

NLS Telephone Forum – 03-27-2013
(paraphrased)

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

Welcome. We're glad everyone could join us on the conference call today. We have a couple of topics we want to talk about and then we'll open it for questions. Two things I have specifically, is to just remind Network libraries that March is the month to report budget, staffing and collection statistics – and you have two and a half days to go, so please get that information in. Secondly is, next month in April, will be the month to report the first six-month semi-annual Readership and Circulation statistics. So, once you close out your cycle for March, please start thinking about those statistics. And, the next topic was the Demographic Survey – and I'm going to turn that over to Deborah Toomey.

Comment: (Deborah Toomey - NLS)

Hi. As you know, we're right in the middle of conducting the NLS Demographic Survey. I wanted to talk to you a little bit about what's going on with the survey. We have a contractor who is hosting the survey, and used CMLS to obtain lists of names of individuals and, I want to thank all of you who provided the individual telephone numbers and email addresses when you had them, for those lists. We can't do it without you. Some of you had questions and marked when people are suspended. Thank you. We wanted those suspended people in there as well. We want to know why they suspended. Why did they cancel their service? And, in the hopes that they would also respond to the survey. The dead ones that you identified, we're appreciative of. We don't want to contact them. We would have found that really kind of difficult to do.

We're starting to get in some feedback on the survey. There are a couple of issues that have cropped up. The people who have been invited to take the survey are given a special website to take it online. And it differs from the one we sent out to you. Theirs is NLSsurvey.org whereas the one we sent to you was LibraryofCongresssurvey.org. The reason we did two was so that we could readily identify people who were being *invited* to participate in the survey and those people who were *interested* in participating. The toll-free number was the same for both. To date, as of Tuesday, we have received 56 responses to those letters that we had sent out to readers who were invited to respond. We had received 134 responses from former patrons – people who were no longer using the service, and we have received 85 responses from non-patrons. People who were not asked to participate, but who were interested and either participated by telephone or participated by taking the online survey. We've received 1,676 responses. We feel that we're doing very well. We're on target. We're meeting our quotas, we hope.

If people don't respond to those letters that were sent out from ICF and from NLS, they'll be contacted by ICF personnel and asked to participate in the survey. We do need, and would be very interested in any of your ideas on getting non-patrons to respond. Our patrons tend to really like (yours) and our services, and they are more-than-willing to respond. The problem is that if a person doesn't know about the service, how do you get them to answer a survey that will take them half an hour? So if you have any ideas on how to solicit more than just the 85 we have right now, we would welcome it. We're hoping to get 300 more non-patrons to participate – at least. We have heard from some patrons that have been turned away from taking the telephone survey. The company that is doing the survey is kind of marshaling their resources – shall we say – to handle the calls from the people who have been invited to participate.

Anyone is welcome to take the survey online. If they need to take it by telephone, it's much more difficult. This has become something of a PR issue. It's not an issue for the survey itself but it certainly is a PR issue. I don't know whether you would be able to help in any way. What I was thinking of is so that we wouldn't increase the burden on you – where you're already up to your neck in alligators – we would ask the contractor to suggest – thank the people for their willingness to participate – and suggest that they respond to your surveys. I realize that your surveys are done only once every three years, as required by the ALA Standards but that means that

probably one third of you will be doing a survey this year. We would very much appreciate it if some of you would include a question or two from the NLS survey. I haven't had a chance to meet with the committee here at NLS to determine which questions we think might be best asked, but we will do that. We have shared the print survey with the conference chairs and they're more than welcome to share that with you as well. If you want, we can send it out to you and, (we would) welcome your input as to what questions you think would be important. It talks about. Their use of alternative sources for books and materials. It talks about ability to open the containers of these materials when they arrive. It covers a lot of ground and I'd appreciate your feedback as well, on the survey and what you think might be something you'd want to include in the survey. And I guess that's about it.

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

All right. At this point, we'll open it for questions.

Question: (Ann Piascik - RI)

Hi. I've got a question for Deborah. Today, I went onto Newsline for other purposes and they said something about the NLS Survey and they said to "press 1 offline" or something. I didn't quite understand, so I couldn't get to what they said about NLS and I didn't know if anyone else had been on Newsline and had heard those same instructions that I had and if they got through and I couldn't.

Answer: (Deborah Toomey - NLS)

I do know that Newsline, NFB, ACB and many of the organizations that you folks recommended to us, were all contacted about the survey, and many of them are putting the information in their newsletters. I haven't heard about Newsline/NFB and how they get to it Ann, but I do know that many of our respondents have come to us through NFB Newsline.

Comment: (Ann Piascik - RI)

Ok. I'm just saying (that) I don't think its working. You might want to check it.

Question: (Catherine Rubin - NC)

I had some questions about Talking Book Topics on cartridge. We've been getting a lot of phone calls from patrons this week. They've gotten the cartridge and they want to know where the order form is and – I've got your documentation, which says that it should be sent out the first week of the second month? I just want to be sure that...the order form will be sent out next week – for Talking Book Topics.

Answer: (Jane Caulton - NLS)

As far as we know, that's what's going to happen. The producers have not told us otherwise.

Comment: (Library Staff - NLS)

There will be another order form with the cassette version that's going out also.

Question: (Catherine Rubin - NC)

And then, I've also been asked about whether or not the local libraries' address would be on the order form as it has been in the cassette version. I'm guessing that that is the case, right?

Answer: (Steve Prine - NLS)

Yes because you want the order form to come back.

Comment: (Catherine Rubin - NC)

Right. I just want to be sure. I just got a question from a patron about that. Okay. And I have one thing that our Reader Advisors are having strong opinions about, and I'm just passing this on. They think that the Talking Book Topics on cartridge should be in a separate cartridge from the other magazines and that it should be available for a longer checkout than the other magazines. (Just) passing that on. I know that its kind of a tall order.

Comment: (Library Staff - NLS)

"We're laughing because Judy's new guide dog just groaned." ... "He's sat in too many meetings about this topic." Thank you for the suggestion. It will be considered.

Question: (Linda Montgomery - AZ)

One of my questions was going to be to ask for the survey questions. I'm thinking a lot of people might be interested in that, and if that can be sent out, I'd appreciate it.

Answer: (Deborah Toomey - NLS)

I have a sneaking suspicion that your chairs will be sending it out when they send the minutes from our discussion yesterday... I only have one caveat. I'm glad you raised that. My only concern is that since the survey itself is done in a "tree," the tree is not always logical and it appears that some of the questions are non-sequiturs – but they actually are supposed to follow some form of logic and, you may have a question – ten questions into the survey - that relates back to the first or second question. I mean, that's a slight exaggeration, but it relates back to a previously answered question. Because there's no way to show the tree without putting it in a flowchart,

Question: (Linda Montgomery - AZ)

Is the state of the respondent identified, so you'll know how many responses came from which state?

Answer: (Deborah Toomey - NLS)

No.

Question: (Linda Montgomery - AZ)

Okay. And I have a totally different question. Staff here was asking what others are maybe doing with broken cartridge (containers that) they own? Are they recycling them locally? Can they be sent along to the NLS recycling center?

Question: (Steve Prine - NLS)

Are these blue boxes or grey boxes?

Comment: (Linda Montgomery - AZ)

Some of them are grey... They're asking about what we do with our grey boxes that are broken. ...Can they be sent to the NLS recycling center or is that something that we would not want done?

Answer: (Library Staff - NLS)

Well you could send them there if they're damaged. They would just be thrown in with the green plastic that's going to be sent off for recycling. If you would like to do that than yes, you could.

Comment: (Deborah Toomey - NLS)

And Linda, I have a little more about the survey. People who have not been invited to participate, we don't know their state, but people who have been invited to participate - you already know who they are.

Question: (Linda Montgomery - AZ)

I have a BARD question as well. It came up because a patron had difficulty searching for a book. Is there any plan to change the search options in the future, to make it easier to search for an author – if you only know the last name for example? This patron was searching for – all they could remember was that it was a book by "Roth." So, they typed in "Roth" and they got a list of things that had the letters R O T H in the middle of words that came up first.

Answer: (Library Staff - NLS)

The Library of Congress has a much more sophisticated search system called “SOLO,” and the plan is to implement SOLO after we get done with this current round of implementations, and the mobile apps and all of that. It will be later this year that we’ll start the SOLO implementation.

Question: (Jane Glassey – CA9)

So, I’m here in San Francisco and I had a question that’s been bothering us for a while. It’s kind of about policy. We’re in the public library and we’re located in an area where we have a lot of people who are what I might describe as an “at risk” population that we serve. They drop in a lot more than perhaps at some of the Network libraries and, we have people who take our books and equipment, then (it) gets damaged or stolen or (its) very dirty when they bring it back. That kind of thing. I had a patron in yesterday who had lost her second machine and she said that she had left it behind when she travelled out of the city with somebody and that that person had said that it had burned in a fire, and it was her second machine. I was kind of wondering whether there are any policies about – and we often ask for a police report, which is what the public library does for letting people off replacement costs – if there are any kinds of policies about how many machines you allow somebody to have, before you say “I’m sorry you can’t – you’re going to have to come in to the library to use our equipment. You can’t have something to take away.” Or do we just continue issuing them?

Answer: (Steve Prine - NLS)

The Network Library Manual has a section – I think its section 9.12 maybe, or 13 – on patron behavior and library usage.

Answer: (Deborah Toomey - NLS)

Jane, I’ll find it and I will send it to you. Usually what we do is you have to warn the patron. You can then say “this is federal government property and you really do need to take adequate care of this property, and if you continue to abuse it…” for people who are really abusing it. So you can have a little chat with them and let them know that their service could possibly be suspended.

Answer: (Steve Prine - NLS)

And you’re certainly within your rights to ask for a police report.

Comment: (Jane Glassey – CA9)

Yes. I’m just really worried about these people because I know they really need us.

Comment: (Deborah Toomey - NLS)

I’d give them the machine. I would let them know that they had to take due care and due diligence, but I always erred on the side of the patron. I mean we have many of our patrons who are eligible for the program but have other issues that really do impact on their lives, and I’d rather provide patron service than not.

Comment: (Jane Glassey – CA9)

That’s my feeling. It’s just that, when you feel like someone really isn’t appreciating what you’re giving to them, but you know that they really need it… but they have a cavalier attitude…

Comment: (Deborah Toomey - NLS)

That’s when you have that little chat and say “you know, I could, according to our regulations and policy, suspend your service for a period of time if you proceed to not care adequately for this equipment.” You can give them a verbal warning and then you have to write them a letter and make it official.

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

You have the (NLS) to fall back on but we rely on the Network Library’s discretion in terms of dealing with cases on a case-by-case basis.

Comment: (James Gleason – MA)

I just wanted to sort of answer the question about searching in BARD,. When you have a partial entry like that that you want to search for – if you put it in quotations, it will stop it from coming up as part of another word. If you put in “green” and you don’t put it in quotations, you might come up with “Greenfield” but if you put it in quotations it will only come up with instances of the word “green.” ...

I’ve taken the survey Deborah, just to let you know. It’s a little tricky. I’ve been using this service since I was three, so the questions about what I did before I was doing this were a lot of ‘don’t knows.’

Comment: (Deborah Toomey - NLS)

You’re not alone. I helped readers who couldn’t do the online survey and couldn’t get in the telephone queue... so I think that you have a lot of company James.

Comment: (James Gleason – MA)

The survey is quite thorough. As surveys go, it’s not that long, or doesn’t seem that long while you’re taking it, because it moves quickly... The other questions I had were about the magazines but people have already asked them, so we’re good. Alright thank you guys.

Question: (Linda Vincent – WI)

Hi. I had a patron who had done the survey and he wanted me to relay a couple things. One is that, he really doesn’t like synthesized voice recordings. He’s wondering if you’re going in that direction. And then, he’s wondering if NLS has ever investigated getting corporate sponsors for recording.

Answer: (Deborah Toomey - NLS)

At this time, as far as I am aware, we are not considering synthetic speech. It certainly is something we’re aware of, but at this time it’s not something we plan on doing.

Answer: (Steve Prine - NLS)

And (as far as) corporate sponsorship, the Congress gives us the money we need to provide this program and, the United States is one of the only countries that I know about, where the government actually pays for services for the blind. In most of the other countries, it is run through a charity or nonprofit organization. Most of the other countries think that we have sort of the best deal, in the sense that we’ve got an ongoing, constant source of funding. So, there’s no immediate plans to do that – I guess would be the answer.

Comment: (Linda Montgomery - AZ)

Hi it’s me again and this is about BARD again. If I understood the comment about putting the last name of the author in quotes, that that was in reference to using BARD? But I have tried that, with the same result, so the first entry that comes up is still a colossal failure and the first R O T H comes up in the annotation, then, even if I select from the top, the 168 instances in “author,” is a book by Allison, Dorothy. So, I’m sorry to say, it doesn’t seem to work in BARD. It works in other search engines I know. Thank you.

Comment: (Deborah Toomey - NLS)

Realize that on the front of BARD now, it has a link too, to the NLS catalog, and I highly recommend using the text catalog – that link. If a patron is having a particular issue, it works better to search the NLS catalog...and if they can’t find it, there is a link right there on the BARD homepage.

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

Once they find the item, there is a link back to BARD.

Question: (Stephanie Schott - AK)

I had a question about Collection Development. Before I say that I want to say that we definitely agree that having the Talking Book Topics on a another cartridge would be wonderful. My question is, whether there's ever going to be a centralized way for us to put in requests for books to be recorded? The Children's Collection Development had set up a couple spreadsheets – Google spreadsheets that we were all able to access and I think that that was really helpful in having feedback about what was going to be recorded, when it would be available, whether or not it was going to be recorded. So we were just curious if there was some way that that was going to happen for adult books as well.

Answer: (Deborah Toomey - NLS)

There's no one here from Collection Development. We'll certainly pass it on. ... Email Ed O'Reilly or you could always email Pam, your network consultant – and I know we have other libraries that have patrons (who) like to make recommendations. They send them to their consultant and then the consultant forwards them on. So, Pam is your friend at NLS.

Question: (Christie Briggs - MT)

We're just playing around in BARD and we noticed that if you put in Roth, it will bring up all last names of R O T H comma.

Answer: (Library Staff - NLS)

Yaay, Christie! Thank you.

Question: (Richard Smith - MO)

Pittsburgh is having a tri-regional conference I think – the midlands, the north and the south. Are any of the consultants going to be there? Or NLS representatives?

Answer: (Library Staff - NLS)

Yes. The consultants for those three regions will be there.

Comment: (Richard Smith - MO)

Excellent. They're letting me do a program. It's called "Strategic Planning." I think it's going to be on (the) Wednesday, and I wanted to make sure there would be some consultants there. I think I have a 45-minute presentation and so we're going over as Strategic Planning because we're doing it here in Missouri and hopefully we're going to give information on produce a strategic plan to meet the standards of NLS, or, it's going to be how not to do it. One or the other. So it's going to be beneficial, but my thoughts were that if the library consultants were there, they could take some notes and maybe help me out and help other libraries around the country because I think one of the things somewhere in the middle of the presentation – I want to suggest that they take all the information...and make that a basis for their strategic plan.

Question: (Mike Marlin – CA9)

My question is concerning the older, lower serial number Digital Talking Book machines that have the battery discharge problem. I think I talked with Bob in QA or somebody about when there is going to be a fix available because we have like, a thousand of them sitting around, taking up space. Non-fixable. And I'm presuming that other libraries have similar situations. Does anyone have any idea if the Engineering Department is working on a fix for – I guess – the motherboards for those machines?

Answer: (Deborah Toomey - NLS)

I'm not sure they're fixing the motherboards. I do know they're working hard to get a charger/ discharger to exercise the batteries. If we had those big tubs like we used to have for the cassette batteries. I've been told that they're working very hard on getting that kind of same piece of equipment available.

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

Unfortunately, there's no one from that side of the house that deals with equipment in the room. But we'll see if we can get you an answer.

Comment: (Mike Marlin – CA9)

Yeah that would be nice because we've got all these machines sitting around that we can't use. It would be great if we could send them to you guys. I know Multi State doesn't want them right now. You could contract with someone to do that or figure something out.

Comment: (Ivan Johnson – CA8)

This is in response to Mike Marlin's statement. Our machine guy does have a way to recover those errant machines and I cannot detail it right now, but if you give us a call or email us, I will have our Senior Technician Alfred spell it out.

Question: (Marilyn Stevenson – NH)

Hi. I missed who the last caller was, who has information about those older machines.

Answer: (Deborah Toomey - NLS)

That's Ivan Johnson at the Braille Institute in Los Angeles.

Comment: (Stephanie Schott - AK)

We were just hoping that the information about fixing the lower serial numbers could just be put on the listserv? I feel like everybody would benefit from that. If Ivan could do that, that would be great.

Question: (Andrew Egan - RI)

Just looking for an update on the progress of the app. Are you still on schedule for that? And number two, as part of that question – when it does become available, will you have some additional type of PR activities in the sense of, this is...a special event? Will there be things going on related to the app access?

Answer: (Steve Prine - NLS)

As far as I know, Andy, the schedule for it is still holding. I have not heard of any setbacks, so it's still in progress and once it's rolled out, yes, I'm sure there will be some events to promote it because, we really made a quantum leap (in the number of) patrons that are using the service now, that could use BARD. We don't even really know how many will be able to take advantage of it, but we think that...

Question: (Andrew Egan - RI)

Anything in terms of security on that app?...

Answer: (Steve Prine - NLS)

We wouldn't be releasing the app if the security wasn't there. There's nobody in this room that will contradict me because (laughter) the people who know anything about it aren't here. My understanding is, the way it will work is people really will have to be already signed up for BARD. They can get the app, and then when they use the app to go to BARD, they would sign in using their password and ID and they could download books that were on their wishlist. Initially, they won't be able to search, they will just be able to get those, but BARD will actually (put a key on the book – on the fly) so that it will only play on that iPhone. That's (the) simple explanation. The technical one is more complicated but it's sort of the same thing. Each one will be customized to the phone it's going to – so that it couldn't be played on another phone – (that) is my understanding.

Comment: (Deborah Toomey - NLS)

I believe too, that there will be various training tools provided, as there are for other BARD issues.

Question: (Kay Goehring - NE)

I have a question about recalling cartridges. Do you have any idea when we'll have any figures for the 2014?

Answer: (Library Staff - NLS)

We'll probably send those out sometime in August or September, I'm guessing right now.

Comment: (Kay Goehring - NE)

Okay. I just wanted to know how much room we need to keep them before we hit boxes.

Answer: (Library Staff - NLS)

We'll try to get it sooner if we can.... We can give you the number sooner but probably the boxes won't be available until at least October.

Question: (Andrew Egan - RI)

Steve, I just wanted to follow up on your asking for volunteers. Are you looking for staff from regional libraries? Or actual consumers.

Answer: (Steve Prine - NLS)

If we need volunteers from a Network library we will certainly keep you in mind.

Question: (Andrew Egan - RI)

Are you looking at consumers volunteering?

Answer: (Steve Prine - NLS)

I'm sure that they will be but I'm not part of the working group that is working on that. It's still sort of in the technical stages but I'm sure there will be testing as we go along, so, I don't know exactly how that's going to roll out yet.

Comment: (Andrew Egan - RI)

We'll listen to what might be forthcoming on issue too because I think it might generate some pre-interest as to what's happening.

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

There's already some pre-interest (laughter). We hear about it from someone or another almost every day... We're excited about having this happen because I think that's going to change the face of the Network in terms of service provision.

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

Well, no more questions appearing. We certainly appreciate your calling in and participating in the call. We hope it was helpful. I would remind you, submit those budget, staffing and collection statistics by the end of the week and next month your semi-annual reader and circulation statistics and, if you have questions, don't hesitate to contact your Network Consultant. Thank you.

No more questions or comments.