

## **Braille and Talking Book Library User Advisory Council**

**Meeting date: Saturday, September 26, 2020**

**Attendees:** Roslyn McCoy- Mt. Shasta, Chair; Janet Snowe- Redding, Vice Chair and National Federation of the Blind of California (NFBC) liaison; Alan Smith- Concord; Shannon Dillon- Folsom; Connie Baitman- Sacramento; Ervin Andy Anderson- Cottonwood; Maile George- Concord, California Council of the Blind (CCB) liaison; Gayle Miller- Winton, liaison for senior Population.

Braille and Talking Book Library (BTBL) staff: Mike Marlin, Director; Donna Scales, BTBL Reader Advisor Supervisor

Excused absence due to Covid and Zoom transcriber/ interpreter challenges: Lenore Presley- Sacramento

### **10:05 welcome and Zoom courtesy guidelines, Roslyn**

Nice to be connected and hear everyone's voices again!

Elections are coming up- let her know of your interest in serving in the role of Chair, Vice Chair, or Secretary.

to be heard/ to prevent speaking over one another, state your name, or use the raise hand feature on Zoom (star nine or go to participants to find the raise hand feature.

### **10:07 Call for action**

Alan moved to approve agenda, 2<sup>nd</sup>: Shannon

Shannon moved to approve the minutes of the March 7, 2020 meeting- 2<sup>nd</sup>- Janet. Note: council did not vote on these motions.

### **10:15- BTBL Director's report, Mike Marlin**

#### **Local and national Coronavirus prevention initiatives**

Brief overview of the REALM project provided: "as libraries and museums around the country begin to resume operations and reopen facilities to the public, there is need for clear information to support the handling of core museum, library, and archival materials.

For more on REALM, go to [https:// www.webjunction.org/explore-topics/COVID-19-research-project.html](https://www.webjunction.org/explore-topics/COVID-19-research-project.html)

All libraries are quarantining materials; Sacramento is quarantining braille for 120 hours (five days) and all other materials for at least 96 hours or 4 days to insure a significant amount of virus does not remain at what could be a dangerous level

Library closed in March; library in Sacramento was unoccupied for approximately five months. No materials were touched during that period of time. Mail circulation started again the second week of August.

There were 50 to 70 thousand digital cartridges and hundreds of braille books in cages and cartons when the team returned

The team expects to have all materials sorted by the end of September.

Currently, only 1 or 2 staff members from circulation department work at the same time

BTBL is back to making and distributing patron centric cartridges

Library is well stocked with cleaning solution, wipes, hand sanitizer and vinyl gloves.

All library employees signed telework agreements so they could work remotely.

As of August 2020, each staff member works one day per week on-site in the library, 1 reader advisor on Mondays and approximately 4 staff on-site Tuesday through Thursday.

### **Communication during the Pandemic**

Pre-recorded disaster message was what patrons heard if they called BTBL after March 17, 2020

Social media announced the closure immediately; newsletter was emailed a few weeks later. (BTBL has 1700 patrons receiving email blasts.)

Reader Advisor staff is not currently answering phones; makes it difficult for patrons to communicate with staff, especially when the patron has no or limited access to email. Short term solution: ask an intermediary to message "Ask a Librarian" on CSL web site.

Other ways to contact the library:

The National Library for the Blind and Print Disabled

[\(202\) 707-5100](tel:2027075100)

Or [1-800-424-8567](tel:18004248567) (Toll-free) or [1-800-424-8567](tel:18004248567) (Toll-free)

Ask a Librarian form: <https://ask.loc.gov/national-library-service>

**Note:** [NLS then notifies BTBL by email.](#)

A workaround is through the CSL Information services reference phone number which goes to a general voice mail box. If people leave a voice mail there, Mike is usually the one who will call the patron back. BTBL does not advertise this method as it is cumbersome.

About 5 to 10 patrons per day contact BTBL via voice mail or Ask a librarian, most ask where their books are; very few ask about alternative ways to get books. Roughly 40 patrons contact reader advisors via email daily.

## **Circulation Challenges**

Post office and political pressure on the postal service have slowed the turn-around time.

2,000 to 2500 books were typically sent per day pre-pandemic; currently, an average of 1500-1800 books are sent per day. The reduction is due to limitations in staffing and the need for physical distancing.

BTBL is operating at approximately 35% capacity.

National Library Service (NLS) is encouraging patrons to use digital downloads, but assures us that they will never get away from sending physical books

NLS director, Karen Kenninger, recommended that those who are proficient in using digital downloads teach those who don't how to do it, and the associated benefits "Nudge them into the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

About 15% of NLS patrons use BARD/ BARD Express nationally; about 25% in California.

Roslyn asked if she paused her subscription, whether that would make a difference

Answer from Donna: they are able to send each subscriber their current maximum allowance of books though limit shipment size to 2 books per day to those with room on their accounts

Alan pointed out that on his account, the system shows that there are five books still out, and yet he returned them in August.

Answer: let Donna know if this isn't corrected by next week, once all the books are sorted

Richard asked if there's been an increase in digital downloads due to the backlog.

Answer- not necessarily; despite the email campaign

California has approximately 2200 to 2500 BARD subscribers About 25% of patrons

Roslyn asked if patrons have been returning their recorded cartridges.

Answer: A lot of books are not accounted for- don't know if they haven't been returned, or if they're lost in the mail.

Andy asked how to best help the people he works with who have no computers/ email.

Answer: Thanked Andy for acting as an intermediary for those with no email. Because RA staff don't have telephone access right now, an intermediary like Andy could relay the patron's request via email and request a call back

RA can communicate with an intermediary on their days in the office or when otherwise feasible.

Gayle also stated that OIB/ Cove clients are not techy- not doing BARD// digital downloads

Discussed the value of rewording the communication and sending it to patrons and activity directors at various organizations- Society for the Blind, Independent Living Centers across the region, Earl Baum, SF Lighthouse, Cove, etc.

**\*\*\* ACTION Item\*\*\*\***

**Mike, Shannon, Janet and Maile will work on a short, simple communication for BTBL patrons outlining what's up with the library, and easy ways for everyone to obtain their books. Mike will begin by sending the communication he's circulated previously to these BUAC members. \*\*\***

Discussed the possibility of doing a train the trainer event for the activity directors/ library ambassadors from the above organizations

Shannon suggested doing a library break-out group during the NFBC at the end of October, but Mike didn't think he would have the bandwidth and the new librarian would not be up to speed by then, although He is willing to speak to NFBC Senior group and general session briefly.

### **Staff updates**

Valerie (Reader Advisor) retired, again... she had come back to BTBL after retiring the first time

CSL Lost 5 employees to the state contact tracing program, none of them from BTBL

Due to pandemic, BTBL volunteers put on hiatus. Mike expects volunteers to return when it is safe to open up to the public again, though Mike is advocating for earlier return of studio volunteers if at all possible.

Soft phones (software) will soon enable staff to work from home by making and receiving phone calls through their state issued laptops; currently, each staff member is in the office only one day per week and when teleworking they are not permitted to contact patrons using their personal phones

VPN established in August/ September allowing staff to access Keystone Library Automation System and computer drives from home and will soon enable staff members to use Electronic phone and headset. Donna and Mike expect there to be a bit of a learning curve, but when staff has been trained on Soft Phones, an announcement will be sent to all patrons. Some network libraries are already using Soft Phones

Mike is in the process of hiring a new BTBL outreach librarian. Will assist with education, including creating material for Zoom and YouTube

Interviews were concluded during the week ending 9/26.

## **Miscellaneous**

Update on Book Share grant: extended one year (fourth year). 500 Total available seats; 465 used. (some have dropped out.

Update on California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation: High BTBL patron turnover, which impacts efficiency. Robert is the BTBL staff person; oversees database coordination, intake, inmate patron management, and wears many other hats! Per NLS, BTBL must follow CDCR guidelines including some restrictions on inmate library service not applicable to general patrons.

Update on BTBL Studio: Californiana currently has produced 25 new titles that are available on BARD. Many other titles were in process by volunteers when the pandemic hit. Studio Coordinator Chris Duran is working on the analog to digital conversion of older local talking book titles originally found on cassette.

Update on Duplication on demand (DOD): California was originally slated to get this book distribution system in March, but now it will probably be November.

Maile asked if the patron will notice a difference between patron centric vs. DOD

Answer: not really, except for what they will be instructed to do with the return mailer card. Also, with Duplication On Demand, the checkout volumes will decrease as multiple titles per cartridge will be the norm rather than the exception.

San Francisco subregional library received the Subregional Library of the Year award.

Finally, FYI: due to a technical issue, both the Mary Trump and the John Bolton books were found to be missing a small portion of the original print edition. The books were pulled briefly and later re-released, but there were some who were critical and thought it was a conspiracy. NLS reviewed the number of political books and found that the library offers an equal representation of Democratic versus Republican centric titles. There are usually slightly more titles written by the opposition party than the one in power in the Executive branch. (For example, there were many Bill O-Reilly titles written and added during Obama's administration.)

### **11:50AM- Committee Reports**

Due to the disruption caused by the pandemic, there were no committee updates

\*Recruitment / Selection Committee\* – Chair Alan, Janet, Maile.

\*Outreach Committee – Chair Roslyn, Janet

\*Legislation Committee – Chair Alan, Shannon, Maile

### **11:55AM-Discussed Next Meeting Date/Time**

Next meeting will be on Saturday, December 5 from 10AM to 12noon via Zoom.

### **12:03PM- Adjourn**

Submitted by  
Maile George  
(10/13/2020)