

Addressing Institutional Challenges to Providing Accessible Digital Content

- Judy Ruttenberg, Association of Research Libraries
- Jonathan Lazar, Towson University
- Sheryl Burgstahler, Accessible IT Services, University of Washington



Commitment to accessibility

- > WIPO Treaty for the Visually Impaired
- > Joint Task Force on Services to Patrons with Print Disabilities
- > NDSR Fellow: Web Accessibility Toolkit
- > Accessibility & Universal Design Working Group
- > Visiting Program Officer for AUD

Digitized and born digital

- > More than 70% of ARL materials budgets on e-resources
- > Digitization of unique content (e.g. special collections)
- > Institutional and Disciplinary Repositories
- > Library publishing

ARL Accessibility Toolkit

“Research libraries have an important opportunity to meet the urgent need to make information resources accessible to all of their patrons, regardless of ability or disability. In so doing, libraries can fulfill their mission to be content leaders in higher education and enhance information access to their users. The path forward requires planning and collaboration across the research institution.”

What do they have in common?

University of Cincinnati • Youngstown State University • University of Colorado-Boulder • University of Montana-Missoula • UC Berkeley • South Carolina Technical College System • Louisiana Tech University • MIT • Maricopa Community College District • Florida State University • CSU Fullerton • California Community Colleges • Ohio State University: University of Kentucky • Harvard University

What is the legal basis?

- > Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
- > The Americans with Disabilities Act & its 2008 Amendments
- > State & local laws

But what if they don't specifically mention IT?

Consider Ability on a Continuum



see

hear

walk

read print

write with pen or pencil

communicate verbally

tune out distraction

learn

manage physical/mental health

Definition of “Accessible”

“Accessible” means a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, & enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally effective & equally integrated manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use. The person with a disability must be able to obtain the information as fully, equally & independently as a person without a disability.

Legal Cases: Lessons Learned

- > Conduct accessibility audit & develop corrective action strategy
- > Develop & disseminate accessible IT policy
- > Set & disseminate IT accessibility standards
- > Provide training & education
- > Develop procurement policies & procedures
- > Develop & publicize grievance procedure
- > Address developed, procured & used IT: websites; Learning Management Systems; Classroom Technologies; Banks & ATMs; purchased software

Approaches to access:



1. Accommodations
2. Universal design

Both are important!

Universal design =

“the design of products & environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.”

The Center for Universal Design

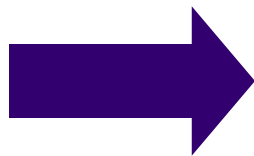
www.design.ncsu.edu/cud



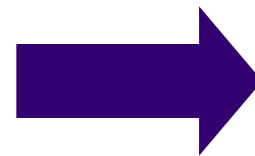


UD on a Continuum

All materials in
printed form



Materials on
website, some
as PDFs



Materials on
website, in a rich
variety of
accessible
formats

Key Aspects of UW Approach

- > Promote accessibility within context of universal design, civil rights, & inclusive culture
- > Develop & evolve “ideal state” & gap analyses
- > Lead a top-level IT accessibility task force with key stakeholders, clear direction, regular reports
- > With UW-IT’s Accessible IT Services as leader, resource, catalyst, community-builder, develop partnerships & empower stakeholders within their roles in a distributed computing environment
- > Provide guidance on an IT accessibility website

University of Montana Settlement Agreement

(with US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights March 2014)

- Include accessibility requirements in all IT procurement.
- Survey current & former students about their experiences with barriers due to inaccessible IT at UM.
- Perform an accessibility audit of all IT on campus.
- Create a remediation plan based on results of the audit.
- Provide 15 specific reports to the US Department of Education, related to areas such as web accessibility, classroom IT, & grievance processes.
- Provide a full report, due in March 2016, documenting how UM has met every required remediation action in the agreement.

Campus IT accessibility plan

- Be clear about a timeline. Example:
 - 6 Months: complete campus/school accessibility audit
 - 9 Months: ensure that IT procurement & purchasing processes include accessibility
 - 12 Months: ensure that major web pages (department, program) are accessible
 - 15 Months: goal to have 95% of course content online accessible
 - 18 months: major online student processes (admissions, registration, payment, graduation) are all accessible
- Start small with faculty syllabi!!

Be transparent about progress

- Provide monthly, publicly-posted reports comparing academic departments & how compliant they are
- Publicly state the progress on the campus-wide accessibility plan
- Include accessibility as a part of new faculty/staff training
- Have an accessibility statement on all university web pages

Who should be involved?

- Academic affairs, provost, deans, department chairs
- Academic senate, college council, council of chairs...
- Student affairs
- Students
- Central campus IT unit
- Business outreach units
- Libraries
- Online learning programs
- ADA compliance officer
- Procurement



It's not just disability support services!

Remind faculty

- This is not about lowering academic standards.
- This is not an academic freedom issue; it's a civil rights issue.
- Faculty have **legal** responsibilities to ensure access to students with disabilities.
- Begin with a syllabus that sets out clear expectations.
- Encourage students to talk to you about their learning & accessibility challenges.
- Use support services to help you make this happen. If they are not currently there, advocate for them.

Focus on the positive!!!

- For instance, accessible PDFs help ALL students search for information (inaccessible PDFs are unsearchable)
- Remind stakeholders of the penalties for non-compliance, but....
- Remind Deans and Chairs that compliance is something good that can be included on:
 - their departmental/dean annual reports
 - accreditation reports
 - reports to state government
- How can faculty get CREDIT for doing a good job?
 - faculty annual reports? promotion and tenure applications? (but respect faculty governance)

Example of a no-cost idea

- Require that, when any grant proposals are submitted to federal agencies for student development or educational materials or infrastructure, that there be specific budget for IT accessibility
 - This raises awareness early in the process, of the need to make sure that any educational materials being developed in the grant are accessible
 - If grant is awarded, PIs cannot say that there is no funding available for making materials accessible (e.g. captioning any videos that were developed)
- This could easily be enforced by some universities

Possible Questions

- > What are the best sources for providing guidance to your campus on concrete steps toward more accessible IT?
- > What partnerships on an off campus can you develop to support the IT accessibility goal?
- > How can I get support from administrators?