

Accessibility in the Trenches

Keys to a successful redesign

Research

As important as current higher ed web trends.

Draw from others' experience

- ◊ Vet your vendors:
 - Examine previous work: claims vs. delivery
 - Are they knowledgeable?
- ◊ Employ an expert (staff or consultant)
- ◊ Look for sites approved by experts
- ◊ Talk to colleagues (internal & external)
- ◊ Get input from people with disabilities!

Lessons Learned

Make sure RFP is explicit

- ◊ Listing WCAG 2.0AA is not enough
- ◊ Emphasize specific criteria
- ◊ Include more criteria, as needed

Get Stats

- ◊ Save data on your site's current accessibility for progress comparison
- ◊ Create a road-map



Implementation

Plan & Test:

Accessibility cannot be an afterthought.

Design with accessibility in mind

- ◊ Make vendor contract explicit
- ◊ Select a high-contrast palette
- ◊ Test at every round
 - Manual experience-based testing: create the best user experience you can
 - Automated testing finds errors you might miss
- ◊ Hold your ground to get the important things right!
- ◊ Don't overthink it, go simple
- ◊ Replace inaccessible technology, i.e., media players, widgets, tools, etc.

Maximize migration

- ◊ As content is rewritten and layout applied, also make it accessible.
- ◊ Train web migrators in best practices for web accessibility:
 - Proper heading structure
 - Appropriate alt text
 - High-contrast graphics/text
 - Descriptive and unique hyperlinks
 - Captions and transcripts

Maintenance

Be a coach, not a cop.

Share your expertise

- ◊ Train web editors
- ◊ Offer extra support
- ◊ Be approachable and positive

Establish a support system

- ◊ Have resources to meet requirements
- ◊ Have alternative solutions ready
- ◊ Secure support from senior administration

Demand strong efforts

- ◊ Have consequences for ignoring/refusing to follow rules
- ◊ Put compliance requests in writing, keep good records of the school's efforts

Monitor content

- ◊ Update stats and show progress
- ◊ Use web crawling software & CMS reports
- ◊ Spot check: web editors will introduce issues

Continue improving

- ◊ Listen to your users, keep an open mind
- ◊ Establish oversight, keep momentum going
- ◊ Technology evolves: so should your site



Sarah Ferguson
Web Accessibility Specialist
Brandeis University