Questions for Vendors: Procuring Accessible E-Resource Platforms

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# Overview

Asking vendors about the accessibility of their e-resource platforms (websites, apps, and reading platforms) ensures that you provide the most inclusive reading experience for library patrons. This is important because not all online services and reading systems have accessibility built into them by design. It will also create awareness among all stakeholders and urge vendors to create more accessible products.

The questions are based on the Accessibility Considerations for E-resource Procurement in Public Libraries and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

# Questions to Ask Vendors

Consider asking these questions when procuring e-resource platforms (e.g., reading platforms, websites, and apps).

## Accessible Controls

1. When using a keyboard on a computer, does the tab or shift-tab key move your focus to all elements on the screen?
2. When on a mobile device with the screen reader enabled, do the swipe gestures move your focus to all elements on the screen?
3. Does how the focus move from one element to the next make sense? E.g., in a catalogue search, you should be able to move through the search box before landing on a submit or search button.
4. Can clickable elements be activated with a keyboard or other assistive technologies?

## Text Readability and Assistive Technology

1. Can the text in the e-resource (reading platform, website, or app) be correctly read with a screen reader?
2. Can the text in the e-resource (reading platform, website, or app) be correctly read with the hardware and software screen magnification tools?
3. Do all the non-text-based elements, such as images, icons, graphs, or charts, provide alternative text or long descriptions?
4. Are all the non-text-based elements, such as images, icons, graphs, or charts, have a high resolution and are clear when read using hardware and software screen magnification tools?

## Accessible Navigation

1. When navigating an e-resource (reading platform, website, or app), does the screen reader announce controls where their purpose is clear to the user? E.g., the screen should be announcing things like 'link home,' 'submit button,' and 'name edit'?
2. When using a screen reader on a website or app, are there a lot of elements on the screen that just say 'link,' 'button,' 'edit,' or 'checkbox unchecked' and nothing else? If so, this red flag indicates that the website/app is most likely inaccessible.
3. Can users visually identify the navigation elements on the screen (input fields, buttons, links, checkboxes, etc.) and identify what they are for (submitting a search, navigating to a different webpage, etc.), with and without using software/hardware magnification tools?
4. Does the screen reader indicate whether checkboxes are checked?

## Visual Customization

1. Are there options on the e-resource (reading platform, website, or app) for users to adjust the visual appearance?
2. Can the user adjust colour schemes and contrast?
3. Can the size and type of the font be changed?
4. Does the website or resource offer a high contrast mode for readers with low vision?
5. Does the reading system allow for reflowable text? E.g., the text will adapt to the screen size so that it is readable on any device.

## Alternatives for Colours

1. Is all information conveyed with cues other than colour, such as text or distinctively shaped icons? E.g., mandatory fields that are colour coded are also marked with an asterisk.
2. If the colour is removed, could the user still effectively use this product?

## Blinking or Flashing Elements

1. Are there animations or videos with blinking or large flashes that occur more than three times per second by default?

## Plugins, Add-ons, and Accessibility Software

1. Does the product override the user’s visual adjustments when they change different appearances with their software/hardware magnification tools?
2. Can the software or webpage be used while running assistive technology or user-enabled accessibility options?
3. Does the website/app use an accessibility overlay?

## Alt-text and Image Descriptions

1. If there are any images in the reading system, do they have alternative text?
2. When a screen reader is enabled, can users understand what the image is, based on what the screen reader is saying when they focus on it?

## Accessibility Metadata

1. Does the reading system (website or app) display the accessibility metadata of the content?
   1. If yes, where?
   2. If no, ask the vendor why not?

## Timed Responses

1. When filling out an online form, is there a way to disable the time limit, adjust it (up to ten times the length of the default setting), or add more time (up to 10 times) 20 seconds before the time is up?

## Prescriptive Design and Barriers

1. Does the product disallow pasting in form/password fields?
2. Can users access the same content or the same feature in multiple ways?

## Product Support

1. Does the company have a well-written accessibility statement that is easy to find?
2. Do customer service personnel have training on working with people with disabilities or an accessibility team that can offer support?
3. Is there a well-defined process to ensure that accessibility feedback reaches the right people and is quickly acted upon?

## Information Architecture and Navigational Links

1. Can you visually see a link(s) at the top of the page to skip to the main content?
2. When using the tab key on a keyboard, does a skip link visually appear at the top of the page?

## Interface Orientation

1. Is it reasonably easy to determine which section of the website or app that the user is in?
2. When you navigate an app or webpage, can users easily determine where they are on the screen with a visual cue such as highlighted text or buttons?
3. Are there visual cues, such as a line of dots from an element on the left side of the screen, to alert those using screen magnification that there is a related button, menu, or field at the far-right side of the screen?

# References

Accessibility Considerations for E-resource Procurement in Public Libraries. Accessible Libraries. Retrieved January 31, 2023, from https://accessiblelibraries.ca/resources/accessibility-considerations-for-e-resource-procurement-in-public-libraries/

Web Accessibility Initiative. (2022, November 1). WCAG 2 Overview. Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI). Retrieved January 24, 2023, from https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/