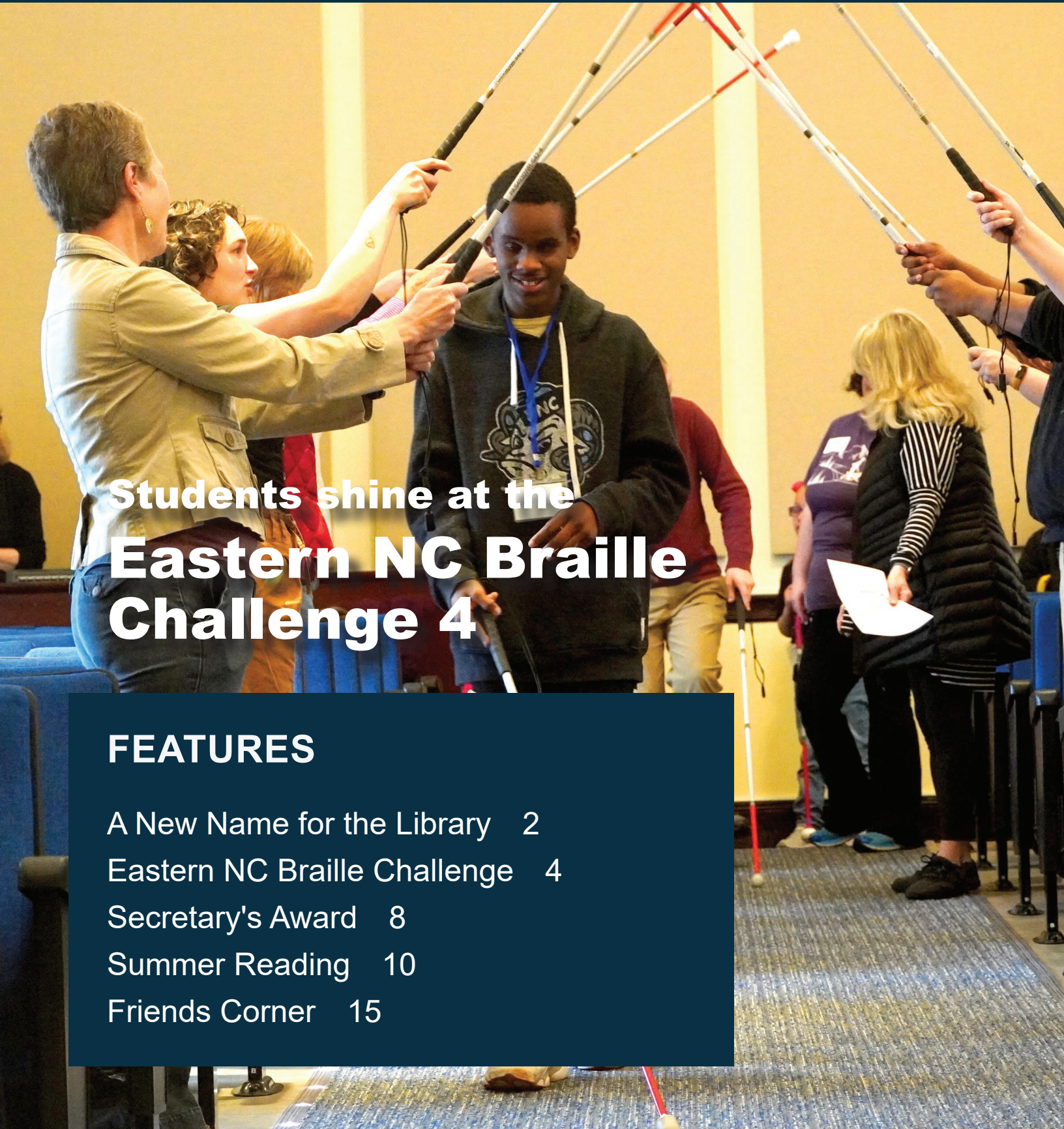


TAR HEEL TALK



Students shine at the Eastern NC Braille Challenge 4

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NEW NAME FOR THE STATE LIBRARY OF NORTH CAROLINA!



On March 17th, the State Library of North Carolina officially became the **Library of North Carolina (Library of NC)**.

The Library of NC has three public-facing sections: [Accessible Books & Library Services](#), the [Government & Heritage Library](#), and [Library Development](#). Together, the Library of NC helps people across the state by giving them access to information, supporting strong libraries, and encouraging lifelong reading and learning.

Of course, many of you are familiar with the Library of NC's Accessible Books & Library Services (ABLS). ABLS provides books and magazines specially designed for people who can't use regular print because of a visual, physical, or reading disability.

Another section of the Library of NC is the Library of NC's Government and Heritage Library (GHL). GHL has materials and tools to help you explore our state's history, culture, and even your own family's past, whether you work for the state, go to school, teach, or just want to learn more about North Carolina.

The final section is the Library of NC's Library Development (LD). LD helps North Carolina Libraries serve their communities by providing consulting services, supporting continuing education opportunities, and administering grant programs and the Aid to Public Libraries fund.

To learn more about the Library of NC and each of its sections, please [visit library.nc.gov](http://library.nc.gov).

EASTERN NC BRAILLE CHALLENGE 2026



Caption: A group of students participating in the Braille Challenge gathers for a group photo

On February 16th, the Library of North Carolina's Accessible Books & Library Services (ABLS) and the Governor Morehead School (GMS) co-hosted the 2026 Eastern North Carolina Braille Challenge.

Eighteen students from across the state successfully completed the competition, testing out their spelling, proofreading, reading comprehension, chart and graph interpretation, and transcription skills. Over thirty



Caption Left: Two rows of Braille Challenge volunteers raise their white canes to form a tunnel as a student walks through when their name is called. **Caption Right:** Braille Challenge students sit together, smiling as they wait for the afternoon activity to begin.

volunteers contributed their time and talents to make the program a success.

To open the day's festivities, the competing students entered through a cane tunnel. Volunteers on both sides of one of the aisles in the GMS auditorium held up white canes and tapped the tips together to produce an auditory sensation as the students walked underneath them. Deputy Secretary for the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources Dr. Darin Waters gave a motivational speech, and the students then went to their testing rooms.

While the students were testing, several parent-oriented



Caption: Various rocks and fossils are displayed on a table alongside geological graphs and charts.



Caption: Braille Challenge students sit at a table listening to the presenter.

programs were offered, including a program on the latest technology that ABLS offers, an interview with the Head of the Patron Engagement Section at the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled, and a presentation by the GMS Campus Director Kathy Segers and Principal Daniel Simmons.

During the afternoon, all attendees participated in a program provided by the Rock Museum staff from Scotland Neck, NC. Students immersed themselves in a tactile adventure, exploring the touch and feel of various rocks, fossils, and gems.

The day's festivities concluded with a closing ceremony at which State Librarian Michelle Underhill spoke, handed out participation

certificates, and conducted a drawing for several prizes. Students who score high enough will be invited to attend the Braille Challenge finals in Los Angeles in June. Braille Challenge, a program sponsored by the Braille Institute, is the only academic competition of its kind each year for students who are blind or visually impaired. Braille Institute developed Braille Challenge to motivate students to practice and hone their braille literacy skills, which are essential to academic and employment success.

“Tar Heel Talk” is a quarterly publication of the Library of North Carolina's **Accessible Books & Library Services** section (LNC-ABLS) and the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

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SECRETARY'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE RECIPIENT: TAWANDA WALTERS



Tawanda Walters is pictured with her award.

We would like to recognize one of our staff members, **Tawanda Walters.**

Tawanda recently received the Department of Natural

and Cultural Resources (DNCR) Secretary's Award for Excellence. She was formally recognized by **DNCR Secretary Pam Cashwell** at a public ceremony for her contributions in public service.

Tawanda serves as the library's Patron Support Assistant. If you have ever called in with issues relating to BARD or your library equipment, there is a good chance you've spoken with her. Tawanda's work at

the library has her deeply involved with the public.

Going beyond her assigned job duties, Tawanda actively seeks ways to contribute to library outreach, operations, and programming efforts.

She often volunteers to represent the library in a range of ways, from promoting our services at outreach events, to preparing and proofreading braille documents before distribution, and she helps plan library programming. She was also featured in a Spectrum News segment in January, 2025, promoting Braille Literacy Month.

Tawanda's impact is immeasurable. Her firsthand experience with vision loss enables her to assist patrons with empathy. She has gone above and beyond to ensure that our patrons have the knowledge they need to successfully use our services.

For her unwavering commitment to the library and service to its patrons, we recognize Tawanda, and we are proud to celebrate her achievements and contributions.



SUMMER READING 2026

Summer reading is just around the corner!

Any books you read from **June 1st, 2026 to **August 31st, 2026**, will count towards your Summer Reading Score.**

Anyone who reads at least five books will earn a prize, and our top three readers in each category will win a gift card!

Categories are split for digital books (Talking Books, digital braille, and BARD) and physical books (large print and physical braille). If you are under 21 years old, you will be entered into the youth division.

As with Winter Reading, you can greatly increase your Summer Reading Score by participating in the Rate & Review program. You can earn an extra point towards your score for each book you rate, and eight extra points for

every book you provide a review of at least fifty words.
That's up to ten points for each book you read!

All Seasonal Reading (Summer and Winter) prizes are provided by the Friends of NCABLS.

Participate in Summer Reading!

How to Register:

- Register online: <https://fs25.formsite.com/statelibrarync/gx1qx9r3ty/index>
- Email: ncabls@dncr.nc.gov
- Call us at 1-888-388-2460

Rate & Review:

- <https://fs25.formsite.com/statelibrarync/kw4eixc2fl/index>

If you would like to have Rate & Review forms sent to you, give us a call at and ask for Rate & Review forms.

COLLECTIONS COMMUNIQUE



Katie's Collection Communique: A Quarterly Collections Update

- We have a full Collection Access and Discovery Services team once more! Cassie Eacker began working in the role of Machine Clerk, and Emily Gogh began working in the role of Lead Machine Technician. Check out their [Staff Feature](#) further

on in this issue of Tar Heel Talk!

- We have made the following noteworthy additions to our subject preference list: Latin Music, Biography Veterans, Coping with Illness, Grief/Grieving, Social Justice/Civil Rights, Mental Health, Spirituality, Engineering, Cooking Fiction,

Armed Forces Interest, Immigrant Experience Interest, Neurodivergent Interest, General Queer Interest, Bisexual Interest, Coming of Age, Retellings, Travel Fiction, Vacation Fiction, Graphic Novel, and Sensitive Subject Matter. Please contact the library to add any of these preferences to your account or to exclude any of them from your account.

- **In April, ABLS began distributing Talking Book Topics (TBT), NLS's bimonthly list of selected audio titles recently added to its collections, as a regular magazine via Duplication on Demand**

(DoD) as NLS no longer produces TBT as a Digital Talking Book (DB). NLS will continue to post the TBT order forms, which can be downloaded from the NLS website. ABLS posts the titles available in the most recent version of TBT to our online catalog. These books may be browsed as a list or by genre here: <https://ncabls.klas.com/browse/basicbrowse.jsf>

- **We have received a second shipment of our next-generation Digital Talking Book Player, called the DA2, from NLS that are now available to borrow on a first come, first served basis. The**

DA2 can connect to Wi-Fi to search and download books directly from BARD, connect Bluetooth headphones, utilize an external keyboard for text input, transfer books from cartridges to the player's internal storage, and more! If you would like to try out the new DA2, please give us a call at 1-888-388-2460 or email us at ncabls@dncr.nc.gov with your full name and full address so that we can accurately match your request to your account with us. Once you receive and are comfortable using the new DA2, we ask that you send your existing player

back to us. Or, if you decide that the DA2 is not for you, you may send it back and continue to use your existing player.

FRIENDS CORNER



"Many people will walk in and out of your life, but only true friends will leave footprints in your heart."

-Eleanor Roosevelt

Dear Friends,

Happy Spring! I don't know about you, but I am ready for spring! On February 1, I woke up to 15 inches of snow in my backyard! That was crazy! For a lifetime resident of this state, this was the most snow I have experienced at one time in North Carolina. So, now we traded the snow for two feet of pollen! HA-HA!

In this Friends Corner article, I'd like to highlight

one of the services or programs that your membership supports for the Friends organization.

Did you know that there are Audio Described movies available from the Library that you have access to for free? You may ask, "What is an audio described movie?" Here is the answer:

DVS movies have a voice describing actions, characteristics, and dress of the actors, as well as details of the scenery or setting. This describing voice is on the soundtrack, during the time when there

is no dialogue. These videos can be enjoyed by everyone in the family, both sighted and visually impaired! The videos play on ordinary DVD and Blu Ray players.

There are currently more than 800 videos in the collection. As new movies are produced in the descriptive format, Friends will purchase them, and they will be added to the collection. Thirty-seven new movies were added to this collection last year. The collection includes older movies, such as: *And Then There were None*, *A Walk in the Sun*, and *The Time of Your Life*, as well as the more popular

ones like *Paul, Apostle of Christ*, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, *Interstellar*, and *Sully*. There is a selection of children's titles, such as *Up*, *Toy Story*, *Frozen*, and *Despicable Me*. The library will be glad to assist you and provide you with a listing of all of the movie collections available. These movies can be mailed Free Matter for the Blind. However, it's important to remember that the library does not loan any DVD/VCR equipment.

Friends will continue to fund the purchase of additional movies, and we hope you will take advantage of this service and enjoy these movies.

I want to thank all of you who have renewed your membership with the Friends for 2026. We have sent out renewal notices, and we are very grateful for your financial support. If you have not renewed, it is not too late to do so. You can renew online at www.fncabls.org and go to the Membership page and pay online. Or, you can pay with a check made out to FNCABLS, and mail to FNCABLS, 1841 Capital Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27635.

Remember, an individual membership is only \$10, and anyone may join as a member. You do not need to be a patron of the Library or need to have a visual

impairment to join us. Your membership allows us to support various services and programs of the Library like the wonderful audio described movies.

Well, that's it for now, until next time, be a friend, hug a friend, and if you are not a Friends member, join the Friends!

Eddie Weaver
President

STAFF FEATURE

We have three new staff members to feature who have recently joined our team at the library: Cassie Eaker, Emily Gogh, and Hannah Davis!

They each bring a unique set of valuable skills to our library that ultimately keeps the library capable of providing services across North Carolina!

First, we have **Cassie, our new Machine Clerk.** She started in October of 2025. As our Machine Clerk, Cassie ensures that our patrons have access to the equipment they need for listening to books on Talking Book Players and

reading books on braille eReaders. When a patron returns a Talking Book Player to the library, Cassie thoroughly inspects, cleans, and tests its battery before assigning the player to a new patron.

Emily is our new Lead Machine Technician. In addition to working alongside Cassie to ensure that the Talking Book Players and eReaders are service-ready for our

patrons, she also performs more complicated repairs on the devices as needed

Last, but not least, meet Hannah Davis. **Hannah joins us as our new Outreach Specialist.** She will be helping the library in its mission to connect ABLS with communities across the state, working to raise awareness about our resources and services. This involves building partnerships, attending events, and sharing information about how ABLS supports individuals with print disabilities and the institutions that serve those communities. She will play a key role in expanding our reach and ensuring that more North Carolinians will

be informed of and use our services.

Here is your chance to learn a little more about them!

Q: What led you to join this library team?

C: I moved to NC from Colorado, where I had worked in libraries for about 16 years. When I saw that I had an opportunity to not only continue my service with libraries, but in a specialty branch, I was so excited! Library work is always great, but I think working with a special community like the blind and disabled, it feels even more important.

E: I lucked out when joining. I had applied for a couple open positions and

was noticed for my previous technician experience. I was encouraged to apply for the role after an interview for a different position. I'm glad I did.

H: I have been a contractor with the Museum of Natural Sciences for several years, so I am excited to finally be a part of the DNCR team in a full-time capacity! I have also always been a book nerd and was always the kid in class sneakily trying to read a book under my desk, so I feel right at home in a library!

Q: What do you enjoy most about working here?

C: The people here are great. Fun, kind, and easy

to work with. I also love when a patron talks about how much they love our services, and I feel like I had a small role in giving them a way to enjoy reading.

E: I most enjoy the opportunity to be able to directly help my community. That was the main reason I decided I wanted to work with the Library of NC. All my energy going towards making an actual impact in my community makes all the difference versus working for a corporation.

H: So far, I've really enjoyed learning about all of the services we offer to help underserved and often overlooked populations. The team here is also great - everyone is always willing

to help and wants to learn more.

Q: Who is your favorite author and why?

C: Haruki Murakami is probably my favorite author for the moment. His books are surreal, weird and casually magical, yet oddly comforting.

E: I have a lot of favorites, but to pick one in the moment, I would say George R. R. Martin. I'm a huge fan of his worldbuilding and how he draws from real, historical events. *A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms* is my favorite of his. The show adaptation is really incredible.

H: Anthony Horowitz! I have

been a fan of his since his Alex Rider series, but I have picked up every book of his since then, no matter the subject or genre. I am also a big fan of John Green. I read *The Fault in Our Stars* in one sitting because I simply could not put it down - even when it got hard to read through blurry eyes.

Q: If you could only read one book for the rest of your life, what would you choose and why?

C: *Hard-boiled Wonderland* and the *End of the World* by Haruki Murakami. I've reread it a few times, and each time I find something new.

E: *Homer's Odyssey*,

translated by Emily Wilson. I read a snippet of her translation before picking up a copy and found it really engaging. I started underlining passages and making notes in my copy. I'm enjoying learning about the full details of the story, rather than the truncated edition I was taught in school. I'm trying to underline every use of the phrase "wine-dark sea." I've got seven down.

H: *Peterson's Field Guide to Medicinal Plants and Herbs*. It is filled with amazing information and tons of details that would take me a while to get through, and it would take quite some time to remember everything in it.

Q: Do you have a favorite quote or work? Why is it your favorite?

C: "Hello, woman" - Frank Costanza from *Seinfeld*. I say it every time my cat comes into the room.

E: My go-to quote comes from the 1987 film *Withnail and I*, by Bruce Robinson. "It'll get better. It has to." It's just such a simple statement of hope that helps me get by when things are tough.

H: Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild* and *Into Thin Air*. Both show the immense beauty and harsh realities of nature in a deeply self-reflective way. They also both confirmed my fear of never climbing Mount Everest or

exploring the deep Alaskan wilderness in winter.

Q: Can you share a fun or interesting fact about yourself?

C: I have played the drums for 27 years and was in a punk/indie band that broke up right after recording our first album.

E: I've worn a lot of hats in my time so far! I've been a voice actress, I've worked as a creative writer on a few projects, and this summer I'm hoping to join a medieval sword fighting course.

H: I canoed over 200 miles of the Neuse River within the span of two weeks.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: MARC



At the Library of North Carolina’s Accessible Books and Library Services, it is no secret our volunteers play a crucial role in making our services possible.

Among other duties, volunteers help to convert books and magazines into an audio format through narration. For this newsletter, we’d

like to feature one of our monitors, and **our in-house Hindenburg Narrator savant, Marc!** Hindenburg Narrator is the audio recording software our library uses to produce talking books and magazines.

Each week, Marc monitors one of our narrators, Florence Nash, and makes crucial edits and real-time

fixes to our recordings to make more accessible books and magazines available to our patrons. Marc has been volunteering with the library for a couple of years, and here's your chance to get to know him!

Q: How long have you been volunteering with the library?

A: My Swiss-cheese memory could've never come up with this, but a search of my emails shows I started in June of 2019.

Q: What made you want to volunteer at the library?

A: I like volunteering, and I love feeling useful. So, when my good friend Florence Nash invited me

to be her session monitor, I readily agreed. Much of my professional work is in audio, and Hindenburg is my home court. It's been a pleasure to come in and spend a couple of hours with it each week, trimming clips for a good cause.

Q: What do you enjoy most about volunteering here?

A: Florence is a fantastic narrator, and honestly, just hearing her read is one of the perks of the gig. I love to learn, omnivorously, and these sessions are a delightful opportunity. We're given an endless supply of good stuff to record; we're fans of *Our State*, and we've done several interesting books. On top of all that, I

have an unreconstructed snoot's ear for grammar, usage, and pronunciation. Knowing what's "correct" and "incorrect"—what's been voted into linguistic office by means of a quasi-democratic, crowd-sourced process, versus what clangs against the eye or ear as just plain wrong—is one of my nerdy predilections. I don't know why I care, but I do!

Q: Are there any interesting hobbies of yours you'd like to share with our readers?

A: Plenty! I'm a car-eschewing bicyclist, a crack origamist, a documentary film fanatic, and an adventurous cook (and sometime baker). Oh, and

a competitive crossword solver and longtime member of the National Puzzlers League. For years I've evangelized the most exalted of word puzzles, the cryptic crossword, and lately I partnered with a fellow puzzle enthusiast to make a website that teaches how to solve them: learncryptic.com. The site is a labor of love—no ads, subscriptions, or Patreons—so this is an entirely wholesome, noncommercial plug!

Q: What would you say to people who are interested in volunteering for our library?

A: If you're a good reader (or listener) and you can

spare a few hours a week, why not come record? It's fun to take part in the normally solitary activity of reading books and magazines, but out loud and in good company. The staff are some of the nicest people you'll ever meet. Adrian and Clint have been a joy to work with.

Q: Has there been a favorite reading that you enjoyed during your time here? If so, why?

A: I'm fascinated by regional accents and speech patterns, which I began to observe more intently when I left my native Arizona for New York City, and then came down to Durham. Last year, Florence and I were fortunate to

tackle *Talkin' Tar Heel: How Our Voices Tell the Story of North Carolina*, by Walt Wolfram. Florence knows her way around an unglided vowel and the blessing of hearts, while I learned new terms like "sigogglin" and "buddyrow." We both found it fascinating.

Q: Who is your favorite author and why?

A: In college I read everything by Virginia Woolf, and all these years later I haven't found a writer I like better. *To the Lighthouse* stunned me with its portrayal of multiple subjectivities.

Q: If you could only read one book for the rest of your life, what would you choose and why?

A: I was going to say an encyclopedia, but I would drift progressively further out of date as things change. Maybe Shakespeare's collected works? I like to soak in the richness of his language like an Elizabethan jacuzzi.

Q: Do you have a favorite quote or work? Why is it your favorite?

A: This isn't literary, but I've never forgotten Jack Handy's "If trees could scream, would we be so cavalier about cutting them down? We might, if they screamed all the time, for no good reason."

Q: Can you share a fun or interesting fact about yourself?

A: When I eat an apple, I eat

the whole thing, including core, seeds, and stem.

I think this practice is spreading. Try it! Also try eating a kiwi fruit (which I like to call by its original name, Chinese gooseberry) skin and all, like a peach.