Social Media Platform Webinar Transcript

November 29, 2023

# Introduction and Housekeeping

[Megan] Thank you, everybody, for attending our Social Media Platform webinar today. I'm just going to go over a few quick housekeeping while we get started.

* So, to minimize distractions, we ask you to please keep your microphone muted for the duration of the webinar unless it's your turn to speak.
* If you are speaking, try to keep the background noise to a minimum if you can. We understand if you can't.
* Please use the chat for questions and other important messages, rather than a water cooler.
  + Excessive chat notifications can become quite disruptive for many participants, especially those using screen readers.
* We, please note that we will be using the built-in Zoom captions, which have been enabled if you would like to use them.
* We are recording the webinar, but we will stop the recording prior to the question period at the end.
  + And the recording will be posted on the accessible libraries website when it is ready, and the captions are added to it.

Yeah, I think that's it for the housekeeping let's kind of get started. So today our presenters are Simon Jaeger, an Accessibility Analyst at the National Network for Equitable Library Service, Tate Hoyem, an accessibility tester at NNELS, Riane LaPaire is the Braille and Testing Coordinator at NNELS and part of the Public Library Accessibility Resource Center, also known as PLARC project. And I'm Megan Sellmer the Web and Usability Assistant at NNELS and part of the PLARC project team as well.

# Land Acknowledgment

So, I'm just going to begin with a land acknowledgement:

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.

Okay, thank you so much, everybody.

# Social Media Platform Webinar

Let's get started with our webinar today. So, our presentation discussed the accessibility advantages and barriers in different social media platforms users encounter when navigating with assisted technologies.

And when we say assisted technologies, that refers to the products, equipment, and systems that enhance reading, learning, working, and daily living for persons with disabilities.

So screen magnification and enhancement software, screen readers, refreshable braille displays or note-takers are all examples of assistive technology. The social media platforms included in the presentation were determined by popularity at the time of testing but are by no means comprehensive, but we do cover quite a few.

## Facebook

So first up let's just dive in, and we will talk about Facebook and begin with the advantages of Facebook.

### Facebook Advantages

Simon?

[Simon] Okay, so Facebook and actually Meta as a whole has a dedicated accessibility team that works on the accessibility of all of their products. They can be reached pretty easily, they're fairly transparent about what they're doing, and they do pretty good work on the mobile applications, in particular. There is a basic mobile site, MBasic.Facebook.com, which works in basically any browser, even old flip phones and Internet Explorer and things like that. And is quite accessible so people can access Facebook that way. There are mobile applications which are accessible to screen readers, VoiceOver and TalkBack. And when posting photos on Facebook, you can include alt text, which is a photo description that tells a screen reader user what the photo is. You can also have automatically generated alt text that will identify people and objects and text in the images. Tait.

[Megan] Tait, you're muted

[Tait] Hello, can you hear me?

[Megan] Yes.

[Simon] Yeah.

[Tait] Oh, fantastic. All right.

[Megan] We are just on the Facebook advantages.

[Tait] Yes, I see that, sorry about that.

[Megan] Technology, gets us every time.

[Tait] I know, I know. Well, what I saw with Facebook is that it had fairly decent Zoom accessibility to about 200% roughly, which is the standard for like web Zoom, like using your browser to zoom up, hitting control and plus. I found that it was pretty reasonable up until that. Above that there were some issues, but overall it was decent and had okay contrast.

### Facebook Barriers

[Megan] Awesome, next up Facebook barriers.

[Simon] Okay, so some of the issues with Facebook as a platform, the desktop website is slow and pretty cluttered when navigating it with a screen reader. It can be unresponsive and it can be frustrating to actually find the content you need because there's just so much. there. The basic mobile site, on the other hand is accessible, but it's limited in functionality. There's a lot of things that don't work as they should. Some things are just not there at all, you can't access certain functionality and there's a lot of clicking around and page reloading because of how basic it is. The iOS app has slightly verbose accessibility labels so, the way Voice Over reads some of the content in the app is unnecessarily verbose and we'll see an example of that in a moment. The Android app doesn't have rotor actions yet. This is not in the slides, but the Android app has action buttons next to posts, and this tends to clutter up the interface. This will also make more sense in an upcoming demo. The mobile app sometimes has some accessibility regressions, so they'll update it with some new design, and then they won't run it by the accessibility team and suddenly we can't use this feature anymore, and that's unfortunate. It speaks to a lack of communication sometimes or a quick rollout of some new design. Tait.

[Tait] All right, so one thing I noticed with Facebook is that above Zoom levels of about 200%, which is not uncommon if you are legally blind, there were a lot of issues with sort of title bars and headers and footers all taking, you know, more than 30% or even 40% of the page. In particular, I found that if you tried to make a Facebook post and we're using Zoom around the 200- 300% range only 30% of the page was actually for your post itself and the rest was title bars and buttons and things that were overlaying your post and not very much actual posting could really happen there.

### Facebook Demonstration

[Megan] Okay, we will now look at a Facebook screen reader demo.

[Simon] This is the Facebook app on an iPhone 13. I'm using the VoiceOver screen reader, which is built into every Apple device now and which will read out what's on the screen. But it does quite a lot more than that. It also allows you to interact with the device using special gestures and it allows you to tap something on the screen to find out what it is, which is probably the simplest gesture of them all. So rather than activating something when you touch it, you can have VoiceOver read out what that item is, thus allowing a totally blind user to explore the screen easily. So if I, in the Facebook app, touch the bottom left corner [Screen reader] selected, phone, tab one of six.

[Simon] It will tell me the tab name, it will tell me that it's selected, because it was the tab that I initiated the search from, and it'll tell me that there are six tabs. Then if we want to continue through the app from that point in reading order, that is to say, left to right, top to bottom, we can swipe right to go forward or left to go backwards, back through the app.

[Screen reader] video, tab, two of six, Market Place, Tab 3 of six, Dating, tab four of six...

[Simon] And so on. This also automatically scrolls any scrolling view, so if I'm on a post.

[Screen reader] AccessibleLibraries.ca BibliosAccessibles.ca, September 6th public more options. We have a handy hashtag checklist you can print out or refer to digitally when creating your hashtag social media posts to ensure they're accessible most people have shared with us that they struggle with writing good alt text.

[Simon] so you may have noticed that it said a few things that it shouldn't have needed to say such as "more options." That's actually not something that's visible as a control on the screen, it's just something that VoiceOver reads because it's part of the label that Facebook has created. It's a bug that's existed for years, but it's such a minor one that nobody has fixed it. If we swipe right,

[Screen reader] AccessibleLibraries.ca / BibliosAccessibles.ca, AccessibleLibraries.ca AccessibleLibraries.ca, AccessibleLibraries.ca...

[Simon] it will automatically scroll to the next post as it goes. So this is how a blind person, a VoiceOver user would scroll through Facebook. They just swipe right and keep on reading. Now we get to what's called rotor actions. These are quick actions you can take on an item, such as a Facebook post or a message in the mail app or any item anywhere that has been given special actions in accessibility land. So, for a mail message, it might be delete, archive, add star, something like that. On a Facebook post, well let's swipe down with one finger and find out for ourselves.

[Screen reader] Like, react, comment share, more options, activate, default.

[Simon] So each time I'm swiping down... I stand corrected there is a "more options" option. Each time I'm swiping down it's going to a different option now, normally if I go to any control on this screen and then I double-tap once the VoiceOver cursor has reached it. I will activate that item. If I first swipe down more than once to find an accessibility action that I want, let's say like. I can then double-tap it we're not going to do that right this second, but we could, and instead of activating it and opening up the post that will like the post. So these are really quick shortcuts that a VoiceOver user can use to accomplish something quickly. The only trouble is that the app developer has to implement them, and we'll see a really great example of what it's like when a developer doesn't implement them later on in this presentation.

[Megan] So that covers Facebook.

## Instagram

[Megan] Next up is Instagram.

### Instagram Advantages

[Simon] So some advantages of Instagram, just like Facebook, it's part of Meta, so it has the dedicated accessibility team that you can reach and that work on the app to make sure that it's accessible, in theory. The mobile applications are very screen reader accessible on iOS, they have rotor actions just like you just saw on Facebook. Unfortunately, they don't on Android yet either. Just like Facebook, alt text can be written for photos, and it can also be automatically generated for photos that don't have alt text. Tait.

[Tait] I had a very good experience with the good parts of Instagram. And the good parts are, it has fantastic contrast. It is almost perfect black on almost perfect white, for every button, every label, every piece of text. That part was fantastic.

### Instagram Barriers

[Megan] Next up the barriers.

[Simon] So the major barrier that I know of and found in Instagram is that there are some bugs when adding stories to Instagram or editing them. And sometimes you won't be able to edit the text properly. There have been some unlabelled controls in the past but they're slowly fixing those, so it is improving. So sometimes new features and redesigns are just not tested properly before they're introduced, so you get accessibility regressions and, of course, Instagram in general is pretty photo heavy and there aren't a lot of people who put alt text on their photos, so that can be a barrier of its own, but it's not really Instagram's fault. Tait.

[Tait] Thanks, Simon. One of the cons that I found with Instagram was that above about 150-160% Zoom, we actually had a problem where posts would stop playing, if it was a video post, posts would stop playing right in the middle as soon as you zoomed up. Like again, about 150% Zoom it would just stop. The post would disappear from the page completely and you'd be left with an incomprehensible mess of title bars overlapping each other. As soon as you zoomed back down, so, you know, 140 or 100% Zoom, the post would continue playing. This violates a lot of WCAG requirements, and so that's my main issue with Instagram.

## Threads

[Megan] Thank you. So next up we're going to talk about Threads. And for the less popular or the newer platforms we're talking about today I'm going to do a brief introduction. So threads is an app, where you can join and post in public conversations. The post can be up to 500 characters and includes text, hyperlinks, images, just a lot of different multimedia. And it's developed by the team of Instagram and is under the Meta umbrella. So you can use your Instagram login to access Threads.

### Threads Advantages

[Megan] All right, so here are the advantages of Threads.

[Simon] So Threads, just like the other Meta products, supports alt text - automatically generated and written by the users. The button labels in the mobile apps are quite good, every button is identified and you can tell what it is when you're using VoiceOver on iOS or Talkback on Android. And from what I've been able to tell, this thing goes for the website, which just recently rolled out previously, it was a mobile-only interface. And not directly an accessibility advantage, but it will eventually, communicate with the same social media protocol that Mastodon uses, which means that Mastodon users and Threads users will be able to interact, and there are, as we'll see, quite a number of accessible options for accessing Mastodon, so that's kind of a benefit in its own. And back to Tait.

[Tait] Thanks Simon. Threads, just like Instagram, has fantastic contrast, but that's about the only positive thing about it. When comes to browser Zoom.

### Threads Barriers

[Simon] So, unfortunately... sorry.

[Megan] No, I was just going to say...

[Simon] barriers.

[Megan] Yeah.

[Simon] The interface for screen reader users is very cluttered. I mean the demo is going to illustrate this better than I could explain it live, but there are just so many controls per post and no rotor actions to speak of that actually navigating the interface and scrolling posts is really difficult. Also, the Threads interface, the Thread service requires an Instagram account and as previously said Instagram tends to be pretty picture-heavy, so not all blind people are there. So there may be some barrier to entry because you first have to create an Instagram account and then join Threads. Tait.

[Tait] Well, for the downsides here Threads has a problem, again this is a fairly common problem, with browser Zoom. You end up with title bars and headers and footers that go over top of the rest of the web page in particular, even at 200% Zoom, which is well within reason. Over half of the screen is covered by a header bar, a search bar

with some buttons, and a footer as well. There's a "For you" button that just floats above the footer for some reason, and it clutters up even more of the screen, like I said, taking up over half of the screen for non-content and just the menus.

### Threads Demonstration

[Megan] Well and now we get to our demonstration.

#### Screen Reader Demo

[Megan] So here's a screen reader demo of Threads.

[Simon] The Threads app is Meta's answer to things like Mastodon and Twitter, or if you prefer X. It's a simple interface that allows you to post text, photos, or videos about equally. It's turning out to be quite photo-heavy if you believe the random "For you" tab, without really following anyone. And it has some pretty major accessibility issues on the screen reader front. I talked earlier about rotor actions and how they could allow you to quickly perform actions on a particular it item, like quickly liking a post without having to find and activate a "like" button and things like that. What we have here is the complete opposite. There are no rotor actions whatsoever. Instead, each single control that is part of a post is a separate item that VoiceOver can flick to and read. So in order to scroll through posts you have to do quite a lot of swiping around the screen and reading of little bits of information. You kind of get drip-fed the posts, one piece of information at a time. So I'm going to, right about here.

[Screen reader] photo by quoteoftea.

[Simon] I specifically wanted to touch the username of course, it reads it incorrectly because it has no capitalization and it's deliberately misspelled, so that's one control. Let's count these if you will.

[Screen reader] 17 hours ago, button, more, button

[Simon] Time.

[Screen reader] follow quoteoftea button, photo by quotes and poems on September 25th 2023, maybe an image of slow loris and text that says "Big life lesson: if they want to they will," button, image "big life lesson: if they want to they will."

[Simon] Okay, so that's an automatically generated alt text description and then once again my phone extracted the text out of the image and also read it so there was a little bit of redundant repetition there but occasionally the phone's image recognition will actually be better than the automatic generated image descriptions so it's useful to have both just in case something doesn't work as it should.

[Screen reader] like, button, comment button, repost, button, send, button, six replies, button 1,316 likes button, it's real lmb, button.

[Simon] Okay, so that's now the next post. That's close to 10 controls, I think it's over 10, for a single post, and that's what you get with every single one of them, assuming that there is no video player there aren't multiple photos things like that. I've seen it get up to 15 or 16 controls for a single post. Unfortunately, there's really no easier way to do this, there's no grouping of these controls, so there's no way to navigate them easily and because of that, scrolling is, well there really is no scrolling for a VoiceOver user there's slowly going through each piece of information or paging through the interface and trying to find the pieces of information you need by touch, which can be difficult if you can't see where they are on the screen. It's not a very fun app to browse through at the moment, and I'm certainly hoping that Meta addresses this in a future update because it's like this everywhere on Android and web as well, but that's the current state of Threads.

#### Low Vision Demo

[Megan] Right and now a demo of Threads by Tait.

[Tait] All right, this is just a quick demo of me moving around within the Threads web interface on my laptop. You can see in the top corner I'm at 200% zoom and look at how much of the space is being taken up by the top bar and bottom bar instead of showing me the content that I'm looking for. Yeah, it's not 50% like some of the other apps, but it is still significant.

## X/Twitter

[Megan] Thank you. Okay next up, let's dive into X, also known as Twitter.

### X/Twitter Advantages

[Simon] Okay, so Twitter, recently renamed to X, has quite a lot of accessibility to speak of, with some asterisks, which we'll get to. The website is quite responsive for a website, and it has some useful keyboard shortcuts the mobile apps are pretty good right now and have rotor actions on iOS, not on Android, though. Photos can be given alt text. There's an automatic reminder, that you can enable from accessibility settings, if you forget to add alt text so that it prompts you to add it before you post the tweet/post. I'm not sure which one I should be using at this point. And for people who don't use a screen reader and want to still know what the Alt text of a photo is, there's a little alt button on photos that have it, so now you don't need to load a screen reader to see images. This is something I think should be everywhere, but most of the apps that have alt text require you to run a screen reader to read what the alt text is, which is kind of unfortunate sometimes. Tait.

[Tait] Well, one thing to consider too with Twitter is that a lot of city governments use it to give out news. I know, I live here in Calgary Alberta and the Calgary Police Service and the public library and all that have pages here. So it may, possibly, depending on your city, have better accessibility as it comes to browser Zoom than the city website, depending on how well they handle that internally. As well as that, the text size scales very well. I never felt like I had to zoom in more than necessary. Some websites force the text to be a little bit smaller than it should once you're zoomed in really far and I did not have this problem with Twitter.

### X/Twitter Barriers

[Megan] Okay, barriers.

[Simon] So a slightly sad story in November of 2022, when X changed hands, the entire accessibility team was let go. There haven't been a lot of changes to the app that would render it inaccessible, but we're not exactly sure whether there's still an accessibility team to speak of or developers who are aware of accessibility. So there's no certainty about whether the apps will remain accessible or whether the next redesign is going to break something. They're already have been occasional accessibility issues, such as the compose button disappearing on Android and some scrolling issues on iOS, but that's always been true. It's never been completely perfect all of the time. One of the biggest problems, though is that again, shortly after Twitter change hands, the third-party app service that apps like Twitterific and tweetbot were using to interact with Twitter was disabled or really just made unaffordable to all developers. So those third-party apps, which were sometimes more accessible to certain users than the Twitter app itself were now disabled and can no longer be used by anyone. Tait.

[Tait] One of the first problems I noticed with Twitter was that if you're not logged in, you get two overlapping dialogues asking you to log in. One being sign in with Google in the top right, and the second one being a sign into X, which is centred in the middle of the screen there. Generally you don't want things overlapping with each other especially when they're asking you for the same thing. If you change your zoom levels while signing up, the CAPTCHA disappears for some reason, CAPTCHA is that little thing where you have to answer a math question or something to sign up for a service. Other bits of the sign-up process had some errors if you changed your zoom level during it. So I had to redo my username and password section of the form if I changed my zoom level. Once I was logged in at higher zoom levels, there were some issues where the latest post button, which shows up whenever you're on the homepage, takes up about 15% of the screen space just on its own. That's way too big and sort of in the middle of the screen as you get to higher zoom levels. The top bar only took about 10% of the screen, which is a lot but not the worst offender. The new tweet button also overlays on your content and takes up another few percent of the screen. At the end of the day, we're looking at around 30% of the screen taken up by menus and buttons. When attempting to use the search function, scrolling up causes a banner that contains the search term to show up at the top and so you get even more cut off. Not only do you have the menu, but you also have the search box on the top. So you get about 40% % of your screen taken up just by, just by menus and your Search terms. When at moderate levels of zoom, it was okay to use at about 150% zoom. I noticed that instead of having the menus at the top and bottom, they moved to the left and right and had the post centred. That was a lot easier to use and read. When attempting to make a new tweet, things were mostly good. Again up to about 200% zoom, and after that the form actually isn't visible at all because it's completely taken up by menus on the top, menus on the bottom, buttons on the side, and they take up the entire screen above about 200 to 300% when you try to post. Twitter, in my estimation has had the most of these failures all in one platform.

### X/Twitter Demonstrations

[Megan] Okay, so demo time. First up Simon.

#### Screen Reader Demo

[Simon] Here's the Twitter app, which is now officially renamed to X, running on my iPhone 13 with VoiceOver. This app currently has no known accessibility team, the entire team was let go in November of 2022. So the accessibility of the app is questionable, but for the moment it seems to be quite good still. There are rotor actions, it's very easy to scroll through posts and content on the app, and generally things work as expected with very few exceptions when it concerns VoiceOver. So if I touch a post on this Accessible Libraries account we have it read to us:

[Screen reader] accessibility standards Canada its International Day of Sign Language is waving hand hashtag DYK Sign Language uses more than just hand gestures, it also uses facial expressions and body language to communicate ASL, LSQ and Indigenous Sign Languages are essential to the inclusion of Deaf communities in Canada.

[Simon] Okay, so I can now swipe down to go through rotor actions, which are quick shortcuts that we can perform on this post. I guess you can't call them tweets anymore.

[Screen reader] reply, repost, like, 347 views, share via, copy tag, more action, view post, authors, ACCstandard.ca hashtag DYK, activate, default.

[Simon] And back around to activate, which is just VoiceOver's way of saying tap. So if I do double-tap now it will activate that post, which means that it will open it the same way it would if one were to tap it.

[Screen reader] Biblios Accessibles Libraries reposted, button.

[Simon] And now we can go through it in more detail. The thing I'm really interested in...

[Screen reader] more actions, it's International Day of, hashtag DYK, ASL LSQ and Indigenous, hashtag DYK,

[Simon] That's just a link.

[Screen reader] graphic of hand gesturing the letters A,S and C in ASL text reads International Day of Sign Languages. Image, international day of sign languages, ALT Canada

[Simon] Okay, so a couple of things just happened. First it read out the alt text that somebody on that Twitter account had actually typed for the image, so thank you for that that's a great image description. Then VoiceOver itself tried to do AI text recognition on the image. I don't have it reading the verbose descriptions because I thought it would get a little bit well verbose, but it does still do text recognition on some images and it did here it seemed to get most of the text and it also got the little "ALT" button, which is a control that X recently added so that people could view the alt text visually without having to turn on screen reader. So it picked up on a little bit of extraneous text but it did read the text to us even though it didn't really give us context for the image. So that's X in a nutshell, it's mostly accessible throughout and we're not sure if it's going to remain that way but it's pretty good with VoiceOver and the same remains true of Android and web, where there are some handy keyboard shortcuts you can use to navigate quickly from one post to the other or from one section to the other.

#### Low Vision Demo

[Megan] Okay and now Tait's demo.

[Tait] This is just a quick demo of me sort of jumping around Twitter or X as you may call it. I'm using search, and you can even see here if I scroll up, well when I scroll up you'll see that that top bar comes back, and then we have a bunch of the screen being taken up by that and the new post button in the bottom right. It's just a bunch of overlay that stops you from reading the content you want

## TikTok

[Megan] All right, TikTok.

### TikTok Advantages

[Simon] Okay, so using a screen reader with the TikTok apps for IOS and Android, it is possible to explore content and navigate the app but there are some asterisks to that. The website has some, actually I'm going to say, the website and apps do have some specific accessibility work done on them to make them more accessible and that seems to be continuing at a slow but steady pace. It does appear to have mobile developers who are aware of accessibility. I'm not sure how long that's been true, but they're making some fixes to the apps as they stand right now. Tait.

[Tait] TikTok was very usable with you know a level of zoom even into the moderate 200s and 300%. It was usable without an account, and the great part about TikTok is that it has mostly vertical video, and so where do all the buttons and menus go? To the left and right side. I would say that it was extremely usable.

### TikTok Barriers

[Megan] Okay, barriers.

[Simon] So from the outside looking for accessibility-related information, it seems like it hasn't really taken into account users with accessibility needs. There's no accessibility help page, accessibility statement, or accessibility help desk. And it seems like there's no accessibility team, either. There are numerous accessibility issues on every platform even on the web, where there seem to be some pretty significant changes, the video player controls are still accessible, which, if you're going to have one thing that should work, it should be the video player on TicTac. I think we can all agree, TikTok rather. There is no way to tell which camera is active when you're posting a video on iOS, at least, and I believe Android is well. When you do, when you press the flip camera button, a screen reader user will not get any feedback about which camera they are switching to, so you may be able to see through the viewfinder which camera it's using but if you can't see that viewfinder you will have no idea. And Tait.

[Tait] The only real con that I found with TikTok is that the search page was somewhat difficult to use above about 200% zoom, but it was still somewhat usable and the rest of the site worked really well no matter how much I zoomed in. So overall, I'm quite impressed.

## LinkedIn

[Megan] Okay, LinkedIn.

### LinkedIn Advantages

[Simon] Okay, so LinkedIn, I will say right off the bat is in a pretty good state for screen reader users. It's backed by Microsoft's accessibility team and their disability answer desk, which is a team of people that are knowledgeable about screen readers and other assistant technology that you can just call and ask questions of or you can chat with them. It supports user-created alt text, so alt text that a user will type on the images they post, and it also now supports automatically generated alt text as well as manual and automatic captions for videos. It has really good screen reader support across IOS and Android. On Android, it's one of the most usable apps I can think of it has the equivalent of rotor actions there and not very many apps support that yet. The interface is just intuitive everywhere, it's clear a lot of work has gone into it. And lastly if you need live video assistance with LinkedIn, for some reason, the free app, Be My Eyes, can give specialized help from Microsoft support. I think just directly from their disability answer desk. Tait.

[Tait] Well LinkedIn doesn't have too many floating buttons or menus over the primary interface, and it has pretty decent contrast, can't complain too much.

### LinkedIn Barriers

[Megan] So LinkedIn barriers, Tait.

[Tait] Oops, sorry muted myself there. At larger zooms, there's quite a large top bar taking about 40% of the screen there and that's present through all the pages, but that is my only major complaint with LinkedIn. Otherwise it's quite good

[Megan] Cool, and now we'll see a demonstration of that.

[Tait] So this is myself just clicking through Linkedin a little bit. You can see in the top right there I'm only at 120% zoom. I'll go back to a larger zoom in a moment I believe, and you can see that the top bar starts to really overwhelm the page at around 200% zoom. You end up with that top bar over your content and searches and friends and whatever else you might be actually trying to read. There's also the, the little cookie banner at the bottom that takes up a pretty significant amount of space.

## Tumblr

[Megan] Okay, so next up, we're going to talk a little bit about Tumblr. So, just some background. Tumblr is a social networking micro blog where users can post different multimedia posts. So like with text, pictures, videos, etc. in like a short form blog posting. It was founded in 2007 and has over 500 million different micro-blogs on the site.

### Tumblr Advantages

[Megan] So let's learn about the Tumblr's advantages.

[Simon] So Tumblr with a screen reader is kind of a mixed bag. It is possible to read the text content on Tumblr and it does support the use of all text for photos, fairly recently actually. That's a recent addition to the platform. There's been some work to increase contrast and the general usage for Low Vision users on the dashboard in particular. Most of the important things have screen reader labels across mobile and web, so most of the controls and buttons can be identified with VoiceOver. It won't hear something like "button" where you should hear reblog button. Tait.

[Tait] Well, I found that the top bar gets a little bit large. It doesn't take up nearly a majority of the screen and leaves most of the other content quite available to you. There aren't very many buttons, menus, and such, which overlay the primary content at all in fact. In search, following or the "for you" screens, all of them are actually hidden behind a hamburger menu. Overall, I'd say the site is fairly usable up to even 350% zoom, which is outstanding and one of the best sites performed so far.

### Tumblr Barriers

[Megan] Barriers.

[Simon] So for screen reader users, I did say that things

are generally labelled well, but it's very cluttered on IOS and Android and not the greatest on web either. It kind of reminds me of Threads. There are just many buttons associated with each post, and it's kind of hard to figure out where you are in the interface sometimes. It's also very picture-heavy, a lot of people don't use alt text they don't know about it. It's such a recent addition, and it just isn't part of Tumblr culture the way it is on some other platforms. Tait.

[Tait] After you view a few posts on Tumblr, it tries to get you to sign up. This is somewhat annoying, much like we've talked about before not necessarily everyone is going to have an account everywhere. As well, the new post page does have quite a bit of space for the title and the x button to close it. It ends up looking like a pretty large menu, but it still gives you the majority of the screen space for you to be writing your post.

## Reddit

[Megan] Thank you, guys. Next up Reddit. So Reddit is a discussion website and a group of online communities organized by subject, topic, interest etc. Users or more commonly known as members of Reddit post and comment on those posts, like the multimedia content. And that those can then be voted up or down by other users or members of Reddit.

### Reddit Advantages

[Megan] Advantages.

[Simon] So there is limited but functional screen reader support report on the web interfaces. There's an old Reddit and a new Reddit, or if you prefer classic Reddit and redesigned Reddit, and both of them have some level of screen reader support. The Reddit app for iOS has been getting a lot of accessibility improvements lately, for reasons I'll talk about in a moment. There have been rotor actions added to it, at least in some parts, and a lot of the previously unlabelled buttons have been labelled. So there's clearly some work going into making it more usable with VoiceOver, and that's great also. There are third-party apps, like an app called Dystopia on iOS and one called RedReader on Android, and these have been made specifically with a lot of accessibility enhancements that make them extremely nice to use with VoiceOver. All kinds of rotor actions and customizations and things you just don't find in a mainstream app. Tait.

[Tait] Well I have a little bit of a love/hate relationship with Reddit. Old Reddit used to allow styling by community. So each community on Reddit would actually design their own way of displaying things, which of course has a lot of gray area. It could be really great for the communities that understand how to do that well and really terrible when they don't. That said, the new Reddit interface, although it mostly works at reasonable zoom level, it does have one fairly large, always on the header at the very top. Old Reddit avoids that at the cost of having questionable contrast depending on the community. Overall I find Reddit to be quite a mixed bag.

### Reddit Barriers

[Megan] Okay, Reddit barriers.

[Simon] So the official mobile apps have pretty poor screen reader accessibility and until recently the developers haven't really had a good track record for acknowledging that, let alone fixing it. The Android app has still got quite a few issues and unlabelled buttons. Certain screens in iOS are still nearly unusable and to add to that, accessibility on the old and new web interfaces for screen reader users is also kind of a mixed bag. There are things that the old interface doesn't have, like headings between posts for instance, that makes it hard to navigate, but there are also things that are less accessible on new Reddit. So you have to know when to switch back and forth between one to the other and it's the kind of thing I get used to as a fairly technical user who is on Reddit a lot, but it's very confusing. Reddit will, Reddit made some changes to their API, the service that application developers can use to make third-party apps for Reddit to display it, Reddit, in their own interface and the changes basically forced all of these developers off the platform. One of the main apps that people will have perhaps heard of is Apollo. The developer had to stop making it because it was no longer possible to make money off it at all and this app was kind of middle of the road when it came to screen reader accessibility, but it was a big loss for the community in general. Reddit eventually conceded that apps that have accessibility in their design process can continue to use their API for free, in other words they can continue to exist, and we can keep using them, but only if they don't charge for their app, not even an in app purchase or a tip jar or anything like that. So these developers, the people who literally make Reddit usable for blind people are not being paid for their work, and are forbidden from being paid for their work. It's a kind of a hostile developer environment and we don't really know how long these apps will actually stick around. In addition to that, there's no support for alternative text on images. So there's, even if people do want to describe their images they can't, and if you post an image on Reddit there's no way to add text to the body of the post. You can put it in the title, but that can get quite long. Some people choose to describe the images they post in their comments, but that can get buried .

There's no way to pin a comment to the top of a post, even your own, so other people can upvote other comments that are not the description and then the description is nearly impossible to find. Tait.

[Tait] I just realized that I covered a bunch of the cons the first time I was talking. One of the major cons of old Reddit versus new Reddit, see new Reddit no longer has an issue with horizontal scrolling. This is something that people who need to zoom in really far often have, is that a website is designed to be quite wide, and then when you're zoomed in you need to scroll left and right to find things. Now old Reddit does have this problem and new Reddit gets rid of it. However, in exchange, new Reddit keeps condensing the text into narrower and narrower slices. I think we have a video, NNELS has a video here, Accessible Libraries about email threading and how if you use large text, sometimes it just gets so narrow there's only a few characters or a few words on each line and Reddit has that problem now.

## Mastodon

[Megan] Okay so our last platform we'll cover today is Mastodon. So Mastodon is a free open-source software made up of independently run servers. Each server has its own established terms of service, contracts, privacy policy, etc. So those rules, the established terms, are enforced locally. And members, when joining Mastodon, should join a server with the rules they most agree with. or host their own, which is also an option. Users of Mastodon are members of a specific server but can interact with and follow users who belong to other servers and as Simon mentioned previously eventually Threads will be, they'll be able to interact with people on Threads. And finally, the posting on Mastodon can include text, pictures, videos, polls it's a lot of multimedia.

### Mastodon Advantages

[Megan] So what are Mastodon's advantages?

[Simon] Okay, so the official mobile apps and the web interfaces on Mastodon servers, by default, are fairly accessible to screen reader users. And they're also open source so that means that anybody can make accessibility changes and fixes and can communicate very transparently with the developers about what's going on with them and what's going wrong or what's going right. So that means that anyone can develop apps for Mastodon, as well because the API is also open-source and they can make their own interfaces and their own accessibility changes that makes those interfaces nice to use. There's also support for descriptions on media, the alt text on photos and audio transcripts or descriptions in general of audio files and videos. Tait.

[Tait] Well I found that Mastodon had great contrast and a dark theme, by default. I was very impressed with that. And the new post page only really takes the top and side bars and they're quite small at reasonable zoom levels. So overall I'm quite happy with it. And yeah the open source nature of it helps with when a problem does come up it can be addressed without having to go through a bureaucracy of some kind.

### Mastodon Barriers

[Megan] Barriers.

[Simon] Okay there are a couple of screen reader accessibility issues on the main page of the default Mastodon layout, and these haven't been fixed very quickly or at all. And the only other real disadvantage, though not a specific accessibility one, is that it's not very widely adopted yet. There are only about 14 million Mastodon users across all servers as of this month. And Tait.

[Tait] Well, like I said, those top and right-hand sidebars can take up a little bit of extra space about above 200% zoom, but it's okay otherwise. There are additional menus like search results and notifications taking additional 10 to 20% of the screen, so if you're searching something sometimes you're a little bit cramped. And the internal hamburger menu, when you're posting, goes off-screen at any zoom level above 110%, which means that again this introduces horizontal scroll where you have to go left and right to find what you're looking for. So unfortunate, but overall reasonable experience.

### Mastodon Demonstration

[Megan] All right and now the Mastodon screen reader demo.

#### Screen Reader Demo

[Simon] Accessibility has long been a focus of Mastodon users and developers alike, and that has a couple of consequences. First, there are many many apps you can use to connect to Mastodon servers, log in, and interact with other people in posts. Second, lots of people on Mastodon makes their content accessible. I selected a random sampling of images and added them to my bookmarks and I will now scroll through them, once again with VoiceOver.

[Screen reader] Joan Fisher, one image, handwritten sign outside of a store, text, your beliefs don't make you a better person your behaviour does, 34 reposts, one favourite, Thomas Stern, Ibaraki Sunset, one image, city street and Ibaraki in Northern Osaka, the street is busy with public buses and cars the shops are lit up as it is early evening the sun is just about to set nearly in direct line with expat scene from an overpass at the Ibaraki train station, the sky is lit in orange hues with scattered clouds, one repost, one like, Nell, do not disturb until next cat day, hashtag cat, hashtag CatsOfMastodon, one image, a mostly tabby cat with white bits curled up looking very tired on a cushion, two reposts

[Simon] And once again we have rotor actions, so we can quickly take action on any of these post.

[Screen reader] new media, new links reply, repost, quote post, unfavourite

[Simon] But unlike other apps, you can actually go into settings in this app, which is called Mona and you can decide exactly which rotor actions will show up and in what order they'll show up, and then you can put overflow actions into a more menu. It's one of the most accessible apps I use, not just for Mastodon, but in general. So there really aren't a whole lot of negatives to Mastodon because if one person's interface is not working well you just switch to another one. And this happens to be one of the best ones out there, but there are many more like it.

# Conclusion

[Megan] Okay, so in summary, thank you, Simon and Tait those were amazing. Yeah, so as you can likely tell there are no clear platform winner, each has advantages and barriers that need to be considered. Our recommendation is just to post wildly on as many platforms as possible and use products like Sproutable or HootSuite and following our Accessible Social Media checklist, which is available on AccessibleLibraries.ca.