

Contributing to the ARC-BC Collection (FAQs)

Why do you need community members to contribute to the ARC-BC alternate format collection?

- ARC-BC is a joint project between PRCVI and SET-BC and is funded by the Ministry of Education. In the past, PRCVI has received funding to provide alternate formats for a small portion of students who would be designated as having a perceptual disability – primarily those with a visual impairment. In recent years, the organization has also supported those designated as having a “print disability”. However, ARC-BC serves a much larger population of students who have a so-called perceptual disability – one of physical, visual and/or comprehension disability. As such, the need for alternate format production has increased dramatically and the ARC-BC production staff cannot hope to meet all the alternate format needs of this group of BC students. Additionally, a small, provincially based team would not necessarily know what print materials are being used in any given district as most districts use locally developed curricula in addition to the standard BC K-12 curriculum.
- So, in order to have the ARC-BC collection be as useful as possible, we need community support and contributions to both increase the number of titles and file formats available and to improve the overall quality of the files. The more involved the community is and the more contributions that are made, the faster the collection will grow and the more students will be supported.

Can anyone contribute to the ARC-BC collection?

- Any ARC-BC registered user can contribute alternate formats or suggestions for alternate formats to the collection. The only exceptions are “student users”. Students, even though they are registered users, are limited users, being able to search and download materials but not submit or upload them. This is not usually an issue since the number of student users is extremely limited as students are given access to ARC-BC on a case by case basis after careful consideration. If students do have suggestions or have created alternate formats themselves, they can submit them through the registered user(s) on their school based team.

What types of print materials do you want as the basis for submitted alternate formats?

- The ARC-BC collection is based on the BC K-12 curriculum and represents those print materials that are currently being used in BC school districts. Alternate formats or suggestions for alternate formats should be limited to those print materials only. At some point the collection may grow to include leisure reading materials as well, but we would begin to include those materials only after we have a full collection of required curricular materials.

What if my English class is reading a novel that is not on the Ministry of Education recommended novel list – can I submit a request for it in alternate format?

- Yes – as long as it is a title that you are currently using in your classroom or with your students as part of their BC educational program.

I don't have time or the technology to create alternate formats – how do I submit a request for that title to be included?

- As a registered user, you can submit a request for a title to be added to the collection using the “Feedback” link that is located at the bottom of the ARC-BC website (www.arc-bc.org). This link will take you to a short form that allows you to send us a message about the title you would like to see. It helps if, when submitting the request, you indicate what file format type you would like as well.

If I submit a request for a title, how long does it take before I can download it from the collection?

- This is difficult to answer because it depends on several factors. When a title is requested, it goes on a “Requested Title” list along with the number of users that have made that request. Based on available budget and the number of times the title is requested, physical copies of the book may be purchased, scanned, and converted into alternate formats. This may happen quickly (within a week, let's say) IF you happen to request a book that has already been requested several times. If you are the only one making the request provincially, it may take some time as it would not necessarily make it to the top of the priority list until the more requested titles have been purchased and processed. In this case it is impossible to give a specific time period.
- There is one important exception to this and that is for specific requests from Teachers of the Visually Impaired who are making requests for one of their students with a visual impairment. PRCVI's existing process for receiving and processing these requests continues and should be followed as before.

If ARC-BC does not have a copy of the print book, can I send it in and have it converted to an alternate format?

- Yes – this is often a very cost effective way for school districts to create alternate formats for their students. You must keep a copy for the student with the perceptual disability, but if you have a spare copy of the print material, you can send it to the SET-BC Provincial Centre at 105-1750 West 75th Avenue, Vancouver, BC, V6P 6G2 (Attn: ARC-BC Production Staff) with a note that includes your name, school district and requested format. The book will be processed as quickly as possible and uploaded to the ARC-BC repository.

If I send a print book in for scanning, will I get the book back?

- No – the binding is cut off the book and the pages are fed through our duplex scanner. Then the book is kept, with the master digital files, in the PRCVI library. We must keep the book in case there is a problem during alternate format production or in case the electronic files become corrupted and we need to re-process the print book. If you happen to send in a print book that we already have (perhaps have just purchased) we would send the book back to you intact.

If I send a print book in for scanning, how long will it take before I can download it?

- Again, this is a difficult question that depends on two factors. Books that are sent in for scanning go to the top of the production priority list but there may be a number of books in that “queue” and it is a case of “first sent in, first served” UNLESS there is a true emergency situation (for example, a Grade 12 student who is in danger of failing a course unless he receives the e-text version of a novel). We hope teams avoid this situation, however, by planning ahead because we can’t guarantee a quick turnaround. Any time you are dealing with technology, issues or problems can appear which will affect timelines.
- The second factor that affects processing time is the file format requested. If teams are looking for a Level 1 (one star) .kes file, this can be processed and uploaded to the repository very quickly. Often within the week. However, if the request is for a derivative file format type, like an .mp3 of the book, this will require more time as the original scanned file must be edited and proofread before creating the .mp3. The production staff will estimate the time expected and you will be informed once the book has been received and assessed.

How will I know the alternate format of my book is ready to be downloaded?

- We make every effort to email the registered user who sent in the book as soon as it is available for download from ARC-BC. You can, of course, keep checking the repository regularly to see if it has been uploaded.

What type of technology do I need to create alternate formats myself?

- Generally speaking, most alternate formats are generated from an original scan of the print book. To do this requires some sort of scanner – flatbed or duplex – and a computer with appropriate software. You can use the software that comes with the scanner to create image files of the pages, but if you want to do any editing work (and you almost always do!), you will need software that will allow you to manipulate and edit the scanned images. This could be a program like OmniPage which will allow you to create e-text versions of the material or it could be a program like Kurzweil 3000 which will allow you to create .kes files, e-text files and audio (.mp3) files.

If I have the necessary technology and knowledge to create alternate formats, what should I do first?

- The first step any registered user of ARC-BC should take is to search the collection for the title and alternate format you are seeking. If it is already in the collection, then there is no need for you to spend time creating it yourself. We would encourage you, instead, to take that time and edit or improve the version already in the collection (see the questions about improving existing alternate formats below).

If I can't find the title I'm looking for or it isn't in the right file format, should I go ahead and create it?

- The entire ARC-BC community would be very appreciative of any community member taking time to create an alternate format of any print material being used in the schools. One of the strengths of ARC-BC is the ability for community members to submit alternate formats to the collection so others do not have to spend time and effort creating them in their own districts. Until ARC-BC was created, the same print book was being scanned and processed repeatedly throughout the province resulting in a tremendous duplication of effort – we hope to reduce or eliminate this and asking for community submissions helps us in this quest.

How do I know how to create the alternate format so it will be appropriate for the ARC-BC collection?

- To help community members create alternate formats that are useful not only to their students but to others, we have created a document called “Guidelines for Creating Alternate Formats”. It contains information which will help you create the best quality alternate formats possible, following a set of standards that our own ARC-BC production staff follows, and that will help in the development of derivative file formats (i.e. creating other file format types from the original alternate format submitted). We encourage anyone considering creating alternate formats to consult that guide first. It is available

on the ARC-BC Support Resources page of the SET-BC Learning Centre (Contribute to Collection module) or by requesting it from arc@setbc.org.

Once I've created the alternate format files, how do I submit them to ARC-BC?

- You can submit them electronically through the “Contribute to Collection” tab that is located at the top of the ARC-BC site when you are logged in (next to “Search”). Clicking that tab takes you to a page where you enter the basic information about the print material you've used and where you can browse to locate the file(s) and then upload them to the Community area of ARC-BC.
- If you have a large number of files and you feel it would take a great deal of time to upload them individually, you can also send them on a CD to the SET-BC Provincial Centre (105-1750 West 75th Ave, Vancouver, BC, V6P 6G2 Attn: ARC-BC Production Staff). Please include a note with your name and contact information.

I submitted an alternate format but it never went into the ARC-BC collection – why is that?

- There could be one or more reasons why your submission was not included in the collection. If it is in a file type that is commercially available, then we cannot have it available through ARC-BC. For example, if you purchased a .pdf version of a textbook, we can't then put that version on the site because others would need to purchase it from the publisher themselves. If your submission was of an alternate format that we already had and was at the same level of production (one, two or three star), then it would be redundant to include another, exact version of that print material. Finally, if your submission had problems – perhaps the scan quality was simply not high enough for it to be read with text-to-speech software – then it would not be included. The “Guidelines for Creating Alternate Formats” has good information on ensuring that your original scans of the best quality possible so you can avoid this situation.
- If any alternate format submissions are not going to be included in the ARC-BC collection, you will certainly be notified with an explanation as to the reason it can't be added.

I have found the alternate format that I needed, but it is only at a Level 1 (one star) stage of production – can I edit and proofread it and then submit this new version?

- YES!! This is the most important contribution community members can make. Editing and proofreading alternate formats is time consuming and the ARC-BC production staff can only work on a few titles a year. If the overall quality of the ARC-BC collection is to improve, community members will need to help edit those files most used. We are hoping that community members will take some of the time they have saved by having

alternate formats available generally (not having to create them) and use that time to give back to the ARC-BC community by improving a few existing ones every year.

How do I go about editing and proofreading an alternate format file that is already in the ARC-BC collection?

- Begin by locating the exact file you will be improving. On the detailed title page of the print title (the page that shows all the files available for that book and where you select which one you will download) you will notice a little note icon on the right side of the page next to any files that are Level 1 or 2 (one or two star). Click that icon to go to a page where you can write a note about what you plan to do to the file and when you plan to re-submit it (instructions for notes are on that page). You may be surprised to find someone else's note there indicating he or she is already working on improving the file so you don't have to! If that is not the case, leave your note and then download the file to your system.
- Check the "Guidelines for Creating Alternate Formats" to ensure you are editing and proofreading effectively.
- Once you've completed the editing process, go ahead and re-submit the file in the same manner as you would a new alternate format – through the Contribute to Collection tab at the top of the site. The only difference would be that you would add the word "edited" in the title field to alert the ARC-BC production staff to the fact that it is an edited file, not a new submission.

What if I want to add a DIFFERENT file format of an existing ARC-BC title?

- You would follow the same procedure as you would for submitting a completely new title – search the collection first to make sure it isn't there and then submit it through the Contribute to Collection page. This is where the ISBN is critical – the ARC-BC production staff will match your new file format to the existing record and add it to the available formats for that title.

How would I know who created a specific alternate format file?

- Each alternate format file that is submitted from the community is identified as having been produced by the community member's school district (you can see that under the file name on the detailed title page). Additionally, the name of the file creator is placed in the File Properties of the file itself for identification purposes and is recorded in the metadata records for that file so it can always be located if needed.

If I am interested in contributing to the ARC-BC collection, is there training available to help me get started or to improve my skills?

- The ARC-BC Provincial Team provides training for community teams interested in developing skills in alternate format production. This can be done remotely through online training or could occur in face-to-face workshop situations as well. Those interested are encouraged to contact us at arc@setbc.org to discuss your training needs.
- In addition, there is an annual “Contribute to Collection” project which involves the loan of an alternate format production station (computer, scanner, Kurzweil 3000 (colour) software) to school districts that have teams interested in developing alternate format production skills and contributing those created to ARC-BC. The project includes training for the team. District teams interested in participating in this project should contact us at arc@setbc.org for a project application form.

Where can I go for more information about contributing to the ARC-BC collection?

- You can get more information on contributing to the collection from the Contribute to Collection area of www.arc-bc.org, by visiting the ARC-BC Support Resources page in the SET-BC Learning Centre, or by contacting us directly at arc@setbc.org.