



Library Service for People with Print Disabilities

Operational Policy for Public Libraries

May 2022

Network Policy Statement

The Government of Alberta has established and sustains a network known as the Public Library Network that connects Alberta's public libraries to enable access to public library resources and services for Albertans. The network is coordinated and supported by Alberta Municipal Affairs through Public Library Services Branch (PLSB).

Statement of Purpose

Public libraries have a fundamental responsibility to provide equitable access to library collections, resources, and facilities. All facets of library service should be made available to every community member. Patrons with print disabilities read books in a variety of ways, and it is important to make books available in different formats that accommodate different reading needs. Print disabilities refer to the inability to read traditional print formats and affect people with visual, cognitive, and mobility impairments. People with print disabilities may read in non-traditional ways, using formats such as audio, braille or electronic braille, modified text, and others. The Public Library Network aims to support public libraries in the provision of accessible reading for all Albertans.

This operational policy establishes principles to guide the integration of accessible resources and help support Alberta public libraries serve patrons with print disabilities

Equitable access to public libraries for people with print disabilities includes:

- facilitating engagement and full participation in library services and resources for all people in the community, including those unable to use conventional print
- creating and adhering to policies that ensure the library is meeting the needs of all people in the community, including those unable to use conventional print
- collecting and making available material in accessible formats

Policy

The Government of Alberta supports library boards in the provision of accessible resources for people with print disabilities.

1. Albertans who have a print disability will have access to public library resources, including accessible-format material and accessible resources, through the Public Library Network at no additional charge.
2. The Government of Alberta, through the Public Library Network, will support equitable access to electronic platforms, resources, networks, and partnerships that support accessible reading in the public library.
3. The local library board has primary responsibility for developing and providing accessible library service at the local level. Resources supported by the Government of Alberta are meant to complement and support, not replace or substitute, existing library services.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Local library boards have primary responsibility for acquiring and providing library resources, including accessible-format material and resources, in response to local needs.
2. System library boards have a role in acquiring and providing library resources including accessible format material and resources, in response to system member needs.

3. The Government of Alberta has a role in providing accessible resources in response to provincial needs, where provincial acquisition is efficient, effective, and/or otherwise appropriate.
4. The Government of Alberta provides accessible resources in partnership with Network Participants to facilitate access to the resources.
5. PLSB participates in local and national networks that respond to the needs of people with print disabilities.
6. Accessible resources provided by the Government of Alberta will be made available to all Albertans with print disabilities through the Alberta Public Library Network.
7. Network Participants are responsible to make the accessible resources freely available to local users with a print disability
8. For the purposes of this policy, Public Library Network Operational Partners are identified as follows:
 - a. City of Calgary Library Board
 - b. City of Edmonton Library Board
 - c. City of Red Deer Library Board
 - d. City of St. Albert Library Board
 - e. RM of Wood Buffalo Library Board
 - f. Strathcona County Library Board
 - g. Chinook Arch Library Board
 - h. Marigold Library Board
 - i. Northern Lights Library Board
 - j. Parkland Library Board
 - k. Peace Library Board
 - l. Shortgrass Library Board
 - m. Yellowhead Library Board
9. Network Operational Partners are responsible to facilitate technological or administrative permissions to ensure Network Participants and users with print disabilities have access to the accessible resources, including e-resource platforms.

Definitions

Accessible: can be accessed, without barriers, by anyone, regardless of disability. It often also implies that a thing can be accessed in multiple ways depending on a person's need or preference. For example, a ramp can be accessed by feet or by wheels; an accessible book can be read by eyes, fingers, and ears; an accessible website can be read with one's eyes but can also be navigated and read by a screen reader or other assistive technology; an accessible library program means that participants can engage with the program in ways that work for them.

Accessible format: allows its reader access to the content regardless of how they read. The format is versatile and can be read in multiple ways without barriers.

Print Disability: falls under the definition of a perceptual disability as defined in the *Copyright Act*. A print disability can be permanent or temporary.

As per Section 2 of the *Copyright Act*, a perceptual disability is defined as:

a disability that prevents or inhibits a person from reading or hearing a literary, musical, dramatic or artistic work in its original format, and includes such a disability resulting from

- a. severe or total impairment of sight or hearing or the inability to focus or move one's eyes,
- b. the inability to hold or manipulate a book, or
- c. an impairment relating to comprehension.

Operational Guidelines

- a) As a fundamental part of equitable library service, services and resources for people with print disabilities should be fully integrated into regular library operations.
- b) In accordance with the Libraries Regulation, library boards are required to establish local policy with respect to supporting the "provision of library resources to persons unable to use conventional print resources, including provision in cooperation with community agencies."

c) PLSB supports access to resources that respond to the needs of people with print disabilities.