# All About Print Disabilities:CELA Eligibility Workshop for Library Staff – Workshop Transcript

Workshop date: November 21st, 2024

## Introduction and land acknowledgement

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**Jessica Desormeaux:** So, welcome, everybody, to today's workshop: All About Print Disabilities, which is a CELA eligibility workshop for library staff. My name is Jessica Desormeaux, and I'm the Communications and Access Specialist at CELA. And I'm going to be facilitating and presenting the workshop today. My colleague Faline Bobier is here with me today as well. She's going to help out just with monitoring the chat and that sort of thing. So we're looking forward to discussing print disabilities and CELA eligibility with you all.

So before we go further, I would like to acknowledge that I live and work in Montreal, which is located on unceded Indigenous lands. This territory has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst many First Nations, including the Kanien'kehà:ka of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Huron/Wendat, Abenaki, and Anishinaabeg. Today it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. Wherever we find ourselves today across Turtle Island, we can be grateful to the First Nations for their careful stewardship of this land.

So, I'll just run through the agenda of what we're planning to cover today. So I'll tell you a little bit about why we decided to do a workshop on eligibility. And that'll lead into some background on where CELA eligibility requirements come from. And I'll talk about proof of disability and what that means in the context of CELA and CELA eligibility. And then we'll get into, “What is a print disability?” So, sort of in the broader context, as well as talking about the individual sort of categories of print disabilities, which are learning, physical, and visual. And we'll wrap up by talking a little bit about what's next. So, sort of, how this hopefully better understanding of CELA eligibility can help you to better support your patrons who have print disabilities.

## Why a workshop on eligibility

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So why did we decide to do a webinar about eligibility? Well, last April, I had the opportunity to travel to Manitoba, and I visited a few libraries there, some in Winnipeg and close to Winnipeg, to talk with them about CELA. And in my discussions with a lot of the staff from these libraries, I had quite a few questions about eligibility and sort of how it works, and some of the finer points of, “Well, what about this and what about that?” And basically, it got me thinking that not only could a lot of libraries benefit from learning-- sort of getting a better grasp on their understanding of eligibility, but also, a lot of library staff members are maybe feeling a bit uncertain about their own understanding of eligibility and being able to answer questions or... about whether or not someone is eligible. So a workshop could be beneficial in helping to clarify things and hopefully help us all to reach more folks who could benefit from our services.

So why is it so important that public library staff in particular understand about CELA eligibility requirements?

CELA is a public library service. And we provide a collection of over 1.4 million books, magazines and newspapers in accessible formats for people who live in Canada and have a print disability. CELA was established with the goal of supporting and assisting public libraries in providing Canadians with print disabilities with library materials that are accessible to them.

So this collaboration between CELA and public libraries is really essential in reaching as many people as we can who could benefit from our services. So it requires ongoing communication, training, and exchanging of ideas.

I'm going to be doing something a little bit different in today’s webinar in terms of how I'm presenting some of the information. I'm going to be presenting a lot of it in the form of a mind map. So I'm going to take this central concept of CELA eligibility that we're talking about and link it to the related topics, just, sort of, to present things in a different way from your typical bullet points on a slide like we have here, to hopefully give sort a better idea of the full picture of everything that we want to consider in terms of eligibility. And of course, I'll be describing everything that I'm showing as well.

## Who should know about CELA eligibility

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So we'll start off by talking about who should know about CELA eligibility. So, first of all, we have CELA staff, of course, need to have an understanding of the eligibility requirements. That's because we approve registrations. So anyone who self-registers for CELA, we go through all of those registrations and approve them, or contact the applicant for more information as needed, that sort of thing. We also, of course, train library staff, like I'm doing now. And we need to be able to answer any questions that arise, whether it's from libraries or from the public, from other individuals, and so on, so we need to have a good grasp on what the requirements are to be eligible to use our collection.

And then we have our patrons themselves, as well as their designates. So if they have a friend or family member or other support person helping them with their CELA access. They need to understand about the eligibility requirements, at least to the degree that they understand what makes them eligible. So as I'll be talking about just a little later on, CELA borrowers self-declare their eligibility, so they have to self-declare that they have a print disability. So they need to understand what a print disability is, at least to the degree that they understand that their disability would qualify as a print disability.

And then of course, we have our public library staff, who are really at the centre of it all. So public library staff need to understand about CELA’s eligibility requirements because they provide access to CELA materials in a couple of ways. So one way is by registering their patrons for direct CELA service. And another way is by granting access to CELA materials directly from your library whether or not the individual is registered for CELA. So in both of these cases, it's important that the person, whether it’s the person registering for CELA, or the person who is borrowing materials from CELA from your library, that they have a print disability. So library staff need to understand what that means in order to, to facilitate that access.

And, of course, library staff also is fielding questions from... from their patrons. So, the more you know about CELA eligibility, the better you'll be able to support any questions that come in.

And then the last category that I have here is educators and other professionals who work with people who have print disabilities. And the reason that I mention them is because they can get accounts with CELA in order to support their students or their clients who have print disabilities. So they need to understand about eligibility in order to provide that support and ensure that only those with print disabilities are accessing CELA materials.

So I hope this has given a bit of a picture of what a crucial role library staff in particular play in reaching people who have print disabilities and supporting them in getting the reading materials in the form-- getting reading materials in the formats that they need. Library staff are often the bridge between the individual who needs an alternate format and accessing that format, whether they do it directly through your library or through their own CELA account. So, that's just a really helpful thing, I think, to keep in mind as we move forward in today's workshop.

So, I'm going to switch back over to our slides now. And we're going to talk about some background on CELA eligibility.

## Background on CELA eligibility

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So, I think something that's helpful to understanding that is getting some background on basically why CELA gets to exist and operate as it does.

So CELA and other libraries for folks who have print disabilities in Canada exists thanks to an exception in Canadian copyright law. This is Section 32 of the Canadian Copyright Act, and it allows for the reproduction of published materials into alternate formats for people with perceptual disabilities. So the intention is to put people with a perceptual disability in the same position as those without a disability, with the goal of achieving equitable access to works in accessible formats.

So what this means is that we can reproduce items in the CELA collection into different formats, and then distribute it as many times as we want, as long as the materials are being used by people with print disabilities. We also collaborate and share materials with other services for people with print disabilities, both in Canada and in other places in the world.

And now, you might have noticed that I used the term “perceptual disability” when I was explaining the exception to the Copyright Act. But we use the term “print disability” when describing CELA eligibility requirements. And the reason for this is, “perceptual disability” is broader in scope than “print disability.” Because the Copyright Act does include an exception not only for making print materials accessible, but also making works accessible to people with disabilities that prevent a person from “hearing a literary, musical, dramatic, or artistic work in its original format.”

So we, at CELA, we’re specifying the narrower term “print disability” because our collections are intended to make print materials accessible and don't specifically address the needs of people who are deaf or have hearing loss.

So I wanted to talk about the Canadian Copyright Act, partly to underline, certainly, the importance of ensuring that this legislation is upheld and that the access to published materials that it provides doesn't get abused in any way. But also to emphasize that this exception exists in order to help make access to published materials more equitable to those who can't read in print format. So we really want to do everything we can to ensure that this access is being enjoyed by those for whom the exception is intended.

Another really important component of understanding CELA eligibility is understanding how our borrowers demonstrate that they are eligible. So we're gonna go back to the mind map again to explore this a bit more. So how is CELA--

## How CELA eligibility is demonstrated

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How is eligibility for CELA demonstrated? So I touched on this a little earlier. CELA does not require any certified proof of disability or medical certificate. Patrons are asked to self-identify as having a print disability. Telling us which type of print disability is optional. So there is a section in the registration form where the person registering identifies that they have a print disability, and then they have the option of disclosing whether they have a learning, physical, or visual disability that prevents them from reading regular print. And this is sufficient to give them access to the CELA collection.

And the reason that we do things this way is that we want to do what we can to remove barriers to access. And for a lot of folks, providing a certified proof of disability or some type of medical certificate would be a barrier, a large barrier.

So what does this mean, when I say that patrons self-declare? If someone says they have a print disability and would like to register for CELA or borrow CELA materials, it is important that they understand the criteria for being eligible. So, your role would be to ensure that they understand what the eligibility requirements are in order to-- so that they can make an informed decision about whether or not they are eligible. But they don't need to reveal the details of their disability to you. Of course, they might volunteer this. They might have questions about whether or not-- you know, they might want guidance on whether or not they're eligible and choose to reveal details about that to you, which, of course, is fine. But it's certainly not a requirement.

So, yeah, going on to say, there's no need for them to reveal the specifics to you, it is really about making sure that they understand what is required. And if they-- so that they can declare if they have a print disability.

As some of you may already know, there actually is a proof of disability section in the CELA registration form, and this is for something called Bookshare.

So Bookshare is a US-based organization that offers books and magazines in accessible formats. And CELA patrons who have provided a signed proof of disability can access over a million of their titles directly through the CELA catalogue. And since they are a US-based organization their requirements are a bit different from ours. And so we must follow those requirements when we're providing access to their collection.

So, very important to note that this is optional. We have plenty of patrons who borrow exclusively from the CELA collection who have never provided proof of disability. And that works great for many. And, as well, as I mentioned, there is that proof of disability section in the registration form. So that is an opportunity to upload a proof of disability during the registration process. But it doesn't have to be done at that time. You can... If you're registering someone and they don't have a proof of disability at that time, you can skip over that section. And then, if they choose, they can then submit a proof of disability any time after that. Days, weeks, months, even years later. So it's an option that's good to know about, but certainly not required.

## What is a print disability?

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So let's get into what is probably the most important content of today’s workshop, which is, “What is a print disability?” So it is a disability that affects someone's ability to read conventional print. And that includes a learning disability that affects reading comprehension. It can also be a physical disability. And here we're talking about one that affects the ability to hold or manipulate a book. And finally, we have visual disability, which refers to the severe or total impairment of sight, as well as the inability to focus or move one’s eyes.

So that kind of gives you the high-level official definition of print disability, which is important to understand, for sure, but a simpler way of looking at it that might be helpful is that a print disability is defined as any condition that means that the format of the published work needs to be changed, but not the content. So the barrier to reading could be removed by changing the format of it without changing any of the content.

So an example of that could be a paper newspaper may not be readable by someone who has low vision. However, when the text from that newspaper is presented as electronic text that can be magnified with a screen magnifier, or read aloud by a screen reader, that same individual would be able to access it. So this is a textbook example of Section 32 of the Canadian Copyright Act in practice. We're changing the format of the work without changing any of the content to allow access to it for someone who, due to their disability, would not otherwise be able to read it in its original format.

So now, we're going to take a closer look at each of these categories of print disabilities and explore some of their nuances a bit.

## Learning disabilities

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So the first one is learning disabilities. So very broadly, a learning disability is defined as a brain-based difficulty that impairs one or more psychological processes. It covers a wide scope of different conditions, and so not all of these would necessarily be considered print disabilities.

So for it to be a print disability, it means that it affects reading comprehension. Or more specifically, the barrier to comprehension would be removed or reduced by presenting the same content in a different format. So this category does include dyslexia, which is maybe the most well-known learning disability that would qualify as a print disability. But it can include other learning disabilities, including those related to attention. So on that note, I'll introduce our first persona.

I'm going to be introducing a persona for each category of print disability, which is just a made-up example of someone who has a print disability in this category. And then, I'm hoping we can have a bit of discussion on how we could support this person in this scenario, and anything else related to this category of print disability.

So this is Emma, and Emma is eight years old, and she recently has been diagnosed with ADHD, or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. And she's been struggling to learn to read fluently because she often struggles to stay focused while she is reading. And so one of the strategies that has been suggested or is suggested in her IEP, her individualized education plan, is to read along to text while she is hearing it being read aloud.

So imagine that Emma's mother comes to the library to find a book for Emma that might increase her interest in reading. So she's not necessarily coming in with the goal of finding books in alternate formats for Emma. But she does happen to mention this strategy from her IEP about reading along while hearing the text being read out loud.

### Learning disability workshop discussion summary

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During the workshop, we discussed what your library could do to support Emma.

Some of the suggestions included:

* Pair audiobooks with print books
* Read-along books from the Libby app
* Wonderbooks or other Playaways
* Synched audio and e-text in the Dolphin EasyReader app

## Physical disabilities

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So the next category is physical disability. For a physical disability to qualify as a print disability, it needs to be a physical limitation that makes holding or manipulating a book difficult or impossible. And when we say manipulating a book, we mean opening the book, turning the pages of it. So, examples of this might be arthritis, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, Parkinson's, and so on.

And something to note, sort of, something that's not always clear is that this category includes not having the physical stamina to work with printed material. So someone might be able to technically be able to do these things for a limited amount of time. Someone might be able to hold a book and turn the pages for a very limited amount of time, but if they're not able to do it for long enough to actually sustain reading, then it qualifies as a print disability.

So with that, I'll introduce Lawrence. So Lawrence has arthritis, which has progressed over the past couple of years, and lately, he finds he rarely engages in what used to be his favorite pastime, which is reading novels. He sometimes picks up a book and tries to read, but it becomes too painful quite quickly to hold the book for longer than a few minutes. So imagine that Lawrence has maybe come into the library while his wife is returning some books, and he tells you that he hasn't been borrowing books himself lately. And he tells you about his arthritis and the reasons why.

### Physical disability workshop discussion summary

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During the webinar, we discussed how you could support Lawrence in getting back to reading novels. Ideas included:

* Register Lawrence for CELA and provide support
* Suggest that Lawrence use a book stand or an e-reader
* Audiobooks from the library, from the Libby app and from CELA

## Visual disabilities

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Finally, we have visual disabilities. And so this is the category that is probably the most often associated with CELA, and the one that is maybe the easiest to understand in terms of how it qualifies as a print disability. However, there are some trickier cases there where it might not be might not be quite so obvious.

So, here we're talking again about severe or total impairment of sight, or the inability to focus or move one's eyes. So something to note is that if someone can't read without their reading glasses, but they are able to read with the help of reading glasses, read print, I should say, they would not qualify. However, if someone can see text but... but they need to magnify it drastically in order to read it, so they need something more than just reading glasses in order to be able to see it, that would qualify as a print disability.

So our last persona is Amira, who is 17 years old, and she has a condition called retinitis pigmentosa that affects the retina and usually starts by affecting the peripheral vision, and then it progresses, usually gradually. And it can eventually lead to total or near total blindness. So over the past five years, Amira's field of vision has been gradually diminishing, and so she is always learning how to adapt to these changes. Up until now, she could usually read printed text, as long as she could move it into her field of vision, but that is becoming increasingly more difficult. These days she uses a combination of a screen reader and magnifier when using a computer or smartphone, she is learning to read braille, and when she's reading a book, she opts for reading an audiobook.

So imagine Amira used to be part of your library's monthly teen book club, but she stopped coming about a year ago. But she comes in one day with some friends to study, and you have the opportunity to talk to her, and she tells you about the changes in her sight, and that she stopped coming to the book club because she figured she couldn't really participate anymore since the books that get chosen are not always easy to find in audio format. So it felt like she couldn't really continue with it.

### Visual disability workshop discussion summary

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During the workshop, we discussed how could you support Amira in getting reading materials in the formats that she needs? Suggestions included:

* Request accessible versions of book club books in advance from CELA
* Choose book club books for which accessible versions are available

## What’s next?

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I'm going to move on to our last our last little bit of the webinar, and then we'll have a little bit of time at the end for anything else anyone wants to ask or share in general.

So this is the sort of, “What's next?” I'm hoping that what I've covered today has been helpful in giving a better understanding of CELA’s eligibility requirements. So I wanted to touch on what you can do with this, sort of like, what's the role of libraries in terms of continuing to support folks who need reading materials in different formats and making sure they're informed about the availability of these services. So we'll go one last time to our mind map.

The first thing I would suggest is certainly inform your eligible patrons. So, ways you can do that, of course, engage with your patrons, talking to them and finding out what they're experiencing is going to help them is going to make sure that more folks are informed about what's available.

We strongly suggest that libraries include information about CELA on their website. That's a really key way of letting people know that alternate formats are available. Using resources from our Outreach toolkit. On the CELA website, there is a link to an Outreach toolkit that we've put together to help you in doing outreach in your community to reach more potential borrowers. And that link will be in the email that I send afterwards. So that's a really helpful resource to check out.

Include CELA materials in displays. So when you're setting up-- When displays are being set up in your library, consider including, like, an accessible reading device like a DAISY player or an Envoy Connect, or display-- like including a printbraille book and that sort of thing. It's just another way that you can let people know that there are lots of different formats available.

And we also encourage you to order CELA-printed promo materials. This is available from our website. The link will be in the email after the workshop. So you can order these printed materials from us for free. And we have posters, and we have various fliers. And that's another way to inform folks that this is available.

So I'll mention again to please make sure-- the importance of making sure that the Canadian Copyright Act is upheld. And so what this means is, you know, being sure that patrons who are accessing CELA materials understand about the eligibility requirements, and have procedures, you know, have some type of procedure in place for how you're limiting the use of CELA materials from your library to those who are eligible to use it, to use them.

And a big part of all of this, whether it's informing patrons, informing people that CELA exists, and that alternate formats are available, as well as ensuring that the Canadian Copyright Act is upheld, is keeping staff trained and informed. So we encourage you to include information about CELA in staff training, and even in your onboarding processes.