

INTRODUCTION

April 22, 2013

In 2005, *Opening the Book* proposed to “make good on more than two decades of promises by providing Canadians with print disabilities access to a broader range of information. In doing so, it will remove a major barrier to their full participation in society and eliminate a significant source of inequality in Canada.” Eight years later, the realization of this vision is at hand. Since the summer of 2012, the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) has been in discussions with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) regarding a national solution for access to alternative format works for Canadians with print disabilities through public libraries. This concept is the result of those discussions. We have within our grasp an historic opportunity to create an enduring, holistic, and sustainable national solution to a long-standing goal: to deliver equitable library services to Canadians with print disabilities through their public libraries.

The CULC/CNIB working group is pleased to be working with the Provincial and Territorial Public Library Council (PTPLC) to organize a working meeting at CLA 2013 to explore opportunities for collaboration.

A new organization to support the delivery of equitable library service for Canadians with print disabilities through Canada's public libraries; Inspired by the *Reading Re-Imagined Business Plan*

May 13, 2013

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Wendy Robbins, CNIB consultant, Reading Re-Imagined initiative

SUMMARY

Canada's Library sector has long recognized the need for equitable access to published materials; efforts to address this need reach back to 1974. With renewed enthusiasm and commitment in 2000 (*Fulfilling the Promise*) and 2005 (*Opening the Book*), we have still struggled to gain momentum and create an actual solution that addresses the scarcity of published content for Canadians with print disabilities. In 2012, the CNIB tabled the latest vision to the same community of stakeholders: *Reading Re-imagined: a National Digital HUB to Support Service Delivery to Canadians with Print Disabilities – Conceptual Model and Business Plan* (March 2012), a plan which CLA's May 2012 motion described as "consistent with previous models and plans."

The Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) believed that the *Reading Re-Imagined* proposal held promise and that public libraries need to bring not just belief and conviction, but also resources and assets to the table. The Council committed to working in partnership with CNIB to explore a further iteration of the HUB proposal.

The concept for a new library organization outlined in this paper represents that further iteration and is one that could finally see equitable provision of accessible versions of trade publications for Canadians with print disabilities through local public libraries. It leverages CNIB's established and extensive digital library infrastructure, operations and investment, and the resources, activities and financial commitment of public libraries to create a new shared venture.

The working group believes that our vision for fully accessible library collections and services through Canadian public libraries is sustainable and can be launched within a year.

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I. BACKGROUND

The Canadian government has legislated postage-free mailing for alternative format reading materials for people who are blind through Canada Post since 1898. This service – Literature for the Blind – is still in effect today. In 1974, the National Library of Canada (National Library) established the Task Group on Library Service to the Handicapped. After two years of consultation and review, the group recommended a national library service for handicapped Canadians, with responsibilities shared between the three levels of government. This recommendation recognized that services to people living with handicaps across the country was fragmented, inconsistent, and insufficient, with some service provided by libraries, some by the provinces, and some by volunteer service organizations, such as the Canadian Institute for the Blind (CNIB). A number of the Task Force recommendations were implemented by the National Library, including inclusion of materials for people with print disabilities in the national union catalogue and the creation of information and reference services. The federal government did not implement the recommendation to create a coordinated national program.¹

In 2000, the National Library and CNIB co-sponsored the Task Force on Access to Information for Print Disabled Canadians, which issued the report *Fulfilling the Promise*, making a number of recommendations for action to address the lack of availability of alternate format works. The National Librarian formed the Council on Access to Information for Print Disabled Canadians, mandating it to pursue Task Force recommendations. The Council operated for ten years under the oversight of the National Library, now Library and Archives Canada (LAC). While other federal ministries have engaged with disability issues, since 2000 the National Library/ LAC was seen as the lead federal coordinating agency on access to alternate format materials.

The most recent national effort to address this issue was the Initiative for Equitable Library Access (IELA), which emerged from a Canadian Library Association (CLA) Working Group report *Opening the Book: A Strategy for a National Network for Equitable Library Service for Canadians with Print Disabilities* (2005). LAC undertook the coordination of efforts to implement IELA priorities, with the model of an arm’s-length NGO “hub,” seen by the majority of stakeholders as the preferred means of providing alternative format content for delivery to end-users through Canada’s public libraries.

¹ This historical overview is content adapted from: Westbrook, Danielle. “An Exploratory Report on the History of Services to People with Print Disabilities in British Columbia”, July 2011. A report commissioned by the Services to People with Print Disabilities Working Group, British Columbia Library Association.

In mid-2011, LAC announced that it would no longer be directly involved in the implementation of IELA. LAC tasked CNIB to continue multi-stakeholder consultation, funded by a federal grant. The intent of this ongoing consultation was to achieve consensus on how to establish and deliver sustainable and equitable access to published works for the print disabled community. CNIB completed this work with its presentation of a proposal for a National Digital HUB in its February 2012 report *Reading Re-Imagined: A National Digital HUB to support service delivery to Canadians with print disabilities*. CNIB began discussing *Reading Re-Imagined* with stakeholders across the country in the spring of 2012, including submitting requests with the federal and provincial governments for financial support for the plan's proposed digital HUB.

The Canadian Urban Library Council (CULC) met with John Rafferty, President and CEO, CNIB about *Reading Re-Imagined* and the proposed digital HUB in Ottawa in May 2012. In the ensuing discussion, CULC members considered the HUB model and found it to be a reasonable proposal and approach that was congruent with the original vision for IELA and, most importantly, reaffirmed that provision of library access to alternative format materials for people with print disabilities is a public library service and not one that should be operated by a charitable organization. CULC members acknowledged that the funding model for the HUB needed further refinement, as did operations and the governance model, but saw a solid proposal from which to advance. CULC agreed that it would move forward with CNIB and other interested stakeholders to further refine the HUB model as its best chance to actually achieve the vision of broad-based accessible content and library service for Canadians with print disabilities.

The following motion was passed:

Being that CULC/CBUC member libraries recognize that public library service is a critical component to equitable access to published materials and the fact that CULC/CBUC would like to be an active partner in the development of an equitable distribution model for accessible formats. CULC/CBUC is committing to work with the CNIB on evolving the Digital HUB proposal to the next stage. We would like to be an active partner through representation in Phase I development (process).

In May 2012, the CLA passed a resolution that was cautiously supportive of the HUB proposal (see Attachment A).

II. CURRENT CONTEXT

Between May and October 2012, CULC and CNIB held informal discussions to gauge the possibilities in a collaborative next step. In October 2012, after an update on these early discussions, CULC reaffirmed its commitment to working with CNIB on evolving the HUB model:

THAT CULC/CBUC reconfirm their June 2012 position that the Digital Hub is a realistic delivery model and would like to work with CNIB and other stakeholders by forming a working group to discuss a detailed delivery and financial model for service.

Initial discussions with a representative of the Provincial/Territorial Public Library Council (PTPLC) in the summer of 2012 suggested that this group was not at a point at which they could commit to joining an effort with CULC and CNIB so work between the existing two partners continued.

A day and a half working meeting was held in February 2013 at Toronto Public Library to advance discussions. In attendance were:

Catherine Biss, CEO, Markham Public Library and CULC/CBUC Chair
Sandra Singh, Chief Librarian, Vancouver Public Library
Rosemary Bonanno, Executive Director, Vancouver Island Regional Library
Vickery Bowles, Director of Collection Management & City Wide Services, Toronto Public Library
Moe Hosseini-Ara, Director of Service Excellence, Markham Public Library
John Rafferty, President and CEO, CNIB
Margaret McGrory, Vice-President and Executive Director CNIB Library
Wendy Robbins, CNIB consultant, Reading Reimagined initiative

The meeting explored a potential further evolution of a new organization to meet the shared interests of CULC members and CNIB. The partners undertook the meeting from the perspective of service providers with a shared interest in developing a new and cost effective approach to delivery of alternative format materials to their clients/communities.

Several principles informed the discussion:

- A shared interest in equitable access to published materials for Canadians with print disabilities through public libraries;
- While informed by Charter rights, from an operational service perspective, the access and format needs of persons with print disabilities are collection development and public service issues for public libraries.
- CULC libraries recognize that they must contribute institutionally and financially to the building of their own and/or a collectively managed accessible format collection.
- Any solution should leverage existing production, access, distribution, and technology infrastructure investments; neither party is interested in spending money on creating new duplicate or parallel systems.
- Both public libraries and CNIB have assets and contributions to bring to the table.
- The services of the new organization need to be available to all public libraries including smaller, rural, and First Nations public libraries that have fewer financial resources than CULC libraries.
- A shared responsibility financial model is required as per the original HUB proposal; however, public library contributions must be included.
- The solution should be implemented in a timely manner; further delay in addressing this systemic inequity is not appropriate.
- The new organization must serve CNIB library clients at least as well as they are currently served.

The CULC representatives at the meeting in February recognized the public and private contributions to CNIB that have allowed it to offer an alternative format library service to its blind and partially-sighted clients. These important investments have resulted in the existence of an extensive, robust, and scalable infrastructure at CNIB that includes a comprehensive accessible library collection; technology for digital storage of content including works in progress, masters, archive and distribution; production systems and

infrastructure for the creation of alternative formats; library management and distribution systems, as well as staff expertise and international relations. CNIB's digital library service is highlighted in its *Year in Review 2012, Attachment B*.

CNIB recognized the collective strength of the nation's public library network, CULC's strategic positioning in terms of resources and capacity, CULC members position as service providers with an operational stake in the solution, and the basic Canadian rights supported through public library service delivery.

The partner representatives considered the principles noted above and each other's strengths and assets and created a draft concept for a new organization that builds on the consideration presented in the original HUB proposal.

PTPLC will be approached to explore opportunities for collaboration and contribution.

This proposal does not preclude future integration with other alternative format service providers, should such engagement benefit members/clients of each potential partner.

III. THE DRAFT CONCEPT

Public libraries are the primary providers of library services to community members, including those with print disabilities. This is a proposal to transfer an existing digital library service for people with print disabilities from management by a charity, CNIB, to management by the public library community through a "new organization."

The concept leverages and extends CNIB's infrastructure, including its well-established digital repository, its digital and physical production operations, and its access and distribution systems, all recently revitalized and scaled with financial support from the Government of Canada. The CNIB's digital repository currently has 30 Tb of disk space for the distribution files and 100 Tb of archival space, ensuring archival storage of digital accessible assets. It has scalability to petabytes, ensuring the capacity to serve the print-disabled population in Canada as described in the Reading Re-imagined business case. This anticipates approximately one million users of library services across the country's public libraries. Please see Appendix B for further details.

A new organization will ensure alternative format publications are available to public libraries, allowing public libraries to access and/or build equitable collections for use by community members living with print disabilities.

The new organization will oversee the ongoing development of a shared national public library collection of alternative format published works for access by member libraries' patrons. The new organization will provide free ILL services to member libraries and/or member libraries can build a permanent "deposit collection" of alternative format materials from the new organization's digital collection by paying a nominal CD production fee for deposit items.²

² The cost of building a deposit collection would be approximately \$100/100 CD titles. Technically, the new organization could email the digital file from its repository to a library so the library could burn a local disc – this would be very time intensive for both the new organization and the library and is not recommended.

The CNIB will refer new clients to their local public library for public library services. Existing CNIB clients have the option to remain with CNIB, which will serve as a service point.

Patrons will experience seamless discovery of the new organization's collection through their library catalogue.

Patrons with print disabilities will receive material from the new organization's accessible collection in three ways as per their choice: Physical material (CDs) direct to the patron's home or via their local public library branch, and/or digitally direct to the patron's device (including computer, mobile device, and assistive reading devices).

The new organization will provide public libraries with training and support on accessibility matters, assistive reading devices, and formats.

CNIB, a contributor to the new organization, will continue to play the role of 'trusted intermediary' and leverage its considerable international relationships for collection development, international rights clearance, collaborative innovation in assistive technologies and operational efficiencies.

Until all alternative formats are produced at source in accessible formats that address user requirements, CNIB will maintain cost-competitive recording studios to produce human voice narrated audio material for the new organization. The new organization may seek other producers, should more competitive prices be available elsewhere. While physical materials are required by patrons with print disabilities, the new organization will provide CD production and braille embossing (printing). CNIB will operate these services on behalf of the new organization at a competitive price and the materials will be deposited into the new organization's national accessible collection and become available to the new organization's member libraries and their patrons.

CNIB will consult with the new organization before making decisions on divestment from production and distribution activities that could impact the new organization's service delivery.

As more clients switch to digital delivery for audio content, the costs of production and distribution of CDs will diminish. And as synthesized voice improves in quality and tone, the need for extensive human voice recording will also lessen. Likewise, as refreshable braille displays improve and become more affordable, the need for delivery of physical printed braille should decrease as well, although braille transcription will still be required. And further, as material becomes EPUB3 at source, the effort required to render a published work fully accessible will be less. This transition is expected to occur over the next five years.

Governance and membership

- The organization is membership based, with public libraries paying a fee scaled to their population. This membership fee is considered a collections expenditure, similar to a subscription to a database. As a major financial stakeholder and a provider of library services in the short to mid terms, CNIB will also be a member of this organization and will contribute a membership fee.
- Governance is by members and will have broad geographic and public library-type representation.

- End-users representation on the governance committee is possible, such as appointments from consumer groups. The balance of governance should remain with organizations that have a financial and service delivery stake in the organization.
- Standing advisory structure for end-user consultation on programs and services to be developed.

Collection Development and Creation

- A national collection development group consisting of library members will create and recommend collection development policy and describe acquisitions needs for accessible materials for the new organization.
- CNIB's existing collection of 80,000 unique titles will seed the new organization's collection.³ Recognition that CNIB created these items will remain in place.
- Copies of accessible format material held in member library collections will be available to the new organization's collection, where rights to do so are established and the need is identified by the new organization. *[Note: this will need consultation with publishers regarding use of purchased commercial audio content]*
- Member libraries will lend copies of content not already held by the new organization to the new organization for creation of an alternative format version, provided that no commercial audio version is available.
- When a public library identifies a collection gap it wishes filled that is beyond the means of the new organization, it may contribute funds to build that collection.
- Print braille (children's materials) and embossed braille will be provided at cost-of-production. The member library will be requested to add the book to the new organization's collection to be made available for ILL to other libraries.
- The model includes a national Bookshare subscription, which immediately adds a further 97,000 titles to the collection.⁴
- The new organization will seek to negotiate a reciprocal collections access agreement for Quebec-produced French language alternative format materials.
- The collection development group will identify which ePUB works can be left as "basic accessible" through synthesized voice and which ones require "enhanced accessibility" through human voice recording.
- CNIB will provide cost-competitive human voice recording for the new organization.
- A network of public library cataloguers will catalogue materials for the new organization's collection on behalf of the membership. The effort will be an in-kind contribution by CULC member libraries or other libraries with means.

³ The CNIB's collection includes 80,000 unique titles; the total number of items/formats is 136,000, including online, DAISY audio, e-text, braille, e-braille, music braille, DVD, 70 newspapers, and 15 magazines.

⁴ Information about Bookshare can be found at <https://www.bookshare.org/>. Approximately 97,000 of their titles are eligible for Canadian readers. CNIB currently has a Bookshare agreement that covers their clients. The new organization would negotiate a new agreement for Bookshare for all member library patrons who meet the requirements (i.e., Bookshare requires an authorized source such as an ophthalmologist, in the case of vision loss, to sign off on a patron's eligibility).

Access and Service

- Existing CNIB library clients will remain with CNIB if they do not wish to transition to their public library.
- CNIB will refer new clients to their local public library for accessible library service.
- Public libraries will register their eligible patrons for access to the new organization’s collections and services based on the eligibility criteria defined in Canadian Copyright law.
- Borrowing material from the new organization’s collection/repository is at no charge to the member library and their eligible patrons. Delivery of borrowed materials can be CD-based direct to the patron’s home or their local public library branch, or digitally direct to the patron’s device.
- In the near term, staff training and support on accessibility matters, adaptive technologies and accessible formats will be provided by CNIB. The new organization will – over time – take on this function. A plan to migrate this service will be developed jointly by CNIB and the new organization.
- New organization will create and offer member libraries publications and other materials to support their community outreach to people with print disabilities and the agencies that support them.

IV. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial implications with potential partners are under discussion, but the model is flexible and feasible.

V. NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINES

The CULC/CNIB working group would like to see endorsement of the new organization, as described in this document, made in a timely manner so as to start work for a Q1 2014 start to the new organization. To meet this deadline the following timeline is proposed. It seeks to maintain momentum while still offer opportunity for feedback.

May 29-30, 2013	Discussion with PTPLC and CULC membership; seek approval from CULC to proceed to implementation of the new organization
June 21, 2013	Approval by CNIB Board to proceed to implementation of the new organization, with reference to the validation process prepared by the CNIB Special Committee on Reading Re-Imagined
June 2013	Hire project lead to begin further refinement and development of implementation plan to take this initiative to ‘Day 1’.

VI. FINAL REMARKS

In 2005, *Opening the Book* proposed to “make good on more than two decades of promises by providing Canadians with print disabilities access to a broader range of information. In doing so, it will remove a major barrier to their full participation in society and eliminate a significant source of inequality in Canada.” Eight years later, the realization of this vision is at hand. We have within our grasp an historic opportunity to create an enduring, holistic, and sustainable solution to a long-standing goal: to deliver equitable library services to Canadians with print disabilities through their public libraries. We put this proposal in your hands with the expectation of a full discussion on the plan’s merits and confidence that this is the right program at the right time.

ATTACHMENT A: CLA RESOLUTION, MAY 2012

Resolution 2012-5

WHEREAS in 2003 the Canadian Library Association recommended, through joint funding by federal, provincial and territorial governments, the establishment of a public and private sector partnership to ensure that Canada provide for Canadians unable to read print, a library service which is equitable and comparable to the services available to all Canadians through public funding; and

WHEREAS since 2005 the Canadian Library Association has supported the need for a national network as described by a CLA Working Group in *Opening the Book: a Strategy for a National Network for Equitable Library Service for Canadians with Print Disabilities (NNELS)*; and

WHEREAS CLA created and supported a Working Group for the *Initiative for Equitable Library Access (IELA)*, launched in 2007 to create the conditions for sustainable and equitable library access by building nationwide partnerships and supporting activities and services to successfully meet the long-term library and information access needs of Canadians with print disabilities; and

WHEREAS the approach taken in *Reading Re-imagined: a National Digital HUB to Support Service Delivery to Canadians with Print Disabilities – Conceptual Model and Business Plan* (March 2012) is consistent with previous models and plans;

BE IT RESOLVED that CLA continue to support the development of a National Network for Equitable Library Service for Canadians with print disabilities (NNELS) by:

1. being a public voice on behalf of equitable access to library services for Canadians with print disabilities and by making support for equitable library access a priority issue in CLA's advocacy efforts with governments; and
2. supporting the library system in taking the primary responsibility for a national network, with support from a variety of public and private sector partners; and
3. facilitating the gathering of feedback from the library community on the development of a national network; and
4. working with all stakeholders to create options for appropriate governance models for a national network.

Proposer: Ralph W. Manning

Secunder: Todd Kyle

ATTACHMENT B: CNIB LIBRARY OPERATIONS AND SERVICES

The following is a web link to the CNIB Library's current Year in Review. It provides an overview of the Library's programs, services and operations.

http://www.cnib.ca/en/services/library/Documents/CNIB%20Library%20Year%20in%20Review_2011-12_EN.pdf.

Some details with respect to the size, scalability and interoperability of the IT environment are presented below.

Size

Repository:

- Distribution versions of the assets 30Tb usable space (36Tb raw) (Plus a fully mirrored copy on a separate disk array)
- Archival versions of the assets 100Tb of usable space (120Tb raw)
- WIPS (Works in Progress) 8Tb of usable space
- Disks Arrays are configured using RAID 6

Scalability

Repository:

- Built based on a global best-practices review of library digital repositories.
- There is a mathematical limit, but so huge that it is irrelevant.
- Repository is based on the Microsoft Windows NTFS file structure and leverages the HP servers and storage systems to which additional security features have been added

ILS:

- V-Smart; selected after a fulsome RFP process. Accessibility features significant in selection criteria.
- A measurable implementation of V-Smart in Paris... 'The 60 branches of the City of Paris Library Network serve 330,000 registered users, handle 10 million loans and enjoy over 8.5 million in-library visits each year.'

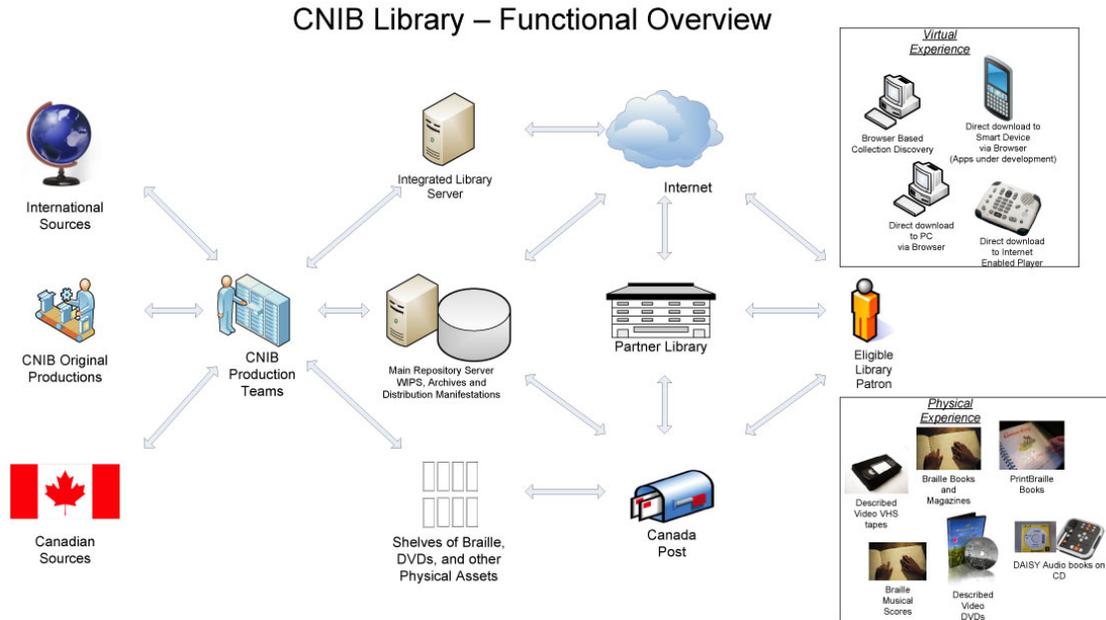
Interoperability

ILS:

- Offers several standards based access models
- Integrated a SIP2 Drupal client with the V-Smart SIP2 module
- Being harvested weekly by the New Brunswick libraries using OAI/PMH clients
- Many Partner libraries accessing CNIB's bibliographic records using Z39.50
- Enforce strict Firewall rules - only whitelist Partner libraries for specific access points
- Bibliographic records also available on Amicus; patron data is locked down securely

ATTACHMENT C: DIAGRAM, CNIB LIBRARY SERVICES

The following diagram illustrates from left to right the CNIB Library functions from the sourcing and creation of alternative format materials, digital storage, library service functions and distribution through multiple channels to the end user.



ATTACHMENT D: HIGHLIGHTS, LETTERS OF ENDORSEMENT

Consumer Group Endorsement

Excerpts of endorsement letters from consumer groups, in support of “Reading Re-Imagined: A National Digital Hub to support service delivery to Canadians with print disabilities”. The “new organization” in this paper is an evolution of this concept that includes public libraries in governance and operations.

Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians

“I would like to express my support for the plan (Reading RE-Imagined)... Canadians with a print disability must rely on a charity to provide library services while our peers use publicly funded libraries... A national strategy to provide equitable access to public library material is long overdue in Canada. There are moral, legal, and economic reasons to make such access a priority.”

Donna Jodhan

President, Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians

Canadian Council of the Blind

“As National President of the Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB), I would like to express my support for the plan outlined in “Reading Re-Imagined: A National Digital HUB to support service delivery to Canadians with print disabilities.”

Louise Gillis, President, CCB

Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario

“The Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) and its 20 community based chapters represent the interests of children, youth and adults with learning disabilities (LDs) throughout Ontario... The National Digital Hub will go a long way toward the goal of allowing individuals with reading learning disabilities to access the world of the printed word, a world that is available to the rest of society who do not have print disabilities. It is a matter of equitable access...”

Lawrence Barns

President & CEO

Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario

Access for Sight-Impaired Consumers

“The minimal amount of audio recordings provided by public libraries equates to less than 7% of the print material available to all others. And a standard audio .mp3 recording does not make a book or magazine “accessible” to a person with a print disability; it merely puts it into an audio format but fails to address the need for true accessibility... this conceptual model moves us in the right direction...”

R.E. (Rob) Sleath

Chair, Access for Sight-Impaired Consumers

Blind Beginnings

“I am writing on behalf of Blind Beginnings... to express my support for the plan outlined in “Reading Re-Imagined: A National Digital HUB to support service delivery to Canadians with print disabilities... (This conceptual model)... is a step towards ensuring that children and youth who are blind or visually impaired will reach their full potential.”

Shawn Marsolais

Manager, Programs & Services

Blind Beginnings

Canadian Council of the Blind - BC-Yukon Division

“It is time to have a plan in place providing equal access to public library material to the print disabled in Canada. There are moral, legal, and economic reasons to make such access a priority... The CCB believes in the National HUB – giving print disabled Canadians an opportunity to be on an equal level as Canadians without print disabilities.”

Ann McNabb, President
CCB BC-Yukon Division

National Educational Association of Disabled Students

“It is time to stop talking about a National HUB to make access to information a reality for all, and start creating it.”

Ian Murley, President
National Educational Association of Disabled Students

Access for Sight-Impaired Consumers

“It is shameful that Canadians with print disabilities must turn to a charity to acquire library services while our peers are able to utilize publicly funded libraries for a wide range of materials...It is time to stop talking about a National HUB to make access to information a reality for all, and start creating it. This conceptual model moves us in the right direction, and deserves immediate support from and by the Canadian Government.”

R.E. (Rob) Sleath, Chair, Access for Sight-Impaired Consumers (ASIC)