When Open Isn't Accessible

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When Open Isn’t Accessible

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11% of students in postsecondary institutions have self-identified as having a disability.

Why Accessibility?
“Accessibility is all about our ability to engage with, use, participate in, and belong to, the world around us.”

The spirit of open access is to remove barriers to education. This includes barriers related to accessibility. Accessibility, as it relates to open educational resources, means that your OER should be accessible to a variety of users - learners with disabilities, the aging population, and those for whom English is a second language. Designed correctly, OER’s create equal learning opportunities for all students; designed poorly, they create new barriers to participation. Furthermore, institutions of higher education have a legal and ethical responsibility to ensure individuals with disabilities have equal access to information both online and in the classroom.

Accessibility, as it relates to open educational resources, means that your OER should be accessible to a variety of users - learners with disabilities, the aging population, and those for whom English is a second language. Guidelines are the legal and technical standards for ensuring accessible open educational resources.

Useful Sites for Locating OERs

Multiformat
MERLOT*
OER Commons
OpenLearnWorks*
Courseware
Saylor
Lumen Learning*
Open Learn
Images
Pixabay
Noun Project
Wikimedia

Your Library’s LibGuides

Additional Tools for Locating a Range of OERs
SUNY Accessible Book Finder*
Advanced Search in Google*
Creative Commons Search*

Accessibility Criteria
- Navigation that is clear and consistent.
- Properly structured documents, including headings.
- Sufficient color contrast. Avoid using color to convey meaning.
- Alternative text descriptions - for images, tables, equations, maps, etc.
- Intelligibly-captioned multimedia and descriptive audio.
- High quality scans with no highlighting or handwriting.
- PDFs that are text renderable, tagged, and structured appropriately.
- Meaningful hyperlinks. Avoid phrases like ‘click here’ and ‘more’.

Not all open access resources will be accessible from the get-go. Taking measures to check an existing resources’ accessibility is necessary.

There are choices designers make that can render content more accessible to all learners. To create a truly inclusive learning environment, consider sensory, motor, cognitive, emotional and social restraints; individual learning styles and approaches; and technical, financial or environmental constraints.

Follow these accessibility criteria to ensure that your OERs are accessible:

Resources
- Advanced Search in Google - https://www.google.com/advanced_search
- Creative Commons Search - https://search.creativecommons.org

License your work and ensure equal learning opportunities. Take the initiative and check your OERs for accessibility!

Using Accessibility Tools

Use a Checklist or Rubric
BC Open Accessibility Toolkit*
Achieve OER Rubric10

Use Accessibility Checkers
Microsoft Products
Word, PowerPoint, & Excel (File > Info > Inspect)
Adobe Acrobat Professional (View > Tools > Accessibility)

Evaluate

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Developing

Consider usability and navigation.

Conversion
Is it possible to convert to another format if needed?

Licensing

(Creative Commons)
Register open work with a CC license.

Test your Work
Try BC Open Accessibility Toolkit.

Anticipate people’s needs from the start. Be proactive!

References
- Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines are the legal and technical standards for ensuring accessible open educational resources.

Additional tools

Useful Sites for Locating OERs
- MERLOT*
- OER Commons
- OpenLearnWorks*
- Saylor
- Lumen Learning*
- Open Learn
- Pixabay
- Noun Project
- Wikimedia

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