Web Accessibility for ETDs

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Problem

- Approached by library administration to incorporate ADA Web-Accessibility Compliance in all theses and dissertations submitted at MSU (to meet requirements of Institutional Policy)
- Students’ or Office of ETD Formatting and Submissions’ responsibility?
- What all needs to be added?
- Little direction provided from leadership, short timeline to accomplish goal (Spring 2020 semester)

Research

- Met with campus IT and National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision (NRTC) to better understand what would be required
- Our institution does not offer all the needed software for students to create fully accessible document on their own
- Reviewed best practices—WCAG 2.0, W3C
- Benchmarked against Peer and Peer+ Institutions

Timeline of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 2, 2019</td>
<td>Received e-mail stating anything placed on Mitchell Memorial Library’s website must be ADA Web-Accessible</td>
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<td>June 7, 2019</td>
<td>ADA Web-Accessibility meeting with MML Associate Dean of CMS &amp; Associate Dean of the Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 1, 2019</td>
<td>ADA Web-Accessibility meeting with the MSU Graduate School Associate Dean</td>
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<td>August 2, 2019</td>
<td>Meeting with Emily Damm—MSU Center for Low Vision and Blindness</td>
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<td>August—October 2019</td>
<td>Added a “heads-up” statement to workshops for students graduating Spring 2020 and forward</td>
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<td>October 11, 2019</td>
<td>Met with LaTeX faculty partner about LaTeX Accessibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 2020</td>
<td>First semester of ADA Web-Accessibility compliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 19, 2020</td>
<td>Center of Distance Education workshop on Accessibility in the virtual classroom</td>
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Note: In between meetings, we researched best practices, benchmarked against Peer and Peer+ institutions, and created instructional materials to include in workshops and in our Canvas course.

Solutions and Results

- Student responsibilities:
  - Add alternative text to figures and equations
  - Add header row information to continued tables
  - Check color contrast in graphs/charts
- Office of ETD Formatting and Submission responsibilities:
  - Add ADA Web-Accessibility processes to workshops
  - Add ADA Web-Accessibility specific workshops to schedule
  - ETD Office will complete final accessibility checks in the PDF including:
    - Tab order
    - Language
    - Metadata
- Very little pushback from students or faculty about additional requirements

Future Research and Needs

- MathType—Students prefer to use this for equations and mathematical terms, but it is not compliant
- LaTeX—Have yet to find a way to make these accessible
- Tables—Tables are formatted to meet the needs of journals
- Merged cells go against accessibility standards
- Different accessibility checkers pick up on different things
- Different readers vary on what they will and will not read