# Transcript of the webinar: “CELA CD Transition: Information session for libraries”

Webinar date: April 29, 2025

## Introduction and land acknowledgement

00:00:15

**Laurie Davidson:** Okay, so with that, I'll start with a brief land acknowledgment to say that I live and work on the unceded territory of the Coast Salish peoples, including the territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, and to acknowledge that the work undertaken by CELA happens across this land that we now know as Canada, and we respect and affirm the inherent and treaty rights of all Indigenous peoples and will continue to honour the commitments to self-determination and sovereignty we have made to Indigenous nations and people.

Okay, so for today, I'll start with some introductions, and then I'm going to begin the session with just doing an overview of the CD decisions, some background, and the reasons why we've made this decision.

Then I'm going to hand it over to Rachel, who is going to go through some discussion around how we can help and what resources and information we have available for you. And then we'll end it with questions and a wrap-up.

So, my name is Laurie Davidson, and I am the Executive Director at CELA, and presenting with me today is Rachel Breau, who is the Manager of Member Services.

## Overview of the CD decision

00:01:35

Okay, so to begin with, I want to just do an overview of the CD decision, sort of the reason why we're doing this session and why we're all here today. So at the end of March, CELA sent out an email and contacted all of our users and libraries, to let folks know of an upcoming change to CELA services, that we will no longer be sending out CDs of audiobooks and magazines to our users and libraries both, as of July 31st, 2025.

So that affects both audiobooks and magazines that users in libraries would have otherwise received on CDs. And for libraries in particular, it also affects deposit collections that libraries may be receiving on CDs.

So, some background for this decision. To begin, I want to acknowledge that we know that this is not an easy change for some of our users. And as you, as libraries know, we have a wide variety of users out there. So from our statistics, we have a significant number of our users who rely on the CD technology as their primary means of reading audiobooks. So we know that this is going to be a particularly challenging, or could be a challenging experience for some of our users.

These readers are often longtime users of CDs who have exclusively used CDs for reading audiobooks, and they may not have the technological knowhow to feel comfortable using other means to read audiobooks yet, they may have limited or no internet connection, and they may not have a support person to help them with the downloading of books. So for this group of users, we know that this change may be challenging and difficult. And we know that you as libraries who are supporting those users who are in this position, that it will be a change in your processes and we need to find as many ways as possible to work together to work out and support these users during this time.

I do want to acknowledge that we also have other groups of CD users. We do have a good portion of our CD users who we also know consume our audiobooks in other ways. They will read audiobooks through an app, they may download audiobooks using an Envoy Connect or other DAISY player, and for this group of users, we hope that the switch will be easier for them that they'll be able to just—because they're no longer receiving CDs, they'll just continue to read audiobooks on the newer ways that they have been reading.

And of course, we also want to acknowledge that we also have a group of users who may have used CDs in the past, but have already made the switch entirely to digital. And so we want to speak to this group of users, understanding that this group wants new ways of reading audiobooks, they want to try new technology, and so we also want to be able to support those readers as we shift to new technology and to new methods of reading, of reading books.

So we know there's a range of users out there, and CELA is committed, and we want to do our best to meet the needs of you all. So for libraries, supporting users as we transition away from CDs.

## Technological landscape of CDs

00:04:49

Okay, so the reasons for this change, I'll start by speaking about the technological landscape of CDs. So this decision has not been made lightly It's due to a few different factors.

The most important piece is this broader discussion around CDs as a technology. So as a technology, CDs are becoming increasingly obsolete and also increasingly expensive for us to maintain. So the equipment that we use to burn CDs is getting more expensive to repair, replace or maintain. And our supplier over the last few years that we use to burn and distribute the CDs it's becoming more expensive for us to do this service. And then the CDs physically themselves are becoming more expensive.

We also know from talking to hardware suppliers, that new devices coming out, including DAISY players, will no longer be sold with CD drives. So we know the availability of devices is also shrinking and also becoming more difficult to support and maintain for users.

So over the last few years, we have also—CELA has also been in discussion with other libraries, serving people with disabilities worldwide. And all libraries who use CDs as a technology to provide accessible audiobooks to their users are experiencing a similar situation trying to figure out what are the alternatives to CDs and how do we move forward in our current landscape. So it's not unique to us in Canada.

And so, while we do want to acknowledge that the CD technology is simple, we know it continues to work, and it is very familiar to many of our users, especially those who have been using it for many years and rely on it, that the environment of CDs is increasingly difficult and expensive to maintain.

## Preparing for this change for some time

00:06:36

So to that end, I do want to talk a little bit about how we have been preparing for this change in the background for some time. Though we never had a definite date for when we would make this switch, we have been, over the last few years, preparing ourselves and getting new methods in place for how our users can read audiobooks.

So we have certainly, over the past few years and many years, been actively encouraging our users and for libraries as well to use digital delivery methods for audiobooks and audio magazines using apps such as EasyReader, and Rachel will go into more detail of this in her part of the presentation. But we've also been piloting and introducing new ways of reading audiobooks and magazines. And I just wanted to mention those new methods that we've been working on.

So, we did receive, about three years ago, funding from the Government of Canada to explore additional delivery options for audiobooks. And so, as a result of that project, we started offering out the Envoy Connect service in May, 2023, and we also piloted at that time a smart speaker option, using the Amazon Alexa for reading audiobooks. And again, Rachel will go into more detail, a little bit more detail on both of those, but to say that we are actively working on new ways of reading audiobooks.

## Funding situation

00:08:12

Okay, the next factor, which is probably the one that is most significant for the timing of our CD announcement is our funding situation. So though we have been working on additional options for some time for different ways of reading audiobooks, our working timeline still had us offering out CDs for a few years yet, so we weren't thinking that we would need to stop this quite so quickly.

However, in December of 2024, we received notice of funding cuts. So, unfortunately, we have had to make this change earlier than anticipated. So, CELA received a fairly significant funding cut through our federal funding. It was a one-third funding cut from what we have received in previous years. So, as a result of that funding cut, we had to make the difficult decision to stop CD services as of July 31st, 2025.

So over the last few months, since December, since we realized that this decision would need to be made, we've been putting the plan in place for how we would be winding down CD service, and how we would be able to help transition our users away from CDs and what materials we would have to get in place for our libraries to help users transition away from CDs. So we have been working hard on getting those training resources and support in place for our users and libraries in order that we can make this switch at the end of July.

## Continued work

00:09:50

So, it is important to note that the only service that is affected are CDs. Our funding allows us to continue with all of our other work, including exploring some new areas. And so I do want to talk about what work we're able to continue, and I want to just briefly also talk about some of the new areas that we are exploring.

So we will be able to continue with the embossed braille service, with our printbraille collection, and with Envoy Connect loading service. All of these services, we rely on Canada Post's Free Literature for the Blind service to send embossed braille out to our users and libraries, printbraille books out to our users, and the Envoy Connect loading service, which allows users to send Envoy Connects back to us, and we load books for them, and then we send the Envoy Connect back in the mail.

So we'll be able to continue with all of those services. We'll be able to continue with all of our original production where we make alternate format audiobooks, braille and e-text of published material if they are not available commercially in an accessible format. So we will be able to continue with that work, and offer that out to our users and libraries. And, of course, we'll be continuing with all of our digital delivery options for all of our formats. And so that work all continues, and we'll be supporting that going forward.

## New work

00:11:22

In addition to that continued work, I just want to highlight some of the new work that we'll be doing, and how that new work will benefit libraries and, directly, our users.

So we will be doing a general launch of the Alexa smart speaker project in June or July of this year. This is a voice-activated solution to reading audiobooks, and using Alexa smart speaker technology. So, we do hope as another option for people to be able to use this. It's been out in pilot. We've had a small group of users already testing it and using it, and we want to launch it out for general release in the next month or two.

We will also be looking at implementing recommendations from our 2023 braille survey in order to improve our braille services to our users. And there's a number of different areas from that survey that we'll be looking at doing.

We will also be wanting to do increased outreach to be able to reach more communities who could benefit from the services of CELA. So this includes doing more in concentrated outreach, to more schools, to communities and organizations who serve people with learning disabilities or physical disabilities that make it difficult to read print material.

We also are committed to improving the reading experience for all formats, and this will help our users with the transition away from CDs by ensuring that we develop and work on easy-to-use interfaces for getting books through digital delivery methods, and we'll also be undertaking a number of collaborative projects with related organizations, including NNELS, the National Network for Equitable Library Service, and this will benefit all users and libraries across the equitable reading landscape across Canada.

## Future advocacy

00:13:35

So, then, the next bit that I just want to talk about is future advocacy and our funding. So, we certainly do appreciate those of you who might be thinking of helping us out with advocacy for our federal funding. The funding that we have in place, or the funding that we have right now is in place and guaranteed through until March, 2027.

So we will be doing advocacy with the federal government starting in the fall of this year to ensure continued sustained funding. We will be also asking for the parameters of the funding to be broadened, which will allow us to use this funding for more technology development and other related work around accessible reading.

And we'll also be advocating for increased funding overall to the accessible reading sector in public libraries. And as we've done in the past, we'll be doing this advocacy work in collaboration with NNELS, as I mentioned before, the other organization Canada—who services the reading needs of people with print disabilities through public libraries in Canada.

So, as I said, we'll begin that advocacy work in the fall, and we will be keeping users informed of this advocacy work, will want to engage with libraries as we do this advocacy work, and we'll let folks know if and when we need additional support. At this point, it's work that our organizations will be doing ourselves as part of ensuring our ongoing federal funding for the important work of accessible reading across Canada.

But as we proceed with that work, we'll certainly keep libraries informed, and we'll reach out if we want to engage more or need support and help in our advocacy work.

So with that, I'll end my bit of the presentation, and I will now pass it over to Rachel.

## How we can help

00:15:41

**Rachel Breau:** Hello, everyone. It's nice to talk with you today and talk about our transition. So, I'm going to talk about the formats and different devices. So generally, I want to tell you how we can support you and your users.

### Deposit collections

00:15:59

So I'm going to begin by talking about deposit collections. Laurie mentioned this briefly, but deposit collections will end on July 31st along with all our other CD delivery.

So if you are a library that has a deposit collection and you'd like to receive your next shipment before July 31st, you're welcome to order that shipment. If you'd like to increase it a little bit in terms of the number of CDs you received, we can help you with that as well. If you are library that does not currently have a deposit collection, then you can order a batch of CDs and we will send that to you.

I should have defined what a deposit collection is, in case you’re not familiar with one, but a deposit collection means that a library would receive a set or a batch of CDs every six months or every year. That would be the normal schedule. And these are CDs that you would catalogue and keep on your shelves at the library and circulate to your patrons with print disabilities.

So all to say, they are ending, but if you would like to get some CDs before July 31st, we're happy to send more to you or some to you. For libraries that have had deposit collections, after July 31st, we won't require statistics anymore, so we won't be sending out those emails to remind you to send in your statistics.

And I did want to say that because we know that you worry your patrons will have to transition to another device, we are hard at work to create more supports for you. That includes resources, it includes training, we're currently offering a monthly audiobook training webinar to just give you a variety of options that will be available for you, and I'm going to do a bit of a summary of those today as well.

### Direct to player format

00:17:53

So when we're talking about using other devices to access CELA books, the secret to knowing how to do this is really knowing about the Direct to Player format.

So, Direct to Player is actually the easiest way to load books onto an Envoy Connect device, the EasyReader app, or straight onto a Stratus4 M or 12 M player, or Stream DAISY player.

So when you are in— (clears throat) pardon me—our catalogue, you will choose your book, and then there's a drop-down menu to choose which format. And so you will want to pick DAISY audio Direct to Player format so that the books will be loaded onto your CELA bookshelf.

So, just a reminder, all CELA libraries are a system, has a CELA account, and you have a username and a password, and you can go log in to our site, choose the Direct to Player format, it will go on to your Direct to Player bookshelf, and then from there, the book will be loaded onto a different device. So it works a little differently per device, but basically that's it. It's really remembering that Direct to Player bookshelf. That's the key to knowing how this will work.

I did want to mention that if you have the same book on more than one device, the last reading position may not be consistent across all devices. Even though they should come from the same bookshelf, it's really more device dependent.

The other thing is that with this, because there—If you have different devices and the book is coming from the same bookshelf, you can actually have multiple—sorry, the same book on multiple devices. So this is really handy for book clubs, for example. However, just keep in mind that if you delete a book off of your Direct to Player bookshelf, it could be deleted off of all your devices or some of your devices as well.

You do have the option, for example, on the EasyReader app to download a title so that it would live on the app, not through your bookshelf. So that's one circumstance that's slightly different, but just be mindful of that if you're going to delete a book. And then, we do remind you as well that you need to delete the book from the Direct to Player bookshelf when you're done with it as well.

## Audiobook player options

00:20:36

So on this screen, I’m just showing an overview of the players that work with CELA books. So we have the Envoy Connect, tablets, smartphones and computers, that’s the EasyReader app I was talking about, and, of course, the Victor Stratus players and Victor Streams, which I’m sure some of you are familiar with.

### Envoy Connect

00:20:56

So I’ll first go into more detail about the Envoy Connect. So this is actually the newest player or device that plays CELA’s books. And it's really an easy and portable and actually more affordable option for reading our audio books. So again, it only plays audiobooks, not e-text.

It's about the size of a deck of cards, so it just gives you a sense of how big it is, and it can be reloaded by downloading CELA books or magazines directly from the patrons, if they own their own device, or they could do it to the library-owned one as well, so to their Direct to Player bookshelf, and you need to download software called CELA Connect to be able to download books, or load books, I guess I should say, from your CELA account to the player.

So we launched this back in May, 2023, and we know there's a growing number of libraries that are loaning out Envoy Connect devices and then loading them for their patrons with print disabilities. And it's really nice to see that this option is becoming more popular. Especially, if you want to explore new player options, especially because they're less expensive.

And, I also wanted to mention that patrons can mail back their player, if they own their own, to us at CELA to reload it as well. We generally don't recommend a library sends their Envoy Connect back to us to reload. It's better if you use CELA Connect and do all the loading and removing of books off of your own Envoy Connects locally. And CNIB Smartlife sells the Envoy Connects and they retail right now for $97.

### CELA Connect

00:22:54

So, I’ll just describe CELA Connect very quickly. So, basically, you have to install it and it is for free. You get CELA Connect software from our site, you download it from our site, and you would add it to a library computer where you will load Envoy Connects. So if you want to load Envoy Connect onto more than one library computer so that more than one staff member can load the players, that's fine. You can share your CELA account log-in so that everything is connected to your library account. You also can load books and magazines onto more than one player from your one account, as well.

So essentially, very quickly, you just—It comes with the cable, you connect the Envoy Connect to your computer, you launch the software, you'll get a screen that asks, “Do you want to remove books?” You choose the books you want to remove. Then you should have a next screen that says, “Do you want to add books?” You add the books, and then it's done and you disconnect the player and you're good to go.

On the screen right now I am showing a screenshot of the loading screen. So there are a list of books, and you can check the books you want to load onto the player.

### Loaning Envoy Connect devices

00:24:12

As I said, some libraries have been loaning these devices and we've received some helpful tips from those libraries. So, I just wanted to say that when you buy an Envoy Connect, it comes with a micro-USB cable, it comes with headphones and a small lanyard. So, like a wrist-size lanyard.

So from the libraries who have already purchased them, they've made some great recommendations. They recommend that you buy a storage case so you can include all the items together. They also recommend purchasing additional micro-USB cords, because in their experience, sometimes patrons lose the cords, and also buying a wall charging plug so the patron can charge it at home.

And, on the image here, Kingston Frontenac Public Library kindly let us share the photo of their storage case they use to loan out their devices.

## Dolphin EasyReader app

00:25:12

All right, next I'm going to talk about the Dolphin EasyReader app. So if you loan tablets, you may want to load the EasyReader app onto them. So this is an app that works with our Direct to Player service, and it's available for Apple and Android devices. It also works on laptops, desktops, and Chromebook as well.

So the app is free, and you can search our catalogue on the app and add books and magazines to the bookshelf. Everything can be done right on the app.

If you want to select books using our site, you log in to the CELA site, the books will be loaded onto your Direct to Player bookshelf, and again, a reminder, use the Direct to Player format. And what's great about this is that the books, regardless if you get them on the app or through the site, are loaded right onto the app. There are no additional steps.

If you'd like to have more options, like syncing books across all the devices with the app, or if you want additional voices for any e-text books, that you might add to the app, you actually can—you pay for a premium edition if these features interest you, and currently it costs about $49 Canadian per year.

So if you're going to loan the EasyReader app, we just have some tips for you. So, first of all, you can add the app to multiple devices. Again, the bookshelf is shared and the same books appear on every device with the app. We do recommend you download the app. That way, it can't be deleted off of the app if someone happens to delete the book off of the bookshelf.

And, a reminder also to only loan tablets with EasyReader on them to your patrons with print disabilities. This is because they will have CELA books on them, and they're only allowed to go out to this demographic.

## DAISY players

00:27:13

So next I'll talk about DAISY players. So I think these are probably the players that you're most familiar with. Many of you probably have a HumanWare Victor Stratus, that's the bigger player shown on the screen, or you might have a Victor Stream, which is a smaller handheld player that looks a bit like a remote control with all the numbers on it.

So the Victor Stratus has a CD slot that can be used to play not only our CDs, but it plays music CDs, and it can play commercial audiobook CDs that you might have in your library. So for someone who might be very tightly committed to continuing to use CDs, they might want to borrow from your other collections and continue to use their player.

But what I did want to say is that both models can be configured to connect to a local Wi-Fi connection, so books are loaded straight onto the player from your Direct to Player bookshelf. So, I'll describe this in a bit more detail in the next slide, but this is actually a really good option if you wanted to preload a player with a bunch of books and you can do so using your Wi-Fi connection at your library.

I just wanted to say that the players retail for $655, if you want the Stratus, that's the bigger player, and then the Stream is $595. So still, they're quite pricey.

I'm also going to mention that you can also load a book or magazine with the zip file. So this is not Direct to Player, this is actually a zip file containing the files of the books, and put them onto an SD card or USB stick, and put them into the players. For the Stream, the smaller player, only an SD card will work there. You can also connect it to a computer and load books.

And just, lastly, to say that you buy the players either through HumanWare, the manufacturer itself, or through CNIB Smartlife.

### Configuring Wi-Fi DAISY players

00:29:25

So in terms of configuring a DAISY player to access the Wi-Fi connection, you first need to determine if your player is Wi-Fi enabled. We do suggest that you press the Info key on a 4 M player to hear the firmware version. And, don't worry about trying to do this on your own. We can definitely help. We can set up a booking for you to speak with one of our tech specialists and they will support you all throughout this process.

What we will need, though, to set up a player is your Wi-Fi name, so SSID name, that's the technical term for it, as well as the password for, I guess, your library's internet so that they can configure it and then configure it to your Direct to Player bookshelf.

So, I did want to say just before we wrap up about just the DAISY players, that the players that are Wi-Fi enabled are the HumanWare Stratus4 M and 12 M, and Victor Streams. There may be some older models that can't connect, and this is why we say, determine if your player is connected. The player that does not connect to Wi-Fi are the really old Victor Classic players. So those now are about 14, 15 years old. However, we do know there are lots of those players in Ontario and Alberta libraries because about 14 years ago, CELA received grants from the provincial governments to give libraries a player. So just FYI, if you have one of those really old ones, unfortunately, it doesn't connect to the Wi-Fi. It will still play CDs though.

## Transferring books

00:31:13

So I just wanted to spend a few minutes on talking about transferring books. So again, from the feedback that we've heard from libraries, some libraries are really bridging the gap between using existing players, and then moving patrons on to newer technologies. And the way they're doing this is by transferring books onto a device and then loading a patron's player. Or it could be a library’s player as well.

So I just wanted to, I guess, repeat or inform you that if you have one of the Stratus4 or 12 M players, you can use a USB stick, and SD card, or you can actually burn your own CDs at your library. Just log into your CELA account, you would get the zip files for the books, and then burn the CDs. And we do have instructions on transferring books onto different devices to load into the players, and we are working on an instruction sheet about burning CDs.

If you want to add more books to an Envoy Connect, so CELA Connect software, that's the one I mentioned before, it also will take a micro-SD card if you wanted to load even more books onto it, And then, for patrons, they can mail in their Envoy Connect to CELA, and if you have a Victor Stream, you can connect it to a computer or use an SD card.

## Voice control on Amazon Alexa smart speaker

00:32:44

So, as Laurie said, we're looking into the future. We want to find new technologies that will read our books. And so we're really excited about offering the Amazon Alexa smart speaker fairly soon.

I'll tell you, basically, you can request a book and operate a book using just your voice. So if you're not familiar with Amazon Alexa smart speakers, you just speak to it and ask for it to operate whatever it is. The, I guess we'll call them programs, that you would request when you have a smart speaker are called skills.

So the skill for CELA is called the Accessible Reading Canada skill. And you might ask why we didn't just call it the CELA skill, which would make sense, however, because we're a bilingual service, we need to offer this service in French, and the name for CELA in French is CAÉB. And, apparently, during the pilot, when they would ask for “biblio CAÉB,” so “CELA library” in French to Alexa, she misheard it and she thought we were trying to say “Caribbean.” Don't know why, but anyway, that's why it's called the Accessible Reading Canada skill.

And we're very much looking forward to offering this option, which will be so helpful for many users.

## How we can help

00:34:14

So, we're nearly done and we're looking forward to answering your questions. I did want to mention, though, how we can help and actually talk about the additional resources that we’ve put in place to help you during the transition and to help patrons as well.

So the first question—Sorry, the first point is that you can book an appointment with one of our tech support specialists for help over the phone. So I mentioned that within the context of configuring DAISY players, but you can call and ask for an appointment and they will help you. We can also help you by offering more webinars.

So again, as I mentioned, we are offering an audiobook options webinar for libraries specifically. We're also doing the same for patrons. And then, the other place where we are providing information and new communications to you is through our Open Book for Libraries newsletter. We mentioned all the webinar dates, if we have any new resources to support you, we would list them in the newsletter as well, and occasionally we send other emails out, to provide as much support. And as I said, as we learn more about how libraries are implementing the transition, we're trying to respond appropriately by creating new resources to support you.

So, when we announced this transition, we sent an email to libraries and users alike, but we do know that we have a fairly high number of patrons who don't have email addresses. And so, we have put the same announcement on a CD and we've already mailed out that CD to patrons. So it is possible some patrons will have heard this news for the first time just this week, so it's possible they might ask you some questions, but, of course, you can always refer them to us.

So if you have questions, please feel free to call us in Member Services. You can also visit our website as well. We'll be happy to help you answer questions about this, but also just all of the regular services, like if you needed to make a change to your account.

**End of webinar transcript**