

IBHE Web Accessibility Consortium

First Year Evaluation Report

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Executive Summary of Progress and Plans

During the first year of the IBHE Web Accessibility Consortium, the group built working relationships between participating institutions on the issue of web accessibility. These bonds were built upon the activities sponsored by the consortium, including training on web accessibility techniques, development of functional accessibility best practices, working with companies to improve the accessibility of purchased web resources and services, building tools to help developers evaluate and build accessible web resources, and raising awareness of accessibility issues and solution strategies. The consortium members met for an all day meeting in January 2008 to chart the next year's activities. These plans continue to be refined and executed through bi-monthly teleconferences.

One of the main results of the first year's work was the critical need to integrate accessibility into all web development training. While there is still a need for specific training activities on accessibility techniques, there needs to be a major effort to integrate accessibility knowledge in both academic and continuing education courses provided by institutions of higher education for students and staff learning about web technologies and electronic publishing. This need is only heightened by the passage of the Illinois Information Technology Accessibility Act (IITAA). The act will create a state wide demand for developers who understand the needs of people with disabilities and the techniques to effectively make web resources more accessible. The working group is exploring the idea of developing a certification program to support the implementation of the statewide IITAA standards. Another important initiative is improving the resources available on the IBHE Web Accessibility Awareness website. This will provide a place for developers and administrators to learn from people with disabilities, web developers and eventually administrators on what are the ways to start and sustain campus wide web accessibility policies. This includes the cost-savings a campus can achieve through the use of a web standards implementation model. The consortium will continue to work together to build the knowledge base of best practices, tools to support their implementation and advocacy resources needed to achieve the ultimate goal of universal access to web based materials for students, faculty and staff with disabilities.

State Wide Participation in Consortium

Participating Institutions

- City Colleges of Chicago
- City Colleges of Chicago- Harry S Truman
- City Colleges of Chicago-Wilbur Wright
- College of DuPage
- Eastern Illinois University
- Governor's State University
- Harper College
- Illinois Central College
- Joliet Junior College
- Kishwaukee College
- Northern Illinois University
- Southern Illinois University-Carbondale
- Southern Illinois University- Edwardsville
- University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign
- Western Illinois University

External Evaluators

- Joe Wheaton, The Ohio State University
- Ken Petri, The Ohio State University

IBHE Listserv

The listserv is used for communication between people participating in the consortium

- 89 people subscribed to listserv

Teleconferences

Bi-monthly teleconferences are used to coordinate, plan and publicize consortium sponsored activities.

Face to Face Meetings

Two face-to-face meetings were held to provide extended time to coordinate and plan consortium activities.

- January 29, 2007 UIUC - 23 participants
- May 31, 2007 Joliet Junior College - 14 participants

Objective 1: DEVELOP INSTITUTION LEVEL EXPERTISE IN ACCESSIBLE WEB DESIGN FOR LOCAL TRAINING AND ADVOCACY OF ACCESSIBILITY (TRAIN THE TRAINER)

Train the Trainer Workshops Overview

The following courses and workshops were offered as part of the IBHE Web Accessibility Consortium training program. People attending the workshops found the workshops very informative and useful in learning about how to create accessible electronic materials and web resources. People attending the workshops also reported demand is low on their campuses for web accessibility training. There are many reasons for the lack of demand for targeted accessibility training, but probably the most important reason is administrators not making accessibility a priority for campus web resources. On campuses where administrators are making accessibility a priority the accessibility training strategy is being integrated into mainstream training offered by campus continuing education programs for faculty, staff and students. Some campuses like Harper College are integrating accessibility into their degree course curriculum.

Plans

The IBHE Web Accessibility Consortium face-to-face meeting held at the University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign on January 15th, 2008 identified training efforts focused on technologies used by instructors and clerical staff as a high priority. Training resources must be available in a just-in-time manner, including web based multi-media tutorials. The need for just in time training materials is demonstrated in the low attendance of workshops on these topics. People need access to more targeted hands-on training when they realize they need to address the accessibility of the resources they are developing and just in time training resources will support that user need.

Universal Web Design Workshop

The Universal Web Design Workshop is a one day workshop designed for disability service professionals, administrators and web developers to understand accessible design of web resources and how changes to web development practices and testing can create web resources that are more usable by everyone, including people with disabilities, and are much more efficient to develop and maintain through the use of web standards based approaches. Each participant receives a CD-ROM of demo software and links to web resources on web accessibility to take back and share with people on their campus. The CD-ROM also includes the full workshop presentation.

Designing Universally Accessible Web Resources workshop will provide experiences in:

- How people with disabilities access the web
- Review the current accessibility guidelines
- Demonstrate accessible design practices

Attendance

- June 7th at College of DuPage (Naperville, Illinois): 15 participants
- April 20th at Joliet Junior College (Joliet, Illinois): 20 participants
- March 30th at Western Illinois University (Macomb, Illinois): 22 participants
- March 12th at Midwest Educause Conference (Chicago, Illinois): 20 participants

Designing Universally Accessible Web Resources Course

The “Designing Universally Accessible Web Resources” course is offered as either a 2 day hands-on or 8 week online course and is designed for web developers to learn about accessibility issues faced by people with disabilities in using the web, and how web resources can be designed to improve accessibility using web standards technology. The workshop provides a foundation on how people with disabilities access information on the web using both mainstream browsers and specialized assistive technologies like screen readers.

Participants learn about the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, the Federal Section 508 Information Technology Standards, and the Illinois Web Accessibility Standards (IWAS) requirements for web resources. Participants also learn about the strengths and weaknesses of various tools used to evaluate the functional accessibility of web resources and how to use the Firefox Accessibility Extension and the Functional Accessibility Evaluator to evaluate and estimate the functional accessibility of web resources. The Firefox Accessibility Extension and the Functional Accessibility Evaluator support the “iCITA HTML Accessibility "Best Practices" for building web sites that are more accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities. Participants build an accessible web page using the best practices as a part of the course. The use of web standards has direct benefit to developers by making it easier for them to create and maintain web resources on their campuses.

Attendance

- March 8-9, 2007 at University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign: 20 participants
- July 10-11, 2007 at University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign: 7 participants
- Fall 2006 (on-line 22 session course) through the University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign: 20 participants

Web 2.0 applications accessibility with ARIA Course (computer lab)

Course Description

This course is designed for web application developers to learn how to use the emerging W3C Accessible Rich Internet Applications (ARIA) recommendations to create accessible Web 2.0 applications. Participants learn about the accessibility issues faced by people with disabilities in

using the web, and how web application resources can be designed to improve the accessibility using the proposed ARIA web standards. Participants learn about the W3C Roles for ARIA and States and Properties Module for ARIA specifications for making web 2.0 widgets compatible with assistive technologies through ARIA support in Firefox browser and assistive technologies like WindowEyes and JAWS screen readers. Participants build and test the accessible Web 2.0 widgets using a best practices model and learn about compatibility issues related to supporting ARIA widgets with Microsoft Internet Explorer and creating valid HTML documents.

Attendance

- June 12-13, 2007 at University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign: 16 participants

Adobe PDF Accessibility with Greg Pisocky (computer lab)

Course Description

The workshop was lead by Greg Pisocky from Adobe Corporation and helped instructors, web developers and administrators understand the accessibility features of Adobe PDF and Acrobat Reader. Participants learned how to integrate accessibility into their web publishing practices. The materials supplied by Adobe can be used by instructors in their own courses on Adobe PDF creation, editing and publishing. The workshops employed a hands-on experience to help participants understand the details of accessible PDF authoring.

Participants learn:

- Accessibility features of Adobe PDF and Acrobat Reader
- Creating accessible documents from Microsoft Office
- Creating accessible PDF forms
- Improving the accessibility of scanned and legacy PDF files

Attendance

- April 3, 2007 at Southern Illinois University: 11 participants
- April 4, 2007 at Lincoln Land Community College: 23 participants
- April 5, 2007 at Harper Community College: 15 participants

Functional Web Accessibility Testing

The Division of Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) at the University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign has created the Functional Web Accessibility Evaluator (FAE) and the Firefox Accessibility Extension to help web developers, administrators and people with disabilities test web resources for accessibility features.

Participants learn the basic principles of functional web access, and how FAE and Firefox Accessibility Extension tools can be used to evaluate and report on the implementation of HTML techniques that support functional accessibility. Participants will be able to test using the tools on their own web resources as part of the course.

Attendance

- February 28, 2007 at University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign: 9 participants

Publishing Word Documents to the Web

Microsoft Word is a popular tool for creating memos, reports, and other documents to be placed on the web. Participants learn how to use the Illinois Accessible Web Publishing Wizard for Microsoft Office to publish accessible HTML versions of Word documents to the web. The html output of the Wizard supports web standards and accessibility to people with disabilities. The use of web standards makes the documents more accessible to everyone by giving all people more options to access and use the document.

In the workshop participants learn best practices techniques to improve accessibility of Office documents. These techniques make it easier for authors to manage the styling and layout of their documents and to improve the quality of the published HTML using the Wizard. An important part of the workshop is learning how to use Word styling features to manage document formatting. The first two hours of the workshop is a hands-on tutorial, and the last hour provides time for participants to use the techniques they've learned to improve the formatting and structure of Word documents they bring to the class.

Attendance

- Feb. 21, 2007 at University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign: 6 participants
- April 17, 2007 online webinar : 3 participants
- April 30, 2007 online webinar : 6 participants

Publishing PowerPoint Presentations to the Web

Microsoft PowerPoint is a popular tool for creating presentations and this workshop teaches best practices of making PowerPoint presentations more accessible through the use of the Illinois Accessible Web Publishing Wizard for Microsoft Office. The Wizard is designed to publish accessible HTML versions of PowerPoint presentations to the web. The Wizard supports web standards and accessibility to people with disabilities, making the presentation more accessible to everyone by giving people more options to access the presentation.

Participants learn best practices to make documents more accessibility and to make it easier for authors to managing the styling and layout of their presentations and improve the quality of the published HTML. The first two hours of the session is a hands-on tutorial, and the last hour is used for participants to use the techniques they've learned to improve the formatting of PowerPoint presentations they bring to the class.

Attendance

- Feb. 21, 2007 at University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign: 7 participants
- April 10, 2007 online webinar : 7 participants
- April 26, 2007 online webinar : 15 participants

Publishing Office (Word & PPT) to the Web

This is a combination of the previous two workshops on Word and Powerpoint accessibility.

Attendance

- June 5, 2007 at University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign: 4 participants

Local Workshops on Web Accessibility

The following are new workshops and courses that have been developed or enhanced from information obtained from the IBHE sponsored workshops and courses.

Western Illinois University

- Creating Accessible Word Documents and PowerPoint Presentations
 - June 19, 2007
 - October 15, 2007
- Move Over Tables, I'm Learning CSS
 - June 20, 2007
 - July 25, 2007
 - October 14, 2007
- Creating Accessible PDF Documents
 - June 19, 2007
 - October 15, 2007

Harper College

- Mozilla Accessibility Extension & FAE Training
 - March 15, 2007
- Hands-On Accessible PDF Training
 - July 9, 2007: 10 participants
- Best Practices of Web Development
 - August 20, 2007: Orientation Week Workshop
- Extending Mozilla Firefox
 - September 20, 2007: Technical Users Group (TUG) Meeting
 - September 21, 2007: Technical Users Group (TUG) Meeting
- WEB 150 Web Development I

- Offered every semester (Fall, Spring, and Summer).
- WEB 210 Web Usability & Accessibility
 - Fall 2007 semester

Illinois Central College

- Web Usability and Accessibility (CMWEB 150)
 - Fall, 2007 semester - August - December, 2007.

Prototype Web Accessibility Awareness Website

One item that was not included in the original IBHE Consortium proposal, but was identified as an important resource by the working group is a website that can be used to educate administrators and web developers on the needs of people with disabilities. The website will focus on how web developers and administrators who have embraced accessible design have changed their procedures and practices to improve the accessibility of web resources. The website will provide developers and administrators just learning about IT disability access issues a central point to learn about the experiences of students with disabilities and receive support from peers that accessible design can be integrated into work plans in a cost effective way and at the same time improve the web experience for everyone. Resources were reallocated during the first year to develop a prototype of this web resource. Additional work will be done on this resource during the second year to make a publically available version.

The prototype resource is located at:

<http://demo.cait.org/accessibilityAwareness/>

Objective 2: DEVELOP CONSORTIUMS TO IMPROVE THE ACCESSIBILITY OF PURCHASES WEB APPLICATIONS AND RESOURCES

Development of Consortiums on Purchased Web Technologies

Blackboard Web Accessibility Interest Group

This collaboration group has been working with WebCT and Blackboard for over three years and has been able to help the company improve the accessibility of WebCT Vista products. The members of this group are end-users, Instructional Designers and Trainers, faculty, Educational technology administrators, and disability specialists. The Blackboard Accessibility Interest Group has three specialized sub-groups

- Testing: Testing existing and prototype products from Blackboard
- QA: Identifying quality assurance procedures for functional accessibility
- Documentation: Document features to support accessibility, accommodations and accessible authoring practices

Coordination and planning teleconference is on the 1st Monday of each month and the sub-groups meet as frequently as needed. All relevant information including meeting dates/times, agenda, and minutes are posted at the Blackboard Accessibility Interest Group Home page.

- www: <http://www.cita.uiuc.edu/collaborate/blackboard/>
- 118 people subscribed to listserv
- 17 registered users from participating institutions from Illinois
 - UI-Urbana/Champaign: 9
 - UI-Chicago: 4
 - UI-Springfield: 2
 - Central Community College: 2

Elsiever Accessibility Interest Group

The Elsevier Accessibility Interest Group works with Elsevier, the largest electronic bibliographic library service providers, to improve the accessibility of their electronic bibliographic services. The Elsevier Accessibility Interest Group includes librarians, library administrators, and disability specialists. The members of this group meet once or twice per month via teleconference.

- www: <http://www.cita.uiuc.edu/collaborate/elsevier/>
- 24 people subscribed to listserv
- 18 registered people from Illinois Institutions of Higher Education
 - UIUC: 13
 - UIC: 2
 - WIU/CAIT: 1
 - Harper: 1
 - Kishwaukee: 1

EBSCO Accessibility Interest Group

EBSCO is one of the largest electronic library bibliographic service providers and during the past year the EBSCO Accessibility Interest Group has been able to help EBSCO make significant improvements in the accessibility in the EBSCO Host user interface use at most libraries around the world. The members of this group include people with disabilities, librarians, library administrators, and disability specialists. The members of this group meet once or twice per month via teleconference.

- www: <http://cita.uiuc.edu/collaborate/libraryebSCO/>
- 34 people subscribed to the listserv
- 17 registered people from Illinois Institutions of Higher Education
 - UIUC: 11
 - UIC: 2
 - WIU: 2
 - Harper College: 1
 - Kishwaukee: 1

ExLibris/CARLI Accessibility Interest Group

CARLI offers its electronic cataloging services including the Voyager Catalog to approximately 71 libraries in Illinois and the exLibris development group for Voyager product is located in Chicago, Illinois. Dr. Gunderson and Hadi Rangin are working with Paige Weston at CARLI and providing direct consulting to the Voyager development group in Palatine, Illinois. Dr. Gunderson and Hadi Rangin have made two trips to exLibris to review the accessibility of the prototypes during the past year.

www: <http://cita.uiuc.edu/collaborate/librarycarli/>

WebMail and Mirapoint Accessibility Interest Group

The WebMail and MiraPoint Accessibility Interest Group focuses on accessibility of the web interface to WebMail applications used in higher educational institutions in Illinois. Accessibility issues along with their universal solutions have been communicated via video clips, documentations, and on-site visits by members of MiraPoint Product Managements. Based upon this feedback, MiraPoint has drafted a PRD (Product Request Document) for the next version of Mirapoint. The members of this group are WebMail Application Managers and Engineers, and Accessibility Specialists. The interest group meets via teleconference approximately once a month.

- www: <http://www.cita.uiuc.edu/collaborate/webmail/>
<http://cita.uiuc.edu/collaborate/mirapoint/>
- 25 people subscribed to listserv
- 6 registered users from Illinois Institutions of Higher Education:
 - UIUC: 3
 - UIC: 1
 - WIU: 1
 - NIU: 1

HTML Best Practices Working Group

The iCITA HTML Best Practices working group consists of both disability access specialists and web developers to define the best markup techniques to improve the accessibility of HTML based resources. This group meets weekly and coordinates its efforts with the Illinois Information Technology Accessibility Act (IITAA). Notably the working group reviewed and commented on the draft of the Illinois Web Accessibility Standard 1.9.

- www: <http://html.cita.uiuc.edu>
- 75 people subscribed to the listserv
- 25 registered users from Illinois Institutions of Higher Education:
 - UIUC: 13
 - Harper: 1
 - NIU: 2
 - UIC: 4
 - Moraine Valley: 1

- WIU: 1
- ICC: 1
- McHenry: 1
- JJC: 1

Functional Accessibility Evaluator

The Functional Accessibility Evaluator (FAE) is being used to estimate the use of the iCITA Web Accessibility Best Practices and therefore evaluate the functional accessibility features of web resources. FAE can be used in conjunction with the Firefox Accessibility Extension to test the accessibility of dynamically generated web resources. This is especially important to support the consortiums working with companies supplying web mail and course management systems to institutions of higher education in the state where the web resources are dynamically generated. This ability greatly increases the efficiency of identifying and reporting to companies and web developers the accessibility features of dynamically generated web resources.

- www: <http://fae.cita.uiuc.edu>
<http://firefox.cita.uiuc.edu>
- 805 registered users
- 116 registered users from Illinois Institutions of Higher Education
 - UIUC: 58
 - UIC: 20
 - UIS: 1
 - WIU/CAIT: 12
 - Kishwaukee: 1
 - COD: 1
 - JJC: 3
 - SIUE: 8
 - @uillinois.edu: 10
 - Harper: 1