

Braille and Talking Book Library User Advisory Council Meeting

Date: December 3, 2022, 10am to 12pm (Held using Zoom)

Chair Jana Littrell called the Meeting to order at 10:05am

In attendance:

Jana Littrell – Chair

Shannon Dillon - Vice Chair

Diane Uebelhart – Member at Large

Richard Rueda - Member at Large

Joe Green – temp Representative for CCB

Absent:

Maria G. Smith – Secretary

Connie Bateman – CCB Representative

Janet Snow – Member at Large

BTBL Staff:

Mike L. Marlin- Director, BTBL patron

Morgan Pershing – Assistive Technology Librarian

Absent:

Laura Kellen - Reference and Outreach Librarian

Guest Speaker:

Lara Rondberg – Program Manager, Bookshare

Mike mentioned that Connie Bateman could not attend but Joe Green is attending in her place. Connie will be exiting the BUAC after this meeting. After this, the current president of CCB will appoint someone to represent CCB next year on the council. Alan Smith is retiring from BUAC; Mike publicly thanked Alan for his years of service and wished him a happy retirement.

Approval of Agenda:

Jana asked if everyone had a chance to read the agenda. Shannon moved to approve the minutes. Diane seconded. All approved.

Approval of Minutes from 9/10/22 meeting:

Jana asked if anyone had a chance to read the minutes. Everyone did. Shannon moved to approve. Diane seconded. All approved.

BTBL Director's Report:

When it comes to the assistive technology lending program, we have started to ship out devices. The library has procured 500 Victor Reader Stream2 devices, 400 Explore 5 magnifiers, and 300 Orbic wi-fi hotspots. The objective is to mitigate some of the isolation felt from the pandemic and in general for our users who are not connected virtually or otherwise, and therefore need access to BARD via hotspots. Public libraries have been doing this for many years. The Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh (Library for Media Access of Pittsburgh or LAMP) has circulated hotspots. This will help patrons to get connected and hopefully use BARD.

As far as the requests that have come in, we have had about 150 – 170ish Victor Stream reservations, about 130 magnifiers, about 95 hotspots. That's how many patrons have signed up for them. Julie, our Assistive Technology Coordinator, has been contacting patrons on the interest lists and conducting a quick reference interview to ensure that they are still interested. The devices go out on a 1-year loan and are renewable for an additional year if there is no waiting list. Julie is working her way through the interest lists, about 1/3 of the way through. We are contacting patrons via voicemail and email.

As far as actual numbers, 25 magnifiers, 30 hotspots, and 30+ Victor Reader Streams have been distributed. We have instructional materials on these devices– materials in large print, braille, Quick Start guides, troubleshooting, FAQs. We expect to have audio and video tutorials for the Victor Reader Stream and Explore 5 magnifiers, narrated by Judy Dixon from NLS. Some of you may already be familiar with the Judy Dixon videos on the NLS YouTube channel. These will be very detailed narrated scripts.

In late December we will begin offering introductory classes on Zoom. For the Victor Reader Stream, we will have beginning, intermediate, and advanced classes. We're also going to offer 1-to-1 training opportunities with the instructors from Adaptive Technology Services, a San Francisco vendor.

We already have patrons signed up for December classes. For now, Julie is going to be distributing the links to the classes to patrons who have a device. We have 6 patrons signed up for the Victor Reader Stream classes and 4 patrons signed up for the magnifier class.

Richard provided feedback: he had received a voicemail from Julie regarding the wi-fi hotspot. He indicated that Julie is not leaving an extension number or an email address, just the main 1-800 number, and so patrons may be confused about how to best reach her or return her call. Mike said that he would make a note of this. Julie is on the main line; she can be reached under the BARD/Assistive Technology Support Desk. During the day, if you call the main number and press the number for the Support Desk, you should reach Mike, Morgan, or Julie.

Diane gave feedback. She said that she ordered a magnifier 6 or 7 weeks ago, and Julie said that Diane would be put on the list. What kind of time window is it to get a magnifier?

Mike reported that Julie is has processed reservations through the middle of May 2022 and is working diligently to get caught up. The bulk of the requests came in during May, after the newsletter went out in April 2022. Mike hopes that Diane will hear from Julie in December, in time for the classes that will occur in January.

Jana asked: for those of us who were beta testing the documents, should we be sending our devices back now? Are we finished? Mike will confer with the AT team; for now, no need to send the devices back.

Mike hopes that the majority of the devices will be distributed by January/February of 2023. The Braille Institute is also involved in a parallel program. They have about 70 (out of 500 or more) or so Victor Reader Streams out in the field so far. They are also distributing magnifiers, the Ruby model, but they are doing it through the rehabilitation arm of their program. They are not loaning wi-fi hotspots.

Mike described some attrition in patrons who have signed up on the interest lists. By the time we contact them, we discover that some of them have passed away, some have changed their minds, some have become unavailable when we try to reach them. We need to redouble our efforts in publicizing this program. We have a one-year, 2022-23 fiscal year contract with Adaptive Technology Services, so the classes only go through June 2023. After this contract expires, our staff will either contract with a vendor again or continue the training ourselves. Morgan and Mike are going to be reaching out to various rehabilitation agencies, like Lighthouse, Earle Baum, Center for the Visually Impaired, Sierra, Society for the Blind, etc. to continue to spread the word. Mike may reach out directly to Richard for additional suggestions to advertise the Assistive Technology Program. We are also planning a large print postcard awareness campaign.

Richard suggested the Mike get a list of the attendees who went to the Assistive Technology Fair at Society for the Blind recently. There were a lot of agencies and centers that brought their students there. Richard suggested that Mike reach out directly to Kathleen Shevlin.

Shannon had volunteered to do some outreach to our Spanish NFBC chapter. Shannon will reach out to the new person in charge of that chapter. Mike can do a presentation to them in Spanish.

Jana commented: at OCB all the students get Victor Reader Streams before they arrive, because they start using them right away.

Mike indicated the Orientation Center for the Blind and the School for the Blind are not as critical to reach out to at this juncture, but eventually they will be contacted. Mike mentioned we also submitted an article about the assistive technology program for The CCB publication the Blind Californian.

Update on the Braille eReader: The library has circulated hundreds which are out in the field. We continue to raise awareness about these devices. We have close to 1,000 patrons still subscribed to braille as a medium on their accounts. However, a large majority of them haven't been active for the last few years. We're going to reach out to them and try to get their interest going in the braille eReader. The Braille Institute is also circulating the Braille eReader, and they have circulated roughly 1,000 devices, but they also have twice the number of patrons that we do.

There are around 20 states whose patrons have access to the braille eReaders. Ideally the goal is to have all of the states on board by the end of 2023. There are lingering pandemic supply chain issues. Side note: the user manual has been updated on the braille eReader. It is available electronically and on BARD, and you should be able to get it on your device, too.

As far as Duplication on Demand goes, 90% of our patron base is on DoD. The goal was to get to 100% by the end of 2022, and we are very close to that. The 350,000 blue containers with cartridges on them are

going to be excess, so we are going to initiate the process of recalling them, which means sending them back to be recycled. We will hold on to 25,000 to keep cartridges on hand if we need them for the Books on Demand process. The rest will go back to the Multi-State Center in Utah for recycling.

Another subject of interest is the increase in number of patrons with reading disabilities. This can be tied back to the change that NLS made, making it easier for certifiers to sign off on reading disabilities. By the end of 2020, NLS had about 13,400 patrons with reading disabilities. At the end of 2021 there were 19,000 and as of today we are at 21,346. So there has been a 60% increase. 7,000 of these patrons have come from Texas. Texas is unique in that they have a law that anyone with reading disabilities should be set up with the Talking Book Library in Texas. We are seeing a modicum of interest and we do have a slight increase in our own patron base.

Shannon asked if we speak to individual DAC agency committees about library services. Not just the statewide DAC, but individual agencies. Mike said that would be a great thing for us to do, a DAC campaign. Mike has spoken to the Department of Health DAC, for their NDEAM event. There were 16-17 attendees.

Reports from Committees:

**Recruitment / Selection Committee (Chair: Vacant)

Mike gave an update. We did receive an application a few days ago, Mike will forward it along for review. Shannon is willing to help review an application and be on the committee; Jana is willing to help be on the committee, too.

**Outreach (Chair: Vacant, Laura)

Morgan gave an update on Laura's behalf since she was absent.

In November we had several events. Mike, Laura, Julie, and Morgan all went to the Assistive Technology Fair and talked to 100 people. On November 15th, Mike and Morgan spoke to an SFSU Issues in Visual Impairment class. On November 16th, Laura was at a booth at Park Place and spoke to 5 people.

Up and coming: Laura will be at Dignity Health four days next week, doing presentations. We are working on Superfest 2023, coming up in January. Laura will be presenting at Sun City Lincoln Hills in March. We're waiting on our California Library Association proposal for their June 2023 conference, to see if our proposal was accepted or not. Mike and Morgan are giving a talk on the 9th to the Statewide Council on Development Disabilities. Then we'll be working together with the Braille Institute to present statewide to Village Movement California. We will have an article in their January newsletter, and we will be doing a training session in February.

Mike mentioned that our BTBL is hosting the 2023 NLS Western Conference in April. We will probably extend an invitation to BUAC folks who live in Sacramento. We have talked about having a panel of patrons and BUAC members, but we're still waiting to hear if anyone from NLS is coming and so we cannot make final plans at this moment.

BTBL outreach librarians Morgan and Laura are always available to brainstorm with BUAC members over Zoom on outreach ideas.

**Legislative Committee – (Chair: Vacant, Shannon)

Shannon said that we hadn't found any appropriate legislation covering print disability. As of the last meeting, we were unsure we wanted to pursue this committee at this time. Mike agreed that we could leave this committee on hold for now. Mike had reached out to the California Research Bureau Director. Jana suggested that we put it on the next agenda to discuss whether this committee should officially be continued or disbanded.

Election of Officers:

There are open slots for positions of Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary of BUAC. Current Chair is Jana Littrell. Vice Chair is Shannon Dillan. Secretary is Maria Smith.

Mike interjected that Maria has missed several meetings and we have been unable to reach her. Most likely that she is not continuing for the next year.

Shannon agreed to conduct the election for Chair. Shannon asked if there are any nominations for Chair. Shannon nominated Jana Littrell to continue as Chair for BUAC. Shannon asked for other nominations. There were none. Nominations ceased. Shannon moved to nominate Jana by acclamation. All agreed. Jana accepted the nomination.

The next position is Vice Chair, currently held by Shannon Dillan. Jana asked for any nominations for Vice Chair. Richard nominated Shannon to accept another year of Vice Chair. Jana seconded the motions. Asked for any other nominations. No other nominations. All in favor.

The position for Secretary is vacant. Are there any nominations for Secretary? No nominations. Mike indicated that he thought Laura Kellen would be willing to continue to transcribe the minutes until we can find a secretary.

Presentation, approximately 25 minutes long:

Lara Rondberg, Program Manager of Bookshare. Contact: larar@benitech.org

Election and membership business resumed after the presentation. Mike said that he will follow up with members individually to see who wants to stay on the BUAC for another year. Initially, we tried to have staggered membership, so 1/3 of the members rotated off each year. That was the case for the first six years, but due to lack of new recruits, we are having members renew and stay on for more two-year terms. Mike asked whether the members present can indicate whether they would like to continue.

Richard Rueda is rotating off. Mike thanked him for his years of service.

Jana staying. Shannon staying. Diane staying. Hopefully we will get a new CCB person, because Connie Bateman is rotating off.

Mike will reach out to Janet to confirm with her. Mike will check with Tim about NFB representation.

Mike indicated that we have enough interest to keep the BUAC going for next year. Mike and Morgan were talking about how at some point we may want to reevaluate the future of the council if we cannot get enough members to join.

Richard suggested that we consider bringing back the topic on what other states are doing to keep their committees going. Mike said we could do that again, choose a few different states this time. This is referring to a past presentation where we had three other states talk about what activities their advisory councils were embarked upon.

Meeting Dates for 2023:

3/4/23 (since then it has been updated to March 11)
6/10/23
9/9/23
12/2/23

Mike will let the BUAC know if we are able to meet in person, and then the group can decide if they do want to meet in person or on Zoom. We could possibly do a hybrid model, one meeting in person and the rest on Zoom.

Adjournment:

Shannon made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Richard seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 11:58.

Next meeting date: Saturday, March 11, 2023, 10am-12pm

Submitted by Staff Member Laura Kellen
February 14, 2023