

NLS Telephone Forum – 5-27-2020
(paraphrased)

Comment: (Steve Prine - NLS)

Thank you. Good afternoon. Welcome to the monthly NLS Open Forum call for May. It's delightful weather here in Washington and we're glad you could join us. First, I'm going to turn it over to Karen Keninger, Director of NLS, for a few remarks.

Comment: (Karen Keninger – NLS)

Well, thank you Steve. As always, it's a pleasure to have the opportunity to talk to everybody out in the Network, and hopefully you will be coming back at the end of this call and have some questions or comments for us as well. So, I thought I would give you some updates on what is happening around the Network and what is happening within NLS. Since the last Open Forum call, we saw that 13 libraries changed from "closed" to "partially open" which basically means that no public coming, but you have mail service and reader advisory and people coming in. So that's a change that I'm sure our patrons are very happy about. Overall, we have eight libraries that are completely open, which is still a fairly small number. We have thirty-eight that are completely closed with no mail service. Within those thirty-eight, we know that there's a lot of work going on behind the scenes – people working from home, VPN-ing and stuff. The one thing that isn't happening is the mail service, unfortunately. We have 49 libraries that are partially closed or that we could say are partially open if we're looking at half-full/half-empty. That's where the Network stands, according to the records that we've been keeping. Let me give you some updates on what's happening with NLS. We are still closed – that is to say the building is closed. We are almost all working from home. Those of us who can't work at home are on admin leave, but most of us are working at home – taking advantage of today's modern technology to keep the fires burning one way or another so, the question that we are all asking is "when will we be able to get back in our building and go back to our normal routine?"

Actually, I don't think we'll ever go back to what we knew as normal but, we'll have a new normal that will have some enhancements when we get there – but in the meantime, we are waiting on the statistics...in the Washington DC-Maryland-Virginia area that we are living in – to see what's going to be happening. And, we're also dependent, of course, on what the Library of Congress is doing. They are certainly watching the DMV (District of Columbia/Maryland/Virginia) to see what the mayors and governors are doing. Washington DC is still very much closed – expecting to reopen fairly soon, I think. Northern Virginia and the Maryland counties that are in the DMV are also still closed but starting to look at being open. All of that is going to impact when the library makes its decision to begin opening and I predict that opening is going to be very slow and very careful and gradual reopening in order to make sure that our staff all throughout the library are safe and all of you I'm sure are concerned as well for your own staff...We're expecting that sometime in June we will be able to start opening up the Taylor Street building and start bringing people back in gradually. What that means, basically is that again, everybody's working remotely. Music circulation is on hold but a lot of other activities (are) happening in the Music Section, including a couple of Junior Fellows that just started. The studio remains closed and one of the big impacts for that is that we're still not doing "The Economist" as far as I know. All of the other magazines are being recorded by our contractors.

Incoming mail: We saw this morning on our call that the Library (LoC) itself has some 140 pallets of incoming mail they have to deal with. I hope we don't have that many, but we haven't been able to deal with it so when we get back into the building, we will start processing that as well. I believe NAC is open so, anybody who works with NAC for magazines is getting magazines circulated, and I'm not 100% sure on the status of PTB. I meant to ask that question and I didn't, so maybe Zaneta can pop in here and let me know.

Comment: (Zaneta Watson – NLS)

PTB is still closed. They're not circulating.

Comment: (Karen Keninger – NLS)

Okay, so PTB is not circulating magazines at this point... Let's see, what else? We are still not sending out the Copy Allotment duplications yet, because of the number of libraries that are closed – and our inability to get that sorted so, once more libraries are open, we'll be able to go back to that, I think. We are also getting back to normal, pre-COVID levels for book production. We got kind of slim there for a while, for a couple of reasons and, it is bulking back up so, we're getting more books out to get recorded and also...duplicated/made ready for BARD, so that's a positive thing. Our staff is looking at reworked processes using e-books, and that is helping to get the numbers back up. Meanwhile, we are still getting Network-produced titles on BARD, so the BARD numbers are going up with everyone's work being

contributed. Duplication-on-Demand is still on hold. Deployment of new systems is not happening. We can't do anything until we can get back into the building and deal with some of the equipment. We are in a position to support existing systems, so we can at least do that to some extent. Multistate – the west has been open and busily fulfilling Interlibrary Loan requests and, Multistate East I believe is on the verge of opening. I don't think they're open yet, but I think it's coming so, that will be a good thing. And of course, BARD is available and growing and we are encouraging everyone – and we know you've been working hard to do this – to encourage people to look at BARD and, wherever possible, to start using BARD so that they will have full access to the collection. Those are the main things that I have on my list. With that, I will encourage you – when it comes to question and answer time – to ask questions if I haven't been clear, or, (if) something else comes to your mind – jot it down and ask the question later. In the meantime, I will pass it back to Steve. Thank you!

Comment: (Kristen Fernekes – NLS)

I wanted to share with you that, next week, we're going to begin a very limited amount of digital outreach using only promoted keyword searches for our major search engines. You may recall from months ago...our intention was to relaunch our digital advertising campaign on April 1st, which, of course we put on hold because of COVID-19 and because we know that many of our Network libraries were going to be shutting down and not be in the position to deal with requests so, we're going to start next week but this is...a scaled-back version of what we had planned for April 1st. (We're hoping) to use this opportunity to reach some folks who are still at home – and who are looking for some engagement and some entertainment. We think that that will be helpful to those individuals. Meanwhile we're going to be...keeping in mind...a number of our libraries are still functioning in a limited capacity, if at all. This will be a soft launch. We're keeping a close eye on it to see what happens. We'll be prepared to dial things back even further if it becomes necessary, or to make some modifications in the outreach. If anybody has any questions, feel free to shoot me an email. My email address is: krfe@loc.gov. I'm happy to answer any of your questions. That's it for me, Steve.

Comment: (David Spett – NLS)

As you know already, in 2019 NLS worked with Gallup to extensively survey our patrons and potential patrons, on a variety of topics. The findings from that research are driving our planning and decision making as we modernize. We're looking forward to sharing many of those findings with you at the conference later this year. Now, we are exploring the possibility of conducting some additional research with patrons. We wanted to ask Network libraries if all or any of you have conducted patron surveys in the past few years. If you have conducted a patron survey, we would be interested in taking a look at that survey so that we can learn from your work, and build on best practices. If you're in that category of a library that has conducted a patron survey, please email it to me at dasp@loc.gov and you can also include your Network Consultant on that email. Please note we've already received surveys from Kentucky and Georgia so, those libraries don't need to resend unless there's been a newer survey. We will keep everyone posted on our survey work as these plans develop. Feel free to let me know later in this call or any time via email or telephone call, if you have any questions or would like to chat further. Thank you.

Comment: (Steve Prine – NLS)

Thank you, David. I believe that concludes the NLS presentations, so I think we're ready for questions from the Network.

Question: (Leslie Bowman – MD)

This question is about the Multistate West. We tried to put in an order for DS1s and we were told that they were unavailable. Is there a shortage of DS1s at Multistate West?

Answer: (Shana Osborne – NLS)

There is not a shortage of DS1s. Can you send me an email and I'll work on getting your order approved?

Question: (Susan Hammer-Schneider - ND)

This has to do with adding the multiple languages in the "subject" field. I've talked to my Cataloguer and the Reader Advisors and, right now I guess there are 23 (or) 24 and counting – of titles in the Polish language. They're in the major subject categories. My staff feel that they belong in the "language" field and not in the "subject" field. It looks like there will be more and more languages added and, so in WebREADS when you are choosing reading interests, it just makes it harder to search. And so they feel if NLS is going to keep doing this, they should utilize the minor subject codes rather than the major subject codes for the languages. The more that the languages are added, the more unwieldy it will be for

the cataloguers to add subject codes. Having the language in a different field also lets you use the autoselects to find the subjects within the language. You can't do this if the language is in the "subject" field. They just feel that this would be a more practical way of dealing with the languages that are being added. So, I don't know who to point this to or whatever, but if there are any other libraries that feel the same way we do – we've had a lot of discussion about this at our library.

Answer: (Michael Katzmann – NLS)

In WebREADS, the minor subject codes are the codes that you – as a library – have decided to put in, so its not a matter of changing it from a major code to a minor code. That's something you could put in a request to have modified in Web READS and that's something we'd consider. I'm assuming the language code is in there. It's not just as a subject code. Those subject codes of CDS or BCS choose as the broad category so, I think that's used on BARD when you're searching to filter out when you want a book in a particular language but, it would come into play when you import the MARC records into WebREADS, so I think it's more of an issue of what we do when we import them in WebREADS rather than changing that subject code grouping. If you find some examples where there is a language in the subject code, that is not in the actual language tag of the MARC record, please send me that because I think that's obviously an error.

Question: (Susan Hammer-Schneider - ND)

So you want me to send you an example of a language that is in the Subject Code but not in the MARC record?

Answer: (Michael Katzmann – NLS)

That's in the MARC record as a Subject Code. In other words, the NLS subject code but (that's) not listed in the "language" so if it's Polish in the Subject Code but it actually says English in the Language then that's an error. Look at the original MARC record. Now, once again, there could be an issue of importing the MARC records into WebREADS, where its not picking up the correct language, in which case that's an error. If we can identify some of those you're having trouble with, we can investigate that.

Question: (Kim Robertson – VA)

(This is) a follow up to Sue Hammer-Schneider's comment: It's not just a language issue. That's actually a subject issue, because a lot of the Polish titles have nothing to do with Polish-language books. I originally sent email to Bibliographic Control about it because there are a lot of titles that might have something to do with politics that are being catalogued as Major Subjects/Polish Titles. Michael, can I have your email address and I'll just save her a step and I can send you the same email I sent to Bibliographic Control?

Answer: (Michael Katzmann – NLS)

Sure. Obviously one is Politics and one is Polish – it could be an import problem where it's been misinterpreted on the import. My email address is mkat@loc.gov.

Question: (Maureen Dorosinski - FL)

I heard (from Karen) about 144 pallets backlogged and I know nothing is happening with your incoming mail, but when you do start getting caught up on your backlog and then, be in a position to open up your mail on a daily basis, are you going to practice some sort of quarantine? I've asked this on the listserv and gotten some feedback. This was last month. But, going forward, what is NLS planning on doing?

Answer: (Karen Keninger – NLS)

What we are going to do when we initially open is , we'll open only two days per week and so when they come in on Tuesday they will deal with the mail and (it) will not be distributed until the Tuesday after – although the mail has already been quarantined. It will probably sit for a week somewhere before it gets distributed. The people who come in on Thursday will do the same things. There will be a seven-day quarantine on it just because of the schedule. I don't know how long we'll need to continue that process. I do know that the mail handlers will be in protective gear. What we're recommending to people is that you contact your state health office – the department of health in your state, and ask them for guidance with regard to questions of quarantine and that sort of thing. That's what we've been recommending to people and I would continue to recommend that.

Question: (Marilyn Stevenson - NH)

I have a question about the outreach that you're going to start doing next month. She said some kind of "soft opening"? I'm wondering what that's going to entail. With 38 libraries still closed, is it a good time to start advertising our service (when) so many people will not be able to follow up with it? And, what exactly is the "soft" approach with the outreach?

Answer: (Kristen Fernekes – NLS)

What we'll be doing is, promoted keyword searches. We do our digital advertising in a variety of different ways. You may remember our last big digital campaign wrapped up last year in July or so. That was really robust. We were doing promoted Facebook posts. We were doing banner ads. We were putting a lot of money into keyword searches. This is going to be a very limited amount of promotion around keyword searches. So what this means is, when someone goes and searches for "books for the blind" or "audio books," "visual impairment" that kind of thing. Basically, NLS will then show up toward the top. That's why I'm saying it's a soft launch. If we were doing promoted Facebook and so on, I think that libraries would start to see a lot more traffic coming in. This is very limited – and certainly your concerns have been taken into consideration. We don't want to overwhelm libraries who are already working...on a limited basis. We've had a couple of considerations that we've had to see through. We...know that there are a lot of people we think could use our services. We would like to be able to reach those (people). That's why we're doing something limited for those people who are searching. The other thing that we have to take into consideration is that we have a contract to spend a certain amount of money and we've been holding for a while so we want to make sure that we can start to (use the money). We've been looking for the most gentle way that we can do this. The good news is – for those of you who remember our television and radio ad that was running parallel to our digital ad – television and radio is sort of a big boat that is difficult to turn around. You can't really stop it once it's started...We're dipping our toe in this starting next week. We have the capacity to watch this very carefully because all of this outreach will drive toward the electronic form that is on our website. We will know that that's where this is coming from and so we'll watch the volume associated with that. If we think that it's more than we want it to be, we can not only throttle it back but we have other ways of limiting it, like, we can target it just regionally, geographically. We don't want to go to that quite yet but in order to see how it's going to function, we have to start it.

Question: (Babak Zarin – VA)

Our library is currently trying to do some planning for the Fall and so I wanted to ask, how are things like the NLS Conference (or) the Orientation session for that season being thought about? I suspect that many public libraries' budgets have been impacted some – by all the closures. And so, I wanted to know what the thinking is when I go to have that conversation with the people above me.

Answer: (Karen Keninger – NLS)

We are going to make an announcement about that pretty soon. One thing that we do know is that we are going to have a measure of digital components to the Network Conference sometime in September. The more we look at your situation with the budgets and our situation with the uncertainties, it's leaning more and more toward a fully digital conference. That announcement is one I really don't want to make. I'll be quite honest with you. I really hate the thought of not having a face-to-face conference but we're going to have to give you a definite answer on this pretty soon. Regarding Orientation, I think we cancelled it for the whole year, didn't we Vickie?

Answer: (Vickie Collins – NLS)

We didn't make that determination yet, but that's certainly a possibility.

Comment: (Steve Prine – NLS)

Well, I think this will conclude the Open Forum call for May and we look forward to talking with you next month at the end of June. Hopefully from NLS itself. Thank you!