

NLS Telephone Forum – 3-28-2012
(paraphrased)

Comment: (Carolyn Sung - NLS)

Well hello everybody – from maybe Puerto Rico all the way to Hawaii. We're happy to be with you this afternoon, and I'm very happy to start the program off with an introduction of our new director, Karen Kenninger. So, she'll say a few words and then you can ask questions.

Comment: (Karen Kenninger - NLS)

Hi everybody. It is a pleasure to be here. I've been waiting for this day for some time now and I'm glad to be able to talk to all of you and hear what all of you have to say. I understand you're supposed to be nice to me, so this is okay! I am in "learning mode" right now. I have been out of the library "immediate circle" for the last three years, so I'm learning all the details, all the issues, all what's happened in the past three years from you guy's perspective as well as all the stuff that's going on here in Washington (DC) so, I'm sort of on overload right now and if you ask me a question, I will probably say "I'll get back to you on that." But, I'm happy to tell you that I want to know what the questions are, and I just want you to know that I'm delighted to be here and I'm really looking forward to seeing everybody in May as well. Why don't we go around the room and see who's all here with us in DC...?

Comment: (Library Staff - NLS)

Deborah Toomey, head of Network Services section; Carolyn Sung; Pamela Davenport; Michael Katzmann, Chief of Materials division; David Whittall, BARD Supervisor; Michael Martys, Automation Officer; Steve Prine, Assistant Chief of the Network division; Vickie Collins, Network Consultant; John Bryant, Production Control; Judy Dixon, Consumer Relations Officer; Ed O'Reilly, Collection Development section; Neal Bernstein, R&D Officer.

Comment: (Karen Kenninger - NLS)

So you can see, we have a big crew here, and I understand we have 40 or so lines open out to the Network, so that's fantastic! Carolyn, back to you...

Comment: (Carolyn Sung - NLS)

Okay! So...do we have anybody wanting to ask a question or make a comment?

Comment: (Ruth Hemphill - TN)

I just wanted to say "welcome" to Karen and how thrilled we are to have you – and I'm sure I'll come up with something else later, but I'll (just) press "7" again. Thank you.

Question: (James Gleason - MA)

I am on a city bus...but I wanted to be here for the conference call and say "hello." I did have a question (that may be) related to Judy Dixon: Judy, your job (title) is "Consumer Relations Officer," Is there an acting "braille" person?

Answer: (Judy Dixon - NLS)

Yes, I'm also the acting Braille Development Officer.

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

James? This is Steve Prine. If you're playing with your (phonebook entry) titles, I'm also head of the Reference section for the next four months.

Comment: (Carolyn Sung - NLS)

Let me add to that announcement. Dawn Stitzel, the head of the Reference section has been "detailed" as we say, downtown – that means the Library of Congress. She is going to be working with Roberta Shaffer, who is the new Associate Librarian of Library Services. Roberta Shaffer is over the whole library side of the Library of Congress and Dawn is going to be working with her

on a very exciting topic called the “Next Generation Strategic Plan for Library Services.” We will be having Steve back wearing more hats. You know he does love hats! So he’s graciously agreed to work in that capacity for the next four months but it means he has two hats (and) he’s still Assistant Chief.

We are going to continue with our publications. We’re particularly working on two projects: the web re-design and (also) Michael Martys is giving us a programmer to help us improve and upgrade the Network Library Database. So...perhaps we could go to the next question.

Comment: (Deborah Toomey - NLS)

MaryBeth Wise is winging her way to Iowa. There’s some irony in that, in that we have Iowa here at the head of our table! She wanted me to please remind all of you that the National Conference is happening in Newport, RI this May, and that April 15th is the deadline for hotel registration to get the “conference rate.” So, if you haven’t done it, the hotel and taxes are both due on April 15th.

Question: (Craig Hayward - NC)

I wanted to welcome Karen as well, to the Director’s position. Do we have an ETA on when Web Braille will become a part of BARD?

Answer: (Michael Martys - NLS)

We have some technical issues with the next upgrade of BARD. We unexpectedly have to do a server upgrade as part of this next version of BARD. We were not planning on needing to do that right now but, some factors outside of our control have made that necessary.

Question: (Craig Hayward - NC)

So does that include an interface re-design or is it just incorporating Web Braille into BARD?

Answer: (Michael Martys - NLS)

There (are) quite a few changes. There are some functional enhancements – like the “has had’s” are back and there is a “wishlist.” Things like that. What we’re really hoping to do is to have the new version of Web Braille up and running on BARD Practice – prior to the conference. A little bit of the schedule is out of my control because I’m depending on other people to build machines, but that’s the information that we have right now.

Comment: (Neal Bernstein - NLS)

I think it’s fair to say that even if we don’t have it up and running on (BARD) Practice by the conference, that we will still be able to show the interface, because the design of that interface is pretty well done. So we can at least expose some people to that at that time.

Comment: (Michael Martys - NLS)

If it’s not running on the big machine we’ll probably bring a machine with us to the conference.

Question: (Andrew Egan - RI)

I just wanted to welcome Karen to the group and I have a question for her right away. What do you envision (as) the broader view for the “Digital Transition”? As we keep moving forward, what do you think might be possibilities, let’s say, or future things that we might not have thought about?

Answer: (Karen Kenninger - NLS)

I am not really able to answer that question in any detail at the moment Andrew, because, I have only been here a day and a half. However, I can tell you that what I hope will happen is that we will have more books available, that BARD will be more functionally friendly – it’s been very friendly - but have more opportunities for searching and have more material on it, and that we will, in time,... be able to do some other kinds of download options. (We’ll) continue to upgrade the functionality on the machine, which, you know, has been going on all along and I’m sure will continue. And, we’re looking at all kinds of options that will for one thing, enhance the collection,

that will give us more content in the collection from various sources, so we're hoping to be able to expand our use of materials that traditionally haven't been available to us. More on that as we know it but my goal is to get as many items available to our readership as we possibly can - in the best possible formats. There's a lot of hope for the apps for the Android and the iPhone and, as an iPhone user myself, I'm very excited about that. (That is) definitely going to happen. Again, it's not happening just yet, but it's going to - and that will be a very exciting thing that a number of people have been (asking about)... so definitely that's in the works. Things (in) the Federal Government, I am learning, move slower than they do in Iowa. That's something I'm going to have to get used to quite honestly... My primary goal as Director here is to get the best possible experience for the patron. My focus is on the patrons and the people around the table here are working very hard to make that happen - as are all of you out there in the field - in the regional libraries... Being a patron myself, it's easy to keep that my top priority.

Comment: (Carolyn Sung - NLS)

Before we get to the next question, I would just like to add an announcement that goes along with what Karen has been saying. We're working hard in Washington up here on Taylor Street and also in Cincinnati - with the libraries across the country. We have actually gotten the first couple issues... of Smithsonian, so if you want to go on BARD and look at Smithsonian magazine, I believe it's the January issue for 2012 and I think maybe December and November are there too. I think we have them... at least halfway back into 2011 and, February is coming soon...

Question: (Maria Baratta - NJ)

Welcome Karen. From New Jersey, we welcome you to our group here. Two questions for you. The first one is pretty basic. We noticed that the most recent "Talking Book Topics" has a lot of older titles and not too many of the newer titles or newer bestsellers, and I'm wondering if that's due to budget limitations? Or is it mostly all the retrospective conversions that you're looking to do?

Answer: (Jane Caulton - NLS)

We are working on that. What happens is, NLS produces about 2000 books per year, normally, and we announce about 1800 of those books - so it's easy for us to get caught up in a backlog. So in the next issue we're going to announce about 500 titles, with some of them being older and some being newer, and we're going to proceed with that until we pretty much (catch up). There is another proposal that we're also looking at, but I won't talk about that now.

Question: (Maria Baratta - NJ)

Okay, then I have just a general question for Karen and I realize that you just started this week and it (may) be kind of hard to answer - maybe something to think about for the next conference call. (What will) the role of public libraries be as we continue with the Digital Transition that we're making?

Answer: (Karen Kenninger - NLS)

You're right, I don't have an answer for that, but I will certainly put it into the "think tank."

Comment: (Carolyn Sung - NLS)

I will interject... before we go to the next question, that we sent Vickie Collins to the Public Library Association meeting in Philadelphia about two weeks ago, and Vickie, would you like to say anything about your experience?

Comment: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

Yes. It was really a positive experience in Philadelphia. There were 8,700 public librarians there, so we had a steady flow of people coming to our exhibit booth. They were really very warm and very receptive and very excited about the new player. And very anxious to share about BARD, and very interested in everything that we were doing. They seemed to see NLS and the Network Libraries as partners. It seems we can look ahead to working cooperatively. I didn't get any negativity about the demo collection issue, so I'm hoping that that's a good sign!

Question: (Ruth Hemphill - TN)

(I have) a couple comments and a couple questions: As a follow up to the message from MaryBeth about the National Conference, I hear a rumor that the Viking Hotel is where Jack and Jacqueline Kennedy spent their honeymoon! I thought that was kind of interesting (laughter). I do have a question about the conference. Just out of curiosity, has the location for the 2014 conference been set?

Answer: (Library Staff - NLS)

No!! (laughter). To be determined.

Question: (Ruth Hemphill - TN)

The next question (is) more for Karen to think about: We READS libraries would really like a READS browser. Here in Tennessee we're looking at a way around it but we'd really rather not have to do that. We'd rather not go through adding something on to READS. So, it's just something for you to think about.

I heard Jane say something about the next issue of Talking Book Topics (would have) 500 titles? How many are in (TBT) usually?

Answer: (Jane Caulton - NLS)

Yes, 500 titles. (Usually there are) 300... We will be making a slight adjustment. We'll be using one-line book descriptions as opposed to the 50-word book descriptions.

Question: (Gregory Kearney – W. Australia)

I'm probably calling from the greatest distance on this telephone call... Welcoming Karen to her position (and) asking (if) the international exchange of books could be addressed at some point in the future?

Answer: (Library Staff - NLS)

Certainly we will continue to look at all of those issues – consistent with our copyright laws.

Question: (Richard Smith - MO)

Would you consider putting a server space up for Network libraries for local documents like, long-range plans, collection development, local exhibit policies, misuse of service and others? So that we can look in and see what documents other libraries have so that we don't have to be emailing back and forth to everyone. When someone gets on one of the lists and goes "I'm new and I need this or that document." ...

Answer: (Carolyn Sung - NLS)

Well, we have the Network Library Services website. We could certainly consider that. Nice suggestion.

Answer: (Deborah Toomey - NLS)

We also have extensive files here, of policies and procedures that the consultants have accrued over the years – and you can always contact your consultant... Some of these policies we have in hard-copy we'll have to get PDF'd in an accessible format... You can always get copies through your Network Consultant Vickie Collins.

Comment: (Richard Smith - MO)

We'll send you accessible copies from the local regional libraries to put up.

Comment: (Library Staff - NLS)

Wonderful!

Question: (Richard Smith - MO)

I may not know of it but is there a general email question line? So that we could avoid having specifically to say "MaryBeth," "Vickie" and then get replies back because you travel so much...

Answer: (Carolyn Sung - NLS)

We have not set up one for Network Services. There is one for NLS and there is one for Reference, and we have an email address for Music. We haven't felt the need for (one for) Network Services section but we will consider it.

Question (Mike Marlin – CA9)

Greetings to all of you and welcome to Karen from the staff here in Sacramento! We're very delighted that you're with us and look forward to many years to come. I have a question and a suggestion. My question is regarding BARD and this was alluded to earlier regarding down the road upgrades that will hopefully include improved search capability. I know Mike Martys has talked about that in the past – in terms of the Author search, etc... But, related to that, I'm wondering if that server upgrade that Mr. Martys talked about will improve the speed of BARD here on the west coast, especially late in the day where we've had a rather slow time of it lately?

Answer: (Michael Martys - NLS)

The upgrade to BARD will almost certainly improve speeds – and by speeds, I presume how fast the website reacts to things you ask it to do. Part of that problem that we've been having recently is that the Library of Congress I.T. organization – that their backup systems have been backing up the servers in the middle of the day and, when they do that it's really bad. I haven't had a lot of luck trying to get them to stop it. I'm actually putting all of my energies into the new server because when we get on the new server we should have far more control of that and that problem should go away. I do apologize for those performance problems... I guess we just have to bear with it for just a little bit until we can get onto the new machine.

Question: (Mike Marlin – CA9)

Are we correct in assuming that improvements of perhaps later this calendar year...will include Improved searching capability?

Answer: (Michael Martys - NLS)

Well, I think it's safe to say yes, we're going to make it better, but there is actually a pretty substantial philosophical discussion that we need to talk about when it comes to searching. We basically have a project scheduled to do a major revamp of searching, and maybe this might be a topic that we could address at the National Conference. We can give you the different perspectives on how to approach this problem we've discussed here and perhaps kind of clue you in as to where our thinking is going. I don't want to say too much right now because I don't want to imply that certain decisions have been made, but we've definitely done a lot of thinking about it right now and we have some idea about where we want to go with it.

Comment: (Mike Marlin – CA9)

And my suggestion is that perhaps the 2014 or 2016 conference could be on the west coast? We'd greatly appreciate that out here on the frontier.

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

Mike, we were just there in 2000! (Laughter).

Comment: (Mike Marlin – CA9)

Well I know 12 years is a small amount of time in your long illustrious career Steve! (Laughter)

Question: (Stella Cone - GA)

Hi this is Stella and welcome back Karen! One of the things I was wondering about since we need to get a recording booth up and going is, what's the progress on the LCM? Or should we go with something like the APH recording and software and markup?

Answer: (Michael Martys - NLS)

I can tell you what I know and then Michael (Katzmann) can kind of chip in a little bit. They're really not providing a lot of support for (LCM). The vendor being Bosch, the people who own LCM. We have engaged Bosch in conversations about the future of LCM, and those conversations are at a state where I really can't talk about them. So I can't give you any guidance about what may lay ahead. All I can do is tell you what we know right now. But we are talking to them. We know LCM works fine on Windows XP and that it's still very possible to run Windows XP for quite a while. Well, not a long time but you can still run it. We do know that LCM has a technical issue on Windows 7, in that the recording function does not appear to work well, but there is a nice workaround for that. You just use another software product to record and just use LCM to make the book. That's pretty much the state of LCM. The thing that you need to know is that we are talking to Bosch right now and as soon as we are able to provide people with an update we will do so. The state of alternatives to LCM – I'm going to let Michael perhaps talk a little bit about that.

Comment: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

I think "Book Wizard Producer" is really the only one that's available commercially and is supported. The thing about LCM is they're not supporting it, they're not making upgrades, they're not making changes. I presume they're still selling it. The long-term prospect for LCM is certainly up in the air. If we can get hold of it, we'll maintain it to the best of our ability, through contractors. The issue is, can we get hold of it, to perform that maintenance? Book Wizard Producer is being used by APH to make our books. There are a couple of libraries, I believe, who are using it. It is a different workflow than LCM. It takes a bit of getting used to if you're used to LCM. It's a lot cheaper than LCM, so you can get a lot more seats or copies of it than you can with LCM. There are certainly some advantages. Really that's the only alternative you have at the moment.

Question: (Stella Cone - GA)

And with the Book Wizard we can do the markups and everything?

Answer: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

That's right. The recording is done with another tool (APH Studio Recorder). They've separated the functions of the markup from the recording. But you have a lot of options to do recording. There are a lot of good recording tools, just for the commercial market (like) SoundForge. Book Wizard Producer is fully accessible. If that's your requirement then that's what you go for.

Comment: (Keri Wilkins – PA9)

Hello everybody. I wanted to welcome Karen from the country into the city! I don't have any questions. I wanted to say that I had a really good discussion with Vickie last week when she was visiting us – it was the week before (last) – and I'm sure she's shared information with all of you, so welcome Karen and I'm looking forward to the next month's meeting.

Question: (Sharon Ruda - IL)

Hello everyone. I just wanted to welcome Karen. It's nice to have a "middle-of-the-country" perspective out there now, and I hope the culture-shock isn't too great for you. One of the things now that Ed is there: I was wondering if any thought has been given to making some of those first books in series into the digital format...I'm specifically thinking of a couple of mystery series like Carol O'Connor's Mallory series. That doesn't seem at this point to have a viable digital

(download). I just wanted to be on record in letting you know that I hope that you explore especially those series that are popular...

Answer: (Library Staff - NLS)

We're on the case, Sharon. It's very helpful for us to identify these so, send me an email whenever you come up with one of these anomalous titles – and we'll see what we can do. I make no rash promises, needless to say.

Comment: (Michael Martys - NLS)

Since there's a little bit of dead air I'll take this moment to remind everybody that we are going to modify the main page on Web Braille on the last day of this month, to remind people to sign up for BARD. There was an Operations Alert that just went out, informing you about what we were going to do but the reason I thought that I would mention it is that there is a probability that you might get a few questions about it since the first page that you go to in Web Braille will be a little different. The buttons...will be a little different and people might ask you about it, so I just wanted to point that out.

Comment: (Carolyn Sung - NLS)

Well, it is now in Washington ten after three (o'clock). Shall I say "going once, going twice, going three times? No question in the queue? Have a wonderful afternoon!

No more questions or comments.