

Web Accessibility Updates: Is Your Campus Using Google Apps?

by Sharon Trerise - Cayuga CC

What is Google Apps?

Gmail, Google docs, Google calendar, Google groups, and on and on.

Several accessibility issues with Google Apps have been brought to the attention of Google by different groups including NFB and California State University. In fact, SUNY Chancellor Nancy Zimpher sent a letter to Google "urging" them to improve the accessibility of their Apps because SUNY has already contracted with Google Apps for Education Service. To find out more about the accessibility problems with Google Apps, visit <http://ati.calstate.edu/mod/book/view.php?id=280>

Since the accessibility study at Cal State was done, Google has responded with changes, but there is still room for improvement.

Find out more at <http://www.educause.edu/blog/jcumings/GoogleAppsAccessibilityALight/238317>



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NFB and Penn State Resolve U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Complaint

From Sharon Trerise—Cayuga CC (Jarrett Cummings, EDUCAUSE)

[According to a National Federation for the Blind (NFB) press release on its agreement with Penn State], the university is committed to continued implementation of "a strategy to make all electronic and information technology systems used on its campuses fully accessible to blind students, faculty, and staff. The information technology systems covered include: course management systems, Web sites, classroom technology, library resources, banking services, and more." Penn State's spokesperson particularly references the university's plans to work with its technology service providers, "to see if their products and procedures can be adjusted to meet the needs of our students."

Key components of the agreement include Penn State's commitment to:

- Conduct a full accessibility audit of its complete technology environment in relation to the visually impaired by February 15, 2012
- Establish an Electronic and Information Technologies (EIT) Policy Statement to guide the development of its accessibility strategy, with procedures to fully implement the policy "across all disciplines" developed by May 30, 2012
- Implement institution-wide "training, instruction, and support" on the EIT Accessibility Policy and procedures by August 15, 2012
- "Develop and institute procedures that require the University to purchase or recommend only EITs that will provide the same programs, benefits, and services that they do to individuals without disabilities, except when it is technically unfeasible to do so," by October 15, 2012

The article and full text of the Penn State - NFB agreement is provided below.

<http://www.educause.edu/blog/jcumingsNFBandPennStateresolveUSDeptof/238851>

New ATB Requirements

By Catherine Carlson
Columbia-Greene
Community College

ATB Requirements have changed. The new requirements change the way we, for those of us that administer placement tests to students with disabilities, do business and may require policy changes on some campuses:

The full set of final rules, as now required by regulations that went into effect 07/01/11, can be found at <http://edocet.access.gpo.gov/2010/pdf/2010-26531.pdf> and the new ATB rules are on pages 66960-66967.

Please see information on page 3 about accessibility needs for the ATB requirement.



Popular Compliance

Chapter 219 – Looking Back and Looking Forward

Part I – Looking Back



By Carolyn Boone, Coordinator of Access and Equity Services –TC3

For those of you who started in this work after 2003, you may not remember all the struggles in obtaining and providing alternate format text materials. We were pretty much limited to Recordings For the Blind & Dyslexic (RFB&D, now Learning Ally), hiring readers to tape the materials or our own ingenuity and technical expertise in scanning materials. Scanned materials were pretty much limited to Word/RTF documents and cleaning up those materials was time-consuming at best, impossible at worst!

So what is Chapter 219 anyway? It is: AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to instructional materials for students with disabilities; and to amend chapter 219 of the laws of 2003, amending the education law relating to providing printed instructional materials for college students with disabilities, in relation to the effectiveness thereof... It's worth looking back at the original instructions for implementation of the law. Some are noteworthy for their current irrelevance or for their projected outcomes yet to be realized:

Chapter 219 definition of "timely manner":

Publishers will provide requested text (using the hierarchy of preferred file formats presented below) within 15 business days of receipt of a request form including all necessary information pursuant to statute. Publishers can use the attached form or a form of their choice. If the publisher is unable to meet this timeline, notification will be given to the college, within the aforementioned 15 days as to when the requested text can be provided.

The college or university 504/ADA compliance officer or disability services coordinator may e-mail requests for alternate format material to publishers but must follow-up by fax or hard copy. If a student with a disability contacts the publisher directly, the student will be referred back to the college or university 504/ADA compliance officer or disability services coordinator for determination of eligibility. [emphasis added]

File format standard to be provided by the publishers:

Key stakeholders at the roundtable discussions agreed that primary consideration should be made to provide materials in the format that is preferred by the student. Keeping student preference in mind, it was also agreed that New York State would set the long-term goal of providing full text implementation of the ANSI/NISO Z39.86-2002 standard, the official name for the American National Standard developed by the National Information Standards Organization (NISO) and approved by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). This globally recognized technical standard, sometimes referred to as DAISY3 (Digital Accessible Information System) or DTB3 (Digital Talking Book), is meant to facilitate the creation of accessible content and was originally developed to benefit people unable to read print due to a disability (see http://www.daisy.org/about_us & <http://www.loc.gov/nls/z3986/> for more information).

New ATB Requirements—Accessibility needs:

The two most widely used Placement Test Companies, Accuplacer and COMPASS, both require all test administrators to complete a certification process.

Did You Notice??

..that Accuplacer has added a new set of questions regarding ATB Testing w/ Accommodations that requires self-disclosure by students with disabilities? Accuplacer is reporting to the Department of Education the nature of disability and usage of accommodations.

Since ASSET is no longer approved as an ATB approved instrument, and COMPASS is not accessible to text readers or screen readers, Accuplacer is the instrument of choice for students with disabilities.

As Carolyn Boone noted in the past, ASSET can be used as an ATB instrument if, after having done an individualized assessment, the disability support provider determines that the student in question cannot use an approved ATB test based on the disability, but those situations should be few and far between.

Bottom Line: Accuplacer is the most accessible ATB approved tool on the market at this time and is compatible with the Universal Reader in the Premier suite, as well as Zoomtext, JAWS and WindowEyes.

Popular Compliance

Chapter 219 – Part I – Looking Back - continued from Pg. 2

To the extent possible, system-wide implementation of DAISY3 will be available by January 2007 for newly copyrighted products. Many publishers and colleges are not prepared to meet the DAISY3 standard at this time. Realizing that it may take time for both entities to acquire necessary technology and the subsequent learning curve, the following hierarchy of preferred source file formats that the colleges will receive was agreed upon: [emphasis added]

Full-text DAISY3 (the ANSI/NISO Z39.86 standard) is the ideal format when possible; Accessible HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) which can be created and processed by a wide range of tools and uses tags to structure text into chapter headings, page numbers, section headings, and anchored placement of graphic images with descriptors. Guidelines for writing accessible HTML can be found at: <http://www.w3.org/WAI/resources/#gl> ;

Accessible and structured PDF (Portable Document Format - a format that preserves the fonts, images, graphics and layout of the source document) according to guidelines developed by Adobe (<http://www.adobe.com/accessibility/>); Microsoft Word™ and ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange – a numerical representation of characters providing straight text with no formatting such as tabs, bold, etc.) only as a last resort or where it can be justified such as an old textbook or a novel. Typically, colleges would prefer a desk copy of older publications rather than ASCII.

These criteria apply to both printed instructional and non-printed instructional material as described below. The advisory group will monitor implementation over the next several years to determine capability of publishers and institutions of higher education to implement the DAISY3 standard.

If you'd like to read the full memo on implementation, you can find it at: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/persprep/chap219.htm>.

So how many of you actually follow up your email request with a fax or hard copy? How many even email? We've come a long way, baby! How many of you get DAISY files from publishers? Or accessible HTML? We've got a long way to go, baby!

This legislation had a sunset date of three years, with the expectation that alternate format would be readily available by then. Need I mention the legislation has been renewed twice since then?

The advisory group that was formed as part of the original Chapter 219 legislation was an ad hoc group representing all the stakeholders and this group played a key role in moving alternate format forward. It is New York's legislation and the work of this group that advanced the provision of alternate format textbooks on the national level. Many publishers felt that this was a framework they could work within. Unfortunately the renewals of Chapter 219 changed the advisory group into a political-appointee system and that has slowed progress as the political appointment process was (and is) political and cumbersome.

So where are we headed? ... We hope you're looking forward to reading:

PART II – Looking Forward in the next newsletter!

Text-to-Speech software on Mac computers

With their VoiceOver and Text-to-Speech features, Apple computers provide accessibility to individuals who have difficulties reading text. While VoiceOver allows an individual to control the computer without seeing the screen (with options for plug-and-play support for braille displays), the Text-to-Speech feature is useful for students with reading disabilities who wish to have digital textbooks, e-mail, web pages, or spreadsheets read aloud.

Directions for turning on the Text-to-Speech feature on a Mac computer are as follows:

1. Open the System Preferences panel under the Apple icon.
2. Click on 'Speech.'
3. Select the 'Text to Speech' tab.
4. Check the option 'Speak selected text when the key is pressed.'
5. Click the 'Set Key' option.
6. Choose one modifier key such as Command, Control, Option, or Shift, plus one other key of your choice (such as the letter "T"), then click OK.

Now each time you type this key combination, your Mac will read aloud selected text.

To choose the narrator voice, click on the 'System Voice' pull-down menu followed by 'Show More Voices.' You can change the rate of speech by adjusting the Speaking Rate slider.

Exams: computer-reader vs human reader

The student's preference may surprise you.

Andrea Snyder and Zach Dubord from Univ. of Binghamton provided an excellent overview of converting math and science-related information to accessible formats. The steps they outlined may have seemed overwhelming, but knowing the process will be necessary if you have a student who is tech savvy and wants course materials and exams in an accessible alternate format.

A recent case at Florida State Univ. involved two students who claimed they were unable to access their math textbooks or use the online course software for the math course because it was not fully accessible. Additionally, the students argued that having their exams read to them by a human reader was not equivalent to accessing an electronic version of an exam using a screen reader such as JAWS and put them at an unfair advantage because they were accustomed to the way a screen reader read the content and a person may or may not read the content the same way.

Read more about this case at the Chronicle of Higher Ed blog site, Wired Campus (<http://chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus/blind-florida-state-u-students-sue-over-e-learning-systems/32028>) or in an article by Accessibility Research Consultant, Steve Noble at <http://accessiblemath.dessci.com/>

SOFTWARE Picks

FREE Closed Captioning for YouTube Videos

Tamara Mariotti
Mohawk Valley
Community College

Videocritter is an easy to use free captioning tool that can export captions in the YouTube format so you can take advantage of Google's machine-translation service to make your videos much more understandable for those who are deaf or hard of hearing, and for individuals with cognitive needs.

You must create a free account in order to use this online program. This will create a transcript captioning file to download to your desktop and can be uploaded directly into the YouTube account that has the original video file. Once added to YouTube the person who requests CC will just click on the CC button within YouTube to view the captioning.

<http://videocritter.org>



Choosing a Text-to-Speech Software Program

by Andrea Snyder - Binghamton University

When selecting a text-to-speech computer program for your campus, there are a wide range of options. NYSDSC members have offered feedback on the text-to-speech programs they recommend in the hopes it will simplify your decision-making process.

Premier: "Very easy to demonstrate and use. Reads tests to students, as well as books."

Kurzweil: "We have version 11. While it cannot read the internet or math ML documents as version 12 can do, it is easy for students to use. We use the more expensive Professional version so students can scan text directly into the program and hear it read aloud. Students can digitally highlight important parts of the textbook and extract this text, as well as create visual maps to organize essay ideas."

Balabolka: "Quick, easy to use, free software program. Students can "cut and paste" text into it. Some students use it to hear the papers they typed read aloud so they can more easily find and fix errors."

George Irwin at Syracuse University's Office of Disability Services has developed a comparison of some of the common text-to-speech software. (See page 3.)

With the exception of Adobe Reader, all programs on the list can read MS Office files. Each program (except Kurzweil) uses MS voices, while several programs have the option of adding voices. The programs vary in their ability to read PDF files, e-mail, and HTM documents. Some programs allow students to highlight text as it is read aloud or change the speed at which the text is read. Still others can download the audio file to an MP3 player. The free programs are noted with an asterisk.

Common Text To Speech Readers

Developed by George Irwin at Syracuse University's Office of Disability Services

Program	PDF files	E-mail	HTM	To MP3	Add voice	High-light	FF & Rev	Adjust speed
Kurzweil 3000	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Verbose		X	X	X				
Natural Reader	X		X	X	X			X
TextAloud	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
ReadPlease*		X						X
ReadPlease Plus		X	X	X	X		X	X
Flamereader	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Balabolka*	X	X	X	X				
ispeech*	X	X	X					
Dspeech*	X		X	X				
Ivona Reader	X	X	X		X		X	X
TextSpeech Pro*	X	X	X	X	X			
Sayvoice	X			X	X			
Read&Write Premier	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Adobe Reader*	X				X		X	X

EYE ON IT

Trends I

George E. Irwin
Syracuse University

Once and awhile someone comes up with something that is worthwhile.

Access Text Network has a Beta tool that searches the most commonly used databases from one entry and lets you know if that title is available. You might want to check it out!

Here is the link

www.accesstext.org/fedsearch.php

Trends II

Tamara Mariotti
Mohawk Valley Community College

Texthelp Systems

Releases Powerful Cloud-based Apps for Mobile Devices

The Apps include: Read&Write Web, eBook Reader for Bookshare® eBooks, Speech, and Dictionary.

Colleges are looking for Assistive Technology (AT) solutions that allow their students to use iPod, and iPad devices at school and at home to access digital content.

The Apps are FREE for Schools/Colleges with Read&Write GOLD Unlimited Site Licenses (V10 PC/V4 Mac) who have a current SMS agreement!

For more information:

http://www.texthelp.com/page.asp?pg_id=10152&id=804



Upcoming Events

- [14th Annual Accessing Higher Ground](#)
Accessible Media, Web and Technology Conference
November 14 - 18, 2011
- [AHEAD Conference 2012](#)
New Orleans, Louisiana
July 9 - 14, 2012
- [2012 CSUN Conference](#)
San Diego, California
February 27 to March 3, 2012

Faculty/staff Training Links

BOOK: [Making Online Teaching Accessible: Inclusive Course Design for Students with Disabilities](#)

Norman Coombs

ISBN: 978-0-470-49904-7

EASI Equal Access to Software and Information
WEBINARS

<http://easi.cc/clinic.htm>

Success Strategies for Nursing Students with Mental
Illness

<http://www.minoritynurse.com/nurses-disabilities/success-strategies-nursing-students-mental-illness>

NY Tech-Connections Issue 02

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