

Comment: (Steve Prine – NLS)

Welcome to the January 2021 NLS Monthly Open Forum call. For new people in the Network that are joining us for the first time, we always call the last Wednesday of every month – January through October – and then because of the holidays, we usually have a combined November-December call in early December. The Patron and Network Engagement Division meets with the Conference Chairs a week before this call – to gather questions and research them if needed to answer on this call, but, anyone from the Network is certainly welcome to ask any question that they have on the call. It doesn't have to be submitted ahead of time. Some NLS staff have a few announcements they'd like to make before we get started, so I think we'll start this alphabetically. Karen...

Comment: (Karen Keninger – NLS)

Hello everybody. It's always a pleasure to speak with the Network. You guys do such great work. What I was asked to tell you about was about our budget. Our budget is sound this year. We were happy to get an increase of about a million dollars in our base budget, plus we were happy to receive our second installment of two special project funding sources – one of which was for the braille e-readers, and the other which is to upgrade BARD. So, our funding is solid and we are moving ahead to spend all of our money. So, there we are!

Comment: (Steve Prine – NLS)

Thank you, Karen. Juliette Appold, head of the Music Section...

Comment: (Juliette Appold – NLS)

Hello everybody. So, the days are getting longer. It's a new year. NLS will be turning 90 and we want to celebrate with you. So, we're super-excited to announce a free virtual concert featuring jazz pianist Matthew Whitaker. The concert will be made available on March 3 at 8pm online – and the concert will kick off a year-long commemoration of NLS' 90th anniversary. Matthew Whitaker is an NLS patron and piano prodigy who has used the Music Section's accessible scores and instructional materials while he was becoming famous. He has been featured on the CBS News Magazine "60 Minutes." We will broadcast the concert that he is recording for NLS on the Library of Congress' YouTube channel. On the day of the concert, we will also post an interview with Matthew Whitaker, conducted by our own NLS Director, Karen Keninger. The interview will already be posted...at 8am on March 3, and the concert will be posted on March 3 at 8pm on the Library of Congress' YouTube channel. We've sent out an Ops Alert and we're going to send out some blog posts and please watch for Facebook announcements and you can also check out the Library of Congress' events page – and please join us for this amazing concert. If you have any questions, feel free to email me at japp@loc.gov.

Comment: (Meredith Beckhardt – NLS)

Thanks everyone... There are a couple of things I wanted to talk about today. One of the things that I do is manage the accounts and the single sign-on system. So, what I wanted to mention is a reminder that, I hope you have incoming and outgoing staff touch base with me for security purposes if staff leave the library we need to be notified so that we can delete their single sign-on account. Likewise, when you have incoming staff, of course we want to make sure that they have an I.D. and password so that they can get to the Network Library Services website. You can reach me at mbec@loc.gov and just let me know (who) the incoming and outgoing staff you have, are. The second thing I wanted to mention is that, later in February, NLDB will be brought back online – and we're going to have five surveys in February that will need to be completed. That's going to be the Collections, Budget, Staffing, Miscellaneous and the Machine Repair Survey. As always, I'm going to send out an Operations Alert to let you know the survey dates along with some directions on how to access NLDB and some other items of note. What I wanted to mention here is that for the first time, there is going to be an attachment to that Operations Alert and what I did is I copied and pasted all of the questions for each of the surveys, on to this Microsoft Word document – and that way you can preview the questions before you even go into NLDB. I'm hoping that that will be a good tool to help you prepare for doing the survey.

Comment: (Kristen Fernekes – NLS)

Hi everybody. Happy New Year. I just wanted to take a moment...I sent out an Operations Alert...about our ninetieth anniversary. Of course, we're very excited – 2021 is NLS' ninetieth anniversary. As Juliette mentioned, we're very excited that we'll be kicking off the commemoration of that anniversary with the concert with Matthew Whitaker – which is on the very day that our legislation was signed into law by President Hoover, so that would be March 3. From March 3 on through the rest of the calendar year 2021, we will be putting out a lot of digital content... We will have some...recordings from Librarian of Congress, Dr. Hayden, who will be recording a message for us. We're excited because we're hopeful now that we'll have some involvement with Congress and, again, a lot of what we hope to be very interesting historical information and digital content. Obviously with COVID, we're a little restricted in what we can do. That's why we're posting very much on digital channels. We really do want Network Libraries to take that content as you would like, and feel free to use it on your digital channels or websites, digital newsletters, social media, etc. So, that's something to look forward to and as I said, we're excited about some of the digital (programming) that will be coming up, and I will be updating you on that as we move forward but I just wanted to give you a heads-up on that.

Comment: (Mark Santangelo – NLS)

Hello everyone. It's nice to meet so many of you. I've met so many of you virtually and also by phone and by email. I look forward that we can meet one day face-to-face and in person. Let's all hope that day comes quickly. I just wanted to mention briefly, the Library of the Year awards, which we have revamped. We are combining this year...for the awards, it will be called the 2020/2021 Library of the Year Award. There will be more details coming out in an Operations Alert within the coming days, as well as the deadlines for that. I encourage all of you to get your statistics together, review your accomplishments and apply for the award.

Question: (Maureen Dorosinski - FL)

I hope everybody is doing good in the new year. I'm not going to gloat and say that it's nice and 70 and clear skies here. I grew up in Michigan, which I call the "Mitten State" so, I can sympathize with what's happening up there. I have a question about supplies. It's a bit of a question and kind of an announcement that Florida is finally stepping one toe into the water of Duplication-on-Demand. We have one of our sub-regionals who is getting a mini-Scribe and, they're just going to check it out. They're not planning on eliminating the collection just yet – so they're not eligible for the pallet of cartridges. I was wondering if we could get...some extra peach cartridges in anticipation of more of our sub-regionals getting it – and we also desperately need some more clear containers. That's the first part. The second part is that we're finally getting Hindenburg, and we are stepping away from the Sound Forge/Book Wizard combo that was killing our recording studio so, Florida is moving forward, and if we could get some containers and cartridges to help us along, we'd appreciate that.

Answer: (Steve Prine – NLS)

Okay. Thanks Maureen. David Perrotta – who is overseeing our Duplication-on-Demand effort – is out of the office until next week but, we'll certainly have him get in contact with you and, really get down to specifics and talk about what we can do for you.

Question: (Joshua Berkov - NC)

I have a question about the MARC records for the Marrakesh books for the DBGs. We were given 12 records in December and then we were given a larger batch in January which, then included the 12 from December again. We had done a little bit of work on the first 12 in making them more accessible by adding Google-translated English annotation to the records, but when the batch of DBG records was loaded this month, it overwrote what we did for the first 12 records. I'm wondering, is this going to be the plan going forward, where we're going to get a completely new set of DBG records each month? Or, starting next month are we only going to get records for new DBG titles?

Answer: (Dominick Spinelli – NLS)

I think that was just a mistake – as we're starting to work with that new material. I don't believe that's an intention to always release a growing batch of MARC records. I will bring that to the attention of the team that's been working on those and verify, but I don't expect that to be an issue going forward.

Question: (Leslie Bowman - MO)

Hi there. I just wanted to know how the braille e-reader pilot is going?

Answer: (Karen Keninger – NLS)

I'll answer that I guess. This is Karen. The Humanware braille e-readers have been in the field now for two or three months and they're going very well. We have not yet deployed the Zoomax readers. We're still working on some updates so, generally the feedback we've had from them has been very positive and we're very pleased with what we've done so far.

Question: (Sarah Jacobson - TX)

We were just wondering, Are we hopeful that the next (BARD) transition will be successful or are we anticipating any further issues with that?

Answer: (Jason Yasner – NLS)

Good afternoon everyone. Thanks for joining us. I can take that. Mike Martys is currently working on the BARD migration right now, hence he's not on this call. We are still looking at a maintenance window ending this afternoon. Things are going well. We've tested (the) BARD website. We've tested BARD Express. We've seen one odd issue with BARD Mobile on Android, so we just want to make sure we're working that out, but things are looking pretty good right now and it looks like we will be making the deadline of this afternoon. As we've said before, I think the impact patrons are going to see is better, faster service, once we make sure everything's okay. Mike did want me to say – if anybody asks a question – we're going to delay R-Sync for about a day to make sure everything is running okay. Obviously, we're going to be watching BARD very closely for the next 24 hours to make sure everything runs smoothly. We are on schedule right now to complete it this afternoon. Thank you.

Question: (Julia W. – Unknown)

Hi. I just wanted to know if anyone else was experiencing (comments) from their patrons, stating that they haven't received braille magazines – not because of production but because of USPS?

Answer: (Vickie Collins – NLS)

Yes, there have been a lot of issues, particularly from the fall and the holiday season and even up until now, Postal authorities are telling us that they've had COVID-19 issues that have impacted their staff, so, there have been a lot of delays. I know many people whose Christmas cards didn't arrive until mid-January. We know that there definitely have been delivery issues with braille and with digital books.

Question: (Angela Hall - AL)

Hi everybody. This message is for Karen or for anyone who can answer but, Karen, you did mention or give us an update on the braille e-readers as far as the testing out in the field but do we have any dates as to when they'll be provided to patrons in all of our libraries?

Answer: (Vickie Collins – NLS)

Angela? This is Vickie from the Network Services section. I seem to still be here. I don't know where everyone else is, but I will say that we'll try to get some kind of response. It's going to be a while before the braille e-readers are actually deployed to the entire country. It's a big project, so I'm not exactly sure what the timeframe would be. We do have a positive response in terms of our funding, so that's a good step forward.

Comment: (Angela Hall - AL)

Alright Vickie. Well, thank you so much.

Comment: (Pat Herndon - GA)

Georgia just wanted to report that we're having trouble receiving machines – and we checked on it and they should have been sent so we believe it's a mail-handling issue. We're very low on our machine inventory right now.

Question: (Kristin White - SC)

Is there an update on the SAM e-reader pilot?

Answer: (Library Staff - NLS)

She's talking about the SAM smartphone pilot – with the camera. I guess Michael Katzmann isn't on the call. I do know that the libraries have been notified and, you should be hearing something shortly about a training (and) the phones have to be distributed but currently, the libraries are selecting their participants.

Answer: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

Sorry, I am on the line. We have to wait for the BARD deployment to the cloud...The participating libraries have been informed and hopefully if the BARD deployment goes well today, (work will begin) to get the necessary service running to support the field test and that will then allow us to get those devices out to the libraries so, if everything is going well, we hope to get those devices out probably early the week after next.

Question: (Kristin White - SC)

If we're participating and we've received the manual, is it okay to send it to our chosen participants?

Answer: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

Yes. There's no problem in that. I think what I sent out was a link to some HTML documentation. Yes, if they're able to read that and are interested in seeing what features are available, absolutely. There should be no problem.

Question: (Kim Charlson - MA)

My question is pretty simple. It's a slight variation on Angela's question about the braille e-readers. Are braille e-readers going to be sent to libraries that distribute braille to patrons? I had understood that libraries were to get e-readers to evaluate and look at and make our staff familiar with the devices that are available so, I haven't heard any more about that.

Answer: (Tamara Rorie - NLS)

Eventually, we will be sending out e-readers to the braille libraries. We have not done that yet, but that will happen and we will notify you before we do it.

Comment: (Steve Prine – NLS)

I want to thank everyone for participating in the Open Forum call. Hopefully, our answers were helpful, and for the questions we couldn't answer on this call, we will be getting back to the individuals that asked them. Have a good month, and we look forward to talking to you in February. Thank you.