Creating Accessible Presentations: Getting Started Video Transcript

March 16, 2023

# Presentation

This is the first webinar in a four-part series about Creating Accessible Presentations. Today we're just going to talk about getting started. My name is Megan Sellmer. I am the Web and Usability Assistant at the National Network for Equitable Library Service or NNELS and I am a part of the Public Library Accessibility Resource Center or PLARC project which is Accessible Libraries the website. Joining me today are two amazing, awesome testers at NNELS, Melody Shih and Tobe Duggan and they will be providing demonstrations later on in the presentation.

I have a couple quick housekeeping rules, not rules, but it's great housekeeping, notes before we get started. So this is being recorded and live-streamed to YouTube. We have enabled the built-in Zoom captions if you would like to use them. We will have a short question period at the end of the presentation so if you could hold your questions until then, if you, I mean it would just be easier for us. And also try and limit using the chat to just questions, just because excessive chat notifications can be really disruptive to screen reader users. And we are going to stop the recordings before the question period. So there we go!

So I'm going to start today with a land acknowledgment. "Our presenters today come from across this land, living and working in what we now know as Canada. We respect and affirm the inherent and Treaty Rights of all Indigenous Peoples and will continue to honour the commitments to self-determination and sovereignty we have made to Indigenous Nations and Peoples. We respectfully ask for you all to take a moment to acknowledge the lands on which you reside."

Thank you very much. Okay, let's get started.

So first off this webinar series is going to focus on three main presentation programs – Microsoft PowerPoint, Apple Keynote, and Google Slides. There's, I know there's a lot of different options out there like Prezi and Canva. We just don't, we just won't have time to cover everything, However, the guidelines that we talk about in our presentations will be applicable to those other options. For those other options, some of them can be quite inaccessible to screen readers, so we recommend that you have like an HTML format or an accessible format of those presentations for anyone when you're working on them.

Okay, so to begin like accessibility you want to start with a good foundation. So with this is like selecting an accessible theme or template. In PowerPoint you can search for accessible templates, like a "Universal Presentation" and "Geometric Presentation" are both accessible templates. I will note quickly that those have just been tagged with the word accessible, so when you search for them they are most likely accessible but they haven't been like reviewed. But they're a good starting point. Unfortunately, you can't search for accessible templates or themes in Keynote and Google Slides, so following the recommendations in this webinar and the following webinars is will be very helpful for there to create accessible presentations.

If you want to work in a, like if your preferred format is Keynote or if it's Google Slides and you but you want that accessible presentation template, you can export PowerPoint templates to those other programs. So we have the directions on here. So to open a PowerPoint template in Keynote, you just go "File" > open file name and then Keynote will open a PowerPoint presentation. To open, and then same with Google Slides, and then the reverse is true. So if you want to open, if you want a Google Slide into a PowerPoint you can do that as well.

We have our presentation theme, we've selected an accessible one, so now let's talk about layouts. So the first thing is that all slides should have a unique title and heading. So this is really important for a couple of reasons. One, screen readers use the titles to navigate through the slides and titles visually organize the information. We also say that they should be unique this is particularly important for like navigation by screen readers. Like if you have, for example, "Library Collection" as the title of three slides, that's can be really confusing to go through right. So yeah, so it starts with having a good unique title and heading for each slide.

Then we also suggest you use the pre-formatted slide layouts provided by PowerPoint, Keynote and Google Slides. This is great because first the title will be correctly marked up if you use the pre-formatted slides with the title option. Also this, using the pre-formatted layouts mean that the slides will change screen size quite well. So like if you're watching/opening it in iPad versus a huge desktop computer they will adjust quite well.

For the slides, we suggest you limit the amount of text on each one, which can be visually distracting. And we don’t, for the last point, we're going to talk about it a little bit more next week, but we you need to ensure that each slide, the reading order is correct. So for this example, so when a reading order is incorrect a screen reader will come to a slide and it can read like the page number or the slide number first and then the text and then the title right. So that means that the reading order is not correctly formatted. We're going to talk about how to check that and fix that next week.

All right, next up colour contrast. So if you've got the layout down, now when you're picking your font colours and your background colours and your design. You want to consider colour contrast. There should be a high colour contrast in both the design and the presentation of the font. So the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines or WCAG state that the colour contrast ratio should be at least 4.5 to 1. So the higher the contrast the brighter, the better it is. The colour contrast ratio is a measurement. It's calculated between, you compare the brightness or luminescence between two colours. So on this slide it would be like the black of the fonts versus the white of the screen and then you would compare those two colors and that's how you get the ratio.

I'm going into the math because quite frankly there's a reason why I didn't get, I'm not a math teacher, so but that's just how it's figured out. So for example, like I just said the black text on a white background is accessible it actually has the highest colour contrast ratio available at 21:1. But light gray text on a white background, depending on the gray that you've selected, it can have anywhere from like 1.3 to like 3 (to one).

It's not, it's not very readable at all. So to determine what contrast ratio your slides have you can, there's a bunch of checkers, like "Contrast Checker," out there. So we've listed one URL ContrastChecker.com. WebAIM has a really good one. Yeah, there's a bunch out there to use.

These you need the hex codes of the presentation of the of the colours and so I can just quickly talk about how you do that. Get my notes, excuse me. So in PowerPoint to check say, like I'm just going to go through it with the font, but it's similar for all the different colours. I would select the fonts and then go up to the toolbar and then in PowerPoint you select more colours and then if you're on a PC a pop-up comes up and the there's two tabs. If you select custom that will give you the hex colour of the font it's a little bit lower on the in the pop-up. If you select, if you're an on a Mac in PowerPoint a pop-up will come up, and you have to select the colour slider option and then from the drop-down menu you have to select the "RGB slider" and that will give you the hex code at the bottom of the pop-up there.

In Google Slides, it's a little bit easier one less step. So just select the text, go to the text colour icon on the toolbar and then click on the custom option and that will bring up a hex, the hex, the current hex code colour of the font.

And then in Keynotes it's kind of similar to how you check for the hex code in PowerPoint on Mac You just, you click on the colour wheel from the right toolbar and you like for fonts and then you select um the color slider option and then choose the "RGB slider" from the drop-down menu and the hex code will be at the bottom. These instructions will be available in the checklist, Creating Accessible Presentations Checklist when it is up on Accessible Libraries.

To continue with colour really quickly, never use colour alone to convey the meaning of text, like of something in your text. So one option to fix this is also adding symbols. So for example, the number of books purchased in March 2022 is in purple and enclosed in asterisks. Now this is important because um colour may not be easily seen by those with low vision and those who experience colorblindness and screen readers and braille displays do not automatically announce a colour change. So you might indicate something's important, but people that won't show up to people who use some assistive technologies.

Right so I'm rushing through this, we've got a lot of information. So we've decided on the colour of the font let's format it. So the big thing is use a really large font, as large that, as you can. So we use, we recommend 20-points or larger. And this also helps with the information on the screen, like if you're using a large font, you're not going to be able to have too much information on the screen. We suggest you use a sans-serif font, like Arial or Verdana. These are just a lot easier to read. They're less, they're less visually confusing when the serif isn't there. Ensure there's a lot of line spacing and a lot of white space. Limit or avoid the use of all caps, which can be really difficult to read. And then for the slides we suggest aligning all the text to the left when possible, especially for large chunks. The other alignments just aren't as accessible. For like a lot of information, if you want to center your title that that will be fine, but yeah we suggest just defaulting to always aligning to the left.

Okay so we had the opportunity, this is awesome, we had our expert accessibility testers with lived experience of a disability share their thoughts on different font attributes in presentations. Sorry... We do note that these are just their experiences and opinions we do, and they do not speak for all people with disabilities, but there are commonalities between their recommendations and on how to make a great presentation. And we thought it would be really helpful. So much like the last screen, their preferences are to always use a sans serif font. The text should be as large as possible whenever/ always. Use a regular or a bolded font when applicable. Tobe is going to talk a little bit about that later. And use white text or black... use a white text on a black background or vice versa.

All right so we've got the layout, we've got the font, now let's talk about writing the content very quickly. So just keep it simple. Use plain and simple language in your presentation. Avoid jargon. Always spell out acronyms when you use them. So for example, I talked in, when I was talking about the contrast ratio I was also talking about the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and then I said WCAG right. So just always do that first. Use inclusive language, so I use everyone instead of "hey guys" and then determine the language preference of your audience. So for example, when talking about disabilities, we and Accessibility Libraries use this person-first language, which emphasizes the person. So this would be like "a person with a disability" instead of identity-first language, which, for example, would be a "dyslexic person." Everyone's preferences differ, like, everyone. Yeah, so asking them is really important of what they prefer because like everyone's different in their preferences. It actually really interesting.

Okay so with that simple and clear information that you have crafted, we suggest you use lists to organize it. Lists are very very helpful in slides, they break in the information into chunks of consumable content, which screen readers can really easily navigate through. However, please never never manually create your lists. Always use the direct formatting option in the toolbar. Manually created lists are just a little bit, just chaos. So they're, they're really difficult to navigate through, they're really, they can be confusing, and then you have to add extra formatting it's just... Direct formatting your lists is the way to go there for accessibility.

Okay, so defining the languages of the text like this is, um if you're doing something in two languages or if you have something like a like a quote that maybe in French, for example, we suggest you define the language of that quote, in this case. So text marked up by different languages will be recognized by screen readers and pronounced correctly.

So you don't need to, I will note you don't need to define the language of like singular words or like short words. For example, in the sentence "she had déjà vu" you wouldn't need to mark-up French for “déjà vu," but if it's a sentence or more we suggest you mark it up. It would just help the screen reader trying to pronounce French as English if it's not marked up is just, yeah, it just doesn't work.

So yeah so you can mark up your language in PowerPoint and Google Slides of just select text quite easily. So in PowerPoint, you just highlight the text you go under "File" > "Tools" > "Language" and then choose the language of that chunk of text that you've highlighted.

In Google Slides, you highlight the text and select "File" > "Language" and choose the language of the text.

In Keynote you can't just mark up the language of a specific chunk of text. You can change the language of the full presentation. So if you're presenting in a different language, French for example, but maybe it's set to English, you can change the language of the presentation by going "File" > "Advanced Language Region" and then choosing that language.

Okay, so last slide before the lovely amazing demonstrations. So accessible hyperlinks. This one's a little trickier in presentations, like first to be accessible the hyperlinks need to be informative for users with assistive technologies who navigate using links. So for example, "click here" is not informative. If you navigate with/by links you're not, you're just going to hear a bunch of "click here's" and no, like none of the context, so those aren't helpful. Now for presentations you need to use or you generally use the URL because it's for an audience and like an informative link text doesn't really work when you're presenting. So in that case, we suggest you use like the shortest URL possible and use a camel case format, which is not going to affect the URL. So like for example, on the slide is AccessibleLibraries.ca that's the, that full, writing that into the your browser will get you to the website and the A and the L are capitalized so it's easier to read on the screen. For digital handouts of your presentation, that's when you need to switch over to using informative text. So for example, visit the Accessible Libraries website If you're navigating by link, and you hear the link "Accessible Libraries website" you know exactly where that's going to take you and that just makes it easier to move through.

Okay so we are getting, we are now at our first demonstration by Tobe. He's going to present how, from the perspective of a person with low vision, how inaccessible presentations can be. Tobe, I'll stop sharing my screen and you can take it away.

# Demonstrations

[Tobe] Hello, thank you for joining me here. I'm um, oh it says you cannot start screen sharing while other participant is sharing.

[Megan] Oh, I'm not sharing anymore maybe try again?Okay, it works now.

[Tobe] Oh uh yeah are you seeing my uh I'm sharing my screen now. All right so thanks for joining me today. I want to move through this fairly quickly. So I come to this with it with a vested interest for a couple of reasons. I have lifelong experience with a visual impairment. In my case it's high myopia, which is basically being very very nearsighted. I have to hold things close in order to see them. So for a bit of context, we're all familiar with 20/20 vision, considered normal, normal vision, which if a room full of people who have 20/20 Vision everyone can see an object that's 20 feet away with about the same sharpness and clarity. So from, in my case, you can see an object that's 20 feet away looks like it's 140 feet away. Or stated otherwise, in order to see an object that's 140 feet away I have to get up to about 20 feet from it, which.

The reason I'm giving all this information is that it provides a deal a bit more context in terms of what it means to be at a presentation where the slides aren't aren't accessible. And I have to say the information I'm giving here is really I'm thinking about being in a live presentation, not so much online but I'll talk about that a bit. So like many of you here as well I've presented, though you'd never guessed it by my presentation here today, but presented and I've also spent some time in as an audience member in presentations where I wasn't able to see the slides. And but I also have an understanding of how challenging it is to create slides that are fully accessible and I, you know, as a starting point, even this slide design that we have here which has been put together with the W3C guidelines in mind, you know, for me I prefer it like this, which is just everything's just a little bit bigger, and I use a slightly different font. In this first version, it is not by any means a deal maker, deal breaker for me especially online, but I know that in a room I'd really want to be sitting close or ideally, have it a little bit larger. And just thinking about what Megan was saying over there I just say that the slides that follow play very fast and loose as far as accessibility goes. It's really, I would it would be an insult for my colleagues who rely on screen readers to go through the files that are to follow, the slides that are to follow. So I'd like to take a couple looks at slides, some examples I was given, of slides that could use a makeover.

In this case, the colour contrast is the main the main issue. I don't find the title bad, the heading, but that "01" behind it is really problematic. I don't know if it's like I'm magnifying my screen right now I kind of have to like zoom in pretty far to see this. If I was in a room looking at this, it would be extremely difficult. It's also this font. This is an example of a, you know, well it's kind of retro-cool, this American typewriter font. It's also what I would say old school inaccessible. So not being a designer, I just stripped down the content a little bit and just bolded everything and it made larger. It might not maintain the integrity of the creator, original creator but it's certainly easier to read. However, I'll say that with this larger font and bolder font it can handle, to my eye anyway, the background colour. And in some ways, it's almost it's, I find it preferable, you know, because that sometimes those white, a white slide, particularly if you're in a big room and something's being projected can be pretty supersonic on your eyes. It can be pretty pretty intense for anyone.

Here's another example, of a slide where there's a few issues here. Again we have a, we have but mainly being as the title says, too much information. There's an unfortunate font size, but for me, it's the table on the right side. I have never met a table that I've liked in a presentation, I'd have to say that tables graphics are can be really problematic. In this case even, I've now made it into a full slide, even this quite frankly even on my computer screen, it's difficult to see. Now I, here's the same slide, I've added a bit of, you know, tightened up the graphics, made it a little, significantly more contrast.

In a presentation, I might be able to see it, but I my preference would be to have it as an electronic file and this is like a key for me key to it being, you know, having a most inclusive and effective way to make a presentation accessible is to make sure that everyone can get the files in advance, which is a challenge. I was doing this to the last minute before meeting you people. But I ideally, I want to have it in my hand and I want to have it on a device where I can look at it close and it's really the only way that I can participate. So just a couple of final thoughts, to reiterate some of what Megan said just slides that are as lean with as clean a layout as possible, in a sans serif font, size large, if you as much as you can with good contrast. You know, I would suggest that even if you're presenting online, design presentations that are intended for an in-person audience. I think it keeps people's content cleaner. I know for myself it seems that it, I have a bad habit of putting too much info in a slide when I think it's going to be just viewed online. And also, preview your slides in advance on a big screen, it's also very informative. And yes again electronic handouts in advance if at all possible, please and thank you. That's all I had to share.

[Megan] Awesome, thank you so much Tobe. Melody is now going to demonstrate how screen readers navigate through inaccessible and accessible presentations. Melody if you want to share your screen?

[Melody] All right! So I'm gonna share the sound as well, just so you have an idea of what is actually going on and what I'm hearing.

[Screen reader speaks rapidly in the background]

[Melody] Is everyone able to hear and see my screen?

[Tobe] Yeah.

[Melody] Alright, cool. I'm also going to turn it down so that people can actually understand what's going on.

[Screen reader] PowerPoint Slideshow.

[Melody] I am, now can see the slideshow. So first of all a little bit about myself, my name is Melody and you know I'm one of the testers at NNELS, and my vision is not measurable. I can see like, I have light perception, I can see you know like if I'm just about to walk into a tree or a poll I can't tell the difference which one is which but yeah I kind of have an idea something is right in front of my space. But you know for how fast I walk sometimes, it's usually too late by the time I see it. And so it's pretty funny when just before Tobe started sharing about his stuff that Megan mentioned that we are here to see how inaccessible presentations can be. But like what I'm about to show you is definitely not at all close to the worst presentations I've seen. So I'm gonna start here.

[Screen reader] An example of what not to do.

[Melody] So this is the title of the slides. I don't actually have a way to tell that it is actually meant to be the title, except for the context.

[Screen reader] March 16th 2023.

[Melody] I see the dates here.

[Screen reader] picture placeholder, a picture containing wooden binding.

[Melody] Oh, well so this is a little too good for an inaccessible presentation as the picture is label with alt text.

[Screen reader] blank, description automatically generated. An inaccessible presentation.

[Melody] And yeah, it shows that it is an inaccessible presentation. I'm sure there are some other things that you could do better, but if this is what I got from a very like General audience I honestly wouldn't even bother complaining.

[Screen reader] An inaccessible presentation, slideshow slide two, agenda, zero one, agenda, zero one, colour contrast, zero two, too much information, zero three, formatting and readability three...

[Melody] Okay

[Screen reader] slash sixteen slash two thousand twenty three.

[Melody] So I can see that the content is actually readable. The date is kind of mislocated, I don't know where it actually is on the screen.

[Screen reader] 2.

[Melody] and there's a "two," which my guess is that it's meant to be the slide number, but it's again the reading order is incorrect, but at least I can still kind of read everything so there we go.

[Screen reader] Zero one colour, colour contrast.

[Melody] So there is colour contrast...

[Screen reader] colour contrast is extremely poor, it has a contrast ratio of 2.79:1 it should be 4.5:1 to pass WCAG standards.

[Melody] Okay, so my screen reader with this read this whole thing as a very long one line. But in a presentation, it's like not even just for accessibility, I'd say it's just best practice to you know chop things up into a tiny little bullet points just for, just so you're whoever you're presenting to, are not gonna be too busy looking at the screen and miss what you're actually trying to say.

[Screen reader] For more information about WCAG colour contrast, https slash slash www.w3.org slash way slash a g 21 slash...

[Melody] This is a very lengthy link.

[Melody] Again it's not actually labelled as a link and like Megan just mentioned, if I were to receive this, I will like the link to be actually labelled or at least be shortened and on its own line.

[Screen reader] three slash sixteen slash 2023, picture placeholder, eyeglass picture.

[Melody] The dates and the numbers here in a weird place again. But again the pictures are labelled, and that is... I'd say like you're in the kind of 80% of the way there already.

[Screen reader] three slash sixteen slash 2023, four zero two, too much information, zero two four.

[Melody] Again this is a very inconsistent order of where things are.

[Screen reader] zero two two months in a 2021, oh stroke, the service is selected were, oh stroke.

[Melody] That is a strange character for, like I can tell that it's trying to be a list but failing. Again, like formats are there for a reason don't even try to create your, don't even try to make your own thing. Like templates are there for good reasons, you know, don't, you don't need to be creative. Be creative on like the content not the design of the your presentations. Like a lot of these overlap with, you're are designing a website or anything else any apps like anything that you're trying to present to like your audience.

[Screen reader] Oh stroke, reference services and readers advisory, oh stroke, borrow, oh stroke, borrowing digital materials.

[Melody] And so like I say these are like a good amount of content on the page. My only complaint here would be it's a sad list.

[Screen reader] picture abstract, blurred Public Library with bookshelf, zero three formatting and readability, zero three picture abst, picture abst.

[Melody] This is a picture. I'm sure it looks right somehow but the first thing I see is a picture...

[Screen reader] zero three

[Melody] ... which is labelled and not sure what "zero three" is supposed to mean.

[Screen reader] Formatting and readability.

[Melody] And here's the title.

[Screen reader] formatting and readability, formatting and readability.

[Melody] And that's all I see.

[Screen reader] formatting, zero four.

[Melody] Though I'm not sure what else is on the screen but I'm sure I'm missing something.

[Screen reader] 3 slash 16, 3 slash 16 2023 the inaccessible features of this presentation include.

[Melody] All right so here is a list of all the inaccessible present features in this presentation. You can probably see it here. So I'd say like the best way to look at it is to treat your audience like kids. As in, this is a strange analogy, I think but

make your presentations like you're making a like little picture of book. You might only want like one sentence or a tiny little list on your page, plus a very clear picture. So your audience can actually focus on one thing and one thing only and like it's easier for the presenter to like as like a very general like reminder to focus on, you know, the one thing you're talking about and not having to look back on the screen all the time for what is the next tiny little bit of this one slide. But yeah like I'm gonna talk a little bit about how a presentation could be worse so...

[Screen reader] Riane, Accessible.

[Melody] ...so my worst experience with PowerPoint slides are at universities. A lot of professors don't really put a lot of effort into making their presentations accessible. I'm not even gonna talk about how like I don't get it before class, and so I usually don't know what they're talking about. But to modify their slides a lot of times it would just stick a new image on to an existing presentation and call it a day. And like there's, there end up being like layers and layers of just images that are not labelled and I have no idea what is important and what is visible So I excused me for the background, I'm actually at my school right now so sorry. But uh a lot of times like I don't even have a place to start looking. So that is basically all I have today

if you want to hear more of my complaints come talk to me and yeah, thank you very much.

[Megan] Thank you so much, Melody. I promise next time I'm going to try and make those slides as inaccessible as possible. So thank you so much.

[Melody] Did my thing stop?

[Megan] Yeah. I'll just quickly share the final...

Okay so thank you so much everybody for attending this webinar. We crammed a lot of information in the last 40 minutes. The next webinar, we're talking about presentation features and tools and in that webinar we'll talk a little bit more we'll talk more about tables and reading order and um handouts, accessible digital handouts of your presentation. So, I think it's going to be a good one. So we hope you have a chance to join us!