



Overview of the Act

An Overview of the Provision of Educational Materials through an Act to Promote the Education of the Blind

An Idea Is Born

In the mid-1800s, when schools for the blind were being established in the United States, each school was responsible for embossing the books and manufacturing the appliances necessary for the instruction of its own pupils. School leaders soon recognized this as a great waste of effort and resources and saw the need to consolidate efforts to provide embossed materials for blind students. Dempsey Sherrod, a blind activist from Mississippi, convinced Kentucky leaders to create a centralized national printing house in Louisville in 1858 to meet the combined demands of the nation's schools.

APH received a federal mandate in 1879 when the Congress of the United States passed the Act to Promote the Education of the Blind. This act designates APH as the official supplier of educational materials to all students in the U.S. who meet the definition of blindness and are working at less than college level. By this federal Act, Congress created a permanent annual appropriation for the specific purpose of "manufacturing and furnishing books and other materials specifically adapted for instruction" of students who are blind in the United States and its outlying areas. The Act and its resulting programs administered through the American Printing House for the Blind make specifically developed educational materials more available and more effective today than ever before.

The Role of the American Printing House for the Blind

Initially, APH was chartered to emboss tactile books and to produce simple tangible apparatus. Today, APH continues this proud tradition by producing hundreds of textbooks in braille, large print, and digital formats and by researching, designing, and manufacturing an extensive catalog of educational aids, tools, and supplies.

