Transcript: Hyperlinks Summer Short

[Riane LaPaire] All right, so my name is Riane LaPaire. I am the Braille and Accessibility Testing Coordinator at the National Network for Equitable Library Service, and I'm also really involved with the Library Accessibility Resource Center project. With me today, I have Simon Jaeger, he is an Accessibility Analyst at NNELS and an accessibility expert.

So our presenters today come from across this land, living and working in what we now know as Canada. We respect and affirm the inherent Treaty Rights of all Indigenous Peoples and will continue to honour the commitments to self-determination and sovereignty which we have made to Indigenous Nations and Peoples. We respectfully ask for you all to take a moment to acknowledge the lands on which you reside.

So as we get started today, what is an accessible hyperlink?

Well first of all what is a hyperlink? A hyperlink is a link that users can click on or select to open a web page or move to another area in a document. When you add a hyperlink to your document they are highlighted in a different colour and often underlined. And so why are these important? Hyperlinks provide users a shortcut to more information without needing to add it in to the document. Informative hyperlinks or descriptive hyperlinks will let people know where the link will take them. Screen readers identify links in the document and then read the linked text. Hyperlinks need to be informative and descriptive for users of assistive technologies who navigate using links. Having a bunch of "Read More" links, for example, are not helpful.

So how do we create accessible hyperlinks?

So we can describe the link using clear, plain, and direct language. For example, use "Accessible Libraries website" instead of the URL: https://accessiblelibraries.ca And I think a lot of the times, sometimes screen readers will read it try and figure out the words. Some of you can correct me if I'm wrong here, but a lot of times it gets spelled out. Is that correct? It's kind of. Am I audible? This is the first time I'm using this. It's kind of like hashtags, actually, because most people don't bother capitalizing URLs because why would they.

So if you have accessiblelibraries.ca it's probably not going to spell it out. Sometimes it will if it has numbers as part of the URL, but it might say like "excessive blood libraries.ca." So if you, I mean one acceptable thing is to just put the text of the hyperlink as capital "A - Accessible," capital "L -Libraries.ca" and then that will be the link text. And it will be read out properly, without the HTTP stuff at the beginning. But generally speaking uncapitalized sets of words don't go well with screen readers. Perfect, thank you. So links using the URL are not informative or descriptive links, screen readers either... well we covered that now, I'm sorry. If your document is a handout or people will access it in a physical format use the simplest format of the URL. So you don't need to include the "https://" if it's not needed or if it's unnecessary. You can also, like if you have a shortened URL that's always nice to include rather than having the big long string of three lines of URL. And then links, like descriptive links, like "Read More" or Click Here" don't always adequately describe where the link will take you. Especially if you have like a page with like five or more of those. Where you have to read the surrounding text to find out what's going on. So how can we add hyperlinks in to a document? You can select the text and select "Insert Link." You can also add a hyperlink by selecting the text and using "Ctrl+K" in PC or "command+K" in Mac.

All right, so let's give it a try. I am going to open the document that I sent out in the chat and there are two URLs in the document and we're going to create them to be informative links. And then we will go through it together, and then we'll move on to questions. So I'm just going to switch my screen share here and... if I can get to them. Here we go.

All right so here we have a couple options where we have our URL. This one's kind of in a little bit of a header for the library. If we were printing this document out and handing it out we'd probably be fine to leave it like this, but we could change this to be a link instead.

So I'm going to go to "Insert Link," or you can right-click and do a link as well. And so the text to display is at the top and we're going to change that to something like "Your Library Website" and then the address is there and we can keep that the same because that Library website doesn't actually exist, and we can see how it changes there. And then there's another option down lower where we're going to want to change that as well. So "items may be renewed once online using your membership number and password provided by staff" and we can change that one as well. And change the display text to, let's see, "Your Library Website." Now those links will be the same, but they are taking you to the same place so it would be fine. However, if you are maybe this is a different URL where it's taking you to specifically where the renewal options are, we could edit that hyperlink and say "Renew on Your Library Website" and the link text will be there.

And so now our document has descriptive hyperlinks, and we can keep continuing to improve this document as we go in the next sessions.