IT Accessibility Center

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Basic Web Accessibility

Accessible web design is the practice of designing and developing websites that are usable by everyone. People who use the web have a growing variety of characteristics. As web developers, we cannot assume that all our users are accessing our content using the same web browser or operating system as we are, nor can we assume they're using a traditional monitor for output, or keyboard and mouse for input. For example, consider these users:

- Most individuals who are blind use either audible output (products called screen readers that read web content using synthesized speech), or tactile output (a refreshable Braille device).
- Individuals with learning disabilities such as dyslexia may also use audible output.
- Individuals with low vision may use screen magnification software that allows them to zoom into a portion of the visual screen.
- Many others with less-than-perfect eyesight may enlarge the font on websites using built-in browser hotkeys.
- Individuals with fine motor impairments may be unable to use a mouse, and instead rely exclusively on keyboard commands, or use assistive technologies such as speech recognition, head pointers, mouth sticks, or eye-gaze tracking systems.
- Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing are unable to access audio content, so video needs to be captioned and audio needs be transcribed.
- Millions of iPhone users navigate the web using a small screen and touch interface on a device that doesn't support Adobe Flash.

An accessible web site works for all of these users, and countless others not mentioned.

Four Principles of Web Accessibility (from W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0):

1. **Perceivable** - Information and user interface components must be presentable to users in ways they can perceive.
2. **Operable** - User interface components and navigation must be operable.
3. **Understandable** - Information and the operation of user interface must be understandable.
4. **Robust** - Content must be robust enough that it can be interpreted reliably by a wide variety of user agents, including assistive technologies.

Steps to Develop an Accessible Website

1. Comply with HTML/XHTML standards.
2. Be sure your document has a clear logical structure.
3. Follow accessibility guidelines and standards.
4. Evaluate your site for accessibility.
5. Test your site with users.

For More information:

- University of Washington IT Accessibility site: http://uw.edu/accessibility
- Accessible University 2.0 Mock Site: http://uw.edu/accesscomputing/AU