

# Braille and Talking Book Library User Advisory Council Meeting

Date: December 4, 2021 10AM to 12 noon (Held using Zoom)

Chair Roslyn called the Meeting to order at 10:04am

## In attendance:

Connie Bateman-CCB liaison, Member at Large; Shannon Dillon- Member at Large; Maile George-Secretary; Jana Littrell - Member at Large; Roslyn McCoy- Chair-representing the Dyslexic community; Richard Rueda - Member at Large; Janet Snowe, Vice Chair, NFBC liaison, Diane Uebelhard (guest)

Absent: Lenore Presley, represents the deaf/blind community; Maria G. Smith, Member at Large; Alan Smith – Member at Large.

## BTBL Staff:

Laura Kellen- Reference and Outreach Librarian; Mike L. Marlin- Director, BTBL patron; Donna Scales-Readers Advisory Supervisor

## Remarks from the Chair:

Roslyn welcomed all, stated that she is following Robert's Rules of Order, informed the group that this will be her last meeting as Chair and that she will be taking a break from the BUAC for a while, and welcomed guest Diane Uebelhart

Roslyn welcomed guest speaker Michelle Alvarado, the Assistant Bureau Chief for the State Library Services Bureau, the public facing bureau of the California State Library.

## Guest Speaker, Michelle Alvarado:

The Bureau provides traditional library services to state employees, as well as the general public. Collection includes over 5 million items. We have over 25 librarians who provide training and research assistance. The Bureau's sections are quite diverse, ranging from a law library, to a genealogy library, to special collections with archival materials, and of course, BTBL.

The library is united around a five-year plan to be a modern, respected research library and to provide library resources to anyone at any time. This plan has evolved from challenges and lessons learned from the pandemic, but this is also a continuation of our Digital First initiative, a focus of our State Librarian Greg Lucas.

The BARD program is a perfect example of a library resource that is available at any time. This is a resilient service model that saw no interruption in service during the closure and stay at home order. During the pandemic, while we were unable to mail cartridges, we saw the number of BARD users increase, but there's still room for growth. To build on this, the library has received funding for an Assistive Technology Pilot Program, as well as two permanent positions to manage this program.

This program will lend assistive technology, such as Victor Reader Streams and mobile hotspots, to patrons who need it. We want to make technology available to all, so that everyone has the same opportunity to access the library's resources.

Right now we are working on acquiring the physical technology that we will be lending. We're also working on hiring for our two new positions. We also have some one-time funding for a contractor who can come in and help us get the program running. We should have all these components of the plan up and running by the end of the fiscal year.

When we launch new programs and new positions, we have to go to the Legislature and the Department of Finance and we have to make a case for the additional funding. This is called a budget change proposal. Successfully getting this program and positions demonstrates that the Legislature finds this program important, and that really speaks to the work that everyone has done to represent the needs of our patrons. This also represents an acknowledgement that the Braille and Talking Book Library has been digital first for a long time, and will continue to be oriented towards digital first, and with an emphasis on remote access, since BTBL patrons come from such a large geographical area.

#### Approval of agenda:

Janet made the motion to approve / Jana seconded / motion carried. All in favor.

#### Approval of minutes from August 28, 2021 meeting:

Jana made the motion to approve / Connie seconded / motion carried. All in favor.

#### BTBL Director's Report

Mike thanked Roslyn for her two years of excellent service. This will also be Maile's last meeting.

I'm hopeful in the future that we can continue doing the Legislator of the Year project, which was Alan's project, and this is another example of where we're going to need to pivot to a Digital First perspective if we're going to continue with that.

Update on the Braille e-reader pilot program. It has begun, but not in California

In regards to Duplication on Demand, we're getting very close to implementing it. We've already had one training on it. At least 75%, if not 80% of our patrons still get books on cartridges, so that model will continue, even as we move towards digital first.

Duplication on Demand is a cloud-based collection of titles. Cartridges are blank, and the circulation staff plug these blank cartridges into towers that have slots in them, and content is burned onto these cartridges and then they are mailed. We have received about 21,000 blank cartridges and containers for this project. (Plus we already have 4,000 peach cartridges given to us by NLS a few years ago.) We are also going to be decrypting our cartridges that we will take from our basement storage collection. We will peel off the labels, decrypt them, and be able to use them. This sounds like a lot, but NLS has counted that we have 10,000 patrons if you include institutions and other factors, and with an average of five cartridges per patron, in this new service model we will need 50,000 cartridges to make this new shift happen. NLS is providing half the cartridges, the other half needs to be extracted from the cartridges that you have on hand.

We hope to start Duplication on Demand in January. We have about 1,700 patrons who have used the Patron Centric Cartridge System. We think these patrons will easily be switched to this new model. Then we will begin transitioning other patrons. We will be working on ways to get the word out through strategies like an announcement in the newsletter, and putting a telephone greeting notification about it on our automatic call distribution system, and recording audio leaflets and putting them on cartridges.

We would have liked to have started this project earlier, but there were issues with the pandemic, as you know. The other reason for the delay is issues with supplies, and not just with cartridges and containers and labels, but issues in the supply chain for the custom building of the towers from the vendor. We had thought that we were going to have these towers in July, but they only just arrived. We are hopeful this will be implemented by the middle of 2022, and then we will have everyone on Duplication on Demand by the end of 2022.

Next is an update on collection development. Some of you may know that our recording studio is on hold because of the pandemic. We're not able to allow volunteers to come into the library any longer, so we can't bring in narrators, monitors, or reviewers. We haven't fully reopened the library to the public, and we are updating the volunteer policy. So we don't have any book narration happening right now. We are doing A2D, analog to digital, conversion going on for all of the local books that we have recorded since the 1980's. We plan to get these up on BARD. You may have noticed these Californiana collection books going up on BARD already.

A new development is that NLS has reached out to ask if any of the studios would be interested in helping them with their commercial book digital markup process. As you know, commercial book publishers have contracts with NLS to provide free titles. NLS gets hundreds of these books provided to them daily. They do not have the staff to process all of these donations. They receive the book file from the publisher, but not a copy of the book. So they use a recording software program to put in chapter markers or other navigation points, and this is something that they need to do themselves.

Because we do not presently (albeit temporarily) have a live studio, we volunteered to assist. We also inquired about Californiana books in the commercial audio format and asked if we could get them and convert them. We were told that as long as we can find the books that we want and they are commercial audio, NLS will get these books for us if we want to mark them up. These can be things on our consideration list, as well as recommendations from patrons. Our studio manager, Chris, has already gotten a book from NLS, done the markup process, and now we're finalizing that and sending it back to them to ensure that it is acceptable. The more that NLS can get from commercial publishers, the more they can spend their time with their own studios and narrators to do rarer or more niche books that commercial studios don't do.

Shannon said that she has heard feedback that patrons would like more access to Braille musical scores and other musical options.

Mike recommended that council members look at the NLS Music blog if they haven't seen it already. This is the blog: <https://blogs.loc.gov/nls-music-notes/>

Also, NLS is having some contractor issues with Braille, and as a result, there's a lot less Braille that is coming out in hard copy. The standard of 650 Braille books a year has not been achieved in several years. But the Braille e-reader will help with that shortage, because anything that NLS produces in Braille is automatically done as a digital BRF file.

Bookshare has been offering seat licenses to the four network libraries in California. There are 500 seats, and 497 of them are filled. We decided that this was a good time to do an activity analysis and find out whether patrons are staying active. In our most recent 12 month activity report, we found that 249 out of the 497 people have not been active within a year. We are working on getting announcements out to those people that they need to use the service or we will suspend them. Also, patrons who have moved out of the state will be cancelled as they are no longer eligible. It is likely that a lot of Bookshare seats are now going to get freed up. There are some people on the waiting list for these seats.

We heard from John Brown, the head of Engineering and Materials Development at NLS. There have been issues with some of the vendors, they have been delaying output of Braille e-readers, and other supply chain issues. We were supposed to get our demo models of both the Zoomax and Humanware readers a month or two ago. We're still waiting. We are hoping California will be ready for the pilot soon.

Other projects that are in development are the smartphone pilot with a small group of patrons. The consensus was that in its current state the voice activated, wi-fi and Bluetooth connected smartphone talking book machine was not ready for full development. It is currently being redesigned. Same with the smart speaker, they are still working on that.

## Committee Reports

**\*\*Outreach** (Chair Roslyn, Janet, Laura)

Updates from Laura:

[Laura.kellen@library.ca.gov](mailto:Laura.kellen@library.ca.gov)

Time for an outreach update on what is new since our last meeting on August 28<sup>th</sup>.

Here's an update on the large print bookmark project, in which we are offering large print bookmarks promoting BTBL to any public library in California. It is still going strong. Most recently we got an order of 500 bookmarks for the Marin County Free Library and their bookmobile.

Did an in-person presentation to Carleton Senior Living in Orangevale.

Did a presentation to Baywood Court, a senior residential facility in the Bay Area.

Did a staff training for Alameda County Library, a 12-branch system with a bookmobile and a school partnership program. Also did a staff workshop for Richmond Public Library, which is a three-branch system with a Children's Center.

Did outreach to VIST, the Visual Impairment Services Team at the San Francisco Veterans Affairs Healthcare System. They cover San Francisco, San Mateo, Alameda, Napa, Marin, Sonoma, Lake, Mendocino, Humboldt, and Del Norte.

We did outreach to CDCR, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, sending them almost 1,200 pieces of outreach material. Also did outreach to Solano prison library.

Mike and I gave a presentation to the Sacramento City College Library Public Services class, to educate library school students on BTBL.

Mike and I met with a librarian from the Talking Books and Braille Center in San Francisco, one of our subregionals, to discuss future collaboration and how to do outreach to Spanish speaking patrons.

Mike and I also met with the Senior Director of Connection Programs at COVIA, which has now been merged with Front Porch, a non-profit that helps seniors connect with their community. In the Spring we plan to present as a part of their Well Connected program.

Did a presentation to the San Francisco State University Teacher Credentialing Program, their Issues in Visual Impairment class. Attendees were either already working as orientation and mobility instructors, or they were earning a second credential to be TVIs, Teachers of Students with Visual Impairment.

Laura is attending ongoing summer library program meetings put on by our sister library in Missouri, Wolfner Library, to learn what different BTBL libraries are doing for their summer reading program.

#### \*\*Recruitment / Selection Committee (Chair Alan, Janet, Connie, Maile)

Diane has applied and we will be vetting Diane shortly. Mike offered to send out the recruitment blurb again.

#### \*\*Legislative Committee – (Chair Alan, Shannon)

Mike gave an update. The California Research Bureau had identified the person who had helped getting funds for the Braille Institute in 2020. But we have held off on an acknowledgement due to COVID, waiting until we could get together in person as a committee once again.

Shannon offered to get Mike, Alan, and herself together in a meeting to discuss this further.

#### Old Business

Roslyn not aware of any old business.

#### New Business

Jana Littrell was nominated for Chair. Roslyn made the motion to approve / Richard seconded / motion carried. All in favor.

Shannon was nominated for Vice Chair. Roslyn made the motion to approve / Jana seconded / motion carried. All in favor.

No one was nominated for Secretary. A note was made that Connie would reach out to Maria to see if she would be interested.

#### Miscellaneous Concerns/Questions/Announcements/Discussion Points

Janet asked when the BUAC would be able to meet in person again. Mike said that he would make an inquiry with administration. Everything is still virtual. There may be a possibility that we can do hybrid in the future.

Connie made an announcement that Valerie Ries-Lerman recently published a book of poetry. She would like this to be made available in an audio format. Mike is following up on that.

Next meeting date: Saturday, March 5, 2022, 10am-12pm

Roslyn adjourned the meeting at 12:05pm.

Submitted by Staff Member Laura Kellen  
January 26, 2021