Making Book Clubs Accessible For All\_edited

Speaker Key:

RB Rachel Breau

JB Jane Beaumont

AH Adair Harper

LU Luke

CO Connie

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RB So, now it’s a pleasure for me to introduce Jane Beaumont. So, Jane has been a librarian for life. And has been involved with library services for persons with print disabilities since she worked for and then volunteered with CNIB Library more than 20 years ago. Since 2005 she has supported a book club in Ottawa for members of the Canadian Council for the Blind. So, without further ado, I’d like to welcome, Jane, and invite her to speak.

JB Thank you very much. I’m delighted to be here. I haven’t done this sort of thing for a long time. So, please excuse me if I fumble a little, but we won’t, Rachel and I have practiced a little. I should also say that I was, deeply, involved in the transition from the CNIB Library to CELA. And I like to say that CELA, actually, is beyond my wildest dreams.

When I was first on the CNIB Library board and the CNIB Library was struggling to provide service as a charity, we began to understand the kind of change that needed to happen. And it did happen. And CELA is a wonderful result. And it happened because of the support of the large public libraries and the provincial libraries and that continues today. So, from where I started in this to where we are now, is amazing and wonderful to me.

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The other part of getting involved in book clubs was as CNIB Library was transitioning to a digital library and CDs, instead of the old analogue tapes. We had to get new equipment into the hands of 20 thousand people and not a lot of them could afford to get that new machine. So, in Ottawa, we went to the Ottawa Community Foundation looking for some funds in 2005.

And at that first meeting, someone said why don’t you start a book club, which was much better than just handing machines to people and never seeing them again. So, that’s how the book club came about in Ottawa through the CCB, the Canadian Council for the Blind. We have two clubs now and I will use a lot of that experience as we’re talking.

So, when we first started to talk about doing this webinar, the other issue was that this is not just about book clubs for blind people. This is about making any book club accessible for people with disabilities. In particular, people with print disabilities. I like to call it universal design, and making sure there are no barriers because I know there are many, many public libraries across the country that do host book clubs.

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But I’ve never had any success in the few places I’ve tried, in getting those book clubs to understand that I would be quite possible to be much more open and to make it much more accessible. So, I kind of, hope we’re going to start a movement of accessibility in book clubs, especially ones sponsored by public libraries. Public library was very involved in the Ottawa ones early on because that was the way we got the books.

That’s changed quite a lot because people now, typically, obtain the books that are chosen themselves, but we’ll come back to that. So, we’re talking about making book clubs accessible to people with a print disability, either sight loss or a perceptual disability like dyslexia. Or even a physical disability, an inability to hold the book. We tend to be very focused on that in the CNIB, CELA community.

But I don’t want to forget the people with physical disabilities, such as a wheelchair because there are barriers for them getting to a book club meeting as well. So, we’re talking about just making the book club accessible. The big barriers when I first got involved were just the availability of books, of titles. And that has changed so much. Again, it’s beyond my wildest dreams. There are so many ways, and I will talk about some of the sources as we go along.

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But getting a book title is just not nearly as limiting as it used to be. But it is an issue in terms of choosing book titles for an accessible book club, where people come with all interests and abilities, to make sure the title is available in alternate format. Some other considerations which we’ll talk about are place, where are you going to meet, if it’s a face-to-face book club, finding that place.

Or even if it’s a virtual book club, and there are lots around the country jumping up and spreading now. A virtual one, making sure members have the technology and the ability to link to that meeting. Time and frequency, actually, matter. The first book club in Ottawa that I was involved in, still meets Tuesday mornings on the first Tuesday of the month. But we were aware of a crew of people around us that actually wanted to meet outside of work time.

So, there’s now the afterhours book club, which is run by the same group of people, but it’s at 17:30, and is going very well. And that, actually, started during this COVID time. So, it’s virtual and it’s afterhours and it’s serving a need that was there. Finding members and using social media to advertise this. And there’s an issue with the number of people in a book club.

Face-to-face in Ottawa we’ve had up to 15 or 20 and I think it’s the same for the Zoom book club. That to have a good discussion you do need to consider how many people you can accommodate, but at the same time, you don’t want to turn people away.

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Rachel asked me to say something about the value of book clubs. And I’m afraid I thought, well, that’s obvious, but it’s not that obvious. And some of you may need to promote the idea of starting a book club, so, that’s something that you want to have in mind. By the way, as Rachel said, I will provide the notes tomorrow or the next day. So, you don’t need to take a lot of notes now. But the most important thing in terms of accessibility is, actually, inclusion.

For people with vision loss and many people with disabilities, isolation is a huge problem. And this is something that brings people together. And the thing that the Ottawa group say most often is this is the one time I get together with a small group of people and it’s been a huge social value to me. So, that inclusion versus isolation is very important, social connections. Also, a book club will venture into new areas, something every month will be new to somebody, So, that discovery aspect of the book club is important.

And peer support, there are often, either before or after, the official discussion of the book, there will always be some discussion about issues which are related to their disability or wondering where to find books. And that is true of any book club and this ability to support each other is really an important part of it. And just being involved in the community.

Certainly, the book clubs have brought people to the Canadian Council for the Blind and to CNIB, because they heard about the book club and then wanted to be involved. That’s the background to this, and as I say, the most important thing to me is remembering and being aware of what being accessible means. So, we’ll come back to quite a few of those points.

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If the book club is going to choose titles for each meeting, then where are you going to get the books that are in alternate format? And by, alternate format, I’m talking about audio, which nowadays will either be downloading the digital file directly. Or it will be receiving the book or getting it from the library on CDs or putting the book on an SD card and sending it to the person who needs it. So, there are a number of ways to get that digital version of the book.

And we’re talking about audio, which can be either human narrated or it can be text-to-speech. I have to say, the book club I’m with are not keen yet on text-to-speech, but most of them admit that they will take a book from Bookshare, which is a text-to-speech service rather than not read the book. And that text-to-speech is getting better and better. So, there are options in audio.

A really interesting example right now, the book that we’re reading in Ottawa next week, or discussing, is Michael Crummey’s, The Innocents. And I picked up the audible version from Audible.com, because I’m not entitled to CELA. And I had already read the book, but I’ve listened to some of the audio. It is the strongest Newfoundland accent I’ve ever heard on an audiobook and it’s not that easy to understand.

Now, the members of CELA in the book club are getting the CELA copy, and it’s actually text-to-speech. And it’s the first time, I think, that we’ve taken a bestseller in text-to-speech. So, I’m looking forward to next weeks’ discussion because I suspect there’s going to be a lot of discussion about the quality of the narration because some of them have got it from Audible and some would’ve got it from CELA. But it’s a good example of the kinds of things that are available and that text-to-speech is part of our lives now.

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The other side of the alternate format is, actually, braille. There are people who, especially for leisure reading, really, really want to read braille. And CELAs one-off, single-use braille books are very popular with the serious braille readers. And they share them around, which is a great service because all the braille books are often very battered and get beaten down by all the fingering that goes on. So, braille from CELA is a luxury that a lot of people really are enjoying.

Or they can be eBraille. So, if you have a text of a book, it can be run through the braille translators and then the reader can read it on a refreshable braille keyboard or display. I’m not very experienced with it, but I’ve watched people using the refreshable braille everywhere from restaurants to timetables and all sorts of things.

And I should say at this point, actually, that there is a very good webinar that will go up on the CELA website shortly, which Lindsay Tyler did on devices and the equipment that people need. So, I’m not going go into that in any detail, but there are pages about it now and then there’s this webinar coming.

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The book clubs have a lot of different ways of choosing books, which I find quite interesting. In Ottawa we, actually, have a retired librarian, Marcia Aronson, who some of you might know, who comes to the meeting once a year, with a wonderful selection of books that she’s recommending, a huge wide range. And then the members vote on the titles as she goes through them, and we rank them and take the most popular for the monthly reading list, so, that’s one way of doing it.

Individuals can promote books. That new book club is taking a Canada Reads approach, and two or three people will promote a book that they want everybody to read. And then the club will vote and that’ll be on the list for reading. So, there’s all kinds of ways to choose books and many of you are probably members of book clubs and have ways of doing this. It’s the same for an accessible book club, there’s not really any difference there.

You do need to expect quite spirited discussion about the pros and cons of different formats and about the quality of narration. The CELA books, inevitably, some of the narration is fantastic and some of it’s not so good. And if it’s not so good we always hear about it from the members at the monthly discussion. That’s just life and it’s the same, even, with Audible.com books, there’s some good narration and some not so great. Rachel have you had any questions yet in the chat about any of this?

RB Not yet, no.

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JB That’s fine, because if questions about a very specific thing come up on Rachel’s screen she’ll alert me, and we might deal with it. Otherwise, I’m going to talk for 20 minutes or so and then we’re going to have lots of time for some discussion.

RB So, just as you say that, of course, a question comes in.

JB The question was do we deal with large print. The answer is, basically, no, but there’s nothing to stop a member in a general book club or even in one for people with sight loss, taking large print. And I quite often meet people who say I’ve been able to read large print until the last six months and now I need to make the transition. So, large print is, actually, often a way into alternate formats.

So, I don’t dismiss it at all, it just happens that CELA doesn’t deal with large print, it’s something the public libraries will do. Or I would expect there are also people who might put a book on Kindle because they can manage the size of the print for themselves. So, there’s that option as well, which fits within accessibility regardless. Thanks for that question.

So, what sort of structure do you need for the book club? We’ve found we need a coordinator. We need somebody who will make sure that if the books have to be ordered on CD from CELA, that that is done. We’ve continued to do that in our book club because I used to do it for the whole club. And the books were sent to the public library and I went and fetched them, and we distributed them at the meeting. None of that happens anymore because the books are delivered directly to the patrons.

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But you still need someone keeping an eye on the list and making sure people know what to order and ordering copies if you need to. And this might be a volunteer, it might be a member of the club, it might be the sponsoring organisation, someone from CNIB or CCB, but that coordination is important.

Chairing the meetings is the other part of this. Typically, we’ve had one person doing it for a year or more and then switching. I think we may be moving towards rotating that chairing because most of the chairing of the meeting is about leading the discussion. Especially if individuals recommend books and then people read that. Why not have the person who recommended the book chairing that discussion.

But that chairing and managing the discussion is necessary. And it can be a bit different if you’re doing it by Zoom, but either way, someone needs to be chairing the session and making sure it moves forward. We’ve looked to have invited guests quite often and we’re lucky enough to have a number of authors in Ottawa. So, Charlotte Gray, is an honorary member of the book club, because she loves coming to our book club to talk about her books.

And one of the reasons she really likes coming is because she gets a very different perspective from the other kinds of other book clubs she gets invited to. The age range is quite significant, we’re people from four or five different nationalities and also, people with vision loss have a different view of a book in terms of the description very often. So, Charlotte’s one of our favourite author visitors, but we’ve had a number of others.

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And looking to provide some variety like that, I think, makes a huge difference and makes the meetings much more interesting. Some people will need some guiding to get into the room, to be seated. When you have people with any kind of disability there are some accommodations that need to be made, they’re often not significant. But they make a huge difference to the comfort level for that person, so, making sure someone knows who they’re sitting next to.

And then I’ll talk a bit about running the meeting in a minute, but just getting people comfortable and into the room. And the co-host at a virtual meeting, you might have that person look after the technical details. Another role is communications, and that’s managing the membership list and knowing the member’s coordinates. If you are running on a grant from a community foundation or something, you may need to record attendance, just to prove that the club has a group of members and who you’re benefiting.

Meeting notices, Zoom links, teleconference numbers, and all of those things need to be communicated. So, communications is something, probably, best held by one person who is willing to do that. The other issue that isn’t, probably, significant with most book clubs, is actually, transportation. And I notice in my notes it comes up several times. We have a volunteer who’s provided transportation for some of the members for quite a few years. And that makes a huge difference in their ability to get to a meeting if it’s a physical meeting.

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If anyone with sight loss is going to need a computer or a device for reading their books and as I said, I’m not going to go into a lot of details of that, because it’s well-covered in other aspects of CELA services. But whether it’s for audio or for braille, that device is necessary. I happened to be looking back over a hundred years for the CNIB centenary. And when you look at some of the equipment that people dealt with and had for the first audiobooks to today, where it’s in your pocket, it’s on your iPhone.

Again, the world has changed dramatically and it’s always been for the better. The choice of device is very personal and according to the disability and the need and the capability to obtain the equipment. There are links to lots of pages on the CELA website about devices and I recommend you start there. Some public libraries, such as Ottawa, have equipment that can be borrowed, and usually on a 90-day renewable loan.

So, if somebody doesn’t really know what they want, and they want to try things. That’s one option, is to go to the library and see if there’s anything that they can borrow. In other cases, organisations have raised money to buy equipment for people. In Ontario, we have the ADP programme, which periodically, a person can spend their money on their reading device. So, it’s a question of getting advice, and this is where peer support comes in.

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And then helping choosing and learning how to use the equipment, so training in terms of equipment is, actually, the number one issue after obtaining the device. A number of cities in Canada have the benefit of Get Together With Technology, which is a CCB chapter programme that provides group support and one-on-one support to people for all their technological needs. But it’s been particularly helpful for people wanting reading devices and I know CELA members have visited GTT meetings quite often, to answer questions and promote equipment.

And then there’s the CELA helpdesk. So, almost everyone, when they get started need some help. But I’d also watch people be confronted with a new braille notebook or something one day, and say I’m never going to do this, and I see them two days later or a week later and it’s as if they’ve had it for their whole lives, and they’re communicating and the world has changed. So, it’s that learning curve that we all go through at various times.

People do need help choosing devices and whether or not to put their books on a smartphone or have a specific device or a computer they want or whether they’re going to have a tablet or an iPhone. All those kinds of decisions are very personal and I would recommend people get advice because it makes a lot of difference to have that support in the early stages. GTT has also spent a lot of time teaching people how to log into Zoom and to use Zoom.

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Interestingly, even before COVID, I was already hearing about Zoom as being a very good, accessible platform for people with vision loss to have conferences and meetings. And then it took off with COVID, so we all know much more about Zoom now than we did, but in many ways, people with vision loss were ahead of the curve on this one. Other things that somebody might need help with in order to get to the meeting is how do you use a navigation app on their phone to get to a meeting.

It’s not something the library thinks it should be doing or needs to do, but is out there as part of the support system that gets people to accessible book clubs. There’s lots written about managing meetings when you’ve got people with vision loss in that meeting. And on the notes that I’ll send you tomorrow are a couple of links to very good websites and documents about accessible meetings.

So, again, I’m not going to go into a whole lot of detail, but the location of the meeting is important, is it an accessible building, is there parking, are there stairs, are there accessible washrooms and what about elevators. And something that we don’t think about a lot is noise. People with vision loss actually have quite a lot of difficulty with a room with people talking around them because they don’t know where the voice is coming from.

So, lack of background noise makes a big difference to the comfort level for a person with vision loss. And another thing I often notice is people with lower vision want to be able to sit where they’re not facing bright lights. So, in our board meetings, the people with low vision will all go to the side of the boardroom table where they have their backs to the windows. So, things like that are small, but make a massive difference to people’s comfort level in terms of the location.

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Is there public transportation nearby, can the people get there on public transportation because these are not drivers that we’re inviting to the meeting? The layout of the room, you need to keep it simple and not have obstructions in between the door and the table and things like that. All of these things are covered in the managing accessible meetings, but they’re just a few highlights to show you what sorts of things you need to consider.

If the meeting is virtual, it could be teleconference, it could be Zoom, it can be people like today, there are people with us that are not using their video. A number of our book club members are happy to use Zoom, but they don’t really want to be on video, so they turn the video off. Some of the ones who do have the video on, what we most see is the ceiling, because they’re not able to see what their screen is showing. So, you can encourage people to join by audio, but not use video if it’s of no benefit to them.

So, a chair’s role is to make sure that everybody gets heard. And in any meeting where you have people with vision loss, the first thing that should happen is a roll call. So, that everybody knows who’s in the room and actually where they are at the table and who’s around the table. If people don’t know each other very well, you probably need to encourage them to say their name when they first speak.

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That’s not an issue with something that’s been going on for months or years, but the rollcall is important so that everyone knows who’s there. And if someone leaves the room they should say that they’re leaving, because that’s another part of knowing what’s going on in the room. There will probably be several dogs under the table, and they’re usually quite happy with the book club, they’ll be fine.

The way we work it is we go around the table, each saying how we liked the book, and then we have general discussion. Book clubs can do whatever they like, but that works for this group, because again, they can’t see everybody in the room and the chair can make sure that each person gets their moment to say how they found the book. Our book club actually likes to rate the books, so we give them a score out of five. I’ve never come across any others who do that, but we’ve had some quite interesting discussions about that.

We had a discussion recently about having a more structured discussion with book club questions, but everyone pretty much rejected that as being too much like school. But I know there are quite a lot of book clubs and there are lots of guides for book clubs reading particular books. But it’s not something we wanted to do. A virtual meeting is a bit of a challenge, but we’ve got more used to it and have to decide whether or not to use mute or whether to use the hand-raising capability.

But one thing I would suggest if people are using VoiceOver or JAWS on their computer, and they’re in the book club, they need to mute themselves. Because the VoiceOver from their computer will immediately make that person the speaker and interrupt the Zoom flow and the discussion. So, people do need to use Zoom a little bit carefully if they’re using VoiceOver on their computer. So, they need to know how to use mute.

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I’ve got food and drink on this list as well, this is all part of the meetings. We take it in turn to take treats to the meeting, but the issue about that is if you have treats and you’re serving coffees, you need to make sure that people know it’s there and guide people to the food or serve them. Again, it’s not just walk up to the table and grab your coffee, but making sure that everybody gets their coffee or their drink.

A few special considerations about virtual meetings. Again, reviewing how to use mute and unmute. Whether or not to use raising and lowering hands. Or whether chat should be used like we’re going to use it today. The book clubs are not like today’s webinar, it’s a lot less formal. We seem to get by with a small group, maybe ten people most of the time, with just interrupting when somebody wants to speak. But the chair does keep an eye on it and will moderate the discussion if necessary.

Quite a lot of people choose not to use the camera and there is an accessibility webpage on Zoom.us, which is probably the best place to go for advice on using Zoom for people with vision loss. This you will get in the notes tomorrow, but the CCB, in our latest grant for the book club, we built in some money to update the accessible book club handbook, which is almost done and will be available by the end of the year.

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So, CELA will certainly promote it and it will be on the CCB website, but that’s a very detailed description of running book clubs for people with vision loss. But much of what’s in there is relevant to any disability and of interest, even, to any book club. There’s CELA who has a webpage on library programmes in the public library section. And the CNIB foundation has got information about workplace accessibility, which is also very relevant to the book clubs.

So, that’s actually, pretty much, what I wanted to say or talk about. I think that bringing people with sight loss or disability into any book club which you have at your public libraries would be wonderful. And I really hope that we can help you do that. And then there will be people who will want to start book clubs for people with vision loss and there’s lots of advice. We’ve talked about lots of issues that you deal with, but they’re not significant issues, they’re just things that make life much easier and make it much more comfortable for people with sight loss.

So, with that, I would love to answer questions and have some discussion. Rachel will moderate and mostly we’re going to do it from the chat. And I know Rachel’s got some other questions if no one else has a question, but I can’t believe there are no questions.

RB Thank you so much, Jane. I’m just going to interject here and just describe how you can get books from CELA for your book club. So, every public library system has an intra library loan account. So, you would log into that account and request the titles that you need, that is if you only need one copy. If you need more than one copy of a book in our collection then email [members@celalibrary.ca](mailto:members@celalibrary.ca) and tell us how many copies you need. And then we can just issue that number of copies to you.

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We do ask you though to give us about four to six weeks, just to really play safe and make sure that those books arrive to you in the mail. You can also download books using your intra library loan account. So, if you wanted to put a book on a USB stick and put it in someone’s DAISY player, you have that option as well. And you can borrow braille from us or any of our formats, any library can borrow them. So, in a nutshell, that’s how you would borrow a book from CELA for your patrons.

When your patrons are done with it, just send them back in the mail to us as you would any normal CELA book. If it’s a CD then turn it over, put it back in the envelope and send it back to us. If it’s braille, so one-way braille, that Jane mentioned, you can keep it or the patron can keep it or recycle it, it’s up to you.

JB Or share it.

RB Or share it, absolutely, yes. So, we do have a question here. Cassidy is wondering. So, it says thank you and she’s saying it’s good to know you can borrow more than one copy. So, at this point, as a reminder, just because we have such a big group, I’ll read out your question, but I’ll also give you the chance to unmute yourself if you have anything else to add.

So, I don’t know, Cassidy, if there’s anything you wanted to add? At this point, you can just unmute yourself. If you’re using a mouse then you move it over and the mute is on the far left, bottom corner.

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JB With the book club that we have, the only books that I order from CELA now, and I’m not a library, is directly through to you about four people who are still using CDs. Is that common? Or is that just we historically have a good connection to you?

RB No, very common. I know we have some members here today who are from other CNIB offices and run a book club for their members. So, for many, many years they contact us directly and ask for a set number of copies for their book club.

JB Ours get sent out directly, I don’t handle them at all anymore.

RB Right, and then there’s the alternative. We, definitely, prefer if you have CELA members in your library that they request their own copies, but you can ask us as well to do it for you.

JB We’ve had wonderful service since the day CELA existed, so we just carried on.

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RB So, just to get the discussion going and maybe opening it up not just about accessible book clubs, but book clubs in general. Maybe some of you can share how your book clubs choose your books? And then we can lead into [inaudible] about finding the accessible formats for those books. Any comments about that?

AH Do you want us to speak out loud?

RB Hi, Adare, we can hear you.

AH Hi, how’s it going? So, Adare Harper. I’m from Richmond Public Library over in British Columbia. This is why I asked the question earlier about the large print as I’m working with a low vision support group out in the community. And there’s a range of preferences there in terms of format, and it does include large print, as well as Libby online audio. So, I actually find that the restricting factor in terms of titles isn’t the CELA DAISY desk options, which the membership team has been great at supplying those.

I actually find it’s more finding enough large print copies that we have in stock, as well as it being available on Libby without a gigantic waitlist. So, it’s perhaps not quite what you’re chatting about here, but for me, what I do is I go and I ask folks what type of book they might want to read next and then I go and wade through our collection, trying to find, basically, the Venn Diagram, where that overlaps. So, sometimes they’re kind of funny titles that come out of that, purely based on what we can actually offer in terms of our collection aspect.

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So, I just thought I would put that one out there because the limitation isn’t actually for folks who have minimal vision and are using disks. It’s more so for the folks who are reading those other formats.

JB I totally agree with you. There are two sighted members of the book club I’ve been talking about, myself and someone else. And the other person who is also the driver relies on the public library to get the title. And too often she’s not able to get it, there’s just too big a waiting list or it isn’t there. So, there are many times when I jokingly say that the people who have access to CELA have a lot of benefits.

And up until now, the people I know, haven’t really been using Libby and Overdrive, etc. but that’s going to grow. But again, they come up against waitlists, and I absolutely do not mean to dismiss large print. I’m reading a lot of large print myself now. So, it’s actually an important issue that needs to be integrated into this discussion because it suits a certain category of people. And they are up against a waitlist problem, a physical waitlist.

RB So, we have quite a few questions and comments now. There’s a question about volunteers, but I’m just going to skip that while we keep on the topic of choosing our titles. So, Alison is saying group members are asked to bring in two suggestions and then, essentially, they vote. Alison, I don’t know if you wanted to add a bit more to that? So, that’s one way to do it, do a vote for everybody, which is great.

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So, I’m going to move to the questions. So, Luke, is asking about other than the chair or the leader of the book club, how many volunteers do you use? Again, Luke, I’ll just give you a chance, if you wanted to ask that question in person? Or Jane can just answer it.

JB Is this the Luke I can see on the screen?

RB Yes, he’s on mute.

JB We have two volunteers, at the moment, involved in the book club. Myself as, pretty much, the coordinator and the person who does drive some of the members. We meet in a very well-organised room at the CCB, so guiding people there and doing things during the meeting, we don’t really need volunteers for, but we’re also only about ten regular members. If you had a larger group, it probably would be a great help to have one or two floating volunteers, which is why I say welcome people with sight.

Because the volunteers are very often people who can do the guiding and make sure the room is safe and so on. Every book club should have some of each, some people who can see and some who can’t. And it’s a mutual support organisation. So, it’s not a lot of volunteers, it’s not like going out on a hike or something like that, but a couple of volunteers does make a big difference.

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LU Thank you for that. It’s something that I’ve considered. I work at the Calgary Public Library and at the central library downtown. And I’ve had issues in the past with some of our patrons getting into the brand-new, beautiful building that we have and it would be nice to have some volunteer way-finders to help people. Other than myself, which occasionally I get roped into doing that and it’s lovely to do.

JB Believe it or not, I went on a field trip to the new Calgary Public Library with a library school professor friend. And my interest was to find my way around as if I were a blind person, and it’s not an easy library.

LU No, you’re not the first person to say that.

JB For example, if you’re going to have the meeting in the library building, someone at the door guide people would make all the difference. I know, Halifax, I’ve been to meetings where there’s going to be a lot of blind people in the new Halifax Library, and there’s always one or two volunteers at the door looking out for those people to take them to the meeting.

LU Thank you.

RB So, we have Connie from Okanagan Regional Library, who talks about using a teleconference line. So, they have a question of the week, basically. Connie, did you want to tell us more about that?

CO We have a question like who’s your favourite character in a book or something along those lines and something different every week. And I was saying in my chat that the patrons are really finding it better. Because a lot of them don’t have access to a computer, or they don’t have other technology that they have access to, where we can do this book discussion group for them. I guess, I could’ve added a question on the bottom of that, which would have been, any ideas about promoting, especially during COVID?

00:42:03

JB Do you mean promoting particularly to people with vision loss or in general?

CO Yes.

JB I would suggest you contact the local CNIB foundation because CNIB, in particular, has moved so many of its programmes to virtual platforms, but a lot of it is teleconference and it’s not necessarily Zoom. So, have a look on the CNIB website in the B, C section and see what’s there, because they may give you some leads.

I’m in The Maritimes and they have an incredible number of programmes that are running on teleconference and not just on Zoom, including a book club. So, I know there’s experience around CNIB now about running book clubs.

CO Thank you, that’s really helpful.

RB And I’ll just let you know, kind of, as an aside, we have lots of outreach tools on our outreach toolkit page for libraries. So, you’re welcome to browse that. It doesn’t have an invitation to community organisations related to book clubs specifically, but there might be some wording there that you’re welcome to use.

JB At CNIB in Toronto, Karen Brophy, is it called Unbound, the book club that she’s running?

RB I can’t remember the title, but I know the one you mean.

JB We’ll look it up because there is someone in Toronto who is responsible for braille literacy across the country, who is promoting ways of bringing book readers together.

00:43:38

RB I guess, the next description I’ll go to is actually from Ottawa Public Library, and Sarah works for their homebound services. She is just telling me about the book clubs that they support in senior’s residences. Sarah, if you want to tell us more about that or if you have any questions?

JB My only comment about that would be in the senior’s residence that I hope that they provide DAISY books for the people that need them. I would suggest that’s one of the locations where you might get a real mix of members, some with vision and some without and some with sight and some without. That’s great.

RB Adare, you’ve shared a few more comments. So, you say as part of your book club you have spouses with vision who participate in the club, so it’s an event together, which is nice. And also, the Seniors' Centre Without Walls in Surrey has a weekly programme with the library, and they read a short story out loud and have a discussion. That’s a great idea.

00:44:58

And others who join through Zoom and you make sure they have an access code. And that’s a good way to protect the Zoom room so that no one else gets into it too. Adare, did you have anything else to add? You have a very dynamic book club. Do you have anything else to say?

AH Let me be totally clear, I’m not from Surrey, but I was looking into more accessible formats for programming and their call-in programme was a very interesting one I thought. And I know that Ottawa is where all that began, so I just wanted to share that. So, basically, the librarian just drops in and reads a story out loud, and then they discuss. So, it’s a nice low barrier one where folks don’t need to prep, they can just have the discussion there.

And then the comment about Zoom was just to say that I wasn’t aware until I got into Zoom programming that folks can call into regular Zoom meetings as well. So, you can have it on Zoom and have that video discussion aspect, but then you can also have people calling in. So, maybe, everybody knows that, but I know it took me a little while to figure that out. So, just to say it’s not an either-or, although, the codes changing all the time can be a bit more of a barrier as well.

JB We have one member who only joins by phone. And she’s still got a little bit of vision, so she can read the phone number okay, but that’s the challenge really with Zoom, if you do it by phone. But otherwise, she’s the same as everyone else on the meeting, it works just fine.

00:46:34

RB I just want to add two things. First of all, there is a nice summary of the shortcut keys to using Zoom, which is what somebody would use if they’re joining on their computer. So, that’s something to look for. The other thing too, is Zoom will come with a phone number, but you have to be careful, sometimes the person might have to pay long-distance charges. It kind of depends on where you live, but just an FYI about that.

JB That is true [inaudible]. The person who does it has a country-wide long distance, so it’s okay, but it’s not [inaudible] for everybody.

RB We’ve got another five minutes or so before we wrap-up, does anyone have any other questions? I’m thinking particularly questions about starting an online book club and thinking of people with print disabilities in general and encouraging them to sign up. One thing to consider, Jane, really hit the nail on the head when she talked about contacting CNIB. Partnerships are huge, I find, in this community, so partnering with print disability organisations in your community can make a big difference.

But also, connecting with other organisations like March of Dimes or wider disability organisations can help as well because then maybe you can talk to the members or parents of children with disabilities and find out what they need. So, it goes a little beyond book clubs, but still, that’s a practice that if you can incorporate it, it can really help.

00:48:20

JB From my experience in Ottawa, most cities have a community foundation. This literacy and vision loss and disabilities go together very well and the community foundations receive requests for grants very favourably. So, don’t be afraid to go looking for funding as well, to help people get equipment, because it’s really the most significant barrier for a lot of people.

RB That’s a very good point, definitely. So, just a comment here, Katelyn is saying that for certain Zoom account holders you can make recurring scheduled Zoom sessions with the same meeting ID code. And that’s a very good point because that way there’s only one link, so, that’s very handy.

JB Yes.

RB Not searching for that email that has the link for your club day which is in an hour. So, that’s really handy.

JB One of my coordinator jobs is to send the link again first thing in the morning of the meeting, so that everybody’s got it on the top of their email.

RB Sarah is saying that she is looking forward to the new handbook and so am I. I definitely read through the old one, it used to be on our site.

JB I think the old one is probably still on the CCB website, but it’s all about CNIB library, it’s very out of date in terms of where you get books from. So, I assure you, it is within weeks of being set up. And this gives an added pressure because I told everybody.

00:49:52

RB Does anyone have any other questions? Any questions relating to promoting your club? Just thinking about the existing book clubs you have, how would you try and make people with print disabilities feel welcome within those existing clubs, any questions like that before we wrap-up? Katelyn, you work at CNIB. I have a wonderful volunteer to get a book club started in Belleville, Ontario and Jane do you have any advice?

JB I thought I recognised the name, this is Katelyn from Kingston, I think. What I should do is put you in touch with the people in Ottawa who started the new online digital-only book club. So, Katelyn, if you want to drop me a note, I will connect you to the new club in Ottawa. And you can share some experiences because it is going really well.

And one of the things people like, which I think someone mentioned, sighted spouses or partners are coming and really enjoying being part of it. Because often their spouse or partner goes off to some special event for people with vision loss, and they’re left out, but there’s absolutely no reason for that with book clubs.

RB Luke had another comment saying it would be nice to collaborate with other public library organisations do some online book clubs together, which is a fantastic idea, actually.

00:51:28

JB Yes.

RB I’m not quite sure how that would get started, maybe through some online library-related lists.

JB Again, look at the online offerings of CNIB at the moment, you’ll see there are some book clubs, and if you wanted you could probably contact a coordinator of one of those and get some ideas and have a talk to that person. Yes, good.

RB So, we have another question about, can a book club operate on its own or would a library staff member need to be reading along?

JB I would say no. The most important thing is providing a room that people can get to and that is free and that there be some of the necessary support around it. There are lots and lots of clubs who meet at public libraries and don’t involve the library staff at all. Obviously, you need to make that initial request and get set up, but no, the book clubs should really try to be as independent as they can be.

RB I just want to make one comment about that too, just to be very clear, CELAs collection is only for people with print disabilities. As library staff, you can access books from our collection, but it’s for the person with the print disability. We’ve had questions specifically about book clubs, so volunteer-run, and they thought they could get access to CELA, but they didn’t have a print disability. They’d have to get the book through their public library or buy it or whatever. So, just to be clear about that.

JB As we said, we’re on the waiting list for the book at the public library, while the CELA members get it directly.

00:53:11

RB Aimee is asking about kids and disabilities. Do you know if any have been done for younger ages, information by age in the book club handout? That’s a good question.

JB It’s a very good question. The only thing I’m really aware of for children is the TD summer reading club and that is an incredibly important public library activity. I’m not aware of any book clubs for young children, but there’s no reason why not, and especially for young adults. But again, those people are welcome at a book club for any young adult, so it’s making any of your activities accessible and welcoming that really matters.

RB I’ll just lead off on that. We had a very good presentation a few weeks ago from the executive director at Dyslexia Canada, and she gave some great tips about library services for people with dyslexia. One point she did make is really be cautious about asking people to read out loud in a book club, if you’re a struggling reader it could be embarrassing. So, that’s a word of caution I would have, but definitely, it’s the same principle, just make sure you have accessible formats.

People with dyslexia tend to want more eText with the audio reinforcement. So, if we have the book in our collection, definitely let the members know, then they can access it that way.

00:54:42

JB That’s a very good point, yes.

RB We’re about two minutes away from the end of the session. So, thank you so much, Jane, for speaking to us. I certainly learned a lot. Especially what you said about the meetings, which is something we don’t talk about very often, so I’m glad to mentioned about running accessible meetings, especially for people with vision loss. So, thank you. Just to wrap things up, I also wanted to say we planned this topic on book clubs very specifically because a book club can make people feel connected.

And especially with people feeling isolated, everyone essentially, it really helps. So, it’s very timely that we offer this and I know you mentioned that too. So, CELA does offer other webinars. Our next one is our orientation webinar, which is on 8 December at 14:00. We have a training page that you can go to and it will be listed there. As Jane said, we will be making her slides available on our site and we will email them to you as well. And we will provide the recording as well.

And lastly, if you have any questions you can always email [members@celalibrary.ca](mailto:members@celalibrary.ca) and we’ll be happy to get back to you. And if you just want to share more tips or information about you’re running your book clubs, particularly with accessibility in mind, we would love to hear them. So, thank you very much for attending and thank you Jane. Have a good afternoon.

JB Thank you, Rachel. It was a very nicely organised meeting, it was great. Thank you very much.

RB Thank you, everyone. Bye.

00:56:29