Works in Progress Webinar: Accessibility and Digital Collections

Pre- or Post-Webinar Exercise: Using Adaptive Technologies Firsthand

Presented by Hanning Chen, Nathan Tallman, and Valerie Yazza on 31 March 2020
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Introduction

It's one thing to talk about accessibility and advocate for accessible interfaces. Experiencing what it's like to use web interfaces with an impairment can really expand one's point-of-view; everyone engaged with digital libraries should do this. However illuminating your experiences from this exercise might be, know that to you it is a novelty and you have privilege to be able to resume your normal life. If this is your first time doing an exercise like this, you may take more time than a less-abled person who might already be familiar and comfortable working with adaptive technologies.

Scenario

Imagine that you now have one of the physical or mental impairments listed below. Your boss has asked you to find some things for her in the digital library.

Instructions

- Have a friend or colleague randomly assign you an impairment from the list below. Each impairment has instructions on how an abled person can simulate the impairment. Some may require installing software or browser extensions.
- After you have followed the instruction to simulate the impairment and have installed and configured any necessary software, choose a digital library to visit. Feel free to use your organization's digital library, if you'd rather not, a list of other digital libraries is included. If you need assistance, please contact your organization's Accessibility or IT department.
- Complete each of the activities. No cheating allowed!
- After completing the activities, reflect on your experience. Suggested reflection questions are included.

Impairments

Blindness

- Install NVDA, a free Windows screen reader https://www.nvaccess.org/download/ or use macOS' included screen reader VoiceOver https://dequeuniversity.com/assets/pdf/screenreaders/voiceover-macos-guide.pdf.
- Use a dark blindfold or eye mask to simulate vision loss.

Partial Vision Loss

- Install the Funkify Disability Simulator extension for Chrome: https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/funkify-%E2%80%93-disability-simu/ojcijjdchelkddboickefhnbdpeajdjg. (You will need to sign into a Google Account.)

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- Use the extension to start the Tunnel Toby simulator.

Deafness (ear plugs)

- Use a pair of earplugs to simulate a hearing loss. Use earplugs with an NRR 35dB or higher rating.

Dyslexia

- Install the Funkify Disability Simulator extension for Chrome: https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/funkify-%E2%80%93-disability-simu/ojcijjdchelkddboickefhnbdpeajdjg. (You will need to sign into a Google Account.)
- Use the extension to start the Dyslexia Dani simulator.

Broken arm (temporary impairments are still impairments)

- Place a large sock over your dominant hand and try to hold it close to your body to simulate a cast.

Slow Internet Speeds

- Use the Developer Tools (Ctrl + Shift + I) in Chrome or Firefox to downgrade your bandwidth to dial-up speeds: 50 KB/s down, 20 KB/s up.
    - Firefox: Firefox Dev Tools → Network → Throttling → GPRS. https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Tools/Responsive_Design_Mode#Network_throttling
    - Chrome: Chrome Dev Tools → Network → Throttling → Custom, Add. https://css-tricks.com/throttling-the-network/

Full sunlight

- Use your monitor's settings to decrease contrast to the lowest or next to lowest setting to simulate a screen in full, bright sun.

Digital Libraries

- Your own organization's digital library.
- Penn State University: https://digital.libraries.psu.edu/.
- Keystone Library Network: http://digital.klnpa.org/.
- Oregon Digital: https://www.oregondigital.org/.
- University of Maine: https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/fogler/.
- Barnard College: https://digitalcollections.barnard.edu/.
- University of Florida: http://ufdc.ufl.edu/.
- Library of Congress: https://www.loc.gov/collections/.
- Stanford Libraries: https://searchworks.stanford.edu/catalog?f[collection_type][]=Digital%20Collection.

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Activities

1. Browse complete listing of collections and choose one to explore.
2. Find the top five creators and the top subject for your chosen collection.
3. Do a basic search and try to page through the search results. Select one result and view the object.
4. When was the original created? What format was the original? Go back to the homepage.
5. Do an advanced search and combine at least three fields, one of them being a phrase search.
6. After exploring the results, try to print and download some objects.
7. Search for and play a digital video.

Reflection/Debrief

- Did you know that things like broken arms, internet speeds, and even full sun are accessibility issues too?
- Was there anything that surprised you about this experience?
- How long did it take you to perform these activities?
- Was it easy? Was it difficult? What was the most difficult aspect?
- How would having the impairment affect your personal and professional lives?
- How did the experience make you feel, personally?
- What about this experience made the biggest impact on you?
- How can you better prioritize and advocate for web accessibility in your organization?