

**Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)**

Welcome to everybody on the conference call. Its snowy here and, looking at the weather map, it seems to be snowy almost everywhere else – all the way down to Florida so, I hope everybody is keeping warm. I've got one thing to talk about before we go to questions. Yesterday I sent out an Operations Alert, asking libraries to cease mailing excess braille overseas. This has come about because the Post Office has questioned the eligibility of that with the library and, we are working with that library and with the Post Office to resolve the situation. At the same time, we don't want other instances to occur – while we're trying to resolve this. We should hopefully have something within the next few weeks or the next month at the most but, we would just ask you to hang on at this point and as soon as we have a resolution we will share it with the Network. And with that, we will open it for questions.

While we're waiting for a call, we will go around and name people...

**Comment: (Library Staff - NLS)**

Karen Keninger; Vickie Collins; Mary Dell Jenkins; Mike Martys; Neil Bernstein; Hugh Boitano; Pamela Davenport; Jane Caulton; Judy Dixon; Paula Bahmani; Margie Goergen-Rood.

**Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)**

Okay, we're waiting for questions.

**Question: (Kathy Kappel – PA8)**

Hello everybody. It's sunny here today but very cold in Pittsburgh. We have a question about the quality assurance standards for the Network Library-produced digital books. One of the things that I am concerned about is consistency. We were looking at, and trying very hard to meet...the standards so that we would be approved – and we've come very close. One of the questions I have about this is: Are we looking at such standards when we're taking on commercially-produced books? And, are these standards clearly and diligently followed by the vendors who produce the books for NLS?

**Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

Let me address that one, Kathy. The standards that NLS has traditionally maintained – and our contractors are held to – are in fact, rigorously enforced by our Quality Assurance section. With regard to commercial audio books, we do not have control over the artistic rendering of the text. And so we cannot enforce the standards that deal with artistic rendering of the text, with regard to commercial audio. We can however, and do, enforce the technical standards that are required for a talking book to be properly put together. That being said, we do have one other control over it, and that is that we can of course completely reject a commercial audio book if we feel that it is of such a quality that it would not be a good thing for our program - and then, if we needed to, we could go ahead and record it ourselves.

The question with regard to the quality assurance standards that we have held for the Network Library submissions to date, has come up occasionally – and everybody knows – and I know this from being in Iowa, that those standards are very stringent. Those are the same standards that we hold our contractors to, but because they are very stringent, we in the Network have had some trouble meeting them. There haven't been that many books that have past QA over the past few years, and we all know that. The new project that we are embarking on – which is just finishing its pre-pilot phase in which we'll be going into a pilot phase and you'll be getting more information about that – has to do with a different level of requirements for BARD. For the locally-produced materials that many of you are working on – and I believe you are doing the very best jobs that each of you can, and there are fantastic recordings coming out of the Network program – the goal here is to share those on BARD. We do have quality standards for them that have to do with the technical aspects of the talking

book. Frankly there are two things that are very important with regard to a talking book – all other things being equal. One of them is that they must be encrypted so that they meet our copyright assurances. The second thing is that they have to play properly on an NLS talking book machine or third-party players AND our apps. Those are the two things that we are requiring, and we have put together the standards for that – and you'll be seeing those soon. So, in effect, NLS has every desire to maintain as high a quality standard as we possibly can - and for the things that we can control, which are the things that we contract for and pay money for, we intend to maintain the standards. For the commercial audio books, we get what we get because the goal there is to save the narration costs, which (are) about 3500.00 on average per title – and also bring things to the Network more quickly than if we had to contract them to be narrated. So there is value, and a tradeoff there. But we can't control the artistic quality of it and we will leave that intact, including any kind of music or chimes or anything that indicates separation in sections of the text.

**Question: (Kathy Kappel – PA8)**

Thank you Karen. I have follow up questions. One is – this is just an example. I'm not going to pick apart all the quality-assurance pieces. I absolutely agree with you that the highest quality possible is what we want to provide our readers. What I'm concerned about is: We don't meet quality-assurance let's say – averages in excess of 12dB and, many of the books that NLS has produced or has had their producers do, don't meet those standards. They're far higher. Things like that. I know you're keeping them to strict standards – I'm not saying that you're not at all. I'm just saying: What is the purpose of our Network libraries making these books? Are they to meet quality-assurance so that they're given a DB number under NLS? What is the purpose for that high, stringent level of quality that we must meet. What do we get out of it? I know we can put some of these on BARD. It makes sense not to make every book have to meet everything to get to BARD. Just like we are looking at the commercially-produced books. To me, it's better to have access than no access to a book. Maybe I have forgotten. What's the whole purpose of our having produced books that meet NLS quality-assurance standards – other than the fact that it's really great to hear that you do?

**Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

Kathy, in the past, the reason was so that they would be incorporated into the NLS network and distributed as NLS talking books – and that still is the reason – so that we can put them on cartridge for you and send them out to all... Books that are put on BARD by the Network libraries are not going to be distributed on cartridge by us. They'll be on BARD, but if they're to be distributed, they'll still have to be distributed through Network Library processes. We're not going to be distributing them, so...that's the difference.

**Question: (Kathy Kappel – PA8)**

Here's my last question about it: The two points you brought up – encryption and playing properly. If a library downloads a book (onto) a cartridge, and it's not properly encrypted and just sends (it) out. Nobody is checking, right?

**Question: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

You mean a Network Library? Like, if you send out an unencrypted book from your library?

**Answer: (Kathy Kappel – PA8)**

Yes.

**Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

Well we're not there to check that.

**Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)**

That's true but, for Network Library books, if it's not encrypted, it will not go up on BARD.

**Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

Our BARD loader will not allow something on BARD that is not encrypted. There's a technical check on that. You won't have to worry about downloading from BARD an unencrypted book. We have been doing a pre-pilot on this 'local materials on BARD' project and discovered that encryption was in fact – because of some pretty esoteric things that were going on down in the depths of the XML files or somewhere – some of the encryption wasn't actually happening, so that is something that we're looking at carefully. It's very important that all the books circulated within the Network be encrypted. We're hoping to avoid any accidental non-encryption by Network libraries – but nothing on BARD will be non-encrypted...This project is going to work very closely with the libraries at the beginning and ongoing, to provide any kind of feedback. You'll get more information on this later but the basic business practice once we're all done is that, a library would have the opportunity (and the obligation, actually) to look at their book that they've posted to BARD – and the cataloguing that goes along with it – and then approve it before it actually goes live.

The other thing that is going to happen is that there will be a feedback form on BARD that will go back to the producing library – so that if a patron finds something that they want to comment about, whether 'it's a fantastic job of narration' or if there's an error or whatever, that feedback is going back to the producing library. The reason for both of these steps is that NLS doesn't have the staff or the desire, frankly, to monitor every locally-produced book that goes up. We have enough trouble doing our own. We are leaving that responsibility fully with the Network libraries, trusting and knowing that the Network libraries - with the guidance we can provide – will be able to do a fantastic job of creating these talking books, and then we'll be able to share them with the whole network.

**Question: (Susan Roberts - FL)**

I have two questions actually. The first concerns excess braille and I sent an email this morning to Steve. We have We have a large quantity of excess braille that was pulled during the renovation process of our building. We've now finished the renovation and we're awaiting information on where to send those. When I say 'large quantity' I'm talking dozens of pallet boxes full. And we've downsized from 82,000 square feet to 46,000 square feet. We're crawling all over these things. Is there any relief we can get on this?

**Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

All we can tell you is that we are working on this and that we don't have an answer at the moment. We know it is urgent. We understand that but because of some of the things that have cropped up recently, we can't give you an answer.

**Question: (Susan Roberts - FL)**

Okay. Well we have not begun to ship anything so, we have everything that has not been claimed by another network library. My second question is: Will network libraries be able to submit braille transcriptions of books that we do locally, to go up on BARD for refreshable braille?

**Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

That has been in place for the last 6 or 8 years.

**Question: (Susan Roberts – FL)**

To whom do we send those?

**Answer: (Library Staff - NLS)**

You can send them to: web\_bra@loc.gov. That's where they've been going.

**Question: (Susan Roberts – FL)**

Judy, would those be listed in the Voyager catalog?

**Answer:** (Judy Dixon - NLS)

Yes.

**Question:** (Susan Roberts – FL)

And they will be listed in the BARD catalog too?

**Answer:** (Judy Dixon - NLS)

Yes.

**Comment:** (Steve Prine - NLS)

You have to submit the cataloguing though.

**Comment:** (Judy Dixon - NLS)

That's right. When we assign (the braille) a number, Bob goes out and retrieves it if the library hasn't sent it. We'd like you to send it.

**Comment:** (Susan Roberts – FL)

We've got plenty we'll send you. What we've decided to do is mostly Floridiana and we know that no one else is doing the majority of that...We're doing a lot of novels by Florida authors (and) books about Florida. Thanks very much. I appreciate the answers.

**Question:** (Mitch Small – PA8)

I want to go back a little bit, to the quality assurance questions that were raised. It had been brought up at one of the previous conferences, that we would be able to submit locally-produced titles, and I understand the first cut is 'no, this is not even worth listening to, send it back.' But once that was done, there were supposed to be two levels introduced where they would be distributed through BARD, with some type of either annotation or other special numbering that would say 'yes, this has passed QA' and also, locally-produced titles that...make that first cut, that (are listenable, marked up and have DRM but have not) passed QA for any technicalities. What is happening with that? I haven't heard anything about that in a while.

**Answer:** (Karen Keninger - NLS)

Mitch, I think you're conflating some different things. What I was talking about earlier - when Kathy asked her question - that's the same thing. We are working through a process that will allow uploading of locally-produced books onto BARD. The QA process that has been in place over the years is still in place, but that's a different issue. The uploading of locally-produced materials to BARD is something that we have a lot of work to do - amazingly - in order to get this done. Part of that is that we want to make sure that we give you all as much support as possible in the beginning so that we don't run into problems with technicalities and that sort of thing...We are looking at technical adherence to standards. We're putting all of that together, and we will be inviting libraries, in the order that you sent in your surveys last summer - by the way - to submit books for our initial evaluation - and that evaluation is twofold. One, which is to look at it from a technical perspective and say, 'this is going to work' or 'you forgot a 'P' here, and therefore it's not going to encrypt.' It is that simple, actually. We will also be providing advice on any other kinds of issues with the book, but, the two things that are show-stoppers for that are going to be that it is encrypted and it plays - and that you got the cataloguing done - so I guess there are three things.

**Comment:** (Steve Prine - NLS)

There are actually two lower-level rules and one is that you have to submit completion cataloguing on the title so that it is in Voyager. Initially we are doing "born-digital" books.

**Comment:** (Karen Keninger - NLS)

We're not going to say 'Oh, your book didn't pass QA.' What we're going to do is to say is "This book is a production of the 'X' Library." So, it will be identified as yours. If it passes QA, it will get a DB number, so you'll

know, and if it doesn't pass (or) if you don't put it through QA and you just go this other route, it will be a 'DBC' number... You'll get all of this stuff in writing pretty soon.

**Question:** (Linda Vincent - WI)

We were wondering if we could get a little clarification on the Operations Alert that just came out with the format changes for the Digital Talking Books Plus. So, that will no longer be in audio?

**Answer:** (Karen Keninger - NLS)

No, we're not talking about audio, braille or print. We're talking about the way the thing is laid out. For the Talking Book Topics, we've changed the way it's going to be laid out. We used to go down the book numbers – they were in book number order which was totally random. It was (difficult) for someone to find anything in them. They either had to wade through it or read the index. We are categorizing them by subject now. If you like romances, you can go straight to romances and see what's in there – and if you don't like romances, you can skip the romances altogether and just look at the westerns or whatever it is that you're interested in. There won't be an index in the Talking Book Topics because of the way it's going to be laid out – you'll be able to find what you want quickly and easily without an index. With regard to Digital Talking Books Plus, because we're categorizing each talking book topic, we think that we can use the funds that we normally put into Digital Talking Books Plus, in more productive ways and so we won't be producing that next year.

**Question:** (Christie Briggs - MT)

I'm calling regarding Operations Alert 1305 – the DB Recall program. The main reason I'm bringing this up is that we had a problem with the 2013 quota that we returned to York, not all being received. The post office has apparently opened some of those boxes, inspected them and not resealed them properly and so, now we have loose DBs being returned to us without cards and we are able to track internally that they are from the DB recall process but we're not able to track where in the USPS system it went awry. In talking to the district manager in Sioux Falls, they weren't even aware that this process was going on. So I don't know if you can give us any guidance. Obviously for future DB recalls we're going to have to put tracking tools in place to make sure we know where they are in the system. Any comments? Advice? Guidance?

**Answer:** (Steve Prine - NLS)

It's hard to know what we can really do about that. I don't want to raise issues with the Post Office at the moment we're dealing with this other issue. We will have to look at that and see if we can come up with suggestions for libraries to do to mark the books because, if they're being opened and the stuff is coming back then that is a problem. It's good to know that your system lets you identify what those are, so they can be re-returned, as it were. This is the first problem of this sort that we've heard, so, we will certainly look at it and see what we can do.

**Comment:** (Christie Briggs - MT)

I will forward you the information that I forwarded to Mr. Reynolds of the District Office. They're working with us to try and identify what can be done. We didn't have a tracking number to follow these. It's all what we've been able to put together from Carolyn, our circulation manager. USPS is looking to their Mail Recovery Center to figure that out. They're also asking what type of tape we're using, how much of it, is there a combination of different tapes, the weight and size of the boxes. I mean, it's all in our Operations Alert as far as how we're supposed to package it but, USPS wasn't aware of this at all, at least at this district level.

**Question:** (Christie Briggs – MT)

What was the reference you made to other issues with USPS?

**Answer:** (Steve Prine - NLS)

The Operations Alert 1408...asked network libraries not to send braille overseas.

**Question: (Ivan Johnson – CA8)**

I've been meaning to ask this question for quite a while now. At least two or three times a week we get a call from a patron and they say "I've gotten this 'end-of-book' message and I'm only a third of the way through the book." We advise that (the patron) should reset the player...but we've really never come up with a satisfactory answer. Does anyone have a better answer than I've been giving?

**Question: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)**

Have you looked at the book when the patron has returned it and confirmed that this is a problem with the book? Things that could cause that to be a problem (may be) because of corruption on the file. It expects to see an audio file and it doesn't. We would be interested to see those cartridges here, if you can reproduce it when you get them back from the patron.

**Answer: (Ivan Johnson – CA8)**

A lot of the time, unfortunately, I'll advise the patron to put a note or a piece of tape or whatever (but) it slips back into the inventory (anyway). Maybe we'll figure out how to get to those to see if the individual cartridge has a corrupted file.

**Comment: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)**

The most likely thing that would cause that is if the file misread coming off the cartridge, and things that could cause problems like that (are) the cartridge is not properly duplicated or, there may be a dirty connector on the player – but without actually seeing the cartridge or the player I'm just speculating.

**Comment: (Ivan Johnson – CA8)**

Well maybe in addition to what I've been saying, I'll ask them to reseat the cartridge. I usually run them through a series of questions like 'Are any other books that you currently have doing the same thing,' so on and so forth. Okay thank you!

**Question: (Richard Smith - MO)**

If it's a...digital book and they hit forward and it's not marked, doesn't it go to the end of the book?

**Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

Oh, because there's not any markup. That does happen.

**Question: (Richard Smith - MO)**

We saw a big jump in users signing up for BARD in January, and we think it's because in December they got all kinds of good presents. Did that happen nationally? I mean, we saw a 43 percent increase over last January – of BARD registrations.

**Answer: (Library Staff - NLS)**

We've seen it in past years. I haven't looked for this year's numbers. It's something we've seen in past years because of third-party players. We haven't looked this year to see if there was a particular jump due to iOS devices, but I wouldn't be surprised if there were.

**Answer: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)**

I looked at the iOS subscriptions and there was a bit of a bump in early January compared to November, but it wasn't huge.

**Question: (Richard Smith - MO)**

Missouri has no problem with the recall. They're getting all of ours and I think we sent quite a few back, and we're trying to get more boxes to get more back to you. When the local books are going to be put on BARD, are you going to do any promotion of it?

**Answer:** (Karen Keninger - NLS)

Through the network? Yes. We're going to do some articles. We're talking about probably putting some things up on the website and that kind of thing. We'll use the methods that we have but it will be even more effective for you all to use your newsletters. Those more local communication vehicles will probably be paid more attention to because I don't think people always read what we put out. We'll have a concerted effort. We want to acknowledge what you're doing and we'll do that.

**Question:** (Christie Briggs - MT)

Regarding 'subject exclusions' on commercial books, I just wondered if there's any progress at NLS on this topic.

**Question:** (Karen Keninger - NLS)

Do you mean the unrated?

**Answer:** (Christie Briggs - MT)

Yes. The unrated.

**Answer:** (Karen Keninger - NLS)

No... I have been watching them and I see that there aren't very many unrated ones that are coming through. We are doing the very best job that we can to rate them. Our traditional process has meant that we have a hard copy of the book and our staff goes through it pretty thoroughly to look for all those exclusion things that we need to call out and, we don't have print copies of a lot of these books that we're getting commercially at this point. There are going to be some unrated. I don't think there's any way around that.

**Question:** (Unknown Caller)

The question about unrated books reminded me that it took us a while to do that update in READS and so, I have a fair number of books that should have gotten that unrated check mark. I'm wondering if there is any halfway efficient way of retrieving a list of the ones that I should go back and check?

**Question:** (Steve Prine - NLS)

We're not sure we have an answer. We'll have to investigate that to see if there is anything that can be done. Do you have an idea of the time frame?

**Answer:** (Renee M. - ??)

We did the update last week, so everything that was unrated that came out before last week.

**Comment:** (Steve Prine - NLS)

We will see if we can identify anything that can be done, and get back with you directly.

**Question:** (Mary Jane Kayes – CA9)

Welcome from 'almost rainy' California. We're not quite there yet. I'm concerned about the Digital Talking Books Plus decision. We need to have your suggestion for how to help people who have no access to computers, but want to pick their own books – and may not be in a position to keep Talking Book Topics for a long period of time. I'm thinking particularly of prisoners, but there are other categories of users as well...Are there plans to try to substitute something other than computer access?

**Answer:** (Karen Keninger - NLS)

We will take that under consideration. We were thinking that if we had the Talking Book Topics – the six issues of them and, that if they are in categories, that that would be sufficient...We will do what we can. If other people have feedback on that, let us know.

**Comment: (Mary Jane Kayes – CA9)**

There's a fair amount of churn with prisoners, and very often their stuff gets taken away as they move to different facilities, and then they beg us for another copy of the catalogue. We try to keep a few years worth on hand. We don't always succeed in restocking them – and not all of them are there because they're creepy people, so we really try to help them. So, that was just one category I was worried about.

**Question: (Richard Smith - MO)**

Is there any possibility of some of the recall books being made into popular older titles, and distributed to the network to fill in our collections of popular older titles that are missing?

**Answer: (Steve Prine - NLS)**

You ask a most interesting question Richard. We were just yelling at each other about that this morning. I don't know that we have an answer, but obviously the question ties into concerns that were raised by at least two other conferences last year, so we're having ongoing conversations to determine what, if anything, we could do about this. The way recall is designed to work is to get books back that can be erased and reused for new books that would come back out to you, so per se, it doesn't generate extra cartridges because from the beginning of the move to digital we always planned to recall some cartridges to be able to produce new books in the future. So, there aren't any extra cartridges there but we hear what you're saying and we'll give it serious consideration.

**Comment: (Richard Smith - MO)**

From what I'm hearing, when we put our local books up, patrons will be able to send feedback to the producers of those local books.

**Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)**

That's correct.

**Question: (Christie Briggs - MT)**

I have a question harking back to catalogues. Does NLS have any plans to make the Religious and Inspiration, the Romance and Love Stories, the Science Fiction and Fantasy and the annual Young Readers catalogue in DB large print as well as audio DB?

**Question: (Steve Prine - NLS)**

Are you talking about the format of the bibliographies? Or the topic of the bibliographies?

**Question: (Christie Briggs - MT)**

Updating them. They only have RCs in them – the current ones. Just wondering if NLS is planning to reprint those in DB formats for those categories?

**Answer: (Steve Prine - NLS)**

In our long-term plans, yes.

**Comment: (Catherine Durivage - MN)**

To the person who asked about how to find unrated titles in the catalogue: You can just do the word "unrated search" in Voyager, as keyword, and that will bring up a list.

**Comment: (Renee M. - ??)**

I tried that. It produced thousands.

**Comment: (Library Staff - NLS)**

We will figure something out for you.

**Comment: (Catherine Durivage - MN)**

I just did it, and...92 records come up. I just made sure that I selected NLS only. If anyone wants to contact me, I'll be happy to send the list – on the listserv, if that would be a help.

**Comment: (John Brown - NLS)**

One quick announcement: There is going to be an M&A circulating hopefully this week. We have a new accessory available. It's an adapter cable. It lets you plug a cartridge directly into a PC. The cable is formed so that you can slide the cartridge in the correct position, and that will let you connect to a Windows computer or any computer with a USB port, and transfer files over to the cartridge. There will be an M&A coming out with instructions on how to order, this week. If you need any more information, you can contact me...My email is on the M&A as well.

**Comment: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)**

It's a USB to USB cable with a fitting that matches the end of the cartridge so the patron can feel the end of the connector, feel the cartridge and just slide them in together. They'll be available to supply to patrons or for libraries.

**Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)**

Okay. With that announcement, thank you all for participating and we'll be talking to you next month. Thank you.

No more questions or comments.