

Comment: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

Well, good afternoon everybody. This is Vickie Collins from the Network Services section and we thought the first thing we would do, would be to go around the table and introduce everyone here as well as callers that we have on the line from NLS. So, we'll start with...

Comment: (Library Services - NLS)

Isabella Marquez de Castilla; Judy Dixon; Neil Bernstein; Pamela Davenport; Robert Axtell; Michael Katzmann; Jane Caulton; Joel Phillips; Steve Prine; Karen Keninger; MaryBeth Wise.

Comment: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

We have just a couple of announcements before we start. Neil, I think you had an announcement you were going to make.

Comment: (Neil Bernstein - NLS)

Just an update. Richard asked me to give you all some numbers on how the mobile apps were doing. I think that's in honor of the fact that last week we passed 20,000 BARD accounts that have mobile devices registered. As of today that number stands at 20,254. Those folks together have registered almost 41,000 devices, so that's standing right at a 2 to 1 ratio. The Android app itself – according to Google as of Sunday – has seen 1,827 installations. BARD was reporting 1640 activations so there's a gap...there. Those are probably people who downloaded the app but were not eligible for service and therefore couldn't login to BARD. In case you're wondering how this breaks down across Android versions, 48% are on Android 5.0 or 5.1 so they are using the newer versions of Android. Also, of the 1,827 installs, about 25% of those are on tablets. 75% are using smaller devices – using phones. By comparison, iOS is up to 39,137 device activations, and those break down to about two-thirds on iPhone and about a third on iPad – so the tablet use is a little bit higher on the iOS side. That's where we are right now. We are looking at features for the next version of Android and we have the next version of the iOS app in beta test and it's looking good as well. The only thing remaining to do on the iOS 1.1 version is some testing of our new cloud-based distribution system that will give folks a little faster download speeds. So that's coming soon.

Comment: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

Since Paula is not here, I was asked to announce that the Hindenburg Audio Book Creator workshop for September 23 and 24 is filled – however we do have November 4 and 5, which is Operations Alert 15-62 if there are other people who might be interested in the Hindenburg Audio Book Creator workshop. Karen, do you have any other announcements? Or are we opening the floor for questions?

Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

Yes. I know that there has been some concern and some questions raised about our choice of the venue for the 2015 conference in San Francisco. I'm really very excited about this conference...but these questions were raised and I'm going to turn this over to MaryBeth Wise, who has been instrumental in organizing the venue and the conference – so that she can answer some of those questions. MaryBeth...

Comment: (MaryBeth Wise - NLS)

Thanks Karen. We had a (conference chairs) call last week and several questions came up during that and, what we wanted to do is address some of those questions. First of all, we do acknowledge the Networks' concern about the costs related to attending the conference. We worked very hard to keep the costs of attending the conference as reasonable as possible... We understand that (San Francisco) is an expensive city. We will continue to do all we can to make conference attendance possible for Network Library staff. To this end, we have been able to offer the conference sessions and the training that will be at the conference without charging a registration fee. The reasons we chose San Francisco... first of all, the Bay Area offers opportunities for presentations from a number of organizations – particularly Bookshare, Google, Internet Archives – organizations that serve the same populations that we serve and, we also wanted to focus on the LBPH...sub-regional libraries that are embedded in public libraries. We haven't really focused on that before. The San Francisco Public Library – the Library for the Blind and Print Disabled - is one of NLS' Network premier sub-regional libraries, and it is located within a public library. We wanted to be in a place that is embedded in a public library, since we are looking to expand our partnerships and outreach into all areas and particularly in public libraries – and the unique perspective offered by San Francisco

Public Library and Jane Glasby, and a number of other public libraries in the Network will benefit NLS and the libraries. So those are some of the reasons we chose San Francisco. The question came up as to whether we plan to offer any remote access to the conference presentations...for those who can't physically attend. We are considering taping select sessions of the conference program and making those recordings available after the conference – so, that is something we are looking at – though the question about 'can NLS assess any options considering that may be helpful for conference attendees to help reduce costs. Of course – as I mentioned previously – we have not charged registration fees and will continue to not charge registration fees, and that's one way we try to help reduce costs....

For future biennial conference planning, a couple of questions came up. One was, 'has NLS considered shortening the length of the conference.' We have considered shortening the length of the conference. We've talked about this for the last couple of years. A survey of conference attendees conducted after the 2012 National Conference indicated that two-thirds of the attendees preferred the conference at its current length, and did not favor shortening the overall conference. We will however, consider the possibility of shortening it in the future, taking into consideration the goals of the conference programming and the needs that the Network and NLS has (in) planning for...2018. If shorter conferences (are) not an option, can NLS consider implementing a hybrid conference schedule of offering traditional conference...and an un-conference style track of sessions? This was a question that came up last week. NLS for this year is considering several un-conference-style presentations, but we will have a traditional NLS and regional presentation – as well as hands-on training and they will dominate the 2016 conference but we will also consider having some un-conference-style sessions... so, that's exciting. I think it worked well in the Tri-Regional conference that I attended.

The other question was: If remote access is not an option, can NLS offer a method...to get access to get access to NLS and Network presentations? We do that currently. All conference presentations are posted on the NLS conference site. Libraries can access past presentations from 2010, 2012 and 2014 through the Network Library Database. Of course, presentations for 2016 will also be posted. Anything that people present, such as Powerpoint and (other) things that they submit, will be made available to the Network after the conference is over. Are regional conference representatives involved with the NLS conference team? Yes. The Regional Conference Chairs are involved with some conference planning. I always send out a thing to the Conference Chairs and to the entire Network for people to submit proposals for regional presentations as well as individual presentations. And then we work with the Conference Chairs to identify and select the proposals that support the conference objectives and goals. Also, Conference Chairs participate in telephone meetings with me and other NLS staff as we get the agenda refined – to refine the selection of topics to be included in programming sessions. So, yes there is (involvement) from the Network and the Chairs in planning as we start to refine the agenda. In terms of the conference hotel selection, regional representatives have not been historically involved...so hotel contract negotiations must go through the...contracting office and that has certain rules and processes that must be followed. So, those are some responses to some of the questions that came up – so if anyone from NLS would like to add anything to those responses, feel free.

Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

I think I will just add that we will – of course – be providing logistical information with regard to ground transportation from the airport and within the city. The hotel is located in such a way that it's very easy to get anywhere on public transportation in the city, and that's one of the strong criteria for the hotel. It's in a safe and acceptable area and it's close to the sub-regional library as well... We're going to have a computer lab set up throughout the conference for the computer hands-on training for people on various topics throughout the conference. Again, I think it's going to be really valuable and I think that as you are looking at justifying your presence at the conference, this is one thing that will be a very strong component – very relevant, hands-on training.

Comment: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

Okay. We can open it up for questions now.

Question: (Ivan Johnson – CA8)

I have a question about the Hindenburg Audio Book Creator workshop for November 4 and 5 of this year. I emailed a couple of weeks ago – not knowing the dates at first – and then when I did find out the dates, I called Paula. What I needed from someone there is maybe an email confirmation and that's so that I can make travel arrangements officially. Is that possible?

Answer: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

We can certainly do that.

Question: (Joshua Berkov - NC)

I've got kind of a two-part question regarding damaged materials. The first is, for damaged braille mailing boxes, where should we be sending those for repair?

Answer: (Joel Phillips - NLS)

Josh, we don't currently have any sort of contract for the repair of those containers. You're probably going to want to discard them unless their condition is perhaps, salvageable. We don't have a contract to repair them. We do have a contract to issue new ones. We will be sending out about 4,000 new containers throughout the Network. Those will probably be made available from the Multi State Centers.

Question: (Joshua Berkov - NC)

Okay. If we're going to discard them do we need to just pitch them or do we have to send them somewhere in particular?

Answer: (Joel Phillips - NLS)

I would say you should discard them as appropriate for your area. If you can recycle them then I would do that. It depends on if the flap that holds the mailing card is damaged. I've seen some libraries be able to work with that, if the damage is part of that mailing card pouch. If it has to do with the casing itself you probably will want to recycle that or discard it.

Question: (Joshua Berkov - NC)

Okay. And the second part of the question is regarding damaged Digital Talking Book cartridges and mailing containers. Has there been any progress on setting up a contractor to send these items to as well? Physically-damaged cartridges.

Answer: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

I'll check, but I believe that at least one of our recycling contractors...

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

They've agreed but, we're set to modify the contract.

Answer: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

We're working on it so, standby.

Question: (Mitchell Small – PA8)

This may be a little ahead of schedule. I'm going to bring up a topic here that has been on the mind of several agencies that I've spoken with – and that is, what happens when there are no more Telephone Pioneers to do the repair? We held a conference looking into this about two years ago. We contacted all the repair agencies in Pennsylvania. We got them all together in one room and we found out that – sad to say – these guys are aging. There is nobody wanting to come in and fill the gap. Eventually, we will have no more Telephone Pioneers or I understand, there's another Verizon group, but like I said, they're a diminishing resource. Does NLS have any plan in place – or are they thinking of any plan? What's going to happen when these guys are gone?

Answer: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

Well, just like we had commercial repair in years-gone-by when the capability of the Pioneers wasn't sufficient to handle the volume of repairs required for the cassette machine, we are looking into a contract for commercial repair of machines. So far, we haven't gotten to the point where we need commercial repair. If you – in your area – are short of Telephone Pioneers for repair, talk to Kevin Watson. There are other groups around the country who might have the capacity to take those machines for repair.

Comment: (Mitchell Small – PA8)

Right now we are okay.

Comment: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

Yeah. We understand – we know the problem. We've been seeing it and, one of the big problems with the Pioneers is that the support they've been receiving from the telco's has been dropping since divestiture. Not only are they falling off, they're not getting the sort of logistical support in terms of areas to do their repairs – that they used to. We are aware of it and, there will be alternatives.

Question: (Mitchell Small – PA8)

One quick follow up – and I thought someone was going to touch on this right before – and that is the NLS-supplied shipping containers for the DTBs. Any word on when those are coming?

Answer: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

We've had some issues with the manufacturer. On three occasions the samples have failed Quality Assurance so, we don't want to be sending out defective containers. I believe a new batch of samples is coming in this week, so once they're approved they'll be manufactured and sent out. I can't guarantee it but I think that within the next 3 or 4 weeks you'll start seeing (containers).

Question: (David Oertli - NE)

My question has to do with the side labels for the cartridge mailers. We have a pressing need for side labels. Would there be some coming soon? And if not, who knows of a commercial source?

Answer: (Steve Prine - NLS)

We are actually supposed to be getting some samples to look at, to verify that it's the correct label – this week. If we get them, we will attempt to purchase some labels. If we're not able to, we'll share the information with the Network.

Question: (Mike Marlin – CA9)

Hello there. I have a two-pronged question about the National Conference in 2016. Part A is, can you give us the dates – or the approximate dates for the conference in San Francisco?

Answer: (MaryBeth Wise - NLS)

Yes. An Operations Alert was sent a few weeks ago. Those dates are April 2nd through the 7th. The preconference is on the 2nd.

Question: (Mike Marlin – CA9)

Thank you. Secondly, in our last Advisory meeting we mentioned that, we were very proud that the National Conference was coming to California and several members asked whether or not they could come for part or more than part of the conference and 'could they tell all their friends' etc., to which I said 'hold on...' I don't know that I've ever seen anything in writing, but is the conference restricted to NLS Network staff and invited guests or, has any thought ever been given to that question?

Answer: (Isabella Marqués de Castilla - NLS)

This is a very interesting question, because we would love to welcome everyone in the Bay Area – in the country, actually. However, we are somewhat restricted because the conference is sponsored by federal funds. To really limit the event to the Network, their staff, and special guests of course – if you are bringing your wife, we wouldn't have any issues with that. But if we are going to be inviting our cousins and grand-cousins then that will be a bit too much and, again, we are restricted by the funding aspect and contracts for the conference.

Question: (Mike Marlin – CA9)

Does that mean we can email you if we have one person who is particularly interested in coming for one day – or something to that effect – and then you could take it on a case-by-case basis?

Answer: (Isabella Marqués de Castilla - NLS)

We can work with that.

Question: (Unknown Caller)

I have a question of when labels for the cases will be coming? They've been on back order from the Multi State Centers and we have a backlog that we need to go ahead and duplicate.

Answer: (Steve Prine - NLS)

We are expecting to see samples this week, and if the samples are appropriate, we expect to try to purchase some labels. If we're not able to purchase (them) because we're getting near the end of our fiscal year, we will provide the source of the labels to the Network.

Question: (John Mugford - NM)

I may have missed this part but in the minutes from last week's grouping of chairs, there's a mention near the top of the NLS discussing recall, and the contractor having difficulties with cartridges being sent back... Is that an accurate statement?

Answer: (Neil Bernstein - NLS)

Actually, yes. The problem that the contractor is having is, a variety of labels applied to the cartridges. So, we have an Operations Alert pending that will go out to this effect. It will be out in a few days. The essence of that Alert is that we need to halt extra labels – or in some cases, we've had Sharpie being applied to the cartridges being sent in for recall. They are causing substantial delays for the contractor.

Comment: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

This is on the cartridges themselves. The labels applied on the container are not so much of a problem. We previously issued a Bulletin regarding the types of labels and the placement of labels but in the past we've permitted these labels to be on the cartridge, but it's an expensive burden in time and cost, to remove these labels from the cartridge. The intent of the library labels is to make sure that those cartridges in the containers get back to the libraries if the address cards are separated from the container. Having the library label on the container, satisfies that criteria. The bulletin...will request that libraries refrain from putting labels on the cartridge...

Question: (Susan Hammer-Schneider - ND)

I don't know if I missed something here but, we used to get retro books on the PICS list, and the last time we got a list of retro books was in October and we haven't gotten anything since. I was wondering, why was it ceased? Was there something sent out that we missed? Our catalog goes on BARD and (we) manually have to put in each of the retro books, which is a lot of work and time-consuming. So I was just wondering who could address that and give me an answer.

Answer: (Robert Axtell - NLS)

Let me say that we do issue – and have continuously issued – full MARC sets of retrospective books every month. We are having problems with the older formats that are in the TeX file format.

Comment: (Susan Hammer-Schneider - ND)

Yes because the last (list) we got was October 6, 2014.

Question: (Robert Axtell - NLS)

That's correct. Have you tried loading the retrospective records into your system?

Answer: (Susan Hammer-Schneider - ND)

Well, yes. Just recently –we're on WebREADS – we were able to upload those – our regular PICS list, but when I go to the index of PICS "Download Books" on NLS, I don't see a retro file there.

Answer: (Robert Axtell - NLS)

If you go to the page for MARC downloads, it contains full MARC records. You should see monthly sets for the retrospectives as well as the current.

Question: (Susan Hammer-Schneider - ND)

Okay. We hadn't been using that one. We use the other one... Okay, we'll give this a whirl and if not, who can I call?

Answer: (Robert Axtell - NLS)

You can call me.

Question: (Abby Rimel - MO)

We were just wondering about a more specific timeline on when UEB materials will be distributed to Network libraries.

Answer: (Judy Dixon - NLS)

The official date for UEB implementation – as put forth by the Braille Authority – is January 4. There'll be some slight variations at NLS, but in general, the contractors will start producing titles in UEB not long after the beginning of the next fiscal year. Libraries should start seeing titles as early as January or February. It could be as late as April or May... They'll be coming along soon.

Comment: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

I believe we do have some UEB materials available to download...

Comment: (Judy Dixon - NLS)

Well we have about almost 50 UEB titles on BARD but those are only in electronic form – they're not in paper copy.

Comment: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

And at the moment, one of our contractors is producing print braille books in UEB.

Comment: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

We do have two more announcements...

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

This is actually two announcements together. One is that NAC, which is one of our MOC magazine producers, has begun to receive Digital Talking Book machines – patrons returning them to (NAC) rather than to Network libraries so, we would just ask Network libraries and machine lending agencies to remind patrons that machines should come back to them and not anywhere else. And, two – we've heard snippets of a rumor going around that, it's okay to send C1 machines to the Multi State Center West. That is a rumor and it's not true. MLAs are certainly welcome to get rid of damaged C1s through the approved process. Multi State Center West or East is not equipped to store C1s that are not being used.

Comment: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

We are in the process of investigating the utility of book cards on audiobooks. As you know, we are no longer distributing book cards with braille books – and we'd like to gauge the feeling of the Network on the utility of continuing book cards on audiobooks... You can email Richard Smith if you are really using those book cards and would greatly miss them if they disappeared, or, if you're pulling them out and throwing them into a bin, we'd like to know that. We get the sense that in the (era) of online catalogs, etc., the day of book cards may have passed. It would be more efficient for us not to have to produce these book cards if they're not being used. Let us know.

Question: (Abby Sheehan - FL)

We've been having a really bad problem here in Clearwater, Florida. For the past two weeks, we've been getting inundated with people calling us and coming in and emailing because they're not getting their books in the mail. There are books that went out on Tuesday and Wednesday for the past two weeks. They haven't come back to us and the patrons haven't received them. We've emailed our postmaster and had patrons call the Post Office and, it's not just here – it seems to be all over Florida.

Answer: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

I know as the Postal Liaison, I have been in touch with our Postal Liaison, who did communicate with Florida, but if you want to send me an email, I'll be glad to double-check on that. Usually what we need is the zip code. It's vcol@loc.gov.

Comment: (Jane Glasby – CA9)

I just wanted to say that we're really looking forward to the conference and really looking forward to welcoming you to San Francisco and, we will be working with MaryBeth to try to defray some of the costs...because we really want you to come. I had a comment about book cards. We use them here. We actually braille our book cards and we keep them in the books when they're on the shelf in our browsing collection – and we actually downloaded a book for a patron who is blind and he said "where's the braille card? I don't know what this book is." So, I do think that we find them useful. And then, I've been having trouble with the Postal Liaison here, so it may be helpful to get help from the DC liaison Vickie, so maybe I'll be in contact with you about that.

Question: (John Mugford – NM)

I'm following up on Steven's comments regarding the disposition of disposable C1s. As I understand it, transfer of C1s that are still useable, to Multi State Centers is not acceptable?

Answer: (Steve Prine - NLS)

That's correct at this time... There are no plans for the Multi State Center West to become a repository for cassette machines.

Question: (John Mugford – NM)

So, how are programs that have hundreds if not thousands of C1 players supposed to proceed as far as removal (or recycling)?

Answer: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

We understand that the cassette program is coming to an end in the next couple of years. We're hoping to get a contract to convert the rest of our books over the next (couple) years... so that all the cassette title will be available digitally. We will look at providing guidance on the disposal of those machines. We will probably either do it by serial number or quality-of-machine.

Question: (John Mugford – NM)

...We're verging on a crisis in terms of storage and we expect to be receiving additional ones over the next year or two. We haven't discontinued cassette circulation so, we still have another few thousand players out there in use and we are out of space essentially. Do you expect progress in this area within the next few months?

Answer: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

Yes. I think so.

Comment: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

Very good. Well thanks to everybody for joining us today and have a good "rest of the summer."

No more questions or comments.