

NLS Telephone Forum – 1-28-2015  
(paraphrased)

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

Well, welcome everyone for 2015 right? Nice sunny day here in Washington D.C. A little crisp. In the 10s, in the teens with a nice breeze. We didn't get the snow (from the) northeast. We have 37 people on the line, so that's a pretty good crew – and we have a number of people here in the room with us from NLS. We'll have an introduction and I'll start with Steve on my left here...

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

Steve Prine, Assistant Chief of the Network Division; John Brown; MaryBeth Wise; Neil Bernstein; Paula Bahmani; Pamela Davenport; Meredith Beckhardt, Reference; Tamara Rorie, Braille Development.

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

So we have a nice crew here today and I did want to go around the room and mention some of the things that have been happening recently. I think you saw an Operations Alert on the recall program. Steve, do you want to mention that?

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

The Ops Alert went out this morning. The consultants are in the process of sending each library their recall numbers for 2015 and, feel free to order boxes from your Multi State Center.

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

Great. The other thing that's going on – I think we're collecting statistics from all the regional libraries – with our new database – and I think Meredith is here and can mention that to us...

**Comment:** (Meredith Beckhardt - NLS)

Yes. Things are going well so far. If you have any accessibility problems getting into the database – now this one requires a login ID and password – please just call me or email me and I'll be able to help you with any difficulties. Ask me any questions at all about how you should proceed with the survey – if you have questions.

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

Meredith released a lot of documents in 2014 and I think they went out on Operations Alert(s) and she has a lot planned for 2015. Utah appointed a new Director of Multi State West and that's David Valentine. I think we had good news for some of you that had trouble ordering the Hindenburg program (from) overseas, so they're working...to be able to distribute that in-state, which will help a lot of you get that going. I think we're going to start pretty soon with XESS?

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

Well we signed off on the proof for the XESS cards today so, they're going back to GPO and hopefully we'll have cards in hand in a very short time. We ordered enough to meet all the demands from all Network Libraries so, once we receive them, we'll start sending them out.

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

Now, I didn't mention to Paula but, how many books do we have up for local libraries?

**Answer:** (Paula Bahmani - NLS)

About 360 DBCs on BARD.

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

Do we know how many libraries?

**Answer:** (Paula Bahmani - NLS)

21 have been through the pilot process and are certified for posting.

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

Excellent! That's going along fine. That's really progress in the last year. Congratulations Network Regional Libraries for getting those books up on BARD. Any other comments before we open up the floor?

**Comment: (Meredith Beckhardt - NLS)**

Can I add just a few comments? This is Meredith and as you know, we are putting out more reference publications now. Last summer you might remember we re-did what we call the "Program Factsheet," which is that really nice overview of the NLS program – and I'm really excited to let you know that we now have a Spanish version. The next Operations Alert that I send out in a few days, will give you the links to that Spanish document, as well as the Stock Number, so you can order it from the Multi State. And also we have now, all of your readership and circulation statistics that you patiently gave us in October and November of last year. That will be posted to PICS as well as BARD statistics. I just wanted to point out those highlights.

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

Anyone else? Then we'll open up to the country. Questions! Comments!

**Question: (Lauren Abner - KY)**

Hi guys. I had a couple of braille questions to ask. Really about the state of getting some things done. First up, we're in dire, desperate need of mailing containers for the braille books. We don't have enough containers to meet the demand of braille that's going out of the building, so is there any sort of ETA on getting more of those containers available through Multi State?

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

We'll have to look at that but...

**Answer: (Richard Smith - NLS)**

I thought we had enough at the Multi State.

**Comment: (Lauren Abner - KY)**

I looked recently – unless it's changed in the last couple days – in the catalogue it says they are out of stock at both East and West.

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

We'll look into it and get back with you Lauren.

**Question: (Lauren Abner - KY)**

Okay. Another braille question is about a producer for replacement volumes of braille because, it's been several years since we've reliably been able to get any replacement braille and we're missing volumes with a lot of really popular titles...so is there any progress on getting somebody assigned to do that?

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

Joel Phillips - the Assistant Head of the Production Control section – is going to join us, but he's a little late because he's in a class, so if we can hold that question until he comes in...

**Question: (Sue Chinault - MI)**

My question has to do with the use of the new network database. Considering that I've got 11 sub-regionals and/or AOCs, I still haven't figured out how I as a regional can look at their data, so maybe somebody can talk to me about that a little bit later. I just heard something that was said about the end-of-the-year statistics going up on PICS shortly, and I'm wondering, do you mean the old database that we look at for historical? Or, will we be able to view those in the new database?

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

Well actually it's a spreadsheet that shows everybody's statistics for readership and circulation as well as BARD, and it's in the Network Documents link on PICS.

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

It's on Network Library Services' website. It won't be in the database per se.

**Question: (Sue Chinault - MI)**

Okay so, I won't be able to look at them the way I used to look at them. If I wanted to look at what one sub-regional reported for their 'population served' or whatever.

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

We need to talk to you offline about being able to view your sub-regionals' information but once we do that, you will be able to go back and look at libraries within your state – within your network – the same way as you have in the past.

**Question: (John Mugford - NM)**

Hi there. I have a few questions here. A couple of them are related to the notes from the Regional Chair meeting of January 21<sup>st</sup>. Richard is quoted as expecting 4 million downloads soon – it used to be 50 books per week but now it's not uncommon for 200 books per day. Firstly, does the 4 million relate to the historical total of BARD downloads from its' beginning?

**Answer: (Richard Smith - NLS)**

I think it was from a meeting we had (where) Michael Martys said 4 million is the (number of) downloads from the beginning, right.

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

He was saying that we were on track for 4 million...this fiscal year. I don't know that we've compared it year-by-year going back to the beginning.

**Comment: (John Mugford - NM)**

Okay. The numbers were a little confusing because...it mentioned "not uncommon for 200 books a day to get there." 200 books a day would be 73,000 a year, so...the 200 books sound low. Maybe more like 2,000 books a day, which would be more like 730,000 per year, so I was just trying to get a handle on that.

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

Yes John, it's a funnel of the books that are coming in – I mean, we used to do 50 books a week. Now, between the magazines, the commercial books, the A to D conversions, it's not unusual for 200 books a day to be going through. These are new books, John, not downloads.

**Question: (John Mugford - NM)**

These are books...added to the system so, 4 million downloads is the historical total – or it's the annual total. Is that what you're saying?

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

It's the projected total for this fiscal year.

**Question: (John Mugford - NM)**

Okay, so the 4 million is the annual and the 200 books a day is the number of new books being added.

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

Yes. It's not every day but some days it does approach that.

**Question: (John Mugford - NM)**

Also in the notes there were some comments regarding postal service and, maybe again people may rely upon these notes for some information so sometimes I think a little clarity would be beneficial. There are a couple of things that were attributed to unnamed NLS representatives – one of which was, "At the national level, talking with the U.S. Postal Service hasn't been as effective as speaking with them at the local level." Has that truly been proven? Is that known as a fact?

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

We don't have statistical data on it but, if it's a situation that deals with 'free matter' in general – that affects the whole country – our conversations with the Post Office have been fairly successful. If it's a matter of a problem with A post office in A state somewhere, it's better that the regional or the sub-regional library have that conversation with that postal person.

**Question: (John Mugford - NM)**

Okay. Another point that was made – and I think there has been an historical perception – that there's a significant monetary contribution given to the USPS to cover 'free matter' mailings but, again in the notes, someone was quoted as saying that the amount given or granted to the USPS is a 'drop-in-the-bucket.' We do get occasional complaints. We'll...say "this is first-class mail" but I'm receiving a slightly different tone of communication so...where are we at, in terms of...

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

Yeah. I think that may have been an amalgamation of several comments. The Post Office does receive a substantial amount for 'free matter.' I made a conversation about a 'drop-in-the-bucket' but what I was saying was that, circulation for our network combined – network circulation plus magazines that NLS sends – from braille producers, from MOC, from whatever – all of our circulation is like, 24 or 25 million a year. That's like a day or day and a half of postal deliveries in a year. They deliver billions and billions of pieces of mail a year so, while it's a very big deal to us and our patrons who are getting this material or waiting for this material, in the overall scheme of things in terms of the Post Office, it's a small part of their overall delivery.

**Question: (John Mugford - NM)**

My final question pertains to today's Operations Alert 1511 and the bimonthly or semi-monthly copy allotment. One concern I have there is that historically with the monthly copy allotments, the new months' posting does not occur at least until a few days into the beginning of the month. If we get two postings I can see a scenario – I know the numbers are going to be a little bit lower – I can see a scenario particularly in a short month like February where if the initial posting doesn't go up until the 5<sup>th</sup> or the 6<sup>th</sup>, people essentially only have a few days...

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

You've lost a week, yes. When Joel comes in, we'll pass it on because that is a valid point.

**Question: (Kim Charlson - MA)**

This is Kim from about 26 inches of snow and a blizzard here in Massachusetts...we haven't had mail delivery for two days. Don't believe the message they say, "neither rain nor sleet nor snow..." Blizzards do stop the Post Office. Again, I'd like to reiterate what I think John was saying about the postal issue and the 'Free Matter.' I think it would be helpful to have NLS communicate – and I think you may have already done so – that our Free Matter mail should be treated like First Class mail. We're doing our own investigating with our Sorting Center in Boston but it slopes to the top every now and then that 'oh that free matter mail isn't the same. Let's put it over there and hold it for a day or two because it's not first class.' In times when I know postal staff are stressed, I think they fall back on 'free matter isn't as important as first class mail, let's put it over there to the side.' So I'd like to see us sort of...eliminate that factor in the whole issue surrounding delays with Post Office delivery, which I think we're all experiencing.

I have a braille question: I'm curious about the Unified English Braille code symbols list that had been discussed. NLS was going to produce it and make lots and lots of copies for inclusion in our braille boxes when we send out braille - when we can GET braille boxes. Is there any word on when that may be completed?

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

The list is complete Kim. We actually completed it several months ago. Our implementation plan is to send that list out in the summer to Network libraries, and to distribute that list to the patrons through the two conventions as well as through the libraries so, our plan is to have it go out first through the conferences in July and then immediately to the Network, and then if people have questions or want a more extensive list, they would ask for that and get that upon request...

**Comment: (Kim Charlson - MA)**

Okay. I would just like to go on record as asking if there's any way to push that forward and make that information available to us sooner, because – as you may know – I happen to have the great honor of distributing on behalf of the Braille Authority of North America, the 'UEB Reader' – which is a publication that BANA has developed for current braille readers to read and learn more about UEB, and I've distributed probably over 800 of them. People continue to ask 'where can I get a list of information.' The interest is high and the demand is high but there isn't anything to fulfill that demand and there's a lot of curiosity and interest and speculation and anxiety on the part of braille readers that I'm trying to quell. I tell them 'you're not going to have a problem with this. It won't be that hard for you. It's not a whole new kind of braille that you've got to learn from scratch but, there's all these misnomers out there. I think the sooner we can get a list it would be helpful because certainly other braille lending libraries are not able to answer the questions surrounding UEB at a level that I can, since I've been a lifetime braille reader...

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

Okay. I will note that and we'll discuss it. The document has been ready for several months, so it is highly possible that we could distribute it earlier.

**Comment: (Jane Coulton - NLS)**

Kim, there's a press release on the NLS website and I think I probably need to send it out to the Network. The library posted it on January 16<sup>th</sup> and didn't tell me, but there is a press release. It doesn't get into the minute details but there is an overview and it does tell the patron that they can relax. There's not going to be that big of a change. I'll try to get that out to you.

**Comment: (Kim Charlson - MA)**

That would be helpful. I haven't seen it so I expect (that) most other folks didn't either.

**Question: (Andrew Egan - RI)**

I think this question is for Richard. It goes back to the BARD statistics. I know you've been struggling with getting them out on time. Is the hope that January statistics (will go out on time)? Do you have confidence in that at this point?

**Answer: (Richard Smith - NLS)**

Michael Martys said he...has a resolution for it. So he thinks next month it will be fairly straightforward. Again, it was just the volume of downloads and now all of a sudden they're doing download statistics for local books, download statistics for magazines and all of a sudden they were doing more and more statistics in a different way and it just got larger and larger and last time I heard he said he had resolved it and he doesn't think it's going to be a problem for a while. Probably until they quadruple the downloads.

**Question: (Andrew Egan - RI)**

That's good news. If they were, let's say, delayed next month, could you send everyone a notice? We're dependent upon them to get our statistics out too...

**Answer: (Richard Smith - NLS)**

I will Andrew, but I'm betting that we won't – but if there's a hitch, we'll get (a notice) out to you.

**Question: (Andrew Egan - RI)**

I have a second question on the new NLS Advisory Group for the future of NLS. Do you have...specific details as to what you'll be looking at beyond 'duplication on demand' and wireless download?

**Answer: (Richard Smith - NLS)**

Was that the group that Karen is calling together? Right. Basically it's a brainstorming of the future services of NLS. In 2009 I think, we actually went digital. I know I was in the pilot and we distributed digital books and shortly before that, BARD went up – even before the machines were there. So that was the digital and it just seems that digital came on and replaced the cassette program and distribution and now all of a sudden it's six years later and we're finding that a.) there are other things that may be possible now that we have a digital collection and we're optimistic because...you didn't have to send out the magazines one-at-a-time. The magazines on cartridge – we were forced to do that and lo-and-behold, it worked! We could send out several titles on one cartridge, and that seemed to work and down the road...there's a possibility we may be able to do that with books. There's also a possibility...we're now downloading books on iOS apps and soon Android so we're getting books directly off of BARD into the patron's hands and, within the next three to five years there may be a machine where we can get a direct download off of BARD rather than distribution through our very fine United States Postal Service.

So Karen just thinks that in the next five years, there may be things in the future and (she) would like to brainstorm some of those things with a group of people. (This is) much like the Long Term Digital Planning group. Something like that. Now that we're more internet-connected, (there's) going to be more telephone conferencing, like the digital group did early on. Right now it's brainstorming and getting ideas. I think she's inviting user groups; representatives from NFB; American Council; Blind Veteran's Association. I think she decided on the (regional chairs), the chairs-elect and...the Automation User Group chairs or presidents or whatever they are. So, a nice group to get together to brainstorm the future of the delivery service. I think many of the long-range plans of NLS had mention of this, five or ten years ago – (these) long-range strategic plans...and now we can distribute the whole BARD collection on R-Sync hard drives, the Gutenberg thing for duplication-on-demand. Just a lot of things that are going to change the way we provide services. So we're getting a group together to talk about

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

One question – Joel's here and he might be able to answer...braille replacement volumes – is there a contract for that?

**Answer: (Joel Phillips - NLS)**

There is no contractor for braille replacement volumes currently, outside of warranty. As long as the volume though, is in its two-year warranty period, we do have replacement contractors for that. You can send me an email about the particular title(s) and volumes you're missing and we can have the producer replace those for you. My email is [jphi@loc.gov](mailto:jphi@loc.gov).

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

In the past when (copy allotment) was happening on a monthly basis, it might not be opened until the fifth of the month – for the month. Now that we're on a two-week cycle, that's almost a weeks' worth so, it needs to open on time very quickly so that libraries have optimal time to be able to respond.

**Comment: (Joel Phillips - NLS)**

That's right. We've changed our procedures for copy allotment recently – really due to commercial titles. The edict (says) they need to go out the door – and so we are doing copy allotment more promptly. Not only in terms of the closure of these – twice a month - but also creating them. The Operations Alert says the length of your book list won't be greater than it has been in a month. Really it's just splitting up your list into two parts and that is so we can get commercial audio titles out the door – because the titles are done already. They have been mastered by the commercial companies. So, this is a case where we are just waiting for ordering quantities for them and so it was determined in our Materials division that it would be best to get ordering quantities as early as possible so hopefully we can get those titles out.

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

Joel, I really appreciate your information. The one thing that we were trying to get at is that there is a delay in the statistics from the end of one month to the next month on the Copy Allotment. Not statistics but the listing of the next months' books. They're not available until almost the end of the first week of the new month – and so it cuts that first of the second monthly copy allotment choices down to a shorter period of time to choose those. The other issue that we see is that even though we're getting the books faster because they're commercial titles, we aren't getting the completed bibliographic records at the same time that we get off of PICS. So that's a concern.

**Comment: (Joel Phillips - NLS)**

I think that's a good concern and I am writing it down. I can't really address bibliographic records myself but I will pass it along to Bob Axtell and we're going to work out a good way to get you the MARC records that match the copy allotment. I'm not exactly sure what his position was but he has been dealing with that issue and I'm pretty sure he'll have a good solution for it. What I believe he was going to do – MARC record sets are sent out when a batch is created so, it's going to be up to him whether or not he's going to post the first part of the month, wait 15 days and post the second...or whether or not he's going to wait until the end of the month and post both MARC record sets for that month. He's working on (resolving) those two options I think. You may want to contact him if you have particular preferences about those two different options.

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

Alright thank you. I have contacted him but I will do that again. The issue that we brought up at first – the delay in being able to pick the first part of the month – copy allotment – because they aren't posted yet?

**Answer: (Joel Phillips - NLS)**

You should not experience a delay of greater than the length of a weekend any longer. If the batch closes on a Friday, you should have your new batch the next business day – as long as it's not a holiday.

**Question: (Andrew Egan - RI)**

How is NLS doing on the progress on (the) PIMMS transition?

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

Well, we are moving along with it. Over the holidays and because of weather it has been slower working with READS libraries than we had anticipated. Kentucky is up – and several others. New Hampshire was supposed to go up yesterday but because of the weather we're not sure they were actually even in the building. Most of the READS

libraries are scheduled. We are working with the other contractors – with the other circulation systems. Certainly KLAS is doing a lot of testing and going back and forth with Data Management regarding questions that need to be resolved. I haven't seen a timeline or a schedule for them yet but we expect to see one fairly soon, and so over the next few months the KLAS libraries will start to migrate.

**Question:** (Andrew Egan - RI)

Are you going to do KLAS libraries by a certain percentage? Five or ten at a time? Or try to do everybody at the same time?

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

We need to have conversations with KLAS itself just to determine. It requires work on their part too, so we need to balance out how quickly they can do things with how quickly Data Management can do them.

**Question:** (Andrew Egan - RI)

One other question I have and it's not related: Does NLS have any concern if a regional library stops sending C1s and RCs – since we're making a lot of progress on the digital front? ...I know some libraries are considering not sending out C1 machines any more – or RCs...

**Answer:** (Richard Smith - NLS)

Well they should be available – and because some people are still using the RCs for music materials and (such) but we don't see a resurgence of C1s.

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

But at the same time there are still something like 22,000 RC titles that are not available in digital... The process over the next few years is to move all those from analog to digital, and that's ongoing. It's just a matter of having the funding to do it and how many the contractor can do in a year. That is our goal but there are still people that unfortunately prefer cassettes. On the Conference Chair call last week, one of the chairs said, "You know, I've still got people using Talking Books – the records" because that's a format they're comfortable with and they're not comfortable with anything else so, we are not saying to libraries "do away with your collections" because there is still a demand for it. We know that there will be a point at which you won't have players that will play and we won't have the parts to (repair) the players. We're not there yet.

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

Well, that's the first meeting in 2015...thanks a lot and have a good day!

No more questions or comments.