

ACCESSIBLE BOOK CLUBS HANDBOOK

Canadian Council of the Blind

CANADIAN COUNCIL
OF THE BLIND



LE CONSEIL CANADIEN
DES AVEUGLES



 **OTTAWA
COMMUNITY
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INTRODUCTION

Book clubs are for all who love to read, and love to talk about what they are reading. Whether you read with your eyes, your fingers, or your ears (or all three!), books have the power to educate, to inform, to inspire, make us laugh out loud, have a good cry, and to transport the reader far, far away.

The purpose of this handbook is to take you through the steps for setting up and running book clubs using books in accessible formats.

Each of the following organizations provide a great starting point and collaborate with each other to support and promote local accessible book clubs and to source equipment and distribute books in accessible formats.

- The Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB) National office and local chapters
- CNIB Foundation – local offices and virtual programs
- Local public libraries and the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA)
- National Network for equitable library service (NNELS)

CCB's Get Together With Technology (GTT) program provides training geared to those with vision loss so that they may participate fully in both "In-person" and "virtual" book clubs.

Testimonial from After Hours Participant

"The After Hours Book Club transforms the spoken words of audible books into memories, explanations, discussions, debates, laughter and so much more. It turns books into ideas about what they are trying to say. It makes its members think! And it does

this in the evening with a simple *click!* on the join Zoom meeting link. It's great.”

ABOUT THE CANADIAN COUNCIL OF THE BLIND

Canadian Council of the Blind Is the Voice of the Blind in Canada™

The Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB) is a membership-based not-for-profit organization that brings together Canadians who are blind, deaf-blind or living with vision loss through chapters within their own local communities to share common interests and social activities.

CCB works to improve the quality of life for persons with vision loss through awareness, peer mentoring, socializing, sports, advocacy, health promotion and illness prevention.

Members participate as volunteers in the peer support, sports and recreation, book clubs, awareness, and educational activities of the CCB. Members manage the affairs of their own local chapters consistent with the National Canadian Council of the Blind and may be elected to executive functions locally, provincially and/or nationally. They serve on various committees at these levels as well as participating in many other community groups.

CCB chapter members may involve themselves at their own comfort level and may choose to learn new skills or sports, become involved in accessibility awareness, and educational activities or simply enjoy the company of others.

Membership provides inclusion, purpose, fellowship and social interaction with peers who understand and support each person's unique strengths and abilities.

The CCB was founded in 1944 by blind Canadian war veterans and schools of the blind. The national office is located in Ottawa with over 80 chapters across Canada. The CCB is the largest membership based organization for the blind in Canada and is known as the Voice of the Blind™.

The CCB offers programs to assist people living with vision loss, increase accessibility in all areas of life and bring awareness of vision issues to the public and government.

The CCB works to improve the quality of life for persons living with vision loss through awareness, peer mentoring, socializing, sports & recreation, advocacy, health promotion and illness prevention.

CCB's community-based model offer programs to assist those people living with vision loss, create awareness of vision issues to the public and government. Recently, the CCB has undertaken proactive programs such as mobile eye health and training for employment.

The CCB partners with a number of local, provincial, national and international organizations all of whom are dedicated to the same mandates and principals that CCB adheres to.

The CCB has implemented the Get Together With Technology (GTT) program which helps people who are blind, deaf-blind or with low vision explore the accessibility and usefulness of electronic devices in every day living.

LACK OF SIGHT IS NOT A LACK OF VISION

To learn more about CCB's programs and services, please visit www.ccbnational.net

Call toll-free 1-877-304-0968 Email: info@ccbnational.net



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Jane Beaumont, Nolan Jenikov, Kim Kilpatrick and Shelley Ann Morris

Funding:

Ottawa Community Foundation

Resources and support:

Canadian Council of the Blind and CNIB

Participants:

Members of the CCB Ottawa Listener's Book Club and the new After Hours Book Club

BOOK CLUB BENEFITS

Connections:

Book clubs are a great way to socialize, to meet other book lovers, and to talk about the reading that matters to the participants.

Discovery:

Book clubs expose the participants to new authors, new ideas and genres.

Support:

Members of accessible book clubs share experiences with peers about ways to overcome the challenges that can come with vision loss and print disability.

Community:

Book clubs can draw on the expertise of public libraries as well as organizations such as CCB, CNIB Foundation NNELS, and CELA. These may open doors to other accessible reading resources and recreational activities.

Life-long well-being:

Numerous studies have shown that social involvement and life-long learning promotes well-being.

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ACCESSIBLE BOOKCLUBS AND OTHER BOOK CLUBS

In most ways, book clubs are all the same. Groups of people who have read the same books gather to discuss their impressions of what they have read. Often when groups meet face-to-face, food and drink are provided.

For those who have disabilities, certain issues may arise, creating barriers to participation:

Sometimes, options for titles for accessible books may be more limited than for print books, making the selection and provision of reading material more difficult

Technology makes it possible for those with disabilities to read in a variety of ways. Rapid advances in technology can leave people in their wake; frequent upgrades in equipment and training are often necessary. Book clubs can help participants to find ways to gain access to infrastructure, new equipment and material as well as the training necessary for its use.

Transportation is a significant issue for those with disabilities who meet in person. Accessibility of the venue (lack of parking, stairs, the absence of elevators, inaccessible washrooms, loud fans, and scents) can make a physical environment very challenging for those who have certain disabilities. Inclement weather, and lack of orientation and mobility training for those new to vision loss makes it difficult for some to get to a book club. Virtual meetings can help, however, members who are new to this format will require training and support to feel comfortable meeting virtually.

Book clubs geared to those with vision loss often include talk about the quality of the book's narration. The pros and cons of human-narrated and synthetically-narrated speech, and various platforms for downloading and enjoying books are often huge topics of conversation.

STEPS FOR SETTING UP AN ACCESSIBLE BOOK CLUB

Find a 'place' to meet:

Decide whether the group will meet in-person, virtually or both. Each kind of meeting will have its advantages and disadvantages that will need to be considered carefully to make sure that no-one is excluded.

Look to organizations that serve those with vision loss to find out if they may have meeting space. Public libraries, community centres and other organizations may have space. Availability, cost, transportation and accessibility will be factors to consider.

If the book club meets virtually, the cost of the platform must be considered. For example, paid Zoom accounts are required for meetings that run longer than 40 minutes.

Find a time to meet/Frequency of meetings:

Some book clubs meet on a weekday, an evening or a weekend. Some book clubs, such as Ottawa's After Hours Book Club had been developed for those who may be working/studying and otherwise unavailable during the workday. Some book clubs meet during the day because participants may not feel comfortable travelling at night.

Most book clubs typically meet once per month; some take a break during the summer.

Find book club members:

Organizations that serve those with vision loss are a great place to start. CCB—chapters and Get Together with Technology program and CNIB could help to market a new book club. Other disabilities organizations, seniors' centres, colleges/universities' centres for students with disabilities, local libraries, community radio/TV and newspapers may help get the word out. Make use of Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).

Some book clubs are comprised of those with vision loss and sighted family members.

***Note:** Determine how large the group will be. If it is too large, all members may not have sufficient opportunities to contribute. An example: The After-Hours Book Club has approximately 20 members.

Choosing what to read:

What kinds of books would the Book Club like to read? Are there books or genres that should be avoided?

At the first meeting of Ottawa's After Hours Book Club, a discussion took place with each member listing what kinds of books they like to read, and which genres they did not like. This helped the group to determine what kinds of books we would choose.

There are a variety of ways to choose books. A lot will depend on the group. Some groups are able to develop their own reading lists, while other groups will need more support.

Many book clubs will designate one meeting per year to compile a reading list for the coming year. There are different ways to

develop this list. For example, the CCB Ottawa Listeners' Book Club works with a retired librarian from the Ottawa Public Library, who comes to the meeting with a list of books and their plot summaries. During the selection process, confirm the availability of potential books in an accessible format. Title suggestions can come from participants, authors the group has previously enjoyed and other sources, such as the Canada Reads lists www.cbc.ca/books

Other book clubs choose one member who will be responsible for choosing the book for the following month. At the very first meeting of the After Hours Book Club, three avid readers were chosen to 'champion' their book, like Canada Reads. Members 'voted' on the order of books to be read over three months. For our December's meeting, all members have been asked to suggest some 'light-hearted' reads.

Club Structure:

Every book club has various roles, and these should be designated so that all will know who-does-what:

Coordinator:

Someone is needed to coordinate the activities of the club, ensuring, among other duties, the timely ordering of books for those who need assistance with this task. This role can be fulfilled by an employee of a blindness organization, a librarian and sometimes, a volunteer.

Chair:

Someone is designated to chair the meeting. In some groups this is a rotating position. When hosting book clubs on platforms such as Zoom, a Host and Co-host can be designated—one to chair the meeting and another to handle the technical aspects such as

monitoring the waiting room and watching for raised hands when someone wants to speak. Hosts and Co-hosts also provide valuable assistance at 'in-person' meetings. Some people may require some additional help finding their way into the room, finding a seat and getting food/drink.

Communications:

Someone should be designated to send the invitation to the meetings, keep a list of members who will attend and provide the title of the book to be read for the next club. Compiling a list of attendees is important when using such platforms such as Zoom so that the Zoom link can be provided to them and not shared widely—to avoid 'bombers.' Knowing in advance who to expect at an in-person meeting may also help when members use parallel transit services as they sometimes arrive early or show up late. Tracking numbers of participants may also be necessary if the book club was established as part of a grant allocation and requirements for follow-up reporting.

Transportation:

If someone is driving other members to and from the book club, it is important to check with the organizations insurance policy as transporting others may require special guidelines such as a clean driving record, 25 years or older and certain levels of drivers' insurance.

SOURCING BOOKS FOR CLUB MEETINGS

Book clubs whose members require the books in alternate formats have a variety of options. Many public libraries offer e-books and audio which can be downloaded and read with apps such as Overdrive, Libby and CloudLibrary. As a public library member book club members can also register to borrow accessible items from the **Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA)** and the **National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS)**.

We recommend that accessible book club members use CELA to obtain the titles they plan to read each month.

Step 1: Each member must register with their local public library

Step 2: Members can then ask the library staff to register them with CELA or they can register online directly with CELA at:

<https://celalibrary.ca/register>

Step 3: Once they have suitable technology in hand members can download the chosen titles from the CELA website or request delivery of the book on CD or in single use Braille. Note: the use of CDs will be phased out in the next few years and it is strongly recommended that members learn to direct download titles from the start.

Testimonial from After Hours Book Club participant

“This book club is a regular gathering of people united by a common passion for reading. Being avid readers we actively discuss books that we usually read in advance before our Zoom meetings. We share our understanding of each book, analyze the development of its main story, characters, their relations, conflicts and actions. What I enjoy the most is that during our discussions there is always a variety of different opinions, interpretations

and points of view. They greatly enrich my understanding of the meaning of each book in terms of its literary, moral and social values.”

TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT

It is important to establish whether or not participants have access to Wi-Fi for downloading the material, and to make sure this is provided to those who do not.

Make sure that participants have a computer or device to allow them to access the books and, in the case of virtual meetings, to access these meetings. Book club members who do not have ready access to computers or devices can join a Zoom meeting by phone.

For those who cannot use newer technologies there may be older technologies that are still available. A priority for anyone organizing a new club is to encourage members to try new technologies and become comfortable with virtual meetings if necessary.

Borrowing Equipment:

To assist participants to use newer technologies, some book clubs have established a program in which newer types of equipment can be borrowed for a certain period of time. Funds allotted for the purchase of equipment can be requested when creating proposals for grants. For example, the Community Foundation of Ottawa allowed a certain amount of money to be designated to purchase new devices. These devices will be borrowed by Book Club members who would like the opportunity to try one. Criteria should be clearly established as there may be more borrowers than equipment. A Loan Agreement should be created and signed. If it is difficult for participants to sign a Loan Agreement in person, an attestation via email by the participant should suffice. Please see the example of a Loan Agreement in the back of this handbook, as well as a list of criteria that can be used to assess participants who wish to borrow equipment.

Testimonial from After Hours Book Club participant

“These Zoom Book Club meetings are invaluable. Interacting with various people, on a common topic is both fun and stimulating. The level of involvement is up to the participant, which is so important, during COVID times. The meetings are very well run and I credit the CCB for this.”

Training:

Training is one of the key components to an Accessible book club’s success.

Some participants may be new to vision loss and learning to read differently. Some may be using a new or different kind of technology.

Partnerships where training is offered are key to assisting participants to take full advantage of a book club. The Get Together with Technology (GTT) program has successfully provided book club members with training. The GTT team helps people to choose a device, such as a smartphone, tablet or computer. They have taught book club participants how to download their books from various sources, such as CELA. They help members to select and use a reading app, log on to a Zoom call or use a navigation app for finding their way to a face-to-face meeting.

RUNNING BOOK CLUB MEETINGS

Here are some things to keep in mind:

Discussion:

Should the discussion with a prepared reader guide, or is it preferable to go around the table, letting the discussion flow. When meeting on platforms such as Zoom, a decision must be made on whether or not to use the “mute” or “raise hand” functions. Regardless of format, the leader must make sure that all voices who want to be heard are heard.

Rating:

Does the book club want to rate the books that are read? If so, what would be the criterion?

Food/Drink:

At face-to-face meetings, how and when will food/drink be served? Would someone be appointed to assist people who are blind/low vision to get food/drink? Who will be responsible for supplying the snacks?

Social time:

How will the book club make room for the social part of the book club? Some groups save their social chats for after the meeting. Some do this first. Sometimes, book discussions spark personal responses that take the discussion far away from the book itself, but are relevant and deeply rewarding.

Housekeeping:

Whether meeting face-to-face or virtually, certain housekeeping items must be in place when holding book club meetings with those who have vision loss.

Face-to face meetings:

Letting others know who is present (roll-call), designating someone to assist with sighted guide or assistance with food. Use names when addressing a particular group member when seated around a table.

Virtual meetings:

Spend a little time at the beginning of each meeting telling people how to mute/unmute, raise/lower hands. There are things to keep in mind when hosting virtual book clubs with participants using Voiceover. Extra time must be allotted for technical glitches. Sentences may need to be repeated as Voiceover interrupts the conversation. Voiceover also announces when peoples' internet connections are weak and drop out. Chat should not be used as Voiceover will read entries when they appear in the chat screen. While some people can use their cameras, leaving video turned off may improve bandwidth and sound. Sources for conducting accessible meetings:

<https://accessibility.cornell.edu/event-planning/accessible-meeting-and-event-checklist/>

<https://zoom.us/accessibility>

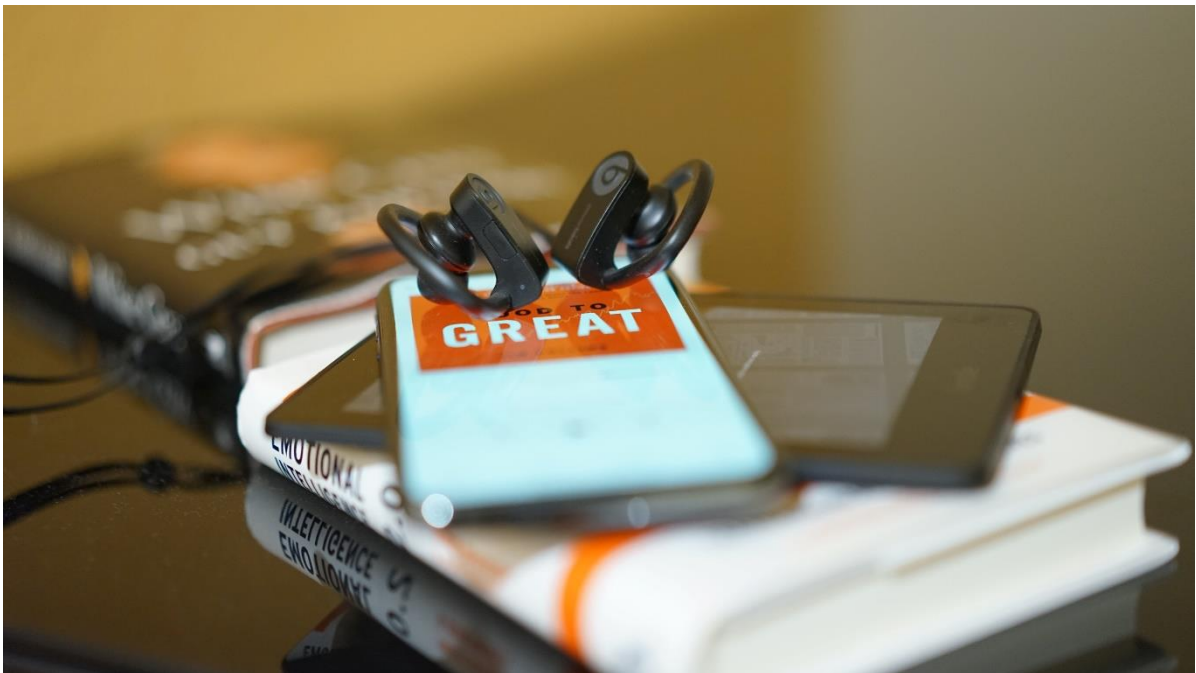
<https://www.cnib.ca/en/sight-loss-info/blindness-work/creating-inclusive-workplace?region=on>

CONCLUSION

We trust that this manual has served as a practical guide to any group or chapter who is forming or maintaining an accessible Book Club. We hope that the information will assist you in all aspects of your book club's development and maintenance.

As times and situations change, technology evolves, this manual will be subject to periodic updates. We welcome your feedback. Please contact CCB's national office should you want to offer feedback or suggestions.

Happy Reading!



LIST OF RESOURCES FOR FINDING BOOKS IN AN ACCESSIBLE FORMAT

CELA Centre for Equitable Library Access

Bookshare

NNELS National Network for Equitable Library Service

Local public libraries

www.cbc.ca/books

Other:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

LIST OF BOOKS READ BY THE CLUB

TITLE	AUTHOR

CCB OTTAWA LOAN AGREEMENT FOR Talking Book Device

Under the terms and conditions of this Agreement, the Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB) agrees to loan a DAISY talking book Device (the “Device”), purchased with funds from the Ottawa Community Foundation to:

_____ (the “Borrower”)

Borrower’s Name

Address:

Telephone Number: _____

Email: _____

Device name and Inventory Number:

Contact Person’s Information:

Contact Name & Relationship with Borrower:

Contact Address:

Contact Telephone Number: _____

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

- 1) The Borrower shall be registered with one of the CCB Ottawa Book Club Chapters.

- 2) The Borrower shall reside in a private home or an apartment. For security reasons, residents of long-term care centres, hospitals, nursing homes or other privately or publicly owned institutions, are not eligible to borrow a talking book Device.

- 3) In the event that the Device is lost or damaged, the Borrower shall be held liable, and shall be responsible for the cost of replacing the DAISY Device at the current market value.

- 4) The Borrower shall be responsible for obtaining appropriate training from GTT or another trainer if needed.

- 5) If the Borrower ceases to be a member of one of the Ottawa Chapter Book Clubs he or she shall return the Device along with all accessories in its original condition to CCB Ottawa.

- 6) The Borrower shall provide the CCB with the name of a Contact Person, who shall agree to return the DAISY Device to the CCB in the event that the Borrower is not able to do so.

I confirm that I have read and understood this Agreement prior to signing it and I agree to abide by the terms and conditions of this Agreement.

Signature of Borrower

Date

Signature of Contact Person

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

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Toll-free 1-877-304-0968
c/o Shelley Ann Morris
ccb@ccbnational.net

CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS USED TO ASSESS NEED/PRIORITY FOR EQUIPMENT LOANS

Have you used a funding program to help cover the costs of reading devices? If so, how long ago?

Do you currently use a disc player to listen to your books?

Do you have use of a smart phone or a similar device?

What type of phone or mobile device do you use?

How much storage space does it have?

How comfortable are you with using it?

Do you have a subscription to any other services such as Audible?

Do you like reading books that are narrated by a synthetic voice or human narrated books?

Do you use Braille?

If yes, do you have access to an electronic Braille display?

Do you know about single use Braille services provided by CELA?

Other Information provided by the participant:

SUCCESSSES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Use this form to track what worked well and lessons along the way. This may be useful when compiling your project completion reporting)

Successes:

Lessons learned:

ATTENDANCE TRACKER

(Use this document to track attendance should you require this information for your end-of-project report)

#	DATE	# of attendees	NOTES