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NNELS Introduction

Welcome! We are happy to have you join our team of dedicated professionals who work hard to create accessible books for people with print disabilities.

What is a Print Disability?

A print disability is a learning, physical or visual disability that prevents a person from reading conventional print.

More specifically, a print disability can be a:

- Learning disability: An impairment relating to comprehension
- Physical disability: The inability to hold or manipulate a book
- Visual disability: Severe or total impairment of sight or the inability to focus or move one's eyes

Approximately 10% of Canadians have one or more print disabilities, and with an aging population there are more readers on their way.

We work to create accessible ebooks through purchasing, production, and special grant projects.

What is An Accessible Book?

An accessible book is a book that is structured so anyone with a print disability can read it. This can include Braille books, audiobooks, and ebooks. As a Production Assistant you will be focused on ebooks.

Properly-made ebooks can be read by anyone on computers, mobile devices, and using various assistive technologies such as screen readers, refreshable Braille displays, or screen magnification software.

Like all readers, people with print disabilities need to be able to navigate, read, and understand a digital book's content. For example, blind readers with the right tools and right books can navigate books like sighted readers by moving between pages or from one chapter or section heading to the next, and by navigating to a page from the table of contents.

A file that is completely accessible to people with print disabilities offers the maximum flexibility for all readers. This includes:

- Text access – Can all the text be read by screen readers via synthetic speech or Braille display? Are there image descriptions for photos and illustrations?
- Logical reading order and navigation – Can the content be read in a logical order? Can a reader navigate to different sections of the book?

Synthetic Narration vs Human Narration

Accessible books can include Synthetic Narration (DAISY and EPUB) or Human Narration (Audiobook).

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Synthetic narration provides some benefits not offered by human narration, including consistency, ability to speed up a voice without distortion, and low cost. It also gives the reader access to the text as it appears on the page, and not just a dramatic recreation of the narration alone; with text-to-speech the entire book is recreated for the reader with a print disability so they can experience the book the same way as everyone else can. This can also be a good option for people with cognitive disabilities, and find human narration hard to follow.

Audiobooks are great for texts that require more emotional engagement with the content. Having a novel read by a professional, or trained volunteer, who can use tone and inflection for meaning, accents for different speakers, and other narrative devices can enrich the reading experience. Audiobooks can include novels and other creative works, as well as text books and other STEM works. There are different techniques for narration for the different genres of books.

Fun fact: NNELS is working with other organizations to create a standard for accessible Audiobooks. This work is similar to the work we have done in the past for creating standards for EPUB's (different format from DAISY.)

Who We Are and What We Do

The National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS) is a repository of content owned and sustained by Canadian public libraries. We work with international partners, libraries, readers, and publishers (particularly Canadian ones) to make copies of books in accessible formats available to readers in Canada who have print disabilities.

When NNELS launched six years ago, we were a team of librarians focused on ensuring Canadians with print disabilities could exercise their right to access information and Canadian culture.

We were bridging a gap: there was no way for people with print disabilities to request books in the formats they needed, and no publicly-owned collection of accessible books for these readers. Our work focused on converting books to alternate formats and educating public libraries about the importance of providing service to all people, no matter how they read.

To learn more who we our and our history visit our About page on our website.

NNELS is a digital public library of on-demand titles for accessible format materials. To learn more visit our Collections Policy page.

Materials in NNELS are produced from available open content whenever possible. When copyright materials are produced at the request of system users, we rely on copyright exemptions that extend equitable access for public library materials to print-disabled persons. To learn more visit our About Productions in NNELS page.

What do Production Assistants Do

Your job as a Production Assistant is to reformat ebooks to match current accessibility standards as outlined in the wiki.

These standards are part of our continued consultation with DAISY and other similar organizations, as

well as exhaustive in house testing and research. All the guidelines in the eText wiki fit into theses recommendations, guidelines, and best practices for accessibility.

The rest of this orientation is designed to familiarize you with the expectations and workflow for your position as a Production Assistant.

We also encourage our PA's to ask questions, and be curious about the process. If you ever want to learn something that goes beyond your assigned position, then reach out to the Content or Production Coordinator.