

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

Good afternoon and welcome to the NLS Monthly Open Forum call. It's a nice warm day in Washington. We just set the record for the most days in July with a temperature of 90 degrees or more, and we still have three days to go, so we'll probably set another record by the end of the month. At any rate, we're glad that you're able to join us and, at this point, I will turn it over to the Director, Karen Keninger.

Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

Good afternoon everybody. It is always good to have an opportunity to speak with you, so I hope you have lots of questions after we get done with our initial overview. I would tell you who all is on the phone from NLS, but I'd forget somebody and, it's too chaotic to ask them to announce themselves so, I would just say that most of the upper management and the leadership of NLS is on the line, so we should be able to answer most of your questions. With a few exceptions, everybody's here. Our first presenter this afternoon is Kristen Fernekes. She's got information for you on the ad campaign. Kristen...

Comment: (Kristen Fernekes - NLS)

Good afternoon everyone. I just wanted to take a moment to give you a little bit of an essay on our digital campaign and then ask you guys a favor. Just to recap, we started a new digital campaign this year after having completed both television, radio and digital campaigns over the past several years. It ended in 2019, We held this year's digital campaign – it was supposed to start on April 1st. We didn't launch on April 1st because of COVID-19 and the closure of many of the libraries. So, we've started sort of a general rollout of our campaign and began on June 1st to do promoted keyword searches, so that when people go and look for words that would be relevant to us, like 'audiobook' or 'books for the blind' etc., there would be an ad that would be served to those individuals. So, those types of ads have been running since June 1st. In July, we began to run more extensive advertising on social media – what we call "brand awareness" advertising. These ads aren't necessarily "call to action." They're not saying "Hey do you want a book?" They're more like, "Have you heard of NLS?" ...

We had to pull back some of the advertising that we were expecting to do in July because of some circumstances outside of our control. Beginning in August, we are going to start...with the digital campaign with the keyword searches, the "brand awareness" and "call-to-action" advertising. So, this campaign – the digital campaign – is going to look a great deal more like what everyone in the Network is familiar with – as far as engaging people who may be interested in our services. With this expansion of the campaign in August, Pam and MaryBeth have reached out to you guys at some point over the past month and a half or so and asked whether or not there was a possibility that this would create some issues for you. So, mainly what we're looking for here is, if you start to get a lot of requests from people who are looking for applications, whether or not this would be an issue, based on your operational status. We do have the capacity to sort of (separate) groups geographically, because the digital campaign is very flexible in that manner. Its not going to be perfect all the time but it would help for libraries that are closed down and are not processing applications at all.

So, the thing that I really want to ask everybody is to please make sure that you're sharing information with your Network Consultants about the capacity of your library to process new applicants. If we have this information, we can sort of hopefully keep you from getting a bunch of applications by way of this digital campaign so that it doesn't create problems for you. The thing that I would also though ask is that if circumstances change with your library's operational status, please continue to share that information with Pam and MaryBeth. This campaign is going to be going on through the end of 2021, and given the fact that what we're seeing on the ground with COVID-19 and changes to the status of various libraries, it could be that your library's status would change multiple times between now and then. If you can keep us informed about where you are and how that's working for you then we can try and make sure that we aren't creating unnecessary problems for you. If anybody has any questions about that, you can feel free to email me. My email address is: krf@loc.gov.

Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

Alright. Thank you, Kristen. We have had what you might consider to be a "perfect storm" of issues surrounding book production, and Michael Katzmann will talk about that. Michael?

Comment: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

Yes. So, we've had some issues – both with getting material out to producers and getting the books – once they're produced – up onto BARD. The issue regarding getting books onto BARD, we think has been resolved, and a number of books went up yesterday. Normal production (is) roughly on the order of 100 books per week. We are down to about 50 books per week being loaded onto BARD. That will continue for another week or two. We've had IT problems getting the mostly commercial raw audio material out to our producers to make accessible DTBs with. We have a workaround for that and we're now sending out material to the producers and they have a couple of weeks to turn them around and return them. We've reached out to the book producers who have come back online now, and they have increased their capacity to process the commercial books so, for a couple of months, we'll be producing at a higher-than-normal rate. At the moment, we're about at half the rate and in less than two weeks we'll get up to our normal rate of about 100 books per week and then over the next month and a half after that, we'll be at a significantly higher-than-normal rate as we catch up. Collection Development has been continuing to select books. As I say, we've had difficulty...getting that material out. That is the plan. Of course, with the current environment, things change all the time...and if producers have problems, they may have to close down and so, I would say, keep in touch and as soon as we find out and have good information, we'll let you know.

Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

Thank you, Michael. Would you like to tell us about the Battelle study?

Comment: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

Yes. We sent out a Network Bulletin (or an Ops Alert) regarding the second phase of the REALM project. That's OCLC, Battelle and IMLS are leading a project to determine the viability of the SARS COV-2 virus (the virus that causes COVID-19) survivability on typical library materials. What we're trying to find out is how long material needs to be sequestered before it can be deemed safe. The first round did normal library materials. The second round – which was published on the 20th of July – also included some braille books, or typical material of ours so that includes braille books, sheets in books. What they do is put the virus onto the paper in little droplets – 100 microliter droplets – 10 of those, simulating a droplet from a person sneezing. They wait for that to dry. They measure how much of the material is still left after its dried. They call that “day zero” and then each day after that, they look to see how much is left. The braille material – they found that it was undetectable after four days – and that's typical indoor room temperature and humidity – so normal office or library type of environment. Bear in mind that if it came from a patron, you also have the time that it was in transit. Of course, if you don't trust the Post Office, you start from the time you get it from the Post Office. Typically, you can probably imagine that you've got at least a day head start before you get the material, so, if you sequester the braille material for 4 days you will be safe. It's undetectable after 4 days. Other materials: We have provided them with USB cartridges which (are) polycarbonate material cartridges with the braille label on it and the polyethylene containers. They have started the third round of tests, which include these two items, and if the time duration of the previous tests was anything to go by, we should expect those in middle August and we'll keep you apprised of that when the results come through. Have a look at the Ops Alert. It's got a link to the study if you want to read it in detail. It's interesting. Thanks, Karen.

Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

Thank you Michael. Our next presenter is Dominick who wants to talk to you about Bibliographic Control Section issues...

Comment: (Dominick Spinelli - NLS)

Yes, I wanted to give a couple of updates. The Bibliographic Control section is taking a look at some longstanding catalog errors – individual record errors – and trying to correct some of those. So, that includes incorrect subject codes, incorrect language codes, but specifically I wanted to talk about some bad series names. We found that there are several examples where we accidentally used two different series names across the span of a series. Now that in BARD, you can search by “series,” these are much more discoverable. We're taking the time to fix these. We're delving into a really large list of series names to identify and address those, but I wanted to talk about this to welcome any bad series names that you guys uncover in your own searches. Please report those to dcs@loc.gov.

Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

Alright. Dominick is standing in as Section Head for BCS as well as his normal job, which is Section Head of Collection Development, while we look for our new cataloguer, so thank you Dominick. We here in Washington – like everybody else – are watching the progress of this pandemic and are trying to understand when it's going to end, how it's going to end, how it's going to affect us in the meantime – all of those things. We want to be as helpful as possible with you all, and we want to provide as much service as we possibly can – to get as close to “normal” as we can get. In order to do that, we need to keep asking you what you might feel are the same questions over and

over again. But if we don't have current information we can't make decisions like, "Shall we mail you books or not? Can you receive them?" "Shall we advertise in your area or not? Can you handle applications?" All these things, because every library is in a different situation. We can't do a "one size fits all." We have the issue of shipping Talking Book Topics. For instance, could you take them or not? What should we do about them? I guess basically what I'm saying is, please forgive us for asking you the same questions over and over again, but we've got to keep a current list of your capabilities so that we can provide the best possible service that we can in light of your capabilities. So you'll probably be hearing more and more questions. Again, I ask you to be patient with us for asking the same questions or many questions over and over again. You are a critical part of what we do and we have to stay in as close a contact as we can.

They have a few updates here on what's going on. The Marrakesh Treaty – as you know – passed in 2013 and the U.S. signed it and then in 2018 we began the ratification process and in late 2019, NLS got our legislation changed in order to be able to participate in cross-border exchange. We still had another step to take in terms of getting our regulations that interpret our law, changed in order to allow us to do that. Well, those regulations regarding Marrakesh and cross-border exchange actually got posted to the Federal Register yesterday, and that has cleared yet another hurdle for us in terms of cross-border exchange. We still have a lot of work to do in order to get systems in place. Finally, we are going to be able to move forward with it, so I'm excited about that. We'll be looking at various ways of implementing that as we go forward, so, yesterday in the Federal Register.

What's happening with NLS? Right now – today, this week, we are still under very restricted access to our building. That's not because of the building so much, as it is to keep social distance and to maintain safety and security for our staff, so on Tuesdays and Thursdays we are open with a very limited staff – a few more than last month., but not very many. I think a maximum of twenty-five. So we have our people coming in one or two days a week and Inventory Management coming in to handle materials and shipments and all of that. By the way, because we have such a complicated system of when we can accept shipments and that sort of thing, we understand that you probably do too, so that's why we keep asking so many questions. Anyway, Music is coming in to do some circulation. Administration people are coming in to make sure that the bills are paid, and Jason is coming in to oversee everything. I'm staying home – working from here – and my ears are tired of headphones but, anyway... We are processing incoming mail. That sort of thing. The backlog is all cleared up. Our studio is partially open. Very restricted but at least it's a start. The rest of our staff are still working from home. Some things are shipping but some things are not. If we had an absolutely accurate list of who could receive stuff, we would be able to start shipping audiobooks – copy allotment shipping and also braille, but we have to make sure that we have exact and up-to-date information on that before we can actually do it. So, that's one thing you'll be hearing about - that our duplicator is shipping and we'll be able to get some of those books into your hands.

Other than that, we're pretty much just doing the best work that we can. Oh, I know – there's one other thing and that's the ongoing saga of the conference. I think we told you last month, we decided to move to an online conference. We don't exactly know what that's going to look like. The dates are uncertain at this point. We're hoping for sometime in November or December. Thinking that if it's a virtual conference it will be a little bit easier to schedule than if it were an in-person conference that time of the year which is...well, usually it's so busy. I'm not sure how it will look this year. Stay tuned for more information. We have to get a contract in place and that's going to impact our schedule. The other thing I wanted to mention is that the braille e-reader project pilot – the first part of the pilot – is very close to starting and we're very excited to see how that goes with our first four pilot libraries so, more on that as it unfolds.

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

Alright. We're now ready for questions from the Network...

Question: (Jane Glasby - CA9)

My question was about – since you're having a bit more access to the building, I'm just wondering how you're getting on with the Gutenberg equipment. We're due for the next shipment. We're really looking forward to it and we can receive stuff, so I'd just like to know how you're getting on with that. Thank you.

Answer: (Library Staff - NLS)

Jane, I actually just sent you a note yesterday with some updates on this. You may not have seen it yet. In general, where we are is that we're trying to get ourselves back on the track that we were on when we had to leave the building in March. We've had to set one of our engineers up with a bunch of tools and equipment at his home. He now has that stuff configured and ready for testing. We haven't figured out how we're going to ship components that are living at our Taylor St. building. So we do have some plans for this that we're in the process of working through.,

and I don't have an exact ship date yet, but my hope is that by the time we get to the mid-point of August – if not before – that we'll be able to ship stuff out the door to our next two libraries and that's CA1C in San Francisco and MN1A in Minnesota. Believe me, we're working hard on this to get it back on track. I've been in touch with some of the other libraries that we had scheduled originally for the February through June timeframe. My hope is that if we can work out this set of shipping issues, we can get San Francisco and Minnesota out the door in August and then basically resume the schedule that we had previously of deploying two libraries a month. So it's a little bit tricky doing this with all of us working from home but, we've been working to make that feasible and we know that people are eager to have this stuff. We know it's a bit of a Catch-22. We know that libraries are eager to get going with DoD and they realize that its super-useful in a situation where your circulation capabilities may be limited. At the same time, our ability to actually get the stuff out the door is also limited. I think we're all in the same boat on this but we're working hard to keep things moving. Jane, let's be in touch about details for San Francisco.

Question: (Sarah Jacobson – TX)

Hi. Greetings from Texas. Sorry if this came up in a phone call before but we were wondering if, during this time, there's any leeway with accepting digital signatures on applications?

Question: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

How do you define "digital signature"?

Answer: (Sarah Jacobson – TX)

We have been accepting scanned documents with a signature, but we were wondering if it's actually possible to get like, an electronic signature – like a digital stamp or something on a PDF document?

Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

I'm working with our Office of General Counsel on this. I'm hoping it will have an answer for you soon. If you could send to me a description of what you're proposing specifically – how it would work – I think that would be very helpful.

Question: (Angela Hall - AL)

I am calling today with just a few questions. A little good news first: We are in full-swing with our Books-on-Demand. Here in Montgomery, we are using KLAS – our Scribe system – for Books-on-Demand. Last quarter – January through March, we had a total circulation of 25,000 books. This quarter – April through June – we have a total circulation of 105,000 items. And so, we are really excited about that, and the opportunities that Books-on-Demand has provided for us. Now, my question is: Regarding the repurposing device for unlocking our white cartridges. I'd just like to know because I'm feeling a lot of pressure to find 8,000 items from our Copy Allotment, that I can use for this process? And, that Repurposing Device: Will we be able to get more of those created by NLS? I think that David mentioned to me several months ago that we had about four in our Network that could be passed around. I wonder if there are any plans to create any more of those devices?

Answer: (Michael Katzmann - NLS)

Depending on demand, we can create them. We're hamstrung at the moment but, that's certainly something that can be done.

Question: (Angela Hall - AL)

Alright, well thank you. Just one other question: You probably have not had time to think about this – I'm speaking of NLS in general. Will you be creating any plans for shutting down again, if we need to? Or reopening under conditions like we're just now going through? Just let me know. I've been asked to work on plans like that for our library. I just wondered if you had any thoughts or ideas about that yet?

Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

We're hoping to move forward, as we are all hoping to move forward. It's not at all impossible that we would have to move backward. We don't have any formal plans to do that. The Library of Congress per se is kind of managing all of that for NLS – but if we have to, what we will do is probably to go back to the same status as we were a month ago – with everybody working from home. A good thing to think about though.

Question: (Maureen Dorosinski - FL)

For my question, I was (unintelligible breakup) that you're going to be...working on the series names and the headings and things like that because we started the exact same project here in Florida and, we have focused on the top percentage of patron usages and likes for their series subscriptions. We sorted all of our series headings together and then picked the top 300, and what we're doing is we're matching you guys because we took it for granted that, while you guys knew – you guys had it down. Well, I was wondering...if you could give some special attention and maybe I don't know if there could be something put on the Network Services website about guidance – when we're doing our own series things – that, when you have 1) series within a series and 2) very convoluted ones – for example, "The Dragon Riders of Pern." So, if something like that could be put on the website, or if, when you go through the series, you could look at those? I think we'd all greatly appreciate it.

Answer: (Dominick Spinelli - NLS)

That's a very good idea. We're at the starting stages of fixing these errors, so I couldn't say that we have 'best practices' that are adapted to the errors but, I can talk to the team about putting together some form of documentation for how we handle series names. It's not something for the next week or two, but it will be a long-term goal for us.

Comment: (Maureen Dorosinski - FL)

I have a follow up. Could you share the sources you go to? Like, for example if you look at GoodReads or the authors websites – which popular ones? What do you guys go with?

Comment: (Dominick Spinelli - NLS)

Will do. Great suggestion. Thank you.

Question: (Erin Pawlus - AZ)

I had a couple of quick questions. One is for the braille e-reader. We have had an increase in the number of patrons inquiring about it. So, I know that you've said that you're basically starting the pilot. And I know that it's not good practice to give people a specific date that they can expect it in their hands but, do you have an idea of – if you were to say "well it will be at least a year" or something just to temper their expectations?

Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

I think it is fair to say that it will be at least a year. The first part of the pilot is going to run for about 6 months. There will be a second expanded pilot that will probably run another 6 months – so it will be at least a year before we have the ability to hand them out to the people who really want them. There is going to be a shortage for some time because we don't have the money to buy all that we need all at once. **35:00**

Question: (Erin Pawlus - AZ)

My other question is – as far as Bibliographic Control section...it sounds like that department is very busy right now. In terms of submitting forms to add books to Voyager so the local books that were just completed – to get those onto BARD. What are we looking at as far as time? Because I don't want to harass them by checking in every once in awhile but, are we looking at a certain number of weeks for those to appear on Voyager?

Answer: (Dominick Spinelli - NLS)

I appreciate the thought. We do have a staff member who is assigned to that task. There was a delay because...the staff member doing it now, is new to the team, so she had to be trained for the process of course. I believe she is perfectly comfortable with it so, it should be back to (a) normal routine where she's processing those on an ongoing basis at least weekly – given the update time, there might be a couple of weeks before it might be actually visible.

Question: (Leslie Bowman - MO)

Question/Comment: So, November 4-6 – please hold those dates, because that may be the conference – is not specifically the conference. Is that true?

Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

It's certainly not confirmed.

Comment: (Leslie Bowman - MO)

Ok. Very good – and I just wanted to let you know that MO1A is open and, here to receive two Gutenberg systems to get ready on Duplication-on-Demand and we will take every opportunity to say "hi."

Comment: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

Alright well, thank you. I am happy to report that all of the NLS staff is healthy.

Question: (Maureen Dorosinski - FL)

Hello there. I saw in a message through NLS Download Help that, "The Economist" was back on? I must have missed that message. Is it back on? Or is everything going – magazine-wise? If you could give just a brief update. I may have missed it.

Answer: (Karen Keninger - NLS)

Sure. As far as I'm aware, all of our magazines are going, except "The Economist" is done in our studio and they have just come back in so it may not be done yet, but if it's not done yet, it should be up pretty soon.

Answer: (Zaneta Watson - NLS)

I can add a little more insight to the status of "The Economist." As Karen mentioned, yes the studio was shut down completely when NLS shut down. They just went back two days a week last week. We only have a couple of narrators in the studio. However, they have started converting The Economist, and they are starting on the backdated issues. I mean, they began on the backdated issues but we heard from the Network and from some of our patrons that they'd like to get them the newer content first, So now we'll be completing the newer editions first and then working our way back to the backdated editions that came out while we were shut down. Last week, two issues might have gone up and they were older issues but since then, we've (adjusted our approach) based on feedback from the Network and from patrons.

Answer: (Margie Goergen-Rood - NLS)

I can even update more with Zaneta. There were two issues from late March going to early April. Those are up and as of today, July 25 went up.

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

We certainly appreciate everyone participating in this Open Forum call and we look forward to talking to you at the end of August, where hopefully it might be cooler – but probably not. Thank you.