

RPLAC Ad Hoc Committee on TBCs Meeting
Middle Georgia Library - Macon, Georgia February 12, 2009

Minutes

Attendees: Chuck Gibson, Thomas Jones, Leard Daugherty, Stella Cone, Lyn Hopper, Gary Swint, Susan Whittle and Teresa Cole.

Co-Chairperson Gary Swint called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. The group spent a few moments introducing themselves and discussing their past work with the TBC program. *Teresa Cole agreed to take the minutes.*

Afterwards, Gary spent a few minutes outlining the history of the Talking Book program in Georgia, including the reasons the TBC program was established. He noted that in the past, the NLS had refused to take a stand on what was the best model for service at the state level.

The group then went through a number of documents (*agenda attached*) in the packet beginning with the 2000 Himmel and Wilson study. After brief discussion, it was generally agreed that the study's recommendations had never been formally adopted as a guide by GPLS. They also discussed the DOAS Performance Audit of 2002. Stella was asked if the recommendations in the audit had been implemented and also what type of oversight DOAS had in place to ensure compliance. Stella indicated that she received phone calls from DOAS on an occasional basis to request the status of the recommendations.

Stella ~~then~~ spent a few minutes explaining ~~about~~ the role of the new TBC *in* Atlanta. She explained that the facility would be a walk in center and is designed to help integrate the TBC users into the public library setting. She said that there would be an area for children as well as space for adult. No books on tape would be mailed from the location. Gary asked if it was not a paradox that such a center was being established in Atlanta within a mile of the Center for the Visually Impaired while such facilities in other parts of the state would be closed as a result of consolidation.

The committee next discussed to what extent, if any, TBC users and advocates should be included in the planning process. Lyn and Stella reminded the directors that there was an advisory group in place for GLASS and that many of the subregionals around the state have their own local advisory groups. Chuck Gibson expressed concern that allowing input from large numbers of people would seriously delay the process and that the directors of the *TBCs* should be the major decision makers for the plan. Gary ~~countered~~ stated that he felt it imperative that TBC users have extensive input as they are the recipients of the service and since they would be in the best possible position to comment on any plan details.

The committee then began to discuss the new relationship between Rome and Lafayette and their respective *TBCs*. Lyn Hopper explained that the Lafayette system faced the sudden departure of a longtime TBC employee. She said GPLS staff decided to use the situation as an opportunity to examine another model of service. She said that Lafayette had retained the outreach portion of their TBC and \$62,000. She added that this amount would likely to be reduced in time, but that Lecia Eubanks had expressed concerns about losing the funding suddenly. In addition, the Rome subregional has assumed responsibility for the Reader's Advisory function previously performed by Cherokee, and would receive \$24,000 for this. The GLASS staff in Atlanta would absorb the shipping/receiving of the recorded books. Lyn said that this would free up \$4,000. Gary asked Lyn if it was not true that when a library system 'cashes in' a state paid position, they get \$55,000. Lyn said that was true. Gary then asked how they could justify giving Lafayette \$7,000 more than that, especially as the person leaving did not have an MLS. He also pointed out that under current funding, \$62,000 is equivalent to what some TBCs get for their entire operations.

A number of directors *present* expressed concern that this was not a carefully designed model, but rather was intended to resolve a local personnel issue. Several also pointed out that this was not following the funding formula currently in place in the Subregional Library/Talking Book Center Grant for Service to the Blind and Physically Handicapped 2004 ~~Agreement~~ contract and Subregional Grant for FY07 memo from David Singleton.

At this point Susan Whittle asked about the possibility of Columbus giving up its subregional status. She said she had discussed with director Claudya Muller the possibility of Susan's system taking on Columbus's counties. Lyn reported that the Columbus system had reported to GPLS that they decided to remain in the TBC program. When asked why the change, Lyn indicated that Columbus wished to retain the RA and outreach portions of the program, but to have Atlanta take over the sending and receiving of the recorded books. Teresa indicated that if this proposal was successful, she too wished to make a similar arrangement with the Atlanta GLASS. She and other directors expressed concern about the possibility that the *TBCs* were receiving disparate funding and treatment. Other directors expressed concern that the current set up of subregionals was costing funds intended for local use and that some other model was desperately needed. *Several TBC Directors said that if more state funding were not available they would have to give up their TBCs.*

Consolidation or warehousing was discussed. Gary asked if any effort had been made to follow up the recommendation that machine distribution be consolidated. He was told by Stella that it had not. Several directors at the meeting said they would be interested in consolidation or warehousing of the talking books themselves. Gary said that if that should happen, that the state should look at housing it outside the Atlanta area, and should take into consideration the lower cost due to lower real-estate and workforce costs.

If consolidation to a centralized warehousing were to occur, another model was discussed to include grants for reader's advisory/outreach to each county based on population to help defray travel expense associated with outreach and give an incentive to reach out to blind and physically handicapped patrons.

For example:

- 23 counties with population > 100,000 would receive at least \$16,000*
- 64 counties with population < 100,000 but > 20,000 would receive \$8,000*
- 72 counties with populations < 20,000 would receive \$4,000*

After lengthy discussion it was generally agreed that a statewide long range plan for TBCs was needed and great consideration should be given to ensure that whatever plan was chosen would be efficient and provide the best possible public service and meet NLS standards for accountability and performance.

Additionally, all grant formulas and requirements should be posted on a GPLS webpage and transparent to all Directors of TBCs.

The meeting ended at approximately 4 p.m.