

# NNELS



## NNELS Accessible Publishing Summit: Summary Report

**The 519, Toronto, Ontario  
January 26-27 2019**

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By the [National Network for Equitable Library Service \(NNELS\)](#)

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# Acknowledgements

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## About NNELS

The [National Network for Equitable Library Service](#) (NNELS) is a digital public library of books for people with print disabilities in Canada, and an advocate for an accessible and equitable reading ecosystem for all people in Canada. The goals of NNELS are to build capacity and employment opportunities for people with print disabilities, to advance the agenda of born accessible publishing, and to develop and maintain a digital repository of accessible books for people with print disabilities in Canada, delivered through the network of public libraries in Canada.

## About the Summit

On January 26th and 27th, 2020, [NNELS](#) and the [BC Libraries Co-op](#) held the second Accessible Publishing Summit in Toronto, ON. Over [60 invited participants](#) came together in Toronto to continue the discussion about accessible publishing in the Canadian landscape. In addition to the stakeholder groups involved the ebook production and distribution chain that attended last year (including authors, editors, designers, publishers, distributors, librarians, alternate-format producers, users of alternate formats, and government representatives) people from even more key groups were invited to attend this year, including reading systems vendors and developers and audiobook producers.

## Objectives

At the first summit, the main goals were: to create a community; provide a space for people to talk about the “how” of advancing the state of accessible publishing; and identify challenges and opportunities that people could work on meeting and overcoming. Through a lively two days of discussions, ideas, and collaboration, these goals were accomplished.

The goals for the 2020 Accessible Publishing Summit were to:

strengthen a sense of community for ongoing collaboration among the different stakeholder groups in accessible publishing;

gain awareness of the challenges faced by readers with print disabilities;

increase understanding of recent developments and the current context with regards to accessible ebook and audiobook publishing;

advance work on various strategies to promote accessible publishing; and

identify next steps as needed for ongoing work toward accessible publishing.

In the following report, we will present how each of these goals was met.

The agenda for the two days of the summit can be viewed, here: [English](#) | [Français](#)

# The Experiences of Readers with Print Disabilities: Accessibility Demonstrations

*How do readers with different print disabilities experience digital books? Accessing, reading and navigating with assistive technologies.*

One of the most valuable sessions at both the 2019 and 2020 Accessible Publishing Summit is designed and presented by the NNELS Accessibility Testing Coordinator and the team of Accessibility Testers. It is imperative to the success of the summit that the both the perspective and the knowledge of people with print disabilities be centred and privileged in the conversation. To support this, we ensure that the accessibility testing team has the time and space needed to demonstrate what it looks like to read accessible format materials, whether they are well-designed or otherwise.

The Accessibility Testers presented on the following topics:

The experience of readers with learning disabilities (Mélissa Castilloux and Kaden Faris)

Low vision readers: Challenges and strategies (David Kopman)

Image descriptions 101 (Daniella Levy-Pinto)

Accessing complex images (Ka Li)

Accessible websites and apps (Simon Jaeger)

General ebook navigation (Karoline Bourdeau and Laetitia Mfamobani)

The structure of an accessible digital book (Danny Faris)

Hearing from the accessibility testers first hand was an enlightening session for many attendees, as it truly brought the experience of the user into focus. Many of these topics are thoroughly discussed by two of the Testers, Danny Faris and Kaden Faris, in NNELS' [Crash Course in Ebook Accessibility](#) (a video series on YouTube). NNELS has also created a few videos demonstrating [common issues with EPUBs](#), which also help to showcase the challenges faced by readers with print disabilities.

# Accessible Publishing: Updates & Current Context

*What is the current context for accessible publishing from the perspective of various stakeholder groups: publishers, alternative format producers, government representatives, librarians, international experts, reading systems representatives?*

In order to gain insight into the perspectives from the wide range of stakeholder groups that were present at the summit, a few people we asked to give brief presentations.

## Publishing Sector

- Hugo Setzer (International Publishers Association), presented by Sarah Hilderley (Inclusive Publishing/DAISY Consortium)

Hugo opened this session with a general discussion about accessible publishing. He noted that many publishers around the world are eager to learn and improve the accessibility of their publications. Right now, there are big opportunities in publishing, as advancing digital technologies are making accessibility ever-more attainable. The book famine continues, with only 10% of published works being available to millions of readers with print disabilities, but if we come together to learn and make change, a future with widespread born accessible publishing can be achieved.

- Laura Brady (House of Anansi Press)

Laura works for a Canadian publisher that is keen on accessible publishing, and she is also a knowledgeable digital publishing expert. She has seen firsthand the demand for accessibility and the (relative) ease with which it can be incorporated into the publication process. There is still lots of work to be done, such as in the area of children's books, the development and exposure of metadata, and the remediation of backlists, to name a few.

- Marjorie Theodore (Vues et Voix)

Marjorie works at Vues et Voix, a Quebec audiobook producer who make their audiobooks available in accessible formats, for free (via a subscription to the Quebec Adapted Book Service (SQLA) of the Bibliothèque et

Archives nationales du Québec (BAnQ)). She notes that there needs to be better access to accessible books; the markets and means of distribution need to be improved in order to get accessible books to the people who need them.

- Kate Edwards (Association of Canadian Publishers) & Eveline Favretti (l'Association nationale des éditeurs de livres)

Kate works with the Association of Canadian Publishers, and Eveline works with l'Association nationale des éditeurs de livres, two key organizations when it comes to advancing the accessible publishing landscape in Canada. Currently (at that time) they were both engaged with the "[Publisher Workflows Project](#)", an experimental project which looked at the publication processes of both English and French publishers. In addition, ACP was overseeing a [broad research project](#) on the state of accessible publishing in Canada (both projects were completed in the spring of 2020). At ACP there is ongoing education and training on accessibility, and they are focused on spreading the word about the importance of publishing accessibly. Because there is support for accessible publishing initiatives from the Government of Canada, there is currently a big opportunity for expanding the conversation to help publishers of all sizes, and ANEL and ACP are working on spreading this message.

## Alternate Format Production & Libraries

- Adam Wilton (Provincial Resource Centre for Visually Impaired) & Bob Minnery (Alternative Educational Resources Ontario)

Adam and Bob both work for organizations that create accessible educational materials for students. In the past they would work primarily from scanned copy of physical books, but now now they work more with digitally (but not accessibly) born titles. Their role is shifting from working behind the scenes, to going into classrooms and educating people about alternate format materials, from places like NNELS and CELA. One of their key concerns is with the **timely** production of accessible materials, because students need to be able to have the books at the exact same time as their peers. They want to work toward the creation of a more seamless connection between publishers, content creators, and students.

- Laurie Davidson (NNELS)

Laurie discussed NNELS role in the accessible publishing landscape, as it has expanded in recent years thanks to support from the Government of Canada, and other organizations. NNELS has been able to add alternate format publishing to their ongoing work of facilitating access to alternative format materials.

The amount of information around accessible publishing is exploding, and this is a key moment for creating standards and paving the way to a future of born accessible publishing. NNELS' role is to provide education and training to libraries and publishers, and they are able to do this because of their team of Accessibility Testers – people with lived experience of print disabilities. Born accessibility will be achieved through collaboration and cooperation.

- Rina Hadziev (Centre for Equitable Library Access)

Rina is the Executive Director of CELA, which (among other things) works with libraries to create accessible titles for their users. The focus of CELA is less on production, and more on selection and partnerships (such as with BookShare). CELA works to make sure that libraries are accessible in everything they do, and combines technology and support in order to help increase access to their users.

- Sarah Felkar (West Vancouver Public Library)

Sarah is the Head of Technology at the West Vancouver Public Library. As a librarian, she discussed the issues with accessing accessible works in libraries. With digital content, libraries must contend with content restrictions, small budgets, slow collection management, digital rights management issues, and more. With physical works, like large-print books, there are even problems with their having short print-runs. In addition to improving the state of accessible publishing, there must also be advances in licensing and access.

## Other Key Stakeholders

- Government Representatives: Sarah Mayes (Department of Canadian Heritage) & Jennifer Feeney-Svab (Office for Disability Issues)



Sarah and Jennifer noted that the number of people identified as having print disabilities is growing – from 1.5 million in 2012 to 4 million, now. This statistic will continue to be monitored, but it is clear that accessible publishing is an important focus for the Canada Book Fund and the Office for Disability Issues. They are exploring opportunities with different departments, publishers, and organizations on how to advance access to books for people with print disabilities. In the first year of funding, there were two calls for publishers to increase training in accessible publishing, and another in audiobooks, then a call for broader projects. The number of responses (over 100 applications) shows that there is lots of interest and engagement.

They recognize that distribution and discoverability needs more work, and they are focusing on setting the stage for production – there needs to be more discussion among libraries publishers, distributors, etc. about discoverability and metadata, and now is a good time to start this conversation.

- Reading Systems: Wendy Reid (Rakuten Kobo) & JoAnna Hunt (Amazon)

Reading systems face a number of big challenges, like diverse devices, diverse needs, diverse content, a multitude of file formats, ever-updating operating systems (which can hamper access), etc. Couple these technical issues with customers, who might not know the difference between file-types, or blames their reading system from issues outside of its control, and you are looking at a serious set of obstacles.

Wendy and JoAnna, who work for two large reading systems, note that addressing these issues needs to be collaborative; there is no way to solve problem in isolation.

Audiobooks have been the largest change in accessible books, and because of this more people are looking at licensing and the impact outside of accessible spaces. The constant move forward with technology affords advancements – though there are challenges. Looking forward, there is a need to move beyond thinking about ebooks as print books. We need to leverage how the technology can change and improve the ebook beyond it being a copy of a print book

- DAISY: George Kerscher (DAISY)

George is the Chief Innovations Officer at the DAISY Consortium. They want to make sure that publishing is accessible from the get-go. Ways they are working toward this is by looking at top-down accessibility standards; exploring tools for creating books; building and enhancing an accessibility checker (and hoping to automate the analysis of titles). They are also looking at the accessibility of various reading systems. George notes that publishers are embracing accessibility – there is more competition between publishers now to create the best accessibility content. This competition should be encouraged! Hopefully, with the increase of available accessible titles, people will insist on consistency. Another area that needs work is searchability; better metadata must be created so people can find the books they need and want.

## Working Groups

The Working Group sessions at the 2020 Accessible Publishing Summit provided people with opportunities to learn from and engage with other stakeholders from across the publishing world. Across the board, summit attendees find these sessions extremely valuable as it allows them to have in-depth, real time conversations with key people from other industries.

Thanks to the support of the Government of Canada, as well as the commitment, dedication, and work of the summit attendees, we are delighted to be able to say that work is advancing in every area which was established as a Working Group. There is nothing set in stone for a third summit in 2021, but it is heartening to know that there are bright, passionate people working on ideas that were developed at the Accessible Publishing Summits.

In the following sections some of their ideas and discussions are summarized, and work that is currently being done in these areas is highlighted.

### Hiring People with Print Disabilities (PWPD) in Publishing

Hiring people with print disabilities is key to advancing the state of accessible publishing in Canada, and around the world. People with print disabilities have lived experience of reading accessible (and often inaccessible) materials, and are the best people to guide the development of accessible publishing best practices. Their knowledge and experience is

invaluable in every aspect of accessible publishing, and therefore, this working group developed action items for all other groups at the summit. Their work has been built into each section that follows.

Some general guidance, that will be useful for all to consider:

- PWPD should be central to accessible publishing work. They need to be hired not only for testing and troubleshooting books, but into all kinds of positions. This group noted that there are a lot of people who have print disabilities that will go the extra mile with their work if given the accommodations and opportunity.
- The voices of PWPD should be amplified, and included at every step.
- All stakeholders must develop accessibility policies in their organizations, and hire people with print disabilities. There is a lot of work to be done around barriers and ableism; it is often assumed that people with disabilities cannot be experts, and can therefore be hired into lower positions or paid less. This needs to be addressed at an organizational level in order to create opportunities for PWPD.
- Another key consideration is that people with print disabilities might have certain needs, like an accessible workspace, or documents consistently shared in accessible formats. These must be met.

## **Current work**

The goals of this group are being met in a number of ways, and continue to develop. In particular, NNELS is a leader in this area: we continue to hire and work with PWPD as accessibility testers and consultants, and are also working as an organization to ensure that all aspects of our workflow, from website development to internal documentation, are fully accessible. This will enable us to hire people with print and other disabilities into a digital workplace that meets their needs and encourages success.

Another major development in amplifying and including PWPD occurred in the “How do You Read?” study (conducted by NNELS, supported by eBOUND Canada and the Association of Canadian Publishers – both of which attended the Summit). Over 600 people participated in this study on the reading needs of PWPD, 60 of whom attended in person focus groups. Focus group attendees were compensated for their time, travel, and

provided with a meal, while online survey takers had the opportunity to win prizes (Android tablets).

The Canada Book Fund, which currently offers funding for the development of [Accessible Digital Books](#) gives priority to projects which “demonstrate the involvement of Canadians with print disabilities or organizations that provide services to this population, including library organizations”. This ongoing funding will therefore be used to support the hiring and inclusion of PWPD.

Some job opportunities in the publishing world, such as the role of Technology Intern for House of Anansi Press, include explicit encouragement for the application of PWPD.

The importance of working with PWPD is becoming more and more well-known, thanks in part to the great work of this group at the 2019 and 2020 Summits.

## Accessible Publishing Website

The main goal of the Accessible Publishing Website group was to develop an online space where resources can be collected and shared amongst all stakeholders in the wider publishing world.

It is intended that the site will: support development of accessibility certification; facilitate better accessibility and discoverability of accessible content; and provide space for educational materials.

### **Current work**

A number of websites that gather and share accessible publishing resources are currently in existence, and are regularly being added to, such as NNELS' [AccessiblePublishing.ca](#) and DAISY's [InclusivePublishing.org](#). AccessiblePublishing.ca has just released a variety of [brand new resources](#), which will be useful for many publishers, in Canada and beyond.

Powerful developments are expected in this area over the next few years, including an extensive project (led by eBOUND Canada) which will explore all the elements needed to create robust online resource kits for both publishers and librarians.

Other goals, which will hopefully be addressed are to include a hub or collective space to host an agency or database of available freelancers / accessibility testers, as well as develop a repository of available jobs for PWPD.

## Accessibility Certification Process

A key part of the Accessible Publishing Summit is bringing people together to have productive, real time conversations where they can discuss, learn, and share information. The Accessibility Certification Process group is a great exemplar of this. By bringing together Canadian researchers, who were exploring the feasibility of a certification process, and folks from organizations who have been working in this area for some time, comprehensive discussions were had, and extensive lists of pros and cons of different approaches were developed. These points were echoed in a final report from eBOUND and the Association of Canadian Publishers, the "[Accessible Publishing: Research Project](#)," within the section "Part Two: Standards and Certification Review" ([accessible versions](#) are available for download from the NNELS repository).

### **Current work**

Work on a certification process continues in Canada, and advances and proposals are forthcoming. There is a lot of support for this among a variety of stakeholder groups.

## Search & Discoverability:

The Search & Discoverability group discussed the best way to expose metadata and ensure that it is included in catalogues and websites, as well as what accessibility features should be included.

### **Current work**

The proposed resource kits for publishers and librarians, discussed above (in the Accessible Publishing Website section), and/or other future projects around accessible publishing, will have a focus on metadata. The importance of including and sharing accessibility metadata is known, and work continues to be done by publishers and librarians to learn more about how to expose it.

This year, thanks in part to the support of the Government of Canada, NNELS wrote a guide on [EPUB Semantics, ARIA Roles, & Metadata](#) (also available in French: [EPUB sémantique, rôles ARIA, & métadonnées](#)). It is designed to help publishers write and include a full set of accessibility metadata in their EPUBs.

## Government Policy & Legislation

This group discussed developing an information package, which would include resources to share with publishers. Alternate format sector folks have been working in the area of accessible publishing for a long time, and now there are new players and stakeholders. They want to build out a “lessons learned” area, to make sure that there is no reinventing the wheel as publishers move into accessible publishing. This package will lend greater definition about where each stakeholder fits into the accessible publishing landscape.

There was also discussion on advancing the knowledge of accessibility amongst new graduates from publishing programs.

It was agreed that more needs to be done in education, as it is so important that the needs of students be well-met in a timely manner.

### **Current work**

The “information package” will be addressed by the resource kits for publishers and librarians.

With respect to including more accessible publishing information in publishing programs, key people at the summit agreed to continue this conversation, and would work to make accessibility a priority in curricula.

In general, work on Government Policy and Legislation continues steadily due to the funding from the Government of Canada. They are supporting many projects around accessible publishing, and are an immense help when it comes to our common goal of making a more accessible Canada.

## Licensing & Rights

The Licensing & Rights group was established this year; it had come up briefly at the first summit, but was not discussed extensively. This year, attendees agreed that it warranted some in-depth consideration.

A fundamental goal of accessible publishing is to ensure the timely delivery of accessible content, meaning that the same book is released at the same time on every platform. In order to do this, equitable distribution models will need to be created.

They discussed the issues that face accessible publishing when it comes to licensing and rights: first, current licensing models are restrictive, partly because the definitions of a book and reading have not modernized along with technology and culture. Also, digital rights management lacks standardization and there is not enough data around piracy. There are indeed good things happening globally around DRM, but nothing solid as of yet.

They also discussed some possible studies or areas of research that can be done to gain more understanding:

- Does DRM affect piracy?
- Do restrictive models create lost revenue over the lifetime of the book? What about series with inconsistent licensing that prevents access to all titles in a series?
- A new definition for book/work should be created, and the model and process of how to license materials should be updated.

## **Current work**

While there is a lot of work being done in this area, much of it goes beyond the scope of this group, as it reaches into so many areas. Some work is being done by EDRLab, a European organization which works on open-source software and open-standards for the publishing industry. They are developing [Radium LCP](#), a “passphrase-based rights management solution”, and are committed to improving the experience for the end-user. NNELS is a new member of EDRLab, and is excited to learn and contribute to their work. Currently, EDRLab is working toward the creation of a library interest group, which NNELS will be a member of.

## **Training & Social Inclusion**

This group discussed ideas around creating training programs; drafting proposals for creating courses; looking at universal training across the publishing board; ensuring that PWPD are included and represented in all

aspects; and how to approach vendors with user needs rather than a particular software/technical solution.

They noted that whatever training happens, it must be delivered by people with disabilities and empower people with disabilities.

One key discussion was around a pilot project of a resource center where people can go to learn about accessible publishing. This center would offer support to empower and build up confidence of people with print disabilities so they can do the work.

### **Current work**

Resource kits on accessible publishing, for publishers and librarians, are a new project being led by eBOUND Canada. People with print disabilities will be key to the creation of these resources.

The work of this group can also be seen in the report from eBOUND and the Association of Canadian Publishers, the “Accessible Publishing: Research Project,” within “Part Three: Training and Outreach Strategy” ([accessible versions](#) are available for download from the NNELS repository). There are training recommendations for public libraries/librarians in Canada, as well as for publishers, colleges, and retailers.

## **Outreach and Networking**

This group discussed how to create a database to share participants’ info. They drafted a spreadsheet which could hold everyone’s information, which identified 16 expert areas.

### **Current work**

NNELS is reaching out to develop this database, and will include it on AccessiblePublishing.ca when it is ready.

## **Audiobooks:**

The Audiobooks group was new to this year’s summit and they spent time discussing the new audiobook specification that came out this year. It can be leveraged to create documentation on how publishers and content creators can create accessible audiobooks.



## Current work

With the release of the new audiobook specification, a lot of work is being done in this area. NNELS has participated in two conferences, a [Panel discussion on Audiobook Accessibility](#) for TechForum/ebookcraft, and a [presentation and Q&A session on Accessible Audiobooks](#), for EDRLab's Digital Publishing Summit.

Information about creating accessible audiobooks may also be a part of the publisher Resource kit project, as publishers have expressed interest in learning about how to improve the accessibility of their audiobooks, in addition to their digital books.

# Summit Details

## Attendees

Jessica Albert (ECW Press)

Roger Beatty (Canadian National Institute for the Blind)

Nicolas Boudreault (Copibec)

Karoline Bourdeau (NNEELS)

David Caron (ECW Press)

Mélissa Castilloux (NNEELS)

Mélanie Dumas (Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec)

Kate Edwards (Association of Canadian Publishers)

Danny Faris (NNEELS)

Kaden Faris (NNEELS)

Éveline Favretti (Association nationale des éditeurs de livres)

Jennifer Feeney-Svab (Office for Disability Issues at Employment and Social Development Canada)

Sarah Felkar (West Vancouver Memorial Library)

Anne Fonteneau (Blackstone Audio)

Robert Gordon (Canadian National Institute for the Blind)

Rina Hadziev (Centre for Equitable Library Access)

Lisa Harrison (Atlantic Publishers' Marketing Association)

Astrid Hédou (Association nationale des éditeurs de livres)

Nick Hilton (Coach House Books)

Lindsey Hunnewell (Wilfrid Laurier University Press)

JoAnna Hunt (Amazon Kindle)

Simon Jaeger (NNEELS)

Kim Johnson (Public Library Services Branch, Government of Alberta)

John Kennedy (Radiant Press)

George Kerscher Ph.D. (DAISY Consortium)

Abigail Kidd (Office for Disability Issues, Government of Canada)

Aneta Kwak (University of Toronto Libraries)

David Kopman (NNEELS)

Charles LaPierre (Benetech)

Kieran Leblanc (Book Publishers Association of Alberta)

Amanda Lee (Consultant)

Ka Li (NNEELS)

Farrah Little (NNEELS)

Sarah Mayes (Canada Book Fund)

Bryan Messersmith (Recorded Books)

Laetitia Mfamobani (NNEELS)

bob Minnery (Alternative Education Resources for Ontario)

Monique Mongeon (BookNet Canada)

Leigh Nash (Invisible Publishing)

Rachel Osolen (NNEELS)

Brendan Ouellette (Annick Press)

Meagan Richards (Manitoba Public Library Services Branch)

Rachel Taylor (Indigenous Editors' Association)

Marjorie Théodore (Vues et Voix)

Lindsay Tyler (Centre for Equitable Library Access)

Tristene Villanyi Bokor (Ottawa Public Library)

Heidi Waechter (Association of Book Publishers of BC)

Adam Wilton (Provincial Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired and Accessible Resource Centre – BC)

## Organizing Committee

- Laura Brady (House of Anansi Press)
- Leah Brochu (NNEELS)
- Paula Bruce (eBOUND Canada)
- Rachel Comerford (Macmillan Learning)
- Laurie Davidson (NNEELS)
- Marisa DeMeglio (DAISY Consortium)
- Daniella Levy-Pinto (NNEELS)
- Sarah Hilderley (DAISY Consortium, Inclusive Publishing)
- Wendy Reid (Rakuten Kobo Inc.)

## Facilitators

Natalie Abdou

Natalie Zend – [ZENDialogue](#)