# Developing an Inclusive Library Service for Patrons with Print Disabilities

## Introductions

00:00:00

**Amanda Lepage:** Really glad that you came to talk to us today. We're really glad that you came to talk to us today. So, our presentation is going to be about 20 minutes and then we're going to open it up to questions. So, feel free to pop your questions in the chat. And let me share my screen. It worked the first time. Let's make sure it works the second time.

There, how's that?

**Faline Bobier:** That's good.

**Amanda:** Okay, great. Awesome. Give me a shout if that's not working for you. Okay, everyone?

So today, Patricia and I are going to be talking about developing an inclusive library service. I'm Amanda Lepage, and I'm the senior manager of Welcoming Initiatives. Patricia is one of our awesome Welcoming Initiatives librarians. And I see another one of our Welcoming Initiatives librarians is here. Han has also popped in as a participant. So hey, Han, how's it going?

We are speaking from Treaty 6 territory, and we acknowledge the contributions of our Indigenous People to this land. So, we appreciate being able to present to you from Treaty 6.

Patricia.

So, okay, sorry. So today we're going to be talking about the what, why and how of how we made SPL’s service points more inclusive to people with print disabilities.

## Slide: Service History

00:01:34

**Patricia Meddins:** Okay, so, we are going to start with the history of the Saskatoon Public Library and how we evolved and how we provide service in the area of accessibility services.

Starting in about 1975, the Saskatoon Public Library provided service to patrons with accessibility issues through our Outreach and Access Services area. They had specialized staff that provided specialized library service. Only the staff would provide those services. If a patron came in to another branch or another department at the Frances Morrison Central Library, they were directed to Outreach and Access Services. The department did talk to other staff about the services they provided, but it was stressed that only the Outreach Services Department could provide the service. And frontline staff in other areas were also reluctant to help patrons themselves.

In 2018, Saskatoon Public Library experienced a system-wide transition and we became Welcoming Initiatives. We started training frontline employees on the services that Welcoming Initiatives provides for patrons and started to train them on some services that they could provide to patrons. The frontline employees were trained in how to make an outreach card or a print disabled card, but the information was forwarded to our Welcoming Initiative team.

We gave a select group some additional training on how to help patrons, but most of the work was still done by the Welcoming Initiative Librarian. We wanted to make Saskatoon Public Library more inclusive at all of our branches, but we didn't have the time to provide the training.

Once the COVID pandemic hit in 2020, the Saskatoon Public Library branches were all closed, and staff started to work from home. This extra time allowed us to start working on a service redesign. We had the time to re-evaluate our vision, create a timeline, create the training and supporting documents, and train the frontline employees.

Now, frontline employees can help patrons, whether in person, over the phone or over chat. Our presentation today will focus on that service redesign.

Amanda?

## Slide: Why Change?

00:04:02

**Amanda:** Thanks, Patricia. So why did we make this change? One of the big, huge visions that we had, the big dream was that we would be able to serve any patron at any service point at any branch during any hour that the library was open.

With the previous service models that we have, that wasn't possible because not everybody was trained on all the details of serving folks with print disabilities. So that was a big dream that we were really trying to work towards.

So, our service was centralized. One of the barriers that we had, our service was centralized, and folks who needed that specialized service or the accessible technology had to come downtown to our central location where our Welcoming Initiative librarians worked.

There was no parking down there. You have to pay for parking. It's busier. It's far away from a lot of folks’ houses. It's very specific hours that our Welcoming Initiative librarians worked because there's a variety of things that those folks do.

So, you know, we really felt that there were a lot of barriers existing there. It's hard to staff a specialized service point with only three people. We have three Welcoming Initiative librarians on our team. And even though we had other folks trained in some of the things, we didn't have that comprehensive service available all the time. Vacations, illness, training conferences, team meetings even meant that some of those specialized services were often unavailable because we had such a small team.

One of the reasons that we wanted to do it, or that we knew we could do it, is because the things that our patrons with print disabilities were asking for were no different than what our other frontline employees were doing for other patrons. So, hold requests, requests for other formats, card creation, information about accounts, loans, services, renewing materials. Those were all just reference questions that our other frontline employees can handle. It was just, there were some details that they needed before they could serve them fully. Helping with access to computers, so accessible technology. We have a Kurzweil, we have a large print computer that we use. It's just computer access, just a different kind.

We knew that historically, the only reason why patrons with print disabilities were served by Outreach and Access Services in our previous service models was because of the disability. It wasn't necessarily a different interaction that those folks required. So, we knew that by moving into a service model where every single frontline employee could serve our patrons with print disabilities, we could share that experience, make our service points more inclusive, and we could leverage the Welcoming Initiative librarian expertise so that they could work on other visionary projects.

So, reducing barriers in other areas, like, for example, homelessness or, you know, poverty or language barriers. So we knew that the benefits to making inclusive service points were really significant. So, we knew why. How is a completely different thing.

## Slide: Making Change

00:07:31

So how did we make the change?

Well, you know, we jumped right in. It's really hard to make change when you're trying to maintain operations. So, when we closed over the pandemic, it actually gave us an opportunity to step back, evaluate, plan and jump into a different way of doing things. So, although we talked about this for a long time, our closure gave us the time to plan and implement, and we began actively planning in August 2020.

So we closed March 2020, like everybody else in the world. We talked about it. We began actively planning and executing in August 2020. So, we moved the furniture and technology closer to the other service points. Early September, we looked at all of the structural guidelines and training that Patricia is going to talk about, and then we started the new way of serving folks in September.

So, we jumped right in. We planned it, and I’ll let Patricia talk about some of the changes we made.

## Slide: Guidelines & Information

00:08:38

**Patricia:** Okay, so we created some documents so that the Frances Morrison Central Library frontline employees could have the information readily available to help our patrons. Our vision is that the same service will be provided at all of the branches.

We also enriched our website so that the frontline employees and patrons had access to the knowledge, forms and services provided by the team. This is a work in progress and we need to create further documents to address the continuing needs of the frontline employees.

On our intranet, we have our Accessibility Services and Technology Guidelines, and this document explains what the technology we have is and who can use it and how the staff can use-- How it helps the patrons, how the staff can book a patron on the technology. We provide the log in information to help them to log into the technology. We provide some troubleshooting. It also explains where the technology accessories are kept. The document explains the other services that we provide and how we help our patrons. We provide our email address so that they can contact us for more information.

We also created a document called Accessibility Services Patron Support, and it's a chart that provides examples of service requests that can be handled by frontline employees and what is handled by our Welcoming Initiative librarian.

For example, we explain that they can search for DAISYs and sign them out on a print disabled patron's card. But if that same patron needs a DAISY player to listen to them, they need to refer them to the Welcoming Initiative librarian. This is very helpful as it reassures them that they can help our patrons.

We have a technology booking calendar and this is an online calendar where they can book the patrons onto the technology, whether it's for that day or in the future. This includes the time and whether the patron needs headphones. If the patron needs a one on one with one of our Welcoming Initiative librarians the frontline employee lets the librarians know and we will add it to the calendar.

We have a Patron Print Disability Card Registration document, and this document explains what a print disability is and refers them to our print disabled application form. It also provides step by step instructions on how they can create a print disabled patron card in our Polaris Leap program.

On the library website, we have the print disability form. It's available online and the patrons or frontline employees can fill in the form and a digital copy of the form is electronically sent to our Welcoming Initiative librarians.

The Accessibility Services page on the website will also explain our technology and services. This is a guide to explain to frontline employees and patrons what services we provide. The Accessibility Services Loan page gives them our service overview and the Accessibility Services Loan application form.

I'm going to now discuss the training that we did with our employees.

## Slide: Training

00:12:28

When we are training the frontline employees, we use a PowerPoint presentation. It helps us to ensure that we cover all of the steps. During the training, we stop several times to make sure that they understand and can ask questions. We make sure that the frontline employees know that they can reach out to us at any time.

In the training documents, we start with our definition of Welcoming Initiative and our mandate. So Welcoming Initiative is responsible for leading the creation and maintenance of an inclusive environment. Welcoming Initiative ensures that all patrons, regardless of sex, gender, sexual orientation, ancestry, colour, race or perceived race, nationality, place of origin, socio-economic status, ability, age, religion, or religious creed, family status or marital status have equitable access to programs and services.

We explain the difference between librarians and outreach workers. The entire team will help patrons overcome barriers to library services, wherever the barriers may be. It includes language barriers, disability, and barriers to people who have historically been underserved by the library.

We show them screenshots of our accessibility services technology and any software that we have installed. We explain how to use it and how this technology helps patrons, how to book it and how to troubleshoot issues. We explain to them what they can do to help the patrons and explain good ways of communicating with our patrons.

We take a look at both the CELA and NNELS websites. We provide them with the links to the website and an explanation of each website and how they can search it. We explain that once they locate an item, they let the Welcoming Initiative librarians know so that we can create a DAISY disc.

We explain the Canadian Copyright Act protects the creation of materials from unfair copying and contains special provisions for people with perceptual or print disabilities. And we explain what a perceptual and print disability is, the visual, physical, cognitive.

For the collections, we explain that anyone can borrow large print books, but that the DAISY, CELA e-resources and NNELS e-resources are only for patrons with a print disability. We also explain that they can provide patrons with CD books, mp3s and downloadable audio.

We have programing and projects. We explain the types of programs and projects that we do, so it's easier for them to refer partners and so that they are better prepared to answer questions from our patrons. I have found that this has helped them to start thinking about barriers.

We train them on the guidelines documents. We’ll go through the documents and explain to them and see if they have any questions. We emphasize that it's just different equipment. Patrons are the same, just a different way of meeting their needs.

## Slide: Practices

00:16:16

[Text on slide: “Patrons with print disabilities have the same need to access information. They use different tools and strategies, and we have more ways to think about meeting their needs.”]

Okay, now I'm going to talk about our practices.

We discuss the difference between outreach patron and a print disability patron. Someone who is an outreach patron, it's usually due to health, age, disability. They just need extra time with their materials. But somebody with a print disability needs the print disabled card so that they can access a variety of formats to meet their needs.

Historically, this decision was made by the Welcoming Initiative librarian concerning who was eligible. But we have found by allowing our frontline employees to use their expertise and judgment in their conversations and empowering them to use discretion will reduce barriers and create an accessible service point.

Print disability cards is a self-declare. So, whether a patron self-declares to a frontline employee or to a Welcoming Initiative librarian, does it really matter? Welcoming Initiative librarians will answer questions and will reach out if patrons or employees are unsure. We give that next level support.

We're now going to look at some of the challenges. Amanda?

## Slide: Challenges?

00:17:45

**Amanda:** Thanks, Patricia. So just like anything in work or life, change is hard. We've been providing this service the same way for a number of different years and people were used to the way we were providing it with one group of folks having that expertise.

So, what we found when we started to implement these changes and started asking folks to do this work on our frontlines, our frontline employees were not confident that they actually had the expertise or enough expertise or the right kind of judgment or knowledge to be able to make some of these decisions or look at all the options and offer the services.

So, we had at the beginning, to provide a lot of support and encouragement and empowering and, you know, really encourage people to act independently and make some of these decisions and offer services. But over time, our frontline employees began to realize actually how much knowledge they did have in this area. And as they built confidence, they were able to enrich and grow their knowledge base. And now we find that our frontline folks are way more comfortable now than they were before. They want to help print disabled patrons and help them find solutions.

**Patricia:** The next challenge we had was with the Welcoming Initiative librarians themselves. We did have some hesitation in passing on the responsibility to the frontline employees because we spend our days looking at barriers. The Welcoming Initiative librarians realized, though, that by passing this responsibility on to other frontline employees, we could spend more time breaking down other barriers. We found that it helped the frontline employees to find other barriers and letting the Welcoming Initiative librarians know.

The third challenge was with the patrons. They had historically been served by Welcoming Initiative librarians, and they really didn't want anyone else helping them. This led to several calls where frontline employees could have helped getting forwarded to the Welcoming Initiative librarians. The frontline employees would explain that they could help them. And when the Welcoming Initiative librarians talked to the patrons, they would also explain how the frontline employees could help them.

We do still have some patrons that would prefer to talk to our Welcoming Initiative librarians directly, but I am finding that this number is decreasing over time.

We're now going to look at the impacts.

Slide 8: Impact

00:20:39

**Amanda:** Thanks, Patricia. So, one of the really big impacts that we're seeing right now is that, obviously, the inclusivity of our service points have just-- have significantly increased. Sorry. (chuckles) I'm just speaking off the cuff here.

We've actually had patrons say when they come up to our frontline now and say, “Hey, you know, I want to do this thing,” and if our frontline in place says, “Ooh, I think you need a Welcoming librarian for it.”

We've actually had comments back from our patrons saying, “But I like going here, I like going to this service point. “I like not having to go to a special place to be served as someone who has a print disability.”

So, really, our inclusivity and accessibility of our service points is much, much improved. So whether this is patrons who have print disabilities, mobility issues, folks who are homebound or are experiencing any other seen or unseen barriers, we really do feel like we've made SPL a more inclusive library where everyone can have their needs met no matter which branch they choose to frequent.

We're still very much in this stage at our downtown library, at our central library, but we are working on the inclusivity of our branches in other neighbourhoods.

**Patricia:** By having our frontline employees help our patrons, whether over the phone or on our Ask Us or in person, they are becoming more confident and are helping us to break down those barriers. If they see a barrier, they are looking for ways to help the patron and let the Welcoming Initiative librarians know.

As the Saskatoon Public Library Vision indicates, we would like to feel that we changed lives through community connections, engagement and inclusivity. By ensuring that inclusivity is our main focus in how we serve our patrons, we can ensure that we are a welcoming place, committed to representing and serving everyone who calls Saskatoon home.

Thank you.

## Discussion

00:23:00

**Amanda:** Thanks, Patricia. Thanks very much for listening to us today. I was really excited to come talk to this group and I'm excited to learn where you're from.

So, in our questions session, if you could just perhaps identify where you're from, we'd love to know who we're talking to today. And I'm just going to hand it back for questions or comments. I don't know. Faline, take it away? (chuckles)

**Faline:** Okay. Well, thank you very much. That was, I think, really thought provoking and also might be a direction that other libraries are thinking about.

So, we're going to open it up for questions. Now, I see that a couple-- I think that there is a question that came in the chat from Alyssa Hopkins. So, if you do have a question, you can unmute yourself and just ask the question. You can also, if you're not comfortable doing that, you can pose the question in the chat.

So, Alyssa says she loves the ideas. Is the Welcoming Initiative team made up of library staff who volunteer to support this initiative?

**Amanda:** So, actually, the Welcoming Initiatives team is a specific work unit in our organizational structure. So when we did our big service model change, we had the big assessment and a service model change in 2018, there was a specific work unit. We're a little bit different in that we don't--

We have, I think, four system-wide teams of librarians who work on, I guess, organizational initiatives. And then we do have neighbourhood librarians at each branch who are the hands on in the branch. So Welcoming Initiatives is myself, the senior manager, and three Welcoming Initiatives librarians. So, we have Patricia, Han, Han who's here, and Katie. And then we actually have three social workers, registered social workers, who provide a drop in social, a drop in social support service. And so, we as a team work-- We do one-on-one work with folks out of our central branch as well as develop those foundational system-wide services that help our frontline employees serve people with barriers.

So it is a specific position to be a Welcoming Initiatives librarian with qualifications. They're one of the more senior librarians at the library. I guess, I hope that-- Alyssa, does that answer your question?

**Faline:** And I see that Adair, you have your hand up. So maybe if you wouldn't mind just saying what library you're with.

**Adair:** Yeah, absolutely. Can you hear me?

**Faline:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** Hi, Adair.

**Adair:** Hey. So, I’m from--

**Amanda:** Love to see your face, by the way. Thank you.

(Amanda and Faline chuckle)

**Adair:** No problem. I'm just in the busy office. Yeah. (laughing in background) You can hear them having a meeting behind me, so I just want to wait to unmute until the last minute.

So I'm a community services librarian in Richmond, out here in BC. And so, I focus on the seniors, and I’m working on some initiatives related to accessibility. And I was just curious with the way your team structure works, is it influenced by a community-led librarianship model? Was that kind of part of the structure? Because I just found it interesting that you had both accessibility services and what seems like a more community-led librarianship model together in one team. So, I was just curious if that existed before, before this kind of remodel or your restructuring or if that was a part of that initiative. So just curious about that aspect of it.

**Amanda:** For sure. Patricia, I’m just going to jump in and answer this one again because it's a structure question. So, our 2018 service model changed before we did this inclusivity shift doing Welcoming Initiatives. We wanted to move towards a community-inspired service model.

We had a consultant come in and say, you know, look at how we were set up and can we actually do this with the positions we have right now? The answer was no. So, we did this big organizational structure change and that's when Welcoming Initiatives came into play. We actually have another systemwide team called Community Education and Partnerships and that work unit is a senior manager and three community librarians who do community inspired work. So, they lead the system in things like building relationships with partners, listening for need, engagement with the community, things like that. And again, I just want to maybe clarify that Welcoming Initiatives is very much a community inspired work unit, but they are not the only folks who work on barriers. They provide that foundational support to the rest of our system, to all work with folks to reduce barriers.

So, for example, we build accessibility guidelines and then we put them out to all of our people in the system and all of the people in the system use them to reduce barriers. In the same way that our community librarians who are working on community inspired work in the system do not do all of the community engagement, do not build all of the partnerships. They create the foundational strategies and best practices and tools and guidelines and put them out to the system so that our neighbourhood librarians can build partnerships. So that our neighbourhood-- So that our managers can build partnerships. So that our programing librarians can build partnerships.

In the same way that our Welcoming Initiatives librarians will, for example-- Patricia, give me an example of another thing that we've built that has made the system better and reduced barriers. Would it be like-- I don't know, there's so much, I can’t even think of the stats.

**Patricia:** Well, we've done things like we've had-- Well, we've had wi-fi hotspots.

**Amanda:** Yeah.

**Patricia:** That one was one where we really saw that barrier, people not having access, even before the pandemic, people not having access to the Internet. And the community librarians kind of help us if we want to partner with the school or we want-- Because we've done several partnerships. They'll help us out that way.

**Amanda:** I'll give you another example, I’m just going to jump in. We had an experience where there was a patron experiencing homelessness who was an artist who really wanted to show his art in our gallery at the central library. But we realized when we evaluated it was that there are a lot of barriers to our application process to show your art in our gallery. So a Welcoming librarian is currently working with a Community librarian who's currently working with the Special Collections librarian who oversees the gallery, and they are planning to propose a revamp of our application process to reduce barriers to show art in our gallery so that folks from different socioeconomic backgrounds can participate in the community in that way.

So, we try to find, how do our library structures make barriers for people? And Welcoming Initiatives are the ones who are busting those walls down or helping others in our system bust those walls down.

**Adair:** Right, so a little bit of an internal versus external kind of focus.

**Amanda:** Yes.

**Adair:** That makes a lot of sense.

**Amanda:** We have a very internal focus.

**Adair:** Yeah, yeah. And, obviously, those things go in tandem, so that makes a lot of sense.

**Amanda:** Mm hmm.

**Faline:** Okay. Are there other people who have either questions or comments?

I think one of the things that Patricia and Amanda were interested in knowing is if other libraries have been making similar steps in this direction sort of trying to work towards a more inclusive way of providing the service so that it's not sort of separated off and something, you know, something very discrete, but actually trying to make it part of a library practice in general. But you don't have to respond to that. Any kind of question you have or comment is welcome.

**Amanda:** Baby steps, hundred percent.

**Faline:** Yes, definitely.

**Amanda:** I know that everybody is in a different place in how inclusive their service points are, for sure. Thanks, Meredith. My daughter's from Waterloo. (laughs) Hello!

**Faline:** Oh, is that your daughter? Oh, great!

**Amanda:** No, no, no. Meredith just said she's from Waterloo Region, and I went, “I’ve been to Waterloo Region!”

**Faline:** Oh, okay!

(Faline and Amanda chuckle)

**Patricia:** I wanted to kind of share something. Before the pandemic, we were having different branches reach out to us because they were finding patrons wanting to get a library card but couldn't physically come in the library card. I mean, to the library, sorry.

So, we were kind of working on a project we call “Library by Proxy” to try and address how we could get them library cards without them physically coming into the library. So that was kind of in process. And during the pandemic, we actually started for people to be able to apply for a library card online.

It's kind of a temporary kind of library card and they eventually have to come in. But that allowed patrons that were unable to come into a library because of the pandemic or wanting to avoid libraries, to still get a library card, be able to get materials because somebody could pick it up for them. So, it was kind of like everybody was thinking about those barriers and helping them out. And I think that's--

Our Library by Proxy, I'm hoping that project will be moving forward so that we can break down that barrier for people.

**Faline:** Yeah, that--

**Amanda:** I just want-- Sorry, go ahead.

**Faline:** No, you go ahead.

**Amanda:** I was just going to comment on Meredith. And Meredith, feel free if you want to jump in and start the conversation around this. And you said you'd love it if we could get every branch and every employee on board.

I'm not sure we do have every employee on board yet. That changes fairly-- It's really easy to--

I mean, our frontline folks are so busy and there's so much that they're doing right now. It's really easy to default to like, “Oh, I know an expert, and let's send you to the best person.” But what we're really trying to do is help everyone realize that they are the best person. The person in front of you at that moment is the best person. And the more that we can empower people, the more skills that they'll have to serve everyone, right?

Like, I would just be tickled if I could teach everyone, you know, sign language or braille or all of the in-depth ways to communicate to somebody who has a language barrier. Right?

But it's all a lot of work, because I think that the best person to serve you is the one right in front of you. And the more skills that that person in front of you have to serve you, then the more you feel like you can go anywhere to get the service you need and what you need. So-- But yeah, there are a lot of employees who--

I wouldn't say a lot. There are employees who still send us folks that they can help. And what we really find-- Patricia, you can probably speak to this, is just giving people or employees that feedback in the moment. It's just, sometimes you have to bounce that back and say, “Hey, you know, thanks for sharing this, but you know what? You could do this and this and this to help this person.”

Right? Like not taking that on, you know, when you know it's something that somebody can help-- Like sometimes our print disabled folks will call, like, somebody who has a print disability or a visual disability will call and say, “I need a recipe for this thing.” And they have our phone number on speed dial. And it got to the point where Patricia or one of the other Welcoming librarians would have to-- That call would get forwarded to a Welcoming librarian, but it's just a reference question. It's just a reference question.

So, once they started bouncing those back, it’s like, “Oh, well, you might try this technique to read them the recipe.” Then that person who bounced it to the to the Welcoming Initiatives librarian will start to take those things on their own to avoid the bounce back.

Do you know what--? I don't know if that was clear or not. But Patricia, can you think of like-- You've done that probably 100 times.

**Patricia:** Yeah, well, I think we had a question there talking about the waiving the fines and so on. We have always kind of listened to what the patron has to say. And if it is in the patron’s benefit to waive that fine-- I mean, life happens, you know. Maybe they were unable to return an item because they got kicked out of their place. And it took a while to get it back. We've always had the ability to kind of listen to the story, all of the staff, all of our frontline employees, the situation and if it warrants a better service to waive that fine, we do waive that fine.

Sorry, I'm getting beeping on my computer. But—

Yeah, and also, I talked a bit about the outreach services card, and that one is one where, you know, a patron maybe needed a longer loan period. Well, you're at a branch, they're explaining to you, “You know, I have difficulty returning my materials on time. If I could just have some more time.” You're listening to that story. You're empowered to give them that card. It doesn't have to come from the Welcoming Initiative librarians. You can provide that service, break down that barrier, because that will ensure that they're continuing to read or having access to our materials. They just can have it a little bit longer.

I also had one where it was fine examples, but we actually are now fine exempt.

**Amanda:** Mm-hmm.

**Patricia:** We don't have fines anymore.

**Amanda:** Fine free!

**Patricia:** We are fine free. Thank you. Yeah. Yeah. Sorry.

**Faline:** I just wanted to read. There’s a comment in the chat from Naomi who, she says, writing from a very small library in Deep River, Ontario. She says, “Thank you for the information that you shared today. We're beginning! I appreciated the reminder that when you start, there will be other unanticipated benefits and growth.”

And Meredith is sorry, she doesn't have a camera or a mic, so that's why she's typing ferociously.

**Amanda:** No worries. I just want to invite anyone who ever wants to reach out and learn more about what we do in Welcoming Initiatives. Look us up. [chuckles] Patricia or myself. Or just Saskatoon Public Library and say you'd like to talk to somebody from Welcoming Initiatives, that you're from another library. They'll connect you with us, even through our chat or our Ask Us. You can always reach our team at [welcoming@SaskatoonLibrary.ca](mailto:welcoming@SaskatoonLibrary.ca). So keep that email handy if you're making change, and you want to either talk to myself or one of the Welcoming librarians or one of the outreach workers on our team to talk about what we do. Very, very happy to connect with like-minded libraries who are doing this work in Canada and other places, too.

**Faline:** Yeah, and it struck me when you were talking about, you know, kind of changes to make it easier for people. I mean, as librarians, I don't think in general we want to put up barriers to people getting library service. You know, most of us are committed to the notion of libraries as a public service and as a free public service.

So, during the pandemic as well at CELA, there were certainly things that we hadn't realized would be a barrier. I mean, we have an online library. We also have physical formats like CDs or braille books that we send out. But at the beginning of the pandemic, for several months, we weren't able to do that. And it sort of brought home to us that there's definitely an important section of people who use our services, who don't necessarily use a computer, who don't use the Internet. And so, we had to think of different ways to try and address that problem.

I mean, one of them was we set up a webinar for what we call designates, they can be friends or relatives, sometimes, if the person is in a long-term care facility, it might be a worker, who actually can assist people with their library service. And so, to try and bring those people in. But yeah, I'm wondering if there are other questions, suggestions or any descriptions of things that your library might have changed or looked at during the pandemic, or if you have questions for Patricia or Amanda.

You can either raise your hand, at the bottom of the screen there's a reaction button where you raise your hand, or just pop your comment into the chat.

**Amanda:** While everybody's thinking about their questions, I'm just going to share a story about how things used to be and how things are now. [chuckles]

And I'll just use the first name just to keep our patron’s identity quiet, but we have one particular patron who comes in to use, I think David comes in to use the Kurzweil, right? All the time, like almost every day. And it used to be that every time David came in to use the Kurzweil. David has a visual disability. He would come in-- The Kurzweil is-- Patricia, that is the scanner that speaks to you.

**Patricia:** Yeah, it’s a technology. Ours kind of looks like a photocopier. And what it does is it scans their document or the book and then it reads it to them. It does put the print on the screen, but it reads it to them. So, it's invaluable.

**Amanda:** So, folks can book it, they can drop in and if it's available, they can use it. But David comes almost every day to use the Kurzweil. And it used to be he would come in and he would go to the central service point, which is smack in front of the doors at our downtown library. And he would say, “I'm here to use the Kurzweil.” And they were like, “Oh, you have a print disability. Let me get a Welcoming librarian for you.”

And so, they would call, find a Welcoming librarian. And you know, there was that rigamarole while David would stand there, and then a Welcoming librarian would come down and log him on to the Kurzweil.

So now what happens is David comes in to use a Kurzweil, he goes to the central service point. He says, “I'm here to use the Kurzweil.” And that person grabs the headphones, walks with David over, doesn't matter who it is, walks him over to the Kurzweil, helps him get set up and says, “Here you go, send us--”

I don't know if he emails or texts when he's done.

**Patricia:** Phones.

**Amanda:** Oh, okay, so he phones the central service point when he's done and says, “I'm done, you can come get the headphones now.” And he leaves. So, he doesn't have to wait. There's nobody special to sign him up. Everybody knows how to do it. He has a conversation with somebody different every time. It's convenient for him to just phone and say, “I'm done,” and then leave when his bus gets here.

It's easy, right? And it's right there. And it doesn't matter if somebody is on holidays. It doesn't matter if somebody is on a lunch break. It doesn't matter if we have no Welcoming librarians that day, or if they're all tied up at the meetings, David gets logged on to the Kurzweil. And that is, to us, really significant, honestly. It’s really great to see. And now everybody knows David. David doesn't know three people at the library, right?

**Faline:** Yeah, I think that's really important. And I mean, that was, really, years ago, that was the initiative behind advocating that library service for people with print disabilities shouldn't happen through a specialized library, which at that time was the CNIB Library. So just because you have a print disability doesn't mean that you should have to go to a charitable organization to get your service, that you should be able to go to your local public library like everyone else. And so I think you guys are doing at Saskatoon Public Library is further kind of extension of that notion that, you know, people shouldn't, like you said, shouldn't have to wait in line for “special” treatment. But that they can see themselves as, you know, like anyone else going into the library and waiting in line where everyone else waits in line to get service. I think, like you said, that's pretty significant.

Okay, well, I see we're approaching 2:00, but if there are any other questions or comments, we're definitely happy to hear them. Did you see that question in the chat?

**Patricia:** Yeah, Nadia is part of-- Oh, sorry, Amanda, I’ll jump in here.

**Faline:** I'm just going to read the question just in case. So, it's from Jeanette, who I think is at Sechelt Public Library in B.C.

“Are all employees in SPL branches being trained on using and teaching equipment like DAISY players? Also, do you have training guidelines that you can share?”

**Patricia:** Okay, so I'll address the first part of the question and then I'll pass it to Amanda. So right now, our focus on the actual technology, so the large print computer, the Kurzweil, the DAISY player, the Optelec player, all of that, our frontline employees at the Francis Morrison Central Library, that’s our main library, get trained on that once they move to a position down there. So, we'll teach them how to how to log it on. We'll talk about who might use this type of technology, the software that we have loaded into it. We'll show them how to use it so that they can help patrons and then we kind of provided that support. Because sometimes they're not doing it on a regular basis, so they kind of need refreshers.

But yeah, and kind of our dream is that everybody at SPL would know, Saskatoon Public Library, would know how to use the technology. But we do have the descriptions available so that if somebody, say, was to phone our Alice Turner Library and say, “I need something to be able to read my books.” And they can say, “Oh, well, we have a Kurzweil down at the main library,” and that they would have that knowledge. So, yeah, the hands on more approach.

I’ll pass it on to Amanda.

**Amanda:** Sure. It is our dream, and one of the things that we're working on, Patricia, I know, is kind of doing a dig into the technology and what's available, what kind of accessibility tools are available in Windows and Word and all the software that we have across the system so that we can start teaching branch employees what they actually already have at their fingertips, that they can show people how to use. Ideally, I’d love a Kurzweil in each branch.

And we're, you know, working on things like large print keyboards in every branch. And so, we're looking at accessibility right across the board at all of our nine locations. Really, we have big dreams, big vision that way. And maybe, hopefully, someday.

As far as the training guidelines and our technology guidelines and stuff, I'd be happy to share them. We're not going to post them. They are an internal document, so I don't know that I'm comfortable posting them on the CELA website for the whole world, but if you are interested in any of the documentation or the guidelines, I'd love it if you contact me, you can contact me directly. It's [a.lepage@SaskatoonLibrary.ca](mailto:a.lepage@SaskatoonLibrary.ca), and we’ll talk about what you want to see, and then I can share some of that stuff with you. I'd be happy to. Training guidelines, you know, any of any of those things, I'd be happy to send you. Email you a copy.

But yeah, that's our big dream. And yeah, having everybody know all of these things. Yeah, everybody should. And I really want everybody to.

**Faline:** Great, okay, I see it's 1:57 Toronto time, so I'll take one last, if there's anyone who has a question or a comment. Okay, if not, I just want to say again, thank you very much, Amanda and Patricia. And it was really great, the information that you shared with us. And as I mentioned, I have recorded it, so once I get the transcript in shape, we will be putting it up on the CELA website. So if there are things that you want to go back to listen to, because I think there was a lot of great information and it was really presented in a really clear way. So we'll have the PowerPoint and the audio up on the website. And thanks for everyone who came out today. Thank you.

**Amanda:** Thanks for the invitation, it was great to talk to everybody today.

**Faline:** And someone, Michael, is saying “Very informative. Thank you from London Public Library.”

**Amanda:** Hi, Michael.

**Faline:** So, yeah.

**Amanda:** Thanks, everyone.

**Faline:** I’m getting a lot of thank yous.

**Amanda:** Always happy to talk accessibility.

**Faline:** Yeah, I really liked that. I'm going to look at it myself later. I really like the way that you put the information together.

**Amanda:** Oh, okay.

**Faline:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** Cool.

**Faline:** Yeah. Kind of like step by step, you know, and it sort of does take the-- not the fear, but, you know, it's a doable thing, as you guys keep saying. You know, it's something that is not rocket science.

**Amanda:** Big projects, like big changes like this can be so intimidating.

**Faline:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** And, really, we have a lot of big change projects that we'd really love to do. And this was one of the first ones. This one we were kind of forced into, because we were, just three Welcoming Initiatives librarians was just not enough. And so, we needed to find a way to reach everybody a little bit better, so.

**Faline:** Great.

**Amanda:** They work very hard, those folks.

**Faline:** All right, I'm going to stop the recording.

**Amanda:** Sure.