Accessible Technology – A Procurement Perspective

Terrill Thompson  
Technology Accessibility Specialist  
tft@uw.edu

Hadi Rangin  
Technology Accessibility Specialist  
hadir@uw.edu

Ray Hsu  
Procurement Services  
rayhsu@uw.edu
“Accessible” means a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, & enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally effective & equally integrated manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use. The person with a disability must be able to obtain the information as fully, equally & independently as a person without a disability.
Diverse characteristics among students, faculty, staff, & visitors

- Have varying degrees of eyesight
- Some are blind or low vision
- Have varying degrees of hearing
- Some are deaf or hard of hearing
- Have varying physical abilities
- Some are physically unable to use a mouse or touchscreen, or unable to reach high places
- Have hidden disabilities
- Some have difficulties reading print (e.g., dyslexia)
Keep in mind that...

- The information technology we're procuring could prevent students from completing their education or prevent employees from doing their job.
What do these schools have in common?

University of Colorado at Boulder
University of Cincinnati
Youngstown State University
University of Montana
Louisiana Tech University
South Carolina Technical College System
Penn State University
University of California at Berkeley
Maricopa Community College District
Florida State University
Ohio State University
University of Kentucky
University of Washington

• Founded in 1861
• Three campuses
• 294 programs with 531 degree options
• Over 55,000 students (45,000+ on Seattle campus)
IT Accessibility Standards

• World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)
  – Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0 (1999)
  – Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (2008)

• Section 508 Standards
  – Published in 2000 to accompany Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (requires federal agencies to procure accessible IT)
  – Covers a broader scope of IT, not just Web
  – Many states & higher education institutions have adopted either WCAG 2.0 or Section 508 as their own standard for IT accessibility
IT Accessibility Guidelines

- Signed by the VP for Information Technology
- “The UW looks to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Level AA for guidance in meeting its IT accessibility commitments. WCAG 2.0 provides success criteria for measuring web accessibility and also provides useful metrics for products and services that are not specifically web-based.”
Key: Provide Support

• UW-IT Accessibility Technology Services
  – Three full-time professional staff plus support staff
  – Available to review bidder's accessibility claims, test products, serve on committees for major purchases
  – Collaborate with vendors to help them understand and meet our needs
  – Develop resources, deliver trainings
“...based on the WCAG 2.0 standards, and is provided to assist the UW community, including web designers, developers, content creators, and purchasing agents, in creating and procuring accessible IT. It can also be used as a reference for vendors and contractors providing products and services to the UW.”
• What steps can we take to ensure the IT we're procuring is reasonably accessible to everyone who needs to use it?
• Purchasing/Creating a product that can be used by anyone including those with disabilities.
• Introduce accessibility/usability features that enhance users' experience
Three Steps to Ensure Accessibility in Procurement

1. Ask vendors to provide information about the accessibility of their products.
2. Validate the information provided by bidders and evaluate the product for accessibility.
3. Include accessibility assurances in contracts with vendors.
Procurement Challenges

• Vendors are not obligated to produce accessible products
• Higher Ed Institutions must deploy accessible products
• Accessibility is a joint responsibility shared by all the stakeholders
• Accessibility is not a "nice feature to have"; it must be handled like security or privacy features
• Accessibility is often not part of the product evaluation process
• Desired product is often not accessible
• Should accessibility be a deal breaker?
Procurement Challenges

• Often products are purchased/introduced to campus without accessibility consideration
• We try to catch them before they enter campus use but we frequently miss
• Most purchasers are not or have no clear idea/plan for accessibility
• Procurement should be asking the question about Accessibility
Working with Vendors

• Entertaining VPAT & Certificates
• Watch out for lip services
• Accessible design vs. accessibility bandage
• Example: 96 shortcut keys to operate Lync
• Early Involvement of Procurement is essential
• Define functional tasks
• Perform accessibility/usability evaluation
• Identify accessibility issues, weight and prioritize them
• Create a roadmap and timeline for fixes/enhancements
• Addressing the roadmap & timeline with tangible consequences in the contract
• Deployment blockers must be addressed before deployment
Case Studies

- Workday
- Zoom
- PollEverywhere
- E-mail marketing
- Navex
- Bridge
- Etc.
Conclusions

- Try to make accessibility part of purchasing requirements
- Ensure that the respective departments understand that accessibility is their responsibility
- Collaborate with vendors and respective departments
Accessible IT Resources

- UW Accessible Technology
  http://uw.edu/accessibility
- UW IT Accessibility Guidelines
  http://uw.edu/accessibility/guidelines
- UW IT Accessibility Checklist
  http://uw.edu/accessibility/checklist
- Procuring Accessible IT http://uw.edu/accessibility/procurement