Strategic Plan  
April 1, 2017- March 31, 2021

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# Introduction

The Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) launched in April of 2014 as a result of years of discussion and planning among key stakeholders, including Libraries and Archives Canada (LAC), the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) and CNIB. It is a national non-profit organization, providing infrastructure, support and content that allows public libraries to deliver accessible library materials to Canadians with print disabilities in equal measure to that which is enjoyed by other members of their community.

The ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty and the momentum building through the Government of Canada’s consultations with Canadians on accessibility legislation are focusing national attention on accessible services and shining a light on the importance of the service that CELA provides to public libraries.

Since its inception, CELA has solidified its place as a sustainable and necessary public service component of its member libraries. The implementation and nurturing of CELA services in member public libraries has elevated awareness among public library staff of the needs of Canadians with print disabilities, and has inspired an improvement in overall service. In our first 3 years, we anticipate that library patrons using CELA services will have borrowed over 6 million books and other media in accessible formats offered by CELA through local public libraries - a number unimaginable and unattainable if each individual library were responsible for providing the service within their existing capacity.

CELA staff and board members have spent their first 3 years focused on:

* Establishing and refining procedures and protocols based on input from public library staff and users
* Transitioning resources and clientele from the CNIB Library to CELA
* Transferring a specialized knowledge base from CNIB Library staff to CELA staff, CELA Board members, committees of the CELA Board and public library staff
* Establishing and marketing the CELA brand
* Onboarding of public libraries to CELA service and providing ongoing training and support to both users and libraries
* Promoting CELA services at conferences and trade shows targeting libraries, educators and Canadians with print disabilities
* Shifting partnerships and relationships from CNIB to CELA and pursuing new partnerships
* Advocacy at all levels of government and throughout the library community

We are very proud of the difference we’ve made thus far, but our work is far from complete. With feedback from member libraries, accessible format producers, national and international partners, organizations and associations representing Canadians with disabilities, CELA staff and, most importantly, the users, the CELA Board has determined that:

* a substantial number of Canadians with disabilities are not yet aware that their local public library is offering CELA or other accessible services, or are hesitant to seek assistance from local public libraries because services were lacking in the past;
* technology provides tremendous potential in removing barriers to accessing books and other information sources for those with print disabilities and is vital that CELA staff, public library staff and users keep up-to-date with latest innovations and inform the process;
* technology is also a tremendous catalyst for increased production of books and other media in accessible digital formats, but many patrons still prefer traditional physical formats and a balance needs to be struck, and;
* the Marrakesh Treaty and other initiatives are giant leaps forward in accessibility, and implementation requires leadership and collaboration.

As a national organization serving 90% of the population through member public libraries, CELA is in the best position possible to further these efforts. Our strategic plan for the next 4 years reflects our desire to seize upon these and other opportunities to make the dream of truly equitable library service for Canadians with print disabilities a reality.

The Board of Directors for the Centre for Equitable Library Access has approved the extension of this strategic plan through until June 30, 2022.

# Vision

Equitable public library services for Canadians with print disabilities.

# Mission

To support public libraries in the provision of accessible collections for Canadians with print disabilities and to champion the fundamental right of Canadians with print disabilities to access media and reading materials in the format of their choice.

# Mandate

To facilitate the acquisition and distribution of published works in alternative formats to Canadian public libraries and to provide public libraries with advice, training, and information to support their patrons’ access to and use of these collections.

# Values

## Inclusion

Canadians with print disabilities have access to quality public library collections across the nation in Canada’s two official languages and in the format(s) of their choice. Collections are preserved to ensure long-term access and represent the linguistic and cultural diversity of Canada. Support services are also provided in Canada’s two official languages.

## Leadership

CELA partners with national and international organizations to identify and implement best practices in creating and maintaining equitable library services for those with print disabilities.

## Expertise

CELA offers specialized skill and support to public libraries to facilitate accessible services for all.

## Effectiveness

CELA offers the greatest benefit to the greatest number of Canadians and public libraries, at the lowest cost possible through funding partnerships, collaborations and the optimization of resources.

## Accountability

Services are informed by the needs of Canadians with print disabilities and public libraries.

# What is a print disability?

A print disability is a learning, physical or visual disability that prevents a person from reading conventional print. See the table below for more details.

This definition of print disability is from the Canadian Copyright Act because it is this Act that permits the reproduction of published materials in alternative formats. The term used in the Act is “perceptual disability”.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Disability** | **Areas of Difficulty** |
| **Visual**  Eye icon | * Seeing text or images (all or partial) * Focusing or moving the eyes |
| **Physical**  Wheelchair icon | * Holding print materials * Manipulating print materials (turning pages, for example) |
| **Learning**  Brain icon | Comprehending text - for example:   * Dyslexia - decoding letter combinations, recognizing common words * Interpreting visual information - distinguishing between letters like 'h' and 'n', for example |

# Current Services

## Users

**Online Access to Digital Collections**

* Access to CELA collection of DAISY narrated audio, e-text and braille books and magazines (100,000 items, English and French, for adults and children) in physical and digital formats
* Direct-to-Player download to IOS, Android and DAISY reading devices
* Access to 50 national, international and regional newspapers updated daily
* Bookshare - access to over 350,000 additional titles for CELA patrons and educators including New York Times bestsellers and a tremendous offering of educational material

**Home-delivery**

* DAISY narrated audio books and magazines on CDs, and described videos
* Embossed braille books and magazines, and printbraille (picture books with transparent braille sheet overlays on each page)

**User support**

* Automated selection based on reading interests to supplement self-serve
* Patron account and technical support service
* Monthly Newsletter

## Public Libraries

* Direct-to-Player download – for libraries choosing to preload reading devices for loan
* Deposit Collections including MARC records for catalogue integration, for library shelves and local-library home delivery service
* Burn to CD service - allows libraries to burn a title locally for immediate fulfillment of a request for DAISY CD
* CELA Interlibrary Loan (DAISY audio CDs, braille, printbraille, described videos delivered to libraries)
* Training & support for library staff – web and live, interactive webinars and instructional materials
* Online self-serve instruction (e-learning)
* Members support
* Monthly Newsletter
* Marketing and promotional material and support for community outreach
* Maintaining social media accounts, including Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest, to enhance promotional efforts

## Educators

* Access to CELA collection of DAISY narrated audio, e-text and braille books and magazines
* Bookshare - access to 250,000 additional titles for CELA users and educators serving students with print disabilities
* Training & support for educators - customized webinars and instructional materials

# Goals for 2017-2021

## Goal 1: Leverage advances in technology to improve accessible services

The inclusion of accessibility standards in web design, the availability of built-in text to speech options on most mobile devices, and the promise of lower-cost braille and DAISY reading devices are just some of the innovations that hold promise for better and easier delivery of accessible formats. Through these and other technological advances, we will continually improve the reading experience for library patrons.

**Key activities to move us forward:**

1. Continually seek improvements to the technology platform that hosts our web site and catalogue to enhance the patron experience in discovering and borrowing books, and both the patron and member library staff experience in seeking information about CELA services
2. Provide input to device and application developers on the needs of public library patrons using CELA services and deliver our materials through as many accessible applications and devices as possible to assure patrons the widest range of options and broadest reach
3. Gather feedback from users and library staff to inform technology decisions

**Indicator of Success over the next 4 years:**

* CELA catalogue traffic (number of searches, pages viewed, etc.) will increase by 10% by 2021
* CELA web site traffic will increase by 10% by 2021
* Access to CELA materials via mobile applications will double by 2021
* The CELA User’s Group will be established and will meet a minimum of 4 times a year.

## Goal 2: Build a Robust Alternative Format Collection

CELA will continually seek means to expand our collection by working in collaboration with production partners and publishers to provide timely and quality access to titles in demand by the public. While technology is a tremendous catalyst for increased production of books and other media in accessible digital formats, we will continue to provide patrons with the choice of accessing either physical or digital collections just as those patrons using standard collection are provided that same choice in public libraries across Canada.

**Key activities to move us forward:**

* Pursue or continue production partnerships that will allow for the efficient creation of the most format-diverse collection of accessible books in Canada
* Pursue agreements with Canadian publishers to provide ePub and other digital files, allowing for quick conversions to accessible formats
* Establish plans to broaden the exchange of accessible titles under the Marrakesh Treaty
* Source and/or produce Canadian Indigenous works to support public library initiatives under the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action
* Consult with libraries and patrons on collection development needs regarding content, formats and production quality
* Explore collaborations with other alternative format service providers in Canada serving schools, colleges, universities and public libraries to create efficiencies in production and discovery of accessible content
* Continue providing accessible versions of books associated with national library programs such as TD Summer Reading Club, provincial programs such as the Ontario Library Associations Forest of Reading program, or local events such as a community read or local book club
* Continue providing accessible versions of books for major Canadian literary awards and programs such as the Giller Prize, the Governor General’s awards and Canada Reads

**Indicator of Success over the next 4 years:**

* Number of titles available to CELA users will increase by 50% by 2021
* Number of production and publisher partnerships will double by 2021
* Number of Canadian Indigenous works produced or obtained will increase by 50% by 2021
* Consultations with libraries and patrons will be documented and summarized on an annual basis
* Collaborations with other alternate format providers will be documented and summarized on an annual basis

## Goal 3: Champion Excellence in Library Accessibility

CELA will help libraries to “think accessible” in everything they do by providing expertise and support to public library staff. CELA will also collaborate with libraries, library associations and national and provincial disability organizations to target initiatives that champion equitable library access. CELA will help libraries set an example for their communities and be leaders in fostering an inclusive society.

**Key activities to move us forward:**

1. Continue to attend conferences and trade shows targeting libraries, educators, and those with disabilities
2. Continue to offer webinars and training sessions for member libraries and organizations interested in CELA services
3. Advocate within the Federal Government for accessible reading material produced at source by publishers as part of the proposed Canadians with Disabilities Act
4. Build on existing relationships with libraries around the world that serve those with print disabilities
5. Work with Canadian publishers to build awareness of inclusive publishing standards
6. Play a leading role in the implementation of Marrakesh Treaty in Canada to ensure Canadians with print disabilities have access to international works in alternate formats and that works produced in Canada are shared abroad

**Indicator of Success over the next 4 years:**

* We will attend a minimum of 20 conferences, trade shows, library staff training days or specialized training sessions each year
* We will provide a minimum of 15 Webinars and training sessions each year
* Collaborative efforts will be documented on an annual basis
* National and international advocacy efforts will be documented on an annual basis

## Goal 4: Broaden Reach to Canadians with Print Disabilities

CELA will educate and inform potential users of CELA services by assisting public libraries to spread awareness of their library’s accessible services within their community and, where appropriate, reaching out directly to users of CELA services. We will do so through a combination of coordinated outreach, marketing and promotional activities.

**Key activities to move us forward:**

1. Facilitate the sharing of best practices in accessible library services and outreach to those with print disabilities and the organizations that represent them
2. Develop a service toolkit for public libraries based on a community-led approach to reach new users
3. Partner with libraries to reach out to national and provincial disability associations to raise awareness of accessible library services
4. Explore options to provide better training supports for public libraries
5. Continue to build on past success with our Open Book and Open Book for Libraries newsletters

**Indicator of Success over the next 4 years:**

* CELA users will increase by 25% by 2021
* People with print disabilities with a public library card membership will increase by 25% by 2021
* Use of collections at public libraries by patrons with print disabilities will increase 25% by 2021
* Increase subscribers to Open Book by 25% by 2021
* Increase subscribers to Open Book for Libraries by 25% by 2021