Web site usability for people with disabilities

RNIB Campaign for Good Web Design

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Impairments that can impact on web use

- 9m deaf and hard of hearing people
- 6m people are dyslexic
- 2m blind and partially sighted
- 1.8m people experience colour blindness
- 1.2m people with learning disabilities
- 450,000 people with epilepsy
- 350,000 people affected by strokes
- 85,000 people with multiple sclerosis
- other conditions such as cerebral palsy, head injury, injuries caused by accidents, etc.
Impairments that can affect use of the web

• Sight loss or blindness
  – what helps: image description, control of layout

• Hearing loss or deafness
  – what helps: text transcript of audio

• Diminished dexterity (arthritis, hand tremor)
  – what helps: keyboard access

• Cognitive impairments (memory, concentration)
  – what helps: logical navigation, plain language
1995 Disability Discrimination Act
and the web… a brief history

- October 1999: DDA Section 21 came into effect
- February 2002: DDA Code of Practice (revised)
- July 2003: RNIB issued county court proceedings

- Recommended article: Mason, Casserley & Howell ‘Web site design and the DDA’ in Computers & Law, Dec 01/Jan 02
  www.rnib.org.uk/webaccesscentre
Finding 1: 81% of web sites fail WAI Level A

Violations of just 8 Checkpoints accounted for 82% of the reported problems:
- Provide a text equivalent for every non-text element
- Ensure that colours contrast
- Usable when programmable objects not supported
- Avoid movement
- No pop-ups without informing the user
- Divide large blocks of information
- Identify target of links
- Clear, appropriate language

Disability Rights Commission
research findings www.drc-gb.org

Royal National Institute of the Blind
Registered charity number 226227
Disability Rights Commission research findings

- Finding 5: 45% of the problems encountered by disabled users cannot be attributed to explicit violations of WAI checkpoints
- Implementing accessibility guidelines is not enough on its own
- Accessibility and usability are both essential attributes of good design
- Usability testing with disabled people is crucial as a means of detecting and correcting web design problems
- ‘The Usability Bonus’: testing with disabled people could identify ALL usability issues
Disability Rights Commission research findings

• High awareness of web accessibility as an important issue
  – 98% of large organizations
  – 69% of small and medium organizations

• Yet 81% of web sites fail the most basic accessibility criteria...

something is wrong !!!
Coming soon...

- PAS 78: Guide to Good Practice in Designing Accessible Web sites

- Volunteers for review panel should contact julie.howell@rnib.org.uk as soon as possible!
Accessible & usable with ‘web standards’

“The power of the web is in its universality. Access by everyone regardless of disability is an essential aspect.” Prof. Sir Tim Berners-Lee

- WAI Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
- WAI User Agent Accessibility Guidelines
- WAI Authoring Tool Accessibility Guidelines
- www.w3.org/wai

Your toolkit also includes:
- user involvement (early!)
- usability testing (often!)
- automated testing (with caution!)
- analysis by experts (check credentials!)
Accessibility standards for

- People with any disability
- People with low literacy
- People with low numeracy
- People whose first language isn’t English
- People in rural areas
- ‘Device independence’
- Any browser, any version
- It also works for 20-something, middle class, able-bodied, highly literate, city-dwelling, English-speaking technocrats...
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“Accessible web sites, systems and services are those that can be used by everyone, regardless of ability/disability, technology and circumstance.”

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