Committing to Accessibility in the Licensing of Digital Resources

BCLA Conference, April 24, 2024

1:45 am – 2:30 pm

# Land Acknowledgement

We are presenting today on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xʷməθkʷəy'əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil- Waututh) Peoples. 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.

# Our Presenters

* Laurie Davidson, Executive Director, Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA)
* Laetitia Mfamobani, Accessibility Consultant, National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS)
* Tami Setala, Licensing & Business Development Manager, BC Libraries Cooperative

# Outline

* Overview of the [Public Library Accessibility Resource Centre (PLARC) Project](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/).
* User Perspective and Demonstrations.
* Licensing Approaches to Accessibility.
* Questions.

# 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.

# 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.
  + 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.

# 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.

# Statistics on Disabilities

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

# Diverse Disabilities

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

# PLARC Project: 2021

* 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](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/) / [BibliosAccessibles.ca](https://bibliosaccessibles.ca/).

# PLARC Project: To Date

* Presentations at library conferences.
* [Is Your Public Library Accessible study](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/is-your-public-library-accessible-study-report/) (2022-2023).
  + Collect, learn about, and value the public library experiences of people with all types of disabilities across Canada.
  + Participants were asked to use their local public library and report back on their experiences through surveys and focus groups.

# PLARC Project: Resources

* Curation and creation of resources for [AccessibleLibraries.ca](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/) / [BibliosAccessibles.ca](https://bibliosaccessibles.ca/)
* 213 total resources (170 English, 43 French).
  + 155 curated resources from organizations and websites.
  + 58 resources created by the project.
  + 12 learning paths for getting started.

# Newest Resource

* The creation of the Considering Accessibility when Procuring Licensed Digital Resources guide was identified as a need for library staff and libraries.
  + Includes practical recommended considerations.

# 5 Key Takeaways

* All libraries have a part to play in the process: whether a library procures individually, through a regional system or through a consortium.
* Advocate for accessibility with vendor, advocate internally, advocate with your consortium.
* Be specific about accessibility requirements in RFI/RFPs, informal requests and licenses.

# 5 Key Takeaways (con’t)

* Accessibility includes both content and platform.
* Hire and consult with people with lived experience with a disability.

# User Perspective & Demonstrations

* Laetitia Mfamobani, NNELS Accessibility Consultant

# Common Barriers 1

Accessibility barriers found in Licensed Digital Resources are grouped in two main areas:

* Area 1:
  + The full search and discovery experience is not always available to all devices or software.

# Demo 1: Inaccessible Libby Platform

Video Demonstration

# Common Barriers 2

* Area 2:
  + The content itself is not always fully accessible.

# Demo 2: Inaccessible Content Proquest

Video Demonstration

# Combined Barriers

* Sometimes both the content and the platform have accessibility barriers.

# Demo 3: Hoopla Audiobook Player

Video Demonstration

# Determining Accessibility of Vendor Products

* Visit [AccessiblePublishing.ca](https://www.accessiblepublishing.ca/) to access a number of library apps and websites that have been assessed for accessibility by skillful and experienced accessibility consultants with lived experience.
* Ask the vendor to do their own accessibility audit/testing of the digital resource and provide a report and explanation of their process
* Ask the vendor for testing access to the digital resource so the library can do their own accessibility testing.

# Testing Approach 1/3

Accessibility Testers use a holistic approach to ensuring full accessibility and usability of the digital resources:

* All controls are accessible.
* The content is readable using assistive technologies.

# Testing Approach 2/3

* Visual customization options are available.
* There are non-colour alternatives for information conveyed only through colour.
* Images have descriptive text
* There are multiple options for accessing multimedia

# Testing Approach 3/3

* The resource does not prescribe how users use it.
* The digital resource (reading platform, website, or app) has navigational skip links.
* Users can determine where they are in the digital content or interface.

# Licensing Approaches to Accessibility

* Tami Setala, Licensing & Business Development Manager, BC Libraries Cooperative

# Licensing Approaches to Accessibility: Outline

* Overview of the processes for engaging with vendors.
* Formal vs informal processes.
* Accessibility Impact Assessments.
* Model License Agreements.
* Advocacy.

# Processes For Engaging with Vendors

* Formal vs informal.
  + Requests for Proposal (RFP).
  + Informal processes.
    - What has the vendor already done?
    - What more do we need from them?

# Request for Proposal (RFP)

* Used for identifying options for a specific project.
* Includes specific criteria that a product must meet.
* Outlines a bidding process.

# Informal Processes

* Accessibility Conformance Reports (ACR):
  + Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT).
  + An assessment of how well their product conforms to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

# Informal Processes (con’t)

* Accessibility Impact Assessments
  + Compliance with legislation:
    - Accessible British Columbia Act
    - Accessibility standards for procurement
  + Hire or contract accessibility testers with lived experience to evaluate the resource.
* Accessibility Considerations for E-Resources Procurement in Libraries: [AccessibleLibraries.ca/Resources/Procurement-in-libraries/](https://accessiblelibraries.ca/resources/considering-accessibility-procuring-licensed-digital-resources/)

# Model License Agreements

**BC Libraries Cooperative Model License**

**2.2 Usage Rights**

**b.**   …the Licensee may permit the Authorized Users (and permit the Participants to permit the Authorized Users), to:

f. Alter or modify the Licensed Materials as necessary to provide an equivalent level of access to Authorized Users with disabilities if the Licensed Materials are not already provided in Accessible Formats.

e. The licensor shall comply with applicable Canadian laws relating to accessibility to ensure the Licensed Materials are accessible and may be used by all Authorized Users including those with visual, perceptual, physical, or other print disabilities and is compatible with assistive devices.

# Advocacy

* Once licenses are signed.
* Quarterly meetings with vendors.
  + Standing agenda item to address outstanding accessibility issues.
  + Following up on development promises.
* When apps are updated.
  + Repeat accessibility testing as needed.

# Questions

* PLARC:
  + Email: info@AccessibleLibraries.ca
  + Mailing List sign up: <https://accessiblelibraries.ca/accessible-libraries-mailing-list/>.
* BC Libraries Cooperative:
  + Questions? Email Tami at tami.setala@bc.libraries.ca

# Thank you!