# Transcript of the webinar “Making Audiobooks Accessible: Challenges and Opportunities”

Webinar date: March 27, 2025

## Introduction and outline

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**Lindsay Tyler:** This webinar is to share the process, the results, and the recommendations from a research project on accessible commercial audiobooks that CELA has been undertaking for the last year with a number of partners. My name is Lindsay Tyler. I'm senior manager with CELA, and I'll let my colleague, Ioana, introduce herself.

**Ioana Gandrabur:** Hi, everyone. My name is Ioana Gandrabur, and I am a peer trainer at CELA. It's a pleasure to be here.

**Lindsay:** Thanks. I'm going to start us off with an outline of our presentation for today. First, I'm going to go through some of the background of the project, how we came to propose this project, the funding, the goals that we had in mind, and the ways that we collaborated with others as we undertook this project. Then we're going to turn to the landscape review portion. Ioana will talk about some of the barriers in commercial audiobooks that we found through our consultations, and I'll talk about some of the perspectives that we heard from industry.

Then, Ioana will lead us through the study itself. Well, both Ioana and I will lead us through the study itself, the methodology and some of the limitations that we would like to note, the results, which I think are very interesting, and then, finally, recommendations. We do expect to have a few minutes at the end for your questions.

With that, I don't want to go any further before acknowledging the financial support of Accessibility Standards Canada. This project was possible thanks to funding from the government of Canada.

## Why we proposed this project

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This project has its origins in comments and observations that we heard from CELA users. For most CELA users and for CELA itself, in fact, audiobooks are a very important format, the most popular format. One of the ways that we build our collection is through agreements that allow us to purchase commercial audiobooks and convert them to DAISY format, which is a specialized format for people with print disabilities.

In addition to using these books that CELA acquires and converts, CELA users themselves will often also purchase their own commercial audiobooks or borrow from public library collections. Commercial audiobooks are an important source of reading for CELA users. We came to this project with their comments and perspectives in mind. For example, we heard about challenges with chapters combined into a single audio track, and we were interested in investigating these practices more.

At the same time, we've been part of conversations in the accessible publishing and reading ecosystem in Canada and internationally, and we acknowledge and applaud all the great deal of work that has been done to advance the accessibility in publishing, especially of ebooks. The accessibility guidelines for ebooks are really well-established, accepted, and supported. There's been many projects in Canada and elsewhere, training, certifications to support and advance accessible publishing, and to realize the dream of born accessible publishing.

At the same time, I'll also say born accessible publishing is a term that we'll touch on a few times throughout this webinar, but I'll explain it briefly. This is the idea that we can make digital books that are fully accessible from the beginning and don't require any further adaptation to work for a variety of people, including those with disabilities and those using assistive technology. Although there are some guidelines for accessibility of commercial audiobooks, they are less well developed generally, and they don't have the same adoption that ebook standards have. We observed this gap between the accessibility support for ebooks compared to audiobooks.

Then we also found that we had several partners who were interested in this question too and supported our funding proposal. These partners are NNELS, CNIB, eBOUND, Book Publishers Association of Alberta, and ECW Press. It's thanks to these partners that we were able to undertake this project. The question that motivated this project in the end was, how can we ensure that commercial audiobooks are accessible to all from the start? As a library that serves people with print disabilities, we had the ability to centre the answers to this question really in the experience of readers, and including readers with print disabilities.

## What we aim to achieve

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I'll talk a little bit about our main goals in this project. First, we wanted to better understand the needs of readers. We achieved this goal by involving readers at each step of the project. In particular, I would like to highlight the leadership and involvement of people with disabilities throughout the project, including the initial design, testing, and analysis. Their knowledge and lived experience was indispensable.

Secondly, we wanted to better understand current practices in the industry. We did this by consulting and collaborating with publishers, producers, and platform providers. We wanted to better understand how books are made now and the barriers and opportunities that these practices create.

Finally, we also had the goal of developing recommendations that are based in the user experience. We have done this by creating audiobook materials that could be tested by readers with and without print disabilities, that have certain accessibility features that we were interested in and were relevant based on our landscape review. Then we tested those with those readers and assessed their practical implementation.

## Collaborative project

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I think a really important aspect of the project to highlight here is that it was necessarily a highly collaborative project. We involved a number of different stakeholders from the accessible publishing ecosystem.

On this slide, we have a graphic that shows a diagram of the accessible publishing ecosystem. In a circle around the words accessible publishing ecosystem, we have the different stakeholders who were involved. We have readers, publishers, accessibility organizations and advocacy groups, technology providers and platforms, librarians and educators, and funders and grant providers.

The project also aimed to include both francophone and anglophone publishing sectors and readers from these two language groups. For example, on the advisory committee, we had the ANEL, which is the primary French-language publishers' association. We had francophone readers testing materials, and materials were tested in both languages. The project advisory committee also represented all of the different stakeholder groups, and we took care in the stakeholder consultation phase to consult broadly and ensure a broader representation.

## Project process

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The project was comprised of four large phases. First, in the spring of 2024, besides just organizing and planning the project, we consulted with readers with print disabilities. In this phase, we looked at their experiences, needs, and preferences with respect to audiobooks, and also the obstacles that they encountered. Ioana will talk about those in a little bit more detail. Then in the summer, we engaged in consultations with different stakeholders from industries, again, publishers, producers, platform providers, and distributors.

We also looked at what's been written in the specialized literature on audiobook accessibility, and also reviewed the existing standards and guidelines and so on, that have been created to support accessible commercial audiobooks. With all of this landscape review completed, we decided on a number of audiobook features that we wanted to look more closely at in the next phase of our project, which was the user testing. We selected a number of accessible audiobook features. We developed and acquired materials that contained those features, designed the survey.

Having recruited a number of generous participants who did the testing, they then listened to those audiobook materials and answered questions about those materials and about their experience with audiobooks in general. We also conducted focus groups, one in English and one in French. Then the last phase of the project has been to analyze our very voluminous data, prepare reports, and disseminate our results, which is what we're doing now.

I think that's giving you a good intro to the topic. Ioana now will talk about the user perspective from the landscape review.

## User perspectives – barriers in audiobook content

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**Ioana:** Thanks, Lindsay. As we mentioned, we had a series of consultations with users with print disabilities to find out more about the challenges and barriers they encountered in terms of accessibility of audiobooks. One of the big themes that emerged is that there is a very clear interdependence between the accessibility of a book and of the platform that it's read on. You cannot talk about accessibility without taking both into account. You will realize throughout this session, in general, accessibility, it is like a chain. It's where every link needs to work so that the chain holds. In other words, the book may be accessible, but if the accessibility of the platform is less than optimal, the end experience will be not accessible.

Let's talk a bit about the various challenges in terms of the audio content itself. Some of the barriers that were mentioned, one of them Lindsay briefly foreshadowed in her presentation, is the fact that often multiple chapters are combined on a single audio track. That creates problems because if you press the next button on your player, you can land from section 1 to section 5, and it makes navigating in a book quite challenging or less than optimal.

Then there is the tracks and audio files that are not meaningfully named. You may be able to jump from section to section adequately, but if the sections are just titled section 1, section 2, that doesn't give you the information that you would have if you could see the original printed text.

Speaking of missing information, that's another theme, another emerging barrier, is the fact that content sometimes is missing from audiobooks, such as images or notes or references or supplemental materials. We'll discuss more about how these can be implemented later in our key findings. The other idea that was brought forth was the fact that there are fewer books available in audio. This is exacerbated particularly in languages other than English, and also when it comes to specialized topics.

## User perspective – barriers in audiobook platforms

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Let's talk a little bit about the accessibility challenges that pertain to the platforms. As I mentioned before, it is not enough to have a platform that has an accessible playback option just because you can press play. That doesn't make the platform accessible. You need to be able to also browse or search for the content you want to read, and then you need to be able to accessibly borrow or purchase it, as the case may be. All these stages need to be made accessible.

What can stand in the way are often poorly labeled controls that don't tell you what they do, so it's not intuitive to find out how to operate them, or sometimes they don't work at all. You have limited navigation options that are-- Again, in here, both the book and the platform need to work together to offer good navigation possibilities within the book. Then also there's the problem of being locked into a specific platform. It would be ideal if one would have the option to choose the reading platform of your choice. Now I will pass it on to Lindsay to discuss the publisher's point of view in our landscape review.

## Audiobook and ‘born accessible’ publishing – the publisher’s perspective

### What is Born Accessible Publishing?

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**Lindsay:** Thanks. I'll talk a little bit about what we heard from publishers in the landscape review. I want to acknowledge here that much of the content in the slides that I'm going to share now comes from colleagues at ECW Press, who were part of our advisory committee and have presented with us on this project before. I don't think I can say it better, so I've used a lot of the way that they approached this question. First, from a publisher's perspective, what is born accessible publishing, and how is it achieved? What born accessible publishing means from the point of view of publishers is that accessibility requirements are part of the publishing process from the point of acquisition through to the marketing and selling of the book.

It means thinking about and integrating accessibility throughout the process, and thinking about the ways that certain content might cause problems for accessibility, or maybe needs to be thought of and to plan for the accessibility of that content. It means the awareness of readers and what needs they may have, and not only an imaginary typical reader, but the full variety of needs and preferences and uses that readers may bring to the book. Lastly, an accessible workplace because people with disabilities can and do, of course, work in publishing and can be part of this process.

### How audiobooks are made

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When it comes to audiobooks specifically, there are two main ways that audiobooks are made. For independent Canadian publishers, each of these presents a certain number of challenges. The first way is that publishers can sell the rights to the audiobook to a third-party audio producer, for example, Audible. The challenge here is that it's not guaranteed that you'll be able to sell the audiobook rights. The market is already saturated.

If you are able to sell the audiobook, then the publisher loses control over the way that the content is created in audio. It may not meet the accessibility requirements that the publisher would choose if they were to produce themselves. They may also lose control over where it is sold, and this comes back to the exclusivity issues that Ioana mentioned, where frequently books are only available on a single platform and can't be taken out to the reader's platform of choice.

The second option is in-house production or working with an audiobook producer. Here, it must be said, I think that audiobooks are expensive, costly, both in terms of human and financial resources. Publishers do need to see some kind of return on investment from the creation of an audiobook. Funding and financing is a concern. We heard repeatedly from publishers about the challenge of financing audiobook production as small or even mid-sized but independent Canadian publishers.

Then the human resources required are also important. You need in-house knowledge about production, connections to the acting and recording industries, and then the ability to distribute the titles and distribution of audio and other formats can be separate and distinct processes. It's lots of work for publishers to produce audiobooks. Then the additional challenge of what does it mean to produce an accessible audiobook, much as publishers want to reach the largest audience possible and value accessibility, some guidance and information and training and so on is useful.

## Making audiobooks more accessible – gaps in standards

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To summarize what we learned in the landscape review, we confirmed gaps in standards for commercial audiobook production that support accessibility. As a result, we find that the practices with respect to audiobook production can vary widely, and as a result, readers have an uneven access to information and literature compared to those who are using print or ebooks. That has, of course, a disproportionate impact on readers who rely on the audio as a primary format, particularly those with print disabilities.

I think it's worth saying here that the point of view that those of us who worked on the project come at this with is that audiobooks are not an additional nice format that exists only alongside the print or the ebook, but that they are books unto themselves and deserve to be conceived with care, the same as other formats. They should be able to be used independently. Again, we have a contrast with ebook accessibility standards, which are much more developed and enjoy better adoption.

Where recommendations and guidelines on audiobooks exist, there is lots of work done in the past five years in Canada on recommendations and guidelines and experimentation on audiobook production. We can build on those and bring information from the users and readers to support those recommendations.

## Participant demographics and insights

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That leads us then to the testing and that user information that we were able to gather. Here we recruited 55 participants who did the audiobook testing with us. 50% of those approximately have print disability, and 50% did not.

About 25% of our participants were francophone, reflecting the overall proportion of francophones in the Canadian population. I want to note a few limitations of the sample. This is a small sample, no question. This sample size was chosen intentionally to make this study manageable in the time and resources that we had available to us, and because we chose a mixed method where we collected both quantitative but also very rich qualitative information.

By having a smaller sample, we were able to use both of those methods. While I think our data is rich and useful and gives lots of insights into what readers want, and especially because of that qualitative data, why they want certain things, at the same time, we can't overgeneralize from our data. I think that that is something to take into account.

There's a couple other points that I want to make about where our sample is not necessarily representative, and to take that into account. Overall, our participants had a high level of comfort with technology. 91% said that they were comfortable and very comfortable with technology, which is probably higher than the general Canadian population. We also had— And this is interesting, I think. Whether it reflects or not the Canadian population, I couldn't say, but there's a high proportion of respondents who use audiobooks for educational or professional purposes.

Overall, 46% of respondents used audiobooks for educational or professional purposes. Then among those without printed disabilities, 36% use them for professional or educational purposes. This shows, I think, two things. First of all, that while I think often audiobooks are considered like really a leisure format, we're seeing in our sample that people are using it for more practical or instructional purposes. Also that there's not a huge difference in the reasons that people are using audiobooks between people with and without print disabilities.

## Audiobook testing and survey

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Now I'm going to talk about how we structured the survey, and then Ioana will get into the results. Participants listen to audiobook samples with the following features. The front and back matter. Both the inclusion of the front and back matter and the placement in the book, whether it was at the front in the traditional print order, or whether we moved elements to the back of the book. The inclusion of a narrated table of contents, footnotes, both their inclusion and whether they were integrated within the text or on a separate track.

We looked at bibliographies in audio, which is not usually a feature that's included in commercial audio, and then whether synthetic or human narrated were preferred. We tested the inclusion of book cover image descriptions. We also tested image descriptions within the text, again, here, both the inclusion and the importance of image descriptions, and whether they should be integrated in the text or in a separate track. Finally, music and sound effects. Our participants also answered questions about their experiences with audiobooks generally.

Most of the features were tested in both English and French, although there were some differences in the materials because we couldn't use the same book in both English and French. I guess it goes without saying. Some of those differences may have affected our results, and that's noted in the full report. Unfortunately, today we don't have time to share the findings for each feature, but we'll share the features that have the clearest and most actionable results. I’ll just take a moment again to say how grateful we are for the participants who did this testing and shared their knowledge and experience with us. Ioana will now talk about our user testing.

## Key themes from user testing

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**Ioana:** Let's discuss about some of the key findings that we found. One of the themes that emerged very clearly from our survey and from the whole research process was the importance audiobooks play, and this is true for both people with and without print disabilities. They all noted the positive impact of audiobooks for relaxation, for reducing stress, but also for mental stimulation. Some various readers reported that it made it easier to concentrate listening to an audiobook rather than having the text version of that same book.

The second key theme is no surprise, the essential importance of narration quality. When you have a clear and engaging narrator, it can really make a book come alive, and similarly, if the narrator is less than optimal, it can be a deterrent and be enough of a reason to drop a book that you otherwise would've liked to read. Of course, the audio quality is important, so in terms of the general quality of the recording, issues with background noise or clarity can be challenges for the accessibility of the book.

Now, another one that is very interesting, image descriptions, including image descriptions and how do we want them placed, and do we want them included in audiobooks? Here, there was a clear consensus between users with and without print disabilities, and both reporting that there is clear benefit in adding image descriptions to audiobooks. Then there was discussion about music and sound effects. Also here there was a clear preference that there needs to be a good way to reduce distractions by minimizing these sound effects to be able to stay focused on the book.

Some of the themes that emerged from the landscape review, of course, we will encounter them again here, such as the navigation challenges and the difficulty in locating a specific passage in a book. Also, the platform-related challenges, such as the less intuitive menus. Also, for example, the availability issues, the lack of availability of certain audiobooks, and the platform limitations, that you're locked in the same platform. These are things that we've heard before, but they were confirmed in our survey results. Again, the same considerations that were foreshadowed in the landscape review, the poor controls or the inaccessible user interface of the platforms can be an issue.

## Footnotes – placement and inclusion

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Moving on, let's discuss a few of the features that we tested in our audiobook samples that we asked the respondents to compare. The first one is the footnotes placement. There was an overwhelming, clear preference across the board from people with and without print disabilities that the notes should be integrated in the main text rather than being separated on a separate track to be heard later. 65%, as you can see from the chart, 28 out of 43 respondents preferred to have the notes integrated. 9 preferred them separately, 6 had no preference, and one was unsure.

Also, another clear consensus here was the fact that 78% of all the participants find including footnotes important or very important. That's interesting because often, as we mentioned before, footnotes are not necessarily included in commercial audiobooks. There is a minimal difference between the points of view of readers with and without print disabilities. There is a difference, for example, when we were asked what aspect of footnotes is important to you.

Depending on the type of books, for example, in fiction, respondents preferred the ability of being able to choose to skip the footnotes so that you can stay in the flow of the fiction. In terms of nonfiction, the placement of the footnotes became essential. You want to make sure that they are in line so that they give you the best comprehension possible. Again, there is little difference between users with and without print disabilities in terms of the preference for placement of footnotes, so 64% versus 72%. There is a pretty clear alignment of preferences. That means that the status of disability doesn't have a meaningful impact on these.

Here's a quote from one of our respondents, "Hearing the footnotes within the text gives it continuity, which is missing if they are in a separate file. I find it difficult to remember what is being referred to if it is not within the text." That's talking about the importance in terms of comprehension to have the footnotes included in line in the text.

## Bibliography narration

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Moving on, this was an interesting case. Not all features were equally interesting to our respondents. One of these that was not considered very important was the narrated bibliography. We offered two samples of books, and it was only done for English participants in this case. We had two books, one with a human-narrated bibliography and one with a synthetic narration. First of all, we asked the respondents which one they preferred, but also then we asked them how do they feel in general about the bibliography.

We can note that there is a modest preference for human-narrated bibliography. 15 out of the 24 preferred the human narration. 10 preferred the synthetic, which I find interesting because it's not to be discounted. It's a viable option. Nine had no preference. Basically, the main takeaway here is that when the respondents were asked about the importance of having narrated bibliography at all included in the book, the result was that there was limited interest. 67% rated the inclusion of a narrated bibliography as unimportant or slightly important. This would suggest that there is actually more value in having an accessible text-based bibliography rather than producing them in audio form.

Here, it's another case where publishers and platforms need to consider working together and finding ways to make them more accessible and better integrated with the audiobook. There is already the practice to have-- Sometimes you can find an optional PDF, but PDF presents its own challenges in terms of accessibility. Just because it's text-based doesn't mean it's accessible, but that's another topic for another time.

## Cover image descriptions

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Moving on to cover image descriptions. We presented the respondents with books that included cover images being described in audiobook, and 28 out of the 48 participants preferred them included. There is a modest preference for having them included, but not as marked as in other instances. 13 preferred them to not be included, and 7 had no preferences. There was a stronger interest in having a cover image description from the participants with print disabilities, which is pretty intuitive that there would be interest in that group.

There was also a difference between the anglophone and francophone participants here that illustrates that the sample may really be influencing sometimes the results in these questions. I guess the takeaway is that not all cover images are created equal. Some are more interesting than others and worth including. All these differences between people with and without print disabilities, this suggests that probably the best approach would be to include them, but have the option offered both by the content creator and the platform to skip them if desired. The skippability, as you will see, this customizable skippability will be a theme that will emerge throughout our findings.

## Image descriptions – inclusion and placement

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Now, let's move on to image descriptions, not just cover image, but images in general throughout the book. Anglophone participants tested two versions of the same book, one with the images embedded in the text and one with the images described on a separate track. Here, we had a very clear consensus. 32 out of the 35 participants preferred the images in the main narration over the version with the images put separately. There are echoes, I find, that we saw from the footnote section here. Two preferred them separately, and one had no preference, so everybody had a very clear opinion here. There were not many undecided people.

Both language groups, so both English and French, were shown audiobooks with image descriptions, and they answered questions about the added value and their opinion about the image description. There was here also interestingly a strong support for including image descriptions in audiobooks. 67% rated them important or very important. Again, just to make sure, the 67% is both for people with and without print disabilities.

Some difficulty was noted at times when distinguishing where the image description begins and where the text begins, so there needs to be some clear and consistent indicators to make this clear to avoid any confusion. Of course, sometimes long or very complex image descriptions may need to be separated. There needs to be, again, this ability to skip them if so desired.

Here's a quote from a participant. "For me, it was one of the most wonderful discoveries while conducting this research. It was the first time I encountered an audiobook that took the time to describe images, and for me, that was truly important." I should say that even in the focus group, I heard from the people that were sighted and without print disabilities, they enjoyed the image descriptions because they were multitasking and driving in their car, and they were enjoying the fact that they could have the benefit of the information contained in those images.

## Ideal future audiobook experiences

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Moving on. In the second part of our survey, as Lindsay mentioned, we had more open-ended questions, where we asked participants about their experiences in general. Also, we asked them about kind of like the magic wand, if anything was possible, what types of features would they want to see in audiobooks. We had a list of features, and we highlight here the top five. The first one that came up was the ability to search within an audiobook. 87% were interested in this feature. Basically, they would love to be able to search for a specific keyword and then within an audiobook and jump to that specific place, like you would do in a text book.

Customizable background sounds or music. 82% of the respondents would like to have the ability to turn these sounds on or off as needed. Switching between audiobook and text versions, 71%. The ability to sync between audio and text formats, allowing readers to switch at will between one mode of reading to the other, from reading to listening. That was another hit. Then there were the voice commands, the ability to control the book or book navigation to say, go to chapter 4 or rewind 40 seconds. That was another requested feature. 64% were interested in customizable voices. For example, the ability to modify the narrator voice, adjusting the tone, or while they're at it, maybe also even selecting a different narrator altogether.

As you can see, some of these features are already possible today and even partially implemented. For example, voice commands. You can do this in many podcasts or audio players such as Audible. You can say skip back 30 seconds or jump to next chapter or previous chapter. Some are clearly more down the road and require a number of changes to support such features. For example, the integrating text and audio, that is a more long-term project.

## Insights

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Some key findings after all this, some key insights that emerged from all this data, that I didn't overwhelm you too much with it. The idea of the customizable accessibility features, so the idea of being able to turn on or off cover image descriptions, for example, and to set your preferences so that if you're never interested to hear a cover image description, you don't have to hear them. However, it would be nice if those that do need them have them available. The importance of a user-centred design. The platform must be catering to varying tech literacy. Some people might be very tech savvy and some just want a very simple interface without distractions and must accommodate various disabilities.

One that I find very important is born accessible audiobooks. The fact that, as we see throughout the survey findings, there is such a remarkable alignment between the preferences of respondents with and without print disabilities that suggests that there is clearly a case for born accessible audiobooks rather than having two separate productions of the same book, one commercial and one in alternate format. The truth is that often what benefits people with disabilities benefits everyone.

Also a clear inside audiobook usage is important not just for leisure reading, but audiobooks are being used also for personal and for educational purposes. Therefore, they must support the various features required for fully accessing these kinds of reading. I will now pass it on to Lindsay, who will discuss the various types of recommendations that we can make as a result of this research.

**Lindsay:** Thanks.

## Key shorter-term recommendations

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We'll spend the rest of the presentation on recommendations, and I think we'll have some time for questions at the end. The recommendations, when we looked at the data and the consultations and so on, we found that we could divide our recommendations into shorter term ones that are doable now with the technologies and formats that exist today, and others that would have to take place over the longer term and will require a great deal of collaboration across the industry and supply chain.

I'll talk about short-term recommendations first. First of all, for publishers and audiobook producers, our results suggests that audiobooks should include the complete content of books and should include notes, image descriptions, front and back matter. I don't think it's a surprise, but we certainly heard loud and clear that high-quality narration is deeply appreciated and important. When we are structuring the content of the full audiobook, it needs to include detailed and clearly labeled track lists, as well as meaningfully named audio files, so that given current technology, users can find their way through the book and navigate effectively.

Sometimes supplemental materials are needed or a chosen approach from publishers and producers, and so they need to be fully accessible. For libraries, we didn't exclude ourselves from these recommendations. These recommendations would apply both to libraries like CELA, that serves people with print disabilities, and also libraries in other sectors, including public libraries. Really, the audiobooks are a valuable way of reading, and so we need to develop robust and varied audiobook collections that support all sorts of different reasons for reading, and also consider the accessibility of products in our licensing decisions.

## Recommended guidelines

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For the recommended guidelines, and these are particularly for publishers and producers, we found that there are some existing recommendations that have been produced by Canadian organizations that our results really do support, and so I wanted to share these. I noticed that there is a question on the Q&A from Carlos. I think this is the answer to your question, Carlos. These are the links to the recommendations that we would support, or data supports anyway, and the full report will include more details. NNELS published at their site, accessiblepublishing.ca, some audiobook recommendations for publishers, and our results would support those recommendations.

Then I think that really the resource in accessible publishing, in Canada anyway, is probably the Accessible Publishing Learning Network, which is housed by eBOUND. They have taken, I think, work from NNELS and from others and repackaged it and augmented it into some really excellent guides on accessible publishing, including audiobooks. In particular, the accessible audiobook workflow guide is an excellent resource. Again, our data would support the recommendations that are on that page from the APLN. Those are both, I think, excellent places to go if you're looking to improve or confirm practices in place now.

## Selected longer term recommendations

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In terms of longer-term recommendations, many of these recommendations, it must be said, will take time and coordination across the sector to implement. Because of that required need for coordination, I think their first recommendation would be to have some form of summit or working group that would bring together actors across the industry to focus on accessibility of audiobooks, to discover the issues and obstacles and opportunities and work towards solutions.

Although I think that our research is valuable and there's been lots of interesting experimentation done in this area, I think we absolutely found more questions than answers through our work, and so further research and experimentation will help refine these approaches. The metadata for audiobooks is another area that we'd recommend work in. Metadata standards do not really describe audiobooks and their accessibility features adequately. There's some work there.

Ioana discussed the interplay between content and platforms and to support the customization that we heard would be valuable and that readers want. This is going to take work both on the content side and the way books are structured and formatted and on the platform side to support the ability to customize playback. For example, to decide if you want to include or exclude specific features.

Lastly, the integration of ebooks and audiobooks for synchronization and text searching. So many possibilities would be opened up by bringing together in some way ebooks and audiobooks. We heard lots from the industry about the multiple challenges, as much rights as well as technology and distribution that are imposed right now. This is another area of exploration, and I think that readers would really appreciate seeing that integration happen.

That is the project that we have been working on and the results and the recommendations that we have produced. The full report will be available on March 31st, on Monday, on our website. We're looking forward to sharing that and having further discussions on this because I think there's still lots more that could be said. For today, I'm going to stop the recording, and we'd be happy to have questions.

**End of webinar transcription**