

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

Thank you on this beautiful...Wednesday – summer day. Basically we have 45 participants signed up to listen in, so that's good. I'd like to go around. There are two locations – the Taylor Street location, and half of us are down here at the downtown location at the Library of Congress. My name is Richard Smith. I'm Chief of the Network Division, and we have...

Comment: (Library Staff - NLS)

Vickie Collins, Network Services; Paula Bahmani, Education and Training Specialist.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

And up here at Taylor Street there's a nice echo in here, so we'll see if this works out. And at Taylor Street, if you could introduce yourselves...

Comment: (Library Staff - NLS)

Michael Martys, Automation Officer; Chris Corrigan, Bibliographic Control; Shana Osborne, Equipment Control Officer; Andrew Skinner, Production Control; David Pelizzari, Publications and Media; Margie Goergen-Rood, Quality Assurance.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

Well thank you. That means there's a nice group here today. With that... I know David had something to say. If you'd give a brief overview of the website design.

Comment: (David Pelizzari - NLS)

Thanks so much, Richard. Friends on the call, I know that you will have seen news in various channels about our forthcoming launch of the new NLS website. It is now available for preview - in beta. What that means is that you go to the longstanding URL that you're familiar with: <http://loc.gov/nls> and you'll see the site as you've seen it for years but, on the right-hand side, you'll see a link – a button that says “preview the new website” so you can click on that and you can see it there. We welcome your feedback at this interval while it is in preview. You can send your commentary for good or ill straight to me at dpel@loc.gov...and please do be candid. Do be aware that the website is still undergoing changes between now and the actual official date that it becomes our website – and when I say “the day it becomes our website” that's simply the day that it will appear at the longstanding URL: loc.gov/nls. Let me reassure everybody that when it appears there, the current website is not going away. It is going to be available for at least three months at a parallel URL and you will be able to click back and forth. So if there is something that you know where to find on the current...website, you'll still be able to find it there – even while we're improving the new website.

I think everybody on the call probably knows that in 2017, websites don't so much get born as they just start to evolve publicly, which means that we can make improvements as we go along. When the new website is at our longstanding URL, you should continue to send your feedback in. We believe that the date that it will be available at the new URL is the tenth of July – and the reason that I'm wording that so carefully is that we are not in complete control of when that will happen. In fact, we had originally intended for it to be available at that URL on the 21st of June and then...the 5th of July and we've recently been told by our technological colleagues at the Library of Congress that it can be only available on the 10th of July. All of that is somewhat out of our control but anyone who has ever been a bureaucrat understands how these things work. So, that's my news. We look forward to your feedback. Please look at it now in “preview.” Send your critiques of it to me. I and my team have very thick skin and we look forward to having it truly launch on the 10th of July.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

Thank you David. Anyone else up at Taylor Street have any comments to start out the program?

Comment: (Michael Martys - NLS)

I think my colleagues are looking at me perhaps to talk a little bit about BARD. So as you know, we had a problem with BARD starting last Friday. What actually happened is that you know, BARD is like any other modern computer system, where it actually has multiple computers that do the job. One of the computers which we call the “database server” had a hardware failure on Friday. Normally, these kinds of hardware failures are really straightforward and

we have service contracts and they come in and replace the part and the machine gets back on its feet. On Friday they tried to repair it. On Saturday they tried to repair it. On Sunday they tried to repair it and, by Sunday they had concluded that we had better get on another machine. So on Sunday and Monday we basically built another BARD machine and put it into service... and it (started) running on Tuesday. What we learned about on Tuesday was that we had one remaining problem which was, the cryptographic function that allows BARD Mobile to play books – basically BARD has to custom-encrypt every book it sends to BARD Mobile. That cryptographic function was not acting reliably, even though in testing mode, we thought it was working reliably.

We made a decision Tuesday to keep BARD Mobile down – and we put the web back up. The programmers are working on the cryptographic function trying to identify where the reliability problem is. What happened with the new BARD server is that (with BARD Mobile) if you downloaded like 10 books, a couple of them would not work. It wasn't a problem with BARD Mobile, it was with the crypto function. We're working on the crypto function as hard as we can to get the thing up and running. We're leaving the BARD webpage up and running so at least the web users can use it. The people who run the big machines are tuning the machine for performance right now – so the performance right now is kind of up and down as they tune the machine, and they'll eventually zero it in. As soon as we get the crypto function working properly we'll let the BARD Mobile people back on. That's basically what's happening, and I'll answer questions as we go along but that's the general overview.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

The other thing I wanted to mention: I just got back from ALA – I put it in the announcements. The nice thing is that the ASCLA Board of Directors approved the Revised Standards and Guidelines for NLS for 2017 – so this was revised from the 2011 Standards and, Will Reed and Danielle Miller were on the working team with Ava and Adam on the Advisory Committee and a bunch of groups that worked on it. We'll send out "thank-you's" later but it was approved and now we'll have some editing of it and then it goes to publication and the final product is due in October – for a hard copy from the ASCLA publications department. So that's wrapping up from a three-year process – which is good that it's been approved. I also want to just mention that since the regional conferences, we got new Chairs of the conferences. Keri Wilkins is now (Chair of) the Northern Conference – from the Free Library of Philadelphia. The Chair of the Western Conference is Susan Hammer-Schneider of the North Dakota State Talking Book Library. Midlands is Sue Chinault of the Michigan Talking Book Library, and the Chair of the South is still Shellie Zeigler of the Mississippi Talking Book Services.

We want to make sure the Chairs are recognized. We did meet with them last week to explain their responsibilities and, hopefully we'll go forward. While we're at it, I want to commend the previous Chairs and all the Network staff for the exceptional job at this year's regional conferences. A special kudos to John Mugford who hosted (the Santa Fe conference). Terry Suave and Sue Chinault of Michigan hosted local conferences. We thought they were exceptional and just "bravo" again to all the regional staff that made this year's regional conferences a success. We do get resolutions from all the conferences. Two conferences – the Western sent in their resolutions and the South sent in their resolutions. We want the Midlands and the North to send theirs in. And the deadline – I asked the Chairs last time – is the 4th of July. We'd like to get those in so that we can get them back by the end of summer – and get the resolutions out to everyone. With that, we'll continue on with questions from the field.

Question: (James Gleason - MA)

Good afternoon everybody. Michael, my question is for you. First of all, I think you're putting one over on us. That sounds like something straight out of a DC comic – the Crypto program (laughter) but maybe it's Marvel. Anyway, while BARD is having these problems, do you recommend a particular time of day that Network libraries should use for doing BARD maintenance...and administrative functions?

Answer: (Michael Martys - NLS)

No it's okay. Just do them on your normal schedules. The people who work on the machines...need to see them under (a) load so that they can tune them... As an aside you may have noticed we went up and down a couple of times today. That was them tuning the machine. They would reconfigure the machine and sometimes the only way you can get a new configuration (is to) reboot it real fast.

Question: (Kim Robertson – VA)

Hello folks. My question is actually from a patron. Chet Avery was asking me yesterday – what's the latest status on Refreshable Braille Machines? Since I didn't go to the regional conference where I'd imagine you said something about that, I thought I'd ask today.

Answer: (Richard Smith - NLS)

Okay. I guess I'll answer that. We are working on – planning for – refreshable braille. I think we put out a “Request for Information” – that's an RFI – on some of the things we'd like to see in a refreshable braille machine. We hope to have that information back by the end of the summer – and then hopefully in the near future, put out a request for proposal (on) a braille machine. We would get input from several groups and, we're really moving forward on it in an aggressive way. Any comments in particular?...

Comment: (Michael Martys - NLS)

There are a number of budgetary items in our next year's budget that deal with braille displays. It's quite a major initiative for NLS.

Comment: (Kim Robertson - VA)

I'm just writing it down. “Lots of money in budget specifically for...” so that I can know what to tell him when he calls.

Comment: (Michael Martys - NLS)

Yeah but you're missing a word: “Lots of money in the PROPOSED budget.”

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

In addition, it's a long process, so I would say (that) everything is going fine. I don't see it going for another two to three years. That would be a hopeful one. Remember the more affordable – the Orbit – has basically been developed and is finally being distributed. And that was delayed quite a bit in the projected arrival. So, we're optimistic and hopeful and it certainly is on the agenda.

Question: (Andrew Egan - RI)

I just wanted to ask one question. Richard, when you talked about the new standards – a consultant is coming to us July 17th and 18th. Will they be using the 2011 Standards or the new 2017-2018 Standards to review us?

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

Well, they weren't approved until this weekend so they'll be coming with the 2011.

Question: (Erin Pawlus - AZ)

So, my question is about the analog-to-digital conversion project and, my understanding is that it's winding down. Are there still some books in the pipeline that are yet to be on BARD? Or – the main question – when do I start asking for rerecords?

Question: (Margie Goergen-Rood - NLS)

When do you start asking for...?

Question: (Erin Pawlus - AZ)

For instance, if there is a Patterson book which is still not on BARD, when do I start begging for a book to be rerecorded?

Answer: (Margie Goergen-Rood - NLS)

Well, this is definitely still in the process, and while we are looking at the light at the end of the tunnel, it is still going to take us a bit to get all of the recordings in and reviewed – so I wouldn't start asking for that Patterson book just yet... And we're aiming for as much as we've gotten identified, by the changeover of the fiscal year – the end of September.

Question: (Shellie Zeigler - MS)

Hey guys. I actually have a three-part question, but it's really easy – I promise. We have a lot of patrons that still have their C1 machines. Now that we're no longer in the RC business, I'm just wondering how diligent I should be in getting these C1 machines back. Some of them are saying “I don't have a box” or “I don't know where it is.” I'm getting lots of interesting responses. Can you tell me how...

Answer: (Shana Osborne - NLS)

Hi Shellie. You don't have to request that they send them back. If they prefer to send them back and you want to give them a digital machine, you can do so but...

Comment: (Shellie Zeigler - MS)

All of them have a digital machine. I just didn't know how aggressive I should be in getting the C1s back or if that's important or not.

Comment: (Shana Osborne - NLS)

When you issue the digital machine, it's encouraged to ask for the cassette machine back but I wouldn't go as far as knocking on anyone's door but a simple request would be fine.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

Anyone who wants to send it back you should just say, "put it in a box with newspaper and send it back." I don't think we'll be sending people boxes to return them.

Question: (Shellie Zeigler - MS)

Okay, that helps a lot. My two other questions – not to beat a dead horse – were about BARD. Michael had talked about how the BARD web page is up and running. Is there any possibility that that's going to be not functioning or going down for maintenance any time soon?

Answer: (Michael Martys - NLS)

If that baby's not functioning after all of this I am going to cry. It's a brand-new system. It's really on the best equipment that the library now has. It's basically a virtual machine now, which means that it can be recreated in minutes instead of days. So, I'm really hopeful that we don't have another problem of this type. We were planning to upgrade the BARD hardware. It's just that we weren't planning to do it this fast and this suddenly – and so, we had been working on these reliability improvements for quite a while. So I'm really hopeful that now that the machine is up it is going to stay put. There will probably be some very short outages. We may have to tune it, but the machine is in much better shape right now. In March we replaced the front end of BARD and now we're replacing the back end of BARD and BARD is basically on the latest and greatest equipment all around. You may remember, BARD has been running since 2006.

Question: (Shellie Zeigler - MS)

I might have missed this but did you give any type of projection as to when BARD Mobile might be up and running again?

Answer: (Michael Martys - NLS)

That's really tough. I don't have an estimate and the reason is, is that the problem is incredibly tricky. This crypto function was rigorously tested in what we call our "test environment" and, in the Library and at any government agency, they want you to do all your development work on one set of computers and you don't do it on the actual production computers – and so when they moved the equipment from the test environment to the production environment is when the problem showed up. It's a reliability-based problem, it's (not like) it just doesn't work. And so it's very tricky in that we're not exactly sure where the nature of it is coming from. Our thinking is that there is some difference between the two computers that is causing this problem. So all I can say is that we're working on it – very hard and very long hours, and we know it's a critical issue. While this is all going on, they're actually still repairing the old computer. One of our fallbacks is that we switch back to the old computer if we don't get this thing working. We're basically going to reevaluate our status every day and decide what to do. I'm kind of hopeful that we're going to have this thing resolved in a day or two. Hopefully (in) one day. And then if it does drag on, we're going to take some more significant actions... Let our patrons know that we do not like this... It's not so much the hours – it's just that it really bothers us when we're not serving our patrons properly.

Question: (Mary Jane Kayes – CA9)

I have a two-parter and the first part goes back to the analog to digital conversion. Is everything that is going to be converted, marked in Voyager or are there still books there that haven't been updated to show that they're in process?

Answer: (Andrew Skinner – NLS)

There is a possibility of a few more coming. We're looking into that right now. Some might have to be "sunsetting" because the reels are too old and non-transferrable and they've been deteriorated and so we're looking at replacing them. We've got a few other titles that we can put on so we're looking at replacing those. So there may be a few more coming.

Comment: (Chris Corrigan - NLS)

But the question was about the Voyager records. We get those from Copy Allotment.

Comment: (Andrew Skinner – NLS)

They'd be pushed into Copy Allotment so that would push it to Voyager. But all the books that have been planned for A to D have been...allocated to a contract.

Comment: (Chris Corrigan - NLS)

Unless we have to sunset and then we might have to put some different books in there.

Comment: (Andrew Skinner – NLS)

So as far as I understand, the answer is "yes."

Question: (Mary Jane Kayes – CA9)

So if we look in Voyager and a title that is a classic – like she mentions, the Pattersons – is not listed as being in process for conversion, it's not going to be done?

Answer: (Andrew Skinner – NLS)

It still might be. We have to look at the reel quality... The producers are going through their lists on titles that can't be transferred and we're looking at replacing them with other titles – but we have to look at all of that. So I can't say yes or no, but I can give you a "maybe."

Question: (Mary Jane Kayes – CA9)

Is there a mechanism for us to request certain ones?

Answer: (Andrew Skinner – NLS)

Send me – Andrew Skinner – ansk@loc.gov – an email and put that on there, and I will do my best. I can't promise anything but I will try.

Question: (Mary Jane Kayes – CA9)

Okay and then I'm incredibly slow on the uptake on the BARD problems and I am hearing you say that the webpage is mostly up and so they can use BARD Express or the web main page to get into their BARD and download books

Answer: (Michael Martys – NLS)

No actually let me just clarify that. BARD Express is actually more like BARD Mobile. BARD Express is actually down.

Question: (Mary Jane Kayes – CA9)

So BARD Express and BARD Mobile are down because they are not reliable when they are up?

Answer: (Michael Martys – NLS)

No. It's kind of close... Let me just clarify that. The unreliable part is the playback of the book. If we were to turn that part of BARD on, and you had BARD Mobile, and you downloaded ten books, probably like eight of them would play and two of them would not – and it's random. We decided that if we did that, it would cause the Library more problems than if we just left it down. After we were testing the new machine on Tuesday, is when we determined that the playback of the books on BARD Mobile was unreliable. We decided to take it offline and try to fix it and, that affected BARD Express as well. But BARD Express is more like BARD Mobile than the web (version). But the web is running and we don't see any problems with it other than perhaps some performance issues and those things will be ironed out because it's a new machine and we have to tune it. I wouldn't tell people that BARD web might die tomorrow.

Comment: (Mary Jane Kayes – CA9)

I wouldn't do that but I'm getting questions like "I can't see my wishlist" and "I don't know where they are" and I have to call them back and say "are you on the web page?" and "are you on BARD Mobile?"

Comment: (Michael Martys – NLS)

One of the design issues with BARD Mobile...It's constantly talking to BARD in the background, and when BARD Mobile has problems talking to BARD, and BARD returns an error message saying "listen, we're not working today" BARD Mobile does not give a good indicator to the user as to what's going on. And so, it just kind of looks like your wishlist is not working. In a future version of BARD Mobile, it would be better to have it say, "communication with BARD is offline right now. You're not able to see your wishlist." Right now, it says nothing – and it can confuse the patron, and they call you. But that's what's really happening. And if people are hitting the buttons on their BARD Mobile, they might have a version of BARD Mobile that says BARD is down and instead it just looks like it's silent. And I wish it wasn't that way but that's the way it is – and that's why you're getting these kinds of calls. ...This morning we tweaked the message and BARD Express users should now see the message very clearly that BARD is down. The regular web (version) works fine. They can go in there and download to their heart's content.

Question: (Maureen Dorosinski - FL)

I have one question related to BARD that comes from a patron. It's a new question – over our email. And secondly just a follow up from something I said last month. The question is: After the recent problems with the BARD website, my entire library on my iPod Touch was wiped out. How do I get it back without having to download every single book again? I can copy that and send it. I'm not exactly sure who to send it to or if there is an easy answer.

Answer: (Michael Martys – NLS)

I don't have an easy answer other than they can re-download everything again. I'm just going to make an editorial comment. When we first started BARD, people would collect books. They would download everything – and we never quite understood why, because BARD will always be there and the books will always be there. We don't plan to remove anything, so they'll always be at the patron's fingertips... I'm actually a little befuddled by how they would have lost all their books by this problem – because this problem would not have deleted anything on a personal device...

Comment: (Maureen Dorosinski - FL)

Then the other thing – last month I mentioned that we were starting a Summer Reading Program with our CVI group across the way. I've had two meetings and they're just learning braille. And that's what the CVI decided to focus on – teaching braille. When we were discussing books they said, "no audio – we want only braille." So, we've made books and everything and the first project we did in the theme of "build a better world" was making dog toys out of t-shirts, so we have the recycling in it – and then we donated (them) to one of the local humane societies...And the second project we did was we made 3-D pop-up greeting cards. And we used the "That All May Read" rulers. And this was the first time that they knew that a braille ruler existed and one boy in particular – after some initial frustration – sailed through the project like a champ. Everybody has one of these yellow rulers now so, thank you for that.

Comment: (David Pellizari – NLS)

I think the first time you mentioned your wonderful program, I proposed to you that you send me some photographs and a little bit of copy and we will make hay with that on our Facebook postings. So if you have photographs of those dog toys or photographs of somebody brandishing one of those rulers, or photographs of the kids engaging with braille texts, send them along with a couple sentences explaining what's going on – we really do, on our Facebook page, want to feature all the good works that our Network Libraries are doing so – whatever you give me, I can make hay with. That would be great.

Comment: (Richard Smith – NLS)

Thanks Maureen. The braille ruler was a hit at the ALA. I was distributing them at the Library of Congress booth and they just love the samples of braille on that braille ruler that we have here that PMS created and we distribute here from NLS for outreach.

Comment: (David Pellizari – NLS)

Richard and Maureen, thanks for both of those comments about the rulers. In general – friends and colleagues on the call – if you have ideas about what's successful with our patrons – what they like to get from us at conferences and exhibits, or use in programs like Maureen's, you let me know because in PMS, we will push things like that. Very glad to hear responses like this.

Question: (Catherine Durivage - MN)

Hi. I have a question about BARD Mobile – the discussion about losing books on BARD Mobile. I wonder...if BARD Mobile supports iCloud backup because, that might be something – if it doesn't – to include that feature as one of the apps that can utilize iCloud.

Answer: (Michael Martys – NLS)

I'm not the BARD Mobile expert and our person that is – John Brown – isn't here, so I can't say. But that's a good comment and we'll forward that to him. With that being said, I still don't understand how BARD Mobile could delete an existing collection on a device. So, I'm going to ask him about that, too. That's a really unusual behavior that we haven't heard of before. I'm not saying that it didn't happen, but kind of unusual.

Question: (Kim Robertson - VA)

Maybe I missed it. Did we get new numbers for the recall for this year? I know at one point we were told that it isn't going to be any less than you sent in last year – and we're about to get into that season again. Did I miss a number or should I go ahead with the 1100 that I was told last year until I hear otherwise?

Answer: (Library Staff – NLS)

That's going to have to be directed to Richard. I know Steve is out. Steve has the numbers. I've given them to him and he is distributing them to the libraries.

Comment: (Mary Jane Kayes – CA9)

I think one of the reasons that books get deleted is that people think that there is something wrong with their BARD Mobile app and they delete and reload...so it's user behavior and if there's no message that BARD is down, the first assumption is that "oh, I've messed up – somehow I need to fix it" and they're going to do all kinds of things to try and fix. And that will delete their books – and that's very frustrating so we need to get as much word out as we can that BARD Mobile is messed up.

Comment: (Michael Martys - NLS)

One of the things I'm lobbying for very high are those system status messages so that the BARD Mobile users know what's going on... And you get the same behavior if you're on a train and you go into a tunnel or something like that. If you lose connectivity to the world, it behaves the exact same way.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

Okay. With that I think we'll call it a day. A lot of reports and interesting things going on and we'll talk to you next month.

Question: (Michael Martys - NLS)

Can I say something really quick? This question about the users missing their reading lists. Are they really asking for is the ability to take things from their "has-had" list and put them back on their wish list? Is that what's really going on? They just want to re-download their has-hads again? If we had a button in BARD that said, "put my has-had list back in my wish list, it would be trivial to get everything back again.

Question: (Richard Smith - NLS)

Well, Mike would that just be recent has-hads?

Answer: (Michael Martys - NLS)

I don't know. It could be. Sometimes when you add a feature it causes more headaches than it solves, so... Well, we can talk about it next month.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

Okay, with that, everyone have a good day. We'll talk to you in July.

No more questions or comments.