# LUA LEDGER

## LIBRARY USERS OF AMERICA, INC.

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## President: Judy Wilkinson

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LUA Ledger

February 18, 2020

### President’s Message: Aira Goes to the Library

by Judy Wilkinson

I’ve attended a number of events at my local San Leandro Library: a beautiful, modern facility with lots of easy chairs for comfy reading. Upon occasion, I’ve sunk into one of those chairs with my Victor Stream. For years, I participated in the book club; the knitting group meets once a month on Sunday afternoon.

I had never been to the library other than to attend a specific event; I had always hijacked a sighted person to help me find the room I wanted. But in early November, as one of our last trips before retiring my guide dog, Carly, I decided to venture where I had never dared to go before, (to badly paraphrase a well-known series). We decided to take Aira to the library! Aira allows a blind person using a smartphone to engage with a sighted person on the other end of the line.

After entering the foyer, I put on my Bluetooth headphones, connected to Aira, and, waving the camera around, asked what the assistant saw. She soon pointed me to a notice board. Who knew? I never realized how many announcements were on that board. A wonderful local African-American celebrity, Brian Copland, was performing that weekend. A book sale was happening. A clown was coming to perform for the children.

Waving the camera around as I approached the stairs, the Aira assistant informed me there was an elevator. I had never known that! So I decided to see where it let off on the second floor. I wandered down all the halls. There was the room where the knitters met! There were several other rooms with various signs: the book club had moved from where I used to attend it. I had always wondered where a Ladies’ Room was: I now know!

What do most people do at the library? They explore the various collections. Never in my life had I been able to do this without my sister or someone else with me. I’ve never had the chance to “browse” around. So Aira directed me to the music section which had many bins of music CD’s. I had so much fun checking them out. I mean, I read about them, picked some up and headed to the checkout desk.

I think the clerk must have thought I was crazy appearing to talk to myself while waving my iPhone around! I explained what I was doing, and she was amazed and excited! She asked if I knew they had a computer with speech and a scanner. I had never known that, so I went to the room where they lived and had the Aira lady show me where everything was.

Finally I checked out my music and Carly and I headed outside with our treasures.

Thanks to services like Aira and “Be My Eyes” we have an entirely new way to visit our local libraries. How often I had dreamed of going to the library and exploring it by myself! Now that is possible. This is not an advertisement for Aira, but the basic plan is $30 for 30 minutes. But after downloading the app and signing up, you are allowed five minutes for free, and you can call multiple times a day. If you call within a minute or so of the end of your five minutes, you’ll most likely get the person you worked with earlier. Of course this time restriction means you need to be creative if you are on an extended visit, say, to a museum, or yes, the library.

As I write this, I’m in training at The Seeing Eye with Kirsten, my new yellow lab, golden retriever cross. You can bet that one of our first trips once we return home will be to introduce Kirsten to the San Leandro Library!

I invite all of you to try exploring your own local library with one of these services. We’d love to hear your stories about taking some variation of “sighted assistance” to the library. Send your adventures to our editor, Sharon Strzalkowski, and if we get enough response, she’ll put together an article about your adventures.

### Inaugural LUA Link Call with Karen Kenninger: A Great Success

by Judy Wilkinson

For several years now, Paul Edwards has led our popular “Books Without Walls” series. Honestly, I’m not sure there’s any book that Paul hasn’t read. He is so knowledgeable and has wonderful comments to make as members share their books on the call’s theme. These calls are held on the third Wednesday of every even-numbered month.

But as you know, we’ve hoped to inaugurate another series of calls dealing with matters of interest to our members.

Once again, we can thank Paul for the suggested name for this series of calls: “LUA Link”. And so it came to pass!

On Tuesday, February 11, we had our first LUA Link call, a visit with Karen Kenninger, NLS Director. We had nearly 60 people on the call. We had to mute everyone as any background noise is extremely intrusive. People unmuted themselves to ask questions. Karen first answered questions which had been submitted beforehand, and as time permitted, she answered other queries.

I won’t go into detail about what Karen said since the call was recorded. Eventually we hope to have the recording available through ACB Radio, but if you have the capability, you can listen to the call which was recorded at the following link: <https://bit.ly/3h8MfM8>

Karen has indicated that she is willing and eager to be with us on future LUA Link calls.

We’re not sure how often we’ll hold Link calls; hopefully once a quarter. Watch for the details and we look forward to having you join us on LUA Link.

### ACB Convention Talking Book Narrator Announced

The American Council of the Blind is thrilled to welcome Erin Jones as the 2020 Talking Book Narrator at our annual Conference and Convention.

Erin will address our general session on Wednesday morning, July 8th. She will also present at the Library Users of America (LUA) session later that day. Here is her brief bio.

"You say  puh-tay-toe, I say whatever NLS tells me I can say."

"Like Erin Jones' NLS work, her career is just as diverse: Dancer, Horse Farm Manager, Actor, Writer, Patent Law Clerk, Producer, Greasy Spoon Waitress, Audiobook Narrator, Tour Leader at the Legendary Churchill Downs, Quilt Cutter, Grant Writer/Recipient & Theatrical Producer. This is not a complete list and most jobs were done at the same time. (For example, soaking a horse's foot at 4:30 am to be at a 600 seat theater by 7 am to do two shows a day, 5 days a week, then home to bushog a pasture in the afternoon.) She still ponders over what it would be like to have only ONE job.

She is currently wiping noses, changing diapers, rocking babies to sleep, getting lots of unsolicited affection AND receiving health insurance and benefits, for which she is immensely grateful.

She has recorded well over 500 titles for NLS & a handful for Audible. If somebody could find the real NLS number, that would make her very happy."

### A Dozen Years of Digital Book Review

by Nolan Crabb

What do you do when you operate an email list as part of a pilot program—a list that gives you the information you need, but whose valuable information is mixed in with a lot of irrelevant stuff you’d rather not wade through?

That’s the situation in which the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled found itself in 2007. It had introduced BARD, and it allowed library patrons to download a single book a day or 30 books in a month. In return for the privilege, NLS staffers wanted to know via an email list what went right with the downloads and what was problematic. It needed the data to improve the BARD experience for everyone in preparation for rolling it out to all eligible readers. NLS got its information, but amidst the bits of helpful information, it got scores of book reviews from excited patrons who had downloaded and read something and couldn’t wait to share the experience with other BARD list members. The NLS list owner repeatedly encouraged someone on the BARD list to start a list dedicated to reviews of books available on BARD, which would presumably allow the BARD list to serve its real purpose, that of providing information to NLS about the ease of use and feasibility of its new BARD site.

Initially, no one responded despite repeated emails encouraging someone to start a list. I read those repeated calls for a book review list, and after several weeks of agonizing, I figured if I were that interested in a list whose members reviewed books they read from BARD, I needed to be the one to start such a list.

I found a home for the list, (we’ve changed list homes several times since), and on January 4, 2008, DB-Review was born. I chose the name because NLS was labeling its new downloadable books with an acquisition number that began with DB.

I admit I had grandiose visions for the list, and to be truthful, I guess I still do. I wanted it to become known as the one place NLS patrons could go to review what they’ve read and feel safe about making comments about the book. We would be that one-stop place for people asking themselves, “What should I read next?”

In the early days, I worked hard to retain list members’ interest in DB-Review. We had a little core of about 50 people at the very beginning, and I felt it was up to me to keep data coming to the list daily until the reviews from the members picked up. To that end, I introduced what I called the “featured book of the day,” which was an attempt to highlight an NLS book that seemed interesting to me, but that I hadn’t read. Intermingled with the featured book of the day, I would provide reviews of things I had read. In the early years, we would provide monthly summaries of books reviewed by list members during the month. As our membership grew, compiling those monthly summaries became increasingly difficult. We learned by polling the list that only about half of the members used those summaries.

Early on, it became apparent to me that I couldn’t do list moderation by myself. A good list moderator understands that two people need to be involved in making decisions for the list, especially when that list involves something as emotional and close to the heart as are books. So I asked Don Horn, a long-time ACB member and lifelong New York resident and a close friend since 1985, to assist me with list moderation duties. I knew of his love for books, and I knew he would help me run a tight ship, which had always been my goal. Our time is already so fragmented by so many things. I reasoned that NLS patrons would enjoy a list that stayed on topic and whose members kept cranking out the reviews. The list’s purpose, after all, is to provide reviews of books that might not otherwise garner the attention of NLS readers. I’m so grateful to Don for his work on the list. We’ve been an outstanding team. Rarely do we talk when DB-Review isn’t somehow part of the discussion.

At one point in its history, DB-Review comprised some 350 members. These days, it’s down to just over 250 people, but that number has remained amazingly stable for a couple of years now.

Each fall, list members pick a book that falls under the classic literature description from NLS, and we discuss it in a group setting we call the Fall Classic. Sounds like that should be a golf tournament; indeed, it probably is, somewhere. But it’s our chance to talk about a classic book during the year. We generally host it on or near the birthdate of former NLS narrator Alexander Scourby. This past year, the group discussed all the Harry Potter books. Discussions in previous years have included The Grapes of Wrath and Orwell’s 1984. We’re not sure what the 2020 Fall Classic will discuss.

Each December, list members get to submit their favorite fiction and nonfiction read of the calendar year. In return for their submission, we enter the member’s name into a drawing held New Year’s Day for a $25 Amazon gift card.

But is DB-Review all that valuable? List members insist it is. Each January, I send out a state-of-the-list message that reviews the year past and the list’s activities during that year. The responses I get are highly positive. Most often, members point out that, had it not been for the list, they would have passed up or been unaware of books that made a tremendous difference in their lives.

We insist that people keep list messages on topic. We welcome reviews, but only of books available on the BARD site. We welcome discussions about narrators and NLS collection development, but we adamantly discourage criticism of any NLS staffers. Although we are not endorsed by NLS or any of its regional libraries, we maintain a positive approach to the library even if we feel the need to be critical of a book in its holdings. Our list membership includes several NLS narrators from various studios and some producers of NLS books who apparently find value in our discussions about book markup. Membership data is kept private and available only to the list moderators.

To become part of DB-Review, simply send a blank email to: [db-review+subscribe@groups.io](file:///C%3A%5Cleaseydata%5Cattach%5Cdb-review%2Bsubscribe%40groups.io). We’ll get you approved quite quickly. That’s really all there is to signing up. It’s free, and there are no ads or other off-topic messages.

### Serving on the Worcester Talking Book Library Advisory Council

by Nona Haroyan

Editor’s Note:

The following article is written by a friend of the editor who chairs our local Worcester, Massachusetts Advisory Council. It would be wonderful to hear about other experiences from LUA members throughout the country. Please feel free to email me at strzal@charter.net.

As the Chair for our sub-regional Talking Book Library Advisory Council, working with my fellow council members to contribute to the program is one of my most rewarding experiences.

Our council is made up of both users and individuals representing blind/disabled agencies in our community. We provide a sounding board for the Director and a place where patrons can pass on any issues, questions or suggestions they may have regarding the service.

In addition to our Talking Book Library duties, as our library is located in a public library setting, our program attracts attention from the greater library community, providing us with a great opportunity to advocate, promote and educate others on who we are and what our program is all about. Having that presence helps open communication.

But, even though we are visible, there are times when we need to address issues with the public library. For several years now we have been working with the public library in order to find an accessible solution for the Automative Check in/out system. The system does not have an audio component, making it impossible for anyone with a visual limitation to be able to use it independently.

Even though we have this presence within the library, the Library Board did not take this into consideration when purchasing the equipment. For several years now we have worked with both the public library and the company that developed this technology to find a solution, but the process has been slow going. However, our Council is determined to make this technology accessible for all users. We are hopeful that 2020 will be our year.

Over the course of many years our members have contributed to outstanding advocacy for the program. We had weathered budget cuts and, for a time, a possibility of losing our sub-regional library altogether. But through our efforts, along with dedicated staff, Council members and patrons, we were able to rally our State Legislators, restoring both the funds and Line Item for our library.

Along with advocacy, the TBL has been a place for patrons to come and learn about assistive technology. For 7 years our TBL held technology workshops on JAWS use and Apple device tutorials. Jim Izzatt, now retired TBL Director, received an award from the Bay State Council of the Blind for his efforts. Even though the workshops have temporarily stopped, the TBL offers one-on-one assistive technology training through the program ELVES (Electronic Learning Vision Easy Solutions), keeping patrons informed on the latest technology.

A little over a year ago the TBL went through a change in leadership. LeeAnne Hooley took over the reins from Jim Izatt after over 26 years of dedicated service. LeeAnne has a fresh new approach and we on the Council are happy to see where she will lead us in the future.

If you haven’t thought of serving on your Talking Book Library Advisory Councils or Boards before, consider reaching out to your libraries and think about serving a program that has provided so many of us with hours of reading enjoyment, as well as large print Books and audio-described movies.

Happy Reading to you all!

### When You Can’t Believe Your Eyes: Vision Loss & Personal Recovery

By Hannah Fairbairn

I have written this first-ever “how-to” book for adults losing vision, their teachers, friends, and families. The book was published in July 2019 by Charles C. Thomas. The NLS Talking Book became available in December, on cartridge and on BARD (DBC011619). Hooray!

As baby boomers age, more Americans are dealing with impaired vision. Until now, everyone who couldn’t see faces well or read comfortably had to rely on sighted friends for essential information: Who is talking to you? How do you find the best doctors and optometrists? How can you speak up when you can’t see if someone is there? And most of all, how can you recover a strong belief in yourself? Anyone losing sight as an adult feels a loss of control and adult status that is almost as bad as the sight loss itself!

A person with recent vision loss may not be ready for my book, being overwhelmed by disbelief, shock and grief. Close family or a friend may read it first.

But I have written the book especially for adults who are living with vision loss or blindness – young adults preparing to leave home, people in mid-life with young families, and older adults wondering how to cope. Just the resources at the back of the book give you back some control, and if you also read through the table of contents and understand how personal recovery can proceed, you may start to feel more in charge.

This short book has twelve chapters which follow the phases that some people experience after vision loss. Each chapter has many one-page sections with true stories, tips and tricks on a particular topic. You can access the sections directly in the talking book, and of course you can bookmark favorite sections and chapters as well as the resources.

My own experience of sight loss and more than a hundred long interviews with adult students convinced me that everyone losing vision needs access to good resources and information about the process of adjustment, as well as practical ways to use assertive speech. We all need to find the right level of independence, gain new friends and social confidence.

The first outline for this book began fifteen years ago! It has taken the generous assistance of my colleagues at the Carroll Center for the Blind in Massachusetts, and many other teachers, counselors, and doctors; a focus group of former students; and comments on the companion website to find answers. They are all in this book! I hope you will find it an enjoyable read, and use some of the tips in your own life.

The print edition is available on Amazon, $28.95, and as an accessible eBook on Google Play Books, $15.63. If you know someone who doesn’t use talking books, free copies of the accessible eBook are available on the book pages of my website: [www.WhenYouCantBelieveYour](http://www.WhenYouCantBelieveYour) Eyes.com, also at [www.VisionLossandPersonalRecovery.com](http://www.VisionLossandPersonalRecovery.com). There is also a page for comments on the book, and I will be delighted to hear comments and more tips and stories for a future edition.

### In U.S., Library Visits Outpaced Trips to Movies in 2019

By Justin McCarthy

(Justin McCarthy is a journalist and analyst at Gallup. He writes about economic, social and political topics)

Story Highlights:

* Library most frequented by young adults, women and low-income households
* Average U.S. adult attended five movies and five live sporting events
* Age and income among key factors in frequency of activities

Visiting the library remains the most common cultural activity Americans engage in, by far. The average 10.5 trips to the library U.S. adults report taking in 2019 exceeds their participation in eight other common leisure activities. Americans attend live music or theatrical events and visit national or historic parks roughly four times a year on average and visit museums and gambling casinos 2.5 times annually. Trips to amusement or theme parks 1.5 times annually and zoos point 9 times annually are the least common activities among this list.

Americans' Reports of Leisure and Activities poll taken December 2nd to the 15th in 2019.

Gallop Poll question: "About how many times in the past year, if any, did you do each of the following?

Note: Questions were asked in random order and the results are an average of all responses.

Go to a library: 10.5 times annually

Go to a movie at a movie theater: 5.3 times annually

Attend a live sporting event: 4.7 times annually

Attend a live music or theatrical event: 3.8 times annually

Visit a national or historical park: 3.7 times annually

Visit a museum: 2.5 times annually

Visit a gambling casino: 2.5 times annually

Go to an amusement or theme park: 1.5 times annually

Visit a zoo: 0.9 times annually

This data is an update from a December 2001 Gallup pool survey. Though the overall rankings at the beginning of the millennium remain the same today, a small decrease has occurred in reported trips to the movie theater (down 1.3 average visits). Meanwhile, small increases have taken place in average reports of visiting a museum (up 0.7 average visits), attending a live music or theatrical event (up 1.1 average visits) and visits to a national or historical park (up 1.3 average visits).

Women Visit Libraries Nearly Twice as Frequently as Men

Men and woman report doing most activities at about the same rate, but there are a few key differences:

Women report visiting the library nearly twice as frequently as men do, 13.4 to 7.5 visits.

Men are more likely than women to visit casinos, attend sporting events and visit national or historical parks.

Reports of Leisure and Activities, by Gender

Results are averages and are listed in order as Men's answers, then Women's answers, then the difference between the 2:

Go to a library 7.5 13.4 -5.9

Go to a movie at a movie theater 5.1 5.6 -0.5

Attend a live music or theatrical event 3.7 3.8 -0.1

Visit a zoo 0.9 0.8 +0.1

Visit a museum 2.7 2.3 +0.4

Go to an amusement or theme park 1.8 1.3 +0.5

Visit a gambling casino 3.4 1.7 +1.7

Attend a live sporting event 5.7 3.7 +2.0

Visit a national or historical park 4.9 2.4 +2.5

The 30-49 Age Group Most Active Across Most Activities

Across nearly all measures, the highest average activity rates are among the 30 to 49 age group, while the lowest are among those 65 and older.

The 30 to 49 age group's higher activity may reflect their relative youth combined with mid-life financial stability. Middle-aged adults' activity is particularly above-par in terms of attending live sporting events. Their average attendance of 7.4 events during the year is more than twice that of younger adults and exceeds older adults by more than three visits.

The two exceptions to the pattern of middle-aged adults being the most active are visits to libraries and casinos. U.S. adults aged 18 to 29 visit the library much more than all older age groups -- possibly reflecting college-going adults, who visit the library for studies. This youngest age group also visits casinos the most.

Reports of Leisure and Activities, by Age Group in order as 18-29, then, 30-49, then 50-64, then 65+.

Go to a library 15.5 12.3 6.8 8.2

Go to a movie at a movie theater 6.6 6.8 4.1 3.6

Attend a live sporting event 2.8 7.4 3.9 3.7

Attend a live music or theatrical event 3.1 4.5 3.8 2.7

Visit a national or historical park 4.2 5.9 2.3 1.6

Visit a museum 2.9 2.9 2.0 1.8

Visit a gambling casino 4.4 2.9 1.8 1.4

Go to an amusement or theme park 1.8 2.6 1.0 0.5

Visit a zoo 0.7 1.5 0.6 0.4

High-Income Households Generally Do More Activities

In general, Americans in high-income households report doing activities the most, while Americans in low-income households participate the least.

The widest gaps between high- and low-income households are in reports of attending a live sporting event, a live music or theatrical event, a museum, and going to the movie theater. All things often associated with significant ticket prices.

Conversely, the library -- which is free and offers a variety of services including WiFi, is visited most by adults in low-income households and least by adults in high-income households.

Despite having smaller incomes, Americans in low-income households visit gambling casinos with slightly greater frequency.

Meanwhile, the three income groups are about as likely to attend an amusement or theme park as well as the zoo.

Reports of Leisure and Activities, by Income Group

Listed in order as $100,000+, then $40,000-99,999, then Less than $40,000.

Go to a library 8.5 10.4 12.2

Go to a movie at a movie theater 6.3 5.7 4.4

Attend a live sporting event 7.5 3.8 3.6

Attend a live music or theatrical event 5.9 3.8 2.3

Visit a national or historical park 4.0 3.6 3.5

Visit a museum 3.5 2.8 1.5

Visit a gambling casino 2.5 2.2 3.5

Go to an amusement or theme park 2.1 1.3 1.5

Visit a zoo 0.9 0.8 1.0

Certain Activities More Frequented Among Households with Children

For most measures, there are not meaningful differences between adults who report having children under the age of 18 in their households versus adults who do not have children living in their homes. But for a few activities, there are some differences between the two groups:

Adults with children in their household attend live sporting events and go to the movies about two times or more than adults who do not have children.

Meanwhile, adults who have no children in their household attend live music or theatrical events slightly more frequently than adults who have children in their homes.

Reports of Leisure and Activities, by Children under 18 in Household

Listed in order as with Children under 18, then No children under 18.

Go to a library 10.1 10.8

Go to a movie at a movie theater 6.8 4.7

Attend a live sporting event 6.7 3.7

Attend a live music or theatrical event 3.1 4.2

Visit a national or historical park 3.9 3.5

Visit a museum 2.2 2.7

Visit a gambling casino 3.9 2.0

Go to an amusement or theme park 2.0 1.3

Visit a zoo 1.5 0.6

Regional Variations in Some Activities

Americans' reports of doing activities vary by the four regions in which they live:

Those who live in the East report having visited a museum with the greatest frequency.

In the West, adults have the highest reports of visiting historical or national parks and gambling casinos.

Reports of Leisure and Activities, by Region

Listed in order as East, then, Midwest, then South, then West.

Go to a library 10.4 12.9 9.3 10.1

Go to a movie at a movie theater 5.3 4.9 5.4 5.6

Attend a live sporting event 4.5 4.6 5.1 4.3

Attend a live music or theatrical event 3.7 3.0 3.8 4.6

Visit a national or historical park 3.0 2.7 3.1 5.9

Visit a museum 4.0 1.7 2.0 2.5

Visit a gambling casino 1.4 3.3 1.0 5.1

Go to an amusement or theme park 1.8 0.8 1.7 1.7

Visit a zoo 0.6 1.1 0.9 0.7

Bottom Line:

Despite the proliferation of digital-based activities over the past two decades -- including digital books, podcasts, streaming entertainment services and advanced gaming -- libraries have endured as a place Americans visit nearly monthly on average. Whether because they offer services like free Wi-Fi, movie rentals, or activities for children, libraries are most utilized by young adults, women and residents of low-income households.

Activities that typically cost money are visited or attended less frequently. Among this group of activities, outings to movie theaters and sports events remain the trips Americans make the most, while zoos are the least frequented.

Many factors determine how Americans spend their free time, and financial means is a key factor. Age, too, is a large determinant. While middle-aged Americans may tend to be the most active in these activities due to their relative youth and greater financial stability, the 30 to 49 age cohort's activeness may also reflect its household makeup. The average age of a first-time mother in the U.S. is 26 and 31 for a first-time father, according to 2016 data from the National Center for Health Statistics. So, the need to keep growing children entertained through trips to the movies or to sporting events -- which are more popular among households with children -- may be more common among this age group.

But one's personal interests also factor into such decisions, which may bear out in activities showing significant gender differences, such as a women's book club at the local library, or activities that are more popular or available in certain parts of the country.

Source: Gallup Inc., all rights reserved, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/284009/library-visits-outpaced-trips-movies-2019.aspx>

### ACB Virtual Convention Schedule

Join us at our LUA Virtual Convention

Register for $10 and be eligible for door prizes too!

This year’s virtual convention for ACB is from July 3-10, and we at LUA have a wonderful program for you to learn from and enjoy. See below.

Monday, July 6:

1:15 PM: Welcome and introduction of those present, Judy Wilkinson, President, San Leandro, California.
1:30: Updates from Karen Kenninger, Director National Library Services for the Blind and Print Disabled. Karen will answer specific questions about how the NLS projects she described in her general session program are being implemented, and will also take questions about other issues of concern to members.
2:30: Break.
2:45: One Book, One ACB. In this session we will discuss [*Flying blind: one man's journey out of darkness DB97425*](https://nlsbard.loc.gov/nlsbardprod/download/detail/srch/DB97425)

Wednesday, July 8:
1:15 PM: Joint Session with LUA, BRL and Friends In Art. Introduction of those present and welcome by Judy Wilkinson, Paul Edwards and a FIA representative.
1:30: Extended time with Erin Jones, Talking Book Narrator from the American Printing House for the Blind, Louisville Kentucky. Erin will talk more about her life and narrating and will answer questions from those attending.
2:30: Break.
2:45: BARD and BARD Express become better! Representatives from NLS will tell us about changes that are being made in both the BARD and the BARD Express programs which are used to access books from the Library of Congress National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled. This session will be hosted by Paul Edwards from Miami, Florida and Brian Charlson from Watertown, Massachusetts

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