

NLS Telephone Forum – 3-26-2014
(paraphrased)

Comment: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

Happy Spring everyone. I hope you're having higher temperatures than we are here in D.C., where it snowed yesterday and possibly some today. I'm actually just bringing you a message from MaryBeth Wise who is at another venue today. She wanted to be sure that everyone registers for the conference sooner, rather than later. She also said that the group code to register for the hotel online and get the conference rate is: LOCLOCA, and the code should be pre-filled if they use the hyperlink in the Ops Alert. She also wanted to be sure (that you) know that in order to get the hotel (conference) rate, you do have to register by April 7. So, that's pretty important...register with the hotel by April 7 and, you are supposed to register with NLS registration which of course, is free, by April 15, but we're glad to have you do that absolutely anytime. Unless anyone else has comments, we'll go around and introduce people. We'll start with Karen...

Comment: (Library Staff - NLS)

Karen Keninger; Paula Bahmani; Judy Dixon; Margie Goergen-Rood; Mary Dell Jenkins; ...and Vickie Collins. So, we'll open up the floor for questions...

Question: (Michael Whitney – NY9)

Hi. My question is: Can we send MOC cartridges out to institutions?

Answer: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

We're not doing institutions for the MOC at this point in time...(however) we're interested in peoples thoughts about it.

Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

And we are encouraging...institutions to have their individual patrons sign up and get their magazines through individual accounts.

Comment: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

We also have been hearing that some institutions are registering for BARD, and purchasing cartridges. That's how some institutions are handling the whole magazine issue so that they don't have to return them in order to keep the subscription going.

Question: (Serena McGuire - DC)

If we have lost track of how many boxes we sent to York on 'Return for Recycling' or whatever that's called - is there a way to find out?

Answer: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

I think you can look that up, but I'm going to suggest that you send your consultant, MaryBeth Wise and maybe CC me too, because a number of people are traveling, Serena. We can check with York and find out that information for you.

Question: (Stella Cone - GA)

Hi. I was in a meeting on Saturday, and someone asked me about the braille display for BARD that NLS was envisioning, and they were wondering where that was (at)?

Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

It's still being envisioned!

Question: (Christie Briggs - MT)

I wanted to back up a little bit to Serena's question...the DB recall and York. We are still missing three boxes – not having arrived (at) York. How do we report that to NLS and get credit for having sent those when they've never arrived? Unfortunately, we did not track those three boxes, whereas now we are tracking every box that leaves here.

Answer: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

I would just suggest that you send that to your consultant and let her know and we can at least indicate that. For our totals we'll know that there are 3 boxes of 44 out there that might show up someplace.

Comment: (Christie Briggs - MT)

What we've found is that, of those three boxes...the boxes have been opened by USPS and not resealed properly, and so we have had some individual books come back from all over – different states – because we have our little address sticker on it, so just to give other people a 'heads-up' if they don't properly seal it back up. If they're tracked, and have a tracking number on the box, then they're better at resealing the boxes.

Question: (Andrew Egan - RI)

I had a question about the audiocassettes. What's your timeline...(for taking the cassettes out of) circulation?

Answer: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

Well, I'll just lead off by saying, we've been looking at 2015 as when people may – if they choose – be down to one copy of an RC. However, it's individually based on patron needs and requests. We're trying to look at the XESS process and handle it from that end, but the patron request process is really from the library end. We know that some patrons – believe it or not – are still using RDs. The critical factor that we can't answer is: What does your patron need? The other element to consider is: We still have several thousand RCs that have not been through the A to D conversion. Until that happens, some titles will only be available in cassette (format)...

Comment: (Ed O'Reilly - NLS)

Just this morning, I was looking at our A to D list. There are still about something like 24,000 analog cassette titles that haven't been converted...moving along at a fairly good pace – I think we have something like a five year plan... As soon as it gets down to a manageable number, we'll look very carefully at the titles to see what can be eliminated, weeded. That would be the DOS Manual; the 1980 Diabetes Treatment Recommendations; the point is, sought-after books are still only available in cassette (format).

Question: (Andrew Egan - RI)

I didn't realize that the numbers were that high. I'd rather put my energy into new technology: DBs; BARD; downloading. It's a generational thing, I understand that... People don't want to let go of what...they're comfortable with... When will a library be able to say, "Okay we're done with audiocassettes, we're not going to send out any more."

Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

I think that will be feasible and reasonable when the number of 'cassette-only' options are smaller.

Comment: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

But you did hit upon an important element and that is the cassette machines. There is always a concern about the useable life of the cassette machines. We have John Brown here. Maybe he wants to speak to that issue.

Comment: (John Brown - NLS)

Well, the skills to repair the cassette machine – they're still out there. There are still a lot of the Pioneer volunteer groups that are repairing cassette machines when asked to. Some of them actually don't want anything to do with the digital machine, they only want to work on cassette machines because as you say, that's what they know – that's what they're comfortable with. We do still have a few parts available for the

cassette machine. We're not ordering any new parts. We have a sizeable quantity of repair parts, so those things are still available if they're needed – for now. We haven't gotten rid of that yet. For us down in Engineering, the cutoff date for cassette machines was when we wanted to get all of our magazine patrons switched over to the digital – then we thought we'd start seeing cassette numbers drop. Our inventory reports still show a huge number of cassette machines out in the field and with patrons, so I think until that goes down, we'll still plan on supporting C1s.

Question: (Susan Roberts - FL)

I've got a couple questions and a concern. We are having great problems with the Post Office. We're pretty darn sure that our materials are not being handled as First Class Mail. An example – and we've been tracking this: Every Monday we get in a full 53-foot postal trailer, with over 100 bins of digital books. The other four days of the week we get anywhere from 5 to 20 bins of digital books. The excessive amount we get on Monday is not just a two day accumulation because of a weekend. Our customers are complaining that it's taking sometimes as much as 10 days for items to go from Daytona Beach to them – wherever they're located, be it Ocala, which is 60 miles away or Pensacola, which is 400 miles away. Is there anything we can get help on with that?

Answer: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

Well, I know that generally, it starts at the local level, Susan, and hopefully you're working with your local postal liaison there in Daytona Beach and in the Florida area. We are having these kinds of complaints in many different places. Different kinds of complaints that seem to be linked to the situation that the Postal Service is in, in terms of their staffing and their financial and budgetary issues. We can attempt to work with them, but these are challenging times, definitely.

Question: (Susan Roberts - FL)

We have, and we used to have a sorting facility here in Daytona Beach, and we would receive a postal trailer delivered by the USPS on a daily basis, and taken back by them. That center was closed two and one-half years ago. We were shifted to a facility north of Orlando. Our materials were then being transported by a contract carrier. We saw a decline immediately. And now we understand all that's going on in that Lake Mary facility north of Orlando is that it's a transfer point for our materials to go on down further to South Orlando to a larger sorting facility. They've built in another good day at least into the distribution process, and we've seen a lot of our local...distribution centers in Florida, closed and consolidated and moved into other areas. In fact we have some up in the panhandle that are actually located in Georgia and in Alabama.

We've even had postal workers tell our patrons that this is treated like Bulk Mail. It's not First Class and doesn't have to be handled quickly. So, it's gotten to be a real problem. We can mail something from here via our truck, with a mailing card and a book, and mail another book at the same time, but let it go out the front door with our office mail – in a manila envelope with postage on it. And the one with postage on it will get there no later than two days – usually overnight. The one that goes out the back door will take up to ten days. Same location, same distribution point, but just being handled differently. So, that's a real problem for us – and I guess, Vickie you can probably guess what my next question is: Do we have an address where we can send XESS braille, yet?

Answer: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

We're working on it. We'll be in touch with you Susan. We are working on that issue.

Question: (Susan Roberts - FL)

And are you aware that there are no overseas shipping boxes available at Multi State? There are also no Digital Talking Book Machine boxes available.

Answer: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

No. We had not heard either one of those.

Comment: (Susan Roberts - FL)

That's presenting us with some real problems. For a long while it was Styrofoam sets we were not getting in. We finally got some Styrofoam sets – a rationed shipment, but we don't have any boxes. None of the braille XESS boxes are available. I've priced them. For the quantity of braille that we need to XESS, it would cost us well over a thousand dollars for boxes. And I've got 160 pallets sitting on the floor in the warehouse that I've got to get out of there. The fire marshal is not happy.

Comment: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

I know you have major, big issues there.

Comment: (Susan Roberts - FL)

Well, we do the XESS process – we did the cycle back in October and were approved for distribution in November – and we're still waiting. We're ready to go. We thought we were with the pallets, but I understand we're not going to be able to ship pallets to the "ship to" address.

Question: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

So, that's what you had also checked on – to see if the Post Office would let you do that?

Answer: (Susan Roberts - FL)

No, actually that came from you.

Comment: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

I said you'd have to check with your local Post Office, regarding the pallets.

Comment: (Susan Roberts - FL)

We can ship pallets anywhere, but you said they would not accept pallets for overseas shipment.

Comment: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

No I said you had to check to see if they would do that – for overseas.

Comment: (Susan Roberts - FL)

Well our Post Office will accept them. That's not a problem.

Question: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

But will they go all the way to their destination?

Answer: (Susan Roberts - FL)

We don't have a destination yet, to find out.

Comment: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

But you know it's not going to be in this country. That's why I'm saying...

Comment: (Susan Roberts - FL)

That's what we've been lead to believe, but nobody's actually told us that. We've not been actually told for sure that these are not going to be domestic shipments.

Comment: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

I don't know that we're doing any domestic... Because that's how we go through XESS is, that if people in the Network want (them), they would be claimed when you did the XESS.

Comment: (Susan Roberts - FL)

We did that. We've already gone through that.

Comment: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

Right. So we're pretty sure it's not going (to a destination) in this country. And we're not sure about international...We're...still working out some of the (Post Office) details about international shipping.

Comment: (Susan Roberts - FL)

Well, the last email I got from you...did say that you were checking, but shipping pallets internationally may not be possible – so I'm still waiting on that. I didn't know we were supposed to check on it.

Comment: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

For the pallets, we can check but I don't know if we can get a definitive answer for your local situation.

Question: (Susan Roberts - FL)

Are we able to send anything in braille, anywhere?

Answer: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

That's what we're working on – with the Post Office.

Question: (Catherine Durivage - MN)

Hi. I did email Vickie and Pam today and Vickie I appreciate your response regarding the signature question I had for certifying authorities. The follow up question I have is: Can we accept electronic signatures or applications submitted electronically?

Question: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

What do you mean by 'submitted electronically'?

Answer: (Catherine Durivage - MN)

Well, there are ways for people to process applications through other...like, the IRS accepts electronic signatures when you file your taxes. They have a process in which you verify who you are by entering a code or, there (are) e-signatures out there...

Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

We have not been able at this point, to go beyond allowing faxes and PDF-type submissions.

Comment: (Catherine Durivage - MN)

We're working on a new application here, and we do get questions from our administration, regarding accepting applications electronically – so there would be a way to interface...it would save a lot of time if someone could enter an application that could be dumped into our database without manually having to enter that information. But the Certifying Authority process is a whole different situation and, what would be a process to accept an application that has been properly certified electronically? I understand that there is no answer to that right now.

Question: (Richard Smith - MO)

I want to ask: If Quality Assurance magazines - of which 'Missouri Conservation' is now one – will they ever be offered on the NLS magazine program, to be distributed with the regular magazines?

Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

Maybe.

Question: (Richard Smith - MO)

Good. What kind? I have a meeting this weekend with one of my blind associations.

Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

There are some logistical issues associated with that, because of the way the system is programmed. It has to do with guaranteed delivery dates. Since we don't have guaranteed delivery dates on Network-produced QA magazines, we have to figure out, and do some reprogramming if we're going to incorporate them, and we haven't gotten there yet.

Question: (Danielle Miller - WA)

I was just curious if you have any updates on the Android app?

Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

No.

Question: (Stella Cone - GA)

I want to go back to Susan's comment about the Post Office. Does the Post Office really understand that things that say 'free matter for the blind' doesn't mean that they don't get any money for it. Maybe that needs to be emphasized at this point with them, because they're having budget cuts, and they see these things 'free matter for the blind' and well, 'I'll just treat it like third-class and not worry about it' – because of all the accumulation of problems around the country. Maybe somehow it needs to come down from higher up in their organization.

Answer: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

Good point, Stella. One of the reasons we're encouraging everybody to do the "Postal Carrier of the Year" is to develop good relationships with our postal carriers, and also find ways to communicate with that very large bureaucracy – to make sure they do understand some of these issues on the local level. That's been very successful in some states. Some states have gotten a lot of good publicity on the Postal Carrier of the Year and I think it has allowed some states to talk with the post office and at least thank them for what they DO do, while we're also trying to un-snarl some of these situations that have been described today as very problematic in terms of our program. Those are difficult issues.

Question: (Devon Evans – PA8)

Hi. I have a couple of comments and then a question all relating to the new format for Talking Book Topics. First, I wanted to say that we really are getting a lot of compliments and people really enjoy the genre breakdown. However, we have gotten some very stern disapproval... In one case we received a letter from a daughter who helps her mother go through the audio Talking Book Topics and the mother sort of writes it down and then later on the daughter goes through and transcribes them on the form. But now that the numbers aren't in sequential order, (it's more difficult). Also, I heard from someone who uses the 'plain-text' version on the website, and they were curious (as to) why that had been removed.

Answer: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

Well, we don't have somebody here from Publications & Media, but these questions have definitely come through the consultants and definitely have been passed on to Publications & Media. We are hearing positive things about the format but we're hearing some issues related to the order form. We are trying to consider – internally – possibly, changes, and there have comments about the 'plain-text' form that was formerly on the website and is not being used. So, we're aware of these issues as being concerns in the Network. ...I'm not quite sure what our next steps are but...

Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

I think we will be doing something about the order of the numbers in the printed order form.

Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

While we're waiting, I will elaborate on my rather cryptic answer to Danielle about the Android app – and that is to say, it is being worked on but there isn't anything new to report. It's still being worked on. We haven't forgotten it.

Comment: (John Brown - NLS)

We are making progress, though.

Comment: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

We might also say that a lot of progress is being made in terms of locally-produced books.

Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

Yes. I want to thank all of you who are participating in the pilot, so far. I'm very excited about the quality of the books that we've seen so far, and I am anxious to move that project forward. Staff are working on all of the back-end things that nobody thinks about having to get done but the people in I.T. They're working on that and that – I think – is an exciting project that will be blossoming soon.

Question: (Stella Cone - GA)

With the Android app – my question is: Do we have an Android app? And, no, we don't, but it's being worked on – and the next question of course, is: When?

Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

That we do not have an answer for, Stella.

Question: (Stella Cone - GA)

...and Karen, I was in a meeting Friday, and a young man was presenting some research and I asked him how he liked BARD and he said, "I love it, I love it, I love it!" He was very complimentary toward NLS about the progress that we're making on things.

Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

Thank you. It takes a whole team of people to get these things done and they're doing a great job!

Comment: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

Well, thanks to all of you, and we'll talk to you again in April. Bye-bye!

No more questions or comments.