Personalizing the Document Experience of an Assistive Technology User

User Experiences

**Alex**

*Failed a class project*

I was working on a group project, that included a presentation. My group members created the PowerPoint presentation but did not make it accessible for me. I was unable to access the content of the slides I was supposed to present on and subsequently received a failing grade.

It would have taken maybe 5 minutes to change the theme to one that was easier to access and to add alt text to the images on the slide, so I could describe the picture on my slide.

**Matthew**

*Inaccessible documents cost me a job*

I was working as a guidance counselor intern. Often, I was handed printed information, or inaccessible pdf files, just before IEP meetings. I appeared unprofessional in the meetings when I could not quickly reference the same information others were in those documents. Headings and data tables with proper column and row headers would have made an enormous difference in my experience.

I sense that I was not hired for the full-time position that came open after my internship because of this demonstrated unprofessionalism. I also worry about what message I was sending to those students. As a guidance counselor, and person with a disability, I tell my students that the only limitations they have are those they put on themselves, to encourage them that they can do anything they want to. I was unable to demonstrate to them that I could be professional in a setting that really required it, and it wasn’t because of any limitation I was putting on myself, it was because of a limitation of the accessibility of an electronic document.

**Rickie**

My sons school puts out a monthly calendar in pdf format. The calendar includes valuable information such as teacher work days, early outs and other breaks, as well as the lunch menu. I am unable to access this pdf document and have sent him to the bus, on very cold mornings, on teacher work days and he has been out there for up to 30 minutes waiting for a bus that isn’t going to come. I have accidently sent him to school without lunch on days that they are serving food he cannot have, making him go without lunch.

This is valuable information that affects the health and welfare of my child. I live in a state that does not have Right to Parent laws on the books and I have friends who have had their children taken from them because it appears they are neglecting their child when in fact they simply don’t have the information they need to provide the right materials or direction to their child. It terrifies me that this type of thing could happen to me! I am blessed that my husband can read these documents, most of the time, but he works a job that takes him away from us quite often and let’s face it, I’m human and I might forget what he read off to me at the beginning of the week.

A calendar, in table format, with meaningful column and row headers, would make it possible for me to hear information, such as the day/date as well as whether I’m in a row that is displaying information such as start or release time, would make the content of the table more meaningful and useful.

**Kate**

I was preparing for a blind date. This is awkward for a lot of people, but more so when you carry a white cane and you know the person doesn’t know you’re visually impaired. You already know you’re going to be answering a lot of questions like, “How much can you see?”.

Our friends set up for us to meet at this romantic Italian place. So, I got online to access the menu, so he wouldn’t have to read to me and I could demonstrate my ability to be independent in even these little things. The menu was a scanned image of the menu and I could not access it.

It was embarrassing to have to ask him to read the menu to me. He was put off by my request and discussion quickly spiraled into me answering all kinds of questions like, “How do you cook?”, “Do you have someone who cleans for you?”, “So, if we were to hook up would we be in your parent’s basement or something?”.

This was a first and last date, but it didn’t have to be. If I had access to the information in an accessible electronic document I would have been able to place my own order and he would have been more likely to see that I am capable and perhaps not voiced the same questions, rather observing me to find out the answers.

Screen Reader Use

*Data collected by, and adapted from: Web AIM Screen Reader Survey #7 https://webaim.org/projects/screenreadersurvey7/*

By Region

Region

North America

Europe/UK

Asia

Australia and Oceania

Africa/Middle East

South America

Number of Respondents

991

380

141

61

39

35

Percent of Respondents

60.0%

23%

8.5%

3.7%

2.4%

2.1%

By Disability Type

Which disability do you have?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Response | Number of Respondents | Percent of Respondents |
| Blindness | 1358 | 75.8% |
| Low Vision/Visually-Impaired | 366 | 20.4% |
| Cognitive | 39 | 2.2% |
| Deafness/Hard-of-Hearing | 90 | 5.0% |
| Motor | 33 | 1.8% |
| Other | 41 | 2.3% |

Screen Reader Usage

Primary Screen Reader

Which of the following is your primary desktop/laptop screen reader?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Response | Number of Respondents | Percent of Respondents |
| JAWS | 811 | 46.6% |
| NVDA | 555 | 31.9% |
| ZoomText Voiceover | 42 | 2.4% |
| System Access or SA to Go | 30 | 1.7 |
| Window-Eyes | 27 | 1.5% |
| ChromeVox | 7 | .4% |
| Narrator | 6 | .3% |
| Other | 60 | 3.4% |

Mobile Screen Reader Usage

