OLA Super Conference Presentation 2023

January 25, 2024

# Slide 1: Title Slide

Is Your Public Library Accessible? Raising the Voices of Those with Disabilities

OLA Super Conference; January 25, 2024; 10:45 – 12:00 pm

# Slide 2: Land Acknowledgement

Our presenters today come from across this land, living and working in what we now know as Canada. 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.

# Slide 3: Our Presenters

* Laurie Davidson, Executive Director, Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA)
* Daniella Levy-Pinto, Manager, National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS)
* Ka Li, Accessibility Consultant, NNELS

# Slide 4: Outline

* Overview of the Public Library Accessibility Resource Centre (PLARC) Project.
* User Perspective and Demonstrations.
* Participant Narratives.
* Findings of the "Is Your Public Library Accessible" Study.
* Group Discussion and Questions.

# Slide 5: Public Library Accessibility Resource Centre (PLARC) Project

* This collaborative project is funded by the Government of Canada, co-led by NNELS and CELA in partnership with eBOUND.
* The goal of the project is to create a consolidated resource centre focused on the education and training of library staff across the country on the importance of accessibility.

# Slide 6: Background in Canada

* Department of Canadian Heritage Accessible Books Funding: 22.8 Million over 5 years (2019-24).
  + Administered through the Canada Book Fund.
  + Support the production and distribution of accessible digital books by Canadian independent publishers.
  + Supporting the born-accessible paradigm.
  + This funding is what is supporting PLARC, and to encourage born-accessible paradigm within public libraries and to build accessibility into all aspects of service.

# Slide 7: Accessibility in Mainstream Public Library Services

* No one-size fits all solution (rural/urban, large/small etc.).
* Historically, accessibility has been done as part of a separate service or organization (homebound services, CELA and NNELS).
* Challenge is to envision new ways to provide inclusive, mainstream service for people with disabilities that has accessibility built into it.

# Slide 8: Statistics on Disabilities

* 27% of Canadians aged 15 years and older, or 8.0 million people, have one or more disabilities -2017 - 2022Canadian Survey on Disability.
* 5.2 million Canadians have difficulty reading print material - Print Material Accessibility in Canada, 2023.

# Slide 9: Diverse Disabilities

* Print Disabilities.
* Cognitive/Learning/Speech.
* Physical/Mobility.
* Blindness/Low Vision.
* Intellectual.
* Hearing.
* Mental Health.
* Invisible.

# Slide 10: PLARC project: History

* Formation of a Library Advisory Group in 2021.
* Survey of library staff in Canada in 2021.
  + Over 500 responses.
  + 95% say they need training on how to help people with disabilities.
* Formation of AccessibleLibraries.ca / BibliosAccessibles.ca

# Slide 11: PLARC project: Current Work

* Continued curation and creation of resources for [AccessibleLibraries.ca](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/) / [BibliosAccessibles.ca](https://bibliosaccessibles.ca/).
  + There are now over 92 curated resources from organizations and websites.
  + There are now 44 resources created by the project.
* [Is Your Public Library Accessible study](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/accessible-libraries-studies/).

# Slide 12: User Perspective & Demonstrations

* Ka Li – Accessibility Tester with NNELS.

# Slide 13: Demo: Browsing the VIRL Website

Video demonstration.

# Slide 14: Demo: VIRL Social Media Post

Video demonstration.

# Slide 15: Demo: Newspaper Page

Video demonstration.

# Slide 16: Introducing the Is Your Public Library Accessible? Study

* Daniella Levy-Pinto– Manager, NNELS

# Slide 17: About the Is Your Public Library Accessible? Study

* Collect, learn about, and value the public library experiences of people with all types of disabilities across Canada in order to help libraries create an accessible, inclusive, and welcoming space for all.
* Participants were asked to use their local public library and report back on their experiences.
* Surveys and focus groups were conducted between April 2022 – January 2023.

# Slide 18: Guiding Questions

* Based on patron experience with their library services, how accessible are Canadian public libraries?
* Do people with disabilities think that their libraries are accessible?
* What accessibility improvements still need to be made in public libraries?

# Slide 19: Personal Narratives

* The following personal narratives are composites of the experiences collected during the Is Your Public Library Accessible study.
* Everything in these narratives accurately reflect findings from the study.
* Names, pronouns, and locations have been removed to protect the identities of the study participants.

# Slide 20: Personal Narrative 1: Charlie

* “Accessible” parking spaces.
* Universal height checkouts.
* Accessibility plans and accommodations.
* Staff knowledge and training.
* Access to content.
* Physical library space and organization of that space.

# Slide 21: Personal Narrative 2: Amari

* Representation.
* Staff knowledge and training.
* Website accessibility.
* Metadata.
* Accessible reading content and platforms.

# Slide 22: The Patron Experience

Findings were categorized into 6 key areas of accessibility barriers in the library:

1. Staff Knowledge & Training.
2. Physical & Digital Content.
3. Website & Catalogue.
4. Buildings & Spaces.
5. Programming.
6. Marketing & Communications.

# Slide 23: Participant responses and review of findings

The following slides will share direct quotes from the study participants as well as an overview of the study findings as they pertain to 6 areas of library services.

# Slide 24: Library Staff Knowledge & Training: Quotes

* “…sometimes, I feel uncomfortable accessing activities because I feel people are not ready to accept people with disabilities”.
* “When I approached a librarian about borrowing a Daisy Player, she pointed and told me to speak with the other librarian at the other desk, as she handled those requests.  Ideally, library staff should all have knowledge of these materials to assist anyone. I was disappointed that no staff approached me to assist me in locating audiobook titles”.

# Slide 25: Library Staff Knowledge & Training: Findings

* Study participants identified that the library staff’s availability, training, knowledge of potential accessibility barriers, and willingness to help significantly impact their ability and ease in accessing programs and services.
* This is notable when barriers to accessibility exist for a program, service or resource and staff lack training/understanding of the issues people with disabilities face.

# Slide 26: Library Staff Knowledge & Training: Resources

* [Accessibility 101 webinar](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/resources/accessibility-101-for-canadian-public-library-staff-webinar-recording/)
* [Checklist: Accessibility 101](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/resources/checklist-accessibility-101/)
* [Guidelines on Library and Information Services for People with Disabilities](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/resources/cfla-guidelines-on-library-and-information-services-for-people-with-disabilities/)
* [Panel on Accessibility Etiquette in the Library](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/resources/accessibility-etiquette-panel/)

# Slide 27: Physical & Digital Content: Quotes

* “In a perfect world, all books would be in all formats as soon as they are released and available at my fingertips when I go into a library to read them. I believe that more people who are blind, deafblind or partially sighted would enjoy libraries more”.

# Slide 29: Physical & Digital Content: Findings

* Making accessible content available and easy to find should be a priority for libraries.
* Participants noted that accessibility should include books (physical and digital), e-resources, and other library items like DVDs, board games, music, etc.

# Slide 29: Physical & Digital Content: Resources

* [Checklist: Evaluating the Accessibility of E-Resources](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/resources/checklist-evaluating-the-accessibility-of-e-resources/)
* [Accessibility Considerations for E-Resources Procurement in Libraries](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/resources/procurement-in-libraries/)
* [Authors with Disabilities: Read Harder 2022](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/resources/authors-with-disabilities-read-harder-2022/)
* [Best Dyslexia-Friendly Books for Kids](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/?s=best%20dyslexia-friendly&post_types=,resources)

# Slide 30: Library Website & Catalogue - Quotes

* “[The website is] too busy because of my vision loss. I have a hard time reading white font on a pale blue background, for example, or light blue font on a yellow background or, you know, those contrasts”.
* “My library experience has been accessible, since the online content is easy to find and compatible with my phone technology”.

# Slide 31: Library Website & Catalogue: Findings

* Libraries should ensure that their website and catalogue are accessible to all users.
* Testing for accessibility and usability of the website and catalogue by persons with lived experience and following the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

# Slide 32: Library Website & Catalogue: Resources

* [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Quick Reference](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/resources/web-content-accessibility-guidelines-wcag-quick-reference/)
* [Creating and editing accessibility metadata MARC tags for library staff.](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/resources/accessibility-metadata-for-library-staff/)
* [Website Accessibility Checklist](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/resources/website-accessibility-checklist/)
* [Accessibility Overlays and Accessibility](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/resources/accessibility-overlays-and-accessibility/)

# Slide 33: Library Buildings & Spaces: Quotes

* “The circulation areas are not clear and logical. There are some obstacles at the end of the aisles that are problematic. Finally, the computer stations are not entirely suitable for the visually impaired”.
* “Personally, I would like to see more labeling in Braille on shelves to enable a blind person to find a particular audio book or DVD”.
* “I wish that each library had "way Finding" technology to assist blind, deafblind and partially sighted patrons to travel independently”.

# Slide 34: Library Buildings & Spaces: Findings

* Library physical spaces often meet the minimum legal definition of accessible, but whether they are useable for people with a range of disabilities can vary from library to library.

# Slide 35: Library Buildings & Spaces: Resources

* [Accessible Spaces 101](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/resources/powered-accessible-spaces-101/)
* [Library Accessibility Features](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/resources/library-accessibility-features/)
* [Quick Reference: Accessibility 101 For Public Libraries](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/resources/quick-reference-accessibility-101-for-public-libraries/)

# Slide 36: Library Programming: Quotes

* “I'd love to see more programming for people with disabilities... We have maybe one program, I think maybe. But they run programs like the Lego program, and I know a lot of our population would love to do a program like that”.
* Cultural activity - sewing workshop on site: “This workshop was not really adapted to the visually impaired. Maybe it was predictable with the theme and I should have chosen a simpler program, but I was curious.... I estimate the accessibility at about 40%”.

# Slide 37: Library Programming: Findings

* Participants identified significant accessibility barriers in the programs they evaluated.
* Improving staff knowledge about accessibility needs is critical so that programs are developed with accessibility considerations from conception through to completion.
* Asking participants about accessibility needs at the time of registration by default can help prevent some barriers.

# Slide 38: Library Programming: Resources

* [Accessible library programming for kids and teens](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/resources/accessible-library-programming-for-kids-and-teens/)
* [Virtual Story Time Services Guide](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/resources/virtual-story-time-services-guide/)
* [Making Events Accessible](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/resources/making-events-accessible/)

# Slide 39: Library Marketing & Communications: Quotes

* “I've been thinking. I imagine there may be more accessibility features at my library - they are just not promoted. Perhaps it's a matter of "if you build it they will come, just let them know about it!" (smile)”.
* “Even though I took a monthly newsletter home, the font is too small to read”.
* “It would be great if the library could send a newsletter featuring new services offered, including those related to accessibility”.

# Slide 40: Library Marketing & Communications: Findings

* Participants identified the discovery of accurate, current, and accessible information about various accessible services, resources and programs as an ongoing challenge.
* Ensuring marketing and communications activities are created with accessibility in mind removes a significant barrier and addresses the impression that libraries are not welcoming to people with disabilities.

# Slide 41: Library Marketing & Communications: Resources

* [Checklist: Creating Accessible Social Media Posts](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/resources/checklist-creating-accessible-social-media/)
* [Panel Discussion: Creating Accessible Social Media and Marketing](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/resources/panel-discussion-creating-accessible-social-media-and-marketing/)

# Slide 42: Breakout Groups by Areas

1. Library Staff Knowledge & Training
2. Physical & Digital Content
3. Library Website & Catalogue
4. Library Buildings & Spaces
5. Library Programming
6. Library Marketing & Communications

# Slide 43: Breakout

* Find a table of area of interest.
  + Try to divide yourself equally.
  + Even if it’s not your area of expertise, your insights will bring great value.
* Designate a spokesperson for your table who will share your group’s findings to the larger group at the end.
* There will be a person from CELA or NNELS, who will be at your table to listen and be available to answer questions.
* There are links to shared Google Docs for the breakout groups, and all presentation materials on our website:
  + <https://accessiblelibraries.ca/library-conference/>

# Slide 44: Questions

* Questions? Email us at [info@AccessibleLibraries.ca](mailto:info@AccessibleLibraries.ca).
* Follow us on social media:
  + Twitter: @BibliosAccess.
  + Facebook: AccessibleLibraries.ca / BibliosAccessibles.ca.
  + LinkedIn: Accessible Libraries; Biblios Accessibles.
* Sign up for our mailing list: <https://accessiblelibraries.ca/accessible-libraries-mailing-list/>

# Slide 45: Questions for Discussion

* What are your experiences around accessibility in your own library (both good and bad) in the context of the key area of your table?
* What are the things your library has done to reduce accessibility barriers in this area?
* What are the things you can do to make your library more accessible; both those things that are easy and doable and those that take more resources?
* What knowledge, connections, resources, and information do you need to solve some of these accessibility barriers?
  + 15 minutes for discussion;
  + 1-2 minutes for each group to share findings.

# Slide 46: Thank you!