

CAPER-BC: 30 Years of Making Print

Accessible | BY TARA ROBERTSON, ACCESSIBILITY LIBRARIAN

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Centre for Accessible Post-secondary Education Resources British Columbia (CAPER-BC) which makes textbooks accessible to students who have print disabilities. CAPER-BC is an organization, funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education, that works with Disability Service Offices in 20 post-secondary institutions to support students with print disabilities.

Our successes include access to independent electoral voting for people with disabilities, way-finding street identification, descriptive narration in Famous Players/Cineplex theatres, and much more. Some of ASIC's work has also benefitted sighted people, such as automated bus stop announcements and the ALRT tactile platform edging for safety on subway platforms.

So much has changed over time. We've moved from using human narrators to record books onto reel-to-reel tapes to today's workflow which is almost entirely digital. A couple of years ago our name changed from CILS to CAPER-BC.

However, the core service hasn't changed—we are still providing accessible learning and teaching resources to students and instructors who cannot use conventional print because of disabilities.

Accessible resources are created individually for each client. CAPER-BC staff work directly with clients and partners at the institutional level to identify the accessibility features and format required to most efficiently meet the client's specific needs. While alternate format production remains a focus for the CAPER-BC team, we fulfill more than half of all requests through our existing collection or loans from other organizations. As a centralized service, we are able to leverage an economy of scale to share resources amongst institutions. We ensure resources are only created or sourced once, avoiding duplication amongst institutions.

Here's what some of our students have said:

"Thank you so much for your work. I've listened to several sections and the voice speed is excellent, very clear and I want to thank you and the team at CAPER for your work. It makes a huge difference for me to be able to hear the material several times while looking at the material."
– BCIT student

"I can't tell you how much I appreciate your effort reformatting this file. Having ZoomText read to me sure saves me a lot of grief trying to read it myself in larger print. You are awesome!" – Kwantlen student

"Thank you very much for your wonderful service. In the first email I received from CAPER-BC, it was stated 'We're here to help.' and that sentence really made me feel relieved, less anxious and welcomed. Having a mental health disorder sometimes makes me feel like I'm a burden, but your organization made me feel that it's OK to reach out for help so I can achieve higher education. Again, thank you very much for your support." – Okanagan College student

"Alternate formats are a lifesaver for this disabled student! Saves me a lot of pain by not having to hold a heavy book in my neuropathy-afflicted hands." – University of the Fraser Valley student

"Your program is such a blessing for people like me with a learning disability. This has helped me improve my study time as well as continually helping me with my reading comprehension." – Camosun College student 



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