

Interregional Advisory Committee for Library Accessibility [IACLA] Plan

April 2022

**Annapolis Valley Regional Library
Cape Breton Regional Library
Colchester East Hants Public Library
Eastern Counties Regional Library
Cumberland Public Libraries
Western Counties Regional Library**

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Welcome Message

On behalf of the Interregional Advisory Committee for Library Accessibility (IACLA), we invite you to read the IACLA Plan. This work has been undertaken by the Annapolis Valley Regional Library (AVRL), Cape Breton Regional Library (CBRL), Colchester East Hants Public Library (CEHPL), Eastern Counties Regional Library (ECRL), Cumberland Public Libraries (CPL), and Western Counties Regional Library (WCRL).

For IACLA members, serving on the Committee has been an opportunity for engagement, learning, and growth. We are proud of the IACLA Plan, and look forward to seeing it put into practice.

The plan reflects our desire to be responsive to the needs of people with various abilities. We aspire for our libraries to be welcoming, inclusive, and accepting public spaces to all people. Through this work, all Nova Scotians will have full and equitable access to spaces, services, resources, programs, and employment/volunteer opportunities offered by public libraries.

Ann-Marie Mathieu, Chair

Peter Hansen, Co-Chair

Introduction

In 2017, Nova Scotia became the third Province to adopt Accessibility Legislation when the Accessibility Act was enacted. Under the act, certain public bodies, such as Public Libraries, were prescribed as public bodies that require an accessibility plan.

Accessibility is a human right, and because everyone can benefit from having access to Public Libraries across the province, it is essential that Public Libraries are accessible and inclusive. Nova Scotia has a goal of being an accessible province by the year 2030, and the Accessibility Act intends to remove barriers to participation in the following areas:

- Awareness
- Delivery and Receipt of Goods and Services
- Information and Communication
- Transportation
- Employment
- Built Environment
- Education

The IACLA collaborated to develop this plan, which establishes a shared commitment to remove barriers in the following areas of focus:

- Collections
- Employment
- Information and Communication
- Programs and Services
- Built Environment

AVRL, CBRP, CEHPL, CPL, ECRL, and WCRL recognize that a culture of accessibility education and awareness is key to being inclusive and

advancing accessibility. We also recognize the value of first-voice input from persons with disabilities, and this document was developed in consultation with stakeholders who have a disability and/or represent organizations that represent persons with disabilities.

What We Believe

Human Rights - We recognize the many barriers which limit full participation of persons with disabilities and we uphold accessibility as a fundamental human right to be modelled in our library service.

Inclusion - We commit to creating equitable and inclusive learning, social, and working environments within public libraries, where community members and employees are treated with respect and dignity.

Creativity – We will advance accessibility with creativity, adaptivity, and forward thinking. Public Libraries commit to being proactive and flexible in our approach.

First Voice – We will listen to and be informed by the unique experiences of individuals and communities that public libraries serve, and commit to advocating for all the people we employ and all those we work for and work with.

Community-Led – We recognize that creative solutions come from new connections and are committed to connecting, consulting, and working collaboratively with our communities to understand their needs.

Diverseness of Disabilities – We recognize the complex nature of disabilities and acknowledge the impact to accessibility individual differences of identity, perspective, circumstance, and experience can have. Disability is regarded as part of diversity and this will be reflected in Public Library policies, programs, and services.

Areas of Focus

Collections

Our Commitment

Our libraries will provide a range of material in a variety of formats including accessible formats for various physical disabilities, and materials, which meet the needs of various literacy levels and cognitive and/or sensory disabilities.

Our Starting Point

Overview

- We provide a variety of materials in both physical and digital formats. Materials from Nova Scotia's nine regional libraries are also available to all Nova Scotians.
- We provide access to materials through a shared searchable public online catalogue, browseable (in-library) collections, and searchable online digital downloads platforms.
- We provide select equipment to support the access of certain digital materials. We own our physical collections, with a few exceptions such as shared collections with local organizations and leased materials.
- We lease or have subscriptions to digital collections for various lengths of time using a variety of pay per use pricing models.
- Each Regional Library has a Collection Development Policy which determines the procurement process.

Achievements

- We no longer charge fees for materials that are returned late.

- We have developed substantial collections of large print books and audiobooks (CD and MP3). These collections have improved over the years with publishers now providing a larger selection of mainstream titles in multiple formats.
- We have increased our spending on (digital) downloadable eBooks and audiobooks, and other online services. We have increased our spending on streaming.
- Our six regional libraries are working together with two other regional libraries to develop and share digital collections, including our eBooks and audiobooks.
- We provide outreach services to seniors' residences and other institutions. Our staff help people select materials for delivery based on their needs.
- We provide a borrow-by-mail service for people who have difficulty getting to the library. Our staff are available to help people select materials to be sent through the mail.
- We help provide access to materials in accessible formats through our partnerships with the National Network for Equitable Library Service [NNELS] and the Centre for Equitable Library Access [CELA].
- We provide equipment loans (examples: iPads, Victor Readers, Daisy Readers, eReaders) for people to be able to access materials in different formats.
- We have increased our selection of short novels and nonfiction books for adult readers who struggle with literacy.
- Library employees provide training and on-on-one help on how to access library materials and digital services.

Barriers

- Community members are not aware of the variety of materials available to them.
- Community members do not have the technology to access materials in the various formats including (ex: CD, MP3, digital audiobook, eBook).
- Community members do not know how to use the technology needed to access materials in the various formats.
- Library staff do not know how to use the technology needed to access materials in the various formats.
- It would be very expensive for libraries to purchase and provide equal access to all devices needed to support access to materials in each individual format.
- Books/materials in alternate formats are often more expensive.
- Shelf space in libraries is not adequate to support materials in all formats.
- Library funding is not adequate to provide collections in all formats and languages.
- There is a lack of awareness of accessibility issues for library staff.
- There is a lack of availability of materials due to publishing decisions.

Policy

- Collection Development Policy governs the acquisition of library materials.
- Circulation Policy governs the access to library materials.
- Third party vendors [Center for Equitable Library Access, National Network for Equitable Library Access] establish their access policies.

Actions

Top Priorities (2022-2025)

- We will actively seek out materials that are by and for persons with disabilities in library collections.
- We will review the Collection Development Policy to ensure it contains appropriate language around collection development for persons with disabilities. This could include, for example, a statement which highlights a commitment to the "procurement of alternative formats that meet diverse needs where possible".
- We will provide in branch training and/or one-on-one help on the use of digital resources and digital literacy skills.
- We will develop a public relations campaign to inform the community of our collections.
- Where possible, collections will be available in accessible formats such as large print books, audiobooks, descriptive and closed captioning videos, Braille books, and ASL content.

Other Priorities (2022 - 2030)

- We will provide a mechanism for feedback on Public Libraries' collections to provide content that meets the needs and desires of community. This could include an annual survey, or focus groups etc.
- We will continue to purchase materials in alternate formats in areas of demand.
- We will continue partnership with National Network for Equitable Library Service & Centre For Equitable Library Access – lobby for continued funding of these organizations when needed.

- We will apply for available grants to provide additional equipment, awareness and collections for those with print disabilities.
- We will keep abreast of the latest trends in technology and formats.
- Service by library staff will be offered to help people find information, programs and services in a format that works for them.
- We will continue to assess the collection needs of the community for outreach and book delivery services.
- We will continue to provide representation on the Digital Collections Development Committee to ensure that the needs of Nova Scotians in a digital collection are met.

Employment

Our Commitment

Our employment policies and practices reflect our commitment to diversity and inclusion. We provide equitable employment opportunities and support the careers of employees with disabilities or who experience barriers to accessibility.

Our Starting Point

Overview

- We employ approximately 263 full and part time staff in 57 Library Branches and Administration Offices.
- We have 60 appointed Board Members who represent 34 Municipal Units.
- AVRL employs approximately seventy full and part time staff in eleven Branches and an Administration Office. AVRL has ten appointed Board Members who represent the eight Municipal Units in the Valley.

- WCRL employs approximately forty-seven full and part time staff in eleven Branches and an Administration Office. WCRL has sixteen appointed Board Members who represent the eleven Municipal Units.
- CEHPL employs approximately forty full and part time staff in seven Branches and an Administration Office. CEHPL has ten appointed Board Members who represent four Municipal Units.
- CBRL employs approximately sixty full and part time staff in twelve Branches, an Administration Office, and a Bookmobile. CBRL has nine appointed Board Members who represent two Municipal Units.
- CPL employs approximately twenty-four full and part time staff in seven Branches and an Administration Office. CPL has five appointed Board Members who represent three Municipal Units.
- ECRL employs approximately twenty-two full and part time staff in nine Branches and an Administration Office. ECRL has seven appointed Board Members who represent the six Municipal Units.
- One of our six regions operates in a unionized environment.

Achievements

- Our recruitment process includes standardized questions and a scoring process to remove bias.
- We have upgraded staff computers software to include accessibility options.
- We have enabled closed captioning for online Zoom meetings.
- Accommodation requests from prospective or current employees to-date have been addressed on an individualized basis.
- All work locations have a Scent-Free Policy to support employees with environmental sensitivities.

Barriers

- A number of Branches and Headquarter spaces are not barrier free.
- The Integrated Library System, Symphony, which controls the registration of patrons, circulation of materials, and the searching of our materials [catalogue] contains limited accessibility features.
- Library processes [receiving and distributing of materials etc.], technology, communications [email, phone, in person etc.], and documents [policies, procedures, memos etc.] generally have not taken accessibility considerations into account. Additionally, historical documents may not be in a form that is easily adaptable to assistive technology.
- Managers are not trained in recognizing barriers that may limit job opportunities for qualified individuals.
- Traditional print and online recruitment methods are generally used, and may not reach or be accessible to all qualified individuals.
- Our operations typically do not include Human Resource Management specialists to provide guidance to management, and opportunities for employees to ask for assistance. There is no clear process or person to seek assistance from.
- Employees may be reluctant to raise issues of difficulties for fear of being labelled difficult or problematic. Offers of assistance must be consistent and ongoing in order to build a "culture of trust".

Policy

- All regional libraries have policies in place to govern the Terms and Conditions of Employment.
- All regional libraries adhere to the Nova Scotia Labour Standards Code, the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act, and all other applicable labour and employment legislation.

- One region of the six has a collective agreement.

Actions

Top Priorities (2022-2025)

- All employees will be required to take the Working with Abilities online training provided by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission [workwithabilitiesns.ca], or equivalent.
- Our on-boarding will include a process to identify a new employee's accommodation needs [survey, interview].
- Our hiring policies and practices will be reviewed. Language that will encourage recruitment/selection of persons with disabilities and job advertisements will be added.
- We will provide training to all employees on how to be supportive of colleagues who experience barriers to accessibility in the workplace.

Other Priorities (2022-2030)

- Our Performance Appraisal systems will include a discussion on ongoing and potential accommodation needs.
- We will develop an orientation/training manual to include a section on respecting diversity.
- We will review workplace emergency response plans [example fire exit plan] with respect to physical barriers.
- Our Policies will enable employees who have a disability or experience barriers to access the tools they need to be successful in their employment and will be supported in their career growth.
- We will investigate strategies for non-traditional recruitment methods.

- We will ensure that members of the Administrative Team are knowledgeable in the area of work accommodations, and that they will be capable of providing assistance.
- We will earmark funds for accommodation purposes/expenses, as an indication of our commitment.
- The orientation process for new employees will include an overview of the Human Rights Act and how to request an accommodation in the workplace.

Information and Communication

Our Commitment

Information and communications produced and provided by the Library will be easy to understand and accessible to people of all ages and abilities. We will use plain language to communicate about the accessibility of library services and programs, facilities, employment and volunteer opportunities, and all other aspects of library operations. Our goal is to ensure all people can receive, understand, and share the information they need.

Our Starting Point

Overview

The Library delivers information and communicates to the public in a variety of ways, including:

- signage and wayfinding within and outside library buildings
- email, bulletin boards, the Library's website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other forms of social media
- traditional media - newspapers and radio
- library programs and special events

- in-person assistance at library branches
- telephone assistance offered by library staff
- library policies
- print information to reach offline users

Achievements

- Libraries maintain accessible websites in an effort to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).
- Library staff have been leaders in producing and making information accessible through a variety of mechanisms.
- Library services are accessible through a variety of communication tools: email, telephone, mail, website, social media platforms, in-person.
- Library staff are welcoming and have customer service training across all sectors.
- Libraries have toll free phone numbers.
- The Library brand is very positive. Generally, people think well of the library as a public entity.

Barriers

- Our Library is often used to disseminate other organization's information (community bulletin boards, pamphlets, government information). We have little control over the accessibility of these communications.
- Training opportunities are difficult to coordinate for front-line staff.
- Our libraries currently do not have technology for communicating with individuals who require accommodation.

- Library staff have not received training on plain language communications.
- Library regions have limited promotional budgets to reach a wide audience.
- There is a lack of expertise about accessible communications.
- Library regions typically do not have public relations expertise on staff.

Policy

- No policies in place.

Actions

Top Priorities (2022 - 2025)

- We will continue to provide training opportunities for staff:
- in better ways to communicate with people of all ages and abilities, and to provide information in an accessible format.
 - on information and communication barriers and awareness of persons with disabilities.
 - on inclusive and plain language in communications.
 - on making marketing materials accessible.
 - on third party assistive services such as the National Network for Equitable Library Service and Center for Equitable Library Access
- We will ensure library locations have accessible interior library signage.
- Library policies will be developed and presented in an accessible format.

- Library websites will include accessibility information clearly outlining services offered (proxy borrowing, curbside pickup, National Network for Equitable Library Service, Center for Equitable Library Access, assistive technology, e-library services, service animals etc).

Other Priorities (2022-2030)

- We will establish procedures:
 - for how requests for information and communications in accessible formats will be dealt with.
 - for patrons to request communications accommodations and provide feedback on access improvements.
- We will conduct a yearly audit of the library website to determine necessary improvements.
- We will develop a policy to address "Accessible Formats and Communication Supports".
- We will provide devices that will improve one-to-one communication such as assistive listening devices and communication boards, and the required training for staff to effectively use these tools.
- We will ensure staff training materials are accessible.
- We will develop library accessibility maps for locations where appropriate.
- We will develop video tours of library branches - wayfinding.

Programs and Services

Our Commitment

Beyond providing traditional books and collections, our libraries will provide a diverse and inclusive range of programs and core services so that all Nova Scotians have opportunities to grow and succeed. We will provide equitable

access to programs and core services in way that is barrier-free and inclusive of everyone.

In accordance with the *2018 NS Public Libraries: Core Services and their impact on the province* report, as agreed upon by all regional libraries and the Province of Nova Scotia, library core services are defined to be:

- Supporting and promoting reading and literacy
- Providing access to technology and supporting digital literacy
- Preserving and promoting culture and creativity
- Providing safe physical spaces that encourage community involvement*

**Physical spaces will be addressed under the Areas of Focus: Built Environment section.*

Our Starting Point:

Overview

- Our regions offer programs for all ages, from newborns to seniors.
- The current pandemic has increased the availability of programs on online platforms.
- Passive programs are those that allow patrons to participate with little to no staff direction and generally on their own schedule – this includes programs like scavenger hunts, take-and-make activity kits, communal jigsaw puzzles, etc.
- We recognize that each individual has different needs and requirements for library programs.

Core Service #1: Supporting and Promoting Reading and Literacy

- We provide programs for all ages that promote reading and literacy, including story times, book clubs, and author readings.

- We provide free virtual and in-person reader's advisory service, which involves making suggestions of fiction and non-fiction titles to library users in an appropriate format.
- We provide an interlibrary loan service whereby our library users can borrow books and materials not available at their local branch from an external library system. The service is free, however, if the lending library requests a fee this will be passed onto the user.
- We provide a borrow by mail service for people who have difficulty getting to the library. Our staff are available to help people select materials to be sent through the mail.
- We provide in-person and virtual information retrieval and referral services, which involves answering questions on any topic and providing assistance in the search of information from collections, online resources, subject experts, social agencies, and government.
- Library staff also provide research assistance service.
- We assist patrons in registering for Centre for Equitable Library Access [CELA] and National Network for Equitable Library Service [NNELS].

Core Service #2: Providing Access to Technology and Supporting Digital Literacy

- We provide one-on-one and group training and classes on computer literacy.
- We provide technology programs, including technology show and tell, coding, maker programs, etc.
- We provide free Wi-Fi access in and around each of our library branches/locations.
- We provide free access to public access computers and basic computer software, like Microsoft Office Suite, for example.

- Each Regional Library has a policy outlining the terms and conditions of use for the provision of internet service, public access computers and the Wi-Fi network.
- We provide scanning to email, photocopying and printing services. Some of these services cost a small fee to recoup cost of consumables.
- Some of our branches also provide a fax service, for a small fee.
- Our staff provides technology training services, through brief, on-the-spot interactions with library users, as well as more in-depth training via one-on-one appointments and/or group classes.
- Some of our branches provide library users with access to technologies, such as radon detectors, 3D Printers, and other 'maker' technologies such as robotics, digital vinyl cutters, sound recording software, etc.

Core Service #3: Preserving and promoting culture and creativity

- We provide staff and community-lead programming that promote local culture and creativity.
- Some of our libraries provide genealogical/historical research services, including access to specialized historical collections and/or records on microfilm.
- Some of our libraries provide free exhibit space for local community artists and artisans to temporarily exhibit their work. These art exhibit spaces are intended to reflect the diverse cultural interests of the community and foster community and individual expression.
- We provide community bulletin boards and/or pamphlet displays in our library facilities to disseminate information about community events and activities from individuals, community groups, organizations and government.

Achievements

- We have been working with our communities to provide programming that meets their needs. For examples, some regions have introduced low-sensory evenings.
- We have been fostering partnerships with local organizations and businesses to aid in providing programs that appeal to a wide range of people.
- We have introduced virtual programming to facilitate accessibility.
- Some of our library locations have introduced height-adjustable desks and/or other adaptive equipment and software for their public access computers.

Barriers

- Community members are not aware of the variety of core services available to them.
- Not all libraries have adaptive equipment and software for their public access computers.
- Library staff do not know how to use the adaptive equipment and software for the public access computers.
- Community members do not know how to use the adaptive equipment and software for the public access computers.
- There is a lack of expertise in the purchase of adaptive equipment.
- It would be very expensive for libraries to purchase adaptive equipment and software for all public access computers.
- Availability to provide a wide range of programs in rural Nova Scotia.
- Cost of providing accommodations, such as ASL interpreters.
- There is a lack of staff training and knowledge on how to accommodate programs to varying needs.

- There is a lack of staffing to provide programs to meet public demand.

Policy

- Internet and technology access policies governs the terms and conditions of use of library internet, Wi-Fi, and computers/devices.
- Community information distribution policies establishes the conditions and context for within which libraries support posting and distributing information.
- Interlibrary loans policy defines standards for requesting and supplying library materials outside the user's home library region.
- Art and artisan exhibit policies establishes the conditions within which libraries who have the space exhibit temporary art and artisan exhibits.

Actions

Top Priorities (2022 - 2025)

- Designated public access computers will be equipped with adaptive equipment and software in each of our libraries.
- We will investigate and provide a variety of disability awareness training to library staff and board members, to foster an inclusive service delivery model.
- We will earmark funds for accommodation purposes/expenses as an indication of our commitment.
- We will keep abreast of the latest trends in technology, services and programs.
- We will provide a mechanism for feedback on library core services and programs. This could include a feedback form on the library's website and/or an annual survey.

Other Priorities (2022 - 2030)

- Service by library staff will be offered to help people find information, programs and services in a format that works for them.
- We will apply for available grants to provide additional equipment.
- We will continue to provide representation on provincial committees to ensure that the needs of all Nova Scotians in library services and programs are met.
- We will ask members of our community what they would like to attend or see as programming.
- We will provide in branch training and/or one-on-one help on the use of digital resources and digital literacy skills.
- We will review the aforementioned policies, where applicable, to ensure they contain appropriate language and considerations for the disabled community.
- We will seek out partners to aid in providing accommodations to open programs to a wider audience.

Built Environment

Our Commitment

We will strive to provide a barrier-free experience for everyone who visits our built environment. While individual libraries are owned and operated by entities outside our control, all means will be used to ensure cooperation and compliance with the goals of the Accessibility Act. We will lobby, advocate and act on behalf of our patrons, employees and stakeholders to ensure that our libraries and our partners are committed to necessary upgrades to remove/prevent barriers.

Our Starting Point

Overview

- AVRL operates 11 public libraries through facilities owned/leased by our 8 Municipal Units. AVRL operates an Administration Office through leased space in the Town of Berwick Municipal Office.
- CPL has 7 libraries in facilities owned/leased by our 3 Municipal Units. CPL operates an Administration Office in space leased from the Town of Amherst (upstairs from the Amherst Library).
- CEHPL operates 5 branch libraries in facilities owned by Municipal Units. CEHPL operates two branch satellites, in facilities owned by a Municipal Unit/Non-Profit Organization. CEHPL leases a space for Regional Headquarters from the Town of Truro.
- CBRL operates 12 public libraries through facilities owned/leased by our 2 Municipal Units. CBRL owns and operates a Sprinter van for the provision of mobile library services. CBRL operates an Administration Office through leased space.
- ECRL operates 5 public libraries in facilities owned or leased by Municipal units. It operates 1 public library in a facility owned by a community group. It also operates 2 public libraries in facilities owned and operated by the education centre.
- WCRL operates 10 public libraries through facilities owned or leased by either Municipal Units or, in the case of two library branches, by Charitable Associations. WCRL operates an Administration Office through leased space.

Achievements

- We have renovated, expanded and/or purpose build facilities with accessibility as a key component of design and construction. [AVRL

has raised over \$3.5 Million dollars through grants and local fund raising to support these 8 projects.]

- We have purchased accessible furniture for our libraries, including workstations for employees.
- We have rearranged our spaces and collections to improve accessibility.
- We have created an awareness of the need for an accessible built environment.
- We have successfully advocated for accessible built environments, often with partner groups such as Friends of the Library groups.

Barriers

- Accessibility Standards are currently in development, and are subject to change.
- We do not own the spaces from which we operate.
- We do not have any financial resources to put towards construction costs for accessibility upgrades.
- We have no legislative authority to require the building owners to comply with accessibility requirements.
- We have to engage with multiple Municipal Units, all of which have different methods for reporting/addressing accessibility issues with facilities.

Policy

- Nova Scotia Building Code
- Nova Scotia Accessibility Act and Nova Scotia Human Rights Act

Actions

Top Priorities (2022-2025)

- With agreement and participation of owners of the built infrastructure (municipal units and third party lease holders), accessibility audits will be completed for all facilities and include surrounding elements such as parking, sidewalks, etc.
 - The Accessibility Committee will be a key stakeholder as part of this project and determine the scope of the audit and review the results.
 - A complete audit report will be provided to the library board and all stakeholders.
 - Where issues are identified that fall within the authority/responsibility of the regional library, those will be addressed. [Example, signage, placement of furniture and shelving, adaptive equipment at customer service desks etc.]
- We will consult with community partners for information on barriers to accessibility in the library's physical spaces, and work with partners to remove barriers and increase access.
 - This will include seeking input from persons with disabilities and their representative groups to identify solutions to barriers.
 - We understand accessibility to the built environment is an ongoing process of improvement and requires listening carefully to the needs of all persons with disabilities.

Other Priorities (2022-2030)

- Education regarding accessibility standards and approaches for the built environment will be provided to all appropriate staff of the regional library.

- Recommendations from the accessibility audits will be delivered to the respective municipalities or owners. Recommendations will include priorities, short term fixes if appropriate, and potential costs and funding sources for capital improvements.
- We will promote creative solutions to ensure that Library sites on existing properties can be adapted to align with our commitments to accessibility and equality.
- We recognize the built environment is not confined to the facility but includes surrounding infrastructure such as parking, sidewalks, signage, lighting, transportation connections, and more.

Implementing the Plan

Responsibilities

- The Regional Library Boards are responsible for approving and overseeing the Accessibility Plans.
- The Chief Executive Officer/Director is responsible for implementing the plan.
- The IACLA is responsible advising on the preparation, implementation, and effectiveness of the accessibility plan.

Schedule/Timeline

- All top priorities in the Plan will be implemented by 2025
- All other priorities will be implemented by 2030

Monitoring

- The IACLA will prepare a Monitoring Report for the Regional Library Boards on an annual basis, and to be delivered to the first Board meeting of the fiscal year. This report will include details on the:
 - Performance of the policies, and their impact on accessibility
 - Implementation of "action items"
 - Recommendations to improve the Plan.
- The Monitoring Report will be a public document, and will be posted on the Regional Library's website.

Evaluating

- The Regional Library Board will conduct a review and evaluation on the Accessibility Plan every three years from adoption [2025].

Responding to Questions and/or Concerns

- Any citizen of the Regional Library Board's service area can express a concern, or pose a question about the accessibility of facilities or services within the Regional Library Board's authority.
- These should be forwarded to the Chief Executive Officer/Director, or their designate.
- All responses will be made within a reasonable time. All appropriate staff will be consulted as part of the inquiry. The response shall include information relevant to the rationale for the decision.
- Any citizen of the Regional Library Board's service area can appeal to the Regional Library Board if they are not satisfied with the response provided by the Chief Executive Officer/Director. The Regional Library Board has the authority to seek additional information and recommendations before issuing a final response to the complainant.
- The Chief Executive Officer/Director, or designate, will maintain a record of all questions, and concerns submitted, and will provide a summary as part of the updates to the Regional Library Board.

Committee Members

Annapolis Valley Regional Library

Ann-Marie Mathieu, CEO

Alnoor Rajan Talwar, Community

Cape Breton Regional Library

Lisa Mulak, CEO

Michelle Bartram, Community

Colchester East Hants

Tiffany Bartlett, CEO

Amanda Priest, Community

Cumberland Public Libraries

Denise Corey, CEO

Amanda Lawless, Community

Eastern Counties Regional Library

Laura Emery, CEO

Danielle Pellerine, Community¹

Western Counties Regional Library

Erin Comeau, CEO

Peter Hansen, Community

Special Resource to the IACLA

Catherine Kelly, Communities Librarian, Nova Scotia Provincial Library

¹ Did not attend any IACLA Meetings.

Glossary of Terms

Accessibility – The prevention and removal of all types of barriers to allow equitable participation for people with disabilities or others who experience barriers to accessibility.

Adaptive Technology – Versions of existing technology that provide different/accessible ways of interacting with the technology.

Audiobook – A recording of a reading of a book.

Barrier – Anything that makes it difficult to participate in society fully and effectively. Barriers can be physical, attitudinal, technological, or systemic (policy or practice). Accessibility barriers may be related to areas such as employment, education, the built environment, transportation, the delivery and receipt of goods and services, or information and communications.

Braille – Braille is a tactile system of raised dots used by many people who are blind or partially sighted. Each raised dot arrangement represents a letter or word combination that is read by touch.

Built Environment – Physical structures, facilities, and spaces where people live, work, shop, socialize, etc.

CELA – Canadian Centre for Equitable Library Access is Canada's comprehensive accessible reading service, providing books and other materials to Canadians with print disabilities in the formats of their choice. A national not-for-profit organization, CELA is fully funded to serve 97% of the estimated 3 million Canadians with print disabilities in partnership with member public libraries and we offer a digital-only service to those in non-funded areas. CELA provides access to 1 million professionally produced titles to provide people with print disabilities with a quality library experience.

Closed Captioning – Text hidden in the signals that create a television picture, which cannot be seen unless decoded. Just like subtitles, the decoded text appears at the bottom of the screen.

Disability – The Nova Scotia Accessibility Act defines disability as, “a physical, mental, intellectual, learning or sensory impairment, including an episodic disability, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders an individual’s full and effective participation in society.”

Equitable – Fair and impartial.

Equity – The quality of being fair and impartial.

First Voice – First voice perspectives generally refer to the knowledge generated by persons with disabilities, and others who experience barriers to accessibility, that emerges from lived experience, community connections, knowledge traditions, and scholarly activities. These are typically undervalued and under-represented perspectives.

Inclusive – To welcome, value and respect all people.

NNELS – The National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS) is a repository of content owned and sustained by Canadian public libraries. They 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.