AUDIO-READER

Sharing the Gift of Sight Through Sound



ANNUAL REPORT



2026

FISCAL YEAR

PRESENTED BY :

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PREPARED BY :

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE



Audio-Reader is a small but mighty organization with only nine staff members, many of whom are part-time or also work for our sister organization Kansas Public Radio.

How are we able to produce over 18,000 hours of programming each year, not to mention providing audio description at dozens of theater and arts events? The answer is… ***you!***

We rely on our community to keep things going. Each year, over 250 volunteers produce programming that includes local and national newspapers, magazine articles, books and more. If you need it, we'll read it! And when I say "we," I'm referring to our hardworking and conscientious volunteers.

You are probably aware that barriers to information, literature, and art still exist for those who can't read print in spite of rapid advances in technology. Last year, we had 110 new applications for service. Our programming impacts thousands of individuals, who listen to the volunteer-produced programs using a variety of technologies, including radios, streaming devices, our website and our new-ish mobile app. Some projects, such as a recent request for a volunteer to record a LSAT prep book, have a significant impact on one individual's life. We're able to meet these varied needs because of people like you. Audio-Reader's success and ability to serve comes from our community – volunteers who generously give their time, donors (100% of Audio-Reader's cash operating budget comes from private support), and people who help spread the word about our free services.

We are here because of people like you, whether you are a listener, volunteer, donor, or someone who is reading this report just because you're curious about Audio-Reader and want to learn more.

Thank you… we appreciate your support and never take it for granted!

Feloniz Lovato-Winston
Director, Audio-Reader & Kansas Public Radio



On the Cover Page
(top image) **Darcy Schild** achieved 45 years of service with Audio-Reader! Pictured with **Trish Dowd Kelne** and **Feloniz Lovato-Winston**; (middle image) Program Director **Nick Carswell** received a 2025 Kansas Governor's Arts Award. Pictured with **Lt. Gov. David Toland**; (bottom image) **Audio-Reader volunteers** gathered in April 2026 for the Annual Volunteer Banquet.

On the Top of the Page
The Lawrence Intergenerational Choir sang for staff and volunteers at the 2025 Holiday Party.

MISSION, SERVICES & STAFF

MISSION

Audio-Reader fosters independence by providing access to information and the arts for people who have difficulty reading standard print due to vision loss, physical or learning disability, mobility challenges, or age.

CORE SERVICES

- **Radio Reading** - providing 24/7+ access to volunteer-read audio versions of newspapers, magazines, store ads, and books. Listeners can hear their favorite shows live through SCA radios, on-demand by telephone, or either live or on-demand on our mobile app, accessible website, or select smart speakers.
- **Special Requests** - in addition to our broadcast streams and Lions Telephone Reader service, our Special Request program is dedicated to providing access to content that is not available in an accessible format. This can include books, training manuals, text books, specialized magazines, legal documents and more.
- **Audio Description** - expanding cultural connections through live audio description at local theaters or pre-recorded descriptions of public art or at select museums via audio tours, audio description (AD) makes the visual verbal.

AUDIO-READER STAFF

Nick Carswell, Program Director
Trish Dowd Kelne, Volunteer Coordinator
Colin Halliburton, Operations Coordinator
Meredith Johanning, Asst. Dev. Director
Martha Kehr, Communications & Outreach
Steve Kincaid, Director of Engineering
Feloniz Lovato-Winston, Director
Danny Mantyla, Web Developer
Beth McKenzie, Development Director
Victoria Roush, Business Coordinator



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

ARTS ACCESSIBILITY FORUM



The Arts Accessibility Forum, sponsored in part by the State of Kansas through the Kansas Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts, brought together arts professionals with members of the disability community. Attendees of the convenings and trainings included members of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB), American Council of the Blind (ACB), staff from The Coterie Theatre, Kauffman Center, The Whole Person, Spencer Museum, Nelson-Atkins Museum, Lawrence Arts Center, Lied Center, Mid-America Arts Alliance, KS Arts Commission, Van Go, A-R volunteers, and more.

The series introduction took place on November 14 at Theatre Lawrence. The second convening, held on January 28 at the Lied Center of Kansas, featured two speakers from KU's Dept of Architecture - **Prof. Nilou Vakil** and **Alayna Thomas** - who spoke about their work in inclusive and universal design. The final series meeting on June 3 was hosted at Johnson County Community College in Overland Park. At that meeting, guest speaker **Magan Harms** from MindsEye Radio in Belleville, IL spoke about their work with audio description across the St. Louis metro.





The two-day audio description (AD) training was held on March 12th & 13th at the Lawrence Arts Center where Audio Description Project founder and president of Audio Description Associates, LLC, **Dr. Joel Snyder,** presented his training materials as he has done in dozens of countries for over three decades. Participants learned the foundations of AD, the importance of accessibility, and practiced scripting description while learning how to perform AD through video and live at theatres.

Image Descriptions: (top of the page) attendees of the March AD training; (top, left) A-R volunteer Christy Allie speaks into a microphone while sitting with Kate Lorenz and Molly Adams during Jan 28 convening; (center, right) Prof. Nilou Vakil presenting on universal design at Jan 28 convening; (bottom, left) Dr. Joel Snyder presenting on AD to a classroom of attendees at the Lawrence Art Center during the March AD Training.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

NEW AUDIO-READER MOBILE APP

- Over 300 downloads in the first year!
- Available on iOS and Android
- 500+ programs accessed each month

3 IAAIS PROGRAM AWARDS & 1 HONORABLE MENTION

Program of the Year

Books/Short Story:

Whirlwind

Reader: Bill Kurtis
Audio Engineer/Producer: Nick Carswell

Program of the Year

Magazines:

The Children's Hour

Talent/Reader: Michael Gier
Audio Engineer: Colin Halliburton
Producer: Nick Carswell

Program of the Year

Now Hear This:

Fabulous Fifties

Program Name: Fabulous Fifties Promo
Talent/Reader: Dr. Carl Graves
Audio engineer/Producer: Nick Carswell



Honorable Mention

Newspaper:

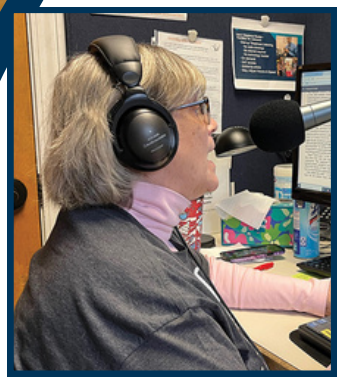
The Sunflower Dailies

Reader: Doug Heacock
Audio Engineer: Colin Halliburton
Producer: Nick Carswell

Image Description (top of the page, left to right): Patty & Steve Grimm, Bobby Duvall & guest speaker Kathy Dawson from the Topeka Sunflower Lions Club, Frank Ybarra & Janet Buie enjoying the April 2026 Annual Volunteer Banquet at Maceli's.

VOLUNTEERS & PROGRAMMING

Audio-Reader's 250+ active volunteers read the 24/7+ programming and telephone reader content plus help with special request readings, audio description at local theaters, help at outreach events, with audio sales, and in the garden. With so many on-demand listening options, our listeners never have to miss their favorite shows read by volunteers they know by voice and look forward to hearing every week. Keeping the Sensory Garden beautiful for the community are staff members **Danny Mantyla** and **Trish Dowd Kelne** along with volunteers such as **Melissa Warren, Craig Sweets, Nelda Mayse**, and many more. Our book readers keep the three book hours filled with excellent content making those some of the most accessed shows.







SPECIAL REQUESTS

Audio-Reader volunteers read dozens of special requested books, guides, newsletters, pamphlets, instruction manuals, or obituaries over this past year.



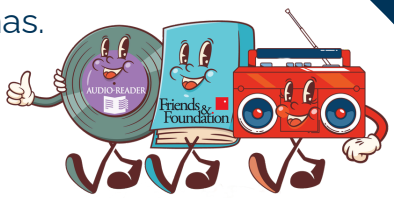
Just a few examples of the Special Request readings completed by Audio-Reader volunteers in FY2026 including *The American Dream, The Young Underground, Clee's Odyssey, The LSAT Is Easy, and Bury Our Bones in the Midnight Soil.*

Image description: (top of the page) attendees of the March AD training; (left to right): Dee Dee Eccles recording in a studio; Board member/listener Dr. Kim Morrow with volunteer Connie Rodriguez; Melissa Warren (volunteer) with Jacob Morton (KPR intern); Celebrating Darcy Schild with Janet Campbell and A-R staff; and Michael Gier preparing to read in the studio.



DEVELOPMENT & OUTREACH

The development team kept busy this year with their fundraising activities including donor relations, holding two Audio Sales, prepping for the Golf Tournament (rained out), posting Airwaves eBlasts, sending fundraising mailing campaigns, working with Lions Clubs and Delta Gammas.



Audio-Reader's two **Audio Sales** at the Lawrence Public Library in FY26 were a huge success resulting in over **$36,000** raised to support our mission!

For the first time in 17 years, the Annual Golf Classic was canceled due to excessive rainfall, course floodings, and risk to the greens. We were sad not to have fun out at Eagle Bend Golf Club, but we're thankful to our wonderful volunteers who set up Sunday evening and cleaned up Monday after the cancelation and all of our generous sponsors and golfers who still supported Audio-Reader in spite of the cancelation.







SOCIAL MEDIA

Our social media audiences continue to grow thanks to our KU student interns and Audio-Reader staff who post fun and informative content throughout the year!

On Facebook:

- ***Page views are up 10%***,
- ***Clicks are up by 41%***, and
- We have ***14% more Followers*** than in FY25!



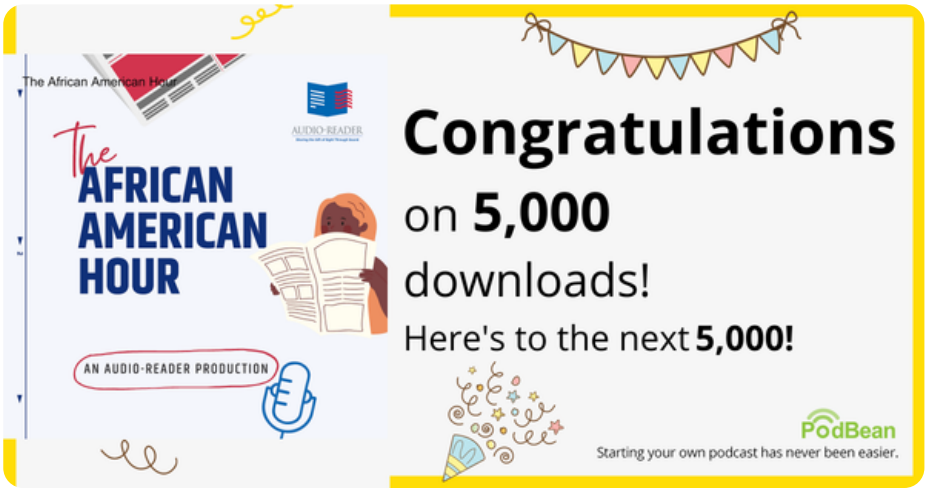
@AUDIOREADER
@AUDIO_READER
@KUAUDIO_READER

Image description: (top of the page) KU students help in the garden; (Left to right) KU international students visit the Sensory Garden; table of attendees at 2025 Golf Classic with listener Mary C.; and audio sale volunteers loading up a truck with equipment in front of Audio-Reader.



MILESTONE ACHIEVEMENT





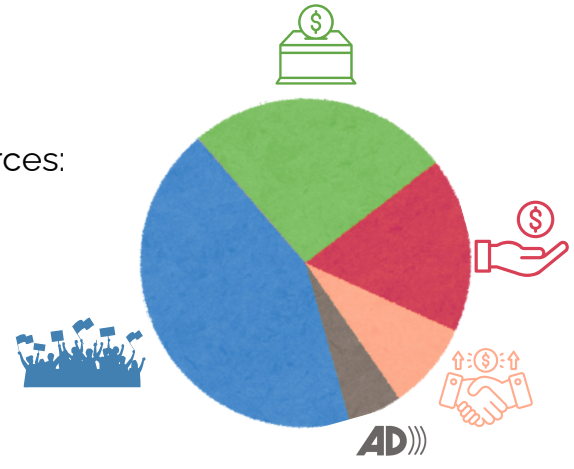
HIGHLIGHT OF MOST ACCESSED SHOWS IN FY26

- ***Book Hours*** - Mystery, Adventure & Non-fiction
- ***Outdoor Program***
- ***On The Lighter Side***
- ***The African American Hour***
- ***TV Guide***
- ***Newspaper Hours*** - Breakfast Table Times, LJW, Wichita Eagle & MO News Hour

BUDGET

Funding for Audio-Reader comes from the following sources:

- VOLUNTEER SERVICE HOURS VALUE
- DONATIONS & INVESTMENTS
- FUNDRAISING EVENTS
- KU IN-KIND SUPPORT
- AUDIO DESCRIPTION REVENUE



Audio-Reader's cash operating budget comes entirely from private support. We are continually grateful for the generosity of our donors, event sponsors, and volunteers for all they do for Audio-Reader and our mission.

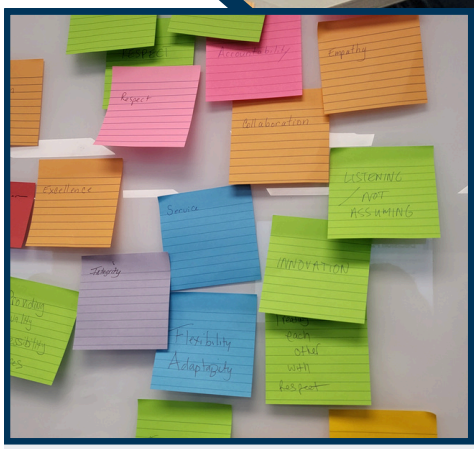


Image description: (top of the page) A-R staff Nick, Beth, Colin, Trish, Felly, and Martha waving and smiling; an image congratulating the African American Hour on achieving 5,000 podcast downloads; and a budget pie chart.



STRATEGIC PLANNING

In August 2026, Audio-Reader staff took a few hours out of their day to evaluate our services and develop strategic goals for the current fiscal year. University of Kansas Human Resources Trainer Stephanie Hull facilitated a discussion about how we prioritize listener services in order to effectively fulfill our mission of fostering independence in the blind, low vision, and print-disabled community. Stephanie asked staff to list their key Audio-Reader values on Post-it notes, and we then grouped similar concepts together, discovering themes and shared priorities. With those shared values in mind, we were able to better formulate a plan for this fiscal year which will include more work on audio description, marketing our app, outreach to theater and radio partners, streamlining our process for fulfilling special requests from individual listeners, and brainstorming ways to increase feedback from our listeners through an advisory board or survey. We dedicate our efforts toward progress over the next year in serving our listeners and the Audio-Reader community.



Post-It Collage
Staff wrote shared values on these colorful Post-its including empathy, service, innovation, integrity, respect, quality programming, accessibility, and responsibility.

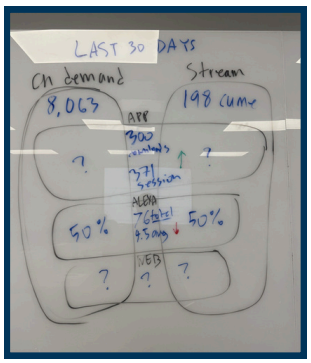






Image description (top of the page) A-R staff with Stephanie Hull talking and looking at whiteboard; close-up of value Post-it notes, white board notes, staff around the table; and Danny writing on the board.

Upcoming Photo Collage Pages

Page 10 (top left to bottom right) Hanan Misko at AAF convening; listener Kalene W. with Janie Jones; volunteer banquet table; Martha at outreach event; volunteers at banquet; Beth, Meredith and Felly with Audio Sales volunteers; volunteer banquet table; Patterson Legal Group awarding a check to Felly and Meredith; Beth McKenzie and J Schafer at Soudwaves event; volunteer Jim Carnell with banquet speaker Kathy Dawson; KU international students in a recording studio.

Page 11 (top left to bottom right) volunteer Pam Blome with Bev and Robert Phillips; Jane Tedder in a studio; KU students helping at Audio Sale; Nelda Mayse and Craig Sweets; Tom Kearney holding records; A-R staff and volunteers at Lied Center; Audio Sale volunteers; Mary Howe and Jim Huber in live performance studio; Doug Keslar sorting records; listener Tina J. and Beth McKenzie; Felly and Melinda Kearney; Craig, Ed and Mike at Audio Sale; Randy Austin presenting at banquet; volunteers and staff smile and wave during Virtual Coffee Bar Zoom; KU students visit the garden with Danny; Soundwaves attendees with Meredith; and Melissa Warren pruning the Sensory Garden.

A YEAR IN PHOTOS




























ROCK, POP
HIP HOP & DANCE



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Sports













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