

# Meeting Minutes: Communication Center Advisory Committee Meeting

Date: 12/19/2024

Minutes prepared by: Joua Lor

Location: Zoom

## Attendance

* Members: Steve Jacobson, Catherine Durivage, Lynn Johnson, Diane Dohnalik, Tom Heinl, Rocky Hart, Ryan Strunk
* Absent: Jeff Mihelich who had an excused absence
* SSB Staff: Dave Andrews, Joe Papke, Jeff Behl, Angela Bodensteiner
* Absent: Brianna (Bri) Holeman, Joua Lor, , Jay Maruska
* Others: Judy Sanders (SRCB chair)

## Meeting Minutes

* Steve J. called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm.
* Ryan S. moved to approve the June 23, 2024; meeting minutes as mailed.
* Rocky H. seconded. All members approved the minutes as mailed.
* Jeff Mihelich is the new committee member but not present.

## SSB Update

* New Volunteer Coordinator is Rebecca Glassing.

## Alexa App Update

* New feature adding is expanding archive from 1 week to 2 weeks.
  + The new program will replace the existing program every 2 weeks.
* New feature adding is ability to speed up program in archive when listening.
  + Will add 3 more speed options in addition to normal speed.
  + Committee will need to pick the 3 different speeds to set the speed parameters when files are being saved in the archive.
  + The system automatically takes the recorded file, runs it through a program that speeds it up according to the parameters set, and then save the files in the archive. Listeners will have the options to choose from those 3 different speeds, plus the normal speed.
  + The archive files are saved on One-on-One web hosting (IONOS) and cost about $20.00 per month.
  + Do not have data on what speeds listeners use in existing programs. Can track programs listeners access but not the speed.
* Dave A. played the different speed levels for the members.
  + Real-time (normal), 1.5, 1.75, 2.0, 2.25, 2.5, 3.0
  + Coach the readers to have the same pace but might vary from reader to reader.
  + Recording quality may vary depending on where it is being recorded.
  + Think of listening devices being used: headphone set, hearing aids, Bluetooth device, etc.
  + Tailoring the speeds to people using the Alexa so most likely without headphone.
  + iPhone users can speed up using their phone.
  + Members suggested having a slower speed than normal, .75 for older listeners or listeners in rehab.
  + Apple podcasts speed range from .75 to 2.2.
  + Quick search on the internet shows speed 1.25 as the preferred.
  + Could switch the speed levels at a later date if listeners are not using a speed.
  + Will talk to developer to see if we can track the speeds being accessed.
  + Members agreed on speeds 0.75 as the slowest and 1.75 as the fastest. Middle speed range between 1.25 and 1.5.
  + Dave A. will send out updates to members.

## Meeting Topics

* Preparing braille and audio material for personal requests
* Braille production and braille transcription
* Braille software updates and compact shelving upgrades
* Tactile graphic
* Revisit Alexa skill updates when ready to test new updates

## Next Meeting and Adjourn

* Next meeting date tentatively scheduled for Thursday, February 27, 2025.
* Rocky H. moved to adjourn the meeting. Ryan S. seconded. All members approved to adjourn the meeting at 3:18 pm.

**Communication Center Advisory Committee Preview Reports**

**December, 2024**

**Audio Services**

We’re seeing an increase of inquiries from K-12 teachers around the state, possibly the result of increased outreach efforts by Lisa Larges and Lisa Rogers. On a related note, Lisa L, Lisa R, Molly McGilp, and I met on December 3rd with teachers from MDE who specialize in helping students with disabilities. They were quite interested to learn we are serving students who may be fully sighted but have other qualifying print disabilities.

Books converted to audio continue to be the predominant request we receive, but we’ve seen a few cases recently of requests for Large Print and e-Text, which we have been able to fulfill.

And, a warm welcome to our new Volunteer Coordinator Rebecca Glassing! We wish her the very best as she learns her new position!

**Braille**

**Braille Services Provided to Minnesota Students**

**Kindergarten through Grade 12**

**From 07/01/24 To 12/09/24**

**Number of students served: 33**

Number of braille titles purchased from other states:                    **117**

Number of braille titles newly transcribed by CC:                        **105**

Number of braille titles reproduced and reused by CC:       **198**

**Total number of braille titles provided:                            420**

Number braille pages purchased from other states**: 109,770**

Number of braille pages newly transcribed by CC:                 **8,833**

Number of braille pages reproduced and reused by CC:    **56,077**

**Total braille pages provided to Minnesota students:       174,680**

**Development Office**

For two decades, SSB’s Development Director, Angela Bodensteiner, has been working with Liz and Ed Kolstad and their family to help carry out their wishes to support the Communication Center with a generous gift through their estate. This week, the first part of that gift, which will total more than $400,000, was received by SSB.

Angela has many fond memories of the Kolstads, who were born a day apart in 1920. Ed (Roald Edgar) passed away in 2013, after 93 very active years. Liz passed away just 5 days after her 103rd Birthday.

Ed was an especially avid consumer of the Radio Talking Book and SSB’s audio services. Angela also remembers how Liz, then in her 90s, carried Ed’s very heavy CCTV down the stairs to pass it along as a donation to anyone who might need it.

**Engineering**

After a long and bumpy journey, we believe that we have resolved all outstanding issues with the new equipment in SSB’s Conference Rooms. We are now working on more complete documentation.

Speaking of the Conference Rooms, three Engineering Unit staff received DEED Achievement Awards for their work on the new conference Room setup. They are Joe Niffen, Ed Stofferahn and Isaac Hanninen. Thank you for seeing this one through!

**Radio Talking Book**

Radio Talking Book has hired a new Intermittent Broadcaster, Andrea Mirenda. She’s been a volunteer reader at RTB for 14 years. She’s nearing the end of her training and will be ready to work solo shifts soon.

**Library**

**MBTBL News**

We filled our Outreach and Public Services librarian position. Susan Lubbers started in August is busy learning about the program and making contacts with our institution accounts.

Effective October 1, 2024, NLS requires a parental acknowledgement form be completed for individuals under the age of 18. The policy was implemented to bring NLS into compliance with a new Library of Congress policy that took effect in March of 2024. Parents or guardians are to acknowledge that:

* Their child will receive services and equipment and will have access to the entire NLS catalog of reading material without content-based limits.
* They will return all items loaned to your child (including digital talking book cartridges, hard copy braille, book players, and accessories) when no longer needed.
* Our application has been updated to include the form, but we will be incorporating the required language into the next version of application.
* We are also contacting primary and secondary schools regarding use the NLS collection. These institutions also have to complete an acknowledgement form if they serve minors and they use the NLS collection and equipment.
* Accounts that we have not received acknowledgement forms by January 1, 2025 will be placed on hold until we receive the necessary acknowledgement.

**NLS News**

*DA2 players*

NLS is expecting delivery of the new DA2 machines from HumanWare by late January/early February. They’ve ordered 21,000 units. The machines need to pass inspection and NLS hopes to start delivery to network libraries in March or April. This timeline is not firm and depends upon delivery from HumanWare and the machines passing inspection.

Each state will receive an allotment of players based on the number of patrons using audio materials. We do not yet know what Minnesota’s allotment will be at this time.

**Collections Connections newsletter**

This is an e-newsletter assembled by the staff of the Collections Division of the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS) to highlight works of diverse interest that NLS patrons can download from BARD, the Braille and Audio Reading Download website (http://nlsbard.loc.gov).

Individuals can sign up to receive the newsletter directly, which will start in January 2025. To sign up, send an email to: connections@loc.gov.

**Smart Speaking to the Smart Speaker (Alexa Skill)**

NLS opened up beta registration for the new My Talking Books skill on Amazon Alexa-enabled smart speakers. NLS patrons who register for open beta will be on-boarded on a rolling basis starting from September 25, 2024. Patrons who wish to register for the open beta should fill out the Patron Registration Form.

The December program Smart Speaking to The Smart Speaker