



## BACKGROUND

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### **The Regional Unit of the South Central States of Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic®**

The Regional Unit of the South Central States of Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic (RFB&D®) is one of 21 nationwide units of a national nonprofit organization that provides an educational library audiobooks for students with visual impairment, dyslexia or other physical disabilities that make reading standard textbooks difficult or impossible. RFB&D's Learning Through Listening® Educational Outreach Program provides schools and universities with instruction and training in using audiobooks and playback equipment in the classroom.

Planning began for the unit in 1972 and the first book was recorded in 1973. The unit was one of the five original pilot units that began testing digital or computer-based recording in 1988. This pilot project prepared RFB&D for a nationwide conversion from analog (cassette) format to an all digital (CD) format that is now in place. RFB&D's AudioPlus® digitally recorded textbooks on CD are formatted for easy navigation between pages, chapters and subheadings using specialized playback equipment. In August 2008, the nonprofit launched AudioAccess<sup>SM</sup>, another service which allows students to download audio textbooks that can be played on a Windows-compatible computer using Microsoft Windows Media Player or a Windows-compatible portable media player. Our outreach team promotes all RFB&D's services which also includes a teacher resource website, [www.learningthroughlistening.org](http://www.learningthroughlistening.org), that provides lesson plans and teaching ideas.

RFB&D's recording studio in Austin was built in 1998 through a gift from Pat and Ken Zitzman and a capital campaign. Located on the property of the Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired, it houses seven recording booths that are set up on a digital network to communicate with RFB&D National Headquarters in Princeton, NJ. More than 275 volunteers regularly come to the Texas studio to assist with recording and production.

Before 2006, the unit operated with a staff of 12 people and the Outreach Program was limited to North, Central and South Central Texas. A contract with the Texas Education Agency to target economically disadvantaged students in kindergarten through 12th grade enabled it to increase staff to 24 to cover the entire states of Texas. Today the unit serves the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma & Texas. Within these states, the unit serves nearly 30,000 registered members from age five and beyond, and more than 1,000 schools and districts are members. However, it is estimated that there are 200,000 students with print disabilities eligible for RFB&D membership in the South Central States. The organization is working to reach them all.

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