Integrating Accessibility into the Online Course Development Process

Another Piece of the Puzzle
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Building an Accessibility Initiative

What pieces of the puzzle do you start with?

1) Understanding the Business Cases and Requirements of projects;
2) Regular meetings with the key players working on the projects;
3) Create easy-to-use documentation to help ease accessibility into the project.
4) Build testing into the processes that are already being used, rather than creating new work.
5) Be a support to the key players as well as manage the overall progress of the overall project.
• Understanding the people you work with, the hurdles in which they may run into and finding common solutions that benefit multiple areas.

• Accessibility
• Mobile Design
• SEO
• Universal Design
• ESL

Document areas from various groups to create a Bridge Document showing where accessibility can be achieved versus areas of difficulty and why.
Roles and Responsibilities

It is never just one person’s job to ensure accessibility

- Accessibility Support helps to outline roles and responsibilities within accessibility.

- An Accessibility Group, Guidelines, Consistent Communication with Key Stakeholders, etc.

- Upper Management support.

- Defined requirements through policy and procedure.

- Overall support of an Accessibility Plan.

- Hands-on Individuals (Developers, Content Managers, etc.) need consistent communication to create accessible projects.
Your Roles and Responsibilities

Everyone in the Mason community has some responsibility when it comes to accessible web content. The role of the ATI is to help you understand what your part is and to work collaboratively with units throughout the University to provide resources and training. Our responsibility is to hold ourselves accountable to the standards in which we ask the Mason community to follow regarding web content and documents. Our goal is to provide a university-wide awareness of what web accessibility is and how it may affect yourself, a student or a co-worker.
Finding low effort areas that also have a high impact are essential for easy wins.

While working on some of the high impact, high effort areas may be more long term projects.
Areas of Accessibility

- Training and Awareness
- Policy and Procurement
- Websites and Applications
Examples of Accessibility in Higher Education

• Web Compliance
  • Ex: NC State Global Accessibility Awareness Day Website Challenge

• Policy
  • Ex: Example policies in higher education

• Procurement
  • Ex: George Mason University Procurement – ASC Review Board

• Training/Awareness
  • Ex: University of Wisconsin-Madison Web Accessibility 101

• Buy-In
  • Ex: Are you the next example?
Web Compliance

- Accessibility of websites
- Content
- Documents
- Videos
- Applications
- E-learning
Do you sign off on policy?

Do you help write policy?

What current policies apply to you?
Do you sign off on purchases?

Do you make suggestions for purchases?

Do you participate in RFP or other contract meetings?
If you'd ask coworkers what accessibility meant, how many different answers would you hear?

What does accessibility mean to you?

When we share knowledge – we can all have a better understanding of accessibility.
Buy-In

High Level Support

- Communication
- Consistent Language
- Accessibility Support
Background, Stakeholders, Existing Models

UNDERSTANDING ONLINE COURSE DEVELOPMENT AT MASON
Critical Moments in E-Learning @Mason

2010
- Participation on DE Council
- SACS Accreditation (2009)

2011
- Faculty Development Workshops for new online teaching faculty (IDs, Library, Faculty)

2012
- Bb/Bb Collaborate
- Supplemental Applications

2013
- ITAG
- Library Liaison (Accessibility)

2014
- Implementation of ITAG Recs
- Doc Accessibility Pilot

2015
- DE Pilot

2016
- DE Review Adopted and completed Each Semester
University has **increased number of online courses and programs by ~20% per year over the past 3 years** (DE Director, Personal Communication, May 2015).

**Key Offices:**
- DE Office (Provost’s Office)
- ID Team (LSS/IT Office)
- Academic Units (Colleges/Schools)
Existing Online Course Development Models

- **4 “P”s** – Proposal, Production, Pilot, and Portfolio (1-year)
- **OCDI** – Online Course Development Institute (6-week)
- Academic unit-specific Initiatives
• Largely driven by LSS/ID Team
• Faculty/staff participate in a 6-week asynchronous cohort
• Viewed as a more scalable going forward.
• End result is one fully developed module.
Baseline Design Considerations for Online Courses

- Visual:
  - Provide alternative text descriptions for all meaningful graphics (images, charts, graphs, SmartArt, objects)
  - Provide descriptions for videos where visual content is important to understanding subject matter.
  - Use styles in Office documents, headers to mark-up tables or frames (for websites)
  - Choose applications that support keyboard navigation and are compatible with screen readers

- Hearing:
  - Provide captions for all videos
  - For audio, provide transcripts

- Cognitive, Neurological:
  - Use consistent navigation, tab order, appropriate language level
DE COURSE PORTFOLIO REVIEW PILOT
Includes a review of the following areas:

1. Syllabus and Course Readings
2. Bb Learn
3. Word
4. PPT
5. PDF
6. Multimedia
7. Supplemental Applications

ATI Course Accessibility Checklist (Internal Use Only)
Updated 5/28/2015

The following checklist verifies that the instructional documents, audio, and video content used in Mason’s distance education courses are in accordance with Section 508 and WCAG 2.0 Level AA accessibility guidelines. While not a comprehensive review of all the areas covered by these guidelines, this checklist does examine areas that would have the most significant impact on the ability of assistive technology users to independently access their instructional materials (e.g., alt text, keyboard navigation, captions, transcripts, etc.).

PLEASE NOTE: This is NOT a comprehensive review of the accessibility of the faculty member’s course. The reviewers will examine snapshots (i.e., Course readings, LMS layout/structure, 2-3 documents of each type – i.e., Word/PDF/PPT, 2-3 videos, and supplemental applications) of the elements highlighted in the table below and provide feedback/guidance to the instructor on how to correct any accessibility issues that are identified.

UNDERSTANDING THE REVIEW PROCESS:
Reviewers examined selected examples of the elements highlighted in the attached checklist (i.e., course readings, LMS layout/structure, 2-3 documents of each type – i.e., Word/PDF/PPT, 2-3 videos, and supplemental applications) and provided feedback and resources for the instructor on how best to remediate any accessibility issues that were identified.

Tools used for testing accessibility:
- Website Accessibility Reviews – WAVE Toolbar
- MS Office Accessibility Reviews – Built-in MS Office Accessibility Checker

| 0.0 – Syllabus and Textbooks/Course Readings (Required and Supplemental) |
|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| ID | Textbooks/Course Readings | Yes | No | N/A |
| 0.1 | Is an electronic equivalent provided for all print reading materials? |  |
| 0.2 | Do all web articles/readings have a PDF/Word version available? |  |
| 0.3 | Course syllabus includes disability statement? | Yes | No | N/A |
| 0.4 | Instructor offers multiple formats/options for |  |
Sample – ATI Course Evaluation Document

Includes the following:

- Priority Recommendations and Resources
- Understanding the Review Process (i.e., testing tools used and process)
- Findings

ATI Course Accessibility Evaluation

As a part of the Office of Distance Education’s Open Call Course Portfolio Review process, the instructional materials used in your course (i.e., documents, audio, video, websites, and web applications) were examined to determine if they are accessible and usable by Mason students, including those with disabilities, in accordance with University Policy 1308.

This is not a comprehensive evaluation of all the areas covered by this policy; rather this review focuses on those areas that have traditionally had the most significant impact on the ability of students with disabilities to independently access instructional materials (e.g., alternative text descriptions, keyboard navigation, captions, transcripts, etc.).

COURSE:

Term: Spring 2015
Professor: 
Course Evaluated: 
Course Reviewer: 

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS and RESOURCES:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority Issue</th>
<th>Action Plan</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure all course videos have synchronized captions and/or transcripts.</td>
<td>Go to the ATI’s Accessible Media Request page for information on requesting this service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure all course videos are streamed through an accessible video playback platform (i.e., Kaltura, YouTube).</td>
<td>Upload course videos using the “Kaltura My Media” link in MyMason/Courses Tab. For assistance, contact the ATI Office and/or Learning Support Services.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visit ATI Website: Creating Accessible Documents</td>
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</tbody>
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DE Course Review Findings

- Not having various Syllabus formats: 13%
- Improper Hyperlink Text: 17%
- Word Inaccessible: 13%
- PDF Inaccessible: 8%
- PPT Inaccessible: 7%
- Videos not captioned and/or transcribed: 15%
- Video Platform Inaccessible: 4%
- Unused tools Hidden: 9%
- 3rd Party Supplemental App/Websites: 13%
- BB Course Structure: 1%
Important Considerations

LEARN FROM OUR EXPERIENCES...
Where we are lacking

• Training on our services (FREE CAPTIONING) would take care of 15% of the issues.

• Training on Creating an Accessible Syllabus (covers multiple formats, proper hyperlinks and Word documents) would cover 43% of issues

• Working with faculty to educate about 3rd Party Supplemental material would cover 13%

• Total: 71% fixing of errors through Education and Awareness that can be implemented into other Office trainings
Things to consider...

Review Procurement of Supplemental Applications and/or Educate Faculty in determining Books
- Do Professors get to pick any book they want? Do they know to check for online versions?
  Does anyone meet with the Publisher Sales Reps?

Identify your Strategic Partners
  • Is your institution investing in online learning?

Do you have policies and procedures
  • Accessibility training (i.e., captioning, document accessibility)

Is accessibility already integrated into the process?
  • Quality Matters? OLC? Bb Course Rubric?

Build off of the platform...
  • Canvas? Bb? D2L? Kaltura? Panopto?

Program evaluation?
  • Do you have a process for determining success/failure?
Questions

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