

NLS Telephone Forum - 4-29-2020
(paraphrased)

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

Thank you. Good afternoon and welcome to the April NLS Open Forum call. We have a number of people on the line from the NLS side and I'm going to ask them to identify themselves please, so we'll know who's on the call from our side...

Comment: (Library Staff - NLS)

Hi, this is Kristen Fernekes. I am the head of Communications and Outreach; Vickie Collins, Network Services Section; Shana Osborne, Equipment Control Officer; MaryBeth Wise, Network Consultant; Paula Bahmani, Education and Training; Tamara Rorie, Braille; Don Olson, Network Services; David Spett, NLS Data Analyst; Judy Dixon (Consumer Relations Officer).

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

Okay, well thank you. Karen has obviously not joined us yet. Does anyone from NLS have any reports they would like to present to the Network?

Comment: (Don Olson - NLS)

Hi everybody. Good afternoon. I'm referencing today, an Ops Alert that went out a few weeks ago, addressing or talking about the deletion or the purging of PII on BARD applications and accounts. Think of this as a three step process. Consider, let's say, a BARD account might be opened today. You already know that if a patron account goes unused for six months, after that six-month period, it will then go into an "inactive" status. If then, the same account does not get reactivated - or I should just say "activated" - for the next six months, it will then go into an "alert" status, and then finally we'll take one more step. If then, after that "alert" status remains in place for the following six months, the accounts will automatically be closed and PII will then be purged from that account. On a related note, any applications that go...untouched...then in six months, that PII will be purged from those applications. And then finally, if applications are rejected at any point in the process, then, again, six months after those applications are rejected, PII will be purged from those rejected applications. Just to pretty much tie a bow on the whole thing, understand that even though the PII is purged from all of these different types of applications, if - for some reason - a patron comes back a year and a half or two years or even three years down the line, those same accounts can be reactivated because in the purged applications, the CMLS I.D. will be maintained. And since you then have the records of all of your patrons, just look them up by CMLS I.D. and you can repopulate all of the PII to reactivate the accounts. That is my report. Thanks Steve.

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

Thank you Don. Anyone else?

Comment: (Kristen Fernekes - NLS)

I have a few things from Communications really quickly. I just wanted to give everybody a quick update. We're going to be sending some of this information out in 'On the Move' here in the next twenty four hours or so. Just so everybody knows what's happening with publications, we are - to a very large extent - keeping all of our publications, so our key publications being BBR and TBT, going according to schedule. The only glitches that we're finding, have to do with when our vendors - who produce various components of those publications in various formats - are simply unable to produce them. Primarily, that would impact 'Magazine-on-Cartridge' for TBT and then also hard-copy braille. We are finding (that) we're able to produce BRF files, which we're getting up on BARD and on our website as quickly as we can. Unfortunately, the vendor who handles that is currently unable to produce hard copy. Also, I just wanted all of the libraries to be aware of the fact that for those of you who receive bulk shipments of things like TBT, those shipments are being held at the printer or at the Multi State Center West until we can reach some level of normalcy again and be able to get those out to you guys. The other thing I wanted to mention to folks is that, you know that we have a digital advertising campaign that we intended to launch in the spring and, we're holding on that right at this moment because we don't want anything that's going to immediately generate applications, or requests for enrollment information, and have those go off to libraries who are not in a position to be

able to respond to those presently. We are currently...trying to get a better sense of the capacities of the libraries across the Network and then we do decide to launch that digital campaign, we're going to be doing it very slowly so it won't be a large amount of advertising that will produce a large amount of requests. So, I just wanted to let everybody have some sense of where we are on those ongoing projects.

Comment: (Paula Bahmani - NLS)

Just so you all know, the Braille E-reader project is going along. We have had to move our start date. We haven't settled for sure on a start date but we believe it will be July instead of June. We are expecting to do training, hopefully in June but it will probably be virtual - at least for the beginning it would be virtual. Eventually, we would like to bring in the people who were going to be trained in-house, and bring you in at a later date. Those of you who are representing those libraries, expect to hear from us shortly with some updated information - and, feel free to email me if anyone has any questions.

Comment: (Sharon Ruda - IL)

I have a question about the Multi State Center. At the last meeting, the gentleman from the Multi State Center West said that they would continue doing interlibrary loan orders? I was wondering if there's a limit, because we are unable to send out anything and this will be the second month. Just (FYI), in the last 3 days, five of us checked in 25,000 books - so that books eventually can go out of our building. Our phone system crashed because of the number of calls.

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

That's a good question. To be honest, I don't know if they can handle that kind of quantity. We'll have to have a conversation with Multi State Center offline and get back to you, Sharon.

Comment: (Margie Goergen-Rood - NLS)

As Catherine O'Connor was saying, I'm kind of on the wrong side here but, I did want to say that QA is on this call and if you have any questions for Quality Assurance, I appreciate it. Thank you.

Question: (Bob Zarin - VA)

(Here's a) compliment and question: First, my compliments to NLS for working overtime to keep everything going. I know at our library, we've been able to work a little bit with VA1A to do some cartridge generation but it's been a very big help being able to talk and brainstorm with everyone at NLS as we try to figure out the contours of how we can keep doing service. The question I had, though was actually related to PICS. I'm having difficulties accessing even bibliographic records through the regular link and since my (two-factor authentication) is currently in the office that I'm not allowed to go in without the approval of the two supervisors above me - and another person six feet away at all times (for) the duration that I'm in there. I'm kind of locked out. Has there been a workaround established for how we're doing that? Are we all just temporarily trying to switch over our confirmations to email?

Question: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

I also do have a communication from Karen Keninger. She's having trouble getting in and she has a list of things that need to be communicated. Maybe she also would get in the other way - the patron way, or the library way. Would that be recommended? Or should she try again the NLS way?

Answer: (Steve Prine - NLS)

You can certainly try it the other way for her. So Paula, would you get back with this gentleman in Virginia?

Answer: (Paula Bahmani - NLS)

I don't have his contact information but, what you can do is send an email to Meredith, which is mbec@loc.gov. She can change your method of authenticating from a fob to email or SMS text, if you want to do that. Once you're able to get back in the building and have access to your fob, you can switch it back. It's not a difficult thing to do. Any other library staff who need to access systems through the single sign-on interface - if you want to change your method of authentication, you can do that. Just send an email to Meredith Beckhardt.

Question: (Bob Zarin - VA)

Then, one: In order to get things like bibliographic information we are definitely going through single sign-on – and then, two: there isn't a workaround for the no-fob thing yet other than changing confirmation. Is that correct?

Answer: (Paula Bahmani - NLS)

My understanding is that the PICS system still has the bibliographic downloads. Those should still be on PICS. The workaround for getting into the single sign-on system if you don't have your fob is to change your method of authentication.

Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

Good afternoon everybody. I am going to calm down now and tell you what I have on my list. One of the major questions that has been coming around ever since this thing started was what to do about machines and equipment that comes back from our patrons. We have been asking you to check with your state health departments and follow their advice. We have some procedures that we think will be sufficient. We're quite sure they're very conservative if you'd like to follow these. One thing that we don't want you to do is to dispose of machines that come back from known COVID sufferers, because we believe those machines can be utilized after proper precautions and we really don't want to be throwing away good machines. So, basically the precautions that we would encourage you to take with machines that come back – especially from places where you know there have been COVID sufferers – is to quarantine them for 14 days.

We think that the virus can live on plastic for up to 2 or 3 days, so 14 days should be very conservative. Once you have sent them to quarantine for 14 days and you want to handle them again then, you should wipe down the box with disinfectant after you have equipped yourselves with your personal protective equipment – and then when you take the machine out of the box, it should also be wiped down with a disinfectant or a mild detergent and that – according to all the health experts – will be sufficient to destroy...any lingering virus at that point. So, again we will make that more obvious or, get more information about that in writing but please, the main message here is don't throw the machines away. Don't consider them "Damaged Beyond Repair." They are very salvageable. The 14-day quarantine should be all it really takes to take care of that.

There was a question about the September Conference – whether it was going to go digital or not. We don't know yet. We are hoping still to have a face-to-face conference. We see – as you all do – that some of these dates that started out like April 15, May 1, are being pushed out into May and June, and things are being scheduled farther and farther out. But, I believe we will be able to have a face-to-face conference and if we can't, we are also looking into having some kind of a virtual conference this fall, if we can't do a person-to-person conference. It's still up in the air, but we'll do something one way or the other. I just wanted to alert you that the "Library of the Year" selection has been made. We're not announcing it yet. The winners have been informed. We will be having the celebration for that in the fall as well. ...Our building – as you know or have heard – is closed. We aren't allowed in at all. It was closed on the day before a day that we thought it was going to be open and therefore, we weren't able to retrieve some things that we probably would have if we had known it was going to be closed. No fault, just a timing issue. So, it is closed and we are all working remotely. ..The Library is beginning to plan for when we will reopen our building and the main library buildings but, they're still giving us no dates so we don't know when that's going to be. They'll be following the precautions set by the Governors in the Washington DC and Virginia and Maryland area. That looks like it's going to be a while yet. That means our music circulation which comes out of NLS is on hold for now. Also, our studio is temporarily closed so, obviously nothing is going on in our building.

Magazines are a question that have come up. Most of our magazines are being narrated by our narrators out there – our contractors – and they're being posted to BARD. So almost all of the magazines are available on BARD, and they're pretty timely. The exception to that is "The Economist." It is on hold right now because that is one that is handled in our studio. Also, the Piano Tuners' Journal – that one is also on hold. Those are the two magazines the studio did. The rest of

them are available on BARD but they are not being sent out through the Magazines-on-Cartridge program because those contractors have suspended work on those temporarily. So your patrons won't be getting their magazines in the mail unfortunately. They will be available to them if they can use BARD. We are not able to process any incoming mail at this point as well. The overseas circulation of materials continues. It has been shifted to the Multi State West, where it used to be and then we brought it back to do Dupe-on-Demand and now it's gone back there as a Dupe-on-Demand process but that's the only Dupe-on-Demand that the Multi State West is doing. They are, however, continuing to do their Interlibrary Loan. That is continuing. They are not able to ship out machines to individuals. That's not something that is possible at this time.

Copy Allotment continues. We are continuing to produce books. There are not as many as we'd like and there have been a number of roadblocks at this point for book production, but our Collection Development and Production Control people have been intrepid about finding ways to get books so that we can continue the flow of books into the system. And copy allotment records does continue however we are continuing not to produce duplication and sending out to libraries so that's on hold. We're not sending anything out. We are not able at this time to provide machines on an ad-hoc basis, so some of you are able to send out machines and I'm really delighted and grateful for that. Some of you aren't - you're in the same boat that we are but we are not able to provide machines at this point. We are really encouraging people to look to BARD. Our consultants are staying in touch with our Network Libraries. We sent out a survey last week and I'm delighted to see that we got about 50 responses to that survey already and that we will be compiling that survey. It's basically an effort to refine the information that we already had about who is working - who is able to do what. If we have a more granular picture of that, we will be able to possibly step in if this goes for a lot longer. So I thank you for that. We'll probably be running that survey again every couple of weeks just to keep track of what you all are doing out there and I do want to reiterate that I'm really delighted and I can't tell you how much I appreciate the efforts that you have gone to to make sure that books continue to roll out of NLS and that books continue to go out to patrons as much as possible.

Life does go on. One of the things in life that has gone on is that Hien (Nguyen), who was our Bibliographic Control person - cataloguer basically - she was the head of cataloging and she has left. Some of you may have worked with her in one way or another so I wanted to let you know that she's taken another position - and so she has left NLS. We have - at the same time - picked up two new people in cataloguing. What I wanted to let you know is that Dominic Spinnelli - who is the head of the Collection Development section is also going to be the acting head of the Bibliographic Control section until we can find a replacement. Duplication-on-Demand is something we've been working very hard on for the last several years - and it's been rolling out quite nicely - it is on hold. We can't get into the building to get the equipment or to do the configuration and we know that you all are busy just trying to make do with what you can, so anyhow, Duplication-on-Demand deployment is on hold although we're trying to support the people who have it as much as possible. I would like to again encourage those of you who haven't finished the survey...please do that as quickly as possible so that we can pull all that together - and I want to encourage all of you to promote BARD to your patrons. BARD is the one thing that's up and running and solid and, it is available to every one of our patrons and I've noticed that there has been a lot of work on our part and on your part in terms of people who haven't been accustomed to using BARD to get going on it - and I want to thank you for that. They will be very happy about it in the end, I think. Just to encourage and to remind people that it's there for them to use and they can get anything that they want whenever they want it. Also, just keep the information flowing about the things that you're doing and the questions that you have on your listserv and that sort of thing. We are a community. We are a family of sorts and we are all in the same boat together so, we need to share everything that we know and help each other in the best way that we can - and knowledge is the best way that we can do that. That is basically the end of the list of things that I wanted to talk about.

Question: (Ilia Desjardins - VA)

I'm wondering if you had any estimation about the Post Office and where we're headed with that. If that whole system collapses, what we would do. If there's any factual information out there.

Answer: (Vickie Collins - NLS)

Well, as the (NLS) Postal Liaison,...communications that we've had with our USPS Liaison have indicated they're not expecting any of those dire consequences at this point in time. So, that is the information that we have received to date.

Question: (Joshua Berkov - NC)

I'm...wondering when will the production of books restart? When will the vendors reopen and start producing Dbs and such?

Answer: (Zaneta Watson - NLS)

As you all know, our producers are located all over the United States. Each producer has its own stay-at-home orders based on directions from their Governors. Right now, all of them are working from home or virtually, except for maybe two or three of them. For those who are working virtually, they are working to continue transcribing braille, narrating books and - as Karen mentioned - uploading to BARD. As far as their return, even once NLS returns to the building and we can do our thing physically, we have no idea when our producers will be able to do their thing physically in their buildings. So, until further notice, everything will continue to be (virtual) but as we receive dates from those producers, we'll be sure to update the Network.

Comment: (Neal Graham - unk)

Earlier, someone asked whether there was a limit from Multistate Center West in fulfilling Interlibrary Loan requests. There is not a limit. However, depending on the number of requests received, distribution may be delayed.

Question: (Sue Greene - MI)

I had placed an order and we just got our new equipment in the mail today, so that's really great but, on my original order it said that batteries were back-ordered and then on the shipping list, it didn't mention that at all, so I was wondering, are we going to be delayed with batteries? And should I keep that in mind? Because we are able to send out machines at this time.

Answer: (Shana Osborne - NLS)

We currently have batteries in stock. You may have received that because your equipment comes from the East and those are being forwarded to the (Multi State Center) West for issuance, but there's no current back-order for batteries. We should have batteries in stock. You should receive your order. I'll double-check for you and get back with you.

Question: (Jane Glasby - CA9)

Hello. Greetings from San Francisco. Thank you all for doing such wonderful work and, Karen, that email you sent in appreciation of everybody in the Network, was beautiful. I really appreciated that. Thank you. And also, the work that everyone is doing in the Network, I think is really impressive. We're doing our best here - our poor best. I have a question from one of the people on staff here...about BARD. It seems a little punitive the way people that people have been dropping off - the six months inactive that Don was talking about - (of) which we're well aware - and we're also aware that it's possible to reactivate people, but in the current situation, we've got people who we're trying to encourage to use BARD and sometimes it's a little difficult for them to suddenly come around and realize that their BARD account has gone away, so, it's probably just a policy decision that you can't do anything about - that's coming from above - but we were wondering if it's possible to relax that six-month inactivity (suspension).

Answer: (Don Olson - NLS)

Unfortunately you're right. That was a policy decision that was made from high above and we truly can't do anything about that. If I can help in any way as far as coordinating patrons getting...reactivated onto their account, I'd be happy to do that - not a problem. So let me know. If you or your staff for whatever reason, are not able to connect with people, I can pitch in and help out as well.

Comment: (Jane Glasby - CA9)

I appreciate that, Don... I kind of feel like, all of our technological difficulties are coming from security policies from above.

Comment: (Don Olson - NLS)

You're not the only one to say that.

Question: (Erin Pawlus - AZ)

I had a couple questions if that's okay but I'll try to make them brief. One, because this is a new world, I am chatting with someone remotely who just wanted clarification about the magazines. It's our understanding so far, that our patrons have been receiving cartridges with their magazines - other than of course, "The Economist." But, going forward, is the MOC program on hold? Or did I misunderstand?

Answer: (Zaneta Watson - NLS)

MOC is on hold temporarily. That has to do with - once again - the shutdown of our producers due to quarantine. Once those producers return to their offices, we will start up with MOC again. However, please be mindful that that doesn't mean our patrons won't get back-dated issues. We have every intent to send out back-dated issues as requested.

Question: (Erin Pawlus - AZ)

Okay thank you. And for BARD, I don't know if this is technologically possible, but what might be helpful is if an automated message could be sent to our patrons maybe a month before they're scheduled to go into 'inactive' status, to let them know...to please login. Is that a possibility?

Answer: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

I'll chime in here. Technologically, that's possible. I'll talk that over with Mike Martys. Go ahead, John.

Answer: (John Brown - NLS)

My understanding is that these types of conversations need to take place with the Chairs. A decision needs to be made at that level. I'd be glad to do my part if and when those orders come down but that conversation needs to take place with the Network Chairs.

Comment: (Margie Goergen-Rood - NLS)

I'm just circling back to Josh - and I'm assuming you were talking about the duplication of the cartridges. I did want to just reiterate: We had been putting up books to BARD - commercials and born-digitals - every single day since this all started. So you can get anything. As soon as it comes in, we're checking it and getting it out there (quickly).

Comment: (Neal Graham - unk)

Karen, I just wanted to take the opportunity to thank Joe Ballard out in Salt Lake City at Multistate Center West, on the incredible job that he and his team are doing in filling in for Multistate Center East that's closed - as well as providing services to the Network where possible. I just wanted to thank him.

Question: (Sue Greene - MI)

Hi, I'd also like to second that. It was a really great pleasure to get those new machines from Multistate West today. I have a second question and this would be coming from my repair person that works in-house. He placed an order for some parts and I'm wondering if those are able to be shipped? Or if that comes from NLS which is closed now?

Answer: (Steve Prine - NLS)

I have a feeling that that is what has happened. Parts are handled from NLS for the majority of Digital Talking Book Machine parts, so, if that's the case, that's why they're not coming out - because no one is in the building to respond to the orders. The orders won't be lost. If they're in the system when staff are back in the building, they'll certainly go through everything and look at filling all the back orders that they have.

Question: (Kim Robertson - VA)

I've come up with a follow up question about bibliographic information: Basically, I am curious whether bibliographic information is being uploaded? I can get access to PICS, and I suppose when I can get to my office, I can get access to the Network website. All I'm wondering is whether or not

there is new information to be had since the last upload of full MARC data that I think was on the 6th of April. Can anyone speak to whether bibliographic data is still being uploaded to either PICS or the database?

Answer: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

The Bibliographic section is still operating. We are still processing books as they come through. I expect the same schedule to be kept of creating the biweekly and monthly uploads for bibliographic data so, as far as that goes, that continues on. There may be less books because we are a bit hamstrung in the selection of books at the moment but the bibliographic updates should be going along on schedule.

Comment: (Bob Zarin - VA)

This is less of a question and more of a general update shout-out. I don't know how many of the libraries know, but the subregional libraries are staying pretty active as we almost all work remotely, Kim Robertson who was asking a question momentarily ago, has been able to go into her library for a short period of time around Monday and Friday, to check things in around quarantining. Our state library has been able to talk to Data Management to give us a very limited ability to have them generate cartridges for those of us who can't generate onsite. My library system gave me a VPN to be able to access WebREADS. It's made my life gloriously easier. I don't know if any of the other libraries who are feeling kind of shut out find any of that helpful but, I do want to praise the people around me who have been able to network enough and put in enough support structure to be able to keep service going to everyone.

Question: (Joshua Berkov - NC)

Hi. I wanted to go back momentarily to Copy Allotment. I just wanted to confirm that there was no copy allotment list for the second half of this month. To try to get an idea going forward through this for next month, are we expecting one or two or is there a plan?

Answer: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

As far as I understand, Copy Allotment is going on as per normal. If there is something different I'll send a message out but as far as I understand, copy allotment is going out.

Answer: (Zaneta Watson - NLS)

So it's my understanding that copy allotment happens twice a month - I believe it's the 1st and the 14th or something like that, and as far as I know it's taking place on that same schedule, and so, the directions that the Network has received previously...it should still be twice a month. If we hear anything differently, we'll let you guys know.

Comment: (Joshua Berkov - NC)

So,...I'm looking at the PICS site now and it's still showing the copy allotment that was due April 14th. I know (that) I and a few others sent emails out through the lbph listserv and I think someone from NLS...responded saying that because there were no books, no copy allotment (was) generated or there were zero books ready or something like that. Definitely if you could get back to the Network libraries about the 2nd half of the month because it is causing some confusion.

Comment: (Zaneta Watson - NLS)

Yes, of course. We'll reach out to the section that facilitates copy allotment and we'll get back to you guys.

Comment: (Dominick Spinelli - NLS)

So, yes there wasn't copy allotment and I believe it's because of the delay in sourcing titles and doing book production, but I don't think that's going to be an ongoing issue because we're getting back on track. We'll look into that and make sure.

Question: (Erin Pawlus - AZ)

Hi. Just a follow-up question about magazines. I hope this makes sense. So, it's my understanding that when an admin goes into BARD you would be able to see when the next magazine cartridge is supposed to go out and what will be on it. Will these be delayed? Is that accurate information as we see it? Does that mean its good to go or is it on hold?

Answer: (Zaneta Watson - NLS)

So, I can't see it from the admin screen, so my only assumption would be that because it's on hold, you shouldn't see anything. As I mentioned I don't have admin access to see that side of the screen. I'm only assuming...

Answer: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

Technically speaking, the patrons will receive all the editions they haven't been sent since they got the last cartridge, so, if we're delayed one month, two months, three months - when they actually get the cartridge, they will get all the issues for the subscribed magazines since they last received the cartridge. I'm presuming that the MOC system will show you that. Mike has texted me during the call. He can't seem to get in but, I will go on that assumption that you should be able to see the books that will go out to the patron based on when they last got a cartridge. But, I'll double-check that with Mike Martys.

Answer: (Mike Martys - NLS)

Hey can you hear me? I just redialed and hopefully you can hear me... Just to follow up with Michael's comment, the MOC system right now, only sends out the most recent three back issues, but we can modify that to send out as many as we want...it's programmable in MOC and based on what people tell us to do, we could do that. The original reason for the limit of the three most recent issues is that there was a general feeling that magazines are time-sensitive materials. People might not be interested in getting a cartridge with millions of old magazines - but we can make an exception for this particular situation. The second thing is I think there was an earlier comment about BARD, and the six-month inactivation of patrons who haven't touched BARD. Right now as you know for administrative accounts, BARD has the capability of warning people that your account is about to be suspended. Right now, BARD sends out three email messages prior to suspension. It does that for the privileged accounts but it doesn't do that for the patron accounts. The reason it doesn't is because we thought that if it sent out those warnings, it would actually cause the libraries more problems than it would solve.

When Don Olson mentioned earlier about the Chairs and making changes in that area, that's what he was really going after. We have the technical capability of doing it but we don't want to accidentally cause more problems than we solve. We would probably want to make any change in that area carefully. We could submit the paperwork to request an extension of the six month period, with our security people. I'm not optimistic that they would grant it but we should do it. The security people at the (Library of Congress) pretty much follow the federal standards for security and this inactivation period is coming from federal standards. But in terms of the email warning, that's something that could be done if people think it makes things better as opposed to making things worse. Perhaps people could give us some of their feedback on this call...or share with their Conference Chairs. But I would like to say that we would want to make any changes carefully so that we don't cause more problems than we solve.

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

Well, if there are no more questions, that will end this month's Open Forum call. We look forward to talking to you next month - on the last Wednesday of May. Have a good season and hopefully we're all back in our offices.