

'Memorizing maps' for blind students

Blind students will have more than their memory to help them find their way around UNL this fall.

A booklet of 12-14 Braille maps of both Lincoln campuses memorizes the two areas for the students.

The booklet, a project of the Office of University Information, will contain two maps which combine to cover east campus and 10 or 12 of the city campus, according to Information Officer Bob Van Neste.

He estimated 50 booklets will be made. There are usually 12-18 blind or visually impaired students each semester, he said.

Bob Payne of the Admissions Office said that includes two Phi Beta Kappa graduates in the past five years.

Betty Hofmann said she hopes the maps will counteract a fear associated with the University's size. It's a factor she said has discouraged blind students from enrolling at UNL.

Miss Hofmann is an orientation counselor for the State Division of Rehabilitation Services for Visually Impaired. She is also earning a masters degree in rehabilitation teaching through UNL. She lost her sight 2½ years ago.

"The University's size has always led blind people to smaller, easier-to-learn campuses. But I think the University has a lot to offer," she said.

She said the maps also will add to blind upper-classmen's confidence and independence.

Van Neste said the Braille maps are based on aerial-view maps of UNL used for construction and planning.

Four variations on their surfaces tell blind students what's there. Lawns are smooth; sidewalks are raised, smooth surfaces; building tops are screen wire; and danger areas such as streets and construction sites are the texture of sandpaper.

The 12-14 master maps were assembled by Daniel Watts, a fifth-year architecture student at UNL. He pasted cardboard, screen wire and sandpaper at appropriate locations.

Each 10" x 10" map was duplicated on a Thermo-Form machine operated by the state rehabilitation division for Braille printing.

A plastic sheet is set over the master map and a heat light and vacuum pump mold the sheet to the master form.

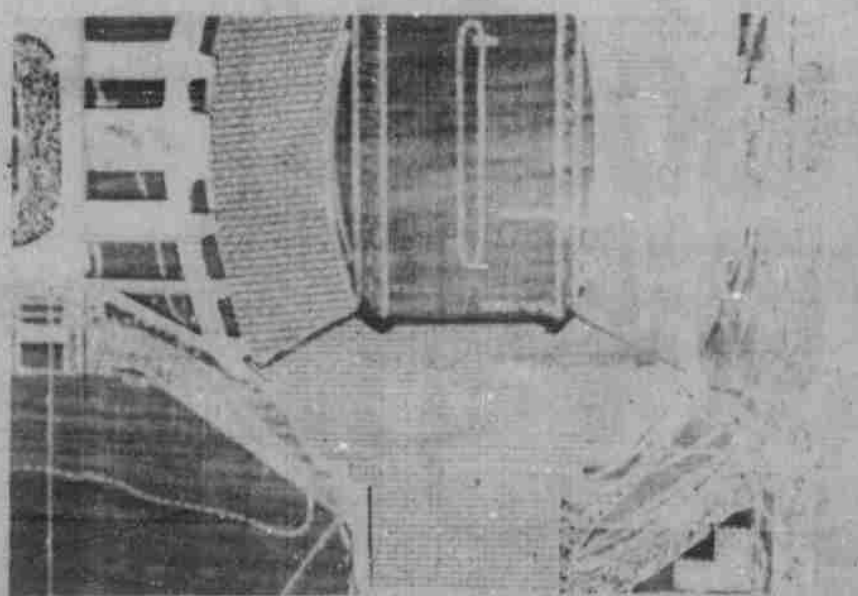
Miss Hofman will write a Braille key to accompany each map, she said. On each key will be instructions for finding doors to buildings, for counting steps, and telling of sound cues such as generators and fountains which she said blind people depend on.

"A lot of that, sighted people don't pick up on when they lead the blind on campus tours," she said. She will lead a tour this fall, she said.

Van Neste said the Information Office will keep the master maps. They may be kept up to date each year with minor revisions, he said.

Cost of this summer's project will be about \$200, he said.

"This has been a great experience for me," Watts said. "There is a new kind of awareness on the part of architects and planners for the handicapped and their problems."



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