# Reading Technology Advisory Group (RTAG)

Policy, Procedures, Member Roles and Responsibilities, 2020–2022

The Reading Technology Advisory Group (RTAG) was formed to (1) advise and inform NLS on products, strategy, and developments, as well as (2) engage patrons, network library staff, hardware repair volunteers, related professional organizational representatives, and subject matter experts. Three working groups will also be formed—mostly made up of individuals who are not members of RTAG—to provide technical expertise to RTAG on specific projects.

## RTAG

RTAG’s mission remains much the same way as in previous years: to bring together and engage a mix of perspectives and competencies to share and discuss NLS strategic objectives and developments. RTAG will meet remotely twice a year for half a day to a full day. In the future, when travel is possible, NLS will attempt to schedule one in-person meeting each year. These meetings will, as necessary, involve key NLS staff members for presentations and moderated discussion.

RTAG members serve two-year terms. Members should be knowledgeable about NLS products and related technologies.

## **RTAG membership and composition**

RTAG will be chaired by Julia Kim and will be composed of approximately fifteen members representing NLS consumer groups, librarians, and volunteers. Unless otherwise noted, members serve two-year terms with a limit of two consecutive terms.

RTAG will be made up of representatives from four distinct functional groups: consumer groups, equipment repair volunteers, patrons from each of the four regional NLS conferences, and the staff of network libraries.

### **Consumer Group Representatives, Equipment Repair Volunteers, and Conference Representatives (9 to 10 members)**

The American Council of the Blind (ACB), Blinded Veterans Association (BVA), and National Federation of the Blind (NFB) will invite their members to apply to represent their organization on RTAG. Applicants should provide a statement of their background, qualifications, and their RTAG consumer representation affiliation (no more than two pages) to the RTAG chair for review and selection. The RTAG chair will consult with each organization’s leadership before selecting an applicant to represent that organization.

RTAG will also include up to two equipment repair volunteer representatives. The NLS Equipment Specialist will solicit representatives from the NLS volunteer network. Equipment repair volunteers may serve on a working group as well as on RTAG. The NLS Equipment Specialist will provide a statement of their background and qualifications to the RTAG chair for review and selection.

Each regional conference chair will also nominate a patron from their region to serve on RTAG. The conference chairs should provide a statement of their nominees’ background and qualifications to the RTAG chair for review and selection.

Following are the number of representatives each group shall have on RTAG:

* + American Council of the Blind (1)
  + Blinded Veterans Association (1)
  + National Federation of the Blind (1)
  + Equipment Volunteers (2)
  + Optional additional member representative of an affiliated professional organization (0–1)
  + Southern Region patron (1)
  + Midlands Region patron (1)
  + Northern Region patron (1)
  + Western Region patron (1)

### **Network Library Representatives (4 members)**

Four additional members of RTAG will be chosen from staff at the network libraries, one from each regional conference. Conference chairs and NLS will publicize the opportunity to apply via messages on the Network Library listserv, Operations Alerts, etc. Network library applicants will follow the same process as above and submit an application to the RTAG chair for review and selection.

## **RTAG member roles and responsibilities:**

* Members are expected to attend each RTAG meeting.
* Members are expected to attend all virtual meetings, have regular access to email, have reliable Internet connectivity, and cellphone service.
* Members are expected to be actively engaged. Members should prepare for meetings in advance and maintain an up-to-date status on NLS products by, for example, reading any pre-meeting supplementary material, (beta) testing releases, and giving written feedback.
* Members will be encouraged to monitor listservs and technology websites in order to stay informed of recent developments. RTAG chairs will provide a short list of potential resources for members to get started.
* If a member misses two consecutive meetings without providing notice three days in advance of a meeting, they are notified and removed from the committee.

## Working Groups

Three working groups that will consist mostly of individuals outside of RTAG will be formed to advise RTAG on specific patron-facing NLS hardware, software, and mobile products and projects. These working group designations are based on NLS priorities and subject to change in the next two-year period. The initial working groups will focus on BARD, the braille eReader, and a smart speaker voice interface. Depending on the focus of the working group, its members may be asked to review strategic plans, documentation, and test prototypes and pre-production systems.

Working group members who are not also members of RTAG may be asked to sign non-disclosure agreements and will be advised on what is or is not appropriate to discuss with others outside the working group and RTAG.

Members of these working groups will be selected by each group’s chair, based on their specialized subject matter expertise. The working groups will meet at least quarterly, and each group’s chair will lead and coordinate their meetings. The chair will select one member from their working group to represent the group and present updates on their work at RTAG’s twice-a-year meetings. Working group members may apply to their chair to serve as RTAG liaison.

## Working Groups

### **BARD Working Group**

Chair: Julia Kim, Digital Projects Coordinator, BARD Mobile Product Manager

BARD and BARD Mobile will undergo significant improvements over the next few years, with an initial focus on exploring new ways to browse and search for content, the potential for new user interfaces, and major updates. As part of a new product management focus, NLS is looking for more active patron engagement and feedback. One major strategic objective is to increase BARD Mobile adoption among patrons.

### **Braille eReader Working Group**

Chair: Tamara Rorie, Braille Development Officer

The NLS braille eReader project involves two braille displays developed specifically for reading NLS braille books in digital format. This will be the first time that NLS has provided a refreshable braille device to its patrons. NLS will review all aspects of the hardware and software including ease of use, size, maintenance, training, technical support, and durability. Further, over the next two years, NLS will continue to customize, streamline, and perfect this product based on patron and network library feedback.

### **Smart Speaker Voice Interface Working Group**

Chair: Michael Katzmann, Chief, Materials Development Division

NLS is evaluating a voice-controlled smartphone product developed by a contractor for possible use as a supplied reading device. NLS will conduct field testing with select network libraries to determine the usability and acceptance of this product as soon as the Library of Congress grants the authority. NLS will use the infrastructure developed for the smartphone project (searching and streaming) to power a smart speaker delivery channel utilizing Google Assistant and Amazon Alexa.