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Transforming Library Culture with a Digital Accessibility Team

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Transforming Library Culture with a Digital Accessibility Team

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**How can digital
accessibility
transform a library?**

Presentation outline

- Brief history
- Challenges coordinating accessibility efforts
- Strategic investments
- Creation of the Digital Accessibility Team (DAT)
- Mission, expertise, and services
- Reflection on impact
- Next steps
- Takeaways

Brief history

Accessibility at U-M and in the Library

mid-1980's

Knox Center
Adaptive Technology
Computing Site

2012-2017

Hiring Accessibility
Specialists / Staff
Training

1983

Council for
Disability
Concerns

2007

Web Accessibility
Working Group

2017

Digital
Accessibility
Team

**Challenges
coordinating
accessibility
efforts**

Challenges with coordination on campus

Campus is huge:

- Over 46,000 students
- Over 26,000 administrative, medical, and academic staff
- 13 undergraduate schools and colleges
- 18 graduate schools and colleges
- 3 hospitals, dozens of outpatient clinics and medical centers
- Nearly 500 library staff

Challenges with coordination in the library

Diverse contexts

Library environments, in-person and online services, collections, content, and tools

Distributed procurement

Broad scope of resources procured across multiple departments in the library

Diverse content and platforms

Wide range of content produced; platforms, products, and resources created and maintained by library staff

Accessibility shouldn't be ad hoc

- No accessibility policy on campus
- People try to be engaged based on good will
- It's unclear whether people have to comply, or what compliance looks like



Elephant, Amboseli Game Preserve, Kenya.
From the U-M Museum of Anthropological
Archaeology digital collection.
<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/a/anthro1ic/x-530/530>

Strategic investments

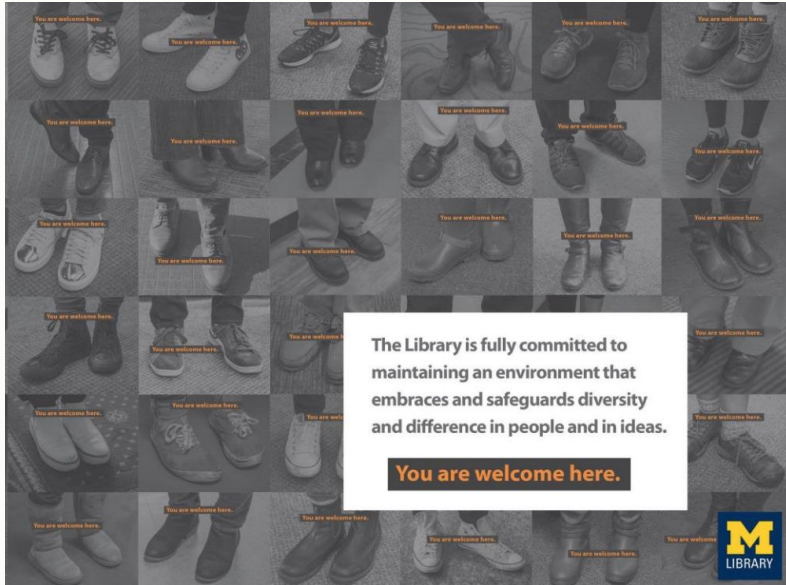
Campus plans for accessibility



U-M has a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan

Council for Disability Concerns has a Strategic Plan to increase awareness and education

Library plans for accessibility



The U-M Library has a 5-year DEIA Strategic Plan focusing on:

- Recruitment, retention and development
- Education and scholarship
- Equity, inclusion, and accessibility
- Service and leadership

Library positions with a focus on accessibility

Accessibility representation within 4 library divisions: Deans' Office, Learning and Teaching, Library IT, and Publishing

- **Jeff Witt**, Diversity and Inclusion Specialist
- **Stephanie Rosen**, Accessibility Specialist
- **Ben Howell**, User Experience & Accessibility Specialist
- **Bridget Burke**, Front-End Developer & Accessibility Specialist
- **Jon Earley**, Front-End Developer & Accessibility Specialist
- **Jon McGlone**, Front-End & User Interface Designer

Paving the way for the Digital Accessibility Team

Challenge:

With the creation of accessibility positions, implementation of tools, and training opportunities, what else was needed to help create a sustainable approach to ensuring digital accessibility compliance at scale?

Solution:

- Create a cross-divisional team that could offer digital accessibility services to project teams and individuals throughout the library
- Give the team a budget
- Encourage project teams and individuals in the library to consult with them

Creation of the Digital Accessibility Team (DAT)

Creating the Digital Accessibility Team (DAT)

Goal:

Coordinate digital accessibility consultation, evaluation and outreach services through a multidisciplinary team

Process:

- Created a charge and a basic plan
 - Mission, services, resources needed, members/expertise, communication strategy
- Incorporated strategic input/communication with library leadership
- Established regular meetings and office hours
- Started sandboxing evaluation, consultation and outreach services

Digital Accessibility Team members



Bridget Burke

Front-End
Developer &
Accessibility
Specialist
(Library IT)



Jon McGlone

Front-End & UI
Designer
(Michigan
Publishing)



Stephanie Rosen

Accessibility
Specialist
(Learning &
Teaching)



Ben Howell

User Experience &
Accessibility
Specialist
(Library IT)



Jon Earley

Front-End
Developer &
Accessibility
Specialist
(Library IT)

**Mission, expertise,
and services**

Digital Accessibility Team's mission

- Help align individual, team and organizational practices within Library organizational culture, processes and workflows
- Provide expertise on digital accessibility standards (WCAG, 508, ATAG, ARIA, EPUB) and accessible design/development best practices.
- Provide web accessibility evaluation services
- Conduct outreach, training and consultation (office hours, etc.)

Our services

1. Provide consultation services during office hours or by appointment
2. Web accessibility evaluations (light, full and custom)
3. Provide support/resources for library staff to understand basic accessibility barriers and utilize universal design and digital accessibility best practices within their regular work

Who needs our services?

- Project managers
- UX and UI designers and front end developers
- Library Administration/Department managers
- Product and service owners
- Program managers
- Human Resources staff
- Public services staff

When are DAT services requested?

1. Procurement of new resources / renewing a contract or license for third party content or software
2. Creation of new web content and documents, products and services
3. Planning or carrying out updates or redesigns related to vendor or library maintained digital products, services or platforms

Reflection on impact

Reflection on our first year

1. Defined and refined our web accessibility evaluation services
 - a. Process/technology for request intake and management
 - b. Designated/empowered team member to manage evaluation requests
 - c. Created protocol for evaluations and template for actionable reports
 - d. Practiced consulting with technical and non-technical staff on next steps
2. Established consistent office hours service
3. Empowered team members with defined roles based on capacity and expertise

Opportunity:

Conduct outreach to key partners in the Library and market our services

Growing influence in the Library

Challenge:

How can we connect the value of our digital accessibility expertise, resources and services with key partners in the Library?

Solution:

- Schedule outreach appointments (team meetings, office hours) with key partners from (Human Resources, Deans' Office, campus partners)
- Introduce our mission, accessibility services, and expertise
- Just listen
- Brainstorm opportunities to collaborate and follow up

Results of digital accessibility outreach

- Majority of colleagues are culturally aware and interested in accessibility
- Largely unaware of accessibility policies, guidelines
- Unaware that DAT could help them practice digital accessibility more fully in their day to day work
- Opportunity to reframe and embed digital accessibility resources, services and consultation within Library processes
- The better we understand our Library colleagues work the better we understood our team, services and resource needs

Story

...during a recent outreach meeting with Meghan and Craig



Meghan
Lead Project
Manager



Craig
Assessment
Specialist

Next steps

Collaboration with accessibility campus partners

- Pilot Accessibility IT Standard Practice Guide (SPG) with the library
- Proactive approach to accessibility evaluation and compliance
- Handful of departments/projects adopt SPG into workflows and processes
- Learn together with campus partners in Information Technology Services and the Office for Institutional Equity
- Identify needed resources, training, and expertise

Takeaways

Nurture an inclusive and accessibility first culture

1. Craft and align organization behind a vision and mission to deliver accessible products and services
2. Build product, service design, and development processes and workflows to include and leverage web accessibility guidelines and universal design
3. Conduct regular outreach and training
4. Practice experiential learning — Learn accessibility through practice coupled with training
5. Include people of all abilities in product and service design, development, and assessment

Resources

[U-M Library: Digital Accessibility Team Charge](#)

[U-M Library: Digital Accessibility Evaluation Protocol \(Light\)](#)

Thank you for being here!

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