

# Library Services for Print Disabled Patrons

Did you know that print disabilities affect approximately 10% of the Canadian population?

Per the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA), a print disability is “a learning, physical or visual disability that prevents a person from reading conventional print.

More specifically, a print disability can be a:

- Learning disability: An impairment relating to comprehension
- Physical disability: The inability to hold or manipulate a book
- Visual disability: Severe or total impairment of sight or the inability to focus or move one’s eyes.

It is important to ensure that all community members have equitable access to library services, even those who are unable to use print media. The Public Library Services Branch (PLSB) of Alberta Municipal Affairs coordinates and funds Alberta public library access to two organizations that respond to the needs of people with print disabilities. These services are the **National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS)** and the **Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA)**, which offer unique but complementary services.

## National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS)

NNELS is a co-operative network building an online digital repository of alternative format titles. Owned and sustained by Canadian public libraries, they work with international partners, libraries, readers, and publishers (particularly Canadian ones) to make copies of books in accessible formats available to readers in Canada who have print disabilities. The NNELS collection includes both fiction and non-fiction titles, in a variety of genres and for all age groups.

NNELS offers its users a record-on-demand service, where the organisation records material requested by users. This means that if a patron requests a book that is unavailable in an accessible format, NNELS staff and volunteers will try their best to obtain a copy.

### Accessing the NNELS Collection

The NNELS collection can be viewed via a web browser. Patrons have access to materials in a variety of formats, including DAISY, PDF, and e-text.

Patron self-registration for NNELS is not available at this time. Library staff are responsible for assisting new users register for the service. To learn how to do so, staff should sign up for NNELS training by visiting: <https://nnels.ca/library/training/register/>

To learn more, visit <https://nnels.ca/> or email [support@nnels.ca](mailto:support@nnels.ca).

## Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA)

*Previously known as the CNIB Library.*

In partnership with public libraries, CELA provides access to materials for up to 90% of Canadians with print disabilities. It is a national not-for-profit that is publicly funded through provincial and territorial governments as well as direct subscriptions from public libraries. CELA has the largest catalogue of materials available for patron borrowing, with 500,000 items in their collection. Items in the CELA collection include newspapers, magazines, and books in accessible formats, including audio, e-text, and braille. The CELA collection includes both fiction and non-fiction titles, in a variety of genres and for all age groups.

### **Accessing the CELA Collection**

Patrons who wish to access the CELA collection must have a valid public library card and PIN. Patrons are able to self-register themselves (if they are able to use a computer) or visit their library for assistance.

To self-register, they may visit: <https://signup.celalibrary.ca/> and fill out the required form.

If you are assisting them in the library, visit: <https://registration.celalibrary.ca/> and follow the instructions. You will need to know your library's CELA ILL account number and PIN. If you do not know these, you may find them out by contacting CELA directly, either by emailing [members@celalibrary.ca](mailto:members@celalibrary.ca) or by phoning 1-855-655-2273.

Learn more by visiting <https://celalibrary.ca/> or emailing [help@celalibrary.ca](mailto:help@celalibrary.ca).

## Policies & Guidelines for Services to Print Disabled Patrons

The provincial government's Library Service for People with Print Disabilities Operational Policy establishes principles and guidelines for the effective selection of resources to help support Alberta public libraries serve patrons with print disabilities. [The policy can be viewed here.](#)

As per the Libraries Regulation, public library boards in Alberta are required to create and implement local policy on Provision of Resources for Those Unable to use Conventional Print. For a sample, see Appendix C in this manual.

**[Name of Municipality] Library Board**

SAMPLE

**Provision of Service to Those Unable to Use Conventional Print Policy**

1. A patron unable to use conventional print may also be known as a print-disabled patron. Print-disabled patrons include any patron who has a perceptual disability, defined in the *Copyright Act* as “a disability that prevents or inhibits a person from reading or hearing a literary, musical, dramatic or artistic work in its original format, and includes such a disability resulting from:
  - (a) severe or total impairment of sight or hearing or the inability to focus or move one’s eyes,
  - (b) the inability to hold or manipulate a book, or
  - (c) an impairment relating to comprehension.”
2. The [name] Library Board believes patrons unable to use conventional print materials should still have full access to library services and programs. It is therefore essential that library services for print-disabled patrons be incorporated into all aspects of library service.
3. Services to print-disabled patrons shall be incorporated into library planning, including the Plan of Service. Every patron who is print-disabled has unique needs, and a broad range of print disabilities may be found in all communities. The Library Board shall plan its services to meet the needs of a broad range of print disabilities.
4. Services to print-disabled patrons shall be treated as essential core services during the budgeting process, and adequate funds shall be allotted to these services.
5. The [name] Library Board shall work with or use the resources of other local, regional, provincial, and national organizations to provide services to print-disabled patrons. Such organizations may include:
  - The regional library system
  - Public Library Services Branch
  - Local community services organizations (e.g. Alberta Health Services, schools, social services)
  - Regional or national organizations (e.g. CELA, CNIB, NNELS)
  - Other organizations as required
6. All staff members shall be trained on how to provide services to print-disabled patrons. While one or two staff members may take the lead in providing services to print-disabled patrons, they should not be the only ones who know how to provide these services.
7. The [name] Library Board shall endeavour to provide materials in a form appropriate to the patron, from whatever source is available. Forms may include:
  - Adaptive computer software
  - Talking books (e.g. Books on CD, DAISY books)
  - Titles at a variety of reading levels for a variety of audiences (e.g. high/low titles)
  - Large print titles
  - Other adaptive technology

8. Library staff shall incorporate the needs of print-disabled patrons when planning library programs. Staff shall take whatever steps are reasonably possible to ensure print-disabled patrons are able to participate in all library programs, and shall regularly evaluate its programs to ensure they are being delivered effectively to those with print disabilities.
9. The Library Board shall ensure that the library building is accessible to people with print-disabilities. It shall do this by consulting with print-disabled members of its community, as well as building codes and design standards (e.g. Barrier-free design). The Library Board shall budget for appropriate building renovations and upgrades when necessary, but may also consider smaller changes such as accessible desks and clear, glare-free, easy-to-read signage or tactile signage.
10. The Library Board shall promote library services to persons with print disabilities through local media and partner organizations. Services can be promoted in standard and alternative formats, depending on the needs of the audience.