

**Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)**

Welcome to the August call. It's hot here in Washington. Congress is in recess – or not. NLS staff are working at home mostly – hard and diligently, except for occasional sneak peeks at the “Panda Cam” to see if this new addition is visible. So, with that out of the way, I will turn it over to Karen Keninger, the Director.

**Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

Well, good afternoon, good morning, hello everybody. It is a pleasure to have you on. We have a lot of things to talk about today so, I think we will go ahead and get started. We have an agenda that is partly taken from some questions that your chairs provided to us. We will start with those and then we have some additional pieces of information that we want to share. If you have questions, please write them down so that you can remember them when the time comes for the open question and answer part. So, our first question has to do with braille mailing containers and Zaneta will tell us about that. Zaneta...

**Comment: (Zaneta Watson - NLS)**

As Karen said, good afternoon and good morning if there's a time difference with anybody. I will talk to you today about braille mailing containers. So, to give you guys a “heads up” we had recently awarded a new braille mailing container contract to a brand-new producer. Over the past few years, we had been doing business with a company called C. R. Daniels, which some of you may be familiar with. But, just at the cusp of quarantine, the contract was awarded, and the producer was unable to ship samples to NLS to test. Because they are a new producer it is necessary that we undergo quality assurance reviews of these new products, to ensure that they can withstand mailing. So, because of that, we have not been able to have mass-production of these mailing containers. In the meantime, we're going to encourage libraries to network with each other. If there happens to be any libraries on the call that may have a significant stock of mailing containers on hand, and you're willing to share with other Network Libraries, please reach out to your Network liaison – and we're going to coordinate with them to see if we can ship mailing containers between libraries. I will say that we're working on a workaround to get those samples tested – hopefully within the next couple of weeks – and once that's done, we still have to wait on mass-production. So, worst-case-scenario, it still could be at least six weeks before production can take place. Once again, if you have a stock of mailing containers that you can share with your fellow Network Libraries, please reach out to us – and hopefully, six weeks from now, we can start production on (braille) containers.

**Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

Alright. Thank you, Zaneta. The United States Post Office has been in the news lately and we had some questions about “Free Matter” so, Vickie, who is our Postal Liaison, would you talk about Free Matter and the Post Office?

**Comment: (Vickie Collins - NLS)**

Yes. Good afternoon everyone. As everyone knows, the Network and the NLS Braille and Talking Book Program has been in a collaborative partnership with USPS for over 89 years now – providing home delivery and return by “Free Matter for the Blind.” Although the federal fiscal year 21 budget is not yet confirmed, nor the forgone subsidy provided by Congress for all organizations using Free Matter, NLS has no indications to date regarding any changes. No defunding is anticipated. Knowing from the media reports about the postal internal issues impacting delivery, including the election, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Network libraries are advised to provide an ample supply of books to the patrons and of course, encourage BARD use. Please contact me – that's Vickie Collins – at [vcol@loc.gov](mailto:vcol@loc.gov) as the Postal Liaison – after exhausting everything locally with mail carriers and postal officials to resolve problems. Sometimes, each of us needs to remind USPS that “Free Matter” isn't free – with, in fact, millions provided by Congress – and that Free Matter is, according to the U.S. Domestic Mail manual, to be treated as First Class mail. Giving USPS a word of thanks at every opportunity is continuing to be a positive investment in this key collaborative partnership, which is so vital to our patrons. Hopefully, this gives you the profile of where we are right now with USPS.

**Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

Thank you, Vickie. Recording studios have had a question about Best Practices and Celeste – who is the head of our recording studio – will tell you a little bit about what she knows.

**Comment: (Celeste Lawson - NLS)**

Hi everyone. We don't have "Best Practices" as such, but what we're doing right now is, well, no one is allowed to come into the building if they're unwell – and that's for the Library of Congress. Because no one is required to come in at this time if they feel uncomfortable, only about half our staff has returned to work, which makes social distancing quite easy to do. We have about 8-10 people who are coming back on the three days we are open. Each narrator, monitor and reviewer is provided with their own set of headphones and each narrator is offered their own pop guards and mic sheaths. No one has used those yet, and that's because the sessions are very widely spaced out, with lots of time in-between each session. Currently, there is only one session per week in each booth – and then people wipe down after themselves, no matter where they're working. Disinfectant wipes are provided and used for narrating, monitoring and reviewing areas, and they're wiping pencils and lamps and keyboards and everything – before and after they work, and several times during the day. We have large containers of hand sanitizers situated around. Masks are worn at all times except when people are in front of the mic, and as I said, social distancing is being observed. Because only about half the staff has returned, our production is not yet what it was before the shutdown but, those of us who are back at work are addressing the backlog as best we can. If there are any more questions, I'm happy to answer them if I'm able.

**Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

Alright. Well, thank you Celeste. The next question that we have has to do with Copy Allotment and Zaneta will talk about that.

**Comment: (Zaneta Watson - NLS)**

Thank you, Karen. So, for Copy Allotment and DTBs that you're receiving, unfortunately, warranties will not be extended – and this is due to contractual constraints. So, it will be one year from the duplication date on the label of your containers, and that will mark your one-year warranty period. That's the date and unfortunately, that doesn't change. If you have questions about that, please feel free during the open questions section.

**Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

Alright. Thank you Zaneta. The next topic is a little more sensitive. We got through the easy ones first and, I'm going to ask Dominick to talk about it.

**Comment: (Dominick Spinelli - NLS)**

Hi. So, the next topic was a question posed that NLS seems to be biased about providing political commentary from the left. They had mentioned The Open Book and Mary Trump's book, without corresponding titles from conservatives... (Collection Development) is very intentionally selecting books from across the political spectrum. The goal is to provide even distribution across subject matter and within subject matter – as is stated within our Collection Development policy. A little bit of background: Given that this is an election year, there are several political titles being published – potentially more than we can reasonably add to the collection. This is a pretty unscientific take, but the trend tends to be that more works are published by people representing the views of the opposition party than by people representing the views of the incumbent party. So, given that the Republicans hold the majority in the Senate, and it's a Republican administration in the White House, this means that books critical of the current administration and the Republican Party as a whole, are more likely to be published. They're more likely to get media attention. More likely to be on bestseller lists and more likely to be trending in the public eye.

I do want to note though, that one of the titles mentioned in this statement was a John Bolton book. Just as an example of something that could be a critical assessment from within the same party: John Bolton is politically conservative. His book is not commentary from the left – as was stated in the question. All that being said, NLS is making every effort to add a balanced assortment of political commentary to the collection. For example, we've recently selected books for the NLS collection from well-known and lesser-known politically conservative voices. Some examples are: Sean Hannity, Newt Gingrich, Dan Crenshaw, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, Tucker Carlson, Adam Carolla, Ben Shapiro and David Horowitz. So those are things that have been recently

selected, have been recently added to the collection, that are in process or that are upcoming. So, we're continuing to select across the political spectrum. I assure you that there is no personal or institutional bias applied to the selection of materials for the NLS collection.

**Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

Thank you, Dominick. There has been a concern also raised that NLS was deliberately censoring material – and recent titles removed and replaced on BARD. So, the question is: Would we provide an in-depth explanation of the technical problems incurred, that caused this problem. So, Zaneta and Margie are going to take this one.

**Comment: (Zaneta Watson - NLS)**

Thanks Karen. I'll be taking this. And I think that this is a perfect segue from what Dominick just spoke to. We want to put everyone at ease that we are not censoring any titles that come into NLS – and what took place was simply a glitch. So, NLS received complete commercial files from the original audio publisher of these books. Now, while we were delivering the source materials to the commercial conversion producer, a transfer timeout occurred due to bandwidth issues. Of course, a lot of us are working from home so we've had a lot of technical issues (with) large transfer files. The Bolton and Mary Trump books were not the only books that were impacted. This discrepancy did not become apparent until the DTBs were uploaded to BARD at which point we took immediate action to remedy, due to the popularity of those books. So, currently we are developing new quality assurance procedures to ensure that this error doesn't recur in the future – and please, rest assured that we are doing our best job to make sure that books are available for all and that they are not being censored. Also – while I still have the mic so to speak – there was an item added to the agenda yesterday at the last minute because we wanted to address the Operations Alert that came out, and so I'll speak to that, and then as far as what I'm presenting today, I think that's it.

This has to do with Operations Alert 20-56 "Seven Talking Books Removed from BARD." ... So, I'm going to talk a little bit more about that Ops Alert that went out – and, I want to provide some context behind that action and identify some of our efforts moving forward. Recently, a patron reached out and they had some concerns about the narration in one of the DTBs listed in that Ops Alert. So, as we went through the process of looking into these concerns, we also identified a handful of books – all of which were recorded about 20-30 years ago – that were also problematic. (Upon reviewing) these books, we agreed that they could have been cast more appropriately. We recognize that, based on context and the author's intended voice behind the characters, its imperative (that) that's reflected in how each story is told or how each book is read. I want to be clear: It is not our intention to remove these titles from our collection, but instead we're going to do our due diligence by working to replace them with commercially-produced audiobooks or with versions re-recorded in-house by NLS – or we're going to reach out to some of our contracted audio producers. We're actually glad that the patron brought this issue to our attention because – as you can imagine – we aren't able to go through our collection in its entirety on a regular basis, so feedback like this is always extremely helpful. I'm also pleased to say that this came at the most fitting time because, just last week, we held kickoff meetings with all of our narration producers. We just ended a five-year cycle, so now we're entering into a new five-year cycle with our contracted narration producers.

During that kickoff, we made it clear that NLS is very interested in diversifying our pool of narrators so that we can assure (that) those narrating our books are just as diverse as the books themselves. Our producers expressed excitement about our request and promised to support us in our efforts in whatever way they could – and they were very serious about that. So, with all that being said, I also would like to solicit your assistance as our Network libraries – as our partners, because this is definitely going to be a team effort. If you or your Reader Advisors are aware of any books that we should consider looking at because the narration is potentially offensive or inappropriate in any way, please let us know. I just want to give you a "heads-up" (to please expect a series of Ops Alerts. They're going to notify you of books we'll be replacing with updated versions in order to address this diversity issue, and so, just like the one that came out yesterday with the seven books, you'll probably see more Ops Alerts with batches just like that, but we're not removing them from the collection – I just want to stress that. We are just replacing them with books that are more appropriately cast. That is all I have on that topic. If you guys have questions when the floor is open, please feel free.

**Comment: (Margie Goergen-Rood - NLS)**

This is Margie from QA and I was just going to reiterate exactly what Zaneta has said. It's very important that you do understand that it was more of a casting decision than anything, on these books. Technically, they are read well, and we passed those as such. So, we will be watching, just like everybody else, as we move forward on this issue. Thank you.

**Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

Thank you, Margie. Now, you guys said that it would also be useful if NLS provided information on the process of how commercial titles are selected for rush treatment, and what constitutes a "rush" and what does not. So, Dominick, can you weigh in on this one as well?

**Comment: (Dominick Spinelli - NLS)**

I think this is something that even internally NLS gets a bit confusing because terminology is used that doesn't always correctly apply to the situation. There is a process for rushing material. Something that's marked as a "rush" is usually narration or braille production, and it does expedite it ahead of other titles, and these could be chosen for a number of reasons based on things such as bestseller appearance, pre-publication buzz surrounding a book, patron requests and otherwise, anticipation based on prior works by the same author. Every book is going to be meaningful to somebody, so we can't rush every book. When we have a collective grouping of these factors, that does come into play, however commercial titles are not really selected for rush treatment because the commercial conversion process is already generally a faster process than doing a narration or braille production to make a title acceptable. For these same reasons, we do have an informal process to track the progress of commercial book conversions. So, when something is a bestseller, has a lot of buzz around it, when we've had a lot of patron requests or Network Library staff requests, we have an informal internal process to kind of keep tabs on the book. It's not a rush process. It's just a way to track the status of the book in production so that we can effectively answer questions about where that is. It doesn't get lost in the hundreds of books being produced, right? We try to keep better tabs on these high-interest titles – but it's not exactly a rush process. I hope that adds some clarity. I'd be happy to talk about this more but really, it's the same (process) we use to select books (but) taken up a notch when something becomes a rush or is followed closely through the production process.

**Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

Thank you, Dominick – and as we have additional questions, we'll get to that later. I would point out that we've worked very hard to reduce the time that it takes to produce, whether it's one that we narrate or it's a commercial book that we put in. Over the last 10 years or so, we have significantly decreased the wait time and we're able to get books out much more quickly than we used to. I think that's worth noting as well. The next topic is an update on our Virtual Conference. MaryBeth, what can you tell us? ...Apparently, she's not able to respond at this point so, the update on the virtual conference is this: We have a contract in place for 2021 – hopefully we can get that done in the first month or so of 2021 – fiscal year. That will determine when we'll actually be able to hold the virtual conference. We do know that it will be a virtual conference. We're anticipating it will probably be in the first part of December. That's what we're hoping for. Stay tuned. We'll get the information as soon as we can. The next topic is regarding the "Library of the Year" award. Pam, are you on?

**Comment: (Pamela Davenport - NLS)**

I am. Thank you, Karen. As you may already know, the 2019 "Library of the Year" winners are: Oklahoma – Regional Library of the Year and, San Francisco – Subregional Library of the Year. We are elated and plan to celebrate during the Virtual Biennial Conference later this year – and the 2019 winners will be invited to the next year's event. That's all I have, thank you. Back to you.

**Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

Alright. Thank you. So, they will get to come to Washington and have a fancy lunch in the Whittall Pavilion in the Jefferson Building when the time comes. We don't want them to miss out on that, for heaven's sake. The next topic has to do with the COVID virus and how long it lasts on materials, and Michael has an update.

**Comment: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)**

Yes. So as many of you all know – as related in previous calls – the library in conjunction with OCLC and IMLS has contracted with Battelle to do testing on various library materials to see how long the SARS-COV2 lasts on typical materials in a library. We have provided materials to the REALM project and they have been testing – and previously, I've given results on the braille materials – the paper and the cardboard for braille books and the test three which included an NLS cartridge with label and an NLS plastic container and so the results of that test three have been published last week. It appears that the virus that causes COVID-19 lasts slightly longer – about 2 days longer – on that plastic material than it does on braille material. After 5 days, it is still detectable but at an extremely low level on the cartridge and on the container. You'll recall for braille books that after 3 days, it was undetectable or at an extremely low level. With the plastic of the container and the cartridge, you can add another two days to that. Initially what they do is they effectively cough onto the materials, so they apply 10 drops of 10 microliters of the virus. They wait for it to dry and then they measure how much is left and it is attenuated by about 10x, so about a tenth of the virus is intact after it has dried and then each day they measure how much is left. After one day it's down to about one-thousandth of the original virus and then over the next couple days it goes down by another factor of ten. After 5 days it's just detectable for the storage container and the cartridge.

**Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

Thank you, Michael. Our next topic is about Braille Book Review and a little bit of a change for the upcoming one, so Kristen, will you tell us about that?

**Comment: (Kristen Fernekes - NLS)**

I'd be happy to. Hello everybody. We sent out an Operations Alert on Monday regarding the upcoming large-print issue of BBR. I just want to draw everybody's attention to it. Because of the delays that we've been having in the production and distribution of hardcopy braille books, we have decided to not produce a large-copy version of BBR in September/October. Although there's a lot of braille books...on BARD, the final step in getting those publications into BBR is to (ensure) that hard copies have been distributed. Essentially, we don't want to send out a publication that suggests to patrons that they can order these publications in hardcopy (when it) is not the case. So, we will be skipping the September/October issue in large print and in the HTML version but we will be producing because – as many of you who are familiar with BBR are aware – the braille versions include brief descriptions of publications that we would otherwise be putting in TBT. Braille users will actually be receiving those. As soon as we are able to get those hardcopy versions of these books out, then we will take all of those topics and announce them in the next available large-print BBR. So, if we're... able to do that then you'll see all of those same books. They will just be in the November/December issue. So, if I can implore all of you – for individuals who receive BBR, if you have any mechanisms by which you can share this information so that they are not under the impression that their large-print BBR is not coming to them. I ask you all to please share that information. And again, we're looking forward to being able to produce that again as soon as we have content to put in it.

**Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

Thank you, Kristen. Our next presentation is around the issue of us needing information from you with regard to the status of your operation, so that we can be sure that we can provide the best possible service to you without inconveniencing you – and so David Spett is going to talk about a survey that we are hoping that you will cooperate with us in going out. David...

**Comment: (David Spett - NLS)**

Thank you, Karen. I'm actually here to talk about a few different surveys. We are starting in the next few weeks, four different initiatives that I wanted to talk to you about and bring you up to speed on. The first is – as Karen mentioned - the Library Operations Survey. Since the start of the pandemic, all of you have been approached I'm sure, perhaps multiple times by your consultants, by other NLS staff, to ask about your operating status. Additionally, we sent you a survey in June that you may remember – to ask for more information on your operating status. For many of you however, your status on operations have changed since June. We need to keep updated as to the operations in your library and other libraries so that we can assess

whether you can receive publications, whether you can receive cartridges and other mail – so that we can fully understand the services that are being provided throughout the Network during the pandemic. So, as Karen mentioned, we are consolidating our data-gathering on Network Library operating statuses into one new survey. We plan to send our main point of contact at each library, an individualized email before the end of next week, which will have information on the survey. It will be relatively short, and each library will have its own link. This will all be explained in the email that we'll send you – but we're going to ask you to save that link, because if your operating status changes at any point after you receive the survey, we'd like you to go back to the same survey using the same link, and change your previous responses. In other words, once you complete the survey, it's going to remain unlocked so that you can change your responses at any time. This is the way that you can keep NLS up to date about changes in your operations. We will be making decisions based on the responses that you've submitted most recently...so it's critical that you keep your responses updated on the form. If you have any questions I'll be here at the end of the call – or any point you can send me or your Network Consultant an email and we'll be happy to address any questions you may have about that.

Item number two pertains to Machine Repair and Equipment surveys. This is not a new item. We reached out to most of the Machine Lending Agencies earlier this summer to ask about your machine distribution and your machine repair operations. A few libraries didn't have a chance to respond and also it has come to our attention that a few machine lending agencies never got the survey. So, we're working to correct these issues and if we need more information from your MLA or your library, we will contact you – so you may hear from us about that. As with the Operations Survey, we're likely to set the survey for all of the MLAs to be open so that MLAs can update their responses at any time – should circumstances change. Alright. Number three is a Gallup survey of patrons. You may recall that Kristen gave us a lot of updates last year on NLS teaming up with the Gallup polling and research company. Gallup surveyed more than 5000 current and potential patrons last year about a variety of topics including technology access and comfort levels. We are excited to share the results of that survey with you at the Conference in December but now, NLS is planning another survey with Gallup to follow up on some of the lessons learned from last year about our patrons.

This survey will cover a sample of just over 10,000 patrons, and a variety of topics will be covered including patron satisfaction with various facets of talking book and braille services, technological preferences and capabilities, willingness to use BARD and BARD Mobile or barriers that keep patrons from using BARD and BARD Mobile. The questions we'll be asking will be new. They'll be different from last year, but the survey methodology will be 100% identical to last year's methodology. The first part of the process will be that Gallup is going to select a sample that's generally representative of patrons overall. So, not every patron will have the opportunity to complete the survey, but we'll select a sample. Patrons who are in that sample will receive a letter in the mail explaining the survey and providing them an opportunity to complete it either by phone or online. That letter in the mail is going to include a one-dollar bill. Gallup has done that in the past. They did it last year and they find that including the one-dollar bill increases response rates. If Gallup does not receive enough responses to the letter – if not enough people go to the website or call the number that's listed in the letter, Gallup is going to make phone calls to patrons who did not respond, and ask them to participate. The goal is to survey at least 2,250 patrons – and at least 500 of those will be active BARD users. In case you get questions from your patrons asking if the survey is legitimate, the answer is "yes." It is in fact, quite legitimate and we would be grateful for their participation.

Finally, Gallup will be doing a different survey of our former patrons. This is the smaller survey. It will have a sample of only 200 patrons who have left NLS services or, who used to use BARD but no longer use BARD. The purpose of this survey is to understand why people stopped using NLS services. We want to understand why they weren't satisfied. The overall goal of the survey is to reduce attrition. As with the Patron Survey, we want to improve our understanding of the best ways to improve our operations and to modernize. One last thing I want to note: We realize that many people who stopped using our services do so because they may have passed away – or they may be quite ill. Gallup has been made aware of this and, (they will be prepared to) express sympathy and condolences in the event that they reach a family member or a loved one of a patron who has passed away. Again, we'll be providing regular updates on all these initiatives, the Operations Alert and future monthly calls – and I'll be happy to take any questions during the Q&A portion of today's call or over email afterward. Thanks so much.

**Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

Thank you, David. The last topic is one that I hope some of you will find to be good news – and that is about electronic signatures. We attempted to send out an Ops Alert about this today, but something went haywire and it may not have gone out yet. Basically, after consultation with our Library of Congress counsel, we have determined that we can take a very simple, straightforward approach to signatures for online forms. That very simple and straightforward approach – which I think is kind of a child of the COVID issue – is that if the certifying authority who needs to certify a person's eligibility, completes the form, which includes their name, their title, their address, their company, their telephone number, their email – all their contact information and the date, then we will be able to accept that as an official certifying signature for the purpose of certifying the patron. If a library has a question about whether that certification is legitimate, they would very readily be able then, to contact the certifying authority listed on the form and verify the certification if they need to.

This is going into effect immediately and...so, we're not going to be using any of the more complex digital signature systems that are out there like DocuSign and the Adobe system and that sort of thing. We're going to take it this way and if you want to start doing that with an online form – if you have a way for them to send the online form to you, that will be fine. We're going to do this – we'll be putting up a new form at the end of the year probably, in conjunction with the change in Certifying Authority regulations that we are anticipating doing by the end of the year. If you have questions about that – and I'm sure there will be questions – the Operations Alert is coming out but if there are questions, we will certainly work through them. So, again, we are going to be able to accept a signature that was typed into an online form and submitted to the library electronically. We will always, of course, accept paper, we'll accept handwritten signatures on forms, we'll accept printed-out digital forms that have that information on them as well. That's some of our news for today and that is the end of my list of topics so, Steve?

**Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)**

Thank you, Karen. Okay, I will take some questions now. We've spent a pretty good amount of time covering the Network things so, I guess it's time for questions – but we are running a little late...so please limit yourself to one call in. You can ask multiple questions but just one call. Thank you.

**Question: (Leslie Bowman - MO)**

Thank you. This call is concerning recording studio and the actual booth. So, how long do you leave the booth empty between narrators so that any droplets that are in there can dissipate?

**Answer: (Celeste Lawson - NLS)**

Right now, we're leaving them for a week – but that seems to me an abundance of caution.

**Question: (Leslie Bowman - MO)**

Okay. And, are you using an air purifier or anything? We're doing three hours.

**Answer: (Celeste Lawson - NLS)**

We do have air purifiers running in all our booths. Yes.

**Question: (Catherine Durivage - MN)**

I have a question regarding the titles that were removed from BARD. Is there going to be any information posted in the catalogue record, BARD record, as to why those titles are not available or something? Because we're likely going to get questions and then if people were once finding those books and then went back and they were not there. I just wanted to know if anything could be done or considered being done?

**Answer: (Zaneta Watson - NLS)**

We have been discussing this, and the thought process behind us getting those titles out via an Ops Alert immediately, was that we are going to have to rely on our Network Libraries to pass the word along to patrons as those questions came in because currently, BARD is not set up to put in a note where a book is removed. If the book was still there, we could put in a note to say we're working on a replacement and if Michael Martys is on the line, he's also been a part of our process trying to figure out how we're going to do this as we try to remove or block books from BARD. It's still being worked out. For now, we're relying on you all...(to notify patrons as needed). We will alert you when we formalize the process.

**Answer: (Michael Martys - NLS)**

Zaneta, I am on the line. I don't know if you want me to comment. BARD has the ability to put up a note on any book that's in the system. The original idea behind the note was that if there was something quirky about the book, we could inform a possible reader/downloader. An example might be: An audio level that wasn't quite good, or something like that. We very seldom use the notes on the book. I don't think there are hardly any. But the thing is – as Zaneta said – the book has to be up for someone to see the note. One of the things we seriously discussed was, "Should we have left the book up, even though it had serious flaws?" and provided a note that basically would have said, "This book has flaws and we're in the process of repairing it." It's a judgement call as to whether we should take the book down. Is it more problem to let people keep reading it or not? In this case, we decided it was better to take it down. We're going to work on BARD in the future so that we can leave the note up if the book is down, so at least someone will see an explanation. But that change probably won't occur for a little while because it's a non-trivial change.

**Question: (Maria Socher - TN)**

I have a quick question about the next-generation players. I'm glad that the Post Office relationship is going well. I'm also looking toward the future and getting concerned about whether we can have the program continue if things aren't great in a few years and, it seems like the next-generation players will help us then, so is there a timeline for that machine to be made?

**Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

Not a specific timeline at this point. We are working on three or four different approaches at this point. One of which is a stopgap player that we would have available in case we didn't have enough players. Another is a device specific to our program – as we've discussed before – where it would...download, and a third option is smart speaker capabilities. These are all very much still in process and we don't have a deadline for when we expect them to be out. It's not any more specific than within the next 4 years or 5 years. Something like that.

**Question: (Babak Zarin - VA)**

I have what I hope are two small questions: One related to the e-signature and one related to USPS. In terms of the e-signature, I know you mentioned having a new form – possibly coming out by the end of the year. (Are) there any fillable forms currently available online through NLS?

**Answer: (Vickie Collins - NLS)**

The form that is on the NLS website is an acceptable fillable form.

**Question: (Babak Zarin - VA)**

We've been having some issues getting it to do that but, it probably is on our end, so good to know that it is actually fillable there. The second question – toward the USPS relationship part: I will publicly thank Vickie for helping with the issues we've been having in our area. We do have some patrons who have indicated...a severe distrust of the mail service and whose degree of visual impairment makes BARD not something they feel comfortable using. I was wondering if NLS has any suggestions for people who are basically saying "We can't do mail and we can't do BARD."

**Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

We hope that people will consider using BARD a little bit more than they have in the past because we know that that is actually the solution to that. BARD can actually be used with any degree of visual impairment, but there is a training and learning curve which is intimidating to people sometimes. What I would encourage is that you – as librarians out in the field – look at ways of helping people migrate to BARD and also encouraging people to have family help...so, those two options are definitely there, whether the individual does the work themselves or whether they have family members who can just download for them.

**Question: (Lisa Nelson – UT)**

My question is for Zaneta basically. You mentioned that it would take up to six weeks for production of the braille boxes to start. Has the vendor expressed any estimates as to when they're going into full production? And how many are you having made?



**Answer:** (Zaneta Watson - NLS)

That's a great question. I wish I could give you a more definitive answer. We are ordering thousands actually. We're going to have a large stock once they are able to produce. I can't give you a full production timeline until we can actually have the samples shipped – which, they're going to get notification this week because now the library is open for shipments we can get regularly. I'm anticipating maybe two to three weeks for them to produce the samples, a week or so for us to approve them...and then maybe I'll get a more realistic timeline. For now, I say order those boxes. As I get updates from them, I will be sure to let the Network know. I hope you guys are not getting annoyed by my Ops Alerts because you get so many from me but I will try to keep you informed about what's going on so I will follow up with an Ops Alert.

**Comment:** (Michael Lang - KS)

I just wanted to spread some good news: The National Association for Rural and Small Libraries conference was set to be held in Wichita this year but of course that has been changed up – but me and a couple of associates did get a conference proposal submitted, and I will be doing a short presentation about NLS services and we will be doing stuff about radio news reading services to present to those groups. So that's a national conference that should have national reach and, we are presenting that on October 1<sup>st</sup>, so if you hear anything from some small and rural librarians in your service area, hopefully they will be seeking you out after our presentation.

**Comment:** (Karen Keninger - NLS)

Great news! Thank you, Michael.

**Question:** (Freya Anderson - AK)

Hi. I was just wondering: With the books that are being rushed – or tracked for speedier access – are you guys using BARD search terms at all to help determine those popular titles? As you guys were talking about it, I was thinking about traditional ways that we find that out – and was thinking about the BARD option as well.

**Comment:** (Karen Keninger - NLS)

I'm not 100% sure what your question is.

**Question:** (Freya Anderson - AK)

So, earlier there was a (discussion) about the books that get streamlined into the system – that get maybe read faster or whatever. I was wondering if...those books were chosen based on basically popularity – among a few other things – and I was wondering if BARD search terms went into determining that popularity. My point is, if somebody searches for the book and they don't find it, then the search terms, I'm assuming, are still in the system – and that's what I was wondering about.

**Question:** (Karen Keninger - NLS)

You mean, do we label them as a rush when we put them on BARD? Is that the question?

**Answer:** (Freya Anderson - AK)

No, not at all. When making the (determination) whether you want to have a title that you're going to streamline, and you're looking at patron requests that have come in to the libraries, or potentially looking at bestseller lists and things like that, is one of the things that you look at, BARD search terms – where people may have searched for the book and not found it?

**Answer:** (Karen Keninger - NLS)

I see what your asking. We're not that sophisticated, I don't think. Google does that over time but, I don't think we have that sophistication. Do we Mike?

**Answer:** (Michael Martys - NLS)

Believe it or not, every search term that has been typed into BARD for like, the last ten years (is stored) – and it's anonymized because that's very sensitive personal information. But the question is (do we use that to) make predictions about what people are looking at, and that's more difficult than I think it seems. We've done cursory analysis of the search terms but, to really get good information out of it would require a pretty

substantial analysis effort – and we just haven't gone there yet as a tool. Dominick might talk a bit more about it - but we do have the raw data but whether it would be a benefit in this area would take substantial work from us and we just haven't done it right now.

**Answer: (Dominick Spinelli - NLS)**

I think where this potentially has been used in the past is – like Mike said – a little...analysis, where we can try to fill in gaps in the collection – but, turnaround time to be responsive on an “immediate selection” basis, would be rather challenging. I think it's a great idea. Certainly, something that we should keep in mind because that would be an excellent additional tool for selection purposes. But I think where it has applied – it's applied to filling in potential gaps in the collection, based on unsuccessful searches.

**Question: (Erin Pawlus - AZ)**

We in Arizona are considering a redesign of our application and, we were going to use the NLS application but, what I assumed – based on the fact that you're making changes to what I think is an online form for the certifying authorities – are you anticipating you will also be updating your paper application?

**Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

Yes. We'll be updating everything when that goes through. It's one of our regulations and it has to be approved before we can move forward and, it looks like we'll be aiming for the end of the year to do that, and at that point we will be redoing all of our applications.

**Question: (Joshua Berkov - NC)**

Just a very quick question regarding the Collection Development Advisory Group: We are still awaiting NLS' official responses to our recommendations from May 2019 – and I was hoping to get an update on how those were going.

**Answer: (Dominick Spinelli - NLS)**

I think I know what he's referring to. I'm going to have to check in with Alice on that. I know that was something that was being looked at when we were still in the office and, honestly, it's not been on my mind since. I think she had this as a project before I joined the team. But, it's something I'd be involved with so, I'll check with her.

**Question: (Kevin Treese - OK)**

Some clarification please: With the results from the COVID testing, what is the recommended quarantine time now?

**Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

What we have said all along is that you need to talk to your state health department. The recommendation that we have from our Health Office, is a 14-day quarantine. I suggest that you contact your health department.

**Question: (John Mugford - NM)**

Hi. A sort of follow up to the last question. Just for clarification Karen and/or Michael, you're saying that the recommended quarantine of the container/cartridge items is 14 days – at least on the national level – and the second part of the question is: Was there any testing done of the container/cartridges after sanitization attempts? Because it is my impression that many if not most programs are doing some kind of spraying/wiping of these items. Thank you.

**Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

The 14-day quarantine recommendation was made early on in the pandemic, when we didn't have very much information. It has not been revised, and therefore I am not comfortable telling you anything other than “check with your health department.” Michael, did you see anything about sanitation in those REALM tests?

**Answer: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)**

So, that's not something that was tested. Obviously, any sanitation efforts are likely to further attenuate the virus and so, I think you shouldn't necessarily treat that as a worst-case scenario. That is, a virus on a surface in an office condition. That's around 68 degrees and 40% humidity. Higher humidity and higher temperatures are likely to attenuate it further. Lower temperatures, lower humidity may prolong it, so, in a way of saying,

“Here are some definitive tests” so we have some good data as to how long they last. So, as I say, in a normal office condition, the borrowed materials are down to an undetectable level after 4 days and after 5 days they’re at an extremely low level. They didn’t actually carry the test to 6 days but, if you look at the curve, its likely that they’d be undetectable after 6 days. I would just say use those test results as a guide but, we’re not telling you one way or the other (that) it’s going to be absolutely safe after “X” number of days. I think you can be reasonably assured that it will be safe after 5 days but there are always outliers and you should continue to use proper precautions...to reduce the likelihood that you could catch anything off the returned materials.

**Question: (Unidentified caller)**

Are we going to get anything about...liquid disinfection or any other thing because a lot of us I’m sure, are struggling with financial issues and (we) just don’t want to talk about spending more money or putting it against the safety of your staff and patrons. A lot of management are asking for...documentation to show that it’s a good idea for us to keep on quarantining...or even using disinfection methods.

**Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)**

We have – as I said earlier – asked you to speak with your state health departments and get definitive guidance from them. Also, the CDC has information on their website, that is considered definitive – and we would ask you to go to those sources for the definitive information that you’re looking for.

**Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)**

Alright. Well, we thank everyone for participating in the call and hope you will join us for the September Open Forum next month. Thank you.