NLS Telephone Forum – 4-25-2012
(paraphrased)

Comment: (Carolyn Sung - NLS)

Welcome! I looked at the date and I saw that it was April 25 and I said "Oh, only 8 months 'til Christmas!" We're a good group here this afternoon. Karen is not with us this afternoon because she is participating in a meeting with COSLA, the Chief Operating Officers of State Libraries. They invited her to be introduced to their group. They're meeting down at the Martin Luther King Library in Washington today. We have – around the table – starting with Michael Katzmann…

Comment: (Library Staff - NLS)

Pamela Davenport, Carolyn, Judy Dixon, Michael Martys, Jane Caulton, Neal Bernstein, David Whittall, Deborah Toomey, John Bryant.

Comment: (Carolyn Sung - NLS)

So, we wanted to start off with two things. First with Michael Katzmann (who) has some information about the magazine project and some changes he's made to the machine. I know everybody's excited about the magazine pilot and I think you'll be interested in hearing what Michael has to say.

Comment: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

Ok. I wasn't going to say much about this now, but we are getting ready to issue a solicitation for…the creation of digital magazines. This has been down at the main library for four months now, but…hopefully they'll get it out in the next couple weeks. The concept, as some of you may know, is to put multiple magazines onto a cartridge, so if a patron subscribes to a number of monthly magazines, they will get one cartridge a month with those magazines on them. To make the process a little clearer to the patron, we also will include (an) instructional – I'm calling it a "leaflet" DTB – as the first audio that we'll hear when plugging in the cartridge.

Carolyn wanted me to play this to let you know what it sounds like (*demonstration of audio from magazine cartridge follows*). Unlike a regular book which would say "end of book" at this stage, this is a special "leaflet" DTB that resets itself to the beginning of the book… A patron would select a magazine by going into the "Bookshelf" mode by holding the "Play/Stop" button down (*demonstration*). So, they go through the magazines here (*demonstration*) and then they'll select the book (*demonstration*). So hopefully that may help in the understanding of the operation when they do get more than one book on a cartridge. Of course, if they only get one book on a cartridge…it would just play like a regular book.

We also may put…a reminder (in there) about returning the cartridges, because this is a recycle program unlike the regular, cassette magazine program. That's a short demonstration. (At) the National Conference we'll give a more comprehensive overview of how the magazine program will work.

Comment: (Carolyn Sung - NLS)

Thank you. Mike Martys also has two things to report. One is about the hacking incident that involved Bob Axtell's forms among other things – and Bob Axtell just came (into) the room. Michael will talk about that and also about how we're going in terms of progressing with putting Web Braille into BARD.

Comment: (Michael Martys - NLS)

The first thing I wanted to talk about was the recent hacking incident we had. About three weeks ago we came under attack from some hackers which we traced back to a location in Russia. NLS has a number of web pages on our website that allow people – libraries or various individuals – to submit information to us, that we would then process. For example, there's a web page where

you can express interest in our program and it automatically emails the appropriate library with that information. Many of those forms are doing basically just that. They acquire the information and they email it to the appropriate person. What happened when we got hacked – and it started about three weeks ago and it kind of petered out about a week ago – was that, these individuals were using something called a "computer robot" to attack…. It was another computer that was repeatedly…trying to break in. Throwing every technique they knew of, to see whether we were resistant to it. All of our forms were resistant, meaning they did not break in. But, their activities had the unfortunate side effect that it caused (what appeared as gibberish information to be emailed multiple times). The record holder was Bob Axtell who received on one day 35,000 email messages in the span of a couple hours. Those things can be dealt with and those emails can be eliminated but unfortunately if there was some legitimate activity on those forms when the robots were attacking us it might have gotten lost in the pile of erroneous messages.

So that is why we did have to alert everybody that we did have this problem. When it first occurred we shut…down to stop the hackers and then after that we used a technique that is very common on the internet called the "slow down" technique. Which is, we added intelligence to each form and as the form was being used it was monitoring who was using it and if it was used rapidly in succession from a particular site, it would begin slowing itself down until it got almost unusable. The idea being that these "robots" which work at extremely high speed, would trigger the slow down mechanism, and within a few cycles would become so slow it would stop working for them, and they would hopefully lose their interest and move on. So all of our forms have that behavior now and the hacking seems to have quieted down. We don't have as many erroneous messages but we had to alert everybody that there was a brief period of time where we were overwhelmed with mail, and we might have lost some legitimate form submissions.

The second item that Carolyn had asked me to let you know is how are things going with our merger of Web Braille and BARD? As you remember from our previous call, I alerted everyone to the fact that we had an unexpected development in our project, which was that we had to switch servers. The present BARD server was deemed to be incapable of handling the new version of the software. The new servers were set up and configured, and we're presently in the process of moving the new software to the new servers. We hope to perhaps, show you this at the conference. Our fingers are still crossed regarding that. But the plan will be – as I've stated before – that when we do power up the new BARD website, it's going to be what we call "Practice BARD" and everyone will have a chance to see the new website in practice before we deploy it to production. The only thing that everyone needs to note is that the practice website will be on a new computer, and when we're ready to do that we'll announce it to everybody.

Comment: (Carolyn Sung - NLS)
Thank you, Michael. Let's move on to the questions you may have. Neal Bernstein is here, in case anybody has any questions about his survey. The floor is yours.

Question: (Danielle Miller - WA)
Hi everybody. Thank you! I'm just wondering if there's any way those cartridges with the magazines – when you enter the "bookshelf" mode if they could say "6 magazines" instead of "6 books" and where we are on being able to scroll instead of (having) to go back and forth if you have more than one item on there?

Answer: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)
Well at the moment the book doesn't have the word "magazine" recorded in it, so, when we next do an update (to the) messages in the machine, we will get (the narrator) to record "magazines." …There are some techniques we could use to differentiate. At the moment, it will say "book." The question about scrolling I don't quite understand?

Question: (Danielle Miller - WA)

Well if you have six books, and you want your first book after all, you have to go back down with the rewind (button) going from six to one. Looping, I guess (is preferred). Going in a circle because that might be quicker than going up and down (through) the number of items you have.

Answer: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

That's a matter of opinion. There are two ways you can do it. The way you're talking about is I think the way the Humanware players work. It was thought that this was a better way, but as I say, it's a matter of opinion. In reality, there's only going to be for most people either 1, 2 or 3 magazines on the cartridge.

Comment: (Danielle Miller - WA)

I was thinking of it in (terms of) general functionality. I have a cartridge with about 15 children's books, for when I go out to schools, and some of our folks with their flash drives have many, many books on them. And it can be time-consuming to go find them – but I understand what you're talking about.

Question: (Ruth Hemphill - TN)

When you were discussing the hacking and you said that if we submit multiple forms quickly, that's for all forms now that we submit on what used to be called PICS? Are you including interlibrary loan forms?

Answer: (Library Staff - NLS)

No… if you actually log in to submit your form, you're okay. The problem came from the forms that were available to the public in general…

Comment: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

Just going back to the scrolling (question). If you press and hold the rewind – or the previous – button, it will jump back to the first book (and) the same with the next – or (fast) forward, so, you can jump quickly from the beginning to the end actually, faster than scrolling all the way through.

Question: (Richard Smith - MO)

When you change over to the BARD / Web Braille – when you do your suspend, cancellation and deleting patrons, will you be sending regional libraries statistics of how many you have changed so that we can get an idea of what our statistics look like?

Answer: (Michael Martys - NLS)

The last Op Alert has the most recent statistics report, where we can base some of that information. Any action we do automatically, Richard, is going to be emailed. We will not do anything without an email accompanying the action.

Answer: (David Whittall - NLS)

And the first thing we'll do the suspensions which are closed which are (deceased) people.

Question: (Sue Chinault - MI)

This is Sue calling from Lansing. For Neal Bernstein, the survey that you just sent out, I'm being asked by some of our subregionals whether this should be answered as a regional or whether each one needs to answer this question. A lot of them pertain to the system (we share). How much data are you looking for?

Answer: (Library Staff - NLS)

Well, I think it's going to depend on how you plan to handle recall. If the libraries are going to be shipping those books out, directly from the subs, then we'll want to know what their capabilities are.

Question: (Mike Marlin – CA9)
Question about Audible.com. This might be for Michael Katzmann. My understanding is that presently, the DTBM does not interface with Audible.com books. Is that correct?

Answer: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)
That's correct. Yes.

Question: (Mike Marlin – CA9)
Is there any chance that in the future, there might be a capability for that? We have one patron in particular. He's a retired professor. He's getting up there in years. He has no computer facility nor any interest in it, but wanted to listen to a book of lectures (that are) only available on Audible.

Answer: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)
This is something we looked at when we were doing the design of the machine – we had some preliminary talks with Audible - but at the moment there are no firm plans to go ahead and do that. It's a cost/benefit trade off. You look at the number of things we have to do and the resources we have for the benefit we get. Technically, it's possible to do it with the machine but…

Question: (Mike Marlin – CA9)
Converting a WAV file to an MP3 or something?

Answer: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)
No, it will be playing it as an MP3. It's just that the player needs software to understand the structure of the book and do the DRM – the un-DRM-ing of the book. Audible would supply a library and you would basically have to add the "hooks" to that library to get it to work.

Question: (Maria Baratta - NJ)
Hi. I have a quick question. I guess this is for Mike Martys or Dave. Within BARD Transfer In – we've seen maybe one in the (whole) time we've been using BARD so…are we supposed to get an indicator every time someone's being transferred into our BARD system?

Answer: (David Whittall - NLS)
If it's done properly, yes, you should…It's just a matter of chances – how many people are moving to New Jersey and transferring to New Jersey but, we are seeing transfers on the automation page. It should pop right up as a transfer.

Question: (Maria Baratta - NJ)
Now if somebody is inactive in another state – say their CMLS record is now inactivated or suspended but they were technically transferred to our library, but their BARD I.D. is still with their originating state, that BARD I.D will be cancelled, correct?

Answer: (Michael Martys - NLS)
The BARD I.D. is like, the internal I.D. of somebody inside of BARD and that stays the same. What you might be mentioning is the CMLS I.D., which goes along with the BARD records. That should reflect the correct I.D. in the state, and during a transfer, that is changed. The BARD I.D. stays (the same), it never really changes. Once you've got an account on BARD, you get a BARD I.D. and that's your I.D.

Question: (Mary Jane Kayes – CA9)
Hi, I am trying to write up an article for our next newsletter which will be out in a few months' time – about the Web Braille merging into BARD, and I realized I didn't know when Web Braille started. The earliest patron use I can find is 1999. Is that about the right time?

Answer: (Library Staff - NLS)
August 24, 1999.

Question: (Ruth Hemphill - TN)
Did he say BARD started on October 13, 2006?

Answer: (Library Staff - NLS)
That was the first hundred testers.

Comment: (Library Staff - NLS)
If we're going to count the tests then Web Braille started in March of '98.

Comment: (Carolyn Sung - NLS)
No more questions? Well I hope all of you got signed up for the conference who were planning to come, and, we look forward to seeing you in Newport!…Thank you!

No more questions or comments.