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CELA, equitable library access, print disabilities, digital formats, audio books, braille, technology literacy, funding challenges, outreach project, smart speaker project, transition from CDs, accessibility standards, reading systems, user support, public libraries.


SPEAKERS


Ioana Gandrabur, Speaker 1, Rob Mineault, Ryan Fleury, Karen Mckay, Steve Barclay


 **Rob Mineault** 00:14
Hey and welcome to another episode of AT Banter.

 **Steve Barclay** 00:20
Banter, banter,

 **Rob Mineault** 00:23
Hey, this is, of course, the podcast where we talked about advocates and members of the disability community. Hey, my name is Rob Mineault and joining me today. Hey, it's my good buddy, Mr. Ryan Fleury.

 **Ryan Fleury** 00:40
Hey, hey, hey, hey, I'm Ryan Fleury, Hey,

 **Rob Mineault** 00:45
Okay, that's enough. Shut up. And hey, look who it is - Mr. Steve Barclay.

 **Steve Barclay** 00:53
I am here. Hey, hey.

R Rob Mineault 00:57
I'm feeling mocked. We're mocking with love. How are you guys?

S Steve Barclay 01:09
Fabulous.

R Rob Mineault 01:11
Yeah. Are you a little bleary eyed after the night following the big election?

S Steve Barclay 01:17
I was sensible. I went to bed at 11 and waited till the morning to find out that nothing had really changed. Is it all decided now?

R Rob Mineault 01:31
Close enough. Yeah, yeah. Which leads me to believe that, like, I don't know, like, clearly we're doing something right, because I don't know those, those US elections, you watch that, and it takes them, like, three days to sort things out. We're just very simple. It's just, we count them up, doesn't doesn't take long, and we aren't we do it like we do with paper ballots and stuff like, it seems like we're lower tech and faster,

R Ryan Fleury 01:53
Yep.

R Rob Mineault 01:53
So, yeah, it's kind of interesting, but it's great. You know the results by 10 o'clock, it was pretty much a, a done deal, right?

R Ryan Fleury 02:04
I think by eight o'clock it already called a minority government for the liberals.

S Steve Barclay 02:08
So, yeah, I've already seen the start of it, though, the right wingers coming out saying the

election was stolen, of course.

R

Rob Mineault 02:15

Yeah. Well, you know all those people that make all the F Carney stickers and bumper stickers and stuff, they're like, oh, thank goodness. Very good news for for those guys. But yeah, yeah, I don't know it's pretty much, yeah, honestly, it was closer than I thought. That was probably my my big takeaway from it, I thought it would be a bit more of a blowout than it was. So I don't know if that's going to be concerned going forward, but whatever.

R

Ryan Fleury 02:51

I think it was really interesting how well the Liberals did in stealing some seats in Quebec.

S

Steve Barclay 02:51

Yeah, both the Block lost seats there, which was surprising, because before the election, you know, I was talking to some people from out at Humanware in Montreal, and they were, they were saying that, Oh yeah, people are so, you know, mad at the Liberals and and this is going to be a great year for the Block. And, you know, month later, bam, no, no, it wasn't good at all.

R

Ryan Fleury 03:29

Yeah. It's going to be interesting moving forward to see if anything actually gets accomplished.

R

Rob Mineault 03:36

As long as we don't backslide, that'll be, you know, that's, that's the important part. As long as if we're creeping forward, I'm happy. Just don't want to, you know, go backwards.

R

Ryan Fleury 03:45

No, the big thing is, if parties can kind of find things that they can work together on instead of just nagging at each other, no, I'm not going to vote for that. No, I'm not voting for that. No, I'm not voting for that. No, I'm not voting for that, right? They're gonna have to find some common ground in order to get anything done.

S

Steve Barclay 04:01

Not necessarily. I mean, you could see two of the parties cooperate again, like the Liberals and the NDP did last time, and just, you know, come up with some sort of agreement between themselves to support one another.

R Ryan Fleury 04:14
What election did you watch?

S Steve Barclay 04:18
Between the two of them they do have a majority. Yes, yeah, yes, but two very polar opposite people, the NDP and the Liberals. NDP

R Ryan Fleury 04:29
What NDP? They don't have party status anymore.

S Steve Barclay 04:32
They still have seven seats.


R Ryan Fleury 04:34
Wow, that doesn't really mean much in legislature. As far as I'm concerned. It's gonna be interesting to see what the votes show.


S Steve Barclay 04:49
Yeah, it's, uh, you need 172 for majority liberal to have 169 NDP have 7. That's enough to push them over the edge.


R Ryan Fleury 04:56
I will have to wait and see where things go.

S Steve Barclay 05:03
Yep, they'll be talking. They'll be talking a lot.

R Rob Mineault 05:05
I'm just taking notes here, just being like, if I mention polictics, Ryan and Steve will blab for 5 minutes.


 **Ryan Fleury** 05:15
I know nothing about politics.


 **Rob Mineault** 05:17
Well, clearly you do. You're enough to have a conversation with Steve. You know more but more about it than I do. Okay, anyways. Enough of that. We should really get on to the show.


 **Ryan Fleury** 05:33
Are the guests still here?


 **Steve Barclay** 05:36
Their eyes might have glazed over, but they're here.

 **Rob Mineault** 05:40
That's right. Not only are we here for a good time, we're here for a long time too. So without further ado, Hey, Ryan?


 **Ryan Fleury** 05:49
Yes. Rob?

 **Rob Mineault** 05:51
What the heck are we doing today?


 **Ryan Fleury** 05:53
Today we are welcoming back to the show. Karen McKay from CELA, the Center for Equitable Library Access. Karen, welcome back to AT Banter.

 **Karen McKay** 06:03
Thanks so much. I was really looking forward to hanging out with you guys.

 **Ryan Fleury** 06:06

 Ryan Fleury 06:06

Yeah, we're glad you could come back. I also understand you've brought a friend along with you. Can you introduce her to us?

 Karen McKay 06:13

Sure, absolutely. So Ioana is one of our peer trainers, and she is incredibly adept with technology really well informed. So she helps our users and sometimes our libraries navigate some of their technical questions. And she is based out of Montreal, and she is blind. She has a beautiful guide dog, and she's also a classical guitarist. So she brings lots of interesting bits to our team.

 Ryan Fleury 06:42

So does that mean we're going to start seeing more music selections at CELA?

 Ioana Gandrabur 06:47

If I have my way we will....

 Ryan Fleury 06:51

Well, we want to welcome to the show.

 Karen McKay 06:53

Sure. Absolutely. So CELA stands for the Center for Equitable Library Access, so we provide reading materials to people with print disabilities, and that includes not only people who have low vision or who are blind, but also folks who have learning disabilities like dyslexia and people who have physical disabilities that make manipulating traditional print books difficult. So that might be something like Parkinson's, for example, or Cerebral Palsy. We have roughly one and a half million books in our collection, and they run the gamut of all genres. We've got English and French, we've got best sellers, we've got, you know, biographies, we've got plays, we've got just about everything. We have magazines, and we also have newspapers. And so we provide these materials free of charge to people through their public libraries primarily. There's a couple of interesting exceptions to that, mostly in Manitoba, but yeah, if you have a public library card, you can access all these materials for free. And we've been this are, well, we're just past our 10th year anniversary, so we've been around for 10 years, and as we continue to grow, we get to offer new and really innovative services and do our best to support people, because we really think that people with print disability should be able to read books in the same way that their neighbors can. There should be as few barriers as possible to make sure that everybody has access to books and information.

 Rob Mineault 06:53

 Rob Mineault 08:33

Glad to have you here. Well, we're excited to have you back before we get too far into it. For the audience members that are unfamiliar with CELA, could you just give a bit of an overview of the organization and sort of the community that that you guys serve? And could you elaborate a little bit on the different types of formats, specifically that you guys provide?

 Karen McKay 08:50

Sure, so we have physical formats, so those would be things like embossed braille or print braille, which is picture books for those who are both sighted and who have vision loss, so they can read together, so they're essentially their picture books with a Braille overlay on on each page. And then we also have digital assets, so we have everything from audio and E-text. We have, you know, day books that play out DAISY players. We have lots of different ways to read our books. So, you know, anything that folks need, really, they're able to get from us, including digital braille as well.

 Rob Mineault 09:35

In terms of growing the collection, because I know that we've talked to you in the past, and the number of titles in the collection have just, has just been steadily growing and growing over the years. What can you talk a little bit about the process of gaining titles into the collection, and how much of your resources sort of go into to get those books into the collection?

 Karen McKay 10:01

Oh, that's an excellent question. So when I started with CELA, which is approaching 10 years, we had about 200,000 titles. And so now we're at close to one and a half million. So we get our books in a number of ways. So some of them are original productions, which the folks who've been around with CELA for the past 10 years know that those are some of our favorites. So those are books narrated and transcribed into Braille formats or audio formats. We also have agreements with a number of publishers, and we receive their collections into our collection as part of those agreements. So we have an agreement with audible.ca and we also have an agreement with Penguin Random House Canada. So that's a really wonderful way for us to be able to get books. We buy books as well and have them format it for folks who have print disabilities. And then the last sort of major way we get them is through exchanges. So some of those are international exchanges. Some of those come some of those books come from the National Library Service in the States, and we have a partnership with Bookshare, which is an organization out of the states, and they are primarily for education. So they have a really unique collection. They actually have, you know, their their collection that we include in our collection is in the neighborhood of the million books, so lots and lots of titles from them, and those are available to CELA users as long as they go through the process of getting a like a Bookshare count. So yeah, lots and lots of choice for folks. And what's been really great over the last sort of 10 years is we've seen a real shift in what we're able to bring into the collections quickly. So for things like awards or Canada Reads, we can get those books in so that they're ready for folks to read on the day that the short lists are announced, for example, so that people are able to participate in the conversations with their, you know, their book clubs or their neighborhood library book clubs, in the same way that their their neighbors can. There's not the delay that there used to be, you know, 10 or 15 years ago, where you'd have to wait

months and months to get a book that's been transcribed or has been recorded in audio, so you're always able to sort of read the current books along with your neighbors, which is, which is really great, because timeliness is one of the barriers that we want to continue to remove from from a collection, and so that people can read the books they want to read when they want to read them, basically.

R

Rob Mineault 12:54

So what's the what's the climate been in the past few years? Are more and more publishers really becoming receptive to the idea that that accessible books need to be a priority? Or are you still finding that, you know, it's still a bit slow getting publishers on board?

K

Karen Mckay 13:12

Yeah, I think that the sort of the marketplace is really shifting. For a few reasons publishers are realizing that, you know, as many as one in five readers could have a print disability. So that includes a large number of folks with dyslexia. But they're really seeing that there's a, there's a commercial market to be entertained with regards to audio books. So there has been some shifts. I'm just going to speak really generally about this, because I'm not super well educated, although I want to might be. There's publishing standards that are coming in place in the EU, in the, you know, in the next couple of years that's going to require folks to have publishers to have accessible versions of books in certain areas and categories like, you know, not small, small publications, but the broader, larger publications. So that's really pushing North American publishers to take a look at that so that they can, you know, that they can access EU markets. And you know the the change is coming around the world, whether or not it's coming from a legislative standpoint, or just because they're realizing that there is this audience. We've been working with lots of different publishers, and we actually just did a really interesting project, and I want to probably speak to this better than I can, but we did a project called the Commercial Audiobooks Project and it involved a number of stakeholders from different areas in publishing. And what we were trying to do was get a sense of what the features folks who have print disabilities. Need in a book to have it accessible and how folks without print disabilities interact with those features, to really get a sense of what's important to both those groups and what's not important, and then give publishers some ideas around best practices for implementing accessible components into their commercial audiobooks. So that project just wrapped last month, and the recommendations have been distributed out to various publishing groups through both the advisory group that we had and we're disseminating it in other ways. So that's a shift, I think, and in collaborative kinds of projects, so that people who are in the publishing and audiobook producing world, you know, have a have a better sense of not only what people with print disabilities need, but also what their colleagues in publishing are are doing. And, you know, hopefully that's moving us towards better understanding and a better standard so that these books can be made, born accessible more easily.

R

Ryan Fleury 16:08

Did you recognize any trends that came out of that program?



I

Ioana Gandrabur 16:11

Sure, if I may jump in, because it was partly involved in the actual research and designing the surveys, that it was really interesting. Well, first of all, it was why we started this, just a quick word. We thought that there was a real gap there. There were way more standards when it came to web accessibility or to EPUB, but I think there is that misconception. Well, it's audio, therefore it must be accessible. So we wanted to drill down and really kind of understand what does accessibility mean in audio books. And one of the great takeaways was that many features that were appreciated by people with print disabilities, such as having images descriptions included in the audio, were actually appreciated by people without print disability. So it's not like we would be asking publishers to make an extra effort for the smaller market, which is people with print disabilities. Actually, we saw that many of the recommendations that would improve accessibility for that group would be appreciated by people without print disabilities, so it's a win win situation. Others were, for example, the ability to skip notes or read footnotes and choose whether you want to hear them included in the text, or basically have that flexibility, but definitely have them included and and again, both people with and without print disabilities, agree on that it would be nice to have that feature. So, you know, this is hopefully will make it more enticing for publishers to add these. The other big piece is that it is very hard to talk about accessible publishing and accessibility features of audio books and of books in general, without taking into account the reading systems and there, you know, there is a real need for collaboration, and hopefully that we can inspire people to have some real accessible publishing or accessibility summits, because it's like the weakest link in the chain. You know, you can have a great book, but if the reading system, the application, doesn't understand that you've embedded, let's say, skippable notes, then the chain is broken. And that means that, and I'm fortunate actually, to be working at the same time on behalf of sila with the DAISY Consortium, and they are doing a project right now, and it's gonna wrap up in a few months, about the accessible user requirements for reading systems. So I'm kind of it's fun to be on both sides of the table, one for the publishers and the other for the, let's say, for the developers of various platforms and reading systems, but there is this need of collaboration between the two.

R

Ryan Fleury 19:09

Yeah, I would think that the whole reading systems is a bit of a wild west when you've got so many different apps that can read these file formats, and these dedicated players that can read these formats, and then we have our phones that can read these and Kindles. Are there standards when it comes to reading systems?

I

Ioana Gandrabur 19:37

Well that's what we're trying to develop. I think we're trying for now not to develop standards, but at least what are the user requirements. For example, do you want to have good synchronization between the cursor that's highlighting visually and the read aloud options? Or, I don't know, like we're trying to look at different use cases of people with print disabilities using books, and what would they need then. So we're not going to sit there and tell each developer how they should achieve this, but trying for now to focus on what would be a good experience in terms of a reading system. And then, of course, it will vary, or some things will not apply at all. Some audiobook players obviously will not have any visual elements, or, you know, some will have voice control or not, and we're trying to, you know, it's an interesting process that one

as well, where we are trying to sort them in different areas. Some that we would kind of must have them. They should have them. They could have them, or probably will not. But at least we're trying to sort through these requirements, and I think it's an ongoing process, and again, they need to work together to create those standards so that the publishers can take advantage of them and vice versa. So yeah, it's, it's a it's a complicated road, but it's an important one, and it's fun to to move along.

R

Ryan Fleury 21:01

Is CELA seeing a transition to more digital devices, or mobile devices, apps versus hardware players or people listening on on the web? What sort of trends are you seeing?

K

Karen Mckay 21:16

We have a dedicated group who like to have their their players and who have been using CDs, for example, for a long period of time. And those folks tend to be older and longer standing leaders with CELA. But you know, one of the things that COVID did was really help us jump a few hurdles with regards to technology, and so we're seeing more users come to CELA with with a variety of reading devices. You know, there's a number of folks that we know that they like to read poetry in embossed braille, for example, and they like to have cookbooks and embossed braille, but they really love, you know, their audio books, and they love to be able to play them on their phones, so that they're, you know, fully portable. So I think that the trends are are not so much general trends, but we're seeing more trends by by age group and by which type of format they'd like to read. So, you know, over the next five years will be interesting to see how that continues to evolve and change as all these new technologies come to play like, as I said when I started with CELA 10 years ago, it was really only DAISY players was and embossed braille was really your only options. And you know now we've got, we've got a number of them, and we've got projects in the works, like a Smart Speaker project, which we're hoping to launch that in a in a couple of months, and have that ready in the marketplace. So you know, there's just, there's so many options now, and if we can get folks feeling comfortable with the technology and with the options, it really gives them so much more freedom about how they read and when they read and what they read. Not too long ago, we had a project called Extended Options project, so we did some research in the you know, with with some of our users, with regards to how things might work. So out of that came the Envoy Connect, which we offer for folks, and that's an option for CDs for some people. It's also a lower cost player. It's a single use, but it's a lower cost player. So people can get into the market if they if they need to. That's where our Smart Speaker Project gained some ground, and we did some work with Humanware on one of their potential new products. So, you know, we've sort of have fingers in a few pies as much as we can. And you know, our whole foundation is around choice. So we want to make sure that we give our users as much choice as possible in not only what they read, but how they read it and and so while it is a bit of a challenge, and certain terms of mastering all these different formats and making them work with our systems, that's what we're here for. Like, we want to be able to give folks as many voices as possible.

I

Ioana Gandrabur 21:16

Yeah, and I think on my, from my point of view, it's a matter of striking a balance. You know, there is so much we can do with whatever resources we have, but also finding a balance. There

are many options out there, but given our clientele and our user base, we also want to make sure that whatever we implement works as simply as possible. Like, of course, you can have all sorts of hacking options that you can have Plex Servers and like, I don't know, like, but, but those will need to keep things accessible in a in a sort of wider way. So we need to make sure that things work as smoothly as they can work. And then, of course, there are the outliers, and people can be as creative as they want to be with. The the emerging technologies, but I think what we will tend to add is things that are slightly you know, that are well tested, that we know we can support without too many headaches for us or for the users. But also, of course, offering the choice of finding that balance between offering lots of choices, but offering realistic choices, also feasible ones. Exactly. that's really well said. Can you talk a little bit more or expand upon the smart speaker project? And the reason I ask is because this morning, Google announced that they are discontinuing support for their first and second gen Nest Thermostats. So anybody who had those and was using their smart speakers to control them who are blind or partially sighted now have to get a new thermostat because they won't be accessible anymore. So do you have certain requirements of the smart speakers? Is there a certain level or models or that you're going to support? Because we know these things come and go... Well, first of all, when we did the expanded delivery project that Karen alluded to, this is when I joined the team, we experimented with both Google Home and with Amazon Alexa to see how the skill that we developed for reading CELA content could work. And it soon became clear that Google was going to stop the main APIs and tools that would allow people to develop these kind of skills. And RNIB and CELA and others, I'm sure, wrote to them saying that this, you know, kind of limits our options. But as a result of that, we did stick only with Amazon. The advantage, of course, of offering these reading solutions on mainstream platforms is, like you said, it's an inclusion, and it gives many options, but you're also a little vulnerable to whatever the big players choose to do, but hopefully, I think that there is good discussion and with Amazon in terms of accessibility in general, right? And we can hope that their APIs will continue, but so that's why we chose Amazon rather than going with Google. And yeah. Well, we had a series of iterations of this project, and here again, we wanted to strike a balance between ease of use, offering of as many features that you can add without adding too much complexity. And also, you know, thinking of of the different types of users there, you want to keep the interfaces as straightforward as possible. Yes, you don't want to get - I mean, ideally, in a perfect world, you would have the power user interface and the simple user interface, but we had to kind of find a balance with, I think, with an interface that is user friendly, maybe not as feature rich as other high end skills that one might see, but also much more accessible. And yeah, so we're still in the final stages of of testing this and yeah, coming soon.

R

Ryan Fleury 28:27


Will the books available on the smart speakers be human narrated and DAISY synthesized audio, or what formats will be supported?

I


Ioana Gandrabur 28:36

Audio books. It will be the at least for now, right? That being said, I am trying to explore, and I think that there might be a way, I was just playing around with this. There should be, at least theoretically, a way to import the EPUB, the books in ePub format in your Kindle library and

have Alexa read them. I'm just trying, I'm actually, you shouldn't quote me on that one, because I haven't yet successfully gotten it to work. But theoretically that should work, right? I will actually probably get back to you on that one.

 Karen Mckay 29:13

Ioana is our technology nerd. So she's the one that always comes up with all these great things. She's like, Oh, I was messing around with these three things, and I created, I don't know whatever it is, so yeah, she's great.

 Ioana Gandrabur 29:24

But yeah, it's in the works that that one, yeah.

 Ryan Fleury 29:27

I would just want to quickly add ask if there are any sort of checks and balances, because we know sometimes if you ask your smart speaker a question, the answers you get back might not be what you had initially asked for. So how have you guys addressed that?

 Ioana Gandrabur 29:42

Well, one of the first things we had to do is we couldn't call this skill CELA or anything, because very quickly, especially in French, when we said CAIB, they were thinking, it's Carib. So we were all of a sudden, get results about the Caribbean, Caribbean island. So. Finding commands that are easy to understand and that work equally well in English and French, we quickly realized that sometimes, like we had to choose right the letters or numbers to give your choices, and actually, we've dropped that all together, so now we just go Previous and Next. And so there was a lot of user testing and figuring out how to avoid any misunderstanding options and possibilities, and also making sure that you can add a few things so you can say, start reading, read, play, and hopefully they all work and and also having a good, hopefully a good fall back in terms of help, if it says it doesn't understand. Do you want some help? Or, here's what you can say that hopefully will help people in the right direction with what phrases they can use.

 Ryan Fleury 30:57

So will we have to register our smart devices with CELA?

 Ioana Gandrabur 31:03

You will need to have skill. You will need a skill, and in that skill, you need to link it with your CELA account, right, so that it can have access to your bookshelf and other things.,

R

Rob Mineault 31:18

Okay, well, one more question, and then I do want to give you guys space to just kind of talk about whatever you guys got going on, or if you've got anything to promote. The only other question that I have, I'm just kind of curious to hear what some of the the gaps or barriers that are still kind of in place for you guys, whether that be funding issues or copyright issues or whatever - the day to day challenges that you guys are facing - what is preventing us to go from a million and a half books to 2 million, you know, in in six months. What are, what are, sort of the some of the hurdles that you guys find that you're, you're still up against?

K


Karen Mckay 32:01


So I would say the biggest hurdle that we have is sustainable funding, really, which isn't something that that your listeners can do much about, but it is something that dictates what we can do. We've just recently had a cut to some Federal funding, which is going to impact is impacting some of the services that we can offer. So we can talk about that a little bit later, but I would say Federal funding is one of our main ones. Copyrights not really an issue because we create our books based on an exception in the Copyright Act in Canada. So that doesn't typically stand in our way. I would say for our users, some of the bigger issues are access to technology and stable Internet access. Both of those things present real barriers. There's not a lot of great systems across the country, like equitable systems across the country, that allow for device support. So in in Ontario, we have some, but there's not great versions of that across the country. And so we have libraries doing things like lending out Envoy Connects and DAISY players for folks who can't afford to purchase their own. And you know, those are often the folks who most need our books, because they are, you know, they're often alone, and they're often elderly, and, you know, they use our books for companies. So technology and Wi Fi access, or a stable Internet access, are two kind of major barriers as well. The other barrier, I would say, is it that we face is really just letting all the folks who need to know about CELA services know about them. You know, we, we have this great collection of books that we want to be able to share, and for the most part, the blind community is pretty well aware of our services. But you know, in in communities related to physical disabilities and learning disabilities were not as widely known. And, you know, these books make a real difference for some of these folks. So that's one of the big ones as well. So, you know, I think it's probably, it would be the same answer if you talk to me in a couple years, it's funding, it's stable access to internet and technology, and it's awareness building just to let people know what's available to them.


I


Ioana Gandrabur 34:27

From my point of view, I would add just one other it will be access to like technology literacy. So even if you would have devices that people having good sources of instruction with technology, and this is partly also why we're regularly doing webinars about information sessions from sila how how to use, of course, we center our our sessions on how to use various technologies to access our content. But it is my hope also that with these we contribute to general technological know how. You know, if I'm talking about how to use CELA using a screen reader, we've received comments that people that that they have feel more at ease using a screen reader in general. So hopefully they they go hand in hand up to a point.

 Karen McKay 35:21
Excellent point.

 Rob Mineault 35:22
So what else is going on at CELA these days? What other programs do you have, sort of on the on the launch pad or or plans for the next six months or a year?

 Karen McKay 35:34
So one of the things that that we want to chat about with you folks is, is that we've had to have a fairly major change in some of our services, in part because of that funding cut that I referenced earlier, but also in part because technology is really changing. So for years, CELA has offered CDs to folks for audiobooks and audio magazines, and that service is coming to a close at the end of July. The technology is is aging in the marketplace. Not only the technology that you know that plays the CDs, but also technology that we use to to burn the CDs, is reaching the sort of end of its useful life. And then we had this funding cut, and we also had our supplier who produces the CDs for us, is ceasing their services. So these three things kind of came together at the same time, and have sort of forced our hand a little bit in terms of stopping the CD service effective the end of July. We knew this was coming and we had plans in place, but we had thought we'd had a couple more years to roll these out and to really help folks transition to other services. And so unfortunately, that's not the case. So one of our big pushes for the next six months is to help folks transition away from CDs and to other options, whether that be an Envoy Connect or to using our direct player service for using their DAISY players so that they have still have access to their books. We know it's a it's a big hurdle for some of our folks with regards to the their level of comfort with technology, but things are actually, you know, probably easier than they anticipate. And so the one is playing a really key role in helping train and provide information and support to to the people who are needing to make that shift. So we did want to bring that up because it, you know, it is a real change in the reading landscape with regards to how some folks are receiving CELA services, and we are very committed to making sure they're able to continue to read their books in ways that work for them as much as possible.

 Ioana Gandrabur 37:48
Yeah, and it's to that, in fact, we've put in place as many supports that we can. We have a dedicated link on our website about transitioning from CDs to other options, we will hold regular information sessions, both for users, but also for libraries, because they will Public Libraries also have such an important role in in enhancing accessibility for people with print disabilities. So we're trying to work on all these. We'll have, at some point, also some weekly sessions where people can drop in. I mean, they do need to register, but they can come with their questions with new technology, and, of course, launching the Alexa, so making people aware of their options and trying to support them as much as we can during this transition. And some of these, it's nice that some of the devices that people currently use now that work with CDs may be able to just be configured once. And so there is a bit of a pain point in configuring the device for access to Wi Fi and linking it to the CELA account, but then people can still use a

device that they're comfortable with if they own a Humanware Stratus or such. So we're exploring all these options and trying to give people as much support as we possibly can. That that's what our top priority is in the coming months.

R

Ryan Fleury 39:24

I haven't been in a public library in decades. Do they still have audio books on CD as well?

K

Karen Mckay 39:31

They do so some libraries will carry what's called a deposit collection, where they actually have CELA books available. But yeah, there's still a number of libraries that have a pretty robust audio book selection, just a commercial one, which, you know, can also work for some people, depending on what their print disability is. So yeah, there's, there's, there's resources out there, for sure, and that's one of the things that we're doing, is we're, you know, providing as many resources as possible to libraries so that they can be sort of. More face to face kind of support for these folks. A lot of people receive home service. A lot of our CD users receive home service from libraries. So there's somebody knocking on their door to deliver them CDs. And so, you know, some options would be to help the those people either get books on an SD card or to help them, you know, navigate getting their books with our direct employer service. So there's lots of options for folks, and you know, we're continuing to do everything we can to make sure that we support them. So, you know, that's a big focus for the next six months. But we also have a couple of other really interesting things going on. We're putting together an outreach project so that we can reach more of the people that could use the CELA collection. I think I referenced earlier just some communities, like people with print disabilities due to physical disabilities or learning disabilities. Those folks may not know much about CELA, and so we're planning some outreach programs to let these folks know about what's available to them and how to use the resources. We do have some connections, like we're well connected with Dyslexia Canada, for example, but some of these other ones, we really need to do some work to let them know what's available to them. So that's one of our big projects coming up. And as I said, the Audiobooks Project is has sort of officially wrapped, but we'll continue to support that as well. Lindsay Tyler, our senior managers heading off to Dublin in a few weeks to present the findings there at a Accessible Book Publishers event. And so, you know, we've got lots of things in the works that are exciting, but we also are really focusing our commitments to people who need some some help to transition to some new technology. We brought on a new staff person to help us with this, this outreach, so there's going to be more of that kind of work. And we're, we're hoping to clone Ioana so that we can get some more peer trainers. So, yeah, you know, we're looking to to increase our ability to support folks, not just with the CD transition, but just in general. Ioana does a really great job of helping educate not only about our own CELA resources, but also, you know, a little bit more broadly about some technology in the more broad market space. So, yeah, we've, you know, we've got lots of exciting things coming, for sure, and we'd love to come back and talk to you about it, you know, in a few months, when there's a few more things on the on the go that we can talk about.

R

Rob Mineault 42:38

Yeah please, anytime you guys want to come back, you're always welcome.

K Karen McKay 42:43

Thank you. It's been so great to have this opportunity to talk to you.

R Rob Mineault 42:46

Yeah, it's been great. If people want to find out more about CELA, where's the best place they can go to get all the information that they need?

K Karen McKay 42:55

So our website is celalibrary.ca. That's the first place I would send folks. We have some newsletters that they can sign up for there. There's lots of help resources. We have a YouTube channel, so you can go and watch some of our previous webinars, or some short bits about some of our different services are available there as well. We do have a presence on social media, so we're on Facebook and Bluesky and sort of Twitter - as Twitter sort of self implodes. We're using it less and less. It's not a pleasant place to hang out these days, really. But yeah, so you can come and find us on social media as well, and please reach out if you have questions. If you're a possible new user, you can call our contact center and and ask them any questions that you might have if, especially if you're not a tech person. So I'll just give people the phone number for that just in case. So it's 1-855-655-2273, or you can email us at help@celalibrary.ca, and that will get you to fabulous people like Ioana who are able to answer questions and talk to you about the technology and just the CELA resources that you might be interested in.

I Ioana Gandrabur 44:15

Yeah, and this is for users, but also for people that might be wanting to help users. So we really want to encourage support persons for others with it, be it friend or family, to get involved and they can learn about these services, and then, in turn, help support the the actual first line, sort of beneficiaries of sila use. So they're welcome as well.

K Karen McKay 44:40

Absolutely, we have a program called Designates, and so if folks are willing to have a friend or family member or whatever sign on to their account, then they can, you know, they can receive all our emails and information and updates and that sort of thing, so that they're able to to help people who they love, who they you know, who want to read. We're really, you know, we're all about reading. So if you have any questions, please reach out to us.

R Rob Mineault 45:06

Yeah, look forward to having you on again, although I wanna, next time, Ioana, you have to bring your guitar.

I Ioana Gandrabur 45:14
Well, I'll, I'll send you to my Spotify link.

S Speaker 1 45:19
We won't do any talking if Ioana is playing. It's so beautiful that we just would all listen and we wouldn't get nothing done.

R Rob Mineault 45:28
Not a thing.

I Ioana Gandrabur 45:29
Not a thing.

K Karen McKay 45:30
Okay, guys, you guys are always so fun to chat with. Thank you.

R Ryan Fleury 45:33
We appreciate your time as always. All right, take care.

K Karen McKay 45:37
Take care.

I Ioana Gandrabur 45:37
Bye.

R Rob Mineault 45:39
That's, you know, it's, that's, you know, it's the downside of evolving technologies, right? All of those older technologies, slowly but surely, just they die. They die a slow death. Not much you can do when the CD manufacturer says, yeah, we're packing it in. We're not going to make CDs anymore.

R

Ryan Fleury 46:00

And it goes with mainstream technology, like I referenced the Google Nest first gen and second gen thermostats. You know, blind people who have been relying on their smart speakers to control their thermostats now are out of luck. They're going to have to get an electrician or a friend to come in and hook up a new thermostat that is accessible if they can find one. And it's just unfortunate, but everything has a life cycle, right?

R

Rob Mineault 46:24

Yeah, but Google's really bad for that. Yes, they are. They'll pull the plug on something like, the first or second or first and second generation of Chromecasts, aren't they removing support for those as well?

R

Ryan Fleury 46:48

It's unfortunate, you know, because there's a whole population of people who relied on the CD service that are going to have to relearn something if they're able to relearn.

R

Rob Mineault 46:58

But it's also interesting to hear that, you know, it's, it's one of the old classic problems that assistive technology has, and that's, you're just getting the word out that this technology exists to the right people sometimes. I mean, it can be a real challenge that even have people who could benefit greatly from CELA to even know about CELA.

R

Ryan Fleury 47:19

And that's if you can afford the devices to play the stuff, right? Whether it's an iPod, iPhone, iPad, Echo, dot, whatever device, you know, there's still a cost. And there's no AT Programs across the country.

R

Rob Mineault 47:33

The other interesting thing she talked about was, was the Wi Fi problem, which, if you're not connected to internet, you're kind of boned. Like if you are in a remote area, you know? If you have unstable Wi Fi, or you don't have any Wi Fi, and again, you know, that can be like, really hard for people to sort out as well if you're a senior.

R

Ryan Fleury 48:00

And who wants Elon-net, right? If you're out in the rural boonies, would you trust Elon-net right now?

How?

R

Rob Mineault 48:08

I don't think we'll have to worry about Elon in five years. They say that AI technology is moving, it's like dog years that it's leapfrogging. Like one year of AI technology is like seven years of normal technology in terms of evolution. It's moving at such a huge pace. There are new models out all the time, and new products out all the time. It's really hard to stay on top of it. So who even knows what in five years? What was what we were talking about, AI-wise, five years ago, in 2020? Like nothing, ChatGPT wasn't even around. Chat GPT was is only been around since 2022.

R

Ryan Fleury 49:00

We were trying to find toilet paper. Rob.

S

Steve Barclay 49:06

Hey, Siri, where can I find toilet paper?

R

Rob Mineault 49:11

True. You can't.

S

Steve Barclay 49:15

Have you considered a bidet?

R

Rob Mineault 49:20

Hey, Ryan,

R

Ryan Fleury 49:22

Hey, Steve.


S


Steve Barclay 49:23


Hey. What about me?


R


Ryan Fleury 49:25


 Ryan Fleury 49:25
Where can people find us?


 Steve Barclay 49:28
They can find us. Well, they could drop us an email at cowbell@atbanter.com


 Ryan Fleury 49:38
And they can find us online [www,atbanter.com](http://www.atbanter.com)


 Steve Barclay 49:42
That's also true. I hear we've also got some forms of social media, somewhere.


 Ryan Fleury 49:47
Yep, where can they find us Rob?

 Rob Mineault 49:51
They can find us on on on Facebook and Instagram. Wow, I'm stunned.

 Ryan Fleury 49:58
You forgot Mastodon. .

 Rob Mineault 50:00
Sorry, I don't, I don't know. I don't know what I'm doing. I do the same thing for 10 years, and now you throw a curveball on me.

 Steve Barclay 50:11
Now tell a dad joke.

 Rob Mineault 50:27
I don't like this strange new world. All right, that is going to about do it for us this week. Big thanks, of course, to Karen and Ioana for joining us, and we will see everybody next week.

S

Steve Barclay 50:47

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