When Open Isn’t Accessible

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Why Accessibility?

“Accessibility is all about our ability to engage with, use, participate in, and belong to, the world around us.”

The spirit of open access is to remove barriers to education. This includes barriers related to accessibility. Accessibility, as it relates to open educational resources, means that your OER should be accessible to a variety of users - learners with disabilities, the aging population, and those for whom English is a second language.

Designed correctly, OER’s create equal learning opportunities for all students; designed poorly, they create new barriers to participation. Furthermore, institutions of higher education have a legal and ethical responsibility to ensure individuals with disabilities have equal access to information both online and in the classroom.

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines are the legal and technical standards for ensuring accessible open educational resources.

What is Accessible Content?

Accessible content refers to instructional materials that are designed from the outset to be flexible and responsive to the needs and abilities of students with physical, sensory, or learning disabilities, by offering media in multiple formats and/or by being interoperable with assistive technologies.

Useful Sites for Locating OERs

* Indicates accessibility page attached to site

- Multiformat
  - MERLOT*
  - OER Commons
  - OpenLearnWorks*

- Open Textbooks
  - Open SUNY
  - OpenStax*
  - Open Library*

- Courseware
  - Saylor
  - Lumen Learning*
  - Open Learn

- Images
  - Pixabay
  - Noun Project
  - Wikimedia

Your Library’s LibGuides

Additional Tools for Locating a Range of OERs

- SUNY Accessible Book Finder*
- Advanced Search in Google*
- Creative Commons Search*

Use a Checklist or Rubric

- BC Open Accessibility Toolkit*
- Achieve OER Rubric10

Use Accessibility Checkers

- Microsoft Products Word, PowerPoint, & Excel
  (File > Info > Inspect)
- Adobe Acrobat Professional
  (View > Tools > Accessibility)

Accessibility Criteria

- Navigation that is clear and consistent.
- Properly structured documents, including headings.
- Sufficient color contrast. Avoid using color to convey meaning.
- Alternative text descriptions - for images, tables, equations, maps, etc.
- Intelligibly-captioned multimedia and descriptive audio.
- High quality scans with no highlighting or handwriting.
- PDFs that are text readable, tagged, and structured appropriately.
- Meaningful hyperlinks. Avoid phrases like ‘click here’ and ‘more’.

Developing

Consider usability and navigation.

Conversion

Is it possible to convert to another format if needed?

Licensing

(creative commons)

Register open work with a CC license.

Test your work

Try BC Open Accessibility Toolkit.

Anticipate people’s needs from the start. Be proactive!

Create

There are choices designers make that can render content more accessible to all learners. To create a truly inclusive learning environment, consider sensory, motor, cognitive, emotional and social restraints; individual learning styles and approaches; and technical, financial or environmental constraints.

Evaluate

Not all open access resources will be accessible from the get-go. Taking measures to check an existing resource’s accessibility is necessary.

Locate

The use of accessible, open, and affordable resources requires knowing where to look. Searches do not guarantee results that are accessible and open. Fortunately, there are many websites that have made it easier to locate open materials such as images, books, and courseware.

Reference


8. Creative Commons Search - https://search.creativecommons.org

9. Adobe Acrobat Professional


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