Digital Inclusivity: Best Practices in Digital Accessibility to Create Inclusive Work, Teaching, and Learning Environments
Introductions
Who we are

• Sandi Arendalkowski, Digital Accessibility Lead Coordinator, Center for User Experience, UW-Madison
• Jess Jones, Interim Director, Center for User Experience, UW-Madison
• Ruben Mota, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator, Office of Compliance, UW-Madison
Objectives

- We’ll identify:
  - How the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the digital divide of inaccessible technology and the need for inclusive, digital best practices
  - How UW-Madison incorporates inclusivity in its digital resources and information technology through the creation of campus resources available to support inclusion
  - Identify UW-Madison’s current evolution of creating a shared campus responsibility and commitment to an accessible digital landscape that benefits all users
  - Organizations need a central infrastructure to support digital accessibility implementation across business and operational decisions
What do we mean by “digital accessibility”?

- The practice of ensuring that digital resources can be used by members of the university community who have a diverse range of abilities. Includes websites, emails, documents, video, web and mobile apps, software, etc. Text
- Acknowledging disability as a facet of diversity, equity, and inclusion
Impacts of Inaccessible Technology
Why is digital accessibility important?

"What is web accessibility?" (60 second video by Women Techmakers)
The pandemic intensified the impacts of inaccessible technology

- No captions or bad auto captions
- Poor color contrast
- Lack of access to video conferencing tools
- Lack of access to devices and printers
- Inaccessible digital course materials, including video content
- Inaccessible apps that met COVID testing requirements
What about accommodations?

Existing accommodations no longer served students, faculty, and staff in the new remote world.

And more people requested accommodations as they experienced barriers to the changing work and learning environment.
The (Not So) New Digital Divide
Live Demo: What if you can’t get the COVID test you need to be able to go to work or attend class?

COVID-19 Vaccine Update: Walgreens is awaiting additional guidance from the CDC before offering booster doses of Moderna and Johnson & Johnson (Janssen) vaccines. We continue to provide Pfizer-BioNTech booster doses for eligible individuals.

your vaccination destination™
Schedule vaccine

FREE flu shots
FREE COVID-19 vaccine
COVID-19 testing options

† No cost to you with most insurance or government assistance.

https://www.walgreens.com/
What is it like to experience inaccessible video content?

Examples:

- **Video 1**: No audio, no captions
- **Video 2**: No audio, bad captions
- **Video 3**: No audio, good captions
- **Video 4**: No video, good caption, no audio descriptions
- **Video 5**: No video, good captions, bad audio descriptions
- **Video 6**: No video, good captions, good audio descriptions
- **Video 7**: Good captions, good audio descriptions

“Good, Bad, and Ugly: Closed Captioning and Video Description” by NADVlogs
How do we narrow the digital divide?

• It can be done!
• Successes
  • Continuity of instruction at UW-Madison
  • Safer Badgers app
  • Online student orientation
  • Campus visitor tour
  • Working with third-party vendors
Recipe for success

• Listen to the people experiencing barriers
• Collaborate across teams and with accessibility professionals
• Clearly communicate to your users what is and what isn't accessible, the general barriers, and how to get assistance
• Organizationally, move towards the goal of shared responsibility
Building shared responsibility for digital accessibility
What we learned

• Accessibility is a shared campus responsibility, not a system.

• It becomes systemwide but it starts with an individual practicing accessibility.

• Accessibility shouldn’t be framed as “additional work”. Instead, accessibility is completing the work that is already being done with inclusive practices.

• The key is to empower university units to utilize our guides and resources (link) to begin incorporating practices.
Our landscape: Culture

Highly decentralized, independent decision-making and funding, large institution with many units separately creating, managing, procuring, and delivering technology on their own.
Our landscape: Awareness

Low but growing awareness of digital accessibility
Our landscape: Community

Faculty and staff who want to do the best for our students, their colleagues, and visitors/program participants, but who are juggling a lot of different roles and responsibilities
Our landscape: Technology

An ever more complex ecosystem of technology and digital resources, changing every semester, if not more often.
We provide the university with the tools and services to include accessibility in physical spaces, including elevators and curb cuts; but we haven’t had the same expectations and rigor in the digital space.
Major milestones

- 2000: One of the first universities in the country to establish a Web Accessibility Policy
- 2017: Office for Civil Rights complaint (resolved)
- 2018: Center for User Experience founded
- 2020: First full-time ADA Coordinator hired
- 2021: Refreshed Digital Accessibility Policy drafted and in the shared governance process
Building infrastructure, empowering people

Our principles:

• We can’t make your stuff accessible, you need to make it accessible
• Accessibility needs to be baked in to everything you do - it’s a practice, a central principle to your work/team and it requires a collective effort
• Right doing should be a pervasive form of business practices for your group
Current resources

TRAINING SERVICE

EVALUATION AND CONSULTING SERVICE

GUIDES
Moving towards shared responsibility

• Accessibility is a shared responsibility, not a system. It becomes system-wide but it starts with an individual practicing accessibility.
  • Shouldn’t be additional work, should really be completing the work that is already being done with inclusive practices.
  • Empower university units to utilize our guides and resources to begin incorporating practices.
  • The key to success is to build accessibility practices into your processes.
We're building the car, but you're the driver

- We provide the knowledge, resources, and tools - but we need to build awareness of these tools

- We need university members to learn accessibility standards and practices, review their business and operational processes, and begin incorporating accessibility practices into them.

- As a community, we need to change how we are doing things. Technology changes, but digital accessibility practices are always based on the same core user needs.

- This is not about adding work, it’s about updating the way we do our work through modern inclusive processes and behaviors.
Looking forward
Our vision

A digital landscape in which all members of our community can independently and robustly participate in the activities they want to and UW-Madison is committed to ensuring our digital campus is accessible and free from barriers for all members of the university community.
How will we get there?

1. Creating shared standards, plans, and understanding
2. Creating community
3. Building on our infrastructure
4. Changing how we add technology into our ecosystem
It takes all of us

• UW-Madison values the contributions of each person and respects the profound ways their identify, culture, background, experience, status, abilities and opinion enrich the university community.

• It takes all of us to achieve the university's mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background.
Questions?

For additional information or assistance, contact us at the Center for User Experience.