

NLS Telephone Forum – 7-25-2012
(paraphrased)

Comment: (Carolyn Sung - NLS)

Hello everybody from coast to coast. We are having a beautiful day in Washington. It was actually so beautiful, I almost turned around and got my gardening tools and forgot to come to work but then I said, “there’s the Open Forum today.” ...We’re very happy to have quite a crew from NLS here today, so we’re all ready to answer questions and hear from you. First of all I’ll go around the room and introduce people. I’m Carolyn.

Comment: (Library Staff - NLS)

I’m Deborah Toomey. Ed O’Reilly, Michael Katzmann, John Bryant, Alice O’Reilly, MaryBeth Wise, Vickie Collins, Steve Prine, Alison Benkwitt, Mary Dell Jenkins, Paula Higgins, Mike Martys, Bob Axtell, Jane Caulton, Bob Norton,

Comment: (Carolyn Sung - NLS)

And back to Carolyn. I think John Hanson is coming back in. We have the folks from Music today, quite appropriately, because we may have some questions about the new BARD which is going to include Web Braille which includes music as well as literary braille. It hasn’t been slow in Washington (DC) this summer. It’s been very busy... Karen is not here today and that’s why I’m hosting the call. She’s happily in Iowa, riding her bicycle I think – so you don’t have to worry that something unforeseen has happened to her. The congressional interest that I wanted to share with you, she shared with the consumer groups at their conventions in July. There is some congressional interest in extending NLS’ eligibility requirements. Not just tinkering with it, but to extend it and replace our current requirements for eligibility with those requirements that are under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA eligibility would be ours. As you who probably know things about ADA, know that this would be a substantial change, so NLS and the Library of Congress have been very interested in being sure that this change and the size of the change would be understood and that there would be a full understanding of the impact. So, this is to let you know that this is underway at the end of a session...in Congress – in a political season. It’s a very unstable time and any kind of things can happen so, I want you to be aware of that.

The second government agency that is interested in us is the Bureau of Printing and Engraving. As you know - or may not know - there was a court case a few years ago about the accessibility of American currency, and one of the things that the Bureau of Printing and Engraving agreed to do was to develop and distribute a currency reader. They learned about us and they think that we might be a match for their project so, there has been some preliminary discussions. We’ve had no concrete discussions about how this would take place. This would be going to blind individuals who needed assistance in knowing what value their (currency) has. We expect to be talking with representatives in the next few weeks. It’s an intriguing proposal in the sense that this would be of benefit to many of our patrons, and it might put us in touch with people that we need to reach out to, but we also realize how strapped you guys are for resources, and if we got into the business of distributing this appliance, there would be of course, discussions about how we would do it. We would try to do it in a way that would have the least impact. They became so interested in us that they were talking about mentioning us in their legislation, but I don’t think they’ve gotten to that point. Again, it’s a “heads up.”

Now for the more “usual” things that we talk about. The better news, I think, is BARD. The expansion of BARD. To be legit and really have that “B” in BARD for braille. Just today on the website in the section on TBT and BBR, in the front, they have “In Brief” and there’s a long description about BARD there, and what’s going to happen with Web Braille and BARD. There’s also now a link at the end of “In Brief” and its title is “BARD Detail Modification Summary” and it has three sections: “New Materials on BARD,” “New Features on BARD” and “Other Changes.” So if you go to your TBT or your Braille Book Review “In Brief” and go to the bottom of the In Brief and click... We can also have Martys talk about this in a little bit.

A couple more things. If you were looking for the list of Books that have Shaped America, we've hit a snag. We haven't forgotten it but we're still exploring if we can share the list with you. We've had a little problem with communications downtown. Also I want you to know this: The Patron and Demographic Survey was posted last Friday on FedBizOpp, so it will be up for 30 days to solicit for people who would like to bid on this contract where we're going to learn more about our users and the demographics of our users. Also, postcards. It looks like the postcards that were ordered in the spring, may be coming in August or early September. These are additional postcards to publicize the digital program. And MaryBeth would like to thank everybody...

Comment: (MaryBeth Wise - NLS)

I just wanted to thank everyone that participated in the Conference Evaluation Survey. We really appreciate your feedback. If you have not received a survey (perhaps it went into your "spam" folder), just email me at mwis@loc.gov and I'll be sure you have a survey to fill out if you attended the conference. Thank you.

Question: (Carolyn Sung - NLS)

And so, Martys, would you like to say a few words about braille getting into BARD? Or do you want to turn it over for questions?

Answer: (Michael Martys - NLS)

Maybe we should just go for questions. Everything that I would say was basically on that web page update.

Comment: (Carolyn Sung - NLS)

Ok. The floor is now open for questions. Do we have anybody with a question?

Question: (Richard Smith - MO)

I wanted to know: Is that link active on the "In Brief" page of the BARD overview?

Answer: (Carolyn Sung - NLS)

Yes, it is. I checked it probably in the last half-hour.

Question: (Linda Montgomery - AZ)

My comment is about the order form for catalogs that went out to patrons. Once again this year we received several hundred of them, because apparently patrons – once again – who are not braille readers – saw at the top of the page, "Large-Print Edition" so I'm wondering if there is some way we can change that form to improve that situation so that somebody who get those at NLS or wherever they go to doesn't have to mark them and then send them to us, and our staff doesn't have to go through and check. I brought this up with Pam Davenport who was here just yesterday and the day before, doing our consultant visit, and we had a wonderful visit and so she's probably going to bring this question back too, but I thought I would just mention it here and see if others had experienced the same thing with getting a lot of those back. I think we had over 350 of them the first week.

Question: (Jane Caulton - NLS)

Are we talking about the braille patron order form?

Answer: (Linda Montgomery - AZ)

The order form that went out to request catalogs for Braille Book Review or the new Digital Talking Books catalog and a couple of others. What happens I think, is (that) patrons see at the top of the page the first thing listed (which) is Braille Book Review. It then says "Braille Edition" and then it says "Large-Print Edition." My suggestion would be perhaps a simple change to the second box that can be checked to make it clearly state – instead of just saying "Large-Print Edition" you say "Braille Book Review" and then in small letters "Large-Print Edition" and maybe that would help clarify for the person so that they know that they're not requesting something that they really don't want.

Answer: (Jane Caulton - NLS)

Well, we haven't heard of this happening any place else. I'd like to hear what other libraries may be experiencing.

...

Question: (Stephanie Schott - AK)

We just wanted to reiterate that that is also a problem with our patrons. We get a lot of those back and it does take a lot of time for us to go through. And, I also wanted to ask a question about the online catalog. It's still showing books from Learning Ally and Canadian holdings. Is there going to be any change with that or are they going to be taken out or is there going to be an update?

Answer: (Bob Axtell - NLS)

We're reviewing that currently. My best guess is that that will be removed. That in itself won't be a particularly quick process.

Question: (Maria Baratta - NJ)

I'm wondering if you have any information about the status of the digital cartridge recall project?

Answer: (John Bryant - NLS)

The status right now is that we have the request into the contracting office to post a solicitation (to have) people bid on doing that, and we are still testing some different packaging for the possible return, so hopefully I'll be able to give a sample of some of these out to those who volunteer to help us with that before too long.

Question: (Mike Marlin - CA9)

My question alludes back to one of the first things you said, Carolyn, regarding legislative extension of eligibility requirements, and I wondered if you could elaborate and be a little more specific about what that means essentially?

Answer: (Carolyn Sung - NLS)

We have one particular reader who has been very concerned with this. I don't think she's the reason for the congressional interest. I think there is an interest on the part of some in the disability community, in our program – wanting to be included and so, there is this feeling that instead of being for blind and physically handicapped, this should be for everyone who's covered by the ADA, including people who have a perception that they have a disability. I am not very familiar with the ADA but it is very, very broad. I know in the past, for example...people couldn't hear (and) they got cochlear implants and they had to learn about pronunciation and so forth and, they wanted to have our program under the ADA because they were disabled – so that they could learn to talk better – and they weren't really eligible because its connected to being able to read and, they could otherwise read. So if they could read regular print, they weren't eligible. That's the one example that came to my mind, although no one else on the outside spoke to me about that particular one. But that's just an example of the various kinds of things that are covered under ADA that this change in our law would bring about. This person who has written to me told me that I was going by the wrong law...Pratt-Smoot. I should be going by ADA and, she was going to sue me. Now, I don't know that she's not the Congressional interest but she must be reflective of some of the people that are interested.

Question: (Mike Marlin - CA9)

Have Congressional representatives contacted Karen or NLS about this?

Answer: (Carolyn Sung - NLS)

Well of course the Library of Congress is part of the Congressional branch so our Congressional relations office has been involved in it. They're the people who coordinate the Library of Congress' relationships with the Congress and so Karen has been talking with them and they've been trying to make clear what would be involved. You never can tell. A Senator is a Senator is a Senator. They can put amendments on various kinds of bills and legislation. It doesn't have to be introduced in a direct fashion.

Question: (Mike Marlin – CA9)

Does anyone have an idea what the numbers would look like if it were opened up like that?

Answer: (Carolyn Sung - NLS)

I'm not good at numbers but it would be enormous.

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

Learning disability alone is considered to be somewhere around 45 million.

Comment: (Mike Marlin – CA9)

Well as long as they're prepared to give us 100 billion dollars a year, I have no problem with that.

Comment: (Carolyn Sung - NLS)

We just don't know what it all means and we won't know until it happens and if we're lucky it won't happen and we won't have to know.

Comment: (Ruth Hemphill - TN)

(My question) was very similar to Mike's. I appreciate Carolyn and everybody kind of giving us a "heads-up" about this and I need to give my administration a heads-up about it. I do understand you don't know what to say but I appreciate the things you did say even though you may feel uncomfortable saying them about the cochlear implants and learning disabilities and - another one that pops into my head is mental retardation. I know I'm going to get questions from the administration and I know that...no one can really answer (them) until if and when it happens.

Comment: (Mary Jane Kayes – CA9)

I just had something to pass along. It's a little unusual and because it's fairly rare, I thought I'd share it with the group. We have a patron who is very sensitive to loud sounds and had asked me if there was a way to turn the volume down on the digital player – even lower than it goes – and she solved her own problem. She bought a Koss VC-20 volume control. She plugged it into the headphone (jack) and then the headphones into the volume control, and it works just fine. So if anyone has that rare patron who wants less sound, that's one way to solve it.

Question: (Sue Walker - ID)

Hi everybody. A couple weeks ago there were some problems with new books with the barcodes (not) scanning correctly. We had probably 25 or 30 of those. I am curious as to were you able to follow up on what the problem was and hopefully correct it for the future?

Answer: (Bob Norton - NLS)

It'll get corrected for the future. I just got off the phone with LCI and it was a new vendor and it actually looks like they're not in conformance with the requirements so, it'll get fixed – as quick as we can.

Question: (Sue Walker - ID)

Do we have any idea how many additional titles may be affected?

Answer: (Bob Norton - NLS)

I don't right now. I'm still kind of working on that. John Bryant and I were just talking about it too. Just to be clear with people, it's not the book producer who puts the barcode on the container – it's the manufacturer. So once they leave the manufacturer they get kind of spread out (between) APH or NAC or PTB. If you need replacements...just send me an email and I'll get LCI to send you replacement barcodes directly. Good, correct barcodes.

Question: (Cora McGovern – CA9)

I was wondering if anyone had...discussed particular conditions that could be added to learning differences, such as cochlear implants. They would have been a temporary learning difference – evaluated every couple years. Just to give an alternative? ... It would be such a strain on the system if we added 45 million people.

Answer: (Carolyn Sung - NLS)

I think the approach that the Library of Congress has taken to this is that, we need to look at what it all means before we decide on a course of action but sometimes that's hard to get people to agree to if they're passionate. But I think that is definitely the library's position – to try to look thoroughly at what this means before it's done – but thanks for your suggestion.

Comment: (Cora McGovern – CA9)

Well, in an election year, they may be looking to impress voters and I'm thinking that if we offered an alternative, it might appease people.

Comment: (Carolyn Sung - NLS)

I suspect many alternatives will be offered along the way as people realize how big a change this will be.

Comment: (Richard Smith - MO)

Just my two cents. We are losing readership over the last few years. Why don't we expand it – and open it up to as many... I think Learning Ally and Bookshare are taking those customers. Maybe we should look at it – and fund it too. But that's my two cents.

Comment: (Carolyn Sung – NLS)

Thank you Richard. I think that's definitely something we're going to be looking at in the Patron Survey, as you were talking about, where you perceive some of our customers are going, and obviously, this other is in the offering and, who knows what will happen and how wide or how narrow the change will be? I suspect there might be some change. Once there's change in the air, there's change in the air.

Question: (Andrew Egan - RI)

Do you think – also looking at institutional accounts, (they) might expand too within that process? In the sense of individuals that we serve expand, then the institutions that also provide services to them might be in that consideration?

Answer: (Carolyn Sung – NLS)

I think there's great interest. You and others are interested in experimenting in that area and helping us chart a path in some of these areas that we have less experience than in others. I was just saying yesterday that I was surprised that last summer and early fall when there wasn't more interest in institutions with BARD than we got. I rather expected it to be wider than it turned out to be, but that may be to the pressures in existing institutions. We do think that, in terms of expansion...the apps will reach out to another audience and that might have an impact on expansion as well. But, I understand your interest, Andy, and I think there are some developments there that might help us in that way.

Comment: (Andrew Egan - RI)

Just looking from Richard's perspective I think it's even broader than what he had mentioned. I see like, Overdrive working through the E-Zone system, expanding into Bookshare, and then, that commercial competition – I think that's what we're up against as well, because people...with the economic power might be going alone and getting their own downloads if they don't want to wait, or if they have some other piece of equipment that functions on a better level. I think there's lots of areas of competition...in some respects. That's why I look at it as being more an opportunity than something negative.

Question: (Ruth Hemphill - TN)

Well you've certainly given us stuff to think about. I have a follow-up to the other announcement you made about the Bureau of Engraving. Just to clarify in my mind, they're considering having us distribute these currency (readers)?

Answer: (Carolyn Sung – NLS)

Yes. I think they think that our population and the population they are trying to reach, overlap... We just don't have any details on... accountability, their timeline, all of that.

Comment: (Ruth Hemphill - TN)

And then there is the issue of maintenance and repair, too.

Comment: (Carolyn Sung – NLS)

Exactly, and replacement. We do have enough experience to be leery I'd say... When we have more details, we'll be sharing them...along the way. There really might be some way that we could do something to help and we might be able to do it in a painless way...

Comment: (Ruth Hemphill - TN)

And it would reflect well on our service too. I'm sure you've all heard – we get the comments that – and this is just a quote, "we're the one good thing the government does." It would be one more good thing.

Question: (Cora McGovern – CA9)

I just wanted to respond to Richard's thought of "well, why not open it up?" While that's very magnanimous and we all would love to do that, we're talking for a large part, about copyright issues – and I think that if we opened it up to huge numbers of people, then the publishers would then start fighting it. At any rate, I suppose we shouldn't worry about would happen until we find out what will happen. I just have some concerns there.

Comment: (Richard Smith - MO)

Missouri will beta-test the distribution of the currency reader... We will check it out for you!

Comment: (Carolyn Sung - MO)

Are there any questions for Mike Marty's? He's been here, ready, patiently (waiting) to answer any questions. If there are no other questions, I would say that if anybody does have any wisdom to pass along to me in doing Patron Surveys and Demographic Surveys, or any advice for me, I would certainly appreciate it. I'm involve with this (with) a certain level of trepidation... Thank you for joining the call everybody and, good luck and keep on doing your good work!

No more questions or comments.