OAS Tips for Document Accessibility

Creating High Quality Scans

Scans should be free from the following:

- text that is cut off
- crooked pages
- dark margins where shadows indicate the curvature of the book's spine
- any markings or blurring

Optical Character Recognition (OCR): OCR capabilities built into a scanner turn images of text into text that is copy and pasteable, a Searchable PDF. This is essential for students use assistive technology that requires searchable PDF to read the document.

The Gordon Library has a "Knowledge Imaging Scanner" for books. Reach out to Amy Lawton, aslawton@wpi.edu if you are interested in using this.

Formatting

Use of Headings

The use of headings in a document should remain consistent as students with screen readers rely on headings to navigate through the document.

For example:

- Heading 1 for the main heading
- Heading 2 for the first level of sub-headings
- Heading 3 for the next level of sub-headings

Hyperlinks

It is essential to use the hyperlink function and assign the hyperlink to meaningful text. In other words, just hyperlinking a course evaluation or survey to the word "Form" lacks description and may confuse a screen reader.

For example: hyperlink the form with the text "Course Evaluation for CS1001" as this is describing the link that they will be clicking. You can also include the full URL next to the hyperlink so that the student can copy and paste it.

Alternate Text

The purpose of alternate text is to communicate the content or a description of a picture, graph or chart to someone who is unable to see it. Please refer to the How to view/edit the alt text in a PDF you're creating article from Business Insider for a brief overview of how to add or edit alt text.

When using a chart or table, be sure to clearly identify column and row headers as this allows screen readers to refer to headers in relation to each cell.

Use of Lists

The use of lists, numbered or bulleted, is helpful when introducing or organizing a large amount of content. The screen reader can determine where the list starts and finishes and how many items are on the list.

Accessibility Checker

When in doubt… use an accessibility checker. Microsoft Office and Adobe Acrobat have built in accessibility checkers that will review your document to make sure that your content is easy for people of all abilities to read and edit.

Adapted from University of Washington, Accessible Technology