# Looking Back, Looking Forward: Advancing Accessibility in Archives

Dr. Lydia Tang
Society of Ohio Archivists' Annual Meeting
May 17, 2024

**Happy Day-After Global Accessibility Awareness Day!**

3rd Thursday of May each year

13th year!

# Introduction

It all started with a coffee date in 2012…

[Book of Hours.] [Paris, approximately 1480s.] XX codex MSS 2
The calendar that opens this Book of Hours betrays its French origins in the language in which the holidays are written. For January, these include the feast days of Saint Geneviève, Saint Polycarp, and Saint Agnes (twice). The most important holidays are written in red, thus the phrase "red letter day" to denote a date of special significance. On the right are two usual features of medieval calendars. First is the labor of the month, a task to be done during that time, which here is solely to keep warm by the fire. Below is an illustration of the sign of the Zodiac for January—Aquarius, the Water Bearer.
[Miniature book of Hours.] [France, 14th century.] XX codex MSS 130
The handwritten text in this unillustrated Book of Hours is very small, challenging the eyes of the reader but making it possible to carry the book conveniently in a pocket or bag. Since these prayer books were meant for personal devotion and were really more meant to be used than to be seen, they did not always have to be lavish productions, like the other Book of Hours in this case, which no doubt was meant to show off the wealth of its owner.
[Fragment of a psalter.] [France?, approximately 13th century.] XX codex MS 114
Gladys Olds Anderson (1892–1981), daughter of Lansing automotive pioneer Ransom Eli Olds, gave these three leaves from a medieval Psalm book to the newly-formed MSU Special Collections in 1963. Likely purchased in a Scandinavian country and dating to the 13th century (possibly even before), they include complete or partial text from 14 different Psalms. This illuminated opening features an elaborate initial "Q" beginning the phrase "Quid gloriaris." ("Why do you glory [in malice, you who are mighty in iniquity?]", from Psalm 51.

# Timeline

- **Joined the newly established Task Force to Revise the Best Practices on Accessibility**
  - 2011 Best Practices co-authored by Michelle Ganz!

# Timeline

- Joined the newly established Task Force to Revise the Best Practices on Accessibility
- **Spearheaded founding the Accessibility & Disability Section of SAA - founding co-chair Michelle Ganz!**

# March 2020

- Archival repositories shutting down
- Layoffs and furloughs being reported on social networks
- Desperate need for compiled information on Work-From-Home opportunities
  - Professional Development/Training/Upskilling
  - Job tasks

# Archivists at Home

Spearheaded by the Accessibility & Disability Section

Main goals:

- Combat the assumption that archivists can only work on-site with collections - KEEP JOBS
- *IF* archivists can work remotely, why can't it be possible going forward? Particularly helpful for archivists with disabilities

SOCIETY OF American Archivists

Accessibility & Disability Section

## Archivists at home


**Archivists at home** 1
- Introduction 2
- At work 2
- Closing Shop 3
  - Readings and Resources 3
  - Suggested Steps to Take 3
- Things that archivists probably can't do remotely 4
- Things archivists can do from home (or anywhere else!) 5
  - Admin work 5
  - Collection work 6
  - Collection development 6
  - Description 7
  - Linked Data 7
  - Reference/Outreach 8
  - Student workers (see also "Additional comments on Student Workers" for advocacy ideas) 8

# Approach

- Compiling ideas from our own experience and what was shared on social media.
- Editable Google doc shared on social media for contributions. Contributors could add their name to the end for attribution.
- Tremendous act of professional solidarity and information-sharing

Archivist Memes, March 16, 2020
https://twitter.com/archivistmemes/status/1239553825511530502?s=20

# Archival Workers Emergency Fund

Established by SAA Foundation in April 2020

Supported by 998 donors

Surveys, webinars, and craft auctions

Distributed over $140,000 to help 188 archival workers.

Archives Dino by Sarah McClusky, 2021

Jen Wachtel
Lydia Tang
Jessica Chapel
Carli
Rebecca Goldman
Lauren White
Anna Clutterbuck-Cook
Rebecca Thayer
Carady
Alison Clemens
Bridget Malley
COURTNEY DEAN
Sarah Parker McLusky
Katja
Amy

Now…

- **Americans with Disabilities Act Title 2 (newly signed into law as of April 24, 2024!)**
  - State and local government entities required to be compliant with WCAG 2.1 AA levels by within 2-3 years

Now…

- Americans with Disabilities Act Title 2
- **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)**
  - Version 2.2 is current, Version 3 is in draft stage

Now…

- Americans with Disabilities Act Title 2
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)
- **Forthcoming Litwin book: Preserving Disability**

Now…

- Americans with Disabilities Act Title 2
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)
- Forthcoming Litwin book: Preserving Disability

***A whole conference on accessibility and archives!***

# Why does accessibility matter?

- The determining factor for if someone with a disability can access information and services
- Not just compliance, **equity** and **inclusion**

“Capitol Crawl” protestors crawling up the US Capitol steps to support the Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990

Image from https://abilitychicagoinfo.blogspot.com/2015/07/climbing-capitol-steps-for-ada.html

# Let’s cultivate a culture of care

- 1 in 4 US adults, 61 million Americans live with a disability (CDC).
- Most people in some way will become disabled temporarily or permanently in life.
- Accessibility benefits everyone

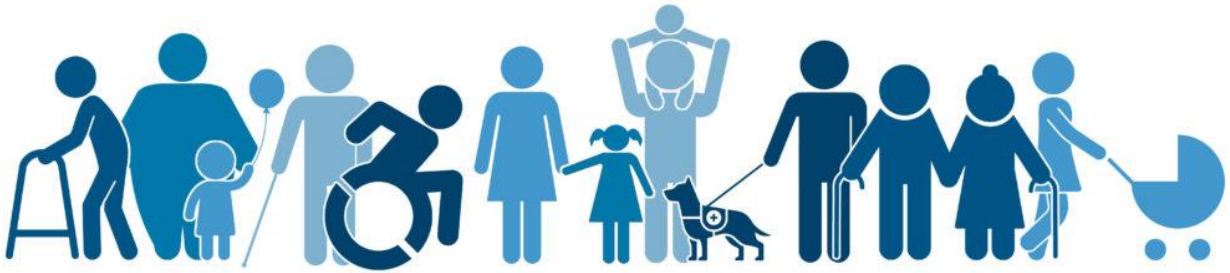


Image credit: https://forrec.com/universal-design-creating-spaces-and-places-for-all/

*What can YOU do?*

Center disabled people

**Nothing About Us Without Us!**

# Invite, Compensate, Collaborate

- Who is your community?
- Who are your experts?
  - Campus disability resource center
  - Ohio disability organizations

Example: Smithsonian's User Expert Advisory Group

# Patterns of Inaccessibility

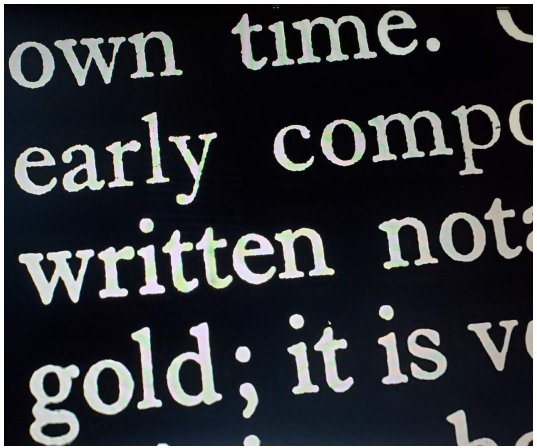
## 1. Assuming that everyone has uniform abilities

Vision simulator for macular degeneration: https://lighthousefw.org/vision-simulator/

lke - WKAR
Tha

# Patterns of Inaccessibility

## 2. **Lacking flexibility to accomplish things in multiple ways**




Inverted color mode using a CCTV magnifier on a book

Dyslexic Friendly Font

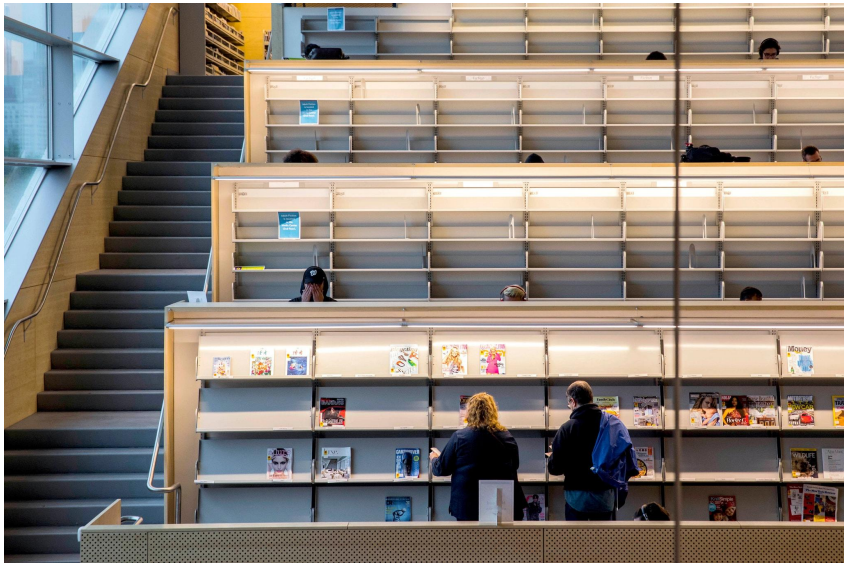
# Patterns of Inaccessibility

## 3. Accessibility as an afterthought, “optional,” or “Special”

Legacy “accessible” seating in a lecture hall.

Who is missing—

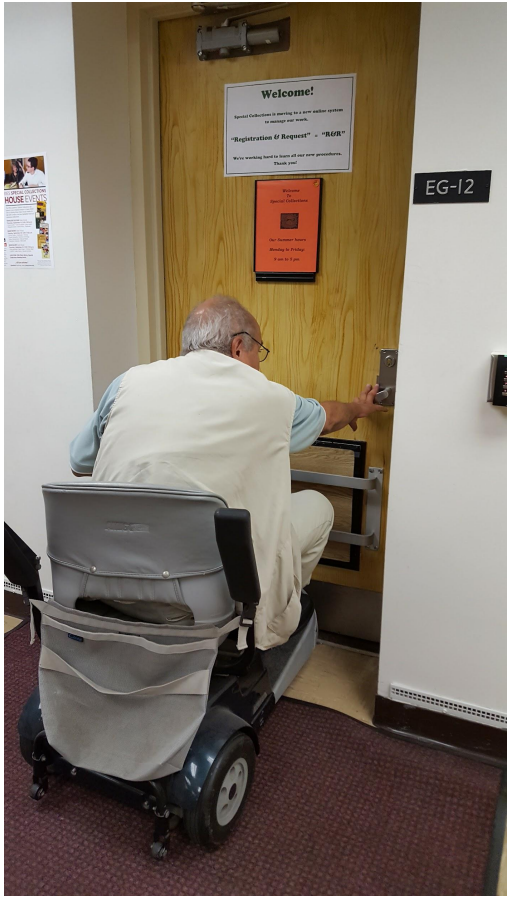
Because they are shut out…?



Hunter's Point Library patrons can only access fiction floors by stairs. Photo credit: Hiroko Masuike/The New York Times

An automatic door opener is blocked by recycling bins

# A Tale of Two Reading Rooms



# Reception Desks

Left image: legacy reception desk too high to comfortably interact with staff

Right image: bi-level reception desk at the MSU Digital Scholarship Lab

# Aisles, Tables, and Chairs

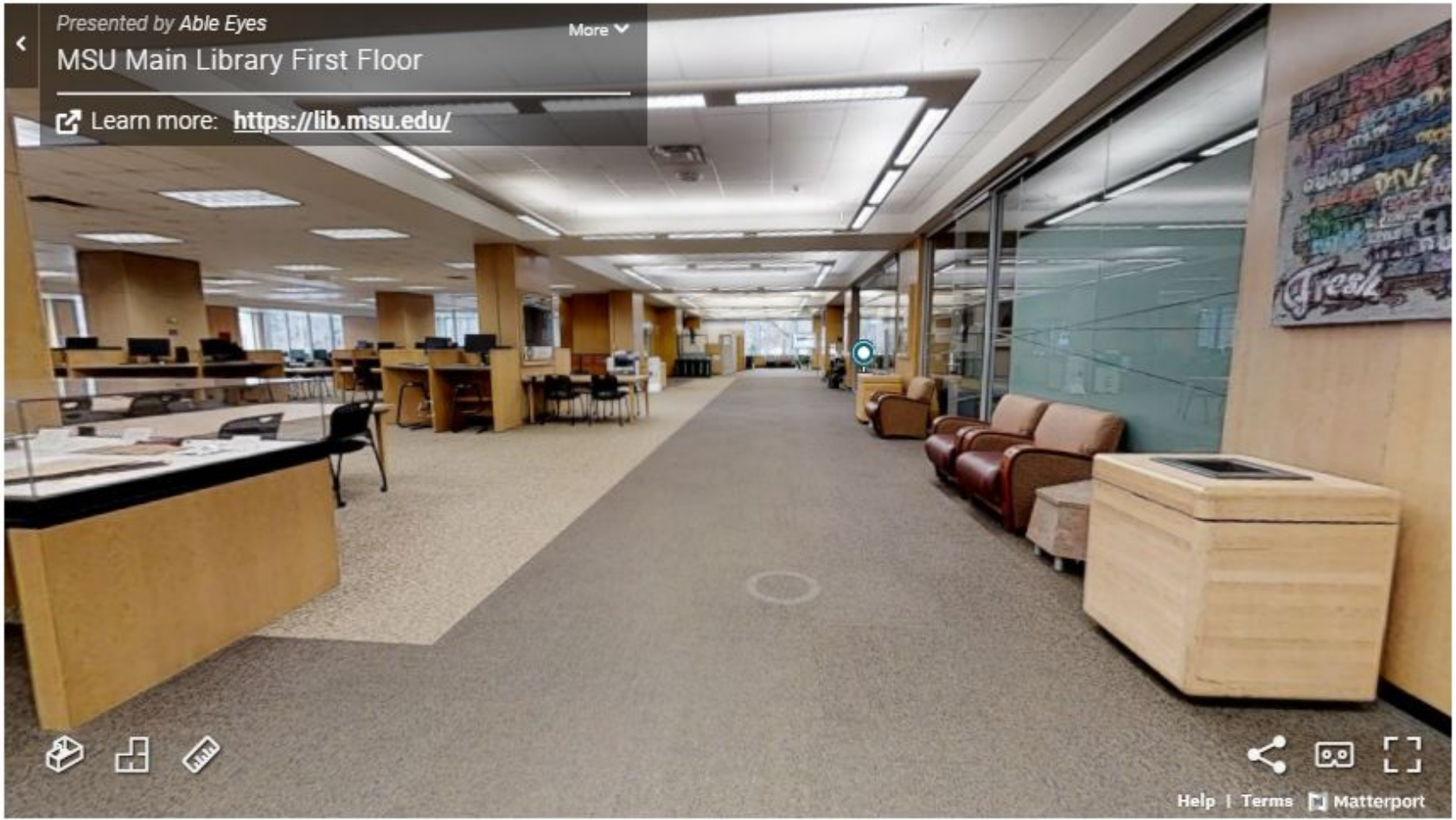
# Exhibitions

- Angle labels and materials for better visibility.
- QR code for digital access to exhibit text

# Incorporate multiple senses

Left image: 3-D tactile book by Tom Burtonwood
Right image: Sound dome in Michigan State University Special Collections gallery

# AbleEyes 3D tour



# Beal Instruction Room

**Location:**
3rd Floor, West wing

**Room Category:**
Individual Study, Library Instruction

**Seating Capacity:**
32

**Seating Description:**
Mobile seats with desks attached

**Notes:**

- Learn more about MSU Libraries' policies on meeting space use and food and drink in the library.
- This room is available for individual study when not reserved for meetings or classes.

**Features:**

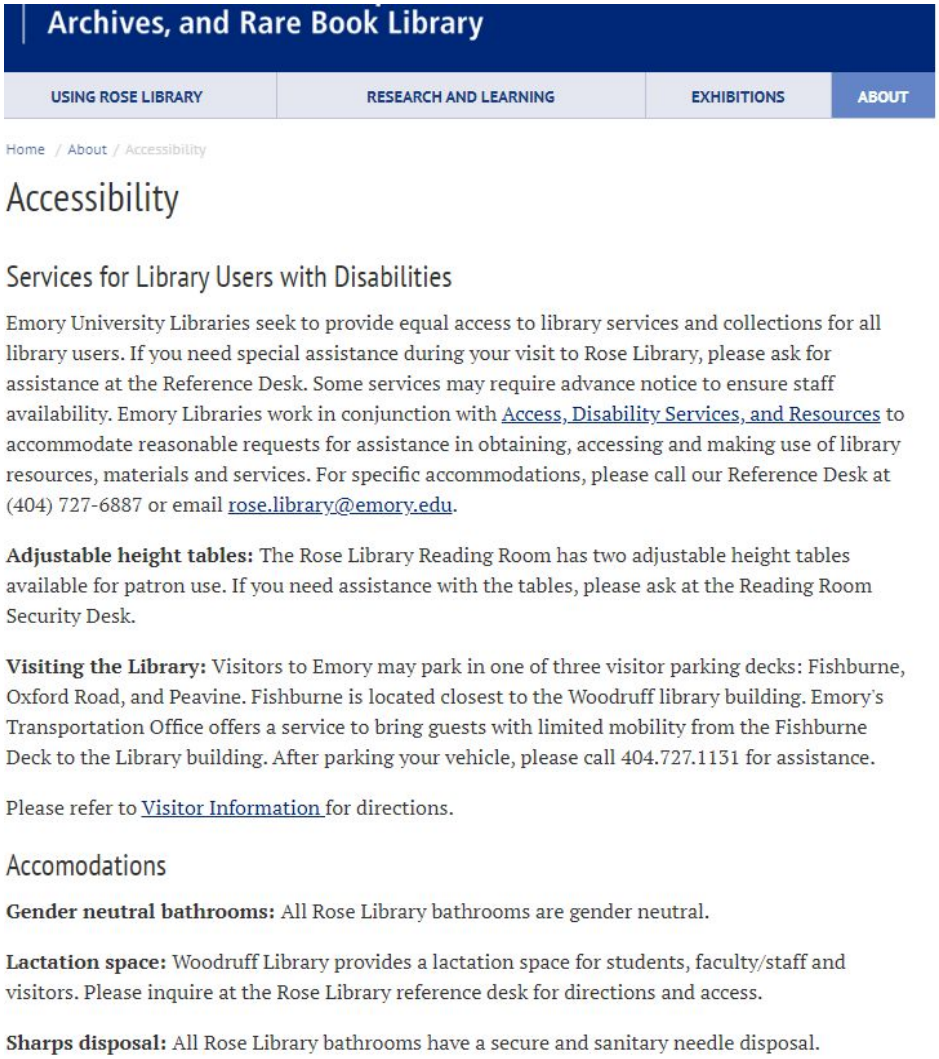
- **Accessibility**: Dimmable Lights
- **Environment**: Dimmable Lights
- **Other Equipment**: Dry Erase Markers, Eraser, Whiteboard
- **Video/Audio Equipment**: Projector Screen, Video Projector

https://lib.msu.edu/library-spaces/beal-instruction-room/

# Be upfront about what is and isn't accessible

- Contact information for who can address accessibility accommodations
- Accessibility features
- Known accessibility shortcomings

"Accessibility," Emory University Libraries, https://rose.library.emory.edu/about/accessibility.html



Archives, and Rare Book Library

USING ROSE LIBRARY | RESEARCH AND LEARNING | EXHIBITIONS | ABOUT

Home / About / Accessibility

## Accessibility

### Services for Library Users with Disabilities

Emory University Libraries seek to provide equal access to library services and collections for all library users. If you need special assistance during your visit to Rose Library, please ask for assistance at the Reference Desk. Some services may require advance notice to ensure staff availability. Emory Libraries work in conjunction with Access, Disability Services, and Resources to accommodate reasonable requests for assistance in obtaining, accessing and making use of library resources, materials and services. For specific accommodations, please call our Reference Desk at (404) 727-6887 or email rose.library@emory.edu.

**Adjustable height tables:** The Rose Library Reading Room has two adjustable height tables available for patron use. If you need assistance with the tables, please ask at the Reading Room Security Desk.

**Visiting the Library:** Visitors to Emory may park in one of three visitor parking decks: Fishburne, Oxford Road, and Peavine. Fishburne is located closest to the Woodruff library building. Emory's Transportation Office offers a service to bring guests with limited mobility from the Fishburne Deck to the Library building. After parking your vehicle, please call 404.727.1131 for assistance.

Please refer to Visitor Information for directions.

### Accomodations

**Gender neutral bathrooms:** All Rose Library bathrooms are gender neutral.

**Lactation space:** Woodruff Library provides a lactation space for students, faculty/staff and visitors. Please inquire at the Rose Library reference desk for directions and access.

**Sharps disposal:** All Rose Library bathrooms have a secure and sanitary needle disposal.

# Digital Accessibility

**Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)**

**Design accessibility from the beginning!**

- Headings
- Alt-text
- Contrast

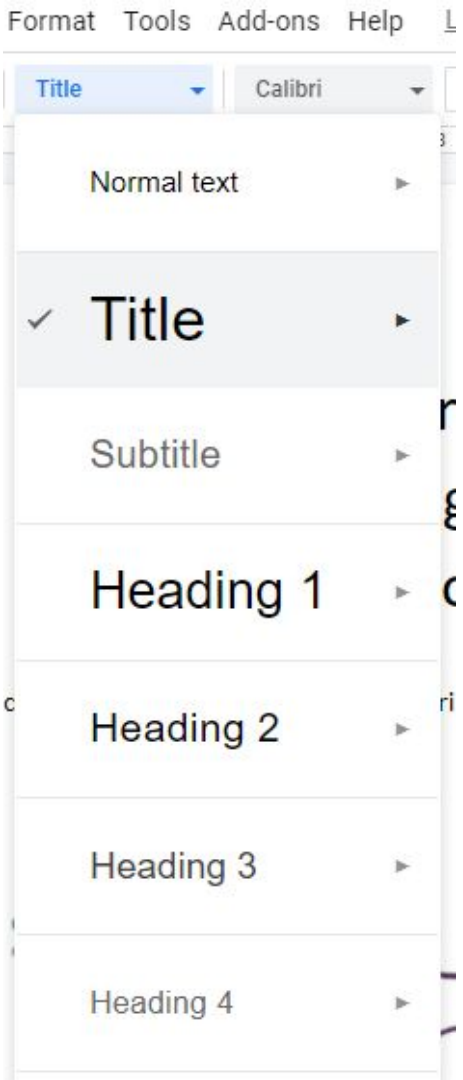
# Structure and navigation

Screen readers can navigate content by headings and can skip to links

Use descriptive hyperlink text (**not** “click here”)

To express your interest in this role please submit your materials here.

More information about this opportunity can be found here.



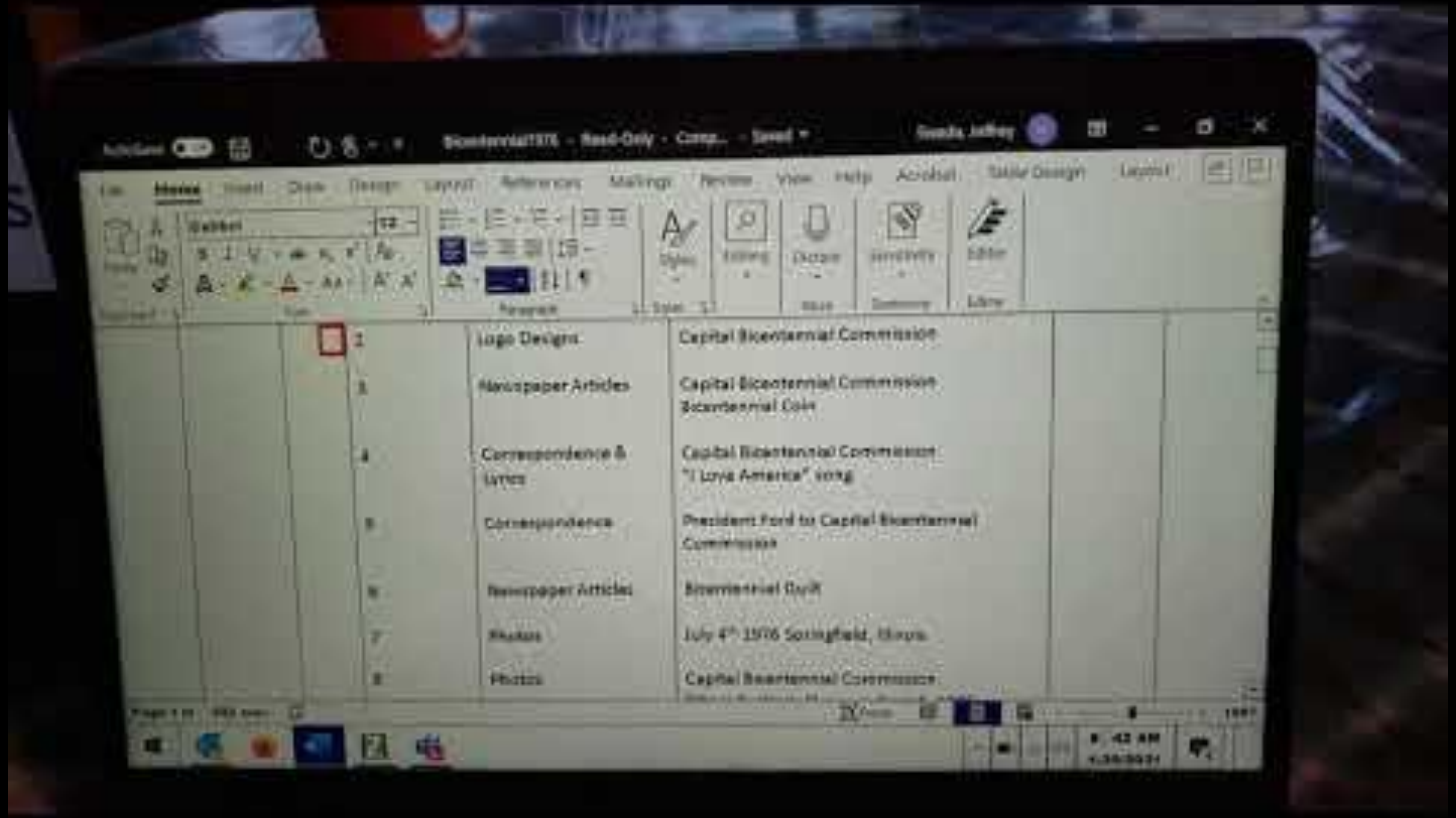

Above image: Example of multiple “here” hyperlinks
Right Image: Menu of headings in Google docs

# Reading Order

| | Folder | Title | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| Box 1 | 1 | Meeting Minutes | Capital Bicentennial Commission<br>July 4th Committee |
| | 2 | Logo Designs | Capital Bicentennial Commission |
| | 3 | Newspaper Articles | Capital Bicentennial Commission<br>Bicentennial Coin |
| | 4 | Correspondence & Lyrics | Capital Bicentennial Commission<br>“I Love America” song |

Screen readers rely on structures to help with reading order. Formatting content visually rarely works.

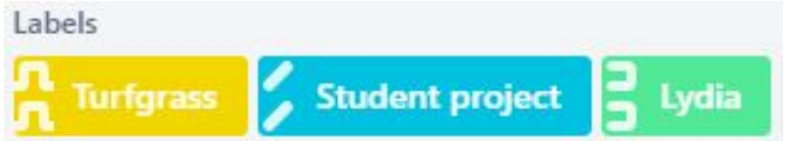
***Test content manually.***



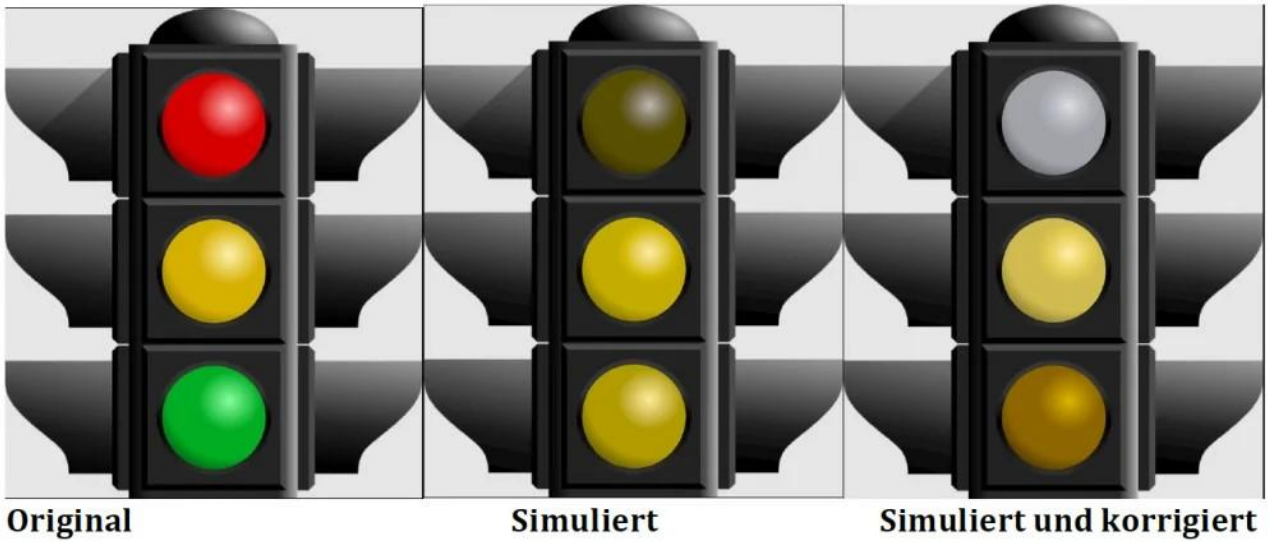
| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 2 | Logo Designs | Capital Bicentennial Commission |
| | 3 | Newspaper Articles | Capital Bicentennial Commission<br>Bicentennial Coin |
| | 4 | Correspondence & Lyrics | Capital Bicentennial Commission<br>"I Love America" song |
| | 5 | Correspondence | President Ford to Capital Bicentennial Commission |
| | 6 | Newspaper Articles | Bicentennial Quilt |
| | 7 | Photos | July 4th 1976 Springfield, Illinois |
| | 8 | Photos | Capital Bicentennial Commission |

# Document accessibility

- Font: Sans Serif is easier to read, ***not this***
- Don’t rely on only color to convey significance.

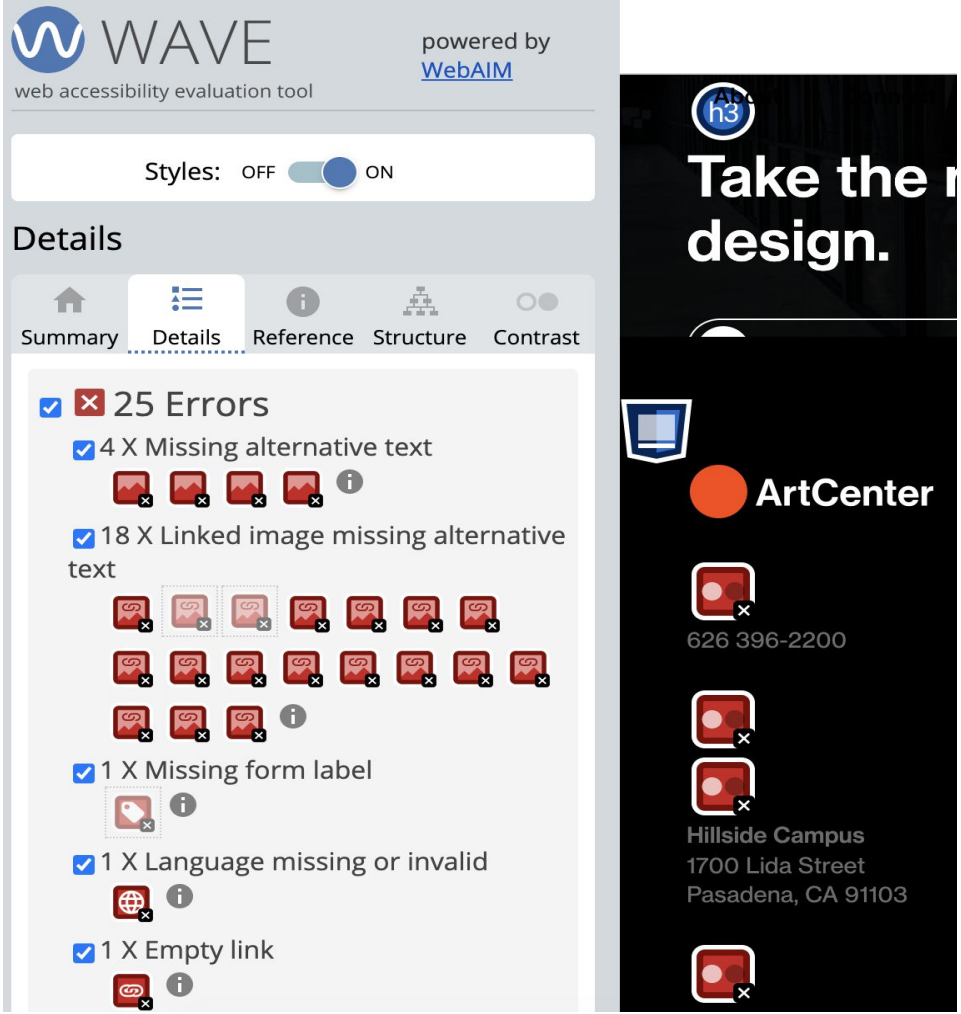



- Image 1: Labels for a Trello board with patterns
- Image 2: Traffic lights simulating spectrums of color blindness https://eye-able.com/en/color-blindness-and-color-deficiency/



# Testing

[WAVE web accessibility evaluation tool]

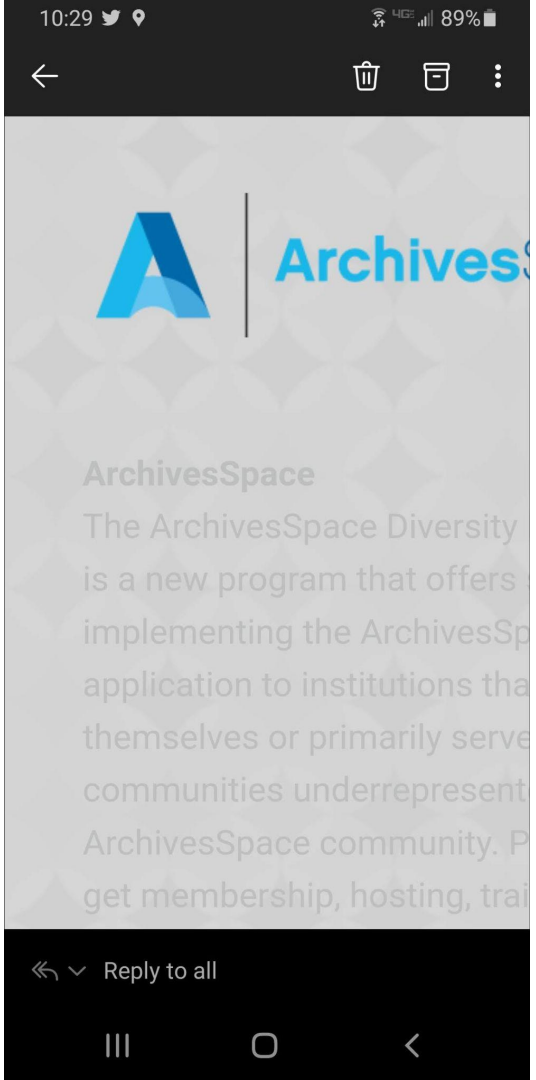



WAVE accessibility browser extension on a sample website

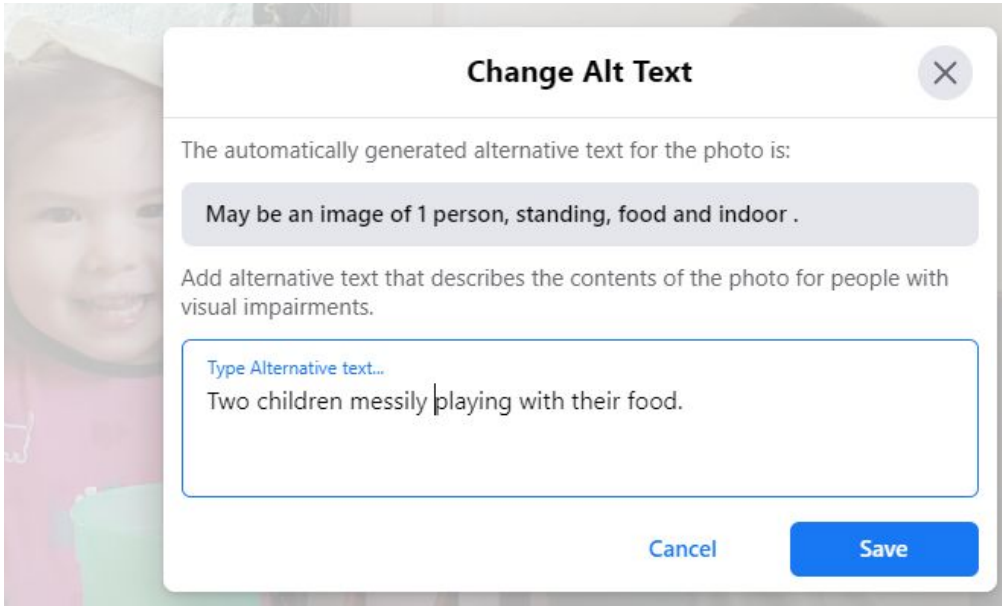
# Testing

- DLF Accessibility Auditing Shortlist
- Try built-in TalkBack, VoiceOver, and common paid programs like JAWS
- Dark mode
- High Contrast mode
- Engage and compensate disabled people to help with UX studies

**Passing an accessibility automated test doesn't mean it's actually *usable!***



# Alt Text




Alt Text Must Be:

*Concise*

*Focused*

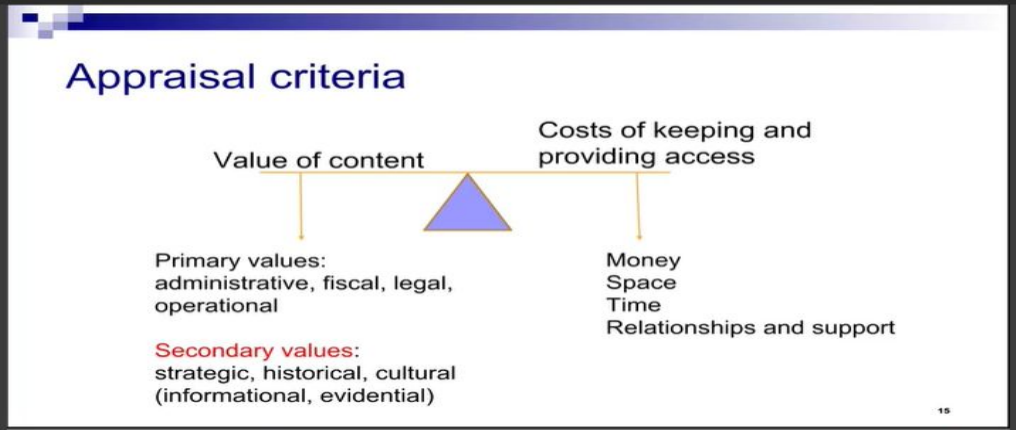
***Done!***

# Captions

Description webcast recording

All changes saved on Rev seconds ago.

Share




15:53 15:54 15:55 15:56 15:57 15:58 15:59 16:00 16:01 16:02 16:03

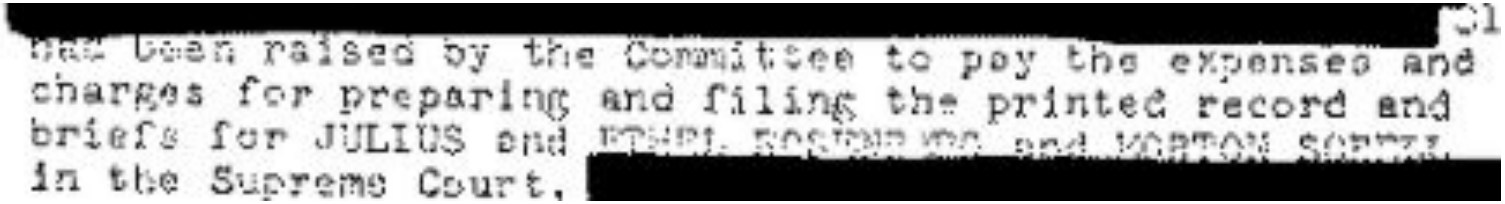
while the overall framework across coll... | and repositories remains fairly co... | The costs of keeping and pr

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| while the overall framework across collections | 15:52.42 | 15:54.78 |
| and repositories remains fairly consistent. | 15:54.78 | 15:56.86 |
| The costs of keeping and providing access | 16:01.62 | 16:03.67 |
| or the resources required that archivists must balance | 16:04.54 | 16:07.76 |
| with the value of the content of the records in their care, | 16:07.76 | 16:11.14 |
| include the money required for preservation actions | 16:11.14 | 16:13.85 |
| and staff to carry out the preservation, processing, | 16:13.85 | 16:16.90 |

# Problems with scanned documents

Scanning/PDF as an image locks the screen reader out!

OCRing image prone to errors and needs structure remediation




een raised by the Committee to pay the expenses and

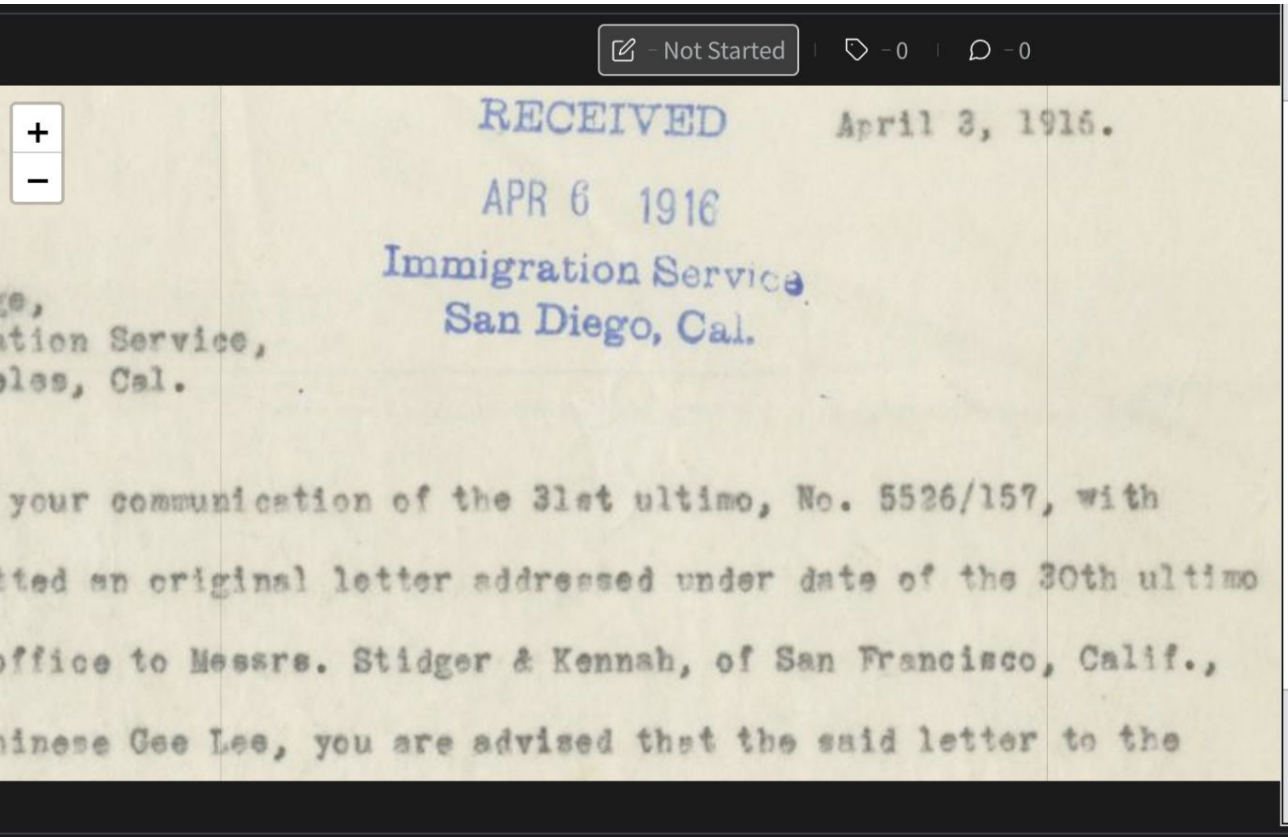
charges for preparing and fi1ing the printed record and

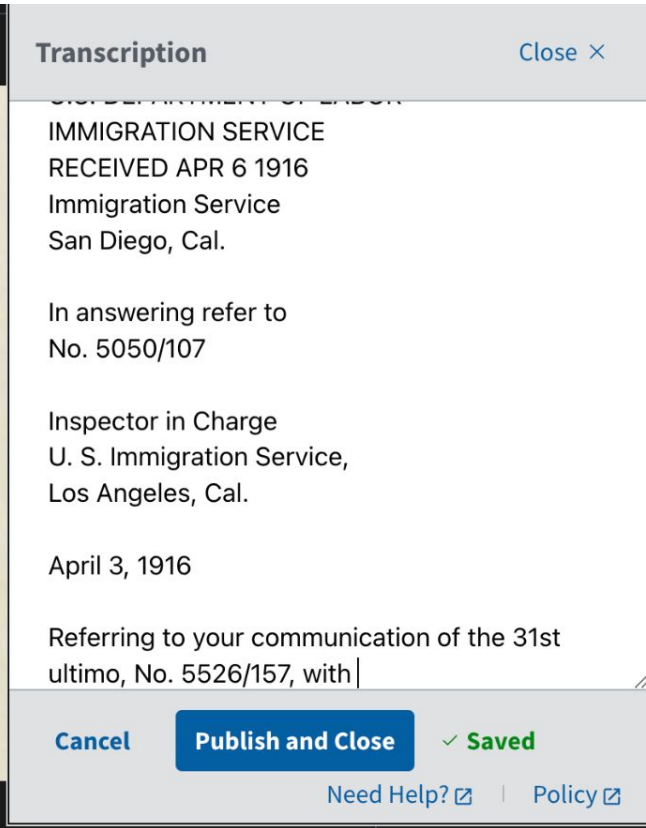
brief & for JULIUS and T?TJ::~f, D(Th2T.~N ~Mnnff MORTON SOBELL

in the Supreme Court.

http://www.columbia.edu/acis/cria/rosenberg/sample/index.html

# NARA: Citizen Archivist crowdsourced transcription



# Inclusion and Equity in the Workplace

- Interview and hiring practices
- Remote vs hybrid vs on-site
- Work space (office, desk, materials transport, equipment, technology, etc)
- Bathrooms, break rooms, etc.
- Modes of communication
- Evaluations and promotions
- Accommodation request handling
- Job Accommodation Network

# Advancing Accessibility on a Structural Level

Image from: https://www.themindfulpotter.com/pottery-wheel-classes

ArchivesSpace

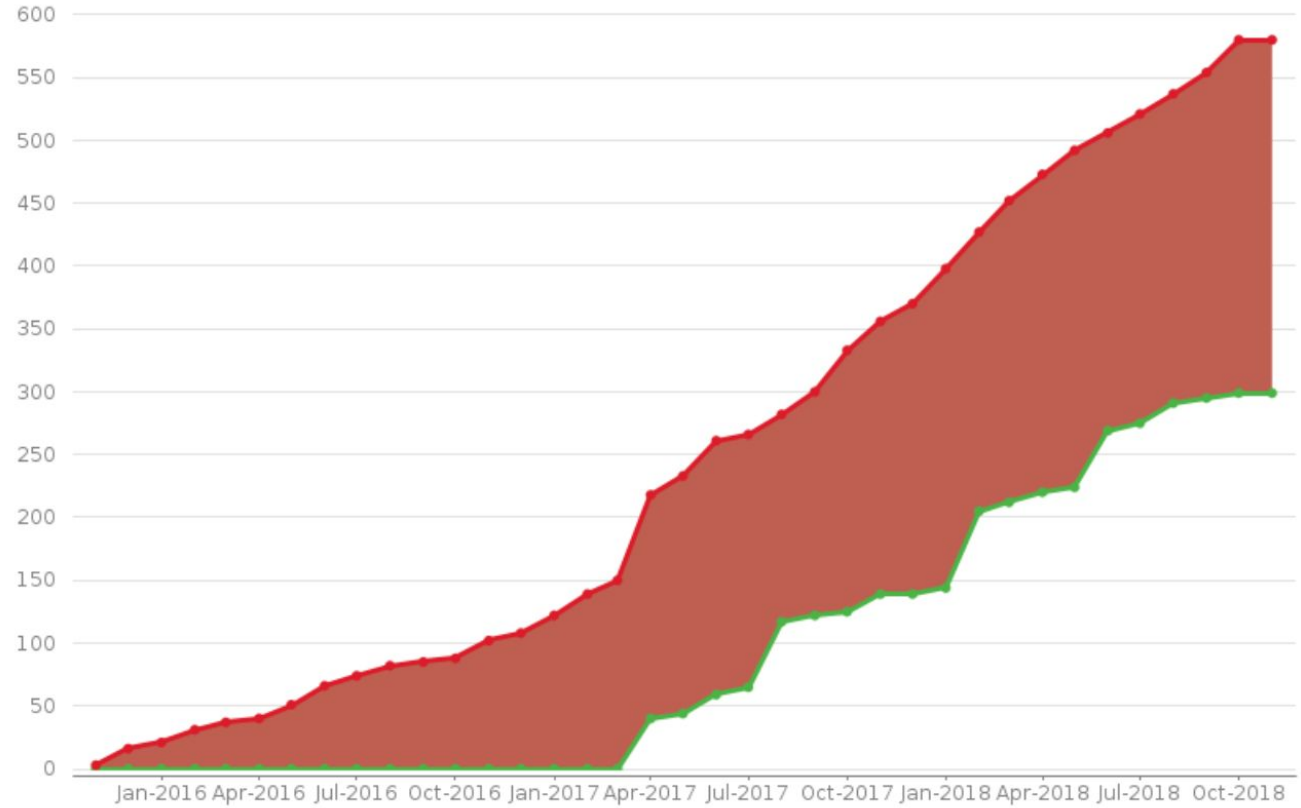
a community served by Lyrasis

# Created vs. Resolved Issues Report

Project: ArchivesSpace New Workflow

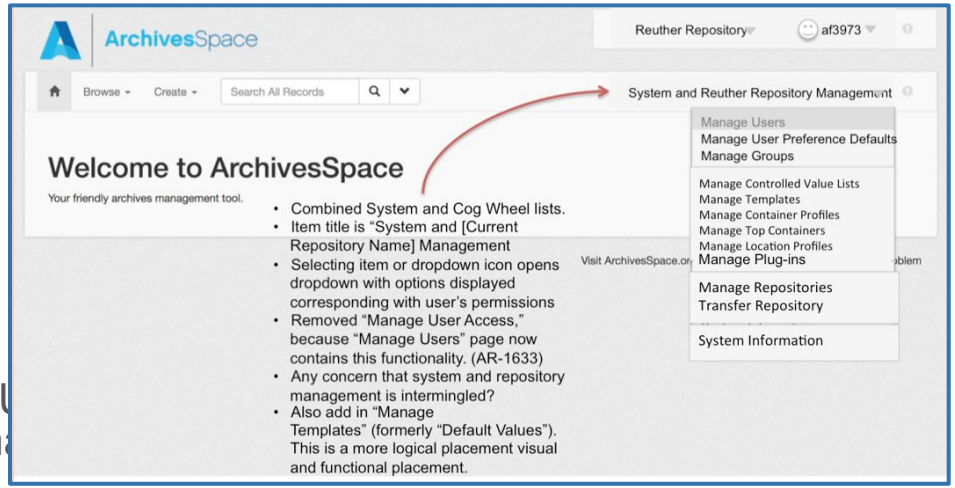
## Chart

This chart shows the number of issues **created** vs. the number of issues **resolved** in the last **1095** days.



# Staff Interface Enhancement Working Group Recommendations

- **Accessibility:**
  - Compliance to WCAG 2.0 Level AA
  - Interface completely tabbable and operable by keyboard commands
  - Increase font size within ASpace
  - Test with standard screen readers
- **Usability:**
  - Design for the F
  - Menu Organization: Consolidation
  - Search and Browse display
  - Adding container instances in RDE
- **Functionality:**
  - Background jobs
  - Spell check
  - Logged-in functionality for staff in the PU
  - Shortcut keys for ArchivesSpace comma




Slide from Alexandra Orchard's MMDP presentation, 2018

collectionspace

# WCAG 2.0 AA Compliancy for Staff CollectionSpace

Link goals

**Description**

Tasks associated will be outlined based on the 2021 Deque audit of CollectionSpace.

Please refer to the audit spreadsheet when indicated that there are multiple reported issues: CSpace_2021_Audit.xlsx
each issue in the spreadsheet should refer to a Jira ticket on its topic.

**Environment**

None

**Child issues**

Order by

24% Done

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| DRYD-1290 | Form elements need labels | MR | OPEN |
| ~~DRYD-1291~~ | Autocomplete attribute must be used correctly | MR | CLOSED |
| DRYD-1292 | Visual heading text is not marked as heading | MR | OPEN |
| DRYD-1293 | Row headers are not associated | MR | OPEN |
| DRYD-1294 | Content should be in a data table but is not | MR | OPEN |
| DRYD-1295 | Reading order is not logical/Intuitive | MR | OPEN |

Open

Actions

**Pinned fields**

Click on the ☆ next to a field label to start pinning.

**Details**

| | |
|---|---|
| Assignee | MR Michael Ritter |
| Reporter | JW Jessi Weithman |
| Labels | accessibility |
| Fix versions | 8.0.UI |
| Priority | Major |
| Epic Name | WCAG 2.0 AA Compliancy for Staff CollectionSpace |

Created August 29, 2023 at 10:30 AM

Updated February 9, 2024 at 3:01 PM

Configure

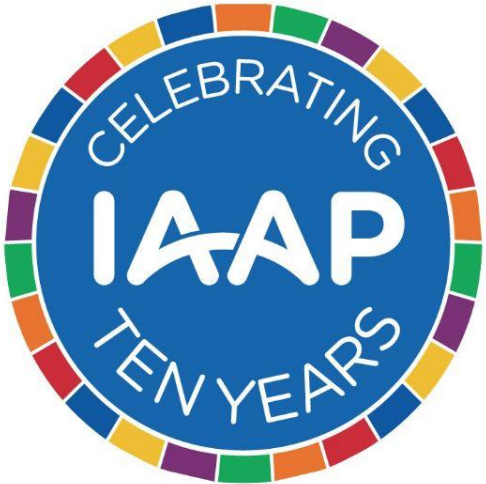
# Principles

- Make accessibility easy
- Ingrain accessibility into workflows
- Operationalize!

Princeton University

OIT Digital Accessibility

- Over 165 staff are certified CPACC
- In-house accessibility training and certification




International Association *of* Accessibility Professionals

A division of G3ict

# Obstacles

- **“Accessibility is too niche”**

# Obstacles

- **“Accessibility is too niche”**

  **1 in 4 people have a disability (CDC)**

# Obstacles

- “Accessibility is too niche”
- **“Accessibility is too expensive”**

# Obstacles

- “Accessibility is too niche”
- **“Accessibility is too expensive”**

# Obstacles

- “Accessibility is too niche”
- “Accessibility is too expensive”
- **“But WHO will lug the boxes???”**

Image from: https://marriagedynamics.com/five-loads-help-your-spouse-carry/

# About the 40-pound box lifting requirement…

I know an archives who…

- Shelves by box size (no linear foot boxes on the top shelf, especially not double-deep!)
- Doesn't buy the super big boxes
- Explore a height adjustable cart

Just don't frame it as a job REQUIREMENT!

Uline Manual Lift Table Cart

# Getting Started with Accessibility

**Join a community of practice**

**Take time to listen and learn**

**We need your voice and action!**

Blind visitor at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, touching a tactile replica of Vincent Van Gough's *Starry Night*
https://narratively.com/please-touch-the-art/

# Learn!

- W3C Digital Accessibility Foundations Online Course (Free!)
- Digital Accessibility courses with Deque University
- SAA Guidelines for Accessible Archives for People with Disabilities
- ARL SPEC Kit 3587: Accessibility and University Design
- International Association of Accessibility Professionals (IAAP) certificates

# SAA's Accessibility & Disability Section

- Founded in 2019
- Home of the Guidelines for Accessible Archives for People with Disabilities standard
- Mentoring
- Anonymous Q & A
- Blog
- Recognized in SAA Council Resolution for "Archivists at Home" document

# Digital Library Federation Digital Accessibility Group

Subteams for IT, Policies and Workflows, Advocacy and Continuing Education

Robust documentation, accessibility testing guidance, and influence within DLF for advancing accessibility

# Additional Accessibility Communities

ALA's Universal Accessibility Interest Group

N.C. Digital Accessibility Community of Practice (A11y CoP)

Code4Lib Slack Community

## Be an #a11y ally

- Don’t put the burden of advocating for accessibility only on disabled people.
- Hold others accountable for accessibility. Ask vendors for VPATs, encourage them to continue to advance the accessibility of their services and products
- Do one more accessible thing today (and tomorrow, and the next day…)

***Thank you!***

***Any Questions?***

Lydia.Tang@Lyrasis.org

With thanks to Jeff Swada for the screen reader demonstration

Tactile reproduction of a portrait of Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, Supreme Court