

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

Hello everyone. This is NLS in Washington DC – the Monthly Telephone Forum. We've got a full room today. I want to go around to my right. My name is Richard Smith, the Chief of the Network Division, and to my right is:

Comment: (Library Staff - NLS)

Vickie Collins, Head of Network Services; Margie Goergen-Rood, Assistant Head of Quality Assurance; Shana Osborne, Equipment Control Officer; Judy Dixon, Consumer Relations Officer; Paula Bahmani, Education and Training Specialist; Neil Bernstein, R&D; Pamela Davenport, Network Consultant; Meredith Beckhardt, Reference Section; John Hanson, Music Section; Chris Corrigan, Digital Reference Librarian; Joel Phillips, Production Control Section; Steve Prine, Assistant Chief of the Network Division; Karen Keninger, Director.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

So we have a pretty full staff here. We have a few announcements to start us off. Shana already introduced herself. Ms. Osborn is now our Equipment Control Officer. She'll be filling a position much-needed here in helping libraries with their equipment requests and problems down the road and, she's a welcome addition to our staff. In addition, Bob Axtell just came in – Bibliographic Control, and Jane Caulton from Publications just came in, so two more staff members were added. We have a few announcements. I think we'll start with Paula:

Comment: (Paula Bahmani - NLS)

I just wanted to say that we're gearing up for our DTB-making workshop. The first session is next month, September 23-24 and the session is full. We have 12 participants representing 9 Network libraries. The second session is November 4 and 5. We do have one space available in that session so, if you're available, please let me know – and we have 11 participants for that session, representing 8 Network libraries.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

On my right – Vickie, if you could give an announcement...

Comment: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

Well, MaryBeth is not here so I just wanted to mention that the National Conference hotel reservations for Operations Alert 15-65 is something you may want to review. It does give the dates – April 3 through 7 coming up in the spring of 2016 – and the hotel registration information as well as a list of some preliminary conference sessions and training. In addition, Operations Alert 15-67 does talk about the Futures Committee report and it is available online, so it would be good to review that and find out what the group of committee members discussed with a wide variety of people giving their input in the spring meeting.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

I also asked Chris Corrigan if he would comment and make a report of IFLA:

Comment: (Chris Corrigan - NLS)

During IFLA, I gave a presentation and coordinated with Mike Marlin to give a presentation about NLS on the national and state level. There were about 40 to 50 people there at the presentation, hearing from libraries for the blind from around the world – and I covered the history of NLS, eligibility for service, the different iterations of the player and then I specifically highlighted BARD and the new apps – and that was a good transition to Mike talking about how the Network interacts with people on a local level.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

Where was it located?

Comment: (Chris Corrigan - NLS)

It was at Cape Town, South Africa.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

Another report I had - John Hanson from the Music Section...

Comment: (John Hanson - NLS)

Apparently I've been asked to reiterate an offer for the Music Section... for free braille music. Not just any free braille music but only those titles that are duplicates. We have hundreds if not thousands of duplicate titles and nowhere to send them and, rather than let them deteriorate on our shelves, we wanted to spread the joy...to anyone who asks – and this would be not only our standard patron-base but I see no reason to limit it to U.S. residents and citizens but to anyone who likes what they see on the list.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

Thank you, John. I think with that, we had a nice Chair conference call last week and we had some questions from that but, we'll open it up for questions from the Network...

Question: (Donna Riegel - MO)

Back in March, we had a conversation with Pam about 3rd party verifications and they said to hold off until NLS came to a decision on it. Has NLS come to a decision on whether or not we can do 3rd party verifications?

Question: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

What exactly are you thinking about Donna?

Answer: (Donna Riegel - MO)

Well we get calls from Spoken Word Ministries saying that they want to verify that a client of theirs is a client of ours so they can be a client of theirs.

Answer: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

Right. We really are following – for most of those – the procedure where, you may not certify but you may verify that that patron is a patron of yours, as long as the patron authorizes you to do that. That's sort of the policy that we're following.

Comment: (Donna Riegel - MO)

That answers it. Thank you.

Comment: (Mike Marlin – CA9)

I just wanted to chime in and salute Chris for a great job on the joint presentation that we gave in Cape Town. Actually from what I understand, there were close to 130 people in attendance at our session – from all around the world. We covered the U.S. vantage point of services for people with print disabilities. There were presentations from France and Finland and South Africa and a couple of other countries. It's really great to be able to share knowledge with our colleagues from around the world... It's very illuminating and really amazing.

Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

I would chime in at this point and say that you will have that opportunity next summer. We're going to have our conference in Louisville, which is going to be an international conference, which is part of the IFLA libraries serving persons with print disabilities subcommittee, so, put that on your calendar for August 10 and 11 in Louisville.

Comment: (Mike Marlin – CA9)

That's right Karen. Thanks for reminding me – yes that should be a great conference and open to anyone in the U.S. who wants to come and learn about that aspect of our service.

Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

Our theme will be: "Tailoring the Reading Experience to Suit Individual Needs." So,...we'll be looking for presentations too, in case anyone has an interest in that.

Question: (Joshua Berkov - NC)

We were wondering if the announcement regarding the Music Section braille could be repeated? It kept cutting in and out for us.

Answer: (Richard Smith - NLS)

Why don't you go to the Music Section Blog. Tell them about the Music Section Blog, John.

Comment: (John Hanson - NLS)

Every week, one member of the Music Section writes an article and it gets posted – usually on Thursdays – on all kinds of topics. Last week’s happened to be on our offer of free braille music to those who wish some. “Free” pertains to what is found on a list that is slowly growing. We have thousands of titles but there are only 80 on the list so far – and it takes work to get them there. Full information can be found at the blog, the address for which is: blogs.loc.gov/nls-music-notes

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

...and I think there’s a link on our website, too... 1st page.

Question: (John Mugford - NM)

I have a couple of questions...my first one pertains to the minutes from last week’s Regional Chairs meeting. A number of the questions had responses that indicated there would be follow up comments at this phone conference meeting now, but I haven’t heard those follow ups yet. Are those part of the agenda? Or shall I go through the list and ask those questions now?

Answer: (Richard Smith - NLS)

Well John, the chairs gave us those questions saying “they may come up this week.” So we were hoping the original person might ask – because we had questions of the chairs and they were more-or-less interpreting information. If you let the original person ask the question then we can answer the question but if not, at the end - as we’re winding down - if we missed something... But if you asked any of the questions, ask away!

Question: (John Mugford - NM)

My question was for an update on the status of the anticipated mailing containers for the peach cartridge(s). My recollection from the last phone conference meeting were that Michael Katzmann said that there were some production issues. I’m wondering what those production issues are (and) if they’ve been resolved and if we should anticipate those containers very soon – by that, I mean within the next month.

Answer: (Joel Phillips - NLS)

We have been working through some issues with the coloring of the plastic unfortunately containing some of the blue coloring from the blue containers, which was not found to be acceptable – and so that is being worked out. It’s a matter of flushing the tool – flushing out the blue colorant from that tool. We are eager to get the batches of the ...containers out soon. I think a month might be reasonable but Margie’s going to say something...

Answer: (Margie Goergen-Rood - NLS)

We just received - like yesterday or the day before...the third “edition” of those clear containers and we’re checking them even as we’re on the phone here. Hopefully, they will pass this time because as Joel says, this has been a problem. A month would probably be a pretty good guess...

Question: (John Mugford - NM)

Should we expect that the availability of the containers will be in smaller amounts initially?

Answer: (Richard Smith - NLS)

I think a lot of libraries got direct from the producer. They’ll be going to the Multi States and then we’ll be sending them out to all of you. I think it’s going to be pretty close to the number of containers you ordered.

Question: (John Mugford - NM)

...We’ll receive a corresponding number of containers according to the number of cartridges we ordered?

Answer: (Richard Smith - NLS)

Right. I’m sorry I didn’t make that clear. Unfortunately, the number of containers per box is different than the number of cartridges per box but it’s going to come close. So you may get 2800 mailing containers if you had 3000 cartridges.

Question: (John Mugford - NM)

The progress on the disposal of C1 players has been relatively slow and there do seem to be certain loopholes if one decides to designate a machine as, let’s say “beyond repair.”

Answer: (Richard Smith - NLS)

That's a good question. I'm going to jump right in because I really expected an Operations Alert this morning. I expect today if not first thing in the morning, we're going to send out an Operations Alert that you can indeed send to Unicor – XESS cassette machines that you don't need anymore. So we'll be sending that out probably this afternoon after this meeting if not first thing in the morning.

Question: (Donna Riegel - MO)

These peach containers – are they going to be able to keep the title of the books from being seen? I see some privacy issues with this.

Answer: (Richard Smith - NLS)

Well, number one, they're going to be murky-clear. You'll be able to see the peach (cartridge) in there, but not the label but, most digital books come with the title on a label on the outside anyway. Your blue (containers) all have titles of books (on the outside).

Question: (Patrice Johnson - IL)

I'm not sure if this was addressed or not but it sounds like...none of the questions were answered that were presented by the chairs, so I guess I'll pose my question: Do we have an update on the Foreign Language materials and having all the languages that are available on cassette right now available in the newer format?

Answer: (Richard Smith - NLS)

The answer to that is our Foreign Language librarian is not here – he couldn't make the meeting... He visited the Multi State and they're lining up all the RCFs that are in good shape – and they're lining them all up for A/D transfer. In addition, he did get some extra help and right now, he's working on a large collection of Russian materials that he's digitizing and should be making those available. The only unfortunate thing he said is that most of the titles that are in the RCFs are indeed Spanish – and the question that they asked of the Chairs was would there be additional languages beside Spanish. Korean I think in particular and maybe another Asian language.

Question: (Patrice Johnson - IL)

I think the gist of what they were trying to get to – according to what's posted on the website – was that there are 78 languages available and that we do have some things available in each of those languages, mostly available on cassette. So I think the question was: At the very least, if what's available in that format could be available in the digital format – the newer format?

Answer: (Richard Smith - NLS)

We'll pass that on to David and see what he says and hopefully he will be available for the next phone call. ...I think if we go down the list of Chairs, since they seem to be asking for it...

Question: (Richard Smith - NLS)

One of the Chairs' questions asked about the Operations Alert about labels on the blank cartridges. What do they do with orphan cartridges?

Comment: (Neil Bernstein - NLS)

I think that was a good question and I've spoken to a number of Network librarians on this and I think it may be useful to just reiterate some of our logic behind that Operations Alert that was asking libraries not to apply labels to the cartridges any longer. The logic behind that is really the cost of recycling. It's become very difficult to recycle cartridges that have labels applied to them. In some cases, it causes them to be unrecyclable at all. The recycler is under time constraints because they are doing hundreds of thousands of cartridges per year. In fact, they're ramping up to a million recycled cartridges per year. So a number of cartridges that have labels applied to them by the Network are simply sitting in storage because the contractor is recycling the ones that don't have labels on them because they are faster to do. So, what Michael Katzmann and myself decided with that Operations Alert was to make the recycling process feasible. Many of these labels experience severe weathering due to age, dryness, sunlight, humidity, whatever. Some of them end up being a lot like duct tape with glue oozing out of the side of the label after x number of years (and it) makes them very difficult to recycle (in bulk) in an automated way. So in addition to its usability and convenience, is to make sure that we can recycle the flash medium. As we did mention in the Ops Alert, labels can continue to be applied to the container as needed.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

Another question: the Midlands are reporting large numbers of duplicate DB books that are simply not circulating. Then it went on to say, "Can we consider revising DB recall allotments to (provide) some Network libraries with some relief for non-circulating DBs?" The Chairs' questions said something about us requiring you to take a number of DBs and I think we ask you to take a minimum of one – but I think there was a suggestion during the conference call that you really should adjust your Copy Allotment so that your only receiving as many as you need. There was some (question) that we forced people to take a larger number than they wanted. So, whoever posed that question – if they could call in if we didn't explain it but basically if you adjust your Copy Allotment...that might solve the problem. We would like to improve allotment down the road so that you're relieved of books you don't need.

The oddity with BARD – whether or not we could get an announcement out – we're looking into that. I think definitely an announcement to the BARD administrators. We had a talk this morning at our management meeting and basically there was an unfortunate coincidence of a number of issues that brought up the most recent problems with BARD. As for getting the word out, definitely to BARD administrators... So if I didn't answer any, give us a question here at the Conference Call.

Question: (Barbara Penegor - KY)

Hello. My question is about headphones. What do we do about headphones returned by patrons, that are no longer working? Do we need to send them off somewhere to be repaired? Is there a recycling facility? What do we do with those?

Answer: (Steve Prine - NLS)

You can send them to UNICOR.

Question: (Sharon Ruda - IL)

Hi there. I unfortunately want to go back to the label situation. When we put our identifying label on the cartridge, it's on top of the NLS label (our label is only ¼ inch wide) and that puts it in the same situation where the recycler (has to strip only one label). We have a lot of issues with getting stuff from Atlanta. We'll get a hamper full of old books from Missouri and Wisconsin and all over the place – that we have to sort through and send on. A lot of times, they are just cartridges laying in the bottom of the container. Some of them we know are ours because we have that label on top of the label that's already on the cartridge. I understand the logic behind the recycling/labeling thing. That makes perfect sense. But if we're putting it on a label that's already on there, does that cause additional problems?

Answer: (Joel Phillips - NLS)

I don't think in theory it causes any problems, because you're right, it's similar to applying labels to the outside of the container. I would question if your labels are covering up the braille.

Comment: (Sharon Ruda - IL)

No. We put it where there's nothing.

Comment: (Joel Phillips - NLS)

I would say that's probably okay.

Question: (Sharon Ruda - IL)

Would you like us to send you a copy so that you can review it?

Answer: (Joel Phillips - NLS)

That's not necessary. I can talk to ForSight, who is the recycler – and I can ask them about your labels in particular. I can get the feedback straight from the recycler and they may just give us some feedback that it's fine for them.

Question: (John Mugford - NM)

I think I've got three things going through my head here so, I'll try to sort them out properly. One pertains to a question or comment asked in the minutes. It seems like a Catch-22 but it was related to whether or not these meetings – taking place now – could be recorded and the minutes transcribed for later sharing. I know that Richard, you were offering some valiant efforts when you were out in the field, and the Braille Institute was doing an excellent job of transcription at one point but seems to have fallen behind for various reasons. I recall Paula mentioning – I think it was during an Android training – that they were recording (the Android) meeting to see what the outcomes might be in terms of archiving in some way.

Answer: (Richard Smith - NLS)

That's a good question John and this meeting is being recorded. They're going to send us a link and we'll probably send that out.

Question: (John Mugford - NM)

Okay, so you're planning on having it available in some compressed format in like, a streaming fashion for playback?

Answer: (Richard Smith - NLS)

I don't know John. I asked them right before this meeting if they could record this and they said "yes, they could – they'll send us a link" (our conference call company). I don't have any more information.

Question: (John Mugford - NM)

Okay, that's good to know. I assume it won't be searchable in any way. It will be more of a linear playback for those who haven't had the opportunity to listen or participate.

Answer: (Richard Smith - NLS)

I don't know John. I'll ask them if it's searchable.

Comment: (John Mugford - NM)

Regarding the R4R, there have been some side discussions on the subject. I think this may have been brought up before. I think one option the NLS may want to consider is – let's just say theoretically, NLS is interested in receiving back "x" number of cartridges per year. Obviously not all programs have developed equally. Some programs may have more storage but less personnel. Others may have less storage and less personnel – what have you. But I can certainly see a scenario where those programs that are pressed for space that wanted to return more, could do so, while maybe another program returns less. I realize the NLS would like to be equitable in the return policy but, I think flexibility in this area might have practical value as well.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

A good suggestion John. Thank you.

Comment: (John Mugford - NM)

Another concern of mine...is the lodgings cost of the conference in San Francisco. We get new Bean Counters from time to time and they like to come up with new rules and I'm sure they're trying to be very thorough. For example, in New Mexico we're being told that – in addition to the usual approval process – we need to get three quotes on lodging and airfare. ...The rates at the Fairmont (hotel) are well above the standard GSA rate.... I think that maybe... (the high lodging rates)...may raise red flags on some level... Maybe there needs to be suggestions as to alternative lodging...

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

Right. I just came back from ALA and the prices were high there, but you're talking to us and that's a good suggestion and Karen is listening in, so we'll look into it.... It's not required that you register at the Fairmont for the conference...

Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

We'll see what we can do, John.

Comment: (Mike Marlin – CA9)

I'll comment real quickly on Conference lodging rates, and that is that for the American Library Association, negotiations were for from between 18 and 20,000 hotel rooms, so I think that's why they were able to get more of a discount than the several hundred we might expect for the NLS biennial conference. Another thought is that maybe our colleague Jane Glasby from San Francisco could do a little research and maybe let us know some of the hotels that are close by that might have a slightly lower rate.

Question: (Mike Marlin – CA9)

My question is simply about the BARD Mobile app for iOS and where we are in terms of version 1.1 or whatever the next iteration will be.

Answer: (Neil Bernstein - NLS)

We released a version to beta testers this morning – we just got it from developers yesterday. It's in excellent shape. They've pretty much killed all the bugs we knew about...all the way through the beta of iOS 9. We believe it is in good enough condition to be submitted to Apple, but since it just went out to beta testers this morning, we wanted to get a few rounds of feedback on it. It's enabled with Cloud download, which is working well and we're real close. We originally thought we'd have to consolidate the 1.1 release with the iOS 9 release, but now it's looking like we'll have two separate ones, and that's good because it might allow us to get some features into iOS 9 that we didn't expect to have until later, so it's starting to look like there's a light at the end of the tunnel.

Comment: (Mike Marlin – CA9)

That's excellent news and being one of the beta testers I will attest that the Cloud download speeds are quite improved and quite great – so when it does get released, I think that people will be pleasantly surprised.

Comment: (Jane Glasby – CA9)

Good morning and afternoon everybody. I'm just responding to Mike's comment and of course we will try to do some work here to see what's available and that's all I wanted to say. We really want you to come.

Question: (Linda Vincent - WI)

Hi. We're still wondering when "Go Set a Watchman" will be showing up in audio. I think we asked about a month ago and we haven't heard anything.

Answer: (Margie Goergen-Rood - NLS)

We just got it in as a "rush" book – into Q/A and we passed it through I think on Monday... It should be up on BARD.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

Okay! Well, no one else? Thank you for your calls and suggestions and... (Watchman) went up yesterday. It's up on BARD. So, we'll talk to you next month. Have a good September. Goodbye.

No more questions or comments.