

Annual General Meeting Minutes – September 9, 2024

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Land Acknowledgement:

We acknowledge that the work undertaken by CELA and our member libraries takes place on traditional Indigenous territories across Canada and we are grateful for the opportunity to live and work on this land and provide inclusive services to all Canadians.

Attendance

Present

Peter Bailey, CEO, St. Albert Public Library
Mary Chevreau, Executive Director, CULC/CBUC (Advisor)
Grace Dawson, Regional and Community Services Librarian, Prince Edward Island Public Library Service
Mélanie Dumas, Director, Universal Collection, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec
Brian Harding, CEO and Chief Librarian, Greater Sudbury Public Library
Åsa Kachan, Chief Librarian & Chief Executive Officer, Halifax Public Libraries
Amanda Lepage, Director, Collections & Service Infrastructure, Saskatoon Public Library
Carolyn Minor, Section Head, Special Services, Winnipeg Public Library
Tara Thompson, Community Engagement Coordinator, Okanagan Regional Library

Also Present

Laurie Davidson, Executive Director, CELA
Lindsay Tyler, Senior Manager, Operations, CELA

Regrets

Tara Wong, Chief Executive Officer, Oakville Public Library
Heather Scoular, Director of Customer Experience, Fraser Valley Regional Library

Call to Order

Carolyn Minor, Board chair, called the meeting to order.

Establishment of Quorum

A quorum of members being present, the Chairperson declared the meeting to have been regularly called and properly constituted for the transaction of business.

Approval of 2023 Annual General Meeting Minutes

MOTION

Moved by Åsa Kachan

Seconded by Tara Thompson

THAT the minutes from the 2023 Annual General Meeting on September 8, 2023 be approved.

CARRIED

Annual Reports

- Board Chair reflected on the accomplishments of CELA since 2014 and thanked all those who contributed to the success
- Executive Director highlighted activities and achievements in 2023-24

MOTION

Moved by Amanda Lepage

Seconded by Grace Dawson

THAT the Annual Reports from the Chair, Treasurer and Executive Director be received.

CARRIED

Financial Statements

Alexander Oliveri (from CBM), Auditor joined the meeting

- Provided update on the financial statements for the 23-24 fiscal year.

Alexander Olivieri left the meeting

MOTION

Moved by Amanda Lepage

Seconded by Mélanie Dumas

THAT the financial statements and the report of the public accountant for the Corporation for the fiscal period ending March 31, 2024 be received.

CARRIED

MOTION

THAT CBM are appointed the public accountants of the Corporation, to hold office until the close of the next annual meeting of the members or until their successors are appointed, subject to the provisions of the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*, and the directors are authorized to fix their remuneration.

Moved by Åsa Kachan

Seconded by Mélanie Dumas

CARRIED

Confirmation of Resignations of Directors and Members

MOTION: That the Members confirm that **Peter Bailey's and Heather Scoular's** terms expire at the conclusion of the current annual meeting of Members. Consequently, Peter and Heather will cease to be a member of CELA as of the conclusion of this current annual meeting. The Board thanks everyone for all their leadership furthering the goals of CELA and equitable library access:

Moved by Tara Thompson

Seconded by Grace Dawson

After discussion, it was RESOLVED THAT the Members confirm that the terms as directors of the above-referenced individuals as directors and members of CELA effective the dates set out above be acknowledged.

CARRIED

Election of New Directors

Elect individuals to become directors in accordance with the General Operating By-law No. 1, as follows: In order to proceed with the election of directors the Chairperson declared the meeting open for nominations. The following are nominated:

Name	Term
Grace Dawson	3 years (to conclusion of 2027 annual meeting)
Mary Chevreau (renewable)	3 years (to conclusion of 2027 annual meeting)
Vicky Varga (renewable)	3 years (to conclusion of 2027 annual meeting)
Sarah Gallagher (renewable)	3 years (to conclusion of 2027 annual meeting)

After discussion, there being no further nominations, the Chairperson declared the nominations closed. No members having demanded a ballot, the Chairperson declares the foregoing to have been duly elected directors of

the Corporation for the term set out opposite their names, or until their successors are elected or appointed.

MOTION

Moved by Åsa Kachan

Seconded by Tara Thompson

THAT the foregoing to have been duly elected directors of the Corporation for the term set out opposite their names, or until their successors are elected or appointed.

CARRIED

The 2 new Directors were welcomed to the meeting.

Confirmation of Directors Terms and Expiry Dates

Confirm the board of directors of the corporation, together with term and expiry dates of each director's term of office, as follows:

Name	Term	Term Expiry
Tara Wong	3 years (renewable)	To 2025 annual meeting
Åsa Kachan	3 years (renewable)	To 2025 annual meeting
Brian Harding	Renewable (current term will end at the conclusion of the 2025 annual meeting as Mr. Harding was elected to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Ardis Proulx-Chedore)	To 2025 annual meeting
Carolyn Minor	3 years (renewable)	To 2026 annual meeting
Mélanie Dumas	3 years (renewable)	To 2026 annual meeting
Amanda Lepage	3 years (renewable)	To 2026 annual meeting

Tara Thompson	3 years (renewable)	To 2026 annual meeting
Grace Dawson	3 years	To 2027 annual meeting
Mary Chevreau	3 years (renewable)	To 2027 annual meeting
Vicky Varga	3 years (renewable)	To 2027 annual meeting
Sarah Gallagher	3 years (renewable)	To 2027 annual meeting

MOTION

Moved by Amanda Lepage

Seconded by Peter Bailey

THAT the Board of Directors of the Corporation be confirmed together with expiry dates for each directors' term of office as above.

CARRIED

Confirmation of Acts

MOTION

Moved: Mélanie Dumas

Seconded: Amanda Lepage

THAT all acts and proceedings of the directors, officers, and members since the date of the previous Annual General Meeting on September 8, 2023 be approved and confirmed.

CARRIED

Adjournment

There being no further business, on motion the meeting terminated at 2:25 pm.

Moved: Amanda Lepage

Approved unanimously

Chairperson

Vice-Chair

Appendix 1 – Report of CELA Board Chair 2023–2024

Annual General Meeting: September 9, 2024

I am grateful for the opportunity to have served my first year as the Chair of the CELA Board, following the excellent leadership of Catherine Biss as Board Chair since CELA's inception in 2014.

Thank you to current Executive Director Laurie Davidson and her team: Lindsay Tyler *Senior Manager*, Rachel Breau *Member Services Manager*, Karen McKay *Communications Manager*, Theresa Power *Content and Access Librarian*, Faline Bobier *Training and Outreach Coordinator*, Megan Toye *Metadata Coordinator* and Jessica Desmoreaux *Communications and Access Coordinator*. Together with fixed term contract employees Ioana Gandrabur, Holly Pickering, Charmaine Co, Kim Kilpatrick, Natalie MacDonnell, Denise Scott, and Tim Sullivan, they have accomplished Board priorities and more.

Following the successful launch of our service for the Envoy Connect (low-cost audiobook player) at the end of May 2023, we have welcomed more than 350 new users to the Envoy Connect.

CELA undertook a study to assess the needs of our braille users, and how our collection and services were meeting those needs. Over 140 braille users responded to our survey to help us better understand the braille landscape in Canada and our place within it, and to use the information we gathered to inform and improve CELA's braille services in the future.

We also continue to work on testing and preparing for a wider roll-out of our smart speaker option, planned for 2024-25. This work is being done in collaboration with EDRLab and Association Valentin Haüy (AVH) in France.

CELA was able to continue to add the NLS collection (from the United States), including more than 10,000 braille titles added this year.

Thank you also to our current Board members – Amanda Lepage, Åsa Kachan, Brian Harding, Grace Dawson, Heather Scoular, Mélanie Dumas, Peter Bailey, Tara Thompson and Tara Wong – for your commitment to the right of equal access for Canadians with print disabilities. I look forward to another year of working with you.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Minor

Chair, CELA

Appendix 2 – Report of CELA Treasurer 2023–2024

REPORT OF THE CELA TREASURER 23/24

Annual General Meeting: September 9, 2024

It has been my pleasure to join as the Treasurer of CELA in this past year. Being able to see the ongoing dedication and hard work of CELA staff and Board directors and members up close has been a highlight of my initial time in this role.

I am pleased to submit this report for the 2023-2024 fiscal year (April 1 2023 to March 31 2024) in conjunction with CELA's audited financial statements for the same period.

CELA's independent auditors—CMB Chartered Professional Accountants LLP—have shared the opinion that the organization's financial statements present fairly in all material respects, the financial position of the organization as at March 31, 2024, and the results of its operations and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations (ASNPO).

Key details from the 23-24 financial statements include:

- CELA's cash balance at the beginning of the reporting period: \$641,887
- Revenue brought in during the reporting period: \$4,486,368
- Expenses incurred during the reporting period: \$4,289,398 (direct costs + expenses)
- CELA's cash balance at the end of the reporting period: \$780,320

Through effective fiscal management CELA continued to meet service level targets while concluding the fiscal year with an operating budget surplus of \$196,970.

Thank you to my fellow directors for your ongoing contributions to CELA and to CELA's staff who deliver these critically important services to users every day. Together we continue to move forward on our mission to support public libraries in the provision of accessible collections for Canadians with print disabilities and to champion the fundamental right of Canadians with print disabilities to access media and reading materials in the format of their choice.

Sincerely,

Brian Harding

Treasurer, CELA

Appendix 3 – Executive Director’s Report 2023-2024

Summary of Highlights

Overall, FY23-24 saw continued change for CELA, and I have been honoured to share in the new projects and learnings that have been undertaken. I am always appreciative of the talent and dedication of the CELA team. I also am very thankful for the support of the Board, in particular our new Executive Team of Carolyn Minor (Chair), Mélanie Dumas (Vice-Chair) and Brian Harding (Treasurer).

This year, CELA launched the new Envoy Connect Service, our new offering for a low-cost audiobook player with both physical and digital delivery options. The launch officially happened at the end of May 2023, and by end of the fiscal year we have welcomed more than 350 new users to the Envoy Connect. CELA also continued developing and testing our smart speaker delivery option. CELA continued its work with the National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS) on AccessibleLibraries.ca through the Public Libraries Accessibility Resource Centre (PLARC) project as well as on work around securing federal funding through the newly created Equitable Access to Reading Program through Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). This year saw us complete the loading of the braille collection from the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS) with more than 10,000 braille titles added. Finally, CELA completed a study to assess the needs of our braille users, and how our collection and services are meeting those needs. Over 140 braille users responded to our survey to help us better understand the braille landscape in Canada and our place within it.

Overall Collection Statistics and Usage

The selection and offering of materials to CELA users through public libraries is guided by the [CELA Collections Policy](#). In FY23-24, the total number of items available to CELA users, through both CELA’s collection and Bookshare’s collection, totaled 1,367,852 (as of March 31, 2024). Collection statistics are as follows:

- CELA continues to provide access to it’s own collection now totalling 191,242 titles available in multiple digital and physical accessible formats, including human-narrated audio, braille, print-braille and etext. 34,452 new items were added to the CELA collection in FY23-24.
- As of March 31, 2024, Bookshare offered 1,176,610 accessible books in eText, Braille, and synthetic voice to CELA users – 108,765 of which were added in the previous year.

- In this year, CELA sent 619,170 physical items (DAISY CD books/magazines and braille and print-braille) and had 1,004,307 digital uses of books and magazines and 446,056 newspaper views.
- At the end of the year, CELA had 26,611 registered users, with 2,166 new users added throughout the year.
- CELA services 1,080 public libraries across the country, with 2,123 service points.

Marrakesh, ABC and NLS

The Government of Canada officially acceded to the treaty in June of 2016, becoming the 20th country to do so and reaching the minimum number needed for the treaty to take effect. It officially went into effect on September 30, 2016.

CELA has access to materials through WIPO's Accessible Books Consortium's (ABC) Global Exchange, which provides a mechanism to share accessible materials with copyright stipulations for each country integrated within the process. As a result, CELA is able to increase the depth and breadth of its collection by sharing resources with other countries.

For FY23-24, CELA added 652 titles to our collection from ABC. CELA users accessed ABC-supplied titles 3,051 times for a total of over 128,000 titles accessed since 2014. In addition, 1,293 titles from the CELA collection were downloaded by other countries participating in ABC.

CELA continues to load titles from NLS (National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled) through an agreement which allows for the exchange of Marrakesh eligible titles between the two countries. CELA has received 100,000+ titles in braille and human-narrated audio from NLS and CELA is working to process and add these titles over the coming years. In FY23-24, CELA added 12,700 audio titles from the NLS collection for a total of close to 95,000 audiobooks added over the last 3 years. In addition, CELA added 10,411 braille books from NLS this year, in both uncontracted and contracted formats. These exchanges greatly enhance the breadth of our collection and offers a diversity of choice to our users. As a part of loading the NLS audiobooks, CELA continues to convert the titles into the standard DAISY format (NLS uses a different standard for their audiobooks) and is sharing these converted titles back with ABC.

Other Collection Partnerships

- We continue contracting out original production work with CNIB, who creates alternate format material for us under Section 32 of the Canadian

Copyright Act, in human-narrated DAISY audio, braille and epub format. Original production by CNIB is reserved for books that are not available commercially in a born-accessible format. The books that CELA requests to be produced are generally new and most often Canadian publications. In FY23-24, CELA produced 324 human-narrated audiobooks, 120 braille books, 56 print-braille items, and 90 ePubs. CNIB also provides 11 human-narrated audio magazines.

- We continue to offer Bookshare titles that provide an ever-expanding depth to the collection, offering, at year end, 1,176,610 books in accessible formats in a variety of languages, including current bestsellers and an impressive collection of educational resources. 108,765 titles were added to Bookshare in this fiscal year.
- Through an agreement with Zinio, nearly 150 magazines in DAISY Text are made available on or near the date of publication.
- We have agreements in place with Overdrive and Blackstone Audio that allow CELA to purchase commercial audiobooks and ebooks. CELA then adds functionality to improve accessibility and provides them to CELA users simultaneously to the commercial release at substantially less cost than full original audio production. In FY23-24, CELA added 2,500 commercial audiobooks converted into DAISY format to the collection.
- CELA provides access to approximately 45 national, international and regional newspapers, which are updated daily and available online in accessible HTML. Users accessed newspapers 446,056 times in this fiscal year.
- CELA continues its collaboration with Penguin Random House Canada (PRHC) and Audible; both organizations provide audio titles free of charge to CELA. CELA converts these books into DAISY format and adds them to our collection. Additional new titles are being added on an ongoing basis to the CELA collection at the same time they are available through commercial channels. In FY23-24, CELA added 144 titles from PRHC and 29 titles from Audible.
- CELA works with individual publishers and publisher associations to get accessible formats of books in braille, ePub and audio. With the born accessible publishing movement and more Canadian publishers becoming accessibility certified, CELA expects these relationships to grow.

- CELA has an ongoing agreement with NNELS (National Network for Equitable Library Service) to exchange up to 150 titles per year between the two organizations.
- An agreement exists between CELA and the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BAnQ) that ensures access to CELA services for residents of Québec and reciprocal access to the BAnQ French-language collection for Canadians outside Québec. In addition, in this year, 7,345 BAnQ French DAISY Audio titles and 113 French Braille titles have been added to the CELA collection as a part of the 2 organizations' ongoing exchange.

Relationship with National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS)

In FY23-24 there continued to be many collaborative projects and initiatives with the National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS). Some of these projects included:

- CELA participated in the in-person Accessible Publishing Summit, hosted by NNELS, in February of 2024, which saw experts and stakeholders from publishing, government, education, accessibility, and related industries gather together to share information, network and plan next steps in advancing accessible publishing in Canada.
- In January, CELA was part of team of organizations to celebrate World Braille Month including NNELS, Braille Literacy Canada, Canadian Council of the Blind, CNIB, and PRCVI.
- With support from the Canada Book Fund, NNELS (National Network for Equitable Library Service) and CELA (Centre for Equitable Library Access) continued to co-lead the Public Libraries Accessibility Resource Centre (PLARC) project, to engage with library staff to develop awareness and training in accessibility in all areas of the library, and help ensure the availability, procurement and delivery of accessible books and resources across Canada.
- CELA staff also worked with colleagues at NNELS to coordinate joint purchasing and reduce duplication of effort between the two organizations.
- CELA and NNELS also worked collaboratively on federal funding issues, including advocating for the new Equitable Access to Reading Program as announced in Budget 2022.

Other Partnerships

In addition to relationships in collection development, CELA continues to seek partnerships with consumer groups, library organizations, technology organizations and literary organizations that serve to strengthen the relationship between people with print disabilities in Canada and CELA member libraries. Examples are as follows:

Accessible Media Inc.

CELA has always had a strong relationship with AMI, providing interviews and insights on topics affecting Canadians with print disabilities. AMI and CELA have partnered to promote CELA services and collections in an ongoing segment that broadcasts every other Friday on their *Live at 5* radio program.

Braille Literacy Canada

CELA has a mutually beneficial partnership with BLC, promoting both organizations' services to each other's respective audiences. BLC promotes the availability of CELA's braille collection, including music, via newsletter and other avenues. In turn CELA promotes BLC programs to CELA users via newsletter. This partnership also offers CELA another avenue for feedback from users.

Canadian Accessibility Network (CAN)

CELA became a collaborating organization of the Canadian Accessibility Network (CAN). CAN, under the leadership of the READ Initiative at Carleton University, is a national collaboration to advance accessibility for persons with disabilities through Research, Design and Innovation, Education and Training, Policy, Employment, and Community Engagement.

Canadian Council of the Blind (GGT and Visionaries Groups)

CELA has a strong relationship with the Getting Together with Technology (GTT) group. Started by the Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB) the GTT "helps blind and partially sighted residents to explore and integrate assistive devices in their home and work lives. The groups meet monthly to discuss new and updated devices, and participants teach each other how to include assistive technology in their daily lives.

Canadian Urban Libraries Council

CELA has the support of the Canadian Urban Libraries Council/ Conseil des Bibliothèques Urbaines du Canada (CULC/CBUC), an organization consisting of public libraries representing communities or regions with populations exceeding 100,000.

Dolphin

In the last year, CELA has offered joint webinars with Dolphin, an assistive technology developer, on the use of their EasyReader app, which allows the seamless delivery of CELA books to a user's iOS or Android devices.

EDRLab

As a part of the expanded delivery options project, CELA is partnering with EDRLab to deliver a smart speaker solution to users. EDRLab is an international, non-profit development laboratory, working on the deployment of an open, interoperable and accessible digital publishing ecosystem, worldwide.

Indigenous Literary Partnerships

CELA continues to seek opportunities to support literary programs for Indigenous works, including the Indigenous Voices Award, First Nation Communities Read and the Burt Award for First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

Literary Award Programs

CELA continues providing accessible versions of books for major Canadian literary awards and programs such as the Giller Prize, the Governor General's awards and Canada Reads. Collaboration with these high-profile awards programs brings an increased awareness within the literary and publishing community about the need for developing and providing accessible materials to ensure all Canadians have the opportunity to take part in national cultural conversations. Through these collaborations, CELA is able to produce accessible versions of the short-listed books – based on confidential advance knowledge of the lists – and make them available at the moment the organizations announce their short lists, ensuring CELA patrons have

the same opportunity as all Canadians to read and participate in the process.

OLS (Ontario Library Services)

This year, in partnership with OLS, CELA was pleased to offer a selection of our webinars through OLS's training services. Library staff can attain a "CELA Service in Ontario Public Libraries Certificate" by watching all four CELA webinars. The certificate and webinars are also available in French.

Summer Reading Clubs

CELA works with summer reading clubs across Canada including the BC Summer Reading Club, the New Brunswick Summer Reading Club and the TD Summer Reading Club. CELA continues to be a member of the TD Summer Reading Club (TDSRC) National Committee. In addition to an accessibility advisory role, CELA also ensures that as many titles as possible are available in accessible formats.

Vues et Voix

CELA and Canal M, a radio show on the French Vues et Voix network, have conducted a series of interviews about books in the CELA collection, broadcast in French and available online.

Support, Training and Outreach

- CELA makes it a priority to respond as quickly as possible to questions, concerns and title requests from users and libraries. We can report that nationwide we handled 23,998 direct user queries through our Contact Centre either by phone or email in FY23-24. We also handled 952 questions from member libraries and their staff.
- CELA also provides a broad and continually evolving range of information and resources on our website about accessibility, print disabilities, compatible devices and apps, and information about the Marrakesh Treaty and other external influences on the service we provide.
- CELA staff participated in both online and in-person conferences and tradeshow. Overall, CELA staff participated in 23 virtual and 25 in-person conference and presentation events across the country reaching over 1200 people. Of these events, CELA had an exhibit booth at 12 of them: both library and disability-related conferences.

- Overall, CELA offered 24 webinars in FY23-24 and these webinars reached 746 participants. These training opportunities and engagement will improve the ability of public library staff in member libraries across Canada to deliver accessible services to their users with print disabilities and will also improve the knowledge of CELA services for users, families, and friends.

Digital Platform

CELA's platform uses underlying Bookshare technology with a Drupal-based front-end for search and discovery services. The platform provides the following:

Accessibility

The interface is accessible to patrons, librarians, and CELA staff and provides an optimized experience for mobile devices, screen-readers and magnifiers.

Discovery

CELA and Bookshare Collections are integrated into one catalogue with a clear user interface focused on search & discovery.

Functionality

All patron and transaction data is kept on servers located in Canada, granular reporting is available, and there is a simple automatic registration process.

Choice

In addition to the human-narrated audiobook content and human-transcribed braille from the CELA collection, there is also an increase in the volume of braille and synthetic audio from Bookshare, created on-the-fly and available via multiple content delivery options. This allows for a breadth of content and format choice.

Copyright Protection

Each file created through the platform is digitally watermarked – a method that provides protection against piracy without limiting the file to certain applications or readers – and fingerprinted to identify the

user while protecting their privacy. The increased copyright protection is allowing positive partnership conversations with publishers that will result in increased content for CELA users.

CELA continues to gather feedback from users and libraries to refine and improve our platform.

Newsletters and Social Media

Monthly newsletters to users and libraries, delivered in both English and French, provide a vehicle for CELA to share information about services and collections, educate users and member libraries about technology and accessibility options and offer an easy way for users and libraries to engage with CELA staff. In addition, CELA is active in social media channels. Total subscribers are:

- *Open Book* and *Livre ouvert*: 10,313 users
- *Open Book for Libraries* and *Livre ouvert pour Bibliothèques*: 1,518 library staff
- Facebook (1,526 followers), English and French
- LinkedIn (109 followers), English and French
- X (Twitter) (2,667 followers), English and French

Staff Development

CELA continues with its Annual Development and Learning Plans, as a way of ensuring staff identify areas of growth and receive opportunities for further development and training. CELA continues to do our once-a-month 'Deep Dive' sessions, where different staff members present on various topics.

FY23-24 also saw our team welcome new members. We were able to continue and add new fixed term employees to help us with our new delivery options, cataloguing and other research projects, including Holly Pickering, Ioana Gandrabur, Charmaine Co, Kim Kilpatrick, Tim Sullivan, Natalie MacDonnell and Denise Scott.

Braille Report

In 2023, CELA undertook a study to assess the needs of our braille users, and how our collection and services were meeting those needs. Our goal was to better understand the braille landscape in Canada and our place within it, and to use the information we gathered to inform and improve CELA's braille services in the future.

The study included gathering information from organizations whose mandates included braille literacy, braille education and training, and library

services related to print disabilities and by surveying current CELA braille users, those who support people who may use CELA braille including teachers or parents of blind children, and those who read braille but choose not to use CELA braille. Over 140 braille readers or those who support braille readers responded.

The study revealed that choice matters. Like all readers, people with print disabilities must be able to choose the ways they read. The choice of format for blind or low vision readers can be influenced by the purpose of the content, the skills of the reader, and the type and availability of technology.

- The study revealed that uncontracted materials are important for those learning braille and for developing literacy skills.
- Embossed braille is an essential format used not only for reading for pleasure but also for information or instruction, or for readers with limited access to digital resources or technology. It is also essential for deafblind readers and those without reliable access to the internet or digital technology. More than half the survey respondents would choose embossed braille if limited to one format.
- The study revealed that some readers choose to read braille on a refreshable braille display, however the cost of this technology is a barrier to many.
- The study revealed that respondents prioritized high-quality braille books with few typos and good formatting suggesting that human-transcribed braille is still the gold-standard despite advances being made in computer-transcribed braille.

User input must be included in all areas of decision making about braille services. People with print disabilities have unique and important insights into the barriers they face in accessing quality reading. They also expect and deserve quality and accessibility similar to what non print disabled readers can expect.

Expanded Delivery Options Project

CELA continues work on our Expanded Delivery Options Project. The project is focused on offering new options for audiobook delivery to supplement the digital options already available. CELA was pleased to launch the Envoy Connect service in May 2023. The Envoy Connect is a low cost, portable and easy-to-use audiobook player. Users have the option of either loading the players themselves through the CELA Connect software or they can mail the devices back through Canada Post and have the players loaded with books sent back to them. Libraries can also purchase and circulate the Envoy

Connect with books to their patrons with print disabilities. In FY23-24, we saw 350 new users begin to use the Envoy Connect. Users downloaded books to these devices themselves 6,988 times using the CELA Connect software and CELA loaded players for users 309 times and sent them back via Canada Post.

In addition, CELA is in the final phases of testing in preparation for offering access to audiobooks via the Alexa smart speaker, with the hope of launching this service for general release in FY24-25. We are now collaborating with Association Valentin Haüy (AVH) in France on a common application, and though this had delayed our launch until later in FY24-25, the collaboration will make the service offering better overall.

Conclusion

Overall, I have been amazed at the work that our team continues to do to further equitable access to reading in Canada. Their expertise and dedication are remarkable, and I am honoured to work with such a talented group of people.

Appendix 4 – Financial Statements

See accompanying pdf