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…
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
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
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/
Patterns of Inaccessibility

2. Lacking flexibility to accomplish things in multiple ways
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

Learn more: https://lib.msu.edu/
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
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1</th>
<th>Folder</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Meeting Minutes</td>
<td>Capital Bicentennial Commission July 4th Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Logo Designs</td>
<td>Capital Bicentennial Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Newspaper Articles</td>
<td>Capital Bicentennial Commission Bicentennial Coin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Correspondence &amp; Lyrics</td>
<td>Capital Bicentennial Commission “I Love America” song</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

*Test content manually.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Logo Design</th>
<th>Capital Bicentennial Commission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Newspaper Articles</td>
<td>Capital Bicentennial Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bicentennial Coin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Correspondence &amp; Letters</td>
<td>Capital Bicentennial Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correspondence</td>
<td>&quot;I Love America&quot; song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Newspaper Articles</td>
<td>Capital Bicentennial Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Photos</td>
<td>Bicentennial Flag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>July 4, 1976 Springfield, Illinois</td>
<td>Capital Bicentennial Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Photos</td>
<td>Capital Bicentennial Commission</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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
Testing

**WAVE web accessibility evaluation tool**

WAVE accessibility evaluation tool

Web page address:

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 Must Be:
Concise
Focused
Done!
Appraisal criteria

Value of content

Primary values:
administrative, fiscal, legal, operational

Secondary values:
strategic, historical, cultural (informational, evidential)

Costs of keeping and providing access

Money
Space
Time
Relationships and support

while the overall framework across collections and repositories remains fairly consistent.
The costs of keeping and providing access or the resources required that archivists must balance with the value of the content of the records in their care, include the money required for preservation actions and staff to carry out the preservation, processing,
Problems with scanned documents

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

OCRing image prone to errors and needs structure remediation

http://www.columbia.edu/acis/cria/rosenberg/sample/index.html
RECEIVED April 3, 1916.

APR 6 1916

Immigration Service
San Diego, Cal.

In answering refer to No. 5050/107

Inspector in Charge
U. S. Immigration Service,
Los Angeles, Cal.

April 3, 1916

Referring to your communication of the 31st ultimo, No. 5526/157, with
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
Created vs. Resolved Issues Report

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 PUI
  ○ Shortcut keys for ArchivesSpace commands

Slide from Alexandra Orchard’s MMDP presentation, 2018
WCAG 2.0 AA Compliancy for Staff CollectionSpace

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.

Assessors
None

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

Fix versions: 8.0.UI
Priority: Major
Epic Name: WCAG 2.0 AA Compliancy for Staff CollectionSpace

Created August 28, 2023 at 10:30 AM
Updated February 9, 2024 at 3:01 PM
Principles

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

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

Digital Accessibility

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?

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With thanks to Jeff Swada for the screen reader demonstration

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