

# Meeting Minutes: Communication Center Advisory Committee Meeting

Date: 3/26/24

Minutes prepared by: Joua Lor

Location: Zoom

## Attendance

* Members: Steve Jacobson, Catherine Durivage, Lynn Johnson, Diane Dohnalik, Tom Heinl, Rocky Hart, Frank Leonard Eller
* SSB Staff: Dave Andrews, Jay Maruska, Joe Papke, Vicky Roberts, Molly McGilp, Joua Lor
* Absent: Brianna (Bri) Holeman, Jeff Behl, Angela Bodensteiner, Catalina Martinez

## Meeting Minutes

* Steve J. called the meeting to order at 2:04 pm.
* Tom H. motioned to approve the January 17, 2024 meeting minutes as e-mailed.

Rocky H. seconded. All members approved the minutes as mailed.

* Correct November 2023 meeting date to November 29, 2023.

## SSB Staff Update

* Molly McGilp is the new Audio Services librarian.
* Annette Plante is the new Braille office specialist.
* Process in hiring new engineering staff. Waiting on HR. Primarily in house to duplicating recordings, repair digital players, manage home recording volunteers, home recording stations and responsible for conference room technologies.
* Duluth volunteer recognition event coming up on Friday, April 5. Fergus Falls, Mankato, Duluth, St. Cloud, Rochester and metro are recording sites.
* Tom Conry hired permanently in RTB.

## Radio Talking Book (RTB) Book Selection

* There are 11 hours of books every day, Monday through Friday.
* 50% fiction and 50% non-fiction split into genres and programming categories.
* Joe P. reads various book reviews in the Star Tribune, Pioneer Press, New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal and also cross reference reviews on Amazon. Keeps a spreadsheet of well – reviewed books and which program they could go on.
* 4 or 5 times a year, Joe P. will do an inventory and refers to the spreadsheet for books.
* Whenever possible, do focus on local authors, local publishers, local subject matter, and books that have a commercial audio release. Amazon will list whether a book will have a commercial audio release or not.
* Have relationships with local publishers who will send their books and don’t have to buy them.
* Local publishers: University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota Historical Society Press, Coffee House Press, A Gray Wolf Press and recently Milkweed Press.
* Buy books from local book store Magers & Quinn Booksellers and get 21-22% off of list price. They give credits for buying books. Half Price Books also buys books.
* Open to book suggestions from volunteer readers and listeners. Books needs to be within a year or two, generally not reading older material.
* Will check if NLS has the audio book before a book is purchased and RTB records it. Once RTB starts recording a book, NLS might have recorded it too. Not sure how to avoid the crossover.

## National Library Service (NLS) Book Selection

* NLS book selection criteria based on recreational informational needs of program users. Focus on both non-fiction and fiction and magazines. Do not choose textbooks or curriculum-related materials.
* Books have to be available in printer digital format, positively reviewed in widely distributed publications.
* Have made exceptions to bestsellers that do not meet the positive review criteria.
* Have relationship with commercial audiobook producers where NLS gets the audio files directly from them. This way, NLS usually have audio book ready on BARD between 5-10 days.
* Books requests can be submitted online to NLS and criteria is that it must be published within the past 5 years.
* Content Advisory Committee that advises and make recommendations to NLS on content and balance of their collection. There’s been a push to get more peripheral books available, more braille books and different subject matters so the collection is representative of different backgrounds and points of view.

## Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library (MBTBL) Book Selection

* MBTBL has a collection of large print book, audio recording program and descriptive videos.
* Collection development policy for large print books: focus on adult and children’s books, both fiction and non-fiction.
* Collection development policy for audiobook: focus on books about Minnesota, Minnesota authors or a Midwest interest. Do not select books that are going to be in the national collection, Like John Snaford, William K. Krueger, or some of the other Minnesota-related authors.
* There are librarians who look at availability. Patrons can request for materials. Usually purchase printed books because have volunteers recording.
* Receive monthly recorded book list from Joe P. and those will be added to the collection. Sometimes there will be duplicates with NLS so notify SSB to not put on BARD.
* MBTBL not much overlap with RTB

## Braille Book Selection

* Books and materials are sent in for Braille by requests from K-12 schools, college students and adult request materials.
* Priority is students grade K-12. Have an interagency agreement with the Minnesota (MN) Department of Education to provide textbooks to students in grades K-12. MN is a requested textbook state – primary teacher gives the vision (TBVI) teacher a specific textbook who will then submit a request to Braille.
* TBVI teachers receives an Accessible Educational Materials (AEM) document with information on the process of ordering books. First steps is to check with the MBTBL before submitting an online request form.
* The online request form is on the website [Braille Transcription / State Services for the Blind (mn.gov)](https://mn.gov/deed/ssb/braille/braille/braille.jsp)
* Vicky R. does the research on the requested books.
	1. If the book is available from other vendors by looking it up in the American Printing House Louis database. If yes, send out a quote to the vendor to purchase and send it off to the school.
	2. If the book is already in our own library we can just send out or have to order another copy if it’s in use.
	3. If it is not available in braille elsewhere, SSB Braille is contractually obligated to produce the book for the student.
* Transcribing a textbook: request school to send in 2 original print copies for the transcribers and in house proof readers. Transcribing can take up to a year so will work with the school syllabus to get it out in time.
* The last resort will be bookshare books.
* Deadline for school year 2024-2025 is May 15th, 2024. Over 66 requested books so far for next school year. Average 300 to 320 books per year.
* Legally blind adults can also request materials (examples: cookbooks, college textbooks, etc.)

## Preview Report Updates

* Engineering did a request for proposal (RFP) for recording software to record in the Daisy format. Got 1 response but that vendor couldn’t fulfill all the tasks in the RFP.
* A couple DEED developers created a prototype of a Daisy recording piece of software and showed how they could make it work to include all the tasks needed.
* MN.IT/DEED will write the software instead of looking for vendors. This software will be used in conjunction with KLAS which will handle management-type tasks.

## Next Meeting and Adjourn

* Tentatively scheduled next meeting for Wednesday, May 22, 2024 at 2:00 pm.
* Ryan S. motioned to adjourn the meeting. Rocky H. seconded. All members approved to adjourn the meeting at 3:23 pm.

**Communication Center Advisory Committee Preview Reports**

**March, 2024**

# Audio Services

Molly McGilp is our new Communication Center librarian. Molly earned her Master’s in Library and Information Science from the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, and she brings a wealth of library and information specialist skills from her time with the Hennepin County Library system. We’re absolutely thrilled to have her on our team! She’s a real librarian and information specialist. Jeff was a pretend librarian and information specialist. Our customers should immediately notice the difference. Molly is your first point of contact in the custom recording process. Welcome Molly!

We are currently in the process of recording a 270 page English – Somali Legal Dictionary. Our Workforce Development unit has a client who wishes to become a certified legal interpreter. The book features the English word first, then the full interpretation and explanation of the word in Somali. Sometimes the Somali interpretations are more than a page long! Workforce Development hired a native Somali speaker from a local interpreting service, and we record in 2 hour sessions. We’re currently working in the letter C.

# Braille

**Braille Services Provided to Minnesota Students**

**Kindergarten through Grade 12**

**From 07/01/23 To 03/18/24**

Number of students served: 40

Number of braille titles purchased from other states: 72

Number of braille titles newly transcribed by CC: 149

Number of braille titles reproduced and reused by CC: 159

Total number of braille titles provided: 380

Number braille pages purchased from other states: 105,800

Number of braille pages newly transcribed by CC: 8,761

Number of braille pages reproduced and reused by CC: 74,690

Total braille pages provided to Minnesota students: 189,251

# Development

I am currently serving on two sub-committees- the Diversity Spotlight Committee and the Logo Committee within the State of MN: DEED: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Committee

FFY20024 Annual Fund (from 10.01.2023 to 2.28.2024) has resulted in just over a total of $74,160 which included 418 gifts from nearly 400 donors. To date in FFY2024 we have not received any Endowment gifts.  Not included in this total is a $20,00 grant we received today from The Saint Paul and Minnesota Foundation.

As of 2.28.24, the November Direct Mail Solicitation has resulted in 279 gifts totaling $21,542.

The April 2024 Planned Giving Newsletter will drop in mailboxes mid-April and is being sent to around 2,000 targeted donors.  The content of the newsletter focuses on the importance of having a will or trust in place.

# Engineering

I am pleased to announce that there is a new version of the Radio Talking Book app for smart phones – Android and iOS, which is now available. The new features include:

* Improved the sound quality for both the playback of the live stream and the Archives
* Added the ability to speed up or slow down playback when listening to an archived program
* Updated the program schedule
* Moved development to a new, more modern framework, to facilitate future updates
* Various bug fixes

The app can be found in the Apple iOS App store and the Google Play Store for Android. Search for “Radio Talking Book” without the quotes, and make sure it says Minnesota.

As you know, we are in the process of moving our management and recording processes to new, more modern software. The work to convert the Braille Unit to the KLAS software from Keystone Systems continues. The work is slow, but is making progress – the tasks are many and the processes are complex.

We conducted a RFP, request for proposal, for recording software. The responses were not what we had hoped for. Recently, MN.IT development staff did a feasibility study and software prototype to see if we could reuse some of our existing code. They are using AI to move some of the code forward, and it seems quite feasible. They also wrote a basic prototype of recording software to demonstrate the structuring and recording of a DAISY book. We were impressed with the progress they made in a short time.

Consequently, we have made the decision to create our own software, rather than using an existing recording program, like Hindenburg. The software will structure and record DAISY books. Other modules will handle tasks like volunteer management, booth scheduling, project management, duplication, shipping and receiving, and interfacing with KLAS which will hold orders, customer info etc. We hope to finish the Braille conversion by June 30, then move on to the Audio Services and RTB work.

# Radio Talking Book

I am very happy to announce that we have offered the Radio Talking Book Program and Volunteer Coordinator position to Tom Conry, and that Tom has accepted.

Tom was hired as an RTB intermittent broadcaster in late 2022.  Over Tom’s first six months of employment, Tony Lopez began training him on the Volunteer Coordinator duties so Tom could fill in when Tony was out.  When Tony passed away unexpectedly last July, Tom was able to cover those duties to help keep the station afloat.

I have been very impressed by Tom’s excellent work and attention to detail while serving as an interim over the past seven and a half months.  As a permanent member of the staff I know he will continue to help ensure RTB is a high quality service for our listeners and a great environment for our volunteers too.

The other news is that volunteer Philip Lowry has offered to create a podcast for broadcast on RTB about issues for people with blindness.  The current plan would be to air it four times a year when we have 5-Sunday months (though it likely won’t be ready for this month).  Here’s the PSA we’ve put together, looking for feedback:

This is Philip Lowry, a volunteer reader with Radio Talking Book.

RTB is creating a new podcast series that will address issues relevant to the vision loss community.

We hope to explore a wide range of topics, from interviewing experts about the latest medical and technological advances in vision loss, to hearing personal stories that might inspire you; we could look at the pros and cons of having a guide dog, or even practical advice about the best way to navigate the dating world.

We want this new offering to be useful, interesting, and fun.  Most importantly, we want it to be programing that reflects what you want to hear.  To do that, we need your help.

Please call us with your suggestions for this new program at 651-642-0880.

Or email Program Coordinator Tom Conry at thomas.conry@state.mn.us

Thank you for your input!

# Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library

## MBTBL News

We continue to settle into our new location. We hope to have new staff coming on board in the near future.

With the completion of our area in the lower level, we have been able to unbox all our large print books and make them available for circulation. We are working on unboxing our in-house collection of print/braille books.

We have a few new Spanish language children’s print/braille books for grades 3-6. They contain a QR code to access Spanish audio version.

## NLS News

The National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled and the Library of Congress are excited to be participating in America’s Field Trip, part of the official celebration of the nation’s semiquincentennial – the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.

America’s Field Trip is a nationwide contest inviting students in grades 3 through 12 to submit artwork, videos, or essays responding to the question “What does America mean to you?” First-place winners will have the opportunity to participate in special tours at historical, educational, and cultural sites across the country such as Yellowstone National Park, the Statue of Liberty, and the Library of Congress.

The deadline to enter is May 17, 2024. Find more information and submission guidelines at [https://america250.org/FieldTrip/](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Famerica250.org%2FFieldTrip%2F&data=05%7C02%7Cdavid.b.andrews%40state.mn.us%7C375af42cf006414e898708dc4385d123%7Ceb14b04624c445198f26b89c2159828c%7C0%7C0%7C638459489214613246%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=%2F4es4rBbBf7EvXkcbNieaD6giRkb0sjcSzjILDBLKaI%3D&reserved=0).

## NLS BARD and BARD Mobile

BARD Mobile iOS version 2.2.2  and BARD Mobile Fire OS Version 2.0.0 have been recently released.

The latest version of BARD mobile for iOS now offers shortcuts via the app.  The app can now be operated by voice commands for playback and navigation, including stopping and resuming playback, fast-forwarding and rewinding by various intervals, and setting a sleep timer or a bookmark. Users can add Siri shortcuts in the app’s settings.

## Magazines

The magazine, *American History,* is no longer available as a print publication.  The Spring 2024 issue will be the last issue available to our patrons in audio.

The following three audio magazines are now available:

* ***Best Friends*** - *Best Friends* magazine is the nation's most uplifting magazine for pet lovers. Full of engaging stories, happy tales of rescue and gorgeous photos, the magazine is the official publication of Best Friends Animal Society, a national nonprofit membership organization dedicated to saving the lives of homeless pets.”
* ***Magnolia Journal -*** “The *Magnolia Journal* is a quarterly magazine by Chip and Joanna Gaines containing inspiration for life and home. Useful as a resource and a guide to living well, the *Magnolia Journal* contains stories, recipes, tips, and useful information you will refer back to again and again.”
* ***Mother Jones -*** “*Mother Jones* is a nonprofit American progressive magazine that focuses on news, commentary, and investigative journalism on topics including politics, environment, human rights, health and culture.”

Contact the library to receive these publications by mail on cartridge. They will also be available to download via BARD.



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Location: Zoom

## Attendance

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* SSB Staff: Dave Andrews, Jeff Behl, Jay Maruska, Joe Papke, Brianna (Bri) Holeman, Angela Bodensteiner,
* Absent: Catalina Martinez, Ryan Strunk, Frank Eller

## Meeting Minutes

* Steve J. called the meeting to order at 2:02 pm.
* Catherine D. motioned to approve the November 27, 2023 meeting minutes as e-mailed.

Tom H. seconded. All members approved the minutes as mailed.

## SSB Staff Update

* Lisa Rogers is the new Marketing and Outreach Coordinator.
* Jeremy Hoke is the new Facilities and Safety Supervisor.
* Jeff Johnson, Electronics Technician, resigned.
* Interviewed for Audio Services librarian, doing background check and hope to make an offer soon.
* Braille office specialist ongoing interviews with 6 candidates.

## Radio Talking Book (RTB) Broadcasting (Dave Andrews)

* Broadcast 24 hours/365 days on a schedule – schedule is available on the web.
* Streaming can be access online – mnssb.org/rtb – select listen button on the webpage for current live streaming.
* Archive is available for a week after broadcast.
* Can also access on android app and Apple iOs app – Playstore to download free app “Radio Talking Book” and make sure it says Minnesota.
* Also available on Alexa Skill (Google action was stopped because of the google play action discontinued).
* Working on version to speed up and slow down on Archives and newspaper readings.
	+ What about lengthening the archive time? Possible but it is the logistics behind it and staff capacity.
* SSB purchased Amazon Echo Dots and give out to people who need them – contact Ronnie Washington.
* Development cycle – ideas to make the development better comes from users.
* Receive money from the TAMM Fund is administered by Minnesota Department of Commerce to pay for apps development (android, Alexa skill and Ios) and the NFB Newsline.
* Advisory committee submit any ideas and thoughts on app development to Dave A.

## Future Meeting Agenda

* Explore NFB Newsline
* Demonstrate RTB broadcast streaming on Alexa skill
* Send Steve J. any ideas

## Preview Reports

* Angela B. emailed the most recent development update and Dave A. will include in Preview Reports.

## Next Meeting and Adjourn

* Tentatively scheduled next meeting for Tuesday, March 26 at 2:00 pm.
* Rocky H. motioned to adjourn the meeting. Tom H. seconded. All members approved to adjourn the meeting at 2:50 pm.