LUA Ledger Fall, 2019

# President's Message

by Judy Wilkinson

How I Came to Be Sitting in This Chair

I've been a member of the California Council of the Blind since my sophomore year in college. UC Berkeley students were thinking of forming a student chapter. I asked the man in charge of the meeting why bother with an organization of blind people? After all, I'd managed just fine thank you very much, graduating fifth in my class of over 500.

Though there was a resource teacher who visited occasionally from the nearby elementary school, I'd negotiated with my teachers about matters like taking tests. What did I need with other blind people? I know this is not a new song; we've all heard variations on this trope. Well it didn't take but about 30 seconds for Dr. Jacobus tenBroek to put me in my place! "Young lady, how do you think you got the right to have your readers, paid for by the state?" (The right? I knew I could never manage without them.) I got a lecture about all those dedicated women and men who had made my life so much easier since the founding of the California Council in 1934. The rest, as they say, is history. We formed that chapter and I have been an activist member of a blindness organization on-and-off ever since. I fear I was a real pain-in-the-ass as an arrogant student and young professional know-it-all: demanding for example that the CCB come out against the Vietnam war. (Didn't happen since, as I was told, we were here to advocate on matters of particular interest to the blind.) But by the early 70's, advocacy was in my bones. However for the next number of years, I dropped out of being active in the Council, focusing my advocacy skills instead serving Skyline Community College, where I became a founding faculty member now exactly 50 years ago. Over my 28 years I served on almost every hiring committee (as the token faculty member with a disability), chaired every faculty committee from Student Affairs to Curriculum and Instruction to Professional Development. I served as faculty senate president and was an active union member, being too much of a rabble-rouser (advocate) to ever be seriously considered for a position as an administrator.

During the late 80's strong-armed by the late great Winifred Downing, I joined the burgeoning California Library Users (of America) to this day known as "Ca-lua." (We once sold kahlua-filled chocolates, but they tasted so bad we never tried that again.) Of course eventually I became a member of LUA, but my only claim to fame back in the early 90's was (to my shame) failing as LUA Ledger editor.

Following my marriage in 1992, and my retirement, we lived in Manhattan, and I dropped out of blindness-related activities until our return to California in 2008. I resumed my work with CCB and served as editor of our quarterly magazine, The Blind Californian, from 2010 until I assumed CCB's presidency in 2016.

Back to LUA. I was elected CALUA president in 2010. Generally I like to know how things run, so as a newly-elected state affiliate president, where would I go on an early Saturday evening at an ACB convention but to the LUA board meeting. There were all the board members: and me! And I asked a lot of questions! I showed up every year: the board: and me! I asked more questions! Finally, a couple of years later, considering a slate of officers, when it came to vice president, Brian Charlson said: "How about this one!" Which one, they asked. "The one at the other end of the table." And so I ran and became LUA's vice president. I took being VP seriously, including the unwritten understanding that if you assume that office, you should be willing to serve as president should the membership decide to honor you with such a nomination.

And so: I'm sitting in this chair.

Paul's fitting tribute to Brian Charlson in the last LUA Ledger reminded us of how much he has contributed to LUA, not just during his years as president, but over the past many years. Paul has distinguished himself for decades occupying the presidency not only of ACB but of LUA, and during Brian's presidency, serving as editor of the LUA Ledger. I've never been known as a humble person, but it is indeed humbling to sit in this chair previously occupied by these two gentlemen. We are indebted to them for the affiliate's institutional memory, the depth of their intelectual contributions of philosophical thinking, perspective on history, not to mention their technological savvy.

My own skills are more, well, pedestrian, quotidien, ordinary. My strengths lie in being detail-oriented, a good organizer, being a strong writer and a pretty good speaker/presenter.

We will build on what has gone before. No captain turns a ship around in a hurry. In addition to Brian and Paul, we have a strong board, committed to this affiliate.

Of course I have things I hope LUA can accomplish, a number of which have been proposed in recent months. When you read this, we will have our Zoom platform in place, sharing the license with our good friends in BRL. (The overlap in board members is significant.) In addition to our popular Library without Walls calls hosted bi-monthly by Paul and ably supported by notetaker par excellence Jane Carona, we plan to have several calls a year of interest to our members, including promised appearances by NLS Directora Karen Keninger. We hope to resume a LUA presence on ACB Radio. I have asked the board to commit to publishing the Ledger three times a year.

I have requested a membership list from our Membership Chair Carla Ruschival, and I hope to reach out to a number of members beyond our board to participate on committees and in various other activities. And as they used to say on the radio back in the day, "Keep those cards and letters coming boys and girls!" With all your ideas, thoughts, suggestions, challenges, and yes even constructive criticism.

I am honored to be the marshal of this parade, followed by our Board members, but remember, you represent the bulk of the marchers in the LUA parade.

# New LUA Ledger Editor

by Sharon Strzalkowski

Greetings, LUA members. I am the new editor of the LUA Ledger, the newsletter that is produced by Library Users of America. I first want to thank Paul Edwards for his countless contributions to this newsletter, both as editor and visionary of what libraries and our relationships to them should be. I am grateful for his continued work on the editorial committee, as well as that of Rebecca Bridges.

Now, on to how you can help! I would welcome any submissions that you want to send my way at [strzal@charter.net](mailto:strzal@charter.net). Perhaps you have had a good experience at your public library, or have participated in a new project there. Perhaps you want to share a particular method of reading books that you enjoy and could explain to others. Or, perhaps you have ideas about the direction that LUA should go and have ideas about future resolutions and convention program ideas. I am also very willing to interview anyone on the phone who does not have access to email or is not comfortable in writing up an article. I see my role as helping to facilitate an active library community.

I welcome your comments and feedback.

Sharon Strzalkowski

Worcester, Massachusetts

# National Convention Notes

by Paul Edwards

The first session of the Library Users of America program featured Karen Keninger, director of the National Library Service, who provided information about where NLS is heading. She talked about the development of a new talking book player that will feature voice input and direct downloading of books. She made clear that NLS is aware that a lot of work will need to be done to make sure that the devices and their interface are reliable and truly easy to use by all patrons of NLS, including those who are older.. Karen also provided some information on preparation to begin field testing braille displays that are being developed for possible distribution to NLS patrons. Two different machines are being tested in the trials and Karen indicated that she hoped to be able to evaluate how each worked during field testing. She felt that having two different models would give NLS a chance to get a handle on what kind of repair problems, if any, may happen. It is hoped that the operation of the two devices will be similar to make training easier. There were lots of opportunities for questions.

The next session dealt with the Marrakesh Treaty. The United States became the fiftieth nation to sign the treaty and it has now been fully implemented through a Presidential signature and the passage of companion legislation by Congress. However, there are barriers that will need to be overcome before it can be as valuable as it could be. Kim Charlson, President of ACB and Director of the Perkins Talking Book Library in Massachusetts, began by describing her work with the Accessible Books Consortium (ABC). This group is an international group that worked on how the Marrakesh treaty can best be implemented around the world. The system that was developed was known as TIGAR (trusted intermediary global accessible resources). One task begun was the development of a catalogue of sharable titles which now numbers over six hundred thousand. One obstacle to implementation is staffing. Somebody will have to work on getting books into our system or out of our system. It was stressed that Marrakesh is not for individuals. Each country must identify "authorized entities". In the United States there are presently four: the American Printing House for the Blind, Bookshare, the National Library Service and the California State Library. Kim then asked Karen to talk about some of the issues she sees. Karen said that there are lots of issues. How can folks be sure that an individual being served in a country like Botswana is actually an individual with a print disability?

Another issue is formats for audio files. The NLS uses an encrypted daisy format. Other libraries use a different, less encrypted daisy format. Books shared in either direction will have to be converted. That takes time and people. Karen stressed that while sharing novels is nice, the real value of Marrakesh may lie in its ability to make text books available. This means involving colleges, universities and other places where educational materials are available.

Marty Schultz, head of Blindfold Games/Objective Ed. described new efforts to create braille learning tools using speech recognition which are being worked on. He emphasized that his company is now concentrating on developing games and other programs that can enhance learning for blind and low vision students.

The business meeting of LUA began with a treasurer's report from Adam Ruschival that showed a balance between our two accounts of $19,319.29. Carla Ruschival reported that we currently have 140 members and urged that we recruit enough members to go from six votes to seven by next year. The LUA Board had proposed two resolutions. One, concerning the American Printing House for the Blind and the Orbit Reader, was withdrawn because it was no longer a relevant resolution. The second asked NLS about its decision process with regard to contracts for the new braille display that was sent forward. Though it goes a little beyond the scope of this business meeting, I must report that this resolution did not pass at the ACB level. The last element of our business meeting involved elections. The Nominating Committee proposed a list of officers who were elected as a slate. Judy Wilkinson became President; Paul Edwards was elected Vice-President. Ralph Smitherman was elected as Secretary; and Adam Ruschival was re-elected as Treasurer. Ralph had been a Board member so his vacant seat was filled by Rhonda Trott. The business meeting was adjourned at 4:04 PM.

Next on our LUA program came a segment called "Music, Music, Music!" It began with Brian Charlson telling us his musical story which included flirtations with the guitar and a pipe organ before settling on a ukulele as his instrument of choice. He used youtube tutorials and materials made available through NLS to teach himself quite a lot about that instrument.

Paul Edwards then indicated that he had taken piano lessons for a year or so when he was nine, but now plays keyboards a bit, well enough to handle Christmas carols in December and other music when very drunk.

Lindsay Conway from the Music Section of NLS spoke next and provided an overview of what NLS has to offer. Every patron who qualifies to use NLS can use these resources. Overseeing the collection is Juliette Appold. She oversees its extensive variety, which includes over 20,000 braille music titles, making NLS the largest music collection in the world. It also contains instructional and lesson books for playing various instruments, titles on music appreciation and biography, musical examples included, and scores, many available in braille and/or audio formats. Over 3,000 talking book titles are available, many on BARD. There are books in the collection that teach folks how to use lead sheets and how to read braille music. There are titles on jazz and folk music as well.

The 800 titles in the large print collection use standard musical notation, enlarged and bolded, for use by people with low vision. There are scores, lesson books, books on music theory and music history in this large print collection.

Available magazines include Musical Mainstream, Contemporary Soundtrack, Sound and Vision, Quarterly Music Magazine, and Braille Music Magazine. Musical Mainstream takes articles from a wide variety of the leading music magazines and makes them available four times a year in audio, braille and large print on topics relevant to classical music. Contemporary Soundtrack is similar but covers pop, jazz and folk music. Sound and Vision provides reviews of recordings and equipment.

The music section was started in 1962 so there is a lot of music there. One of its goals is to make as much of the collection as possible available online. Now new scores must be in digital format, and there is also an ongoing effort to digitize the other items in the collection. Currently 20 percent is already online but the staff is working with experts from other Library of Congress sections to create methods to make digitizing more accurate and faster. In response to a question, Lindsay indicated that she thought there were about fifty Smithsonian Folkways titles now available on BARD. These include liner notes and a list of songs which are narrated along with the album of music. These materials are also sent as a braille file so you can read while you listen. If they were recorded that way, the albums are also in stereo.

To keep current with what the Music Section is doing, Lindsay recommended that people read their blog, called "Music Notes". At the end of each month the blog publishes a New Additions episode so that folks can search backward over time to see what has been added each month.

Anyone can contact the Music Section by calling (800) 424-8567 and then selecting 2 from the menu. You can also email them at [nlsm@loc.gov](mailto:nlsm@loc.gov) Karen Keninger, who sat in on this session, indicated the Music Section blog is on the Library of Congress blog page. She also mentioned the NLS Facebook page "that all may read". The rest of the program was spent with members of the audience impressing those of us presenting with their musical skills.

# Joint Session with Library Users of America and Braille Revival League

by Paul Edwards

The first part of our joint session featured our talking book narrator, Gary Telles. Gary began by indicating that he got to read a number of pretty weird books including one on the Newtonian Principles written by an Australian gentleman and William Burroughs' famous book "The Naked Lunch". He reiterated that he enjoyed reading books by Mark Twain and Phillip K. Dick. Gary indicated that a magazine like the New York Times Book Review was received on Monday and was usually finished by Wednesday morning. He said he worked a normal eight hour day with a break for lunch. Gary indicated that he had no favorite genre and appreciated the fact that he could enrich the lives of so many people by his reading. He felt that all narrators felt privileged to do what they do!

Next Hannah Fairbairn told us about her new book which came out at the end of July. It is called "When You Can't Believe Your Eyes: Vision Loss and Personal Recovery". Hannah indicated that the book had taken fifteen years to write and was prompted by her own experience losing vision and raising a daughter who also had vision loss. Hannah spent many years working as the home management instructor at the Carroll Center in Massachusetts. The book was written to help people who are losing their vision communicate assertively with others to get the help they need. It is also a book that helps people who lose vision to reassert the control of their lives that vision loss may have limited. Hannah indicated that she has a website, [www.whenyoucantbelieveyoureyes.com](http://www.whenyoucantbelieveyoureyes.com), where she would welcome comments. There is a section on that page which can be used to donate to making the book available to people whose vision loss has shrunk their income. There is also a spot for email and Hannah encourages folks to read the book and share suggestions for the second edition.

The last session of our LUA program dealt with tactile graphics. Brian began the session by suggesting that many people who are born blind are never taught how to interpret pictures. He also made it clear that in today's careers an ability at least to be able to interpret charts is essential. More and more careers require familiarity with graphics and Brian suggested that since everyone in the room was committed to literacy we should be concerned about the illiteracy of people who are blind in this area. Our first speaker was Frank Welte from the San Francisco Lighthouse, who talked about their involvement with tactile graphics. The "Madlab" (media and accessible design lab) is the department at the Lighthouse that works in this area and has seven staff members. The "Madlab" began with a Federal grant to produce audio and tactile maps of the train stations in San Francisco. From there more and more tactile graphics have been done by the Lighthouse. Frank indicated that he would add to literacy and numeracy the idea of graphicacy which is, of course, literacy in terms of graphics. One of the goals of the "Madlab" is to develop training materials and curricula that will enable blind people to better understand tactile graphics. Frank believes that many tactile graphics from the past have not been very good and he and his department are working to change that! Beyond the transit maps, the Madlab has done maps for Calgary Alberta in Canada, Reno Nevada, and Stockton California. A new project is "strip maps" which are more like lists than actual maps. A lot of maps of campuses have also been done. Some national parks in the San Francisco area have also been mapped. Indoor maps of convention hotels have been done and, perhaps most unusually, a map of the temporary city that springs up every year at "Burning Man" in Nevada. Lastly, Frank described the diagrams that the Madlab has done for Apple's app Swift Playground, a program to teach children how to program. Kids must program robots to get through mazes and the lab has done 37 diagrams for this project. People can call the Lighthouse to order maps and soon ordering can happen online. If you want a map of your neighborhood you can get one from the Lighthouse for only $25.

Brian asked whether we can expect more from the future. Can technology do some different things beyond printed tactile graphics? To answer that question we heard from Venkatesh Chari, chief executive from Orbit Research. His company made the iBill and makes the Orbit Reader. In addition, he and his company have worked to produce the Graphitti, which Venkatesh described. The Graphitti has sixty columns and forty rows of pins. Each can move independently and can depict any picture. Each pin can be set to its own individual level which allows you to depict color by the height of the pins. You could show green as the fullest extrusion, blue as less fully extended and white, say, with no pin showing. Two graphs can be shown together in different heights as well. The device is battery operated though the technology is scalable, which means that a much bigger or much smaller version could be built. You can rotate pictures so that an idea of perspective can be gained by showing a picture of an animal, say, from different sides. Perhaps the most significant thing that the Graphitti can do is manipulate images. They can be rotated, shrunk, made larger and so on. This can be done by gestures using the device. One of the features of the Graphitti is that it has HDMI input. This means that you can connect, say, an iPhone to the device and take the picture that is on the iPhone screen directly to the Graphitti. The iPhone camera can also be used. Whatever the camera is looking at will be shown on the device. One demo that Orbit Research does shows a series of logos. Simple shapes like circles and squares and triangles can also be depicted. You can connect Graphittis together, and a smartboard in a classroom that is being used by the teacher can be plugged directly into the Graphitti. Currently Orbit Research is in the pre-production stage. They are trying to determine how many will be produced in the first run. It is hoped to sell the device for less than $5,000. We ran out of time during this session, but Paul and Brian ended with the point that Library Users of America and the Braille Revival League both are committed to narrowing the tactile graphics gap that currently excludes most people who were born blind from graphical literacy.

# A Visit with Gary

by Ralph Smitherman

On Tuesday, July 9, 2019, from 1:15 PM, to 2:30 PM, the Library Users of America met with our guest narrator, Gary Telles. Gary records at Potomac Talking Books in Maryland. Over the years Gary has recorded around 400 books for the National Library Service. Many of you may know his voice from the New York Times Book Review. Gary is deliberate in his speech, and from childhood wanted to be an actor. As you know, this “LUA” session is for getting to know the narrator better. Gary was humorous, and eager to answer questions from us. There were lots of questions asked and answered. Gary is a coffee drinker and one of the questions asked was if he had ever spilled coffee while recording; his answer was, “Is the Pope, Catholic?” Generally, at each convention, we meet with the guest narrator on Tuesday afternoons. I find the session very entertaining as it gives us a glimpse into the effort put forward by these narrators. Gary is married to Joanne Giaquinta, another narrator. If you attend the convention, I strongly urge you to attend the “up close and personal,” session.

# ALA honors Perkins Library’s Kim Charlson

By Mark Schwartz

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From helping local restaurants provide menus in braille to her work on creating standards for audio description and the passage of the Marrakesh Treaty, it seems no task is too big or too small for Kim Charlson to tackle. She has engaged the local community and moved all the way up to the global, as an advocate, trainer, tester, consultant and expert.

That drive and commitment led the Association of Specialized, Government and Cooperative Library Agencies, a division of the American Library Association, to honor Charlson this spring with its Francis Joseph Campbell Award. The award is presented each year to a person or institution that has made an outstanding contribution to the advancement of library service for the blind and physically handicapped.

Charlson is executive director of the Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library in Watertown, Massachusetts, an NLS network library.

“I’ve always worked to have everyone consider and adopt an accessibility mindset, so that information access and inclusion for people with disabilities can be a reality,” she said recently. “Winning this award makes me believe that I’ve helped to make some progress toward this goal.”

Charlson’s dedication to the profession was evident back in 1983 to fellow students at the University of North Texas (UNT) in Denton, Texas, where she got a master’s degree in library science and met a lifelong colleague, Jeanne Standley. The former executive director of the Robert R. Muntz Library at the University of Texas at Tyler, Standley nominated Charlson for the UNT 2006 Alumni of the Year award in 2006.

While working as executive director of

the Perkins Library for the past 18 years, Charlson has also served on many library professional association boards, as well as national and international groups. Outside of libraries, her experience includes serving as the president of the American Council of the Blind for three terms, on the board of the Accessible Books Consortium and as a delegate to the World Braille Council.

Shelley Quezada, a consultant for Library Services to the Unserved at the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, noted that Charlson began work more than 20 years ago on the Community Advisory Board of Boston public broadcasting station WGBH, where she helped shape development of Descriptive Video Service (DVS). (WGBH pioneered DVS in the late 1980s to help visually impaired people enjoy the experience of feature films and programs.) “Her efforts . . . have had a tremendous influence on services that directly impact millions of visually impaired users across the country,” Quezada said.

Charlson repeatedly recognized the potential of emerging technologies to increase access for people with disabilities generally and the blind community specifically. As the world became a smaller, flatter place, the digital age opened new avenues of pooling resources such as books in accessible formats, especially with the advent of ebraille, electronic braille.

Charlson labored tirelessly to promote ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty by the U.S. Senate. The treaty makes the production and international transfer of accessible books for people who are blind or visually impaired easier, by establishing a set of limitations and exceptions to traditional copyright law. Charlson’s service as a board member of the Accessible Books Consortium also allowed her to push the issue of sharing books in accessible formats on a global scale, garnering broad support from not only organizations advocating for the blind but from publishers here and around the world.

Charlson’s work pushes into the future. Speaking often at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at

Simmons University in Boston, she shares with future library leaders the array of programs and devices that will inspire future advocates and advancers to surmount challenges and experience the rewards of connecting all—through inclusion and empowerment—to the world of information, entertainment and ideas.

# 2020 Census

For the first time, the U.S. Census Bureau is going to have a variety of ways that people can fill out their Census questionnaires. They have put together a factsheet on accessibility which is at:

<https://www.census.gov/library/fact-sheets/2019/dec/2020-census-accessible.html>

# 31 Cool Things You Can Do with Your iPhone: From Fun, to Practical, to Entertaining

By Judy Dixon From National braille Press

Like many people, Judy Dixon believes that the iPhone is a magical device - she can't believe the profound effect the little slab of glass has had on the ways she does things. In this book, Judy explores apps that are practical, and many that are just plain fun!

She covers a wide variety of activities, from tuning a guitar to counting your steps, depositing checks to measuring an angle, from writing in braille on your iPhone to finding a screw you dropped in the grass! These apps are selected for their accessibility and ease of use.

Braille (1 vol.), BRF, DAISY, or Word: $12.00

Contact National Braille Press at [www.nbp.orgor](http://www.nbp.orgor) at 617-266-6160.

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