Transcript: Digital Accessibility Best Practices Training, Fall 2022

Hey everyone, thank you so much for watching this webinar on creating accessible digital content. My name is Lily, I am the digital communications manager for the League of Women Voters. And this was originally presented to staff. So there are some aspects of this presentation that are specific to the staff, website and systems. But this should be generally applicable to anyone who is creating digital content throughout the league. So thank you very much. And we will get started.

Just a brief overview of some of the content we'll be looking at. That includes alt text, transcripts and closed captions, links, headers, and the language that we use.

So first up, you can see I just included this little quote here, my disability exists not because I use a wheelchair, but because the broader environment isn't accessible.

This is by Stella Young, who is a comedian, journalist and disability activist. And I think it's something that is good to keep in mind as we move forward. Think about our systems and ways we can make them more accessible.

Right, so first step is alt text. This is a really important part of making your website more accessible, especially to screen readers, which are a tool that are used by many people to make content on a screen more accessible.

So every picture or illustration or graphic, basically any image that is on a website, and on other places, too, like social media starting to add them should have alt text or alternative text. And this is a tool that allows screen readers to read the content of it aloud so that they can explain the image to people who might not be able to see it otherwise. So it's important to remember that screen readers are an audio tool, not a visual tool, people don't read the alt text, they hear it being read by the screen reader.

Good alt text will succinctly explain the images relevance to the page. Below here you can see an example of what alt text looks like specifically on LWV's website. So if you're adding alt text, if you've uploaded an image, you can see there there's the name of the image and and the alternative text right next to it. And that alternative text here is for a blog banner that we have it says the speakers on stage at the women power democracy panel for LWV's 2022 convention. After that, you can't see that that basically, you can see how that simply describes the content of the image and why it's relevant to that page. And we'll get into a few better examples on the next page.

So for example, if you look at this image on the right, a good example of alt text for an image like this, given the context of lwv.org. And what we're likely posting would be an LWV volunteer help someone register to vote on a sunny day. That's obviously relevant because it tells us hey, this is someone who is volunteering with LWV. That's why it's relevant to us. And they're helping someone registered to vote. That's a big action that we take a lot. You don't want to make it too vague. Like for example, people are outside that doesn't really tell us anything about the image and why you'd be using it on your specific site. You also don't want to make it overly specific and bog it down with detail. Such as this one here, a person in a blue jean jacket is holding a white clipboard to another person, they both have black hair, the sky is blue, one woman assigning it and the other is watching her etc, etc. You do not need that

much detail. A short sentence or two should suffice. And there are a lot of great examples on the internet if you just want to look up good examples of all texts.

Next up transcripts and captions. The best practice for any sort of media you're providing is to provide it in multiple ways multiple ways for people to consume that content. So when we have audio visual content, we want to give people multiple options for how to consume it with videos. Two ways we can do that and that we're trying to do that more on the LWV site is for every video we want to add captions, like in the top image

and we want to add transcripts like in that bottom image.

An easy way to add transcripts, you can go to the site otter.ai, And they are a free transcript making tool so you can enter any video and they will pull that text and create a transcript for you. So that is super helpful if you don't want to watch the whole video yourself and have to type out the transcript. YouTube is great because they do have

tools for creating closed captions if you don't add them yourself. Now, these are imperfect. So it is better if you can to add a transcript yourself. But there are other options. And then also, this is great for meetings like zoom, you can add captions.

And these are all just really great practices to make any of your content more accessible on multiple different levels.

Links, so good websites have a lot of links.

But you want that link text to be uniquely descriptive. So for example, a lot of the time you'll see, we'll put a link on "To find out more, click here," and "click here" will be the link. That is actually not what you want to do. You want screen readers to basically indicate when I click this link, where exactly am I going, this really helps people to navigate your website with more knowledge. So instead of saying, "blah, blah, blah, read more," you might want to say "read more about redistricting" if, for, example, the link goes to a page on redistricting. Or if you're linking to a webinar on accessibility, you could have the link text say "watch the webinar on accessibility" instead of "watch here." You can see to the right over here, there are examples of a few different links, which we also have created unique styling for to help them stand out. So that "see all court cases" is from our homepage, it is the link to the Legal Center. So instead of just saying "click here," it says "see all court cases," people know exactly where they're going. And it's a little hidden by this black box in the corner.

But you can see sort of if you're behind the scenes on our websites, how one might create a link, and this one's a little different. It's in a purple box instead of purple underlined.

It says something like check out this case, because it's linking to a specific court case. But yes, if you're on the LWV website, there are ways to make these links stand out, which is really helpful. And they allow people to know what is link versus what is other text.

And other best practice with links. If, by clicking on it, the person is going to automatically download a PDF or something like a report, indicate that in the link, what we'd like to do is put the link text as normal, and then maybe in parentheses, will generate PDF download something like that. Just so people know what they're getting into.

Yeah, and here's just for anyone who's on LWV staff using Drupal. These are some instructions for how you can create your own special link, you would be typing it in the content of the website as usual, highlight that link and go to that styles option. And you can create either a button which is that one with the purple outright outline, or the underlying text, which is the one we saw on the page before this where it was purple text with an underline.

Okay, headers. One thing that is great is to always make your page text varied and distinguish certain sections from others. This is also important for screen readers so they can learn how your page is organized. Assistive technology relies on headings to show us how to navigate page content. So one thing that's important is to always make sure you're nesting the headings appropriately or essentially going in order

of the type of headings. So for a lot of websites, you'll have options to be like this text is regular, or paragraph text, this is heading two, this is heading three, and so on and so forth. Sometimes it's tempting, if we liked the style of heading three, or heading five, to just use that and to skip heading two or heading four. But we really don't want to do that. Because that's very confusing to people who are trying to navigate the page with screen readers, you really want to make sure you're starting at the top and going down. So on this page. In this image, you can see an example from a blog on the Inflation Reduction Act. You can see a heading two sample at the top and nested below that because it's a sub section, we have heading three and then we have another large section below that that's heading two and if there are any subsections there we have more Heading Three, etc.

Another way you can break apart content on a page is to bold it. But for SEO, which is search engine optimization, purposes, which essentially is making Google like us so people find us more easily when they Google certain topics, headers are preferable to bolding.

Great so this is a big one. It's easy as experts quote, unquote, in the field of democracy for us to get really in the weeds with a lot of intense political language, but we have to always remember that we are writing to an eighth grader, because that's the average adult reading level. And the whole point of the league, or one of the many important points of the league is to make our democracy more accessible to all people. So we don't want to be writing at a level that is not going to be accessible to the average voter.

Another reason why this is important, is a lot of the people who we work with are speaking English as a second language. And I just imagine, you know, if I moved to Italy, for example, and I were trying to cast my vote, and all of the instructions were Italian, what would I understand more, would I understand simple accessible language, or would I understand complex legal and political terms? I would definitely be hoping they would be using more simple, accessible language. So that's another thing to keep in mind as we're writing.

And then I just included a little quote that I like here, which is the rule of genius is not to complicate the simple, but to simplify the complicated. Sometimes people refer to making more accessible writing as "dumbing it down," I really want to encourage us to move away from that mindset. We are making it more accessible, we're not making anything more "dumb," we are making it more comprehensible to the people who we want to empower.

I'll find a little quote to leave us on by Steve Krug, a user experience expert. The one argument for accessibility that doesn't get made nearly enough often -- sorry -- nearly often enough is how extraordinarily better it makes some people's lives. How many opportunities do we have to dramatically improve people's lives just by doing our job a little better? There are a lot of little changes that we can make, in how we're doing our jobs, that can make our sites so much more accessible, and thereby make our voting tools and information more accessible, which ultimately reaches our goal of defending democracy and empowering voters.

Here are just a few resources here again, the video transcription site is otter.ai. I have a few links,

which you may or may not. I guess you can't click them by watching the PowerPoints. But you can Google them perhaps or go to some of the websites. The 10 accessibility tips for getting out the votes is that aapd.com Hemingway app is at Hemingway app.com. And you're always free to message me. L McGee, L-M-C-G-E-E at l web.org. With any questions about this. So thank you again for taking the steps to make our work more accessible. By doing this. We're helping empower more voters and making democracy available to more people. Thank you