

NLS Telephone Forum – 09-27-2017
(paraphrased)

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

Good afternoon everyone. I think we have 42 people on the line for this conference call. We're down here in the Adams Building – and there's a little echo chamber here so we'll just have to deal with that through this phone call. It's a beautiful day here in Washington. It's sunny. High near 90, so we're not getting the autumn feel yet. That will come in a few weeks, we hope. We have a few items – both good and bad – no ugly, so that's the good part. A new Head of Publications and Media section has been appointed...and her name is Kristen...

Comment: (Kristen Fernekes - NLS)

Yes. Hello everyone. My name is Kristen Fernekes and – as Richard said – I am indeed the head of the Publications and Media section. I've (been here) for about 3 weeks so, I am learning obviously a great deal about all the wonderful things that NLS is doing. I'm really looking forward to having the opportunity to work with all of you, and learn about the wonderful work that you're doing at the Network Libraries. Just to give you a tiny bit of background about me, I have a pretty extensive background in both locations, in communications. I spent a number of years working for the Smithsonian Institution. I was Deputy Director of Communications at the Peace Corps. Most recently, I was (unintelligible) directing a number of federal contracts. So, again, me and my team are excited about working with you...My team is very experienced. I know that you are probably aware of them, I'm new, I'm excited and I'm looking forward to working with all of you.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

And we should introduce all of NLS staff, so we'll go around the table here at Adams...

Comment: (Library Staff - NLS)

Meredith from Reference Section; Steve Prine from Network Division.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

And we have a group from Taylor Street. You want to introduce yourselves, Taylor Street?

Comment: (Library Staff - NLS)

Vickie Collins from Network Services; Paula Bahmani, Education and Training Specialist; Shana Osborne, Equipment Control Officer; Alice O'Reilly, I'm from the Materials Development Division; Margie Goergen-Rood, Quality Assurance; Juliette Appold, Head of Music Section; Neil Bernstein, R&D; Michael Martys, Automation; Chris Corrigan, Bibliographic Control; Andrew Skinner, Production Control.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

We'll move on. Unfortunately, MaryBeth Wise was unable to join us but she did send out an Operations Alert for the 2018 Conference planning. She told me to urge everyone to fill out the survey for training and programs for the National Conference. We've got about 42 responses so far. We would like everyone to respond. That was in Operations Alert 17-62. There's a link in the survey. We're asking for conference suggestions. Sue Chinault sent a nice list of conference ideas from the Midlands, which we appreciate, and we're really looking forward to getting a stellar program and agenda for the National Conference in 2018.

The other thing – there were questions about the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, and basically MaryBeth had spoken with staff in the Virgin Islands and she said everyone was safe. They still have no power and they're under curfew, so it's still not the ideal situation unfortunately, and Puerto Rico was contacted mainly through Facebook messaging. Some staff said they were fine. We didn't get any word from the Regional Librarian yet. There's no power, no water and unfortunately a very difficult situation in Puerto Rico. That's the to-date information on that. One other thing that we wanted to mention: We're going to hopefully get an Operations Alert out today – about a device...called a Mobile Cartridge and of course the acronym is MOCA. Is Alice here? Alice, did you want to fill us in on that?

Comment: (Alice O'Reilly - NLS)

Sure. What we have been working on is a way to deliver Digital Talking Books wirelessly to patrons – and so we've been experimenting with a model that basically delivers – I think Mike Martys called it the "virtual mailman." And so essentially what happens is, a patron plugs a cartridge into a device, and then the Digital Talking Books are delivered to that from their BARD wishlist. This is something that we contemplated would be good for people who

are not on BARD currently but might like that kind of immediacy. (This is) a way for us to (begin) to understand how people would access books wirelessly, and what that behavior would look like. We initially made 24 of these devices – handcrafted. If you remember, ten years ago when we were making our Digital Talking Book Machine, we started in the same way – and then made it available to blind staff and sighted staff to play with and to download and experience the process and help us refine...what the feedback was and what some of the complications were. We were able to...kind of make some improvements to that and make some improvements to the behavior and to some of the technological elements of it. Chris Corrigan acted as the Network Librarian, loaded peoples BARD accounts, simulating that kind of Reader Advisor experience. And so we were able to refine our process a little bit, and what we'd like to do now is make that kind of trial phase available to the Regional Libraries in anticipation that (in a) pilot phase (we'll) make them available to a select group of patrons. We don't have very many of these devices at the moment. We have about 250 total. So we were thinking that we would let everyone decide in the next couple of days – October 3rd is our deadline for that – whether the library would be interested in participating. Steve drafted an Operations Alert that's coming out under Vickie's name – because we like to spread the opportunities for blame around. So that's going to come out today I think, if it gets through Publications and Media, but you might see it tomorrow if it somehow doesn't make it out today. And I'll give all the details, but basically what we're anticipating is that you would provide information about one of your on-staff people – just perhaps name and email. You would provide that to Paula. She is spreading all of the responsibility. And then what we would do is...Federal Express it so we don't waste a lot of time with Free Matter. We'll send the device to your library and there is both a time and a data limit, so you'll have two weeks or one (gigabyte) to play with it.

Question: (Library Staff - NLS)

Do you have a video of this thing in action that maybe they can look at to help them make their decision?

Answer: (Alice O'Reilly - NLS)

Well, no I don't have a video...If you're interested conceptually – because there's no video to show you practically – get the device, experience what it's like to download, and then see if that's something your library would like to support for patron use. We have enough for every library to participate if you want to – but if some libraries don't feel as if it's something that's appropriate at the time, or if you don't have the staff or it would be kind of a burden, then we don't want to force it on anybody. There will be lots of time...

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

Alice, that's every Regional Library.

Comment: (Alice O'Reilly - NLS)

Regional. Yes, thank you Steve. So we wanted to ask any preliminary questions but would just like to get ahead to that Operations Alert...If there's anything that you wanted to know initially, we're available to talk about it over the next couple of days to see if there's any additional questions that you wanted to have answered...before you make your decision, because I think we had identified October 3rd as the day we would want to know if you would be interested in participating so that we could have these devices mailed out or Federal Expressed out by October 6.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

Okay Alice. Thank you – that's exciting news and we will have an Operations Alert out if everyone could really participate... The next item would be – I think Meredith has information about our statistics – end of the fiscal year...

Comment: (Meredith Beckhardt - NLS)

With the end of the fiscal year, which is FY17, it's time that we run some statistics and have you report those to us, so around October 1 you should be seeing an Operations Alert. There will be many more details in that Operations Alert, including a helpful guide on how to use the NLDB database. Of course, if you have any questions at all, call either myself or Michelle Spezzacatena, and all of our contact information is in the Operations Alert. If you're not sure about your login I.D. or you're not sure about the whole survey, just give us a call. We can walk you through it. Any level of help is available here. So, I just wanted to let you know about that. Your circulation system should be able to bring out the readership and circulation reports for you so that you can put the numbers into the NLDB database. **11:40**

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

Thanks Meredith. That's vital. We get all that information and walk it across the street to Congress to justify our funding. So we appreciate you updating us every year. The next thing is, unfortunately we found a glitch in the NLS Helen program on our website. We'd rectify it but we also have to figure out a fix for it also. I think Michael found it with the help of Network Library input. Do you want to explain that, Michael?

Comment: (Michael Martys - NLS)

So, the form here that we internally call the "Helen" form – which is the NLS Program Interest form – when filled out by a potential patron would (be emailed) to the respective library that would normally handle that prospective patron. We received several email messages from a couple of libraries over the last several days – that basically raised concerns about some of those forms not being delivered. When we investigated those incidents, we discovered that we may have a fairly sizeable problem in that a large number of these forms may not have been correctly mailed to libraries, over maybe perhaps several months. What we're going to do – since there is some uncertainty – is that we're going to do a reconciliation. We have all the data for all the forms going back in time, and we're going to compile a list of all the data that should have been sent to each library since the beginning of 2017.

We're going to purge that list of all prospective patrons that signed up – and then we're going to send that list to each library for you to see if any of these prospective patrons were not sent to you. We're not sure of the size of the problem or of the duration, because we're not exactly sure (about) when the cause of the problem started, but we just thought for the sake of thoroughness that we just go back to the beginning of 2017. We've rectified the problem and we now believe that the systems are sending out the email correctly – and we're going to be watching it closely over the next several weeks. And we would particularly like for you at the Network Libraries to watch it as well, and to alert us if anything seems odd or unusual. As of Friday, the system should have been sending out emails correctly and we want to make sure it continues to do so – and we're putting in steps to perform continuous monitoring...We will probably send out an Op Alert, so you don't have to memorize what I just said.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

In general news, Congress has passed a new resolution – until December 18 – so we're not shutting down, so I guess that's good news too. Any other NLS staff reports that I've missed?

Comment: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

I'll just mention that the NLS Orientation dates for 2018 have been put out in Operations Alert 17-60, and the dates will be in March, May and October. The specific dates are on this Operations Alert 17-60 for 2018.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

With that, Richard if you can open the line for questions, we'll take questions here.

Question: (Jill Rothstein – NY8)

Hi everyone. It's really hot and humid here, so I feel your pain. My kindly-meant question is: Whether you guys think that there will ever be a chance that - across-the-board - raise the quota of overdue or lost MOCs allowed? We have massive postal delays and postal (losses) here – and along with the patrons who we feel we may have to bother you about because there are so many people who swear they've returned everything – and we believe them, but they get lost in the mail and they're not getting their magazines.

Answer: (Michael Martys - NLS)

Everybody is looking at me – that's Mike Martys. My answer is that, technically, I can do what you request, but I don't make the decisions. It's the Network Division that sets policy, so I'd have to get them to answer the question.

Question: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

It's really an economic issue, so we usually go to Production Control since it's an MOC...What would be helpful? If it went from 2 to 4 would that help? Or would that not really resolve it?

Answer: (Jill Rothstein – NY8)

Yes. That would be helpful – definitely.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

We'll investigate it Jill. Thank you.

Comment: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

On the case of individual patrons, your Network Consultant, whether it's Pamela Davenport or MaryBeth Wise – or even anybody at NLS – can raise the quota for individual patrons, and we're very willing to do that. One of the concerns about raising it across the board is, it would restart people who are delinquent, if they're still active for that magazine – so it's a little bit of a concern whether all that data is correct, and whether the ones reactivated are the ones you would like to have reactivated.

Question: (Michael Martys - NLS)

One more clarifying question: Are you guys thinking of – for a state? Or just for a library?

Answer: (Library Staff - NLS)

Across the board.

Question: (Maria Socher - TN)

I wanted to check and see if there was any news about the machine batteries and the issue that we were having with those.

Question: (Shana Osborne - NLS)

Hi Maria. What was your concern about the batteries again? You guys have not been utilizing the new batteries, correct?

Answer: (Maria Socher - TN)

Right. We had one patron we sent six machines to. Each one was fine when it left here. The first time the patron uses it, it's fine, but when she goes to recharge it, it has a diminished capacity – it will say it has maybe 5 hours and then after a few minutes, it dies completely and will not work unless it's plugged in.

Question: (Shana Osborne - NLS)

I would make sure that you guys are testing the machines – that you're utilizing the new white batteries that came in this year. Do you know which ones we mean, Maria?

Answer: (Maria Socher - TN)

We've got an order for them. We don't have them in hand yet.

Comment: (Shana Osborne - NLS)

They're dramatically better. Also – testing the machines before they go out – instead of just plugging them up... (Make sure that) you're exhausting the battery and then charging it back up to make sure that that battery will hold a charge.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

And I think we have a video for that.

Question: (Mark Sachon – PA8)

This morning I was cornered by our last two remaining Telecom Pioneers, and they asked me, "where can we send the dead batteries?"...They also suggested that it might be easier for us to take them down and dispose of them at the recycling plant (which is) conveniently located in our Home Depot a couple blocks down the street. What do you guys think? Should we get rid of them ourselves, or is there some place we can send them?

Answer: (Steve Prine - NLS)

There is no place to send them at the moment. NLS is looking at a new contract for battery disposal. However, if you have more than you can store at the moment, you can take those to the Home Depot. Just don't take them in such large quantities that it overwhelms their disposal (capacity).

Comment: (Mark Sachon – PA8)

Sure. That sounds great. We don't have a giant boatload of them. I think the Home Depot could take them. Thank you.

Question: (Ava Smith - TX)

We are getting calls from patrons who are wanting to know if they can volunteer for NLS. What they want to do is to do markup on the A to D recordings that have gone up on BARD. So far, we've been telling them "no" because the priority is to get all of the A to D recordings up on BARD and the quickest way is not to stop and mark them up. We were wondering if there is a point in time where NLS will be marking up the A to D recordings – and if NLS would be interested in having some patrons do volunteer work.

Answer: (Library Staff - NLS)

We'd have to look into that. I'd have to talk to our legal department because the volunteer stuff can be a little tricky at times – and I know we haven't necessarily looked at it due to budgetary reasons, with our budget either staying flat or dropping. Contracting that out was not always an option because it actually takes away from creating more books. It's hard to do more with less money, so we can look into that, and I'll check into the legality of volunteers marking up A to D books.

Answer: (Michael Martys - NLS)

There'd probably be an expectation that we would have to provide the tool. So, that's where it gets tricky.

Question: (Ivan Johnson – CA8)

Hello everyone. I have an interesting issue that came up about the middle of the month. A patron of ours receives both Patron-Centric Cartridges – the ones that we generate from our Keystone system – and also Magazines on Cartridge – MOC carts. The MOC carts, she claims that they don't play properly. Now my first thought was that she is not doing it right – but I left the conversation thoroughly convinced that she knows what she's doing in using Bookshelf. She says 6 to 8 magazine carts have functioned improperly this month, yet all of the Patron-Centric cartridges work just fine. Any idea on that?

Answer: (Library Staff - NLS)

This is the first we've heard of that. If we could have them sent to us, we could have our QA people and engineering types take a look at them to see what's going on.

Comment: (Ivan Johnson – CA8)

Okay if I can get my hands on them I will forward them.

Question: (Jill Rothstein – NY8)

Hey guys. Remember back when we were talking about Magazines on Cartridge? I was trying to answer your questions but my mic went off. You were saying something about whether raising the limit would make people NOT delinquent, who we WANTED to be delinquent. And I wasn't sure I understood that.

Answer: (Michael Martys - NLS)

Well, basically the way the MOC system is set up right now with these quotas, that if a person reaches their quota, MOC will stop delivering magazines to a particular person. It's waiting for them to return them or something. One of the side effects of raising quotas across the board is, all of these people that were suspended, all of a sudden become un-suspended – and MOC starts delivering to them again. It can have some unintended consequences. There are some people that actually didn't want the service. The system stopped sending them cartridges. They're happy – and then when the system starts sending them again, they get surprised, then they're unhappy. So, you're right, it's not a lot of people but it has happened in the past and it has caused the library consternation in the past. We just need you to be aware of that – that that's a side effect. If we were to do this...you should do a quick audit and make sure that if there is anybody in the state who should be shut down, you shut them down.

Question: (Jill Rothstein – NY8)

So how would we know if they should be shut down - in your envisioning of this?

Answer: (Michael Martys - NLS)

Well you would use the MOC tools – using the query tool to bring up all the people who are suspended – and then you would just review that list to make sure that there's nobody on that list who actually wanted their service terminated.

Comment: (Jill Rothstein – NY8)

I see, okay. Thank you for bringing that up. It is something to think about. I definitely have a list of people who have the player, are supposed to be subscribed and are active in our system. And, I'm holding the list in my hands. It's a good half-inch. It's a lot of people and what's happening is that we're getting a lot of patrons calling us, or when we call people to see how they're doing, they're like, "Yeah I don't know why I haven't received magazines for a year. I used to love them. I don't know what I did wrong." So, it's really more trying to help those people who deserve the service and just postal issues are getting in the way – and I know there will be a couple people who will call and be like "hey, why are you sending this?" but then that's a good thing because then that will help us know to look at their record and fix it.

Comment: (Michael Martys - NLS)

But, just to reiterate Vickie's point, you know you do have the ability to raise the quotas of individuals by working with your consultant.

Comment: (Jill Rothstein – NY8)

Yes, absolutely. And so that's what we're doing until now but – as I mentioned – the list of people who are delinquent currently is so massive that...I mean I could email it to my consultant but I would feel really guilty about giving them all that work on an individual level.

Question: (Michael Martys - NLS)

How massive is it? Can you give me a number? Let me just say this: If there is a vast amount of physical work, like, me working with your consultant – we might be able to automate a big long list for you.

Answer: (Jill Rothstein – NY8)

There are 33 people per page and maybe 50 pages.

Comment: (Michael Martys - NLS)

Like I said, if it's really a massive amount of labor, I can work with your consultant to automate it, but I would need a spreadsheet.

Comment: (Jill Rothstein – NY8)

Okay. That's why I was wondering if it would be easier just to raise the limit for everyone in my region.

Comment: (Michael Martys - NLS)

Maybe this is one of those things we could take offline and work with the consultant about it.

Comment: (Jill Rothstein – NY8)

A second thing was, someone asked about batteries? I wanted to let you know that we're also having the same complaints about batteries – just, giving one number and then lasting 30 minutes, dying and then not taking a charge again. We are using the new batteries and we are testing them but we're still having problems.

Question: (Shana Osborne - NLS)

You're having problems with the new batteries?

Answer: (Jill Rothstein – NY8)

Yes.

Comment: (Shana Osborne - NLS)

Can you email me? That's Shana Osborne. My email is sosb@loc.gov.

Question: (Mary Jane Kayes – CA9)

Hi. It came to our attention the other day – from a note from Perkins – that they had green cartridges for sale to the general public, again. As I investigated our list and NLS' list of providers, I couldn't find any other vendor that said they had stock, and APH pointed to Perkins. So, they were another seller that we used to send people to. If anyone knows of another vendor that currently has stock – or is very likely to have stock very soon, could they please share it to the LBPH group or to the Braille and Talking Book Library in Sacramento. I really hate recommending just one vendor when I'm telling about things that are for sale. Right now, on the NLS list, there is nobody other than Perkins that has stock that I can easily track down. That's just a request.

Comment: (Richard Smith - NLS)

Well, I thought it was an informative day and everyone enjoy the nice weather and go frolic out in the fields there...Take care. Talk to you next month.

No more questions or comments.