Making the Case for Accessibility

What is accessibility and why does it matter?

1/5 of the population of the Earth has a disability and struggles to have access to the same services and products as people without disabilities have. According to the W3C, an international standards organization for the Worldwide Web, accessibility "means that websites, tools, and technologies are designed and developed so that people with disabilities can use them. More specifically, people can: perceive, understand, navigate, interact with the Web and contribute to the Web."

*Ensuring all aspects of communications are accessible
are not only compliant with The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA),
but adhere to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.*

The Americans with Disabilities Act

The purpose of the law is to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else. It guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications. Standards under the ADA state that all electronic and information technology must be accessible to people with disabilities.

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act

In 1998, the U.S. Congress amended the Rehabilitation Act to require Federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology accessible to people with disabilities.

What Makes an Accessible Website?

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are organized by four main principles.

1) Perceiveable

Information and user interface components must be presented to users in ways they can perceive. This means that users must be able to comprehend the information being depicted: It can't be invisible to all their senses.

Perceivable Guidelines:

Text Alternatives: Provide text alternatives for any non-text content so that it can be changed into other forms people need, such as large print, braille, speech, symbols or simpler language.

Time-based Media: Provide alternatives for time-based media.

Adaptable: Create content that can be presented in different ways (for example simpler layout) without losing information or structure.

Distinguishable: Make it easier for users to see and hear content including separating foreground from background.

2) Operable

User interface components and navigation must be operable: The interface cannot require interaction that a user cannot perform.

Operable Guidelines:

Keyboard Accessible: Make all functionality available from a keyboard.

Enough Time: Provide users enough time to read and use content.

Seizures and Physical Reactions: Do not design content in a way that is known to cause seizures or physical reactions.

Navigable: Provide ways to help users navigate, find content, and determine where they are.

Input Modalities: Make it easier for users to operate functionality through various inputs beyond keyboard.

3) Understandable

Information and the operation of a user interface must be understandable: Users must be able to understand the information as well as the operation of the user interface.

Understandable Guidelines:

Readable: Make text content readable and understandable.

Predictable: Make Web pages appear and operate in predictable ways.

Input Assistance: Help users avoid and correct mistakes.

4) Robust

Content must be robust enough that it can be interpreted reliably by a wide variety of user agents, including assistive technologies: As technologies and user agents evolve, the content should remain accessible.

Robust Guideline:

Compatible: Maximize compatibility with current and future user agents, including assistive technologies.

Accessibility Practices for Digital Media

Why does accessibility matter when it comes to digital media?

Without accessibility, you risk losing connection to a full audience.
Digital media is a widely used source to provide information.

General Tips:

- Avoid using acronyms in captions and always explain what the acronyms mean.

- To keep emoji usage accessible, be sure to;

  - Use emojis in moderation. Limit oneself to two or three emojis, so it doesn't bring down the readability of the content.

  - Place emojis at the end of social media posts. Using emojis in the middle of sentences could mix up the messaging once it's read out loud by a screen reader.

- Avoid using emojis in a social profile name.

- Use Camel Case Hashtag, which indicates the separation of words with a single capitalized letter in each word, i.e. #DeepRiver

- Write in plain language- avoid jargon, slang, or technical terms unless appropriate.

- Don't overuse caps. Full-caps can be difficult to read and misinterpreted by screen readers.

- Most social media platforms provide alternative text (ALT-text), which is the text equivalent of an image.

- Use closed-captioning vs. subtitles in videos that have dialogue when possible.

  - *Subtitles* assume an audience can hear the audio, but need the dialogue provided in text form as well. *Closed captioning* assumes an audience cannot hear the audio and needs a text description of what they would otherwise be hearing.

- Do not use decorative fonts (script, block, bolded or italic fonts). This makes the post unreadable by a text-to-speech program.

- Avoid using the term "click here." Consider using short, yet descriptive words to clearly explain what the link is or where it will lead site visitors.

Facebook

- Facebook is a multifaceted platform where you can create and join groups, shop, share photos, create an event, and more.

- Facebook is the most widely used social media platform by many populations

    – 25% of U.S. Facebook users are age 24 to 34

- Usage is spread evenly amongst all genders, while users tend to become increasingly active as age increases.

Features:

Facebook Live, Facebook Messenger, Advertising Capabilities, Facebook Stories

Facebook Live lets users stream live videos to their followers.

Facebook Messenger is an instant messaging feature on the platform.

Facebook Stories are short user-generated photo or video collections that can be temporarily uploaded.

Tips for Creating Accessible Images and Posts on Facebook:

- Do not overuse hashtags and emoticons, if hashtags are used, ensure that Camel Case is used.

- Choose background colors wisely. Make sure to choose a dark solid color, as backgrounds with a lot of detail and gradient may make posts difficult to read.

- Avoid sharing posts using the Stories feature, as the feature is not accessible.

Accessible Features on Facebook

- Facebook auto-generates a description of images:

    - *To provide accurate descriptions, you can add your own descriptions of new posts and already existing posts.*

- Add closed-captioning to your Facebook videos or, load videos to YouTube and add captions there and link the video to any Facebook post.

Instagram

- Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms, as the general demographic is all genders with a large age range.

- As a visual first-network, Instagram favors photos and videos that are attention-grabbing.

Features:

Instagram Reels, Instagram Live, Instagram TV, Instagram Stories

Instagram Reels are short videos that can be posted on Instagram.

Instagram Live lets users stream live videos to their followers.

Instagram TV is a feature for sharing long-form videos on Instagram.

Instagram Stories are temporary posts through individual photos and videos.

Tips for Creating Accessible Images and Posts on Instagram:

- When it is not possible to add alternative-text to an image, include descriptive captions on the post.

- Add captions to Instagram stories through the "Threads" app, which is only available on mobile devices.

- Use Camel Case when writing hashtags.

Accessible Features on Instagram

- Instagram provides specific fields for you to add alt-text for images and Graphics Interchange Format (GIFs), which are animated images.

- Automatic closed-captioning is available for Instagram Live and Instagram TV in 16 languages.

- Verbalize visual details during stories and videos.

- In addition to alt-text and subtitles, add descriptive details to captions.

Twitter

- Micro blogging social site that limits each post to 280 characters.

- Twitter's shorter-term interactions makes it a great platform to share content, drive discussions, and receive information.

- Great for reaching a large number of people quickly through tweets and retweets.

- *Instagram is an entirely visual platform. Unlike Facebook, which relies on both text and pictures, or Twitter, which relies on text alone, Instagram's sole purpose is to enable users to share images or videos with their audience.*

Features:

Tweet Threads, Voice Note

Tweet Threads *is a series of connected Tweets from one person. With a thread you can provide additional context, an update, or an extended point by connecting multiple Tweets together.*

Voice Note *is a feature that allows one to record a voice note and share it in a Tweet.*

Tips for Creating Accessible Images and Posts on Twitter:

- Add full photo description within the main tweet for text-heavy images.

- Because automatic closed-caption is not a feature on Twitter, one will have to manually add captions within an editing software.

- There are no features on Twitter that allows one to add captions, audio descriptions or sign language to videos, which means it has to be done manually.

- The Voice Note does not include a way to add a transcript, which means that if the feature is used, the body of the tweet, or tweet threads, must include a transcription.

Accessible Features on Twitter

- Add image description through the "Add Description" icon when creating a post.

- Twitter provides the option to add Alt-Text to GIFs.

- A platform for video content, YouTube is a source of entertainment and educational content.

- 73% of US adults report regularly using YouTube, with the age range of 15-34 years old.

Features:

YouTube TV, YouTube Kids, YouTube Stories

YouTube TV is a streaming television service that offers live TV.

YouTube Kids is an app specifically designed for kids, makes it easier for children and parents to find content they are interested in.

YouTube Stories are a collection of short videos. You can watch them on the mobile YouTube app from the top of your Subscriptions feed, from your homepage, or on some watch pages. Each story lasts 7 days.

Tips for Creating Accessible Posts on YouTube:

- Use [YouTube with screen reader](#) to understand how the experience might function for a person with a disability.

- Use YouTube's automatic subtitles feature and edit existing subtitles so they are accurate, in sync with the video, and include closed captioning.

- Add a link where full text transcript can be found.

- Recommend alternatives to YouTube's interface. These alternatives can sometimes provide more accessible experiences for people with disabilities.

  – [Accessible YouTube](#)

  – [Access Youtube](#)

TikTok

- A platform for creating, sharing, and discovering short videos through singing, dancing, comedy, and lip-syncing.

- TikTok has about 80 million monthly active users and has become one of the f astest growing platforms in the industry.

- 60% of these users are between the ages of 16 and 24, and 26% are between the ages 25-44.

Features:

TikTok Live

TikTok Live lets creators stream live videos to their followers.

Tips for Creating Accessible Videos on TikTok:

- Use and edit auto captions before posting on the platform.

Accessible Features on TikTok

- Viewers can opt out of videos that contain creative effects that may be harmful to those with photosensitive epilepsy or those who suffer from light-induced migraines.
  - Warning labels are also shown to creators on specific effects that may trigger photosensitive epilepsy.
- Text-to-speech converts typed text to a voiceover that plays over the text as it appears in the video.
- Auto Captions are available, as users can add captions during video editing after they've uploaded or recorded a video.