

Web Accessibility Updates: Your Campus Needs to Know....

By Sharon Trerise - Cayuga CC

A growing list of technology-related OCR complaints involves a college close to home – Penn State. Last year, the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) initiated the complaint which alleges several violations of equal access to technology for students and faculty who are blind or visually impaired, citing inaccessible:

- ⇒ Departmental websites including Disability Services web pages
- ⇒ Web pages leading to the library catalog
- ⇒ Online course management system which, coincidentally, is Angel
- ⇒ “Smart podiums” in classrooms
- ⇒ Campus ATM kiosks

Read more about the Penn State case at

<http://www.nfb.org/nfb/NewsBot.asp?ID=702&MODE=VIEW>

Other recent cases:

3/15/2011 Adoption of Google Apps Program Discriminates Against the Blind

<http://www.nfb.org/NewsBot.asp?MODE=VIEW&ID=771>

4/26/2011 Justice Department Reaches ADA Settlement to Make Law School Application Processes Accessible to Blind Applicants

<http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/2011/April/11-crt-519.html>

Technology accessibility is a topic which has been simmering for years and is now starting to really heat up. OCR's decision on the Kindle issue (http://www.ada.gov/kindle_ltr_eddoj.htm) is evidence that OCR is going to be tough on these issues.

Pass this information along to the IT director and webmaster on your campus. If you need help talking to your campus IT staff about this issue, the NYSDSC Access Technologies Committee may be able to help.



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Online Resources for Alternate Format Books

By Andrea Snyder - State University of New York at Binghamton

In an effort to increase student independence, it is important to introduce free online resources where students may acquire textbooks in an accessible format on their own. While some of these resources require membership to gain access, others are available without a membership.

1. www.learningally.org Qualifying students with a print-reading disability may sign-up for a free membership to Learning Ally (formerly known as Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic or RFB&D) and have access to audio books via a free download to either a PC or Mac computer.

Students frequently inquire as to how to increase the speed or volume control after downloading a Learning Ally audio recording. When using Windows Media Player on a PC, speed control is accessed by clicking on the “View” menu, followed by “Enhancements,” and “Play Speed Settings” or by accessing the “Play” menu followed by “Play Speed.” Volume control is available by clicking the volume button at the bottom of the screen beside the play/pause button or by pressing F8 for lower volume and F9 for louder volume. On Mac computers, press the Option key together with the plus sign to increase the volume. Press the control key with the plus sign to increase the speed of the playback. Manuals with other shortcut keys are available at the Learning Ally website.

2. www.bookshare.org Free memberships to Bookshare are available for qualifying students with print-reading impairments. Using Bookshare, students may download digital books, as well as the software to hear books read aloud. If students experience difficulty “opening” the books after downloading them, a quick tip to “unzip” the book files is to select the .zip book file, choose “Extract All” from the File menu, select a location for saving the files, and enter their password.

3. www.gutenberg.org and www.librivox.org These websites are useful for finding the text or audio from books in the public domain such as classic literature and philosophy books written pre-1923. The text can be “cut and pasted” into text-to-speech software to hear it read aloud.

4. www.worldcat.org The World Library Catalog will inform students if a professional audio book recording has been created from a particular title and the libraries that carry this book. Students can then request the audio book from a particular library or have it sent to their local or university library through interlibrary loan.

CLOSED CAPTIONING FOR YOUTUBE VIDEOS

By Andrea Snyder—
State University of New York at
Binghamton

When professors post videos on YouTube for students to view, it can be a challenge for students with hearing impairments unless closed captioning is available. The easiest way to caption is when the video is initially uploaded. Here's how to request automatic machine captioning when uploading.

YouTube videos:

1. Login to your YouTube account
2. Click on the user name link in the upper right of the page
3. Pick My Videos
4. Click the edit button next to the video's name
5. Click the Captions and Subtitles tab
6. Under the Machine Transcription heading, click on Request Processing. If there is no Request Processing button, then a machine transcript has already been created.

Machine captions aren't perfect, but if we request them for all our videos at the time they are uploaded, we are taking steps to improve video accessibility. You can preview the machine transcription file in YouTube by clicking on its link (after having followed the instructions above). In order to edit errors in the transcription, click the Download button to the right of the machine transcription, open it on your local computer with a plain text editor, correct the errors, upload it back to YouTube, and select it as the default transcript for that video.



Popular Compliance

Enforcement Actions Regarding Access to Technology Intensify



Reprinted with approval by Salome Heyward, J.D.
<http://www.salomeheyward.info/>

Agreements between DOJ, the Law School Admissions Council and Law Schools' recent events reflect that ADA compliance enforcement at the federal level continues to be focused on access to technology and the obligation to adopt measures to provide "effective communication" for individuals with disabilities. The Department of Justice (DOJ) announced settlement agreements with the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) and John Marshall Law School, on April 25, 2011, regarding the use of an on-line application service.

The agreements addressed the fact that the LSAC on-line application service used by law schools nationally to process applications is inaccessible for applicants who are blind and who have low vision because the process does not enable individuals to use adaptive equipment, such as screen readers. The agreement with LSAC provides that by the beginning of fall 2012 the online application process will be fully accessible to individuals who use screen readers. The agreement with the Law School requires the school to modify its website "to notify potential applicants of a process they may use to apply to law school until the LSAC electronic application process has been made fully accessible" and to cease using the LSAC process for the fall 2012 application cycle if the LSAC site is not fully accessible at that time.

The attitude of DOJ regarding access to technology and the agency's compliance efforts are clearly reflected in the following statements by Assistant Attorney General Thomas Perez:

- ⇒ "Increased use of the Internet or other electronic technologies may enhance convenience for law schools and applicants alike, but the rights of individuals with disabilities may not be violated in the process."
- ⇒ "The ADA requires equal access to educational opportunities, and the Civil Rights Division is committed to vigorous enforcement of the ADA."

It is also important to note that the LSAC application controversy involved complaints against 18 other Law Schools many of which are yet to be settled.

These agreements are the latest in a series of important enforcement actions by DOJ concerning technology that include:

- ⇒ The joint letter from the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Department of Education (DOE) to all college and university presidents discussing the obligation to provide equal opportunity to technology and to ensure that use or adoption of emerging technology includes access to individuals with disabilities was discussed (January 13, 2010);
- ⇒ DOJ's settlement agreements with a number of institutions regarding their plan to use Kindle DX (electronic book reader), a device that is not fully accessible to students who are blind or have low vision (March 2010); and
- ⇒ DOJ's proposed regulations regarding the Accessibility of Web Information and Services

The message that postsecondary institutions should take from this enforcement activity is that they are in the crosshairs of the efforts of federal enforcement agencies to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive equitable treatment with respect to access to technology. It is abundantly clear that a complacent attitude regarding access to technology is no longer an acceptable position to adopt or maintain. Postsecondary institutions must begin to get their houses in order by taking a more affirmative or aggressive stance with respect to this issue.

A Preconference Workshop with Dr. Salome Heyward will be held on Tuesday, June 14, 2011

NYSDSC June Meeting at "The Inn on the Lake", Canandaigua, NY

To register or for more information go to:

http://www.nysdsc.org/meetings/NYSDSC_PreConfFlyer_w_Form.pdf

By Cyrus Hamilton—Cornell University & Tamara Mariotti—Mohawk Valley Community College

RFB&D Gets New Name, New Face, New Goals

RFB&D, which serves over 300,000 K-12 students, college students, and service members, announced earlier this year that they are changing their name to Learning Ally. Shortly before the announcement, the Princeton, NJ based company announced a new CEO, Andrew Friedman.

The move to change the name from the well-established brand of RFB&D took more than a year of research. After listening to its customers, RFB&D decided to update their name for two primary reasons: First, to better reflect who their customers are, stating that most subscribers are not blind nor dyslexic; and Second, subscribers to the service did not want to be identified as having a particular disability and wanted to be recognized as a person first and wanted the focus to be on access rather than any particular disability.

Learning Ally's updated mission encompasses all persons who share a passion for learning regardless of their ability to access the printed word. This reaffirmation of its values is best captured in its new slogan, "making reading accessible for all".

With all the changes, Learning Ally continues to be a non-profit 501(c)3 organization that is funded by the U.S Department of Education, state and local programs, and the contributions of volunteers, foundations, and corporations.

To learn more about the changes and how they may affect you, visit <http://www.learningally.org>

Affordable Alternative Technology Solutions

By Jeremy Zhe-Heimerman—State University of New York at Cortland

With the prevalence of the affordable laptop, fewer students care to use college labs for the bulk of their work. This makes our expensive software irrelevant to many students except in testing situations. Some institutions have responded to this by purchasing "at-home" type licenses that allow students to access Kurzweil 3000, Premier AT, or something similar on their personal computers. Others have continued to provide text-to-speech software for campus labs while also training students in the use of affordable software they may acquire for their own computers.

Students with PCs have had success using Free NaturalReader. It will pick up the PC's pre-installed voices in its two interfaces. In the default interface, the user can open up any text or RTF file and have it read aloud with sentence or word highlighting. Images are not displayed and some formatting might be lost, however, this interface works quite well for reading a book without graphics. The second interface is called the Floating Bar, which hovers over any program open on the screen. One may open a text-based PDF, website, or another document, select text to be read aloud by dragging the mouse over it, and click the play button. While this preserves the page image in a graphics-filled PDF, words are not highlighted as they are read and one must constantly select text rather than have it automatically read the entire document. For \$50, students may upgrade to the Personal version of NaturalReader, which includes the VW Kate and VW Paul voices and the conversion of text to mp3.

There are other affordable text-to-speech PC applications, but it seems that none beats NaturalReader. ReadPlease was once popular, but it has not been upgraded in years; TextAloud offers a \$30 version and a bit more functionality, but it seems needlessly complex; Balabolka is a free software that will open files without images such as in PDF and Word, and converts to mp3 and allows for pronunciation correction but does not offer a toolbar, making it less than ideal for textbooks with images.

If a student has a Mac, I demonstrate its built-in text-to-speech capabilities. The default voice is better than Microsoft's and most students love that they can simply select text and use a hotkey to have anything read aloud. A couple students, though, have found it useful to purchase GhostReader. Since the free 14-day demo is fully functional, I encourage students to try it and see if it's worth \$40. Those who purchase it appreciate that it can convert text to mp3s and that it includes word highlighting, both of which are unavailable with the basic Mac OS.

As Bookshare adds more books to its library, more students are able to download their textbooks and the free Bookshare version of Read: OutLoud with free Acapela voices. It can be useful to have an institutional membership to Bookshare, but to give students more freedom and responsibility, I assist them with signing up for a free individual membership whenever they have a required text that is available from Bookshare. The Read: OutLoud Bookshare version easily navigates through Bookshare's DAISY files and allows highlighting and note taking. However, it may only be used to read Bookshare books and the Acapela voices are not picked up by other text-to-speech programs. Some students really appreciate the high quality Read:OutLoud interface and Acapela voices, but others are content reading their Bookshare books with whatever text-to-speech application they primarily use.

No matter how good an application is, it won't help a student who can't install it. Despite the stereotype of today's students as technological whizzes, many require assistance downloading, installing, and learning to use A.T. software. I encourage them to make an appointment to bring in their laptops and go through that process with me so they can focus their time and energy on reading—not on struggling with technology.

Creating Accessible PDFs

By Andrea Snyder—State University of New York at Binghamton

Tips to Remember!

Adobe Acrobat Professional is capable of converting many different types of files into an accessible PDF. If you have a document scanned as a GIF, JPEG, PNG, TIFF, or Microsoft Office file, any of these can be made accessible for your students.

⇒ Keep in mind that if the original scan is of poor quality, the OCR programs will not be able to decipher the words and the document will not be read aloud correctly.

⇒ Some, though not all, PDFs downloaded from online databases, journals, or publishers may already be in an accessible format. Test the file by following the steps above, "How to Test PDF's Accessibility". If the document can be read aloud, you may not have to run an OCR scan.



It is important for faculty to learn the steps to create accessible PDF's. This ensures students with vision or reading impairments who rely on text-to-speech software access to course readings. Software programs such as Adobe Acrobat/Professional, OmniPage, and ABBYY Fine Reader have Optical Character Recognition (OCR) capabilities to create an accessible PDF. Free trials of most of these programs are available online.

Creating Accessible PDF's Using Adobe Acrobat

To create an accessible PDF format using Adobe Acrobat:

1. Open a scanned document in Adobe Acrobat.
2. Click on the "Document" pull-down menu > OCR Text Recognition > Recognize Text using OCR.
3. Choose "All Pages." (Options are given to recognize only the Current Page or a group of pages if preferred.)
4. Choose "Primary OCR Language: English (US)" > click "O.K".

You now have a document that looks identical to the original scan, but can now be read aloud by text-to-speech software.

How to Test the PDF's Accessibility

Follow these steps in Adobe Reader (a free download) or Adobe Acrobat to hear the text read aloud.

Click on the 'View' pull-down menu > Read Out Loud > Activate Read Out Loud, followed by the 'View' pull-down menu > Read Out Loud > Read This Page Only.

If the document reads aloud, but the text is read out of order, adding "tags" to the document may help. In Adobe Acrobat, choose "Advanced" > Accessibility > Add Tags to Document. (This command adequately tags most standard layouts so text-to-speech software reads the PDF in the correct order, but it cannot always correctly interpret the structure and reading order of complex page elements.)

Adobe Reader Version X

<http://www.adobe.com/products/reader/features.html#featureList2>

Adobe accessibility Link

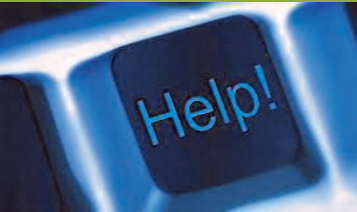
<http://www.adobe.com/accessibility/?promoid=DJGVE>

Tips for Newcomers

By Zach DuBord—State University of New York at Binghamton and Suzanne Sprague—State University of New York Institute of Technology at Utica/Rome

We have found AccessText to be a solid resource for alternative textbook requests. What do you do when the alternate format book you need is not available through AccessText? The next step is to request the alternate format book through Bookshare. If a book is not available yet, a helpful possibility for getting textbook access for students with disabilities is to request the raw scan version. Bookshare has been willing to share the raw scan version once it arrives in their office. The raw scan version has not been proofread and will have errors. We can get this copy to the student while the final version or proof version is being processed. An example of the turnover time for this process through Bookshare for a student at Binghamton University was receipt of the raw copy on Jan. 6th and then receipt of the proof version Feb. 23rd. The process could be longer than this, and it is a benefit to our students to have the raw copy sooner.

If you have any questions regarding the Bookshare requests, contact Cherie Miller at Bookshare with questions: cheriem@benetech.org. We are looking forward to having a representative from the Bookshare organization at the Disability Services Council Conference Vendors Display in June and learning more about the best ways to provide alternate format textbooks to our students!



Internet Tools to Improve Student Study Skills

by Brittany Plony—State University of New York at Binghamton

For students who struggle with organization and study skills, consider recommending these educational applications and websites.

1. **Digital Notes:** ScanR and Qipit. When students take a picture of text (ie., from articles, class notes, professor's whiteboard, etc.) using their cell phone, both ScanR and Qipit can turn it into a PDF. ScanR even uses Optical Character Recognition to create tagged PDF's. <http://www.scanr.com/> <http://www.qipit.com/>
2. **Concept maps:** Mindmeister. A visual way to organize class notes, learn new material, and brainstorm ideas for papers. <http://www.mindmeister.com/>
3. **Presentations:** Prezi. An alternative to Powerpoint, this tool creates class presentations in an eye-catching way. <http://prezi.com/>
4. **Task List:** Remember the Milk. A way to improve time management skills through features such as e-mail reminders of "to-do" lists. <http://www.rememberthemilk.com/>
5. **Flash Cards:** Study Blue. Students create flash cards and can view those created by classmates. www.studyblue.com
6. **Videos:** Khan Academy. Video tutorials sponsored by Bill Gates on topics such as organic chemistry and linear algebra. www.khanacademy.org
7. **File Storage:** Dropbox. This online file storage tool makes it easy for students to store and access their digital documents. <http://www.dropbox.com/>

SOFTWARE PICKS



For students who have their exams read, try the latest version of Microsoft Word, 2010, which has text-to-speech capability built-in. The feature, called "Speak" can be easily added to the Quick Access Toolbar. For setup instructions, visit <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word-help/using-the-speak-text-to-speech-feature-HA102066711.aspx> or search Google for "Microsoft word 2010 speak". Use the Windows Control Panel "Speech" option to change the voice and voice speed.

There is also a new app for iPad and iPod to download audio books for a minimal cost. Check it out at: <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/rfb-d-audio/id418888450>





Faculty Training Links

Invisible Disabilities and Postsecondary Education

<http://www.youtube.com/user/TheDOITCenter?blend=24&ob=5#p/u/0/SH3vt-XrkEs>

Understanding Asperger Syndrome: A Professor's Guide

<http://www.researchautism.org/resources/AspergerDVDSeries.asp>

Creating accessible documents: videos and written guidelines for MS Word, PDF, PowerPoint, & Excel documents and captioning video

http://teachingcommons.cdl.edu/access/docs_multi/index.shtml

Upcoming Events

- **Closing the Gap AT Conference**
October 10-11, 2011
Bloomington, Minnesota
<http://www.closingthegap.com/conference/>
- **Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA) 2011 Chicago**
November 3rd – 5th, 2011
Schaumburg, Illinois
<http://www.atia.org>
- **Accessing Higher Ground- Accessible Media, Web and Technology Conference**
November 14-18, 2011
Westminster, Colorado
<http://www.colorado.edu/ATconference/index.html>

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Chair—Cyrus Hamilton—Cornell University Student Disability Services
Co-Chair—Sharon Trerise—Cayuga Community College Office of Disability Services

NY TECH-CONNECTION Newsletter Team

Design/Art: Tamara Mariotti

Editors: Cyrus Hamilton and Sharon Trerise

Contributors:

Zach DuBord—zdubord@binghamton.edu

Cyrus Hamilton—ch286@cornell.edu

Tamara Mariotti—tmariotti@mvcc.edu

Brittany Plony—bplony1@binghamton.edu

Andrea Snyder—asnyder@binghamton.edu

Sharon Trerise—trerise@cayuga-cc.edu

Jeremy Zhe-Heimerman—Jeremy.Zhe-Heimerman@cortland.edu

For more information visit the NYS Disability Services Council Website at: www.nysdsc.org