# Transcript of SPH & UW IT Accessible Technology ‘Accessibility Café: Making Your Canvas Course Accessible’.

# Facilitated by Mary-Colleen Jenkins

**Chelsea Elkins (she/her):** Thank you so much. Dean Godwin

Okay, so we are recording feel free, though, once we get to the kind of Q&A and want to be more interactive, we'll turn off that recording so folks feel comfortable. And if there's a question you want to ask again, and you want to turn off that recording for, that is totally okay. And we're definitely going to be passing around mics in the room. But for folks on zoom, if at any point you can't hear us or can't see something.

Please let us know, but we'll try to keep checking in with you and Katrina and I will be monitoring the chat. So hopefully, this will be nice and interactive. That's our goal. So without further ado, I want to introduce our amazing facilitator and guest, Mary-Colleen Jenkins.

And she works at UW IT accessible technology services as the instruction accessibility specialist. Thank you for saying all that. Which is amazing. So specifically like for faculty staff, and instructors kind of working together to do what we can to kind of make our content online, materials more accessible. Mary-Colleen also was an instructor for about 20 years, and so she really also understands the pain points and challenges of instructors. And she's just amazing at breaking things down into like bite size pieces. So really excited.

**Mary-Colleen Jenkins (she/her):** Thank you everyone for letting me take up some of your time today. I'm not - I'm going to be looking around. But hopefully you'll look at my screen more than me cause – there’s people here in the room that I'll be looking at. And then there's that camera, I think, right there. So the goal is to make this kind of a, I like to think of it as a presentation slash study hall slash office hours.

So we have a lot of time. We have the room and are set up till 1230. I'm not going to be talking that entire time, I promise. And the goal for me, I call these accessibility cafes, these events are 90 minutes, and I'm hoping just a half hour will be me talking and demoing. Thank you. I don't Want to. I don't want to double. Thank you.

And so I'll do a little presentation for about 30 min, and then we have work time, open work time. And that's where the office hours slash study hall piece comes in. And this will be true for people online and people in person. I just want to give you time to practice. Some of the easy accessibility fixes is what I'm calling them. I want to give you time to practice and play around with it.

I love going to webinars. I love going to presentations where I come out feeling super inspired to make some changes or to practice something. But what I find is, if I don't have a chance to practice then and there, no matter how inspired I get. I go back to my desk and I open my email. And it all goes away. So that's why we have this long period of time. So you can have that gift of time to practice these things. As Chelsea said, I was an instructor for a really long time. I know what it's like. And actually let me start talking with slides as we go.

So is it going to work? Maybe not. So let's see what's going on here. Hmm, okay. Pause for control here. For some reason I'm not able to click on that on that screen. Oh, thank you. Gosh, yeah, I swear I was a teacher, and I did do zoom for like a million years. Beautiful room. By the way, thank you.

So I just have a quick agenda. We're going to do a short presentation, and I'm really doing 101. This is accessibility 101. So some of you are probably like, I already know, that totally fine. Just let it wash over. You just read it, just, you know, get refreshed for you. Some of you may be thinking. Oh, thank goodness, cause I don't know a lot.

I wish I did, or I feel like I should. And nobody's going to know, you know, if I'm learning so I'm going to talk about incremental mindset. That's really important to me. It's my philosophy. It's what I talk about with faculty, because trying to build more accessibility skills, trying to make your con- your content more accessible can be really overwhelming.

Because there's a lot of pieces and a lot of things to think about, and that can lead to task paralysis. There's so much to do. I can't do anything. I wanted to just start with trying to get you out of that mindset, and I'll repeat it a lot because people hear it and then they need it repeated.

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I'm going to talk about 5 accessibility fixes in canvas with short demonstrations. So I created a little canvas page. And I'm just going to show you just short demonstration. I don't want to overwhelm me with detail. I don't want to give too much information.

Then I'll give you a little list of things you can play with during work time, and then we'll turn off the recording, but keep zoom going, and I'll walk around. You can do work silently. You can open your laptop, you can talk to each other in zoom. You can just chat, and we have people monitoring chat. I can answer questions. You can vocalize questions.

And again study hall/office hours. We give them to our students. Why not give them to ourselves as well? And again, it's okay to work. However, you feel comfortable. If you just want to turn your camera off on zoom and just quietly work while listening. Totally fine. If you need to take off. That's okay, too. We're not holding you captive today. Okay, so that's that.

So who am I? Thank you, Chelsea, for introducing me already I have so many words in my title and in my team it takes like a minute and saying, but again, Mary Colleen Jenkins, my email address is listed and we will have a follow up email with lots of links and resources. So don't worry about that.

I joined the accessible technologies team in December of 2022. So I'm based - I'm just over a year in this role. And my focus, I have a team of technical experts. I have web accessibility experts. I have procurement experts. I have document experts on my team. I'm - my role is new. I'm an instruction accessibility specialist. And basically I'm here for you. And that's, that is a new role because there was a little bit of a gap between the resources we have for IT and Faculty's awareness of those resources, and there wasn't anyone dedicated to kind of reaching to faculty, specifically trying to engage and

just working on skill building and answering questions and those kinds of things.

My team will help anyone, but it just didn't. There didn't seem to be the understanding that they're there beyond just IT, but for everyone on campus. I focus on outreach and engagement - you. And because I was a former instructor. I could bring a different perspective for talking to faculty. I taught on 3 different campuses for over 20 years, mainly writing. So I didn't have a lot of the complicated STEM stuff that you do but technical communication, writing of all kinds, and my last gig was 8 years in the College of Engineering here, and I taught introduction to technical, technical communication and advanced technical communication for the professional workplace.

And then I did a lot of freelance instruction and professional development in engineering companies around the region, talking about the same thing because engineers who've been in the field for 10 years need to know the same thing that freshman engineering students need to know. I did professional certificates in the continuing college, and I can't get out of the classroom 100%. So I teach twice a year for professional and organizational development. I teach effective business writing. So if you're interested, I’m teaching it now, and I'll do another one in August. I have to keep my foot in in there. Can't get rid of me.

So again, I understand those pain points of being overwhelmed with grading, developing content, and then being asked to add a layer that maybe you didn't anticipate which would be the accessibility pieces. So that's why I'm going, doing these events. How can I help you? I'm going to keep this quick cause. I will send out a follow up but in my role as a specialist in outreach.

I can do one on one, or small group consultations. Just anytime you can schedule a meeting with me with your group. I'm going to start doing Wednesday Booking hours so you can, you don't have to go back and forth with my schedule. You can just look on my booking. I'll set that up next week. I'm doing open office hours during week one of each quarter. I started that winter quarter, so just open drop in just for quick. It could just be just want to talk. I mean anything that you want. It could be actual learning something. It could be just talking.

I do monthly instruction accessibility meetup first Thursdays on zoom at 10 Am. I'm really excited. March fifth I have 2 librarians here, Kira Wyld and Perry Yee from UW libraries talking about accessibility work they've been doing, and also how faculty can partner with librarians to look for accessible resources to help with scanning, you know. Really good. If you have to do like digital scanning and you need the PDFs tagged, how to find really good sources like that. They'll talk for about 20 min and then do a Q&A. Afterwards.

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In April I have Dr. Alex Prybutok and Kristen Bennet from chemical engineering. They're going to come and talk to us about recording and posting video lectures they and their team of researchers have done a lot of research over the last, probably 2 years on the question, does posting video lectures, which helps with accessibility, Does that have a negative impact on students’ attendance?

And they have done a lot of work. I'm really excited to hear what they have to say. They'll be coming in April. And then I have an email list and then presentations. And we'll go over that later. But I don't want to take too much more time. Do we have a question?

**Participant:** [inaudible]

**Mary-Colleen:** Okay. So the introduction I just wanted to get that out of the way, because during work time it's hard to talk about my information. So again, I'm going to start with my philosophy here, and I'm going to move this little thing here.

Progress over perfection. I want you to keep that mantra in mind the whole time you're working on accessibility, and this is true of everyone. And I like this. I have this graphic on the screen, and it's one of my favorite graphics. It's 3 rows of 6 circles, in each row. Each circle has a different level of blue color in it. I like to think of it as glasses, half empty or half full sort of thing. It looks like little glasses of water.

And they all have various levels. Some have a teeny bit of blue in them, some, one is almost to the top, but none of them are completely full. That's accessibility for you right there. If someone says my stuff is a hundred percent accessible, they're missing something. Because we can aspire to that. But it's really that's the goal that's what we keep working towards. But it's very difficult to achieve. But each of the rows has a descriptor. The first one says, This is progress. The second one says, this is also progress, and the third one says, and so is this.

And that, I really like that because it helps you visualize. Small changes are important changes. Small changes you might make might help that one student or 2 students. And as we make small changes, we start building habits in our work. And we learn skills that we build into our process and it becomes easier. And it just keeps growing. And so I really want you to keep that in mind as you go through this. We want to start with small things that are replicable and sustainable. We want to make use of our small chunks of time.

I don't want you to spend all summer tearing down your canvas sites and rebuilding it from scratch. That's not a great use of your time and energy. What you want to do is think ahead. So not what was my canvas like, you know, 2 weeks ago. But what's my next slide deck? What's the next assignment I'm going to build? Those are - You're moving forward. When you have time to tinker with the past stuff, you can, but we're looking at moving forward.

Partnering with partners or with peers or colleagues is really helpful. That's why I like to have this interactive kind of work time. And don't let perfection be the enemy of good. You’re a professor. You're at the University of Washington because your subject matter experts. We're all good at what we do. It can be a little discombobulating to be a beginner at something like accessibility, especially if we're looking at our canvas course sites, and we've worked so hard on that content. We built these things over a long period of time, and then to feel like, Oh, now I have to fix something. It's really hard. And so it's important to not try to be perfect, but try to do good faith effort to improve over time.

Okay, so progress over perfection.

And again just reiterating, you might feel like this woman in the image. Oh, my gosh! You know, what am I going to do now? I have to pick something natural. We have complex sites. We have a lot of content. Again, incremental improvement is what we're looking for, because it builds up over time.

Okay? Was that the good pep talk before going? And okay, I will repeat it many times. Yes. Oh, wait, hold on.

Thank you. Yes. Okay. Yes, you may ask it much. I’m going to turn the mic on.

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**Participant:** Thank you. So one of the things that you said I want to remark, on you said that you know these changes might be great because they'll assist one or 2 students. And I'm really thinking about the fact that we're all super busy people. And how is that compelling? How is that compelling helping one or 2 students? Yeah, I mean, I really want to talk about that as an, as a magnitude. It's like there are a lot of things that might be done with that time that could help 5 or 6 or maybe a dozen students. So why is that worthwhile?

**Mary-Colleen:** I really like that question. I do, because it takes that incremental piece which I think is really important and kind of thinks well, what about down the road? And I think what I like to say about that is the one to 2 students this quarter becomes 5 to 6, next quarter becomes 8 to 10 next quarter. So I mean, if you have an accommodation request from a student and DRS. Is helping you. That's that person is taken care of because their accommodations.

But a lot of these things that we are changing will mitigate some of the simple accommodations. Like, for example, if a student needs. And I probably won't talk about this today. But I can individually. But like, if a student needs lecture notes, for example, that's their accommodation, and DRS an't do the lecture notes for you. But there are ways to create your slide deck so you can put notes in the in the notes view, and then give the students the Powerpoint slides, not a PDF of them but the Powerpoint slides, with all those notes there. So that's a short cut for doing lecture notes.

Now, if you give that to one students because of DRS accommodations, that's helping one student. If you change your work pattern so like I used to always give Pdfs of my slides. And then I started thinking, why am I getting Pdfs of slides? Because some students might need those lecture notes. You can't see them with a Pdf. So by making all my slides available in the Powerpoint file so all students can see my notes. The one thing I did for one student is helping every person in the class. So that's 30 students. So that's the way to think about it that we have very little time in our schedule. So if you're doing one of the - and we're going to talk about 5 or 4 easy fixes.

If you make that one change for that one page, it's helping 30 students read that page, and then you start building – oh, next time I make a canvas page, I'm automatically going to do headings in a way that's accessible to everyone. Does that make sense? Does that answer your question?

**Participant:** It does. Yeah.

**Mary-Colleen:** I like that. You ask that cause. I think it's really I get excited, and then I move my and then I'm glad you asked that then, because I do want people to ask those questions, you know there will be time at the end. But if there's a question right then and there. Please feel free to ask at any point.

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Okay, so let's see if I can change my screen a little bit here oops did, I remember? And here we go. Okay. So here we go with the 5 easy fixes. And I like this image because it's the 5 stones balanced on top of each other, and we want to make sure, that's where we're building these 5 things. A couple things to note. I'm going to talk about accessible headings. Alt text for simple images. Color contrast. And I say, in brief, because there's a lot with color contrast that probably won't be necessary to talk about when it comes to canvas pages. Because if you're doing really complex images, you won't be putting them in canvas. So we're focusing on canvas for that one. Descriptive link text. And then number 5, just the concept of building content within canvas.

One thing to note, I have an asterisk on my heading. So I'm focused on canvas with this. But all of the things I talk about with canvas are available to you in any content platform you're using. So the basics I talk about here with my demo on the canvas site. You can do the same thing in Microsoft word, you can do the same thing in Google docs, you can do the same thing in slides. They're just going to look slightly different. But these tools are going to be in all of them. So just keep that in the back of your mind that this can be done in any platform.

Now I'm going to take a moment to toggle to my, my canvas page. So I'm going to stop sharing. And I practiced this so hopefully, it'll work. Okay. Canvas page. Where did it go? Okay, here we go. Okay, what are we seeing? Oh, no, okay. Okay.

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You can see my canvas page, I hope? Okay, I wrote this for this, the purpose of our conversation. I will confess when I look back over my old canvas sites. I'm not a perfect person at all. When I look at my old sites, I see a lot of things that need to be worked on. But I did this for ease of use here. let me see, how do I get rid of this toolbar? I'll move it. Okay, Nope. Bear with me here. Okay, I'm just going to put that here.

So right now, we're looking at canvas. You're all familiar with canvas, but I want to point out a couple things. First of all, how many of you know where the canvas course Accessibility report is. Do not open it. I just want to know if you know where it is. Do not open it. If it, for those of you don't know where it is cause not everybody does, I'm going to show you it's in your navigation bar. I hope you can see my cursor here. It's in the navigation bar right here on mine. It depends on how you organize yours. Again. Don't open that yet. I just want you to know where it is.

It can be helpful or it can be overwhelming. It's like a double edged sword, you know. It's a useful tool, but it can lead to that task paralysis that we talked about earlier. Which is why I don't want you to look at it right now. Okay, so we're going to talk about 5 easy fixes. And some of these are related to common, I asked DRS what are common students complaints about websites, and they said, headings is one of them.

Bad contrast is another, there's, students don't like a lot of canvas, but we're talking about accessibility, and alt text, and those kinds of things. And these are things, if we work on them in our courses, and as we're designing things, we might mitigate those accommodations for students or if you get the letter you might say I already do that. So I don't have to worry about it. So we're going to talk. You don't have to read these pages very carefully. I just have examples, but the first one is headings.

So if you look at the first heading I have here, I have the title. 5 easy accessibility fixes. That's in the title bar. You're going to have that automatically accessible. Then I have another one. You see this. Easy fix one creating accessible headings. That does not look like a heading cause it's not a heading. And if - and I'm going to go into the edit mode here so you can see what tools you have. So we're looking at the page title right here. So we've got 5 easy accessibility fixes.

And if you look at the toolbar. There's this dropdown menu right here, and it says paragraph, it defaults to paragraph. If you click the dropdown menu you'll see heading 2, heading 3, heading 4, pre-formatted, which I'm ignoring today. Never use it. So I don't encourage you to at this point. And then the paragraph, and you'll see there's a check mark by the paragraph. That's because this heading that I wrote is in paragraph default mode. So it's sentence level. If I were to make that a heading, all I have to do is click my cursor inside that heading. You can highlight it, too, but you only have to click it, and then I go to my dropdown menu and click, heading 2.

And hopefully, it'll work. So you see, it got bigger, bolder, easy to see. So that's a heading top tool, basically. And what that does is it allows you to easily structure headings. If you're in word document you have, there's all kinds of styles. Google has them. Basically what it does is it creates a structure in the HTML, which we don't care about right now.

So a screen reader or immersive reader or whatever is going to. If a student is using a screen reader, the screen reader will “see” that structure and say to the student heading two, fixing, or create accessible headings. And every time there's a heading that's structured it'll read heading two blah blah blah heading two blah blah blah. And the reason it's important to do that is a in Google Docs or other documents, it helps to create a table of contents.

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But also, if a student is using a screen reader. Or maybe they downloaded the audio file because they're going to listen to it on the way home, as they're driving home. It helps create a visual structure in the student’s mind. So a student who doesn't see it at all cause they can't, because they're blind, or a student who's listening is going to hear that structure all the way through. If we don't have the headings, if it's in paragraph mode, it's going to read everything as if it's a paragraph, and they won't be able to discern the organizational structure or the emphasis.

Also, if they are screen reader user, they can screen reader users are very sophisticated in their technology. They can do lots of things with their screen reader, so they can go only to the table of contents and skip around. It helps them navigate so they can remember. You know, they can use it more successfully. So that's why we want to do it. We want them to hear headings. Yes.

**Participant:** So how would the screen reader interpret heading two versus heading 3 versus heading 4?

**Mary-Colleen:** So what they'll do is oh, yes, so the question was, how's the screen reader differentiate between heading 1, 2, 3? It'll literally read heading 2. So, though it won't be that we here's heading two, we have 5 headings. And there's heading 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. It's this, the basically the level of headings. So they know heading 2 is going to be a main heading, the heading, 3, 4 would be subheading.

Yeah, so when you're designing, you want to think okay, how many sub headings am I having? Do I have 5 major sections? Than I have 5 heading twos. And then if there's subsections within the headings, they would be 3. And if you have a subset section that would be four. Yeah. So the question is, why they go straight to heading 2 instead of heading one. Yeah. So we're like, we'll get there, we'll figure it out. So heading one is always the title.

So you'll always only have one heading one on your document, and canvas is making it easy for us by not allowing us to have a heading one except in the title box. So that's a nice thing about canvas. So you're, it won't allow you to do a heading one in the middle of your content.

I wanted to show you this heading, so I have another heading that says ‘headings created manually’. And I want to share this because this is how I used to do headings before I realized what I was not doing. I think it was faster for me to just highlight my heading, bold it and make it bigger. That that was my habit. I didn't think twice about it just did it all the time, because headings created manually, I can see it.

I wasn't listening to my page because technology wasn’t, didn't allow us to listen, unless you had a special screen reader. and I wasn't aware of screen reader use. I had never heard a screen reader ever. Like I'd never seen someone using a screen reader, and showing me how they did it. I never heard it before. I didn't realize what the structure headings were and how important they were. And so if you look at this, I'm going to click on it.

Look at what it's what it defaults. It says paragraph. So up here in the menu it says paragraph when I click in it. So it looks like a heading. But the screen reader isn't going to read it as a heading. They won’t announce it. So my, my students who can see the screen are, going to know. Anyone listening at their home, or anyone who's low vision or blind, the screen reader is not going to announce that because it doesn't have a structure. And so how do I fix it? I just click in it. And I go and click heading two and look.

It changes. You can kind of click on it, and it shows you. So I put it back in. It's a heading two. So it's pretty easy to change those headings in canvas. Yeah, Chelsea.

**Host:** There was a good question in the chat. Did you want to ask a question or should I?

**Participant:** I was trying to be anonymous so that I wasn't the person that kept asking things. My question is, and this is again going back, and I know you said go forward, but I always look at that accessibility score, and it gives me a headache. So I do think about documents that already exist, and whether there's an AI tool where you can just grab the entire thing and ask it to convert to use whatever accessibility functionality?

**Mary-Colleen:** It's not here yet. I'm glad you asked that cause I've had that question multiple times. And actually, in a staff meeting with all my super technically expert team members, It's coming. It's not here. It's coming, though, and that will be a wonderful day when it does, because I would like to be slightly out of a job. I mean, not really. But I would like the easy step. I want a tool that's going to do that, and it is coming, and it will be great, because there are lots of nuances in accessibility that AI is not going to be good at. But this kind of thing we want it to be good at it.

And you know when, if you're looking at this and you'll have time today, you can go into any page and just say, I wonder if I've done that, and just do a quick check of headings. It could be a TAs job, you know. It's easy enough to do this kind of thing. So it's one of those things that if you're working, if you have a, you know, an exam coming up, or something you do on, maybe instructions. You might just say, Okay, I have. I'm going to give this to my students in 2 days. I created it last year.

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I can at least take 5 min, maybe, and do this one thing. So it's one of those small chunks of time issues. And you just gotta keep moving forward because that accessibility score will have you pulling your hair out. So that's the basics with headings. And again, super easy to do.

And we might think we have a lot of documents, and we do. But one by one you can get them there, and you can do this in word, you can do it in any of your other platforms. Okay. So alt text to images is our easy fix two. Oh, and I wanted to show you something here. So this is really it's what Juanita was saying. So here's my accessibility score up here. Oh, let's see. Get my cursor there. Here we go. So up in this, in the screen, you can see there's a teeny 73%. It's green. Green is good.

Green is good. That means you're, you're getting there 73% to us as scholars. You might be like, that’s a C, you know, it's better than a 56. You know it's showing you're on the right path, right? And so you might take the scores, it can be a tool that.

I'm kind of back and forth on the tool. It's a good visual, but it's also something that can sink your heart a little bit. So you want to think of priorities? You know, what do I need to do that's going to be more the most accessible to the most people. Again, with accommodations, you have help with DRS and other resources. So we're looking to build these things for the students, as many students as we can, and it will build over time. So adding alt-text images. So one thing I found I didn't do, when I got this job especially, I looked back over all my canvas sites. It was like, Okay, where did I? Where do I need to learn? And when did I not do that?

I can, you know, use as a priority point for faculty that I'm helping, and what I found I had a lot of red, 25% scores. It's like, Oh, my gosh. I'm terrible! I'm a terrible teacher. I'm a terrible canvas designer. And what I realized was all these 25% were these things, the little images I put in there cause they would make, add a little visual interest. Or maybe a screenshot I hadn't put alt text. Everything was 25% red. And when I went through and I was like, Well, what do I need to do to make this old page accessible. I could in half hour get 100% on like 10 things because it was all alt-text.

So that might be a really low level fruit thing, low hanging fruit that you can fix. So I'm just going to show you some basics. So with alt-text again, you're not doing complex images in your canvas site, for alt-text, we're looking at simple things.

So there are 2 types of images I want to talk to you about. One is those decorative things, you know. You add a little humor with the dog on the computer, or maybe on your dashboard you have a spring flower because it's spring quarter, you know. No one's going to miss out if they don't see that, you know, it's just a nice thing to have.

And then there are alt-text images for things that if someone couldn't see it, they're missing information that's important that everyone else gets to see, and they can't see it, either because they're blind or low vision, or they can only listen. So they, if they're missing key information,

That's the problem. So with something like alt text for images with this little dog, what you, there are a couple of things you can do, and it's the same on many tools. So if I'm clicking on, I'm going to click on the little image and a little box pops up image options.

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Okay? So if you click on that, which I'm going to do here. You get an image options box. And so this is just telling you what you can do. It's not the accessibility checker which I'll show you in just a second. But say, you just click on it. You're going to get those image options. And there's a little question mark by alt-text. Then there's a little, alt-text box and you'll see in the Alt text box. I have a file name, dog on computer dot Png.

There's a box that you can check for decorative images. And then there's some other display options which I'm not going to worry about right now. If you look at the little question mark it tells you what alt-text is. Okay. And it says used by screen readers to describe content of an image. Just a really quick definition. Its not as in depth as the accessibility report would give you, but it tells you basics.

So with this image, I put it on the slide just because I thought it was cute, and I was talking to the students about, you know. Make sure you turn in your thing on time. Something, the slide I had it on, it didn't really matter what it was. And if a screen reader, a lot of screen readers will say, I don't want alt text for decorative stuff, because I have enough to listen to and absorb. I don't need extra.

Okay, so you can in this case, mark it as decorative by going to this - Well, the first thing I would say is your Alt text shouldn't be a file name because usually file names don't really have a lot of information. This one does. But you want to avoid using a file name. It will default to that. But I want to get rid of that because I don't want it to be read to a screen reader, because that's annoying.

So I'm going to click decorative image right there. And so decorative image means screen reader will ignore it. So it's tagged as a decorative image. Not that important. Screen reader will not read it. Okay? And you're leaving people out with that, but they don't care. They don’t really want to hear it. So that will improve my accessibility for later.

Okay, but one thing I'll note if you look at the bottom of the screen. There's a little accessibility icon that's on each page. And you see, I have 4 flagged items. So if I look at that, I haven't applied that yet. If I click on that the accessibility checker’s saying, this is one issue out of 4. I have a file name as my alt text, and they say, don't use file name, and I hadn't done the decorative image yet.

So I can go in clicking decorative image, hit apply and look. I have 3 issues now instead of 4. Yes. It should have like fireworks going off, and it does have a little balloon later. But it will tell you kind of how you're doing. This can be really helpful. One caveat that little accessibility checker on the page does not flag headings.

And I called Dave Coffey, who's the learning and technologies Guru. He's very helpful if you have technology issues. And I, said, Dave, why? And he said, I don't know. So that's a canvas thing, and I think it might be because it would flag so many false positives that it would be almost detrimental to someone to have false negatives flagged all the time for headings. The accessibility report will flag headings problems in files in your canvas files. That's another conversation. It's a little more difficult.

Okay? So I just want to look at the other problem with alt-text that I have that the accessibility checker is flagging. So it's not really that easy to see, but I have on the screen a screenshot. and it's a screenshot from the page I just showed you the image options this, if I were talking to a class or to you about this is what the fields for image options looks like when you click on it, which I showed you earlier.

If someone's listening to me only, because they're joining by zoom or phone, or if they are using a screen reader that image needs an alt-text because they need to know what everybody else is seeing when I talk about this, okay? So first problem I have is, I've used a file name for my alt text. Screenshots.Png means nothing. Okay, they know it's a screenshot. But that's not super helpful, so I want to get rid of that. And it's not a decorative image either, because I'm trying to describe what it is, but there are things in this image I don't need to explain.

[00:40:11]

It doesn't matter to a screen reader user that it's black font on a white background. That doesn't add any information. So I would. And I just wanted the caveat with alt-text. It is an art and a science kind of you have to think of what is the main point. I'm showing here what is the main piece of information here, and then use the context to help you determine what you're going to say. You want it to be one to 2 sentances max.

My friend, my colleague Gaby says the length of a Tweet is like the longest, or whatever it's called now. So you want to think what is the most important point? So if I was, if I was really trying to show the decorative image box as my key feature in this alt-text, I might focus on that. I might say image options field on canvas, showing alt text space or space for alt-text and decorative image checkbox. I might just leave it at that. So you really want to decide what's the key point here that the person who can't see it needs to understand that everyone else is, going to understand. So some people say, just practice. Like, if you were describing on the phone to someone who is not facetiming but like on the phone, how would you describe it and try to keep it that way.

Learning this really helped me when I was doing slide decks, because I thought to myself, Okay how intentional am I in choosing images? You know, how often am I using multiple images to show the same thing? Do I have to show all those? Do I need this here? It made my slides better, it made them simpler, but they still had visual interest. So that's what you want to think about when it comes to simple alt-text. So I'm just going to put a decorative image or something box. And there's a question.

This is not great. Alt-text right here. I'm just going to show you how it works.

**Participant:** So I realized that when I do my old text boxes that I've been using meta discourse that I write this image shows da da da. Is that totally useless, because they actually get that from the reader, and so stop doing them?

**Mary-Colleen:** Stop doing it.

**Participant:** Okay.

**Mary-Colleen:** Great. That is a great question. Yes, you do not have to say, this image is, this is a picture of, this is a screenshot of because they're in it. They're in the content already, and anyone who has a screen reader reading alt-text, they know. Yeah. So you can chop out half that content. So if you're trying to get it down to a tweet that will save you. So it doesn't have to be photo of, it doesn't have to be any of that. That takes practice. I still have a hard time getting out of the, this is a screenshot of.

I might say, partial view like, if I'm showing it, and I have done that in these slides if I'm showing a dropdown menu. But I'm only showing part of it, I might say partial view of Dropdown menu, and then just focus on what is important there and complex alt text is an altogether different conversation. So if you have questions like that. I can talk to you one on one about those kinds of things.

Okay? So we're down to 2. Notice, we're down to 2 items in our accessibility. Check-in question, no. Nope. Okay, how are we doing on time. Oh, gosh! I'm using a lot of time here. Number 3. Color contrast. I'm only going to talk about simple stuff.

We want to avoid using color only as a way to convey meaning. Okay, some students are color blind, and there are different types of color blindness. Some students are low vision, so they may have difficulty differentiating contrast, that's not really strong. So, what I recommend is, if you're using color to emphasize something, use a couple means by which to do it. So my first example, I have. Monday, February 26th in yellow highlight.

It's a dark highlight, a dark yellow, but some people may not be able to see the highlight, so I have bolded it and used highlighting. So you can do 2 ways of introducing something. That's important. You'll see the second example. You I hope you can't read it. That was the point. It says Tuesday, February twenty-seventh, in light blue, and it's highlighted in light grey.

[00:45:02]

If you can see it, it might because you're at in front of this big screen, or you're close to your computer. But that is difficult for many people to see, including me, and a lot of websites are defaulting to a weird gray font. And that's like the style now, I don't know why. It's terrible. But just be aware you may like color combinations personally, but they may not work for students. Another thing. I have, my last example is red. It says, Wednesday, February 28th in red.

A student helped me with this. I was designing a lot of calendars and a lot of instructions, and I would emphasize things in red. And I'd say the red deadline, the red deadlines are the most important. Pay extra attention to those. I did it for years and years and years. And then one day student emailed me and said, can I just ask you to change those red text to something else.

I'm color blind, and I'm not going to be able to tell which of these deadlines is being emphasized. I was like, how many years have I been doing that? How many students have not seen my emphasis because, and I felt terrible. And then I thought, you know, okay, I'm not going to feel terrible. I'm going to just change and look ahead.

So with that one there are couple of ways you can do it. You could still use red. That's fine, but have an alternative like, so I might put an asterisk on either side of the Wednesday. Keep it red, but put an asterisk or important deadlines and have a bullet list. Or I could say, Wednesday, February 28th, ‘Remember’ in capital letters. There are ways to stylistically change these things. You just have to decide which one you're going to go with.

And then for the accessibility checker, if I click on it, I have 2. So I have accessibility checkers showing up with fonts. It is focusing on my light blue and gray. So what it can do, it says, change text color. So I can use this little drag and drop and apply a better color. Click, apply, and it'll change it. And look, I only have one accessibility problem. So it'll highlight those things for you. It'll also highlight those things in files that you have.

The problem is when you're changing things in files, you have to go to the original file and fix it, and if you have a really old file like windows 2010, or whatever it may be harder to fix than you would think. I tried that. And I'm like just redo, the whole thing. Or maybe, did I really need that handout in the first place? Ha! It really helps you limit how many things you're doing. And with the red you, it also allows you to like, change the color. You can drag it. I can make it a very dark red that's almost black. But that doesn't mean people are going to really notice it. So it's almost better just to have red, plus some other way to do it. So you can apply that. That'll fix it. But the question is, is it fixing it for all your students?

And you do get a little. It should be like a video. But you do get a fix. So that's how the accessibility checker works on that.

So my last item. I'm just going to. Oh, yeah, live links. I'm going to make this quick because I think it's easy to understand. Descriptive links. In your items we want to avoid big URLs, live links as URLs. What you want to do is make it a descriptive link. So make it part of your sentence, with a live link in there. So my example here is descriptive links are accessible. So I have a sentence. Learn more about - if I can pronounce it, protanopia, a form of color blindness. I should have practiced that before. So that, so protanopia, a form of color blindness is a live link.

So I have it, instead of a URL, I just have that phrase highlighted. And then I've inserted a live link there, and you can do that with this drop-down menu here. You can insert an external link or course link that'll take you to files, in your files. And so what I've done is, I've just highlighted the words and inserted that link there. So if I do that, let me see if I can do it. I'll try. I'll just practice with this.

Let's say I was making that into a link. I can do external link here. It tells, it says text, that's where my sentence would be, a partial sentence. And then I put the URL in the link box, hit done. It's going to make that sentence a live link like I've done in the example - oops. So that's what I did here. That's why it's underlined in blue. And students these days assume if it's underlined in blue, it's going to be a link. Screen reader will read that link, as the phrase. But it’ll announce it as a link.

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The reason that's important is - here's a link here. An alpha numeric URL, super long. What do you think's going to happen with a screen reader on that one? The screen reader will read every single thing. HTTP dot S dot colon Slash slash Www. It'll read the entire link to that poor person on the other side of the screen here. And the issue is not only is this a lot of cognitive noise, it's also, screen reader users can pull, create a link list from any page.

So if you have, like, 5 or 6 links or more, maybe have a bibliography. The screen reader user can create a list of all those links so they can jump around in those links without reading the whole page. So if they want to go back to that page, you know, a sighted reader can just go to bullet 3 really easily, and they'll be listening. And so if we have something like this, it's just a list of these long URLs. They're not going to know which URL goes to which thing, unless the URL is short enough that they can discern that description. So that's a reason not to have that also.

So I have a sample and sentence here. It says, to learn more about protanopia, a form of color blindness, click here. I’m encouraging you strongly to not make click here the descriptive link. Anybody know why?

**Participant:** For the reason you just described? Because then, in the summary, it'll just be like here, here, Link.

**Mary-Colleen:** Yes. So the answer was for the exact same reason that we don't want to list URLs. A screen reader user, if you say click here and click here is your descriptive text. Their list of links will say, Click here, click here, click here, click here, click here, and if they need to get to the fourth one, because it's on color blindness and that's what their research paper’s on, they're going to have to open every single one of them to figure out which one it is.

And again, this is something I never really knew, because I hadn't experienced screen readers like, I just didn't know and it's common not to know, because we're, we design things based on what we've seen. And so we're seeing a lot of it. So that's just one other thing that could be an easy thing like if you're doing a research paper assignment and your students have resources, you can look at that one section and say, Okay, I really should look at these links, and it might take a little effort. But it'll save everyone time, not just the screen reader users, it'll save you time for fixing links. And also helps anyone who comes across a broken link. Because if I'm on a website. And there's a broken link in my canvas.

If it says, Click, here, I'm not going to necessarily be able to say, Hey, Professor, the click here Link is broken. Well, which one? So it'll help you in your editing. It'll also help your students. Is there a question?

**Host:** There is. There’s a great question in the chat, asking, is it worthwhile to include a citation with the descriptive text for links?

**Mary-Colleen:** I think it depends, I would say that's a case by case basis. If you're trying to help your students learn citation processes and you want to make sure you're modeling the kind of behavior you want them to model. I would say, yes, I think if it's an assignment, and you're like, I'm giving you these resources.

Take them and apply and choose the ones you want for your project. Might be more of a learning moment to help them do that themselves. So I would say I would. I would look at it on a case-to-case basis. It's good practice I think. If we're looking at practice that we want our students to apply, and yeah, it might be too much information on certain circumstances, cause it will read the screen reader will read all those citations, too. So you want to, if it's in a footnote, the screen reader can probably turn it off.

So again. Sorry not to have a definitive answer on that, but I hope that helps. Okay. Alright. I do want to give you some work time, cause I promised it, didn't I? I'm just going to just kind of do a quick promotion of something that not everybody likes. But I'm going to promote. It is building content within canvas, when you can, when it's appropriate. Before COVID, I was like the handout Queen. You know I did a lot of, you know, in class exercises, and I had a lot of handouts that people could doodle and work on them. and when COVID hit I'm like, Oh, my gosh! What am I going to do? I'll just put all the files up, and students can look at the word files and tinker with them like they did in class. That caused so much work.

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I had to upload files to canvas. I had to make sure if there was a broken link. I, you know, fixed it. Sometimes students can see it sometimes they couldn't, and students don’t like clicking around. They really don't. So what I started doing was building activities and instructions in canvas as much as possible. If we had a group work activity, I needed a group discussion post.

And so the instruction would be there, and they would do the work in there in class. So, it's a lot easier on some in some regards to do that. I know you can't do it for everything, but when you can, like a syllabus, for example. I don't like, how canvas sets up the syllabus itself? But you can have a syllabus page and a lot of people do PDFs because they don't want students like manipulating the content or messing with formatting. Canvas will lock it down, you know. So if you have these front-facing pages that you don't want students to play around with. There's no reason not to do it in canvas for those same, unless you have reasons.

**Participant 1:** Yeah. I'd like to offer the - yeah. So for the reasons. It's not that you have to provide the PDF to your students, but for accreditation reasons, we are required to collect PDFs for faculty. So I guess I would just put in a plug for that faculty recognize that just having it on canvas, it's not going to be adequate for accreditation purposes. If you want to say more than that. But I would just hate for people to like, rebuild it in canvas, and then have us say we actually need you to give us a PDF for this and then be frustrated.

**Mary-Colleen:** Good reason, yeah, for sure.

**Participant 2**: You can download Canvas.

**Participant 3**: But for purposes of consistency it might be better.

**Participant 1**: So I guess what I could say is we have a template that they can use canvas. You're suggesting would be awesome if we had a canvas template.

**Participant 3**: Both, I would. Yeah. And I know that the Global Health Department does have a canvas template that they created off of a master template. Because I do get many that are downloads or print offs of canvas.

**Participant 1:** Oh. Katrina is the collector of the syllabi for the school, the harvester of the syllabi. So from an accreditation perspective it is okay to do a print to pdf of your canvas site as long as it is formatted in the same way that our template is for syllabi, which is, yeah, which has all the components. Exactly. But that actually brings us to another, another question which you can say, now is not the time for that.

But I actually, one, something that students brought up in my class, my canvas site. They found that there was dramatic differences even within specific programs of like, how canvas sites were organized and how they worked, and they expressed that that was frustrating, that they felt like they were, with each class sort of learning a new mental model that the professor had.

And do you have like, have you seen, so it's good to hear that global health it sounds like has a template. But do you know, are there other units on campus that have like canvas templates?

**Mary-Colleen:** There are some. I know, I mentioned chemical engineering. They're doing research on the recording issue. They're trying that. They're working with learning technologies, Dave Coffey there, to create a template canvas site for chemical engineering. And so they're working on that. It's a department conversation about, are we required to? Are we suggested? But your point is really good, and I'm glad you brought it up. It's not really about the 5 things, necessarily, but it's a huge issue, and I even have a presentation on this, as well. But the cognitive overload that students get, especially week one.

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They're taking 4, 4 or 5 classes. They have new professors, new manner. Some are friendly. Some are business-like, they're learning where they are, their name, all the stuff. When 4 different professors have vastly different canvas sites, or maybe no canvas and a website. And then they're adding, maybe some third-party tools. Students are spending so much time trying to figure out how to manage the class. It takes them a week or 2 before they start doing the work. And so a question we have to think about with universal design, and this is part of accessibility is how do we get students doing the learning more quickly, instead of negotiating all these different things that could have some students starting behind, you know, if there's a family crisis, if they're sick and miss the, my daughter missed the first week of class she was sick.

Then she had canceled some classes because of snow, you know. If students are managing life experiences which may or may not include disabilities on top of it, which includes being part of marginalized groups and not having a lot of resources. All kinds of things. All those different canvas sites add kind of cognitive overload, but they also add barriers. So it is. It is worthwhile to have the conversation.

We want our academic freedom, of course, and we want to be creative in our classes, you know, it's hard for us to say, Okay, I'm going to follow a template that I didn't create. But I think there's room for talking about it, because it can enhance all the accessibility across the board, if templates are built with accessibility in mind as well. So I know it's a tough conversation. But it is part of the process. So I am glad you asked cause I do worry about that with students.

And if it is different, then, can we spend time, those first couple of days front loading a little bit of hand holding, training them how to be students in our class in the first couple of days, can help mitigate some of those problems. So there are ways to do it without a template. But I think it's agreed upon conversation, training them to be students in the class with the stuff we're getting them to do. So thank you for asking that, I do.

Okay, we are. Okay. I'm just going to just promote the idea when you can, when it's appropriate and applicable. And when your boss says it's okay, create some stuff in canvas.

One thing I have found is, it saves me so much time with updating and editing, because every time I was pulling links or pulling files, you can change it in one canvas page. It's not going to run. The edit's not going to run from page to page, and the more complicated I made my stuff with files and things from the folders, the less, the more unorganized, I looked. Because students would be like, but you send it on this page. And it's not on the next page. Because I had forgotten or I missed it in the, I missed the forest for the trees, basically. So I think it can really help in certain circumstances. Okay. So we're running low on time. I'm going to kinda end the demo at this point.

I do want to promote canvas alternative formats really quickly. This can help with some of the questions that were brought up earlier. I don't know how many of you are familiar with canvas alternative formats. But it is this beautiful little logo up here. Little icon top of the screen looks like a fat A with the fat download icon next to it. I, once I realized this was here, and it was in COVID when students were telling me I'm getting headaches from being online, I’m getting blurry vision. I'm exhausted.

I was like, What's this thing? And I clicked on it. It's amazing. This allows students to download your canvas pages and some file, a lot of files are downloadable. I won't promise every one of them. But it allows students to download them and access them in different ways. So there's Epub you can read it on ebook, ipad, or other Ebook technology.

There's electronic braille. You can download. Students can download it to their electronic braille reader. Audio, I was saying, people might listen to your page on the way home from work. They can download an MP3 version and listen to it on the bus, or you know, if they're tired of reading their eyes hurt, they can listen to it, BeeLine reader can help students with disabilities, learning disabilities like dyslexia, it can help English language learners with vocabulary and grammar. So it's an enhanced version of your page. Immersive reader, all Microsoft products have that now. You can click on it. Linkedin has it to. You can click on the icon, and it will read the text to you.

Tell your students this exists, so many of them don't know. I mean students with disabilities probably know, you know, if they have learning disabilities. But my daughter uses it all the time. She doesn't have a learning disability. She doesn't have visual disabilities, but she's an anthropology major and has tons of textbooks to read, so she'll listen and follow along on the screen as it goes. It helps her absorb.

So it's a really great way to show your students how to access it, and you can practice it. You can say, I wonder what my page sounds like. Download it and it will read it to you. Question?

**Participant:** Yeah, comment. Thank you. So I just went there on my page, and there's also a files found, so that it says, link to course syllabus. And I could download my course syllabus in any of those formats as well. So that's cool.

**Mary-Colleen:** Yeah, it's not easy to download. You can't download canvas in mass, like your whole thing, your whole canvas course. But this is if you want to download it, and you can do it page by page or section by section. Okay, we are running out. We're not going to have a lot of work time, I'm afraid, but I hope you don't mind, because I know you’re learning a lot. But I'm going to go back to my page really quickly my screen, or my slides, just to kind of get to a close point. So maybe we can have a few minutes of QA. At least. Let's see if I can do this properly.

[End Transcript]