# Transcript of “CELA CD Transition: Information session for users”

Webinar date: April 30, 2025

## Introduction and land acknowledgement

00:13:12

**Laurie Davidson:** Okay, I think I’ll get started, and we’ll let folks join in as they are able to, if more people want to join.

Welcome, and thank you for taking time out of your day or evening to join us today. This presentation is to discuss CELA’s CD transition. It's an information session for our users.

Okay, so I just wanted to begin with a land acknowledgment to say that I live and work on the unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples, including the territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh nations, but do want to say or acknowledge that the work undertaken by CELA happens across this land 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 peoples.

Okay, so for our presentation today, I'll just begin with some introductions. My name is Laurie Davidson, and I'm the Executive Director at CELA, and with me today is Rachel Breau, who is the Manager of Member Services at CELA, and we will be doing the presentation. We're also joined today by Karen McKay, who is our Communications Manager, and she will also be in the session.

What we want to cover today is I’m going to begin with an overview of the CD decisions and just give a little bit of background and context for why we made the decision. Rachel is going to then do a portion of the presentation going over all the different ways that we can help, and the different resources that we have available for you, as we help you transition away from CDs and to other ways of reading audiobooks.

And then at the end, we'll have time for questions. And then, we'll do a wrap-up. And we'll try to keep this to be just... stop at just after an hour. So that we've got allotted for today.

## Overview of the CD decision

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Okay, to begin with, I want to do an overview of the decision, and to make sure that folks know that, that we sent out an announcement at the end of March. We sent out an email and contacted all of our users to let them know of an upcoming change to CELA services, and that is that we will be no longer sending out CDs of audiobooks and magazines to our users as of July 31st, 2025.

So to begin with, I do want to acknowledge that we know this may not be an easy change for some of our users. We know that we have a wide variety of users out there, and from our statistics, we know that we have a significant number of our users who rely on CD technology as their primary means of reading audiobooks.

So this group of users, often longtime users of CDs, and may not feel comfortable or have the technological know-how to switch to another way of reading audiobooks. They may have limited or no internet connection, or perhaps also don't have access to a support person that can help them with the transition to reading audiobooks in a different way.

So I just would like to acknowledge that for this group of users, we know that this change may be particularly challenging and difficult, and we want to work with you here at CELA, and we want to give you all of the resources and support that we can in order that you can successfully make the transition away from CDs and still continue to enjoy and read audiobooks.

For those of you that read—that use CDs as a method of reading audiobooks, but also consume our audiobooks in other ways, through either an app or through download or other digital delivery, we hope that you'll be able to make the transition away from CDs relatively easily, since you're already also reading audiobooks in another way.

And we also, of course, have a group of users who used to use CDs, but have since migrated or made that switch entirely to other methods. And for that group of users, I think we'd also want to talk, that you’re often interested in trying new technology and new ways of reading books.

And so I just want to acknowledge that there's a range of users out there that we're trying to serve, and we want to do our best to meet the needs of you all as we transition away from CDs.

## Technological landscape of CDs

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I want to talk about the technological landscape of CDs.

So, to begin to say that this decision has not been made lightly by us at CELA, and it is due to a few different factors, but I think the most important one that I want to begin with is this broader discussion around CDs as a technology that is becoming increasingly obsolete and expensive.

So the equipment that we use to burn CDs is getting more expensive to repair, replace or maintain. Our supplier that we use to burn and distribute the CDs year over year is becoming more expensive, and CDs themselves are becoming more expensive.

We also know from talking to hardware suppliers, that new devices, including new DAISY players, will no longer be sold with CD drives, and so the availability of devices is also shrinking. And therefore, support for CDs is just overall becoming more difficult to support and maintain for our users.

Over the last few years, we have been in discussion with other libraries serving people with print disabilities worldwide. And I will say that all libraries who use CDs as a technology are experiencing a similar situation. So this is not unique to us in Canada.

So I do want to acknowledge that CD technology is simple. It continues to work and is very familiar to many of our users, especially for those who have been using it for many years and rely on it, but that the environment of it is increasingly difficult and expensive to maintain.

## Preparing for this change

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I just want to talk that we have been preparing for this change for some time without actually—We never made the decision to stop CDs, but we have been aware, have seen this change coming. So we have had to adapt and make sure that you know, we're supplying reading options for newer technologies that are coming out as well.

So, as some of you may know, about three years ago, we did receive funding through the Government of Canada to explore additional delivery options for audiobooks and magazines. And we wanted to look at a variety of different options to meet the diversity of needs out there. And as a result of this project, we started offering the Envoy Connect service in May, 2023.

Envoy Connect is a low-cost, small, portable audiobook player that you can use to read audiobooks. And, in addition, we piloted a smart speaker option, and that smart speaker option will be launching in the next month or two, either June or July of 2025, as another way of reading audiobooks.

So I do want to say that we've got a few new ways of reading audiobooks that can help with the transition away from CDs.

And then, of course, in addition to those new ways of reading audiobooks, those are in addition to our other digital download options, using Direct to player or zip downloads to devices and apps of your choice. And Rachel will be going in more detail into the various options that are available to you in her part of the presentation.

## Funding situation

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So, though we had been working on additional options for some time, our working timeline still had us offering out CDs for a few years yet. However, in December of 2024, we received notice of funding cuts. So we had to make this change earlier than anticipated.

So, unfortunately, CELA received a fairly significant funding cut. It was about a one-third funding cut to our federal funding. This is 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 earlier than what we had hoped to do. So, we are now, as announced, stopping CD services as of July 31st, 2025.

Over the last few months, since we knew that we would be receiving this funding cut, we've been putting the plan in place to wind down CD service, and figure out what resources and what paths we need to put in place to help transition our users away from CDs. So, we've been working hard on getting all of those training resources together and support in place for our users, so that we can make this switch at the end of July. And again, Rachel is going to go into more detail on some of the pathways that you have in terms of how to read audiobooks or new ways of reading audiobooks, if you are reliant on the CD technology.

## Continued work

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So, it is important to note that the only service that is affected are the CDs. So our funding allows us to continue with all of our other work, including exploring some new areas. So I just wanted to say what we're still able to do, and also some of the new areas that we'll begin to explore so that you know that we are fully committed and want to offer as much accessible reading service as possible to all of our users.

So we'll continue with the embossed braille service, printbraille and Envoy Connect loading service by Canada Post. So we will continue to, if you request embossed braille, we can deliver that out through Canada Post using the free Literature for the Blind service. Printbraille materials can be continued to send out, and we will, if you have an Envoy Connect and you don't want to load it yourself, you can send the Envoy Connect back to us, and we will load it for you and then return it to you in the mail.

We'll be continuing with original production of human-narrated audiobooks and magazines, printbraille, braille, and e-text so that we're able to offer alternate format titles to you, and that you will be able to read those in the same manner and the same timeliness that we've been able to do in the past. And of course, we'll be able to continue with all of our digital delivery options for all formats.

## New work

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Some of the new work that we will be exploring, as I mentioned before, we will be doing the general launch of the Alexa smart speaker project. We hope to do this in June or July of 2025. And this is to provide another option for reading audiobooks. And if you have an Alexa smart speaker, then you are able to, using voice-activated commands, you can interact with the CELA catalogue, with your bookshelf, and be able to retrieve and listen to audiobooks.

We'll be looking at implementing the recommendations from our 2023 braille survey, and this is all in an effort to improve our braille services so that we can better serve you on the braille front.

We'll be increasing outreach to more communities, particularly those with learning disabilities or physical disabilities that make it difficult to read print, so that we can help more people who need accessible reading services, and we are committed to continually improving the reading experience for all our formats and all the different devices and interfaces to ensure that we can offer as easy-to-use interfaces... that will enable you to get your books.

## Future advocacy

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So, we do appreciate those of you who might be thinking of helping us out with advocacy for our federal funding. Our funding is now in place until March, 2027. And that is set, and so CELA will be doing advocacy with the federal government starting in the fall of this year. And we'll be doing advocacy with them to ensure continued, sustained funding for accessible reading services in Canada.

Currently, the funding that the federal government is allotted is only set until March, 2027, so we have to advocate and make sure that funding will continue beyond that. We'll be advocating to allow us to broaden the parameters around funding, including being able to do more technology development and other related work around accessible reading, and we also want to advocate for increased funding overall to the accessible reading sector through public libraries.

So what we've done in the past, we'll be doing this in collaboration with NNELS, who's the National Network for Equitable Library Service, who is another organization in Canada who services the reading needs of people with print disabilities. So, as I said, we'll begin this advocacy in the fall of this year. And we will keep you all informed of our work and our progress on this front to make sure that we can get continued funding and hopefully increase our funding after March of 2027.

And just to let you know that we'll keep you informed and if and when we need additional support, we will be reaching out to you and communicating with you if there is any assistance or help we need in that advocacy.

So with that, I'll end my part of the presentation and I will pass it over to Rachel now, who is going to go over the different ways that we can help.

## How we can help

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**Rachel Breau:** Great. Thank you, Laurie, and good evening or good afternoon, I guess, to all of you and thank you for joining us today. So I'm going to talk about what your options are for finding a new way to read and enjoy CELA’s audiobooks. So, I'm going to tell you about some of the main and more popular players, and then I'll go into more detail about each one.

I'm showing a slide now that has a few options. So the first option is the Envoy Connect player that we've mentioned a few times. This is the smaller audiobook player. We also are showing a tablet, a smartphone and a computer, because if you use an app you can read the books on those devices, and I'm also showing a Victor Stratus player, it's a 4M model, and a Victor Stream, and these are the players that possibly you're the most familiar with. So now we'll look at each one.

## What does Direct to player mean?

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Actually, just before I do that, to understand how to get books onto one of those devices without CDs, you do have to understand what format to pick in our catalogue to be able to read our books on those devices.

So, if you've logged into our catalogue and chosen a book, you'll know that you have to pick what format you want. And there's a dropdown menu and you choose the format. So what you want to choose is DAISY audio Direct to player. That's the format that will load straight onto the EasyReader app, and that you can load our books onto different devices.

So when you pick that format, what happens is that it will load onto your bookshelf. We call it your CELA account bookshelf. And then any book on the bookshelf, or audiobook in this case, on the bookshelf, can be loaded onto one of those device options that I mentioned earlier.

So, the first one we're going to look at are Envoy Connect.

## About the Envoy Connect

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So, as Laurie said, we launched the Envoy Connect service back in May, 2023. And it's yet another way for you to access CELA books. It's about the size of a deck of cards, so that gives you some reference. And we have a photo on the slide and it shows someone holding an Envoy Connect. So it's fairly small, but that means it's very portable. And it's actually a very affordable option as well for reading our books.

So, it can be reloaded by downloading books or magazines from your Direct to player bookshelf, and you would use software called CELA Connect to load the books. Now, if you don't have a computer or maybe you're just not comfortable with technology, you also can mail back your Envoy Connect to us. We will reload the books on the device and then mail it back to you. And it's all done through Canada Post's Free Matter for the Blind. So that's one option.

I just also wanted to say that you can have your books automatically, through automatic selection they can be loaded onto the device, but you can add even more books using a Micro SD card as well.

So to buy one of these, they are sold through CNIB Smartlife, and right now they retail for $97. So I just want to finish off this very brief overview of the Envoy Connect by saying that, if you don't want to buy your own, many public libraries are starting to buy some and loan them out to their patrons with print disabilities. And what they do is, they load the books at the library and then loan out the player. So, I think it's a good thing that this option is becoming more popular with public libraries because it means that you may not have to buy your own, and that—the good thing also about Envoy Connect in general, whether it's purchased by libraries or individuals, is that it really is a less expensive way to read our audiobooks.

## About DAISY players

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The next players I'm going to talk about are DAISY players. So, again, this is probably the device that you're most familiar with. There are a few models. There is the HumanWare Victor Stratus 4 M or 12 M. 4 M are the ones with the four buttons in the middle. 12 M have what looks like a telephone keypad in the middle, and then the Stream is a smaller player.

So on the Victor Stratus, it has a CD slot in the middle so that you can play music CDs, you can play other audiobooks that you could get from your library, or you can play DAISY CDs, like you may be used to doing. So, the Stratus has large buttons, and it was actually designed specifically for blind and low-vision users and for... because of the contrasting colours, large buttons, and for really anyone who needs one, it's durable.

The Victor Stream is smaller, but it makes it more portable, of course, and it's like a handheld player. It reminds me a little bit of a remote control, actually, if you're not sure what it would look like.

So both models will play DAISY audio, and both models can be configured to connect to a local Wi-Fi connection, so that means an internet connection, so books are loaded straight onto your player from your Direct to player bookshelf. So if you have a stable internet connection through Wi-Fi, then Direct to player service is a good option. Because I'm guessing quite a few of you have the device, a DAISY player, you may want to consider going through the process of configuring the player.

### Configuring your Stratus or Stream DAISY player

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So just to go over some quick steps on how you do this. So, configuring the player might sound a little scary. No worries. We will help you through the process. You have to set up the player once to connect the player to your local Wi-Fi and then connect to your CELA bookshelf. So in order to do this, you do have to contact us. We actually have staff who are specifically assigned to supporting configurations and other technical support as well.

So if you did want to have your local Stratus or Stream configured, they do need two pieces of information. One, they need the name of your internet, so what you call it at home. The technical name is SSID name. And they also need the Wi-Fi. And the only reason they need those is to connect the player to your local Wi-Fi. Then, once your player is set up, when you turn it on, it connects to the Wi-Fi at home, and there you go. The books will start loading onto the player. And if you enjoyed automatic selection when you had CDs, you can continue to enjoy it.

So every day, when you turn on the player, you're going to get three books. You will do so until you have a maximum of four books, and then you will have to delete some books to be able to get some new ones. And you do this all on your player. You don't need a computer, everything is done on the player.

So, I'll just very quickly talk in a little bit more detail about the configuration, even though we will help you through every step. You do need to use the Info key to check what firmware version, and also, we will have to send you an SD card that you would put into the player if you have a Stratus4 M, that's the one with fewer buttons, to help it configure it to your bookshelf as well. So again, don't worry about it. Just call us, and we will help you through that step.

### Transferring books

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I also want to talk about transferring books. So, we've gone over how you get books in different ways with these different players, but if you're not ready to connect to the Wi-Fi, there are other ways that you, or maybe someone who is helping you, or maybe your public library can get books onto your device. So again, if you have a Stratus4 M or 12 M, they do take SD cards, so you can put more books onto an SD card and put it into your player.

You can also put more books and magazines onto a USB stick and put that into your player. And also, if you have at home or someone can help you, if they're able to burn CDs, they can get a file of our book, burn the book onto a CD, and then you put it into your player like you're used to doing.

If you have a Victor Stream, then you can connect the Stream to your computer to get more books or use an SD card.

And for Envoy Connect, you can use CELA Connect software, which is free. You can use a micro SD card to add even more books, or mail it back to us.

## About the Dolphin EasyReader app

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And then the last reading option I’m going to talk about is the Dolphin EasyReader app. So, perhaps you, or maybe a family member, may have a device such as a tablet or a smartphone. And basically, if you don't know what those are, it's like a mini computer basically all in one. So the common types of tablets or smartphones are iPads, iPhones, and then a wide range of Android devices.

So, to play CELA books on one of these devices, you need to download an app that can read DAISY book files. And the app that works with our Direct to player service is called EasyReader, and it's available for free. And you get it—And it's available for Apple and Android devices. You also can put EasyReader onto a desktop or laptop or a Chromebook, so you have a very wide range of devices that will play CELA’s audiobooks.

EasyReader will also play e-text, if that's something that would interest you. So, again, I'll just repeat a little bit of the process of how you get a book. So, yeah, you would go on to our site and then select the book, and then select the Direct to player format for audio. The book will then go onto your bookshelf, and it will automatically go onto the EasyReader app.

Now, another feature of the app that's really handy is that you can search our catalogue and add books straight from the app. so that means you just open the app, log in, choose your book, the book goes on your bookshelf, and you're done.

The other way to get it through our site is you have to open our site, log in to your CELA account, choose your book, choose Direct to player audio format, and then it will load. So, a few more steps so there's lots of options for you, but you can choose books on the app. It makes it easier.

So while I mentioned the EasyReader app is for free, if you would like additional features, like, perhaps, more voices, or if you would like to be able to sync your books across your other devices, then you can pay for a premium edition, which right now retails for $49.99 Canadian per year.

And then, I'll also mention that you can get our books as a zip file. So, if you don't know what a zip file is, it just means our book files which can be transferred over to another device. So I won’t get into too many details about this, but if you use other apps like Voice Dream Reader or Google Read&Write, you would need to download the zip file of one of our books to be able to read it on one of those apps.

## Player options with Wi-Fi

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Okay, so I'm going to do a little bit of a summary of all those devices I spoke about. I hope it's not too confusing, but we want to make sure that you understand what your options are after this.

So, the CELA Connect device, that's that small one that’s about the size of a deck of cards. The way you get books is you download the CELA Connect software and load the books onto your device. And it costs about $97.

So, the options I'm talking about right now assume that you have a Wi-Fi connection at home. So, the next app was EasyReader that I just spoke about. So, the way you get books is to search on the app, or you can go to our site. While the app is free, you would have to pay for a device though. If you needed to buy an iPad in order to get EasyReader to read your books, you'd have to pay for the iPad.

And then in terms of DAISY players and Wi-Fi options, you would configure your player to connect to your Direct to player bookshelf. And the configuration is free. That’s just part of all the CELA services that we do.

## Player options without internet

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So if you're somebody who doesn't have an internet connection, or maybe the internet connection is very poor around where you live, you still can get CELA audiobooks. There are some options.

So again, with the Envoy Connect, you can mail it back to us, we reload it and mail it back to you. And you might want to also ask your public library if they have Envoy Connects, because you might be able to go into your public library and pick them up, Or if your public library has a home delivery service, you might want to enquire if they would deliver an Envoy Connect preloaded with books for you.

If you have a DAISY player, then the best thing to do is ask if your public library has a collection of CDs. So there are many libraries in Canada that have a set of our DAISY CDs for loan to people with print disabilities. So just call and ask if your library has that. What I can tell you is, since we made this announcement, libraries are starting to stock up on their CDs in order to help and serve their patrons who really prefer to use CDs. So again, contact your local library because every library is different.

And then, with the EasyReader app, you do need a Wi-Fi connection. So if you don't have one at home, then, perhaps bring it to a friend, or bring it to a location that has Wi-Fi, download the book, and then you can read it at home.

The other option as well, I guess more related to DAISY players, is the option to burn CDs. If someone has the equipment to burn a CD, then they could burn a CD of one of our books for you.

## Other reading devices

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I did want to mention some other reading devices. And the reason we we talk about these reading devices is because, actually, we've had questions about them. So we thought we would answer these questions.

So, there's some popular other reading devices. So a Kindle, for example, is one of them, and the Libby app, which is a library app. Libraries offer usually huge online libraries of audiobooks and ebooks through something called Overdrive. And to access Overdrive, the app is called Libby.

So, in general, our audiobooks do not play on any of these devices. However, if you don't mind reading the text and listening to the text of a book, you can use a file format in our collection called ePub. And then, you can read our books on a Kindle, and also on a program called Google Read&Write. This is more for students. Schools use this quite a bit. So, just letting you know about that, but for the Libby app through public libraries, unfortunately, CELA’s books do not work on it.

And I'll just wrap up by saying, any MP3 player will also play our books. However, they won't have that navigation capability that our books have if you use a DAISY reading app or DAISY player.

## Voice control with Amazon smart speaker

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So, Laurie was talking about the projects that we're working on and the devices that we're exploring because we want to move audio reading and accessible reading into the future.

So we are very excited about telling you about, the smart speaker option. So, if you don't know what a smart speaker is, it's a device where you speak aloud to it and then it will do the function you’ve asked it to do. So, the option that works with CELA’s books, or will work with CELA’s books, is called the Amazon Alexa. And this... It's technology a little bit like Siri. If you have an iPhone, you might be able to just ask Siri to do something like open an app, and it will do it for you. So this is a very accessible option for really anyone using voice commands. And like we've said, soon you’ll be able to open a CELA book, operate a CELA book, and read the CELA book as well, using the Amazon Alexa.

So the Amazon Alexa, or really any device like this, a smart speaker, their programs are called skills. And so, if you have an Amazon Alexa, then the skill you need to ask for is called the Accessible Reading Canada skill. So that's a bit of a mouthful, and you might be asking why we didn't call it the CELA skill. Well, it's because in French to say “CELA library” you say “biblio CAÉB.” And when we were doing the pilot, Alexa was hearing “biblio CAÉB” as “Caribbean.” So it got very confusing and it wasn't working well. So this is why we call it Accessible Reading Canada skill.

## We can help!

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So we're getting near the end and we're going—and we look forward to answering your questions, but I do want to tell you how we can help you and the resources that we've put in place to help you through this transition.

So, first of all, we always encourage you to call our Contact Centre. And in fact, you can book an appointment with one of our tech specialists to help you with one of your devices, or with your device. They configure the players, but they also can help with other things as well. So you would call our Contact Centre for help with the device, but also to make a change to your account information or order books. So all the things that you may have done before with our staff.

Now to help you specifically with the transition, we will be offering webinars every month about the options. So we'd be giving a similar session like I've just described, but in a lot more detail about the devices at one of these monthly webinars, and then, starting in June, so as we get nearer the ending of CDs, we are offering weekly question and answer periods. So what that means is, you would register for a particular date, and then bring your question and our staff will help you with that question regarding a specific device. So it's a great way to get some one-on-one help, basically, or another way to get it.

And then, I did want to mention as well that we do have a newsletter. It's called Open Book. And if you haven't subscribed to it, or this is the first time you're hearing about it, we highly encourage you to subscribe. You can do so on our site. Because this is where we put in all our service announcements, we announce new titles as well. So we are going to be putting any new resources or information about the transition into Open Book, and, occasionally, we send out an individual email as well to all of our members.

And then the last thing I'll mention in terms of how we can support you is we have a whole web page devoted to the transition. In it you will find all the dates for our webinars, you will find documentation to help you.

We've created two getting started guides. One is for Envoy Connect and the other one is for EasyReader, all to help you learn and move forward using a different device.

So, if you have a question about our service, you are welcome to call our Contact Centre or email them. So, our phone number, and we can put this in the chat a bit later on, our phone number is 1-855-655-2273, and our email is help@celalibrary.ca, and our website is celalibrary.ca.

**End of webinar transcript**