**LUA LEDGER**

LIBRARY USERS OF AMERICA, INC. Winter/Spring 2017/2018

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Produced inBraille, Large Print, Digital Cartridge and EmailFor LUA by the Perkins LibraryWatertown, Massachusetts

Library Users of America, Inc. is a Special Interest Affiliate of the American Council of the Blind

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**President's Message**Down Texas WayBrian CharlsonMany of you have attended the American Council of the Blind Conference and Convention at least once. I remember my first time. The convention was in Florida, and I had never been to such a large hotel and had never been a part of such a large event.

With many ACB events behind me, both national conventions, legislative seminars and mid-year meetings, the last thing I thought would happen to me was being overwhelmed by a library conference. I should have taken to heart the adage "Everything in Texas is big!" The Texas Library Association is BIG!

Back in April 2017, it was my pleasure to attend and to speak at the Texas Library Association Conference held in San Antonio. While most of the time I get invited to speak at such conference because someone heard me speak at some other public event, this time the invitation came from an old classmate of Kim’s, the President of ACB, Director of the Perkins Braille and Talking Book Library, and my wife. Jeanne Standley attended the University of North Texas School of Library and Information Science in Denton Texas with Kim and our good friend Vicki Vogt.

My topic at such events typically hovers around "It is my library too!" My goal is to convince those in attendance that a blind or visually impaired person has every right to expect to have access to the holdings and services of a public, academic or specialized library. We pay taxes, attend school and even hold jobs.

By this point, I have spoken on this topic at six library conferences and before upwards of 350 librarians, not to mention 100 students attending library schools. Even if I haven't made accessibility their top concern, I am positive I have succeeded in making it an issue to consider each time they purchase technology, start a new service or see a person with a disability at their library.

Back at home, the staff of the Watertown Public Library know who I am and know to treat every person with a disability with respect and to offer them the same fine service they provide their non-disabled patrons. When the disabled citizens of Watertown drop into the library, they know that they are welcome and that the staff will be helpful.

Now comes my ask of you. While I, like you, enjoy the books and services of my Braille and Talking Book Library, I need each of you to reach out to your public library and ask them to provide you the same access and services they provide others. If each of us takes on this responsibility, it will take no time at all for library schools to include instruction in accessibility; and for companies who offer downloadable books and periodicals to build accessibility into their products rather than relying on each library to work out some kind of patched-in way to give us access. It will also help communities to understand that blind and visually impaired people enjoy the printed word as much as they do and have the right to expect complete access to public resources, including the library.

Please go and get a library card from your public library and let them know what you need and what you expect. Write us here at the "Ledger" and let us get your story of success with access out to others. Together we can change our communities.

**Editor's Message**In Search of the FuturePaul Edwards

There may well be a sense in which those of us who are blind who read have sat back and let things happen to us! There was a time a few years ago when we protested that Kindle was not accessible. We challenged the silly assertions of authors that synthetic speech was the same as a narrated recording. We challenged the eclectic collection choices that NLS was making at the time when experimental literature seemed to be in ascendance. Where have readers been over the last few years? Is everything perfect? Are there not issues just as substantive as those that existed when we were more assertive about what we wanted?

Nook is still relatively unfriendly. The Marrakesh Treaty remains unsigned. Many of the suggestions made at the Braille Summit held in Boston a few years ago have not gone very far. There have not been braille books produced that take into account many of the preferences we proposed. We argued that there needed to be more braille books with diagrams. We could use more atlases and more books that feature print organized spacially. This applies to novels and poetry where the location of words is as integral to the meaning of what is there as the words themselves are.

These examples are just the tip of the iceberg. Public libraries that are covered under title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act are being allowed to purchase audio books that are inaccessible. Many public libraries also have websites that are virtually unusable by people who are blind. There is almost a feeling that blind people are supposed to use “their library”, which is NLS or state and subregional libraries. There was a time when most libraries had accessible computers that blind folks could use. Recently in Broward County in Florida, most of the branches had nothing available. Having equipment isn't enough either. Staff must be trained to help patrons use the equipment.

At least part of the reason that things are as they are is that we have come a huge distance over the past few decades. Audible has made getting the best sellers in narrated form easy and immediate. Kindle has also immensely multiplied the number and range of books that we can get. Bookshare has grown exponentially. BARD has created a direct way to download NLS titles to a plethora of devices. The truth is that we now have access to more than we can possibly read that is easy to get and relatively easy to read. If we can get our literary fix easily, why bitch?

It is easy to be complacent, but it's also dangerous. What do blind kids do who come from homes where computers don't exist when they have a school assignment to do? What do poor blind people do who don't have access to computers? Libraries are for everyone: not just those who don't have disabilities! We must consider how we can create again the kind of groundswell that made public libraries pay attention for the first decade after the ADA was passed. We also need to be sure that blind people are prepared to make use of what they get. I served on a number of public library advisory committees who spent money to create access, only to find that when they built it, nobody came. ACB and LUA must become public library advocates and must encourage kids to make use of a resource that is under attack from all sides and needs everybody's support if it is to survive. There are many who predict that the internet will kill public libraries. I, for one, am not ready to be complicit in their demise!

This article is intended to be a starting point. Let those of us who care about reading and libraries think about what we are prepared to do to focus on what we believe the future of reading for people who are blind ought to be. Write an article for the Ledger and share your concerns. Write to the officers of LUA and tell us what we should be working on to make things better! LUA is your organization! Become active! Help us do what you think needs to be done!

**It's A Plane! It's A Bird! No It's A Podcast!**Judy Wilkinson

Why would a member (the vice-president no less) of an organization of library users be writing about podcasts? Aren't we supposed to be, um, about books? Well Dear Reader, many of today's podcasts might as well be books: talking books!

Okay, I'm (shall we say) of an age where I came to podcasts rather late in life. But hey, I'm cool! I can learn! I get ACB podcasts; I'm up on technology podcasts (Apple Vis, Tech Guys, move over!) One of my favorites from years ago is the history of the world through 100 objects produced by the United Kingdom's BBC.

But English teacher, what about your thesis statement? What about podcasts and books? I have my two nerdy nephews to thank for introducing me to entirely different genres of podcasts!

You want history? Try Mike Duncan's History of Rome (175 episodes, about 15 minutes each.) Or his History of Revolutions (including Haiti's!) Young people today don't "read" history books; they absorb all kinds of knowledge formerly found in books and other printed material through podcatcher apps like Overcast or Downcast!

But what about other, mind-bending categories of podcast? Are they fiction? Documentaries? Drama? All of the above!

Take Wooden Overcoats. A second, rival undertaker sets up shop right across the street from the established undertaker in the small island village of Pifling Vale: and the fun begins! (Think Six Feet Under meets Miss Reed.) Did I say Very British? Dramatic (or is it comic) fiction for sure!

For fantasy lovers, how about Hello From The Magic Tavern. A portal opens just behind a Burger King in Chicago, and our host meets and introduces us weekly to all kinds of characters, including a stereotypical wizard and a foul-mouthed talking flower! The first 100 episodes are numbered. Then apparently realizing they'd caught on and were going to be around for a while, the creators finally commenced season two! Did I say Very British? Just a coincidence. But still fiction.

Lovers of NPR's This American Life can get that podcast by itself (nonfiction) or from NPR, but then there was the spin-off podcast Serial: two series, each delving into a story in greater depth. Nonfiction: a documentary: right?

Then came This American Life's S-Town: a seven-part event; no other word will do because it's gothic; tragic; it's drama; it unspools like the most suspenseful novel. Who listens to this series? NPR junkies? Think again! It is one of the top 20 podcast series downloaded: ever! My husband Steve and I binge listened to most of it over 2 evenings. We couldn't face the final episode until the afternoon of the third day. It moved us beyond belief. We'd stop the Victor Stream repeatedly to ask each other questions; make comments; shed tears. No fiction ever moved us more.

Steve remarked, "Podcasts are the new, old-time radio; audio listening in all imaginable categories." One might even go so far as to say PODCASTS are the new talking books!

**At a Crossroad**Paul Edwards

This rather lengthy article will explore perhaps the most significant change in braille reading potential in the past decade. It will contain a discussion of the Orbit 20 which I have owned for nine months now. It will also include a discussion of the Braille Me which is a second inexpensive braille display which has been developed and marketed from India. I have not seen the device but have heard an interview with its developer and have read its manual. It is quite different from the Orbit but certainly has potential. Third, I want to talk about the future. In particular, I want to talk about the role that NLS is playing in making tomorrow come sooner. Whatever else comes out of this article, I think that folks will recognize that we are at a crossroad where braille reading is concerned.

Earlier issues of The Ledger have talked about the circumstances that led us to the Orbit 20. Those circumstances may well have engendered the development of the Braille Me as well. Essentially though, it is worth at least paying tribute to the international effort that led to the development of an entirely new way of producing electronic braille. It may in fact have led to many more approaches than those used by Orbit and the Braille Me which are very different from each other.

While we must celebrate the emergence of these two new technologies, we have to at least ask ourselves why it was that we had to wait so long for them to arrive? Realistically electronic braille displays have used the piezoelectric approach since the early 1980s and that approach has kept the price of braille displays exorbitant and beyond the reach of most blind people. Is the market for braille displays so small that, without the infusion of funding that was made nearly a decade ago, there was no incentive to change a system that sort of worked? As consumers of braille displays we have lived with delicate and expensive displays for a very long time. There have never been a lot of players in the braille display business. Was it in their interest to use the approach they did and maintain an oligopoly? What damage has been done to braille literacy by the failure to develop a technology that is robust, reliable and inexpensive? The fact is that, within a year, we have seen the emergence of two entirely new and different approaches to braille display technology. One of them uses a "screw" technology while the other uses magnetism. Both claim that they have been specifically developed for use in the developing world where only the very rich can currently afford braille displays and where the delicate nature of the piezoelectric design may limit reliability and even survivability.

I am not sure that some of the questions just raised will ever be answered. However, we need to celebrate the impact of this double new technology that has taken so long to be available. Hard copy braille is expensive to produce and does not do well in tropical climates. With the advent of the Marrakesh Treaty and inexpensive braille displays, are we truly at a point where there can be a renaissance of braille reading all over the world? We shouldn't forget that blind people in this country are among the poorest groups with unemployment still hovering around 70 percent. That brings us to the third component of the potential way forward.

At the Braille Summit sponsored by NLS and held at Perkins in Boston several years ago, there was overwhelming support for the idea that NLS should get involved in seeing whether there was a way that the National Library Service could distribute braille displays. By then, the project that eventually led to the Orbit had been launched, but nobody knew whether it would truly produce the results it did. Nevertheless NLS took the important step of changing the statute under which it operates to allow it to distribute braille-producing devices. They have worked with Library Users of America to explore what such a device should look like and have now released a request to see who would like to be involved in producing prototypes of what a future braille display might look like. We can expect to hear more about this process as time goes on. There is an expectation that one of the primary prerequisites for the proposed display will be that its price is as low as possible. It will be interesting to see whether companies like HumanWare and Hims decide to respond to this request. I would be surprised if they did not. Will they offer the same piezoelectric approach made cheaper because of the number of units they expect to sell? Will they work with one of the two new technologies, or will they devise a third less costly option? So that is the context for what follows. Let's now take a look at the two new kids on the block and compare them to what we had before and what we have now. They have already had a huge impact as we will see later.

The Orbit ReaderI first touched an Orbit Reader during the 2016 convention of ACB. What I saw was a prototype which was not very different from the device that eventually was put on the market at the beginning of 2017. I was determined to get one as soon as I could. I probably called the American Printing House for the Blind fifty times as the year wore on trying to order the Orbit Reader 20. They could not give me a firm date of when it was going to be available or a final price. It was very frustrating. Rumor had it that the Orbit was going to be available at the ACB convention and so, come hell or high water, I was at Exhibits very soon after they opened and made a beeline for APH to grab one before they were sold out. Imagine my shock when I discovered that they had only twenty and there would be a lottery. You could put your name into a hat or some other receptacle and, if you were very lucky, your name would be drawn and you could take a device home. I put my name in and waited with baited breath to see what would happen! LUA did a session on Sunday where we allowed a limited number of people to actually spend an hour or more playing with Orbits. At that session I heard that I had been successful and could come and pick up my Orbit on Monday. You had better believe I wasted no time!

So since July of last year, I have been the proud owner of an Orbit Reader 20 and can provide firsthand information on how it works and what it is like to use.

By the way, the price was $449 plus tax which meant that I paid a total of a little over 480 dollars. The Orbit 20 is slightly larger than the Braille Sense mini. It has 20 braille cells and does not have cursor keys though it does have a dot at characters 5 10 and 15. Each cell has 8 dots which means that extended computer braille can be supported. It can interface with Windows and Mac computers and with Android and iOs devices using both USB and bluetooth connectivity. It does not have a translator built in so what it sees is what you get. If you import a file from your computer which is a text file, it will read it in what is essentially computer braille. If you use a translator to turn the file into braille before you send it to the Orbit Reader, it will be seen as braille. The same applies going in the other direction. If you write notes in braille and save the file to your computer, it will be in braille so that, to provide an example, the word "find" would be written f i n d. Again, there are ways around this, and I am very satisfied with the way the device functions. The braille display is closest to you when the machine is properly oriented, and at either end, there are two small keys. The upper one moves back a line while the lower one moves ahead a line. I like the fact that you can choose whether to use the right or left end of the display to control movement.

Immediately behind the display are three keys: the back key to the left, the space bar in the center and the enter key on the right. Immediately above the space bar is a cursor cross with four arrow keys and a "select" button in the center. Above the cross are the six braille dot keys. They are in a straight line rather than angled. This seemed a little unusual at first, but I quickly got used to the arrangement and actually found it more comfortable than some other display key arrangements. On the back of the device there is a tiny power button, an SD card slot and a micro USB port.

I have read using very large files (more than three megs). I have had no difficulty, and the files loaded very quickly. I currently am using an eight gigabyte card and have well over five hundred books on it. There appears to be a limit to the number of files you can have in a folder, so I have ended up creating several folders to divide the books into categories. That solved the problem, and file sorting returned to perfect! If there is a single down side for this device it has to do with the noise it makes when refreshing braille cells. I didn't take it very seriously till I got to the Illinois affiliate convention. I was sitting in the back row, and somebody who was presenting from the front indicated I was reading and not paying attention. I really don't find the sound disturbing, but it can be detected more than I thought it could. I think what we need is more Orbits so mine cannot be picked out!

What is most impressive about the Orbit is its "remote" mode. This is where the interfaces with various devices happen. I had no difficulty connecting my iPhone, and the interface worked flawlessly. One of the things I liked a lot concerns how that interface works. If you are reading a book but have the phone connected, it will immediately come to life when you get a message or a notification. This lets you get to your phone very easily and effectively. I am also impressed with how the cursor cross is integrated into the command structure.

The other "mode" is "stand alone". This is the setting you use to read books or to create and edit files. It does a really good job with the braille and it has a reasonably comprehensive set of editing commands. The braille itself is very firm. It is not like the piezoelectric braille which has some give. With traditional displays you can sort of push the dots down. With the Orbit the dots stay firmly up. I think this may make the Orbit more easily read by folks with some neuropathy. (That is just my opinion; I have nothing to back it up with but my experience.)

I have been very satisfied with the Orbit Reader. I find it comfortable for both reading and writing, and it has done well interfacing with my iPhone. I have not tested it with either a Windows or Mac computer and have not tried using it with Android devices. I appreciate that there are full instructions for handling all the interfaces and Jaws drivers are available. The device also works well with NVDA. There have been two updates since I received the unit, but I have not yet done either. I think this is an area that could improve. You have to load a special Windows program or that seems to be the case before you can send the update files to the unit. I will write an addendum to this article once I have had a chance to experience the process.

The Braille MeI first became aware of the Braille Me through a podcast from "accessible world". That podcast featured an interview with the developer of the product from India. He indicated that he was looking for a distributor for the product in the United States and that he expected to have one by the time of CSUN, the computer conference in California to be held just after mid-March. I then went to the company's website and downloaded a manual. Their website is www.Innovisiontech.co. So my information on the product is based on information from these sources. I have had no opportunity to explore the actual device. It was indicated that the price would be under five hundred dollars in the US. I think it was also indicated that the case is metal rather than plastic. According to the website, the device weighs 580 grams which is just over a pound and measures 18.8cm by 13.8cm by 2.9cm. If my calculations are right that translates to 7.4 inches long, 5.4 inches deep from front to back and height 1.14 inches. It is arranged very differently than is the Orbit Reader.

Nearest you, if the device is oriented properly, is a sloping front face. Behind that are the back key, the space bar and the enter key. Behind that are the six braille keys arranged ergonomically according to the manual. Behind that are the cursor routing keys and farthest from you is the braille display. On the left side is an SD card slot. On the right is an on/off button, a connection for the AC adaptor and a USB port for connecting to other devices.

As I suggested earlier, one of the unusual elements of this device is that it only has six dots for each cell. As far as I know, this is the only braille display with only six dots currently available. At one point, there was a six dot device from Blazie Engineering. Because it has cursor routing keys, this may not be such a huge issue. In addition, there are two other ways to identify where your cursor is. One method involves causing the unused dots in the cell where your cursor is to blink. So if your cursor was on the letter b, the b would stay up while dots 3-4-5-6 would blink. The second method would take all the braille away from the display and would show a full cell in the spot where the cursor is. When you turn off the single cell approach, you go back to your full display.

I have thought a lot about this and have come to the conclusion that this is not a deal breaker for this device.

The primary intent in making this device was braille reading, and for literary braille six dots is just fine. I have seen a couple of devices which had their displays located at the rear of the product. It would take some getting used to but, again I think I could adjust to this.

Like the Orbit, this device allows for the connection of the display to various computer and phone products. Some of these connectivity options appear to be under development and, given my reading of the manual, some of the interfaces may require a good deal of learning. Bluetooth and USB connectivity are included.

The editing elements appear to be fewer than are currently available in the Orbit Reader, but it is hard to evaluate their effectiveness without actually using the device. It should also be understood that it is easier to create software than it is to make a revolutionary hardware product. The Orbit Reader allows a user to load one language in addition to the default. It seems that the Braille Me can accommodate up to five languages and the creators have already developed fifty languages. Most of these will be languages spoken in India.

For the sake of clarity, I should say that language is used for commands and may also relate to the braille rules of those languages. There is no speech in this device or in the Orbit Reader. Like the Orbit, there is no built in translation program. However there is an app for doing file conversions. I was not clear just how this app works or what it actually does. This may well be my issue rather than a problem with the company or its products. Clearly having a way to create braille files for downloading to either of these devices would be excellent. I use Bookshare to download books already in braille and could easily use braille books from BARD or NBP. As things stand now, only text files can be edited. I believe you can write grade 2 braille in this file though I don't know this for sure. As things stand, any time the device sees a brf file extension, the device turns off editing and makes the files read only. I would suspect that some of these options can be changed in the future. People are going to want to be able to write their own braille in files they create themselves. I think there are some semantic issues with the manual, so I am a little uncomfortable being categorically critical. The truth is software can change pretty easily to better meet the needs of those who will be end users.

Probably the most discouraging element of the Braille Me is its file size limit. According to the manual, the Braille Me cannot handle files larger than forty kilobytes. If this is true, I think it will seriously lose credibility in the American market and elsewhere. Virtually all books are bigger than 40 k, and without being able to change this feature, this new and exciting piece of equipment may lose out.

It is crucial that we distinguish between the software and the hardware. It appears that we have a technology here that uses a revolutionary approach to creating braille cells on a display. They call it "magnetic", and I suspect that it can be altered so as to become an eight dot display. Unlike many displays, the whole 20 cells refresh at once, and it appears that the Braille Me is faster at refreshing than is the Orbit Reader. Its importance lies in its ability to create braille on a display cheaply using a technology that is completely new and appears reliable, robust and inexpensive. Incidentally I have not heard this display in action but have gathered that the Braille Me changes its cells all at once and very quickly. There would not appear to be as much of a noise issue as with the Orbit. It is impossible to evaluate just how well the various components can be made compatible with what it seems NLS wants. I hope that this small company can find a way to prosper. Though they talk of many blind testers in India, there seem to be some decisions made that don't appear to be as consumer-oriented as they should be. Trying to sell here may be harder than might appear to initial contact. They are far behind. They still have not completely handled their interfaces with other operating systems. Their command structure seems hard to remember and may need to be updated if a wider market is what the Braille Me truly wants.

A Few Last ThoughtsThe Orbit Reader was developed with lots of input and, to a degree, under the supervision of the International Consortium that funded its emergence. The Braille Me has been on sale in India for the last several months and has already won some awards there and elsewhere. Both devices are revolutionary. They demonstrate that innovation and creativity can combine with technological competence to produce devices that have the potential to be game changers in the field of braille reading, braille production and the future for people who are blind who want to read. We are at a crossroad because international cooperation has demonstrated that something good can come out of cooperation and joint ventures. We are at a place where the Marrakesh Treaty and at least two potentially viable inexpensive and durable displays may revolutionize literacy for the blind people of the world.

In our country we are also at a crossroad. There are two new braille technologies that are already on sale. The traditional braille display people are in an interesting position. It appears that Baum and Baum USA are gone. The traditional producers of braille products have not so far changed their displays but their prices do appear to be falling. Last Summer there were several displays available for under one thousand dollars at the ACB convention. This is already revolutionary.

Can NLS create the perfect storm that will allow the traditionalists to produce products that are cheap and of high quality? Will the new kids on the block be able to find a way to get the NLS contract and make the revolution complete? But there are other concerns that we need to deal with today if we want the future to be what we believe would be best for people who are blind here.

Braille reading is apparently declining. How can we energize schools to create more enthusiasm for braille among students? How can we persuade agencies serving blind adults to place more emphasis on teaching braille? How can we as LUA members work to assure the braille renaissance we all want? We must recognize that the next few years may constitute the last best hope for braille in the world. Our medium is precious! Let's do what we can and what we must to assure it has the chance to better the lives of blind people everywhere!

**Current CLUA Capers**Bonnie Rennie

(Editor's note: this article was submitted last Fall, but is just as current today. LUA needs to congratulate CLUA for receiving the California Council of the Blind Growth Award in April of 2017 for their huge increase in membership over the previous year. I think LUA could use California's help! Thanks Bonnie!)

You love being a patron of the NLS Talking Book library. But what could make you willing, no, eager, to pay yearly dues to an organization of talking book library users? As duly elected President of California Library Users (CLUA) this is the key question for me. For there are a great many avid blind and visually impaired readers, yet relatively few of them are members of the American Council of the Blind or of LUA. We in LUA and CLUA want to offer as much incentive as we can, to attract new members and retain current ones. Below are activities the CLUA branch of LUA is implementing in order to give people reasons to join and be involved.

1. Interesting conference calls! In addition to encouraging members to participate in the LUA book discussion calls, we are offering our own themed calls, usually on the fourth Sunday evening of a month. The July LUA call on our favorite nonfiction books was a fine example of the type of stimulating interaction that makes folks want to sign up and attend. Our next call, on October 22, is on our favorite series, and why we like it.

2. Enliven and better utilize our email list. Sure, we use it to notify members of the next meeting and agenda, but we are working to make it more of a conversation of book lovers. We invite posting to the list things such as book suggestions, short book reviews, from a lay person's perspective, questions about genres, authors, or experiences of other kinds of accessible reading/listening. Thus even members who cannot attend a conference call can still benefit from a positive community of fellow book fans.

3. Pursuing development of a club T-shirt. Just as ACB has produced many styles of shirts and jackets, we like to promote accessible reading, and our CLUA organization. Wearing an attractive T-shirt while we're out and about is a great way to be visible and create public interest in our community.

4. Short workshops of interest to visually impaired readers. In May, we have scheduled a short workshop on how to set up and best use an Amazon Alexa device, for reading Kindle books for example.

5. Encouraging and perhaps leading accessible book clubs in our own communities. This is a longer range goal. Book clubs offer many kinds of social, mental and knowledge benefits to participants. Our conference calls can provide some of this opportunity. But in person community clubs, such as those hosted by a Council chapter, or a CLUA member, may be a way to draw potential new CLUA and Council members in.

Time and energy will tell just how successful CLUA will be at these efforts. Our hope is to give visually impaired friends and acquaintances good reasons to join and stay involved with LUA and CLUA.

**Into The Future**Paul Edwards

The Board of Library Users of America held a planning meeting early in February of 2018. We had met as a Board on a regular basis several times before this special meeting. However the group wanted to hold a meeting that would focus on planning for the future. The idea was to create a better organizational structure that would move Library Users into a better place.

The first decision that was taken was to create an editorial committee that would do a better job of making sure the Ledger comes out when it is supposed to and contains content that would be valuable for our members. There was a general feeling that we needed to broaden our focus. We should not only do articles on NLS, but should also continue to discuss public libraries. We decided that we should also focus some attention on other reading approaches such as Kindle and Audible.

Quite a lot of time was spent discussing advocacy. A committee was formed that will specifically work on creating a set of priorities for change that LUA would work on. Members can expect to see evidence of this group's work this summer at ACB and in future issues of the Ledger.

There is a new technology called Zoom Cloud Meeting which we may begin to use for Library Without Walls. It will allow us to get much better quality interaction and will allow participation by members using their phones as well as using computers and other devices. There is a plan to see whether we can use this application to create an ACB Radio program. Library Without Walls and other topics will be considered.

We as a Board are committed to find ways to reach out to our members and our affiliates to see what their concerns are. Obviously the proof is in the pudding, but the Board came away from this meeting with a clearer vision of what LUA could be and with a commitment to make the organization more active and more relevant to its members.

**Library Without Walls**Paul Edwards

On the third Wednesday of each odd month over the past year and more, a group of us have gathered to talk about books. We decide in advance what kind of books we are going to discuss; then each of us talks about one or two books in that category that we have enjoyed. We have talked about international books; we have looked at a specific book, Blindness by Jose Saramago; we have explored books written about or taking place in the Western United States; we have explored books we would give as a gift; and so on.

There is some unease among our regulars because our next topic is science fiction. I happen to be a fan so it does not bother me. I hope people will come to our meetings. We need your love of books to shine through so we can all have more cool books to read. I would publish the number we have used in the past, but I think we may be changing how we meet so watch the leadership list and the ACB list for more details.

Remember put the third Wednesday of odd months on your calendar. We meet at 8:30 PM Eastern time!

**2018 LUA Convention Program**Library Users of America  
President: Brian Charlson

Registration: $10 ($12)

Sunday, July 1

1:15 PM: Welcome and Introductions: Brian Charlson, President, Library Users of America, Watertown, MA.

1:25 PM: Initiatives and Issues at NLS:

Karen Keninger, Director, National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Washington, DC

2:30 PM: Break

2:45 PM: Exciting Activities at the Wolfner Library, presenter:

Donna Riegel, Library Director, the Wolfner Braille and Talking Book Library, Jefferson City, MO

3:15 PM: Business meeting and elections

5:45 PM: New Approaches from Familiar Places. $7 ($10)

Judy Dixon, Consumer Relations Officer, National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. will discuss and demonstrate BARD Express from NLS and speakers to be announced will outline recent developments at Bookshare and Learning Ally in this session jointly moderated by Brian Charlson, Watertown MA and Paul Edwards, Miami FL.

Tuesday, July 3

LUA BRL FIA IAC joint program

1:15 PM: Welcome to the LUA/BRL/AABT/FIA/IAC Joint Session:

Brian Charlson, President, Library Users of America, Watertown, MA; Paul Edwards, President, Braille Revival League, Miami, FL; and others provide a welcome and give those present a chance to introduce themselves.

1:30 PM: Braille and the iPhone: Judy Dixon, Consumer Relations Officer, National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. This session will feature approaches to reading and writing braille as well as apps for the iPhone which relate to these functions.

2:30 PM: Break

2:45 PM: Meet the Talking Book Narrator:  This session will give those present a chance to get up close and personal with Laura Giannarelli, NLS talking book Narrator, Washington DC. who presented during the morning at ACB'S general session.

**What We Did Last Summer**Paul Edwards

At our LUA meetings last Summer we offered a varied and exciting program that featured many of the same components as we usually do but which gave us a chance to once more celebrate reading, libraries and great books.

We began our program with an opportunity to once more share an hour with Karen Keninger from the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS). It is always a pleasure to have her at our convention because she brings enthusiasm and openness as well as a willingness to listen to our concerns. She spent time talking about what is being done to move toward the possible distribution of a braille reading device. She reported on plans for a possible new audio player in the future and what it might contain. She talked about the possibility of building in speech and making a player that could directly download books.

Next, Lainey Feingold talked to us about the process of writing and publishing her new book on Structured Negotiations. How do you make a book on what seems like a dry subject interesting and what is the purpose of making such a book available? Lainey provided lots of anecdotes but, more importantly, indicated that she hopes that this book will persuade other attorneys to use a method that has demonstrated that you can settle legal disputes without necessarily resorting to litigation if you take a measured and carefully crafted approach. Her book is recently available on BARD. After our business meeting we came to what was one of the most exciting elements of our program.

We held a session that allowed a limited number of participants to have hands on experience with the Orbit Reader 20 which is a new, low-cost braille display. We only allowed forty people to register for this event and had 20 Orbit Readers available so that two people could share one. Everyone got a chance to see just how exciting this new product is and could actually try reading and writing with the Orbit. Brian Charlson and Vinkatesh Chari, the developer of the Orbit, ran this session and folks came away excited by the potential that this 20 cell display has to change the braille reading and writing game with its price of under $500.

On Tuesday, we got a chance to hear more from Madelyn Buzzard, our talking book narrator from the American Printing House for the Blind in Louisville Kentucky. She was a huge hit and discussed her career as an actor, living through floods in Kentucky and her experiences as a reader.

After the break, we focused on unusual reading sites online, how to find them and how to use them. This was a panel discussion which actually went on for too long so that our last session, "One Book, One ACB", almost got swept aside. We discussed "All The Light We Cannot See" by Anthony Doerr. We perhaps did not do it justice because of the short time we spent on it, but all agreed that the book and its portrayal of blindness was well worth the time we did give it. We were pleased that this session was a joint one with the American Association of Blind Teachers, the Braille Revival League and Friends In Art as well as with the Information Access Committee. We did not need a post-convention Board meeting.

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