



Washington Talking Books and Braille Library
November 23, 2015

Present: Pam Nyberg Kiesner, Chair; Christine Peck, Vice Chair; Patricia Cutright, Allyson Carlyle, Laura Dushkes, Trish Henry, Marci Howells, Jim Loter, Valerie McBeth, Elizabeth Partridge, Susan Whitford, Greg Lane, Jeff Martin, and Maura Walsh

Not attending: Jane Blume, Kyle Cox, and Lorena O'English

Guests: Danielle Miller, Director, WTBBL and Nathan Brannon, WTBBL Patron Advisory Council

Meeting

Danielle Miller welcomed the council to Washington Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL). She has been the director for eight years and is quite passionate about the library. She said she always welcomes the opportunity to have visitors because that allows her to showcase what WTBBL does. She introduced Nathan Brannon from the Patron Advisory Council who was a guest at our meeting and a presenter in the afternoon program. Miller shared interesting anecdotes from the recent exhibition by the China Braille Press, which coincided with the Chinese president's visit to the US and Seattle last September.

We reviewed and approved the September 10th meeting notes. We agreed to change the order of the talk and tour in the afternoon's agenda.

State Librarian Report

Lane updated Council on the search for the new State Librarian. The Secretary of State is reposting the position. They are being thoughtful about this important hire, conscientiously taking a step back and deciding where to go. The highest priority is to find a communicator who can market libraries and create a sense of value. The last decade presented a great deal of turmoil without a chance to envision what the library can be.

The Secretary of State is firmly committed to Washington State Library and the greater library community as seen by the efforts last year to reestablish the financial commitment from the Legislature. Libraries have changed a lot and the Secretary believes in the very relevant role Washington State Library has in making all libraries successful. Lane is trying to talk to library leaders around the state to get a better idea of what we need. Lane shared what he'd learned from his visits so far and answered questions from the Council about the search as well as the upcoming legislative session and what the role of the state library can and should be.

No timeline has been set, they are not rushing, but do intend to select someone as soon as it is possible to find the right person. They hope to find someone with digitization process experience and who shares a clear vision of where the library should go.

LCW Composition Review

Martin reviewed the 1998 rationale behind the current composition of the Council. Discussion included ideas about the definition and value of different positions. There was also discussion about the importance of well-balanced representation by user or user community type, be that geographical, professional, academic, socioeconomic, age or interest. The idea of technology has certainly changed enormously, as evidenced in the applications for the current Council vacancy.

We unanimously decided to change the term ‘disadvantaged’ to ‘underserved’. We agreed that it would be beneficial to create a new position for a community partner. This person would represent the non-librarian voice. There were a number of questions about how this could be accomplished. We agreed to continue the conversation and want to consider

- How to select
- Length of appointment
- Eligibility to vote
- Creating community outreach

Nominations Committee Report

Loter explained that the committee had received seven applications for the open position. Each of the members read each application separately, scored it, and then they met to review them as a committee. They were unanimous from the start and unreservedly recommended Anne Lally, Head of the Digital Initiatives Program at the University of Washington. Our current Chair and Co-Chair also agreed to serve another year. All these recommendations were unanimously approved by the Council.

Lane then presented a certificate and letter of appreciation to Loter, who was attending his final meeting as a Council member.

LSTA Five-Year Evaluation and Five-Year Plan

It is time to develop the new plan and evaluation. Martin reported that IMLS hasn’t released guidelines, and anticipates that it may do so at the state programs convening in April. He has contacted Samantha Becker at the iSchool. She is interested in doing the evaluation again as well as developing the five-year plan. There may be cost savings in one person doing both.

We will need demographic analysis to include in the plan. Martin showed and explained how we’ll marry perceived needs (by library constituents) to demographics. Our goals will be to identify those programs and activities we hope to support. Martin plans to share this document with the Council for evaluation and suggestions before submitting it. Then LSTA has 3 months to review and evaluate. We would like a plan

broad enough to allow progress in any number of ways; IMLS may prefer something narrower. This narrower version means amendments may be required if we later decide to vary our programming.

There was concern over the timing of this given the imminent naming of a new State Librarian. It was felt by some that it would be better to wait so that the new librarian may have more input. Martin felt that without knowing when this position will be filled, we can't know if we would have sufficient time. We decided that we would go forward, keeping the Secretary and Lane informed, trying to accomplish as much of the preliminary work as possible, and aligning with the Secretary's vision for the Washington State Library.

Council will be involved along the way. Kiesner suggested that we may be able to add a public hearings segment to a regular Council meeting in order to give people a forum for contributing. The library community could help get the word out to our extended communities. Cutright added that this would validate the process even more and be inclusive on a broad scale. Cox suggested Spokane as a good location.

Training and CE: Washington Talking Book & Braille Library

In 1906 the library began and in 1907 the first embossed books for the blind were circulated by Seattle Public Library. In 1931 the Washington library became part of the national braille and talking books network started by the Library of Congress (Pratt Smoot Act). In 1934 talking books were introduced on special phonograph records. By then, the library was serving Washington, Montana and Alaska. Now there are 57 libraries like ours in the US and possessions. All services must be 100% free. We serve the reading disabled: patrons with dyslexia, autism, Alzheimer's, or anything organic that can cause a problem that impedes using regular reading materials. Up to 12% of our population may be eligible, but a medical diagnosis is required. School libraries can have account as can other places where there are groups of eligible patrons.

Brannon was not encouraged to learn braille even though he had severely impaired vision as child. Rather the emphasis was on trying to keep him in the mainstream as a regular reader. Reading only braille was considered a greater limitation. He explained what devices were available over time to him as a WTBBL client. He also talked about the difficulties for this community with unemployment near 75%. Other technology has not been an answer – 90% of those who have a college education and a professional job have braille. It is hard to teach and learn, but the earlier learned the better; early literacy is equally important in this population. The Braille Bill (1985) allows any parent to request braille instruction.

When blind come to your library the staff needs to be comfortable. The blind can enjoy many regular library services and materials. New universal braille is coming January 4, 2016. (The US is adopting the world braille system.) WTBBL hosts both summer reading and early literacy classes.

We concluded with a tour of the library.

Information sharing, unfinished business, and items for next agenda

We discussed possible meeting places for upcoming meetings and shared upcoming job openings. We will explore the possibility of meeting in eastern Washington with a possible visit to one of the institutional libraries for one meeting and a small rural or special library for another.