

Special library helps patrons to read through sound and touch

By Mike Weibel

David Oertli says the library that he directs looks for books about Nebraska and for books written by Nebraskans.

But most of the library's customers don't "look." Most rely on the senses of sound and touch to read. They are blind or otherwise handicapped.

The Nebraska Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped supplies books and magazines in print or in Braille. It also supplies materials on records or cassette tapes. Last year it recorded 16 Nebraska books on its own.

Oertli said the library, 1420 P St., circulated 148,000 items last year. It is one of 56 regional libraries in the United States.

"Our circulation is more than double the per

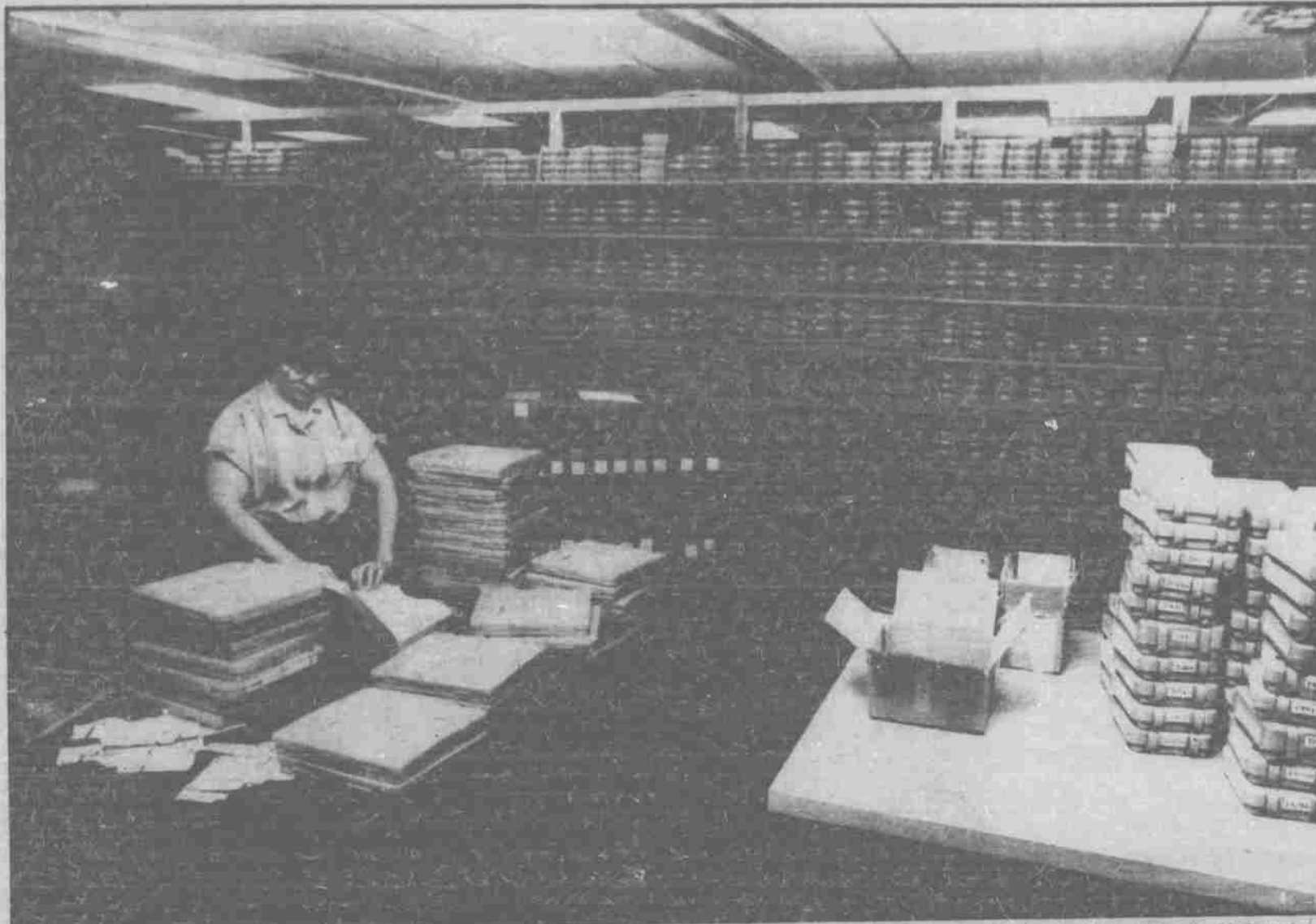
capita average of other libraries," Oertli said. "We can get to know our patrons as people rather than numbers and folders."

With 204,000 titles and 102,000 volumes, the library last year supplied 4,500 handicapped Nebraskans with materials from the Lincoln and North Platte branches, Oertli said. The library also provides playback equipment for its tapes, including tape recorders, special telephones and headphones.

Supported by more than 40 volunteers, the library services about 400 institutions, Oertli said. These include nursing homes, hospitals and schools.

The library's back-up facility in Utah is one of four multi-state centers in the nation. The Utah center provides the western states with added material for the blind and physically handicapped.

The Library of Congress in Washington D.C. is the library's supportive body, reviewing suggestions for new publications every year.



Craig Andresen/Daily Nebraskan

Lucia Demma, a librarian at the Nebraska Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, inspects returned records.

Shorts

The Willard Community Center, 1245 Folsom, will host a yard sale Saturday, Aug. 4, from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Individuals and groups will sell clothing, household items, canning jars, garden produce and craft items. Call 475-0805 to reserve display space.

The United Way of Lincoln and Lancaster county is looking for volunteers. They need people to operate a literacy hotline, to deliver posters for a canned good drive, receptionists and people to help those with mental retardation development work skills in an industrial workshop setting.

For information on these and other volunteer opportunities, call the United Way volunteer center at 474-6151.

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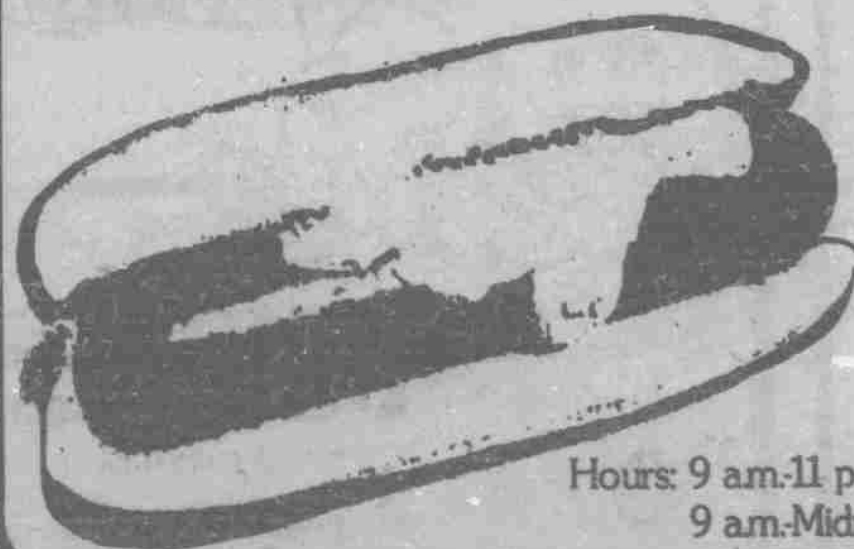
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