Understanding & Reviewing E-Resource Accessibility

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Making the accessibility case. . . Who do we serve?

- Students, Faculty, Staff
- Docents
- Independent researchers
- Community members
- Each other

Consider 5 Laws of Library Science *B. Shadrach 2015*

Shadrach's public library remix of Ranganathan:

1. Knowledge is for use in *all* forms.
2. Every citizen has the right to access *all* knowledge in *all* forms.
3. Every piece of knowledge is for access by *all* without discrimination of any kind.
4. Save the time of *all* of the knowledge seekers.
5. A library or a knowledge system is one that evolves with time to achieve all of the above laws.

How does this apply to the accessibility landscape?

Dependence on and Challenges of E-Resources

- Not historically part of the selection process for most institutions
- Library databases are not highest impact EIT. Not every student MUST use them.
- Most libraries are understaffed

BUT

- Huge investment in our digital resources
- Needs were clear before COVID-19
- Pandemic accelerated needs landscape
  - Fast pivot to fully remote teaching. . . with little to no preparation
  - Many faculty lack technology to adequately scan items. . . higher potential dependency on E-Resources
  - Limited ability for in person "drop in" explanatory or light bulb moments
  - More of us having executive functioning challenges and distracted environments

SUNY Systemness

EIT Policy passed in 2019 (in accordance with section 508 of Rehabilitation Act, ADA, etc.)

"System Administration and campuses shall develop, purchase, host, and/or acquire, to the extent feasible, web pages, websites, hardware and software products and services that are accessible to persons with disabilities."

SUNY Libraries Accessibility Cohort--Est. Summer 2020

- Representatives from libraries of varied sizes, varied types, and with varied patron needs
- Members have a variety of roles on their campuses
- Arrived invested (each member had an interest in this work)
- Varied levels of experience and comfort with accessibility reviews
- Goal of shared and self-directed training
- Built community, paired activities
- Tasked with reviewing VPATs for e-resources subscribed to by SUNY campuses
- Created model documentation, vendor communications, and more on a collaborative toolkit

What are VPATs?

- Voluntary Product Accessibility Template
- Can cover (the INT version covers all three):
  - U.S. Revised Section 508,
  - European EN 301 549, and
  - WCAG standards
- Generally created by the vendor regarding their individual products

VPAT Example

ARTSTOR

Artstor Digital Library Accessibility Conformance Report
Revised Section 508 Edition *

(Based on VPAT® Version 2.4)

Name of Product/Version: Artstor Digital Library and Artstor platform

Product Description: The Artstor Digital Library provides access to more than 2 million high-quality images to enhance scholarship and teaching, accessed via the Artstor platform (library.artstor.org).

Report Date: June 2020

Contact Information: support@artstor.org

Notes: ITHAKA is committed to providing an experience that is fully accessible to everyone. We make every effort to ensure that our services comply with web accessibility guidelines. Due to the scale and complex nature of the Artstor platform and content, this is an ongoing effort.

We evaluated the Artstor platform on the basis of, and with a focus on, its core functionality. Core functionality is defined here as viewing, organizing, browsing, searching, and downloading high-quality images in the Artstor Digital Library. The Artstor Digital Library is a licensed service that provides content contributed by museums, artists, libraries, scholars, and archives around the world. New contributions are added regularly.

The Artstor platform also displays user-contributed content that is freely accessible by anyone; no subscription or login is required. A companion service offered by Artstor, called JSTOR Forum, allows users to publish collections of content to the Artstor platform. These user-contributed collections may be added at any time and it is not possible for Artstor to know what this content will be. We cannot guarantee the accessibility of this uncontrolled content. User-contributed content may be identified as being part of a "Public Collection," "Institutional Collection," or "Personal Collection" on the Artstor platform.

Artstor does not fully conform to WCAG 2.1 level AA, but would fully conform if the non-conforming contributed content were removed from the analysis.

* This document covers Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0, 2.1, and the revised section 508 standards.

VPAT Example, cont.

Table 1: Success Criteria, Level A

Notes:

Criteria	Conformance Level	Remarks and Explanations
1.1.1 Non-text Content (Level A) Also applies to: Revised Section 508 • 501 (Web)(Software) • 504.2 (Authoring Tool) • 602.3 (Support Docs)	Partially Supports	All meaningful images that are part of the Artstor interface have a text alternative. To validate support for this criterion, we evaluated the images that regularly appear throughout the site (e.g. icons, logos, and UI components) and used VoiceOver to determine whether they had appropriate text alternatives. The Artstor Digital Library is a purely visual resource, containing high-resolution images for education and research. Many of the images in the Artstor Digital Library depict art, architecture, and the natural sciences, and are intended to create a specific sensory experience in a way that words cannot fully capture. These images are contributed to the Artstor Digital Library by third parties, and the quality of the text alternatives will vary, depending on the contributing source. All Artstor Digital Library images have informational text alternatives (usually, a "title" and "creator") which conveys descriptive information about the image. Some images have additional descriptive text (e.g. a "description" metadata field), however, we cannot guarantee that all images in the Artstor Digital Library have been given descriptive alt text.

What Does a VPAT Do?

- Demonstrates that a vendor has considered accessibility and tested regarding the common accessibility standards and legal requirements (within some jurisdictions)
- Provides an understanding of known issues, sometimes with proposed workarounds
- Serves as a guide for discussing accessibility issues with the vendor and planning for accommodations
- May include statements about when improvements will be made

What Does a VPAT <u>Not</u> Do?

- Guarantee that testing has been done accurately and comprehensively
- Guarantee that all accessibility issues have been appropriately addressed
- Serve as a legal warranty
- Get updated immediately upon revisions to the platform (though this varies by vendor)
- Address the needs of every possible patron with a disability
- Provide clear workarounds for all possible needs or requests

Bottom Line: Even if a VPAT is provided it makes sense to review it

Reviewing the VPAT

- The VPAT is the template itself, used as shorthand for the compliance report. Once you've received it, it's a good idea to take a look at it and see what vendor has provided.
- Here are things to consider:
  - Currency
  - Commitment
  - Thoroughness
  - Level of Support
  - Accuracy

Reviewing the VPAT: Currency

- When was the report published?
- On what version of the VPAT is it based?
- Does it say anything about plans to produce an updated report?
- If you have a VPAT that's older than 2 years, it's worth contacting the vendor to see if they have a newer version or if they plan to produce one.
- VPAT currency can be an indication of a vendor's commitment to making their product accessible

Reviewing the VPAT: Commitment

- What indications show that the vendor takes accessibility seriously?
- Do they provide a dedicated accessibility contact person?
- Do they have an accessibility statement and/or webpage on their site?
- Do they provide a road map detailing when problem identified in the report will be resolved?

Reviewing the VPAT: Thoroughness

- Does the vendor provide full remarks and explanations as to why they meet or do not meet the criteria requirements?
- Are the remarks adequate?
- Does it look like they really reviewed the criteria, or did they simply mark "supports" for each one?

Reviewing the VPAT: Level of Support

- How many of the criteria are identified as Does not Support, and in which sections (i.e. Level A, Level AA, Level AAA)?
- For those areas where it notes that it does not support the standards, is this reasonable?
  - For example, if there is no audio content on the site, the vendor might have marked the captions and transcript criteria as does not support, when it might have been better to mark it as not applicable.

Reviewing the VPAT: Accuracy

- Based on review of the platform, which we'll discuss shortly, are the vendor's assertions about the site's accessibility still valid?
- Has the platform's accessibility improved or degraded since the report was published?

VPAT and Product Review

Intention is to verify the vendor's assertions

General areas of review are:

- **Images and Text:** Does the platform provide alt-text for images? If the site includes PDFs, are they tagged for accessibility and able to be read with a screenreader?
- **Captions, Audio Descriptions, and Transcripts:** If the platform includes audiovisual content, is it captioned appropriately? Are transcripts available? Does the video content offer audio description?
- **Adaptable:** Does the platform allow users to gain access through a variety of methods, including screenreaders?
- **Distinguishable:** Is color alone used to impart information (such as identifying parts of a chart by color alone)? Does the color contrast on the pages meet accessibility standards?

VPAT and Product Review

General areas of review, cont.:

- **Navigable and Keyboard Support:** Does the platform support keyboard navigation? Does it provide skip links to let users bypass the menus to get to the main content? Are there keyboard traps like a Twitter feed?
- **Seizures:** Does the site contain flashing content that might trigger seizures?
- **Predictable:** Is the site organized in a predictable way? Are menus in the same place on all of the pages so that it is intuitive to navigate?
- **Input Assistance:** Are the forms coded correctly so that a screenreader or keyboard navigation could identify the fields? Is there any assistance offered if the user enters something incorrectly?
- **Robustness and Compatibility:** Does the platform behave the same way in different browsers and on a variety of devices? Is the content responsive when used on large and small screens?

What if a VPAT isn't Available or isn't Complete?

- Have a policy for next steps
- Consider this an opportunity for vendor advocacy
  - Explain why you request VPATs
  - Share a model VPAT
  - Request an alternative, such as an accessibility roadmap
  - Ask for a timeline to provide a VPAT

Model Language for Requesting a VPAT

Dear [_____],

I am writing to request a copy of the Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) for [NAME OF PRODUCT/PLATFORM]. As you may know, VPATs provide documentation about the ways that an information and communication technology conforms or does not conform with the requirements of U.S. Revised Section 508, European EN 301 549, and/or WCAG standards. SUNY is committed to providing equitable access to individuals with disabilities and, as such, relies on VPATs in making purchasing and subscription decisions. Understanding your product's level of conformance is vital for us to make procurement decisions related to your product.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about this matter.

Best,

What if a VPAT isn't Available or isn't Complete? Cont.

- Check whether another library or organization has completed a review
- Consider undertaking your own testing with patrons or using automated tools
- Share testing results or accessibility complaints with the vendor
  - Have a system for collecting issues reported by patrons
  - Regularly send these to vendors asking for a plan for resolution or a workaround

Model Language When a VPAT Is Not Available

Dear [_____],

I understand that your company has stated that no Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) is available at this time for [NAME OF PRODUCT/PLATFORM]. As you may know, VPATs provide documentation about the ways that an information and communication technology conforms or does not conform with the requirements of U.S. Revised Section 508, European EN 301 549, and/or WCAG standards. SUNY is committed to providing equitable access to individuals with disabilities and, as such, relies on VPATs or equivalent documentation in making our procurement decisions. Moreover, this is increasingly the standard across higher education to ensure that we are in compliance with federal law. Without this documentation, we are unable to rely on your product's accessibility. Please confirm when this accessibility documentation will be available. If you are not able to immediately provide this documentation, at a minimum provide a description of your current accessibility compliance as well as your roadmap for future accessibility improvements.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about this matter.

Best,

Model Language for Reporting an Issue

Dear [_____],

I am writing to you regarding an accessibility issue that we have found while using your product, [NAME OF PRODUCT/PLATFORM]. We have received reports from users that the product is inaccessible to them because [DESCRIPTION OF ISSUE]. Could you please let me know whether you are already aware of this issue and whether there are any known workarounds available? In addition, can you share your timeline for addressing this issue? Finally, can you please let me know the best contact person at your company regarding future accessibility issues for this product?

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Best,

Resources

- [Library Procurement Accessibility Toolkit](#) - Resources, forms, model documents and more created by the SUNY Library Accessibility Cohort and publicly available.
- [SUNY Library Vendor Accessibility Repository](#) - Members of the SUNY community can contact any of us for the password for full access.
- [Library Accessibility Alliance](#) - Features the LAA Library Accessibility Toolkit, eResource testing reports, and model contract language.
- [UW Libraries' Library E-Resource Accessibility Testing](#) - Shares the results of testing started in 2019.
- [Accessibility and Licensing at CUNY](#) - VPATs, guidelines, and more from CUNY.

Free Testing Tools

- [WebAIM's WAVE](#) - Both a free web-based and free browser-based option.
- [Deque's Axe](#) - Free Chrome-based extension.
- [Paciello's Color Contrast Checker](#) - Free, but requires download; available for both Mac and Windows.
- [Photosensitive Epilepsy Analysis Tool (PEAT)](#) - Free, but requires download; only for Windows. The tool identifies seizure risks in web content and software.

Questions?

Keep in Touch!

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