

NLS Telephone Forum – 08-28-2013
(paraphrased)

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

Welcome to the Open Forum call. I'm going to – in turn – turn it over to Karen Keninger, our director, for a few words.

Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

Before we get started, we'll go around the table and introduce our staffs who are here today. Karen Keninger...

Comment: (Library Staff - NLS)

Vickie Collins, Steve Prine, Michael Martys, John Bryant, Hugh Boitano, MaryBeth Wise, Isabella Marqués de Castilla, Jane Caulton, Mary Dell Jenkins, Margie Goergen-Rood, Michael Katzmann, Paula Bahmani.

Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

That should keep us busy. There are a bunch of us here, so any questions that you have, someone ought to be able to answer, I would guess. Don Olsen just joined us, as well.

As you know, the BARD mobile is in BETA right now. Many of you have signed up to get your accounts so that you can take a look at it and play with it before it goes live - so that's very exciting. If you have questions we can talk about that after a bit. We will have some videos and a webinar - which we will talk about in a few minutes - as well. So, again, welcome to the conference (call) and I'm going to turn this back over to Steve to start the actual agenda.

Comment: (Steve Prine – NLS)

Before we go any further, I do have one announcement. In case you haven't looked at... the "Library of Congress Job Opportunities," the head of the reference section position here at NLS was posted this morning. It will be up until September 30th.

There were several comments and questions that we've gotten. I'll turn this over to John Bryant and let him talk about Talking Book Topics and cartridges.

Comment: (John Bryant – NLS)

The question has come up numerous times about TBT; is it possible for patrons to receive their copy and keep it, and that sort of thing. We are looking at how much it would cost to perhaps change the way that TBT is delivered. However I think it would be safe to say that we would not be able to provide every patron with a TBT and allow them to keep it indefinitely. But, we are looking at the costs associated with the way it's distributed right now. We will try to keep everyone updated as that plan continues. Low-cost suggestions are welcome first! ...(those with suggestions) can contact me, John Bryant.

Comment: (Paula Bahmani – NLS)

Right now we're trying to put together a webinar to demonstrate the mobile apps for IOS devices. Then after the demonstration we're planning on having a Q&A session that we're hoping to run over this same telephone conference method that we're using here. It's planned right now, scheduled for next Thursday, tentatively - we don't have everything finalized yet. Information about the details, getting on, participating and, an agenda, will come out in Operations Alert.

Comment: (Michael Katzmann – NLS)

We've been BETA testing and very few issues have come up, and we're confident it will be launched very shortly – within weeks.

Comment: (Steve Prine – NLS)

The issue of magazines in special media in large print, has just been shipped from the producers. We've just received ours - we will be putting out an operations alert. If patrons have requested it in a publications survey – they will probably receive a copy directly, and there will be copies at the multi-state center. So, with that, we will open it for questions...

Question: (Stephanie Schott - AK)

I have two minor questions: We have been sending in DBs for the recall program, and we've been posting those on the Google document. But the "shipment received" page looks like it hasn't been updated since June. So we've sent in about 23 boxes and we have no clue whether they've been received. So we were curious whether that would be updated soon.

Answer: (Library Staff - NLS)

Well, we will check with the contractor, with whoever is responsible for updating that document, and find out where they stand on it.

Question: (Stephanie Schott - AK)

This (question) is about the one-sentence annotations that are still in the Talking Book Topics. We've had a couple of patrons still express the fact they hate these because they really don't help them select their books. So we were just curious if that was going to either end at some point, or if this was going to be the new normal for talking book topics.

Answer: (Jane Caulton - NLS)

This is Jane Caulton – Head of Publications and Media. It will not be the new normal. We're expecting to return to full annotations in January 2014. So, with the first issue: Jan/Feb 2014, we will return to full annotations.

Question: (Linda Vincent - WI)

Hi, I'll ask about the Magazines on Cartridge and the Talking Book Topics. We've had patrons who would like just the talking books topics on a single cartridge, instead of mixed with some of their other magazines. So, we're wondering if that might be a tweak you could make. And, obviously, a lot of people are asking if they could have it for the same loan period, as a book.

Answer: (Library Staff - NLS)

Thank you Linda, we will be collecting these suggestions. We will put it in the pot with other (suggestions).

Question: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

When you say a book: what period is that?

Answer: (Linda Vincent - WI)

Two months.

Question: (Christie Briggs - MT)

My question is directed to Jane Caulton, and it's regarding the Digital Talking Book Plus 2012 edition. When will that be coming out?

Answer: (Jane Caulton - NLS)

That is in process now, and you can expect it mid fall.

Question: (Linda Montgomery - AZ)

Regarding the mailing of Magazines on Cartridge, the person here who handles all of our magazine circulation has asked if the post office would forward those to a person, if they are temporarily away and put in a forward

with the post office, but didn't notify us of any change. Is there any way to know if those would get forwarded, or just sent back to the producer?

Answer: (Library Staff - NLS)

It's supposed to be treated as first class mail, which means it would be forwarded. That doesn't mean the post office actually does it, but. In theory it should be, yes. Do you know for sure that it's not being forwarded, or just a suspicion, or just a question from a patron?

Answer: (Linda Montgomery - AZ)

Just a question from a patron. We can have them check with their local post office I suppose.

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

That would probably be the best thing to do. But theoretically, it should be forwarded.

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

While we're waiting for the next question - A situation we're having - it's sort of a bi-product of those magazines, being returned to the producers - are library and patron cartridges are showing up at the producers, and the green cartridges. So, if they're marked, the producer can return them, at least to the library level. But, they do need to be marked. So, you might want to suggest to patrons that they might want to identify their cartridges with their name and state. The libraries might choose to do that too with their own cartridges, because the patrons might be returning your cartridges to the magazine producers. This would ensure we could actually get it back to you, if you put at least your library code on it, the producer would at least have a source to return it to.

Question: (Richard Smith - MO)

I had a question, and I don't know if it has happened yet, I think it may be in the future. Basically, as more and more commercial books are put up on BARD, I think it's assumed that not all of them will be sent to regional libraries in hard copy through the PICS. How will we know if there's books up there that are not going to be offered?

Answer: (Steve Prine - NLS)

Richard, as usual, you have asked the \$64k question and there are actually meetings ongoing here trying to determine what we're going to do and how we're going to deal with this. We've gotten over the euphoria of having all this new material, now the trick is to decide how do we do it, how do we make it as widely available as possible.

Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

We are seriously looking into this issue, with many pieces to examine and try to figure out how to do the whole project in the best way. It sort of exploded. WE are going to have a lot of commercial books and the questions that we have to ask and answers have to do with, as you know: how many can we put on cartridge, and how many can we let you know that we put up on BARD that we can't put up on cartridge, and the things associated with those issues. We're assuming that we want more content and we've got to figure out the best way to maximize everything that we have so that we can get the most content and the smoothest operation.

Question: (Richard Smith - MO)

I guess - have you done that yet - was my other question.

Answer: (Richard Smith - MO)

No - we've put them up on BARD but as I understand it, the ones that have gone up on BARD are also going onto cartridges.

Question: (Susan Roberts - FL)

My question concerns the postal code for free matter. We know that the code requires delivery of free matter for the blind, and not the pickup from residents' homes. We're having an increasing number of patrons who are having a very difficult times getting their cartridges or their talking books back to the post office, so that they can be mailed back to the library. Is there any dialogue ongoing with the USPS to give us some relief or help for our people?

Answer: (Steve Prine - NLS)

The post office is required to deliver. They're not required to pick up. So... and that's been their standard for a number of years. Although, in many places, once a postman gets to know people on his route, they have done it. I don't know that they would be willing to make the change. We could initiate a conversation with them, but to be honest with you I'm not hopeful. Given their financial problems.

Comment: (Susan Roberts - FL)

We probably have 98% of our patrons - their materials are picked up. It's a very isolated group and it's geographically isolated. We have two locations right now where we've heard horror stories where people live in neighborhoods that have cluster boxes. And, even if they put their materials back in the drop box, they're just left there, they're not processed or taken. So, they're in the postal stream, just not being handled.

Question: (Library Staff - NLS)

By drop box, do you mean a postal mail box?

Answer: (Susan Roberts - FL)

Yes.

Comment: (Library Staff - NLS)

If patrons are actually getting them into the box, then that's something that probably could be taken up with the post office.

Comment: (Susan Roberts - FL)

That's what I figured. Because once they're in that box, there in the postal stream.

Comment: (Library Staff - NLS)

Yes, if you could send me an email and get me the names of the places where this is occurring...

Comment: (Susan Roberts - FL)

Yes, I can do that.

Question: (Mike Marlin - CA9)

Good morning folks. A quick question to follow-up on what Susan just brought in terms of this postal service. I know that we've received calls from patrons who've heard about some legislation that has been proposed regarding the post office not delivering to residences and only to cluster boxes. It was actually a little bit vague. I remember seeing something on the news many weeks ago. Have you heard anything about that?

Answer: (Steve Prine - NLS)

Congress has been on vacation this month, so nothing's happening at the political level. We're not seeing anything from the post office, one way or the other. So, that isn't clear whether it's gone away or waiting out the summer recess. It might not come back on the radar.

Question: (Mike Marlin - CA9)

Congratulations on BARD mobile - it's wonderful, I've been using it as a tester, and so now we're going to be using it for our staff to train on. My question is about the Google Android app - when patrons start calling about that - what do we tell them as far as ETA?

Answer: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

We do not have at the moment any idea of when that's going to be finished. The contractor for that has struggled; the performance for the app at the moment is very poor as far as usability and/or actual processing performance. It's not in a condition that we would consider releasing it. So, after the contractor year ends, which is in November, we will have to go out and fix that application up before we could release it. So, I wouldn't realistically think anything like a release date until probably mid next year. It's in a very bad shape, an unfortunate situation. We are in a situation where we think there will be probably much more demand for the iPhone app. So, the impact on the patrons will be lower. We're getting actually some assistance. Hugh, has arranged some assistance with Google, as far as the accessibility part goes. So, we're hopeful that we might be able to get some help from Google, to get that Android up earlier than would otherwise have happened. Not good news unfortunately.

Comment: (Serena McGuire - DC)

This is a follow-up about putting the regionals' name on cartridges. We do put a sticker on every cartridge, on every cartridge we send, with our name and address - which is a lot of work admittedly. But, we have received cartridges in our mailboxes, you know the white flats. We've received a number of loose cartridges. So, there is at least some value in doing that. Thank you.

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

Well, we've given it thirty seconds or so, but if there are no more questions... Well, thank you everyone for your participation. Please call again next month at the end of September for the next Open Forum call. Thank you!

No more questions or comments.