

Braille and Talking Book Library User Advisory Council Meeting

Date: September 10, 2022 10AM to 12 noon (Held using Zoom)

Chair Jana Littrell called the Meeting to order at 10:01am

In attendance:

Jana Littrell – Chair, Shannon Dillon - Vice Chair, NFB liaison; Connie Bateman - CCB Liaison; Janet Snow – Member at Large; Diane Uebelhart – Member at Large

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

BTBL Staff:

Laura Kellen- Reference and Outreach Librarian; Mike L. Marlin- Director, BTBL patron

Absent: Donna Scales- Reader Advisory Supervisor

Guest:

Jameson Rohrer – Sacramento Public Library, Librarian

Guest Speaker:

Jackie Peterson, Communications, California State Library

Jana opened the meeting with a change to the agenda order to accommodate presenter Diane U.'s schedule.

Diane Uebelhart's comments:

Diane has reached out to over 20 retirement communities in 2 to 3 different counties. She has been sending out a letter, then following up with a phone call, i.e. personal conversation with them. Campus Commons has a high rate of participants, but other than that, Diane has been having a hard time getting through to these communities – when talking to prospective contacts, she has been abruptly disconnected. For the most part, she feels as though the experience has been “a bust.” She is unsure whether she will continue.

Jana pointed out that her students may not be interested in NLS when OCB staff first talk to them about library services. But the more exposure they receive, the more interested they become. By the time they leave her program, they have usually signed up for BTBL/NLS service.

Approval of agenda:

Shannon moved to approve agenda as amended. Janet seconded. Approved unanimously.

Approval of Minutes from 3/5/22 and 6/11/22 meeting:

Connie moved to approve the March minutes. Shannon seconded. All in favor? Aye. Motion to approve? Janet approved the June minutes. Shannon seconded. All in favor? Aye.

Guest speaker: Jackie Peterson.

Jackie is a Communications Officer at the California State Library. Has been in her position for 3 months. Works with Communications Head Alex Vassar, who has spoken to this group before.

Jackie was a Communications Manager for several large synagogues in New York City and San Francisco before coming to the California State Library,. Before that, she wrote for newspapers and magazines as a journalist, specializing in layout design and multimedia.

Regarding analytics for the BTBL website, it has had 13,000 users in the last 90 days, an increase of 448% from the preceding 90 days. Most activity was from 8/14 – 9/3/2022. Visitors are mainly people who already have the BTBL URL or are getting it from the CSL webpage, not really coming from Google searches. Views are coming from the search page, catalog, book basket, etc. which shows that people are using the website.

Concerning social media in general, the Communications office has been posting more to TikTok and Instagram, more video and photo posts. This has been good for the library, and they are planning on continuing.

Communications is hiring 3 new people, 1 person is retiring, this is a net gain of 2 people. They have a lot of content ideas that they haven't been able to execute but they expect to do so when they get the new staff.

Some of the ideas they would like to implement include:

A series of videos about the BTBL recording studio. Including a studio tour, a recording in process, the editing process, an interview with a volunteer narrator

Video or post showing the braille magazine options

Post about double-sided (interpoint) braille pages

Video tour of the talking book stacks

Sharing a short clip of a descriptive DVD

Laura pointed out that TikTok and Instagram skew younger; is there a plan to reach older folks? Jackie said that the population on these platforms grow older every year, and we can reach older folks as part of a bigger plan with Alex and Communications at large.

Mike had some questions. Do you know how many subscribers the California State Library (CSL) has to each social media platform?

Jackie said she has the information for the main CSL accounts. Twitter: 2,112. Instagram: 3,964. TikTok: 1,479. Facebook: 8,451 followers – general post reach is 4,090.

Laura reported there are 632 followers of the BTBL Facebook page.

Does CSL repost BTBL's posts? Yes, CSL reposts from BTBL and Sutro.

Mike asked if TikTok and Instagram were worthwhile to reach the blind community, due to such visual formats. Can the new, robust Communications staffing levels help us with these other social media avenues?

Jackie said if it is your goal to serve your specific audience, there may not be a big enough audience on TikTok or Instagram. Not a good investment in time, because it takes so much time to produce video content and do quality assurance on video.

Mike asked about Twitter. Could we just get our Facebook posts automatically on Twitter?

Jackie said that the strategy for social media is that it's not a good idea to cross-post anymore. It's too obvious. It doesn't get you good followers. It's hard to get followers on Twitter anyway, because Twitter is defined by conversation, not informational posts.

Jackie said that Facebook and Instagram are probably the best sites for BTBL. Social media is a lot of guessing about what works. Feel free to try Twitter if you want. You never know how your posts might get picked up by an algorithm.

Mike said that he would love it if we could just call up a local affiliate of a network news affiliate to promote our materials and services. Alex has said that it's really hard to get television news and other news outlets to do a public interest story. Can we try to get some local media stories about the BTBL?

Jackie said that one of the new hires will be working on projects for public libraries. One will be a digital composition specialist, so graphic design and production. One will be a communications associate. We will have new help, with different specialties. We could have more time for press releases and reaching out. But it is very hard to get noticed and get a response.

Podcasts were brought up as an option, but no one knew of any local or regional ones that would be a good match for us.

Laura said that interacting with, commenting, sharing, liking, etc. with our content will help Facebook to understand that the public want to interact with our page, and will show them more of our content.

Laura also suggested to Mike that they work on a more comprehensive strategy for social media when the new Assistive Technology Librarian joins the staff.

[BTBL Director's Report:](#)

Circulation Supervisor Marian Broom has retired. She was with BTBL since 1998. She was instrumental in helping convert us from analog to digital formats. We will soon rewrite the job description and rehire.

We have hired a new Assistive Technology Librarian, Morgan Pershing. She starts at the end of September and will be promoting our technology and doing other traditional librarian duties.

Assistive technology program: we're getting closer to the rollout of wifi hotspots, Victor Reader Stream players, and Humanware Explore 5 video magnifiers. Next Wednesday, there will be an assistive

technology advisor beta testing user meeting. Several members of BUAC are involved. We have created user guides and we have several people who are testing.

We are working with Adaptive Technology Services, a contracted vendor, to put quick start guides together. The guides will be going in the boxes with the equipment. They are doing the initial embossing and printing of these quick start guides.

Mike described the new Assistive Technology webpage on the BTBL website. It is located here: <https://www.library.ca.gov/btbl/assistive-technology/>

Jana said she had some suggested changes to the quick start guide. She will email Julie about it.

We have 260 braille eReaders out circulating amongst patrons. We have almost 1,000 signed up for the braille medium, but only 200 active users at present.

Shannon asked if they were ever planning to activate the audio portion of the braille eReaders. For now NLS is not planning to activate the audio component.

A new pilot is Braille on Demand, one personal Braille book per month, for a patron's own personal use.

BARD 2.0 is imminent. Includes app search capability, no longer has a link to the internal embedded BARD website. It includes more intuitive searching, you no longer need to use quotation marks, you can sort search results better. Search also includes NLS music holdings, toggle between audio and braille results, sort the bookshelf.

There are two new NLS online patron programs: The Many Faces of BARD, a monthly BARD program, which just occurred on September 8th, and there is the NLS Patron Corner, the next one is on September 12.

Reports from Committees:

**Recruitment / Selection Committee (Chair: Vacant, Jana)

Mike said that we are running recruitment notices in almost every newsletter now. Mike will send an email with a blurb and ask everyone to send to their networks. Janet said that 3 new veterans came to their NFB meeting last time. Janet said they are hoping to get more veterans, maybe we can get one on the BUAC.

**Outreach (Chair: Vacant, Janet, Laura)

Shannon had 2 questions. The NFB convention is on 11/5 and 11/6, can BTBL fit on the agenda? Shannon could try to reserve a space on the agenda. It's in San Diego.

Mike said that if its in the South, then the Braille Institute would be the ones to speak, because it's their service area.

Should we have someone come speak to the NFB Spanish chapter at large? Yes, Mike will speak.

Updates from Laura:
Laura.kellen@library.ca.gov

Outreach activity since our last meeting on 6/11/22:

Presentations:

Mike presented to Front Porch, a virtual community that offers phone-in presentations to senior citizens in order to help them feel connected. He presented entirely in Spanish. There were 15 participants.

Laura gave a virtual presentation to a low vision support group at the Lions Center for the Visually Impaired, which serves the East Bay area. There were 11 attendees, many who were new to BTBL.

Mike presented to the SDAC – Statewide Disability Council Meeting – this is made up of members of individual agency DACs from across the state, and these meetings are typically attended by Reasonable Accommodation Officers, Equal Employment Opportunity Officers, and other Human Resources personnel. There were 96 attendees.

Other Stuff:

Laura followed up with the 16 local retirement communities that Diane had done outreach to, sending them personalized letters, brochures, and blank applications

We're continuing to work on patron retention. We identified 12 distinct categories where we could use more retention efforts.

Up and Coming Outreach:

9/26 – presenting at the Low Vision Support Group for the Society for the Blind at the Gold Country Retirement Center in Placerville

10/1 – presenting at the California Teachers Association Annual Special Education Conference in San Francisco

10/12 – presenting virtually at Baywood Court, a senior living facility in Castro Valley

10/13 – BTBL will be staffing a booth at the National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) Fair on the West Lawn of the Capitol

10/13 – Mike will be presenting at the NDEAM Virtual Fair at the California Department of Public Health (CDPH)

10/19 – Mike, Laura, and Chris will be presenting to the Sacramento City College Library and Information Technology Program

11/5 – BTBL staffing a booth and presenting at the Assistive Technology Fair at the Sacramento Society for the Blind

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

Shannon thinks the legislature is now meeting in person. Mike needs to talk to Tom Negrete at the California Research Bureau about this project. Jameson Rohrer said he would be happy to help. The first step is that Mike will talk to Tom Negrete, then we can set up a meeting with BUAC members who are involved, possibly Jameson, and Alex Vassar from Communications.

Miscellaneous Concerns/Questions/Announcements/Discussion Points

Laura said she wanted to talk about the December guest speaker. Mike said he will contact Lara Rondburg from Bookshare as a potential guest speaker, to talk about the new human narrated program. He can also contact Tamara Rory from NLS, although this might be difficult because she is so busy. Mike can also reach out to Hadley School for the Blind to see if someone from there would be a guest speaker. We could possibly get someone from the American Printing House for the Blind.

Everyone said that they wanted someone from Bookshare.

Jameson suggested someone from the California Library Association. There could also be American Library Association groups that we're interested in having as guests.

Mike is going to work on getting us a guest speaker.

Mike also said that in the December meeting we need to reserve some time to see who on the council is continuing on in 2023. We also need to establish what this group wants to focus on. Is the current format satisfying to everyone? Do we need our purpose to be refocused and rechanneled? Eight years ago, the BUAC had a lot of projects going, but we have seen a marked loss of energy since the pandemic. No one's fault, we should just discuss it.

Mike had inquired of management if we could meet in person for the December meeting and was told that we could not meet in person yet.

Old Business

None stated.

New Business

None stated.

Adjournment:

Shannon moved to adjourn the meeting. Janet seconded. All in favor. Jana adjourned the meeting at 12:05pm.

Next meeting date: Saturday, December 3, 2022, 10am-12pm

Submitted by Staff Member Laura Kellen
September 10, 2022