

CONFERENCE ROUNDUP

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multiple!) that we have today. The presenters shared our collective frustrations across library types about the promised improvements for usability and searchability from modern discovery layer interfaces and expressed their experience with “old, clunky federated search” versus bento box styles while acknowledging that “many of those are still chugging along.” Then it gets good when they dare to ask “is seamless experience a fool’s errand?” After a decade of trying to understand and fix their own search experiences, the trio offers a down to earth, candid glimpse into the history of our current state of searching in libraries. They asked many vital and thought provoking questions and invited the audience to discuss them, including: “Have we advanced beyond silos, and when it comes to information seeking behavior, are silos so bad?” Each presenter shared how they adapted search interfaces to become more personal and localized throughout the pandemic and how many of those changes are likely to become permanent.

Converting Excel Files into XML: Two ways explained

Presenters: Amy Jiang, Head of Emerging Technologies and Digital Initiatives at the Wilson Library at the University of La Verne

Bryan Haley, University of La Verne

This session was a super practical one. How many of us feel like we basically live in our Excel spreadsheets, am I right?? Well, if that is you, then watching this session is well worth your time. The two presenters share their favorite ways to convert Excel files into XML. As with several sessions at Code4Lib, this one really resonated with me because the presenter backgrounds to creating this session were because of an Esploro implementation at their University. For those who don’t work with repositories as much, it is one of the popular institutional repository platforms. My own University has been migrating from open source D-Space to Esploro, too, and while our law library repository still exists in bepress Digital Commons, most repositories (including Digital Commons) rely on batch uploading and metadata revisions and management using CSV or XML sheets. In the midst of my own batch metadata revisions (and going in circles with CSV raw data, to Excel to work with formatting and clean up, and then to XML to upload back into my own repository), these two methods really hit home for me. As I do and probably most of us do, the two presenters share how they, too, usually gather data in Excel format initially, so converting Excel into XML was a routine task for their migration project. Throughout the session, they shared how they worked with student workers to come up with two separate ways of converting Excel files into XML formatted ones. The first version they shared is more of a traditional programming approach using Python, while the second version uses Excel’s built in functionality so that non-programmers could create an XML file (spoiler alert – this approach takes only a few minutes!). They then took turns discussing the pros and cons of each method as well as sharing the code for other institutions to use or adapt.

Automation as a pathway toward slow librarianship

Presenter: Wesley Teal, Metadata Librarian at Iowa State University

Coming full circle, particularly with my favorite session on AI in mind, this session expanded on the conversation of librarians fearing more automation in the work environment. The speaker really did a fantastic job of reframing our attitudes about automation. While it is generally touted as a means to increase efficiency, they explain that it can also be a tool for slowing down. This presentation was full of engaging anecdotes and a series of questions that spurred lots of discussion in the Code4Lib slack channel. I had only recently been turned onto the term “Slow Librarianship” and had been reading a lot about the concept. Reframing automation as a means to slow down was truly hopeful to engage in thinking about. I must say I am fully convinced (more so) that automating tedious and time-consuming tasks is a very innovative idea for making more space for more meaningful types of work. The talk not surprisingly delved into the benefits of writing – and not just writing academically, but with a group of programming librarians writing code – “how writing code can be a contemplative practice that can lead to a deeper understanding of the problems we’re trying to solve.” There was a lot to take in and contemplate in that session, and I truly enjoyed getting to think more critically about why we automate, how it can help us find more meaning and carve out time for other rewarding work in our roles, and how we might achieve that in our respective libraries.

THE INTERNET



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Website Review: Section 508.gov

by **Wilhelmina Randtke**

Introduction

While a website review might seem old fashioned, the section508.gov website gives tools for problems that are pervasive in libraries. It has high value resources, such as a series of concise introductory training courses on how to make

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documents (.docx, .pptx, .pdf, and spreadsheets) more accessible and which tackle accessibility in a modern and practical way that accounts not just for plain old hypertext markup language (HTML) but also for the variety of uploaded files and content management systems that we use. This is important because websites splash pages are just the tip of the iceberg for accessibility. On a day to day basis, a person might spend more time in email, on a shared drive, or other digital environment where files matter more than splash pages. And for website creation, most of us are likely using a blogging platform or content management system (CMS) provided by our employer, and broad principles that apply to looking for software settings translate well to editing in a CMS. The approaches on section508.gov mesh well with how electronic documents and websites are created and used today.

What is section508.gov

Section508.gov is run by the United States General Services Administration and is geared towards helping federal agencies comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act is electronic and information technology accessibility, and it encompasses web accessibility. The section508.gov website is more than 20 years old, and content has been changed and updated over time to keep up with technological and legal changes. Section 508 requirements are written into federal funding eligibility requirements, including funding to federal agencies and funding distributed through federal grants. The federal government has significant interest in putting out clear guidance and training, and enough money is tied to the requirements to ensure resources are available to create, review, and maintain centralized information.

Training Modules on Accessible Content

One of the major issues that comes up in web publishing is addressing uploaded documents, as opposed to the splash page, for a website. This is an issue with purchased databases. The library website is one layer, and there's relatively plentiful training and awareness about accessibility for web design. Then there are the vendor hosted search interfaces, which librarians don't tend to focus on because there isn't any direct way to control or improve accessibility issues but where general web accessibility knowledge makes it possible for libraries to understand the issues and quality and to meaningfully ask vendors about accessibility while investigating purchase decisions. Then there are the final research sources. Often, those are PDFs or other files. Likewise, in digital publishing, a publishing platform will have a splash page for publications, then a search engine or content management system to find publications, and then the publications, which are often PDFs or other files. In overseeing publishing technology in Florida, often the uploaded files of publications were both the "last mile" and

the overwhelming majority of the content. Meanwhile, most library training on accessibility focused on the web splash pages that linked in to books, pdfs, Word Documents, images, and other content. Often the actual meat was downloadable files. There's definitely a need in the library community for easy concise training on how to prep and assess files for accessibility.

Section508.gov has concise training courses at <https://www.section508.gov/create/> for building accessibility into documents created with Microsoft Word, Adobe Acrobat DC, Microsoft Excel, and Microsoft PowerPoint. Common themes between the trainings are how to use built in templates and features to ensure accessibility is met. Accessibility requirements have existed for so long that built in software features tend to have been designed with accessibility in mind, such that using built in features tends to improve accessibility. For example, built in templates that ship with PowerPoint tend to have sufficient contrast and clear fonts.

Training courses on creating content were created between 2016 and 2019, and a date of publication is provided for each. Each training course has short videos broken out into topics, and watching all videos for any given course takes about an hour. Each course also has a Tips and Tricks section, with a short list of key points for that format, and links to relevant additional training resources from other federal agencies. Essentially, each training module has about an hour of video content which overviews that format and highlights basic settings that will improve accessibility. It's something anyone working in publishing, or in library IT, can work through and can assign or promote within an organization because the total time commitment is less than five hours. The guidance is generally relevant (training modules have been updated as software versions change). Themes overlap from one software platform and format to another. For example, using headers and using the header features built into the software, rather than choosing a different font, comes up in Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat DC. Working through training modules for multiple document formats gives concrete examples and repetition of themes for better remembering. These aren't detailed courses, but rather something that is manageable for almost anyone to work through due to a small time commitment, a clear, easy to follow format, and something that can be assigned or promoted within an organization for better training. Essentially, videos can be assigned for a 5 hours total time commitment that both improves accessibility training and provides training in basic office software (for employers using Microsoft and Adobe products).

Training Modules on Testing for Accessibility

The Training, Tools, and Events section at <https://www.section508.gov/training-home/> includes links to the content creation trainings discussed above and also includes training modules on software tools that can be used for accessibility testing of websites. These tools are generally free of charge to install. They are not necessarily made available through the federal government but are recommended through the section508.gov website, which potentially makes it easier to get

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any security approvals to install them on a work computer. The testing section is organized more as laid out tools and instructional materials on using those tools and less like a course. In order to work through these, someone would have to install the software and try it out, and the time commitment will vary from testing tool to testing tool and person to person. Testing tools slant towards testing traditional website splash pages and HTML pages, although color contrast checkers can be used to assist in testing any formats that display on a screen.

Some Section508.gov Content is for Federal Employees Only.

Most of the site is free-of-charge and readily available to browse. Some resources are restricted to federal employees only. For example, a Join the 508 Community page at <https://www.section508.gov/manage/join-the-508-community/> promotes a listserv which is only open to federal email addresses and links out to ways for employees of specific agencies to connect with resources within their agency.

Some content also is geared towards government operations, rather than content creation or software and authoring generally. For example, some sections are about financial workflows, such as funding sources and grants and applicability of accessibility requirements. These are practical for enforcing requirements or determining legal requirements for a government agency distributing funding, but for libraries and library employees outside of government, the specifics of tying accessibility to funding is less of interest than is information about how to make websites more accessible and how to measure accessibility within a website or database.

In general, training materials and practical guidance on accessibility testing are of broad interest to libraries, while financial or law and policy areas of the website are specific to federal agencies or grant recipients.

There is also a small amount of training content that is for federal employees only or has a cost associated with it. These are generally in person trainings or live online events.

Conclusion

Section508.gov has been around for decades. It's been updated over time and has high quality concise training materials about accessibility that can benefit anyone authoring digital content, including file uploads, email attachments, and traditional websites. In particular, the concise training modules about authoring accessible content are valuable for having a manageable self-contained training course with a low enough time commitment that almost any role within an organization can find the time to work through them.

OCLC

by Christopher Thomas, UCLA

OCLC cataloging community meeting

June 3, 2022

This virtual event featured a panel discussion of diversity, equity, and inclusion in library metadata. Staci Ross from the University of Pittsburgh and Michelle Cronquist from UNC Chapel Hill spoke about the work of the African American SACO Funnel. Merrilee Proffitt from OCLC spoke about anti-racist and reparative descriptive practice, and Keila Zayas Ruiz from Florida State University spoke about training staff on inclusive description practices. Recordings and presentation slides are available on the OCLC website:

<https://www.oclc.org/go/en/events/cataloging-community-meeting/june-2022.html>

OCLC at ALA Annual

June 2022

OCLC held a cataloging community meeting in person at the ALA annual meeting. OCLC staff attending included Cynthia Whitacre, Nathan Putnam, Jay Weitz, Bryan Baldus, Laura Ramsey, Shannon Stenberg, Gina Winkler, David Whitehair, and Chip Nilges. Jay Weitz presented OCLC news, and there was a Q & A session on a variety of topics including WorldCat Entities, encoding level updates, LHRs, FAST, and LCSH updates. This session was not recorded, but there are recordings of several other OCLC sessions at ALA, including transforming metadata and a sneak peek at the forthcoming new Worldcat.org.

<https://www.oclc.org/go/en/events/ala-2022/view-recordings.html>

OCLC lawsuit against Clarivate PLC

On June 13, 2022, OCLC filed a lawsuit against Clarivate PLC, claiming tortious interference with contracts and prospective business relationships and conspiracy to interfere with contracts and business relationships. Clarivate is developing MetaDoor, a free and open community peer-to-peer platform for sharing metadata which would compete with OCLC and may contain some data that originated in OCLC. A temporary restraining order was issued on June 29, preventing inclusion of WorldCat data in MetaDoor and also preventing Clarivate from contacting OCLC customers about sharing records. OCLC and Clarivate have posted statements on their websites:

<https://www.oclc.org/en/protecting-worldcat.html>

<https://clarivate.com/news/clarivate-statement-on-oclc-lawsuit/>

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