

Braille and Talking Book Library

User Advisory Council

June 10, 2023

Attendees:

Mike Marlin (BTBL Director), Jana Littrell (Chair), Shannon Dillon (Vice Chair, representing NFBC), Karen Shrawder (representing CCB), Lenore Presley (representing the deaf-blind community)

Absent: Diane Uebelhart

March 11, 2023 Minutes and June 10, 2023 agenda were approved unanimously

Director's Report:

Bookshare:

Bookshare has announced that they will be increasing the cost of their annual subscription from \$50 to roughly \$79. Bookshare will delay implementation of price increases for the BTBL 2023-24 fiscal year. This will not affect BTBL Bookshare patrons as library will absorb the cost in its 2024-25 budget. There are still vacant "seats", so members should let patrons know about this opportunity to access thousands of free titles as either braille files (BRF), narrated formats, and synthetic audio titles that can be read with screen-reading software.

Assistive Technology:

Around 300 braille eReaders have been distributed to patrons. There is an ample supply of eReaders to distribute, so council members should spread the word. The Braille Institute has circulated around 500 of them to patrons in southern California. Currently 330 out of the 400 electronic video magnifiers have been distributed. A magnifier waiting list for inmates is in process. BTBL plans to request more of these. Victor Streams have recently had quite a number of technical issues, and many have needed repairs. Around 360 out of the 500 currently available have been distributed. Around 140 of 300 hotspots have been circulated to patrons; these are tricky to use because they are not completely accessible for patrons. Training for this equipment is provided in the following formats: video, audio, text documents, braille files, and hard copy braille. Training classes are also offered via the Zoom platform. BTBL will soon be renewing their contract for assistive technology training.

Magazines on cartridge:

Currently patrons can receive magazines on cartridge by mail. This NLS outsourced service with challenged capacity will eventually be replaced by network libraries using their duplication resources.

First they must determine the best way to organize this migration, which will take several years. Currently around 1600 patrons are receiving these magazines on cartridge, and NLS recently reported that 900 of these cartridges were delinquent, meaning that patrons had not returned them within the due date period. There are lots of cartridges in limbo, and NLS staff didn't know why. After some research they discovered that these cartridges had actually been returned but had not been checked in correctly by National Audio Company personnel.

Books on Demand (BOD):

This program is going well. There has been an increase in the number of average cartridges loaned to patrons from two to four, and feedback from patrons is mainly positive. These BOD books come with two mailing cards inserted in the front slot. The second card contains up to the first 8 titles printed. Regarding the NLS Braille On Demand program, patrons can now request up to five hard copy braille books per month, and the books will be mailed directly to them from NLS contractors. They can keep these books indefinitely.

Volunteers:

The volunteer engagement program is almost back on track. A new policy has been rolled out, but a few things still need to happen. For one thing, they are working on studio volunteer job descriptions along with the necessary approvals. In addition to other types of recruitment publicity, Volunteermatch.org is a great website that they will be using to recruit volunteers. Around five former studio volunteers will be returning to work in the next few weeks. BTBL's studio is continuously uploading more Californiana titles, which are analog to digital conversion audio books about California. Roughly 300 of these titles will have been added to the BARD service by the end of the year. Some studio recording volunteers will be able to work remotely. Other volunteer positions may include eReader support assistants and circulation recall help. Several members chimed in and stated that they are already providing eReader support informally. Recall volunteers can help to load cartridges in large containers for recycling. Eventually volunteers for braille inspection could be considered. Sighted volunteers will be needed for studio monitoring and narrating.

NLS Western Regional Libraries Conference: This was held here in Sacramento, and representatives from 13 regional libraries and beyond attended. It was a great networking opportunity. Two BUAC members attended, and Mike wished that more members of the council had been able to join them.

2023 California Library Association Conference: BTBL was well-represented at this conference. BTBL staff presented about the Books on Demand program to about 50 librarians and library workers from all over the state. This was also a great networking opportunity.

Future meetings:

The next meeting will be held on Zoom on September 9 at 10:00 a.m. The final meeting of the year will be moved from December 2 to December 9. This will hopefully be an in-person meeting for which BTBL would provide lunch for the Council members. Karen offered to create the minutes for this and future meetings, so Laura will not need to take her work time to create them.

Recruiting:

Although some groups are represented by this council, many are not. We need to keep recruiting. Mike told us that, if we don't gain three or four additional members by the end of the year, we may restructure or sunset this council and find alternate ways to communicate with and receive feedback from patrons. Mike will email us the recruitment "blurb" again, so we can reach out to the groups who are not currently represented on the council. We need representatives from groups including youth, veterans, parents of blind children, blind parents of sighted children, and more.

BTBL Newsletter: Several members commented positively about the current newsletter. It is professional, informative, and positive. Many patrons don't realize they need to opt in if they want to receive the newsletter electronically. Patrons need to let us know which format they prefer or it defaults to large print, and They need to be told by the council members. Patrons can receive it in braille, electronically, and in large print. Members can grab the newsletter from the website and distribute it to the groups we represent.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 PM.

Minutes Respectfully submitted by Karen Shrawder

California Council of the Blind representative