

**BTBL User Advisory Council  
Meeting Minutes  
September 6, 2014**

**Attendees:**

**Members:** Alan Smith, Elena Thomason, Thomas Mason, Margie Donovan, Kathleen Berman, Karen Parsegian, and Roslyn McCoy: Debee Armstrong via conference call

**Staff:** Mike Marlin, BTBL director: Donna Scales, BTBL Readers Advisory Supervisor

**Special Guests via conference call:** Judy Dixon, NLS Consumer Relations Officer; Joel Snyder, ACB Audio Description project

The second meeting for the Braille and Talking Book Library user advisory council was called to order at 10:10 AM by President Alan Smith.

**Approval of Minutes:**

- Debee Armstrong read the minutes for the May 19 meeting. Several additions and corrections were suggested. Minutes were approved with the revisions suggested and have been incorporated.

**Approval of Agenda:**

The agenda was approved as presented.

**By-laws Review:**

The following changes were discussed and approved:

- Chair and Vice Chair titles to President and Vice President.
- Members' terms will start January 2015 and will be staggered to provide for continuity. Members agreed to the following terms:
  - One** year - Elena Thompson, Tiffany Manosh and Georgeta Tanase
  - Two** years - Karen Parsegian and Kathleen Berman
  - Three** years: Thomas Mason, Roslyn McCoy, Margie Donovan and Alan Smith
- More than two unexcused absences in a calendar year will constitute grounds to vote to remove the member from the council.
- "Appointment Committee" was changed to "Selection Committee". The Selection committee's purpose will be to review annual applications, check references, and possibly interview candidates for appointments in the following calendar year. Whenever possible, the two Selection committee members should not be officers. One BTBL staff member will be on the committee. There is to be at least one alternate member. The Selection committee members were established as Thomas Mason and Kathy Berman, with Margie Donovan as the alternate.

It was decided that the Selection Committee will provide a report at the next BUAC meeting in January 2015.

Other related topics included:

- Several members voiced concerns that committees that allow a majority of members to attend via conference call rather than attending in person do not work as effectively. There was discussion of amending the Council bylaws to place emphasis on in-person meetings; however, the exact language of the statement is postponed until next meeting. Mike needs to find out if he can budget to support in-person meetings year round.
- It was also suggested that the bylaws be amended so that, whenever possible, members other than officers serve on current and future established committees and subcommittees. Ideally, work is spread evenly throughout the membership of the Council.

### **Guest Speaker via telephone: Judy Dixon NLS Consumer Relations Officer**

Judy covered a multiplicity of small changes and improvements to the NLS program, including updates to BARD and BARD Mobile app, the addition of Wired magazine to replace PC World, and the new NLS director's successful effort to expand the book collection, including additional contracts with commercial audio book publishers, and the expansion of retrospective analog to digital conversion of talking books.

Judy's Email: [jdix@loc.gov](mailto:jdix@loc.gov). For consumers with feedback for NLS, she suggests Emailing Mike Marlin, the Regional library director who can route suggestions to the appropriate channels at NLS.

Further discussion of library improvements included adding a Google Translator feature to the BTBL website so that foreign language readers could more effectively locate materials. Mike needs to consult with the CSL Information Technology Bureau and the CSL Administration first before it can be considered and ultimately implemented. [Further exploration revealed that the Google Translator feature already exists at the bottom of all CSL web pages.]

### **Guest Speaker via telephone: Joel Snyder, ACB Audio Description project**

Joel manages a company which contracts with ACB for their Audio description project. He covered some history of audio description and emphasized that DVS is a trademark from one of the groups that provides described audio. Rather than DVS, the preferred generic term is Audio Description.

Council members asked Joel many questions about how to help blind patrons navigate a DVD to play the described audio track. Debee Armstrong agreed to summarize Joel's presentation and supplement it with information from his web site, as well as summarize Council member suggestions as an article submission for BTBL News (library newsletter). Independent access to a DVS audio track without sighted assistance can be challenging.

Joel emphasized that more accessible equipment is being developed, but the design of

DVD menus is not a feature under control by audio description vendors.  
Joel Snyder contact info: jsnyder@acb.org or jsnyder@audiodescribe.com.

## **BTBL Customer Demographics/Marketing Outreach**

The Council discussed some demographic data provided by BTBL staff. The data shows that a huge population of legally blind people are not taking advantage of BTBL library services. Outreach to the non-patron populations is imperative. Demographics for counties, for which patron numbers were provided, differ, and group members identified the need for outreach in more rural areas.

Mike doesn't have the staff to do outreach as effectively as he wishes, thus his request for the Council members to help. Current outreach efforts include: letters drafted by Alan Smith to Northern California public library directors and an article for submission to the California Library Association newsletter. Mike is researching a plan for BTBL to provide large print stickers and/or bookmarks for Northern California libraries with large print collections. A Council goal is to ensure that web links to BTBL are shared with public libraries and their Friends organizations.

BTBL serves 9,200 patrons. Texas by contrast serves 20,000 and Southern California 29,000. BTBL serves a large geographical but less dense population that is more spread out, making outreach even more critical.

The Council discussed some details for improving the draft Outreach letter. The overall goal was to make it more thorough. Organizations to target for outreach included:

- Veterans; both at veterans rehab centers primarily through the VIST coordinators, and veterans centers which serve the general veteran population. Margie Donovan suggested that VIST coordinator should be the single point of contact because to receive rehabilitation services, blinded veterans must go through that person first. Thomas Mason and Margie Donovan will work on outreach to veterans.
- Children can be reached through school superintendents and CTVEH (California Transcribers and Teachers of the visually handicapped). Margie made the point that transcribers have more time than teachers and often use that extra time to talk more to parents.
- Community colleges through the list of DSP&S coordinators, contacting blindness centers (i.e. Vista Center, Lions blind centers, and the Skills and Orientation Center). Margie agreed to contact several of these blindness centers; Debee agreed to work on outreach to community colleges. Roslyn McCoy volunteered to speak with Selva directors who work with special education populations but will need help getting names of persons to contact.

Based on the discussion of outreach efforts by various members, Margie suggested that the BUAC Secretary include a list of action items at the end of the minutes.

## **Tour for Legislators**

The Council discussed the idea to invite freshmen legislators to tour the BTBL facility after fall elections but before they become too busy with other matters. How could these new legislators be enticed to visit BTBL? Mike will discuss the idea with the State Librarian's Office about the feasibility of such a tour.

The Council discussed ways to make such a tour really interesting, with Council members on site to read Braille , demonstrate a Braille embosser and the NLS digital player, and Braille books both in the basement and on display in the BTBL reading room. The Council feels it is vitally important that lawmakers see what their budgetary funds are providing and how people use the service.

## **Reading Room Update**

Mike reported on progress in the reading room. This is the public room where patrons can drop in to browse. The BTBL now has sole ownership of the room after sharing it with other sections for the past five years during building renovations.

BTBL will be re-installing study carols with CCTVs and one stand-alone Kurzweil reader. The library already has computers with access technology, Braille and large print books, NLS players and Wi-Fi which is used by the general public in addition to BTBL patrons

Mike solicited further suggestions for ways to make the reading room more attractive to the general public. He has many ideas, including a children's corner, vendor fair, tech classes, bimonthly descriptive movie showing, Braille chess/backgammon tournaments, etc.,

The Council agreed with his plans for a locked glass cabinet with a history of Braille and a history of the Talking book program. There was consensus that when people went on tours of the capitol and the state library that they could take a quick excursion across the street to see the BTBL reading room, thus the need to have more on display. Mike welcomes further ideas for publicizing the reading room.

## **BTBL Improvement Suggestions**

Members suggested:

- That the BTBL catalog search become more user-friendly. Alan in particular would like to see a Google-style search, where users wouldn't need to know the exact spelling of an author's name. BTBL is already in the process of upgrading the software that provides the user interface for searching its catalog. It will contain a "sounds like" search plus a wild card search, Mike would like members to continue to use it and provide feedback.

- Debee feels that more documentation on how to search would help, and would like to see a feedback form users could fill out when they have a search that isn't working.

## **Recruitment of New Members**

Counties in the northern part of the state near Redding and Eureka need to be represented. Margie is particularly interested in getting younger people on the Council, and will talk both with the California School for the Blind and the Vista center, as well as Junior Blind. Reaching out to more people who have disabilities other than blindness is another goal. Debee will post to the Alternate Media list, which serves all specialists in California about the need for BUAC members who are students or have disabilities other than blindness.

## **2015 Meeting Schedule**

Members unanimously agreed to quarterly meetings. There was debate on whether Saturdays or weekdays worked better due to varying member schedules. The next meeting will be on Saturday, January 3, 2015. The spring quarterly meeting date is scheduled for Saturday, April 4, 2015. Official motions for both these dates were voted on and carried.

Mike suggested rather holding meetings in December and March, because there are fewer conflicts with holidays. Margie pointed out that if more youth representation comes about; the Council would need to meet on Saturdays because it's almost impossible for students to get time off from school during the week.

Because the first Saturday of summer 2015 is July 4, the Council was undecided about the summer quarterly meeting date and postponed its discussion to the January meeting. It was decided that Council meetings will begin at 10 AM.

## **Future Agenda Items**

- Mike emphasized he'd like the agenda to include a discussion of further ways to improve library services.
- The Council agreed to discuss the need for additional committees.
- Members will report on their action items.
- The selection committee will give a report.
- Other items can be proposed via Email.

The meeting adjourned at 2:47 PM.

Minutes composed by Deborah Armstrong