Basic Guidelines for Achieving Accessibility

This page will likely need to be renamed and will need to have extensive editing and iterating, but in favour of getting it out there below is text from an email originally written by Jutta Treviranus and reproduced here with permission and edited thereafter. This might also inform current work that is starting on a best practices guideline for the Prosperity4All project.

Accessibility is Achieved Through Three Processes

Process 1: Transformation of presentation or control methods to meet individual needs

Transformation requires proactive design so that the user interface of the delivery platform and the content are amenable to transformation.

Examples

• automated restyling
• speech to text/speech recognition
• text to speech, text to tactile displays
• translation devices can be separate systems that the learner has access to or owns - screen reader, refreshable Braille display, screen magnifier, speech recognition app, etc.

Process 2: Augmentation

The most labor intensive in the long run is usually augmentation (e.g. with captions and descriptions of our content).

Examples

• adding a scaffold, an additional presentation such as captioning or description, etc.
• augmentation this is usually manual rather than automatic but there are emerging services that provide some automation

Process 3: Replacement

Replacement requires a diverse pool of resources, a way to capture the needs of the user and the accessibility features of the resource/content as well as the goals addressed by the content, and then a way to match the two.

Examples

• offering an alternative that meets the same goal, this can be partially automated

How?

To address Transformation and Replacement can be done by following some basic guidelines:

1. Use open standards, e.g., HTML5, CSS, EPub3, Javascript, XML etc. (they are more amenable to interoperability with assistive technology).
2. Make it possible to swap/transform presentation for the same content and structure (e.g., well structured HTML with CSS). This applies to style, layout, and presentation mode. For content the intermediary or base content type should be text as text is machine readable and automatically translatable into a number of formats and is searchable. That does not mean that the final presentation should be text.
3. Provide structure and clear structural markup (for navigation, search-ability and ascertaining an overview)
4. Provide meaningful labels and associate labels with items/groups labeled.
5. Enable logical control with only a keyboard (without a pointing device such as a mouse, joystick, tablet) as most alternative control systems emulate keyboards.
6. Provide metadata regarding the accessibility features of a resource.
7. Enable users to indicate and enact their personal preferences.

In addition to this there are some things to avoid, e.g., communicating information through colour only, flashing, time limits for actions, etc.

Other Resources

• Inclusive and Accessible Web Content Guide
• Quick-and-Dirty Website Accessibility Tests and Fixes
• The Inclusive Learning Design Handbook
• The Inclusive Design Guide