Auditing Advice

This page explains how to audit the current accessibility of all aspects of the organisation, including the frontlist and backlist book files, the website functionality and the backend submission platform. You could complete this yourself using self auditing, or employ an external auditor. You could also look at assessing current organisational knowledge, attitudes towards and motivations for engaging with accessibility work. For a full audit, especially if you have ambitions to go beyond legal compliance, you could consider all of the four steps below, but completing the first two would be sufficient as a minimum.

1. Automated Testing
2. Manual Checking
3. Assistive Technology Tests
4. End user testing from print disabled people

Automated Testing

There are many proprietary and open source tools available to audit accessibility using automated testing. Below we have collated our top picks for open source tools, however many publishers may have budget to purchase a tool to do this, therefore, we have included links to other curated lists of accessibility tools from recommended sources. It's important to note that automated testing is only part of the process and can only take you so far, as many accessibility features require human assessment, for example, automated tools can check for the presence of ALT text, but can only guess at it's quality, for example length or matching the file name, and full quality checking will always need a human.

Top Picks:

EPUBs

Ace by Daisy

Smart by Daisy

PDFs

PAC (PDF Accessibility Checker)

HTML and Web Pages

Wave Browser extensions

Accessibility Checker

More tools:

W3 Web Accessibility Evaluation Tools List

DWP Accessibility Tools and Resources

Accessibility Resources

A11y Project Resources

Manual checking

EPUBs and PDFs

We recommend our auditing tool, OARC, which includes just the parts of WCAG that are relevant to static files, and has additional checklist items for the two most common file type formats for open eBooks.

HTML and Web Pages

For HTML books and web pages, you would need to consider all of WCAG AA, rather than just the selected checklist above, which only includes aspects of standards that apply to ebook files that need to be manually checked. Below are a list of already available widely used full WCAG based checklists:

WebAIM's WCAG 2 Checklist

Checklist of Checkpoints for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0

Deque Accessibility Developer's Guide

Other checklists and related tools:

W3C Easy Checks

UK Government: Basic accessibility check

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines - Quick Reference

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines in Plain English

BCCampus - Accessibility Toolkit - 2nd Edition

Open University Library - WCAG 2.2 Level A and AA Basic Primo VE Checklist

Assistive Technology Tests

We recommend running at least a sample of eBooks through assistive technology in order to double check that everything works OK, and best if this is a range of the most commonly used tools that fulfill a range of functions. The minimum checks you complete should be checking that:

- the file opens
- the file displays properly in a way that's understandable
- everything within the file can be used with that technology

There are different types of assistive technology that are commonly in use and you should check through at least one example of each type.

Contrast, Colour and Font Changers

Try different settings using:

- Windows High Contrast mode
- Different browser's settings, such as Firefox and Chrome

Screen Readers

NVDA desktop screen reader is a commonly used open source application that you can download and test with. It's also recommended to check using mobile screen readers such as VoiceOver on iOS or TalkBack on Android. Complete the following tests using these technologies:

- Read every element and header
- Tab through every link
- Check every landmark, for example your footer and any navigation
- Check your use of Accessible Rich Internet Applications (ARIA)
- Check you can fill in any editable fields, for example writing and submitting a form

Screen Magnifiers

Use desktop features such as Windows Magnifier or mobile features such as Apple Zoom to check this. Complete the following checks using these features:

- Test up to at least 4 times magnification
- The spacing between elements, for example the gap between a form label and field
- That page elements display consistently on different page layouts - so someone who is zoomed in to a page can always find the search box, for example
- That users know when something happens outside the viewport - for example, with modals or error messages

Speech Recognition

Dragon speech recognition is a commonly used proprietary desktop screen reader that you can test with. It's also recommended to check using mobile speech recognition on iOS or Android. Complete the following tests using these technologies:

- Navigate to each feature using speech
- Activate every link, button, or interactive element, for example form controls or a media player using speech
- Enter text into any forms if applicable to your service using speech, say punctuation out loud and correct any spelling mistakes you make

Make sure you speak clearly, but naturally. You should also use a high quality headset rather than an in-built microphone in your local machine and make sure you’re at a consistent distance from the microphone.

More information:

WebAim articles

using NVDA to evaluate web accessibility

using VoiceOver to evaluate web accessibility

UK Government advice

GOV.uk Testing with assistive technologies

End user testing from print disabled people

While not common for small presses, and likely this is beyond available capacity, best practice would be to approach end users with disabilities to test a sample of book files, web pages and submission systems. Below is some advice on finding user testing opportunities like this, if presses decide to go down this route.

The best feedback will always come from end users with disabilities, and from older users, as it can uncover accessibility barriers that are commonly experienced by your readership, yet are not captured within legal minimum accessibility requirements.

In most cases, including users in evaluation involves:

- getting a few people with disabilities, and depending on your target audience, older users
- including them throughout the development process to complete sample tasks on draft book files and websites so you can see how different aspects of the design and coding could be improved before publication
- discussing accessibility issues with them

Sources:

W3C Involving Users in Evaluating Web Accessibility

W3C Involving Users in Web Projects for Better, Easier Accessibility

More information:

AbilityNet - A Step-by-Step Guide to User Testing

AbilityNet - Product and Services - User Accessibility Testing and Research

The GOV.uk website includes a set of hypothetical user profiles to give you working examples of the range of users and their needs. These can be used to develop a strong idea of accessibility use cases and may help make content design decisions.

Understanding disabilities and impairments: user profiles

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