From Concept to Creation: Developing an Open Access Resource for Accessible Library Teaching

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McMaster University Libraries

OCUL Accessibility Symposium 2.0

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Land Acknowledgement

McMaster University is located on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe nations. Many urban Indigenous folk also continue to inhabit Hamilton and its surrounding areas. This territory was the subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

As we reflect on our presence here, as guests and uninvited settlers, we recognize that accessibility is a key component of justice and inclusion for all communities, including Indigenous peoples and those belonging to our institution.

Introductions

Matt
Fesnak

Anna
Flak

Katie
Harding

Katie
Merriman

Nancy
Waite

Overview

Overview of the project

Presentations by chapter authors

Questions for panelists

Q&A

Background

- Anna and Katie participated McMaster's inaugural Accessible Education Fellows program in 2023-2024

- Our project focused on making screenshots and live demos more accessible in library instruction

- We weren't finding much information about the library-specific ways that we teach and engage with students

- We proposed a library strategic initiative for accessible library teaching

Goals

o Provide an opportunity for team members to take a "deep dive" into an accessibility topic.

o Create a resource that can be used within our library to help make our library teaching practices more accessible.

o Share our resource openly with library workers at other institutions.

Getting Started

o Environmental scan for information about accessibility in library teaching and learning practices

o Call for collaborators from within McMaster University Libraries

o Created chapter guidelines and project timeline

o Shared examples of open resources about accessibility topics

Team Members

o Teaching & Learning: Jeannie An, Anna Flak, Katie Harding, Carly McLeod, Katie Merriman, Ariel Stables-Kennedy

o Health Sciences Library: Laura Banfield, Louise Caravaggio, Susanna Galbraith, Jo-Anne Petropoulos

o Distinctive, Legacy, and Digital Heritage Collections: Matthew Fesnak

o Digital Scholarship Services: Subhanya Sivajothy

o Library Accessibility Services: Nancy Waite

Chapter Guidelines

o Simple chapter template

- Overview
- Description of library teaching practice
- Guiding principles
- Recommendations for accessibility
- References
- Further reading and resources

o Tone: More practical than scholarly

o Flexibility

Chapter Topics

Authors identified 8 areas of interest:

- Online and in-person instruction
- Instructional workshops
- Accessible technology in teaching
- Research consultations

- LibGuides
- Online learning objects
- Access services
- Outreach events

Writing and Revising

- Meetings for discussion, questions, scheduled work time
- Peer review process
  - Authors peer reviewed other chapters from the project
  - Additional reviewers from McMaster University Libraries, McMaster's Accessibility Community of Practice, McMaster Student and Alumni Accessibility Council
- Revisions
- Editorial review

Open Publishing

- Published 8 chapters in Pressbooks
- Licensed CC BY to encourage sharing and reuse
- Now available: Accessible Library Teaching

Presentations by Chapter Authors

Integrating Accessible Technology into Teaching

Nancy Waite, Coordinator, Library Accessibility Services

Chapter Overview – Integrating Accessible Technology into Teaching

o Examines common assistive technology (AT)

o Student specific technology (screen readers, mobility devices, assistive listening systems)

o Class-wide technology (captions, described video and accessible learning resources)

o Best practices to enhance accessibility

Selecting Technology

- Students
  - Best resource
  - Expert at what works for their needs

- VPAT (Voluntary Product Accessibility Testing)
  - Provides accessibility information, though reliability varies based on authorship and date of completion.

Student Specific Assistive Technology

- Screen Readers – JAWS, VoiceOver, NVDA
  - Separate program-like JAWS or NVDA or
  - Built in OS based tool such as VoiceOver.
  - Provide class materials in a well formatted Word document.

- Assistive Listening System (ALS)
  - Wireless hearing system
  - Use the microphone

Student Specific AT – pg. 2

- Mobility Devices
  - Consult with students about seating preferences
  - Respect mobility devices as an extension of personal space.
- Speech to Text – Dragon Naturally Speaking, Dictate, etc.
  - No direct assistance needed
  - Instructors should be aware that spelling, grammar and punctuation may not be perfect.

Class-wide Assistive Technology

- Closed captions
    - Essential for D/deaf and hard of hearing students
    - Required by AODA for all supplementary classroom content
- Live Captions
    - Use provided microphone and audio equipment for both instructor and anyone speaking in class.
    - Stable internet is required.

Class-wide AT – pg. 2

o Described Video / Audio Description (DV/AD)
- Created when key visuals are not conveyed through audio
- Standard: Same length as the original film
- Extended: Film is paused to insert detailed descriptions

o Learning Management Systems (LMS)
- Use built-in accessibility checkers
- Create content directly in the LMS
- Use proper headings, rather than bolding text.

Accessible Research Consultations

Katie Merriman, Teaching & Learning Librarian, STEM

Chapter Overview – Accessible Research Consultations

This chapter examines the practice of research consultations and offers strategies for collaborating with students who require accessibility support. It provides recommendations for information professionals through the lens of Universal Design (UD) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL), addressing each phase of the research consultation process: scheduling, physical and virtual space considerations, and the consultation itself.

Potential Barriers

o Screens

o Inaccessible tools

o Consult locations

o Audio/volume

Preparing for Consults

o There are many questions to ask yourself!

- How are students made aware of this service?

- How do students find the form/system to book with a librarian?

- Does the form/system meet WCAG standards of accessibility? You can use tools like, accessibility checker to evaluate your webpages.

- Are you providing students with options of in-person and/or virtual consultations? - Consider offering both meeting spaces

In person spaces

o Wheelchair/mobility aid accessibility (stairs, floor gaps, steep ramps, large enough space, etc)

o Locked doors unclear signage

o Quiet, distraction free

o Strong Wifi connection, outlets, computer access

Virtual Spaces

o Is the platform used by your organization accessible? Zoom is often considered to be the most accessible platform
- Ensure permissions for sharing are enabled

o Recording meetings

o Sharing transcripts

o Live captioning

Recommendations During Consults

o Audio support (hearing impairment, or auditory processing disorders)
- Supports: live captions, slower speech, jargon-free language

o Visual (visual impairment, or auditory processing disorders),
- Supports: Zooming in on text and screen visuals, using descriptive language, changing the visual display of your computer,

o Content/communication (language barriers, auditory processing disorders)
- Lead with kindness and patience, provide space for invisible disabilities, you never know someone's experiences
- Recording consults

Access Services

Matthew Fesnak, Library Services Platform & Discovery Services Librarian

Chapter Overview – Access Services

o Examination of different aspects of library services, including directing users to materials, supporting learning, guiding research, and providing opportunities for engagement

o The accessibility of library services can be affected by many things, and this chapter tries to consider as many aspects as possible

o Focus on providing useful guidelines from government and library agencies, like the governments of Ontario and Canada, ALA, CFLA, and ACRL, along with my own comments and relevant references

Library Service Then & Now

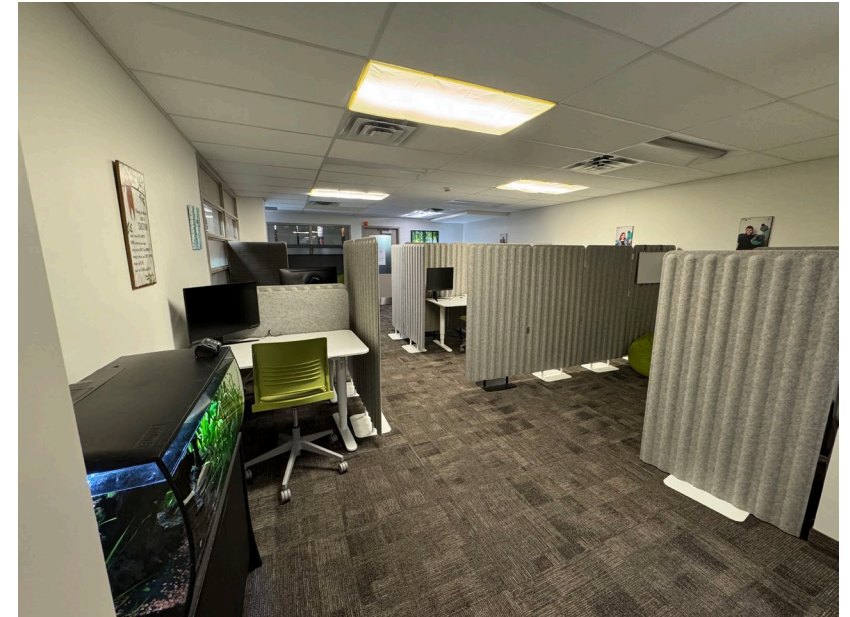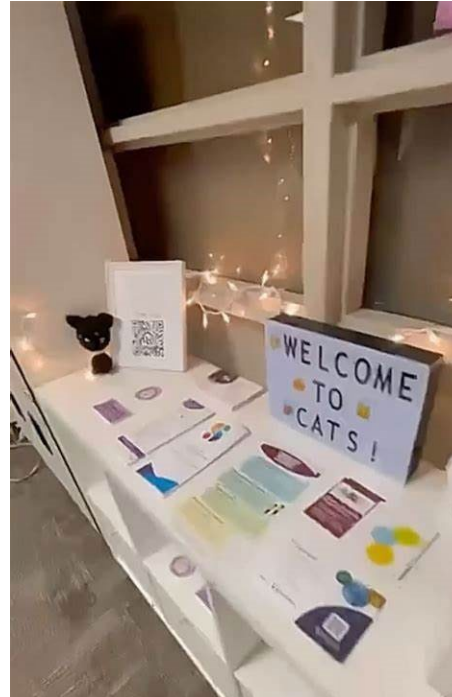Public Library Reference Service

Attitude towards Users

o Reflect on the biases embedded in your service policies

o Securitization in libraries creates a lot of issues for mentally ill, disabled, and/or neurodivergent users

Built Environment

o Providing examples of good vs bad library environments for providing accessible services

Library Culture

o Many examples based on personal experience and readings, with lots of references

o Accessibility was prioritized during the beginning of the COVID pandemic, and the scaling back of work-from-home, hybrid events, and public health measures specifically has exacerbated inequities

o Offering accessible programs to students but not staff or faculty is a bad thing to do

Questions for Panelists

What previous experience did you have with accessibility work?

Why did you decide to participate in this project?

Tell us about your experience working on this project

Q&A Period

Thank You!

Questions? Find us:

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