Assistive Technology: Not Just for the "ADA Patron": Notes and Bookmarks

Examples of product development
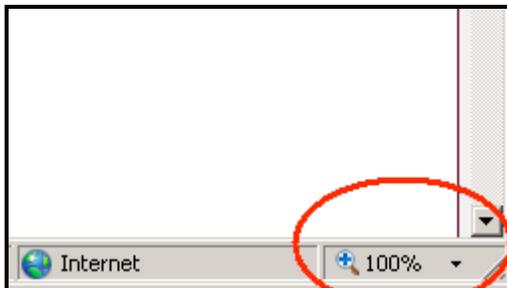
A more extensive history of Electronic Curbcuts (assistive technologies adopted by the mainstream) is available at www.accessiblesociety.org/topics/technology/eleccurbcut.htm.

Universal Design (UD)

The Center for Universal Design is located at North Carolina State University. Their comprehensive website is http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/

Examples of conscious UD

In Internet Explorer 7 (IE7), a Zoom feature in the lower right corner of the screen has a pull-down menu that lets you modify the displayed text size:

In both IE7 and earlier versions, text size can be modified via a View menu→Text Size option and a Tools menu → Internet Options → Appearance → Fonts preference, but these are dependent on websites being coded properly. Even UD can be improved!

UD Implications Beyond Disability

For an interesting discussion of cultural factors and UD, see www.wired.com/wired/archive/12.11/kosher.html?pg=1&topic=kosher &topic_set=

A more recent article is available at http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/02/business/worldbusiness/02koshe r.html?em (free registration required).

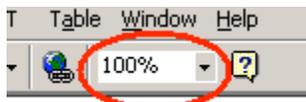## UD control panels - Windows
UD utilities - Windows

In Windows Vista, presentation of most UD control panels and utilities was moved to a centralized "Ease of Access" feature. Ease of Access can be reached by going to Control Panel→Ease of Access→Ease of Access Center, or by pressing Windows Logo Key+U.

Other UD control panel options will be discussed during the "Accommodating Boomers" webinar on October 7. Potential conflicts and resolutions between control panels and security software will be discussed during the "IT Staff" webinar on November 19.

UD in Microsoft Office

In Word 2007, the Zoom feature is in the center of the View ribbon, and the Insert Object is in the Text section of the Insert ribbon (second option from the right).

In earlier versions of Word, the Zoom feature is under the View menu and is also available on the Formatting toolbar:

The Insert Object feature can be reached via Insert menu → Object.

UD control panels – other systems

Macintosh computers running most versions of OS 10 have a "Universal Access" control panel under System Preferences. VoiceOver in OS 10.5 is a major improvement over prior versions. For information on Universal Access options, see http://www.apple.com/accessibility/

The definitive Wiki on Unix/Linux accessibility features is at http://larswiki.atrc.utoronto.ca/wiki/Software.

Websites

The two major guideline sets on website accessibility are:
- § 1194.22 of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (generally refered to as "Section 508"), www.section508.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=Content&ID=12#Web.
- The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0 (WCAG), http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG10/

At present, Section 508 is roughly a subset of WCAG. Both guideline sets are undergoing a significant revision, in large part to take Web 2.0 technologies into consideration, although it is unclear when the final revised versions will be published.

While there are several tools available to check for website accessibility, website review by individuals with disabilities is also critical. For example, automatic accessibility checkers can verify the existence of alternate text for a graphic, but cannot verify whether this text is appropriate.

Feel free to contact the presenter at jane@janevincent.com with questions about website accessibility.

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Alternate search engines include the following:

- KartOO: http://www.kartoo.com/
- Vivisimo: http://vivisimo.com/
- TinEye: http://tineye.com/login?redirect=/faq

Video

The National Center for Accessible Media (NCAM) is the primary resource on multimedia accessibility. Their website is http://ncam.wgbh.org/.

Multi-Modality

A description of an intriguing design use of smell—a fire alarm that sprays horseradish—is at www.wctv.tv/APNews/headlines/16188567.html

Useful Websites

The presenter is a regular contributor to Access on Main Street (www.accessonmainstreet.net), a blog that tracks universal design features in mainstream technologies or technologies designed for other purposes.

Abledata (www.abledata.com) is a 17,000 item product database that tracts high, low, and no-tech products, without regard for whether the products were specifically designed for people with disabilities. It also includes references to several do-it-yourself solutions.

A new magnification software program, particularly relevant to the needs of seniors with natural but not extensive vision loss, is ZoomWare. Compared to its older sibling ZoomText, ZoomWare has a simpler interface, a more limited feature set, and a lower price ($150). For more information and a 30-day product demo, see www.getzoomware.com.

A useful accommodation for people with low to moderate hearing loss is the PocketTalker. Some libraries keep these on hand to facilitate communication. The manufacturer's website is www.williamssound.com/productdetail.aspx?product_id=90. One webinar attendee recommended Harris Communications as a vendor; their website is www.harriscomm.com/.