

- X. OLD BUSINESS
A.1 Talking Book Service – Summary - Discussion
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Talking Book Service (TBS)*

**Summary originally compiled by Pat Raffee, ICfL Board Member;
sourced from staff information & ICfL documents
February - April 2018**

**revised to include Ann Joslin changes discussed on May 3, 2018
(additional Joslin edits for context added May 14, 2018)**

For review by ICfL Board members June 1, 2018

Mission

**The Idaho Commission for Libraries assists libraries
to build the capacity to better serve their communities**

* In 2002, ICfL discontinued other direct services to patrons,
to focus on statewide library development.

TBS Funding

Up until FY2009, the State funded TBS adequately. ICfL began using LSTA funds for TBS when state funding was reduced.

- In FY2008, ICfL spent **\$13,106 LSTA** dollars on TBS
 - In FY2009, ICfL spent **\$396,227 LSTA** funds on TBS
 - In FY 2010, ICfL spent **\$396,764 LSTA** funds on TBS
 - From FY2013 – FY2015, ICfL spent \$1,347,532 LSTA funds on TBS, an average of **\$449,177** per year
 - In FY 2015, ICfL spent \$414,770 total on TBS
 - In FY 2016, ICfL spent \$412,274 total on TBS
 - In FY 2017, ICfL spent \$433,526 total on TBS
 - In FY2018 ICfL is spending **\$460,566 LSTA** funds on TBS
- Two consultants (Carson Block and Himmell & Wilson) (evaluators for our 2013-2017 5-year LSTA plan) have suggested ICfL
 - “develop stronger state funding” for TBS *to free up LSTA dollars for other programs*
 - “maintain a sharp focus on early literacy”
 - The National Library Service consultant recommends that ICfL “work to obtain funding...that is not LSTA based”
 - ICfL documents inform the state we would use freed-up LSTA money now allotted to TBS for more early literacy programs

TBS Governance

An Advisory Board meets quarterly; members include reps from the Idaho School for the Deaf and Blind; the National Federation of the Blind; the Boise VA Medical Center; a (TBS user); (public libraries – 2); and (Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired)

(The NLS Standards and Guidelines are a major factor in shaping the way we approach this service)

TBS Service Delivery Information

ICfL contracts with two vendors for TBS services, totaling about \$37,000 a year

- With Keystone/KLAS in the Carolinas for database maintenance of user areas of interest (KLAS database is also the circulation platform – to track what each user has been sent in the past and has currently – and our TBS inventory control platform – titles, number of copies, machines; we also use the system to circulate LTAI titles and Read to Me consumables)
 - ICfL's access to data on their servers isn't user-friendly
- (With the Utah State Library to provide braille materials for Idaho users)

(The following refer to BARD, Braille and Audio Reading Download, which is part of the NLS service, not a contract)

- about 600 patrons used this in 2014 (about 25% of TBS users)
 - BARD allows for direct user downloads; 758 users access this in 2017, some users also get physical books from TBS staff
 - BARD users get support from TBS staff when they have download problems or need to change their passwords
- April, 2015 a National Library Service regional consultant visited TBS to review operations. She wrote a report (Board document 16-23) (2017 was the most recent site visit; the report is [Board document 18-17](#))

TBS Usage Parameters

Playback equipment/accessories are provided within two days of patron application. Users can identify areas of interest and TBS staff will send books matching those areas automatically; 2,122 active individual users for this.

- Books have 4-week checkout period, 2 week extension available
 - About 400 letters re: overdue books (generated by the KLAS system) are sent quarterly by ICfL staff based on a report provided by KLAS. There is no fine for overdue books (NLS guidelines prohibit charging overdue fines)
- Magazines have a 2-week checkout period with no extension

TBS Individual Users

Total numbers vary: approximately 2,639 or 2,369 users 2/14/2018

- 64% female
- 76% of users are over age 60; of those, 57% are over age 80
- 91% are visually impaired (1,361) or blind (1,008)
- Most TBS users (35%) learned of service from Idaho Commission for Blind
 - Idaho Commission for Blind and Visually Impaired supplied TBS services previous to ICfL (ICBVI did not serve people with physical handicaps)
 - Boise has a Braille Club sponsored by the ICBVI
 - The National Federation of the Blind has a chapter in Idaho
- 80% of users access TBS for recreational reading
- 55% have used TBS less than five years
- 15% are veterans
- 90% of TBS patrons receive titles by mail

TBS users were surveyed in 2017 (see University of Idaho report)

- 72% of users rate service as Excellent; 24% rate it as Good
- Improvements (suggested) are mostly technical (BARD downloads, online catalog difficulties, low player battery life, too many/too few books at once) (CSRs followed up on all comments if the user wished to be contacted)
 - Survey recommends TBS staff periodically checking in with patrons automatically receiving titles (CSRs now do this)

TBS Individuals Usage Trends (*over last 17 fiscal years)

To be an “Active User” one must check out at least *one book or magazine a year*

- Highest Active Individual Users were in FYs 2005 – 2008
- Cumulative* user deletions (12,458) 30% higher than user additions (9,497)
- Circulated items have fallen for last six years (our stats show that SFY2017 circ was higher than SFY2016; SFY2018 is on track to exceed last year, due in part to the “Say Yes to TBS” campaign)
 - In 2017, 1,024 Active Individual Users checked out fewer than 10 books
 - In 2017, 49 Active Individual Users checked out exactly 10 books
 - In 2017, 1,767 Active Individual Users checked out more than 10 books

TBS Institutional Users

Institutional Users	#	Est. Users*	Act. Users**	AvgCirc 2017
Hospitals	13	104	2	9 books
Nursing, retirement & hospices	58	464	20	11 books
Govts, ICBVI & Misc	28		6	21 books
Public or private schools	12	96	3	4 books
TOTAL	111	888*	31**	63 books

*These institutions' users are *estimated* at 8 by ICfL staff (the 8 users per institution is NLS' estimate); no actual stats kept (institutions don't need to register individual users)

** Actual institutions getting *2 or more* books in 2017 & their average circulation

In addition, 141 Public libraries have TBS equipment *for demonstration purposes only*, and got no or only one book in 2017 so were not counted as actual users. Aside from ICfL, only 8 libraries (most in cities) were actual users, receiving an average of 32 books in 2017.

NOTE: TBS Institutional User reports are inconsistent:

- user type lists don't match reports of actual users
- category labels such as Governments include for-profit entities

Key takeaways in the Institutional User section are:

1. estimated users *far exceed* actual users
2. better data is needed for other substantive conclusions to be drawn

TBS Personnel items

- 7 FTEs are allocated to TBS
- Average (loaded) salary \$62K now (FY2018 budget reflected average loaded salary of \$52,500; FY2019 will be lower due to new hires replacing long-time CSRs); has ranged from \$59K to \$67K
- Reporting structure is scattered
 - TBS customer service reps report to Dian Scott (as do all support staff)
 - Volunteer Services Coordinator Colleen Showalter, primary contact with TBS volunteers, reports to Shirley Biladeau (this is because volunteers are used for other programs in addition to TBS)
 - Sue Walker, TBS trainer (Regional Librarian) for about 50% of her time, reports to Stephanie Bailey-White (we assign 25% of Sue's time to TBS; in the current year she estimated closer to 50% because of her time to help train/orient 3 new CSRs)
 - Are all TBS personnel cost being fully captured and reported? (because we support cross-training among all support staff, time spent on a single program varies depending on current activities – such as preparing for the national KLAS conference or the Public Library Directors Summit or Summer Reading; rather than asking staff to keep timesheets, we periodically review the time estimates)
- Three of four customer service reps *retired and were replaced* last year
 - ICfL has *twice as many customer service reps* per population as NLS guidelines suggest, though with volunteers doing some support, ICfL total staff is likely just under NLS standards for the population served (NLS guidelines also recommend 1 additional FTE for every 333 users to do collection development, subject coding, tech support, outreach, and local database maintenance; our 4 CSRs perform all of those functions in addition to readers advisory and registering new users)
- Sue Walker serves on the board of the Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, (also a state agency)

Miscellaneous TBS Information which surfaced in the review

1. Compliance

Federal law requires “giving preference at all times to the needs of blind and other eligible print-disabled persons who have been *honorably discharged* from the armed forces of the United States”. All veterans are issued a DD-214 identifying their condition of discharge; the conditions are honorable, general, other than honorable, dishonorable or bad conduct.

- ICfL appears not to document the DD-214 records of TBS users. (The TBS application asks about veteran status, and that information is recorded in the patron record)

2. Library staff views (ICfL’s primary constituents)

Only 50% of the library workers surveyed believed continuation of TBS was a high priority (Nancy Bolt focus group) among ICfL programs. (This focus group of 20 was part of the 2008-2012 5-year LSTA plan evaluation: 10 rated it a high priority, 8 rated it medium; in a separate survey instrument, all types of librarians rated TBS 4th in a list of 9 statewide programs; respondents who had referred users to TBS rated continuation of the service “very high” at 4.55 on a 5.0 scale)

TBS was consistently ranked lower than staff education.

Library staff report most Idaho libraries already have books on tape, books on CD, and e-audios available to their patrons. (True, however most libraries don’t have collections large enough to satisfy high-volume readers, and many TBS users have transportation or mobility challenges in getting to the library)