



Center for Teaching and Learning

Digital Accessibility Resource Guide

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Purpose

The purpose of the digital accessibility resource guide is to provide a list of tools and resources and information for faculty and staff to make digital documents accessible for posting online and in the D2L learning management system to meet the university’s goals for digital accessibility.

Accessibility and usability are closely related aspects of creating a digital experience that works for everyone. Accessibility addresses aspects related to equivalent user experience for people with disabilities. Web accessibility means that people with disabilities can equally perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with digital content. It also means that they can contribute equally without barriers.

Digital accessibility applies to USD's online presence of any kind; this includes email, online course materials, the USD website, all forms, documents, and handbooks we use, student research publications, live streaming of events, recorded videos, and more. USD is moving toward greater levels of digital accessibility and has two overarching outcomes. First, it brings us closer to (and ultimately, in line with) federal regulations and guidelines for digital accessibility. Second, it creates an environment where all students, staff, and faculty have the opportunity to access all digital content in the formats they need or which serve them best.

The main aim of making digital documents accessible is to provide information so a person with a disability “can acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services in an equally effective and equally integrated way with substantially equivalent ease of use as a person without a disability”

(Source: Department of Education Office of Civil Rights).¹ ADA compliance in digital spaces refers to WCAG² adherence, a way of designing websites, tools, and technologies so that everyone, including people with disabilities, can use them as easily as possible. The University of South Dakota recognizes that students with disabilities should be afforded equal opportunity to course materials in their online courses and on the USD public website. In order to meet the definition of equal opportunity, faculty should do due diligence to ensure any content is compliant with accessibility standards (Source: [SDBOR QA Rubric 2020 Std. VIII](#)).

Objectives

The objective of this manual is to provide the necessary resources in order to help faculty and staff meet digital accessibility course goals and the [USD Digital Accessibility Policy](#).

The University of South Dakota [Digital Accessibility Committee](#) (formed in 2019) set a goal that all D2L courses have a Blackboard Ally score of at least 85% by Fall 2023 with no severe errors as reported by the Blackboard Ally Course Report feature. In preparation for this, all Spring 2022 courses in D2L should have a Blackboard Ally course score of at least 75%. The USD public-facing website goal is that 95% of the content meets WCAG 2.0 Level AA. All content posted online should be accessible. Fixing legacy content and remediating older materials in previously taught courses is not required. However, if those materials are recycled for future courses, then they should be made accessible before posting in a D2L course shell.

USD Digital Accessibility Policy

The University of South Dakota (USD) is committed to ensuring equal access for individuals with disabilities to the programs and services of the University in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 504/Section 508 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act as amended. Equal access includes access to electronic and information technology. USD strives to ensure all aspects of electronic and information technology – from procurement and development to online course content and public web pages – are accessible to individuals with disabilities. [Link to Digital Accessibility Policy](#).

Required Accessibility Statement for USD syllabi

Accessibility Statement

The University of South Dakota strives to ensure that physical resources, as well as information and communication technologies, are accessible to users in order to provide equal access to all. If you encounter any accessibility issues, you are encouraged to immediately contact the instructor of the course and the Office of Disability Services, which will work to address the issue.

¹ [ADA Compliance for Online Courses](#) by Sheryl Bergstahler (January 30, 2017) published by EDUCAUSE.

² [W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 Level AA](#) is the standard adopted by USD.



Resource Guide

The Center for Teaching and Learning has provided several resources within this Resource Guide to assist faculty and staff with making accessible content and remediating existing content. The resources are a combination of automated checking tools, manual fixing tools, training opportunities, remediation services, and one-on-one assistance. Visit the [USD Digital Accessibility webpage](#) for more information.

Digital Accessibility Staff

The USD *Digital Accessibility Coordinator* is responsible for coordinating the digital accessibility efforts across all digital spaces that make up University's digital presence. Contact information: UDL@usd.edu.

The *Digital Accessibility Specialist* is responsible for assisting faculty and staff with their digital accessibility needs including outreach and training. Contact information: UDL@usd.edu.

The CTL *Document Remediation Assistant* at the CTL is responsible for assisting faculty and staff with document remediation needs. UDL@usd.edu or [Document Remediation Request form](#).


Faculty Mentors

Faculty mentors are approved by departments to assist course instructors with resources and guidance to remediate their documents and create accessible content. Digital Accessibility Faculty Mentors support faculty questions, help faculty find resources, and serve as the “go-to” person within the college or school.

- *College of Arts and Sciences*: Joel Sander, Teresa ChasingHawk, Elizabeth Hanson, Rodrigue Rizk
- *School of Education*: Dan Mourlam and Hyung Suk Yang
- *Beacom School of Business*: Sebastian Wai and Chad Birger
- *University Libraries*: Danielle Loftus
- *College of Fine Arts*: David Sanderson and Paul Lombardi
- *School of Health Sciences*: Katie Pudwill and Mackenzie Feldhacker
- *Knutson School of Law*: Eric Young
- *Sanford School of Medicine*: Taylor Friemel
- *USD Sioux Falls*: Chad Birger

USD Digital Accessibility Committee

The Digital Accessibility Committee (DAC) at USD is tasked to improve, foster, and promote an inclusive online environment for everyone through a comprehensive review and planning process aimed at providing equal access in all digital content across the institution.



Center for Teaching and Learning UDL Team

The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) team at USD consists of educational technology integrationists and experts who can assist faculty with making digital content accessible, incorporating UDL principles, and provide one-on-one course design consultations. Requests can be emailed to UDL@usd.edu.

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework applied by course designers for the inclusive design of instructional materials and assessment methods that are usable by a wide range of neurodiverse learners. UDL is based on neuroscience research by CAST³ and disciplines that recognize that students have individual learning preferences and patterns and that learning systems should accommodate students' learning variability regardless of ability. The [USD Center for Teaching and Learning](#) provides UDL course design consulting and workshops throughout the year. Please [visit](#) or email udl@usd.edu to schedule an appointment.

Techfellows

There are approximately 30 techfellows across campus that can assist with remediation efforts. They are a first level support within departments. They are a great resource to assist faculty with document remediation efforts and cleaning up post-production captions. The CTL also has techfellows that can assist faculty in the event there is no other availability elsewhere on campus.

I.D. Weeks Library resources

I.D. Weeks has a distance librarian, Daniel Loftus, trained in digital accessibility that can assist faculty with accessible third-party content for use in courses. There are a number of hardware and software assets listed on the [Library Accessibility webpage](#). I.D. Weeks (IDW) has Acrobat Acrobat Pro on the adaptive station by Room 121a and also on all the scanner stations. Additionally, it is on all the Mac computers. For help with finding accessible journal articles, literature, and textbook chapters, the Library Liaisons are available. The [Assistive Adaptive Technology Libguides webpage](#) is a helpful guide that describes hardware and software resources that are available to faculty, staff, and students. The [assistive technology software webpage](#) lists resources that include information about screen magnification, keyboard shortcuts, speech recognition, and a variety of other assistive technology designed to operate directly with the computer. Resource pages: [General Accessibility](#) | [Text to Speech](#) | [Speech to Text](#) | [Screen Readers](#) | [Screen Magnifiers and Reading Tools](#)

³ See www.cast.org/our-work/research-design-development



Social Media posts

When social media content is used by the University's employees to participate in core educational and administrative activities, all available accessibility supported features of the platform should be utilized. Helpful tips are found at [Social Media Accessibility Guidelines](#) by Princeton University.

Training Resources

USD PDF Makeover Event

Every Spring and Fall semester, the CTL UDL team offers a three-week immersive training event titled the "PDF Extreme Makeover Event." Participants embark on a deep dive into PDF remediation and use a scorecard to track their progress. Participants receive a certificate of achievement for successfully completing the event. Visit the [PDF Makeover Event webpage](#) for more information and how to register

Digital Accessibility Training course

The [Digital Accessibility Training Course](#) in D2L is a comprehensive 9-part asynchronous training course recommended for faculty and teaching assistants new to digital accessibility. In this course, participants will learn the basics of how to create accessible digital content and fix non-accessible content using common tools - Blackboard Ally, Microsoft Office, D2L, Adobe Acrobat Pro, Google Docs, and common video creation tools. Upon successful completion of the course, participants will receive a certificate of achievement.

Guidelines for Accessible Documents

The CTL has created [Guidelines for Accessible Documents](#) as an easy, basic guide for making digital documents accessible. The easiest way to create an accessible digital document is to start with the authoring software it was originally created with, i.e., Microsoft Word, Powerpoint, or Google Doc. Word processing documents should be made accessible before saving them as a PDF and all electronic documents should be made accessible before publishing on the Internet. [PDF Checking and Remediation Tutorial](#) with instructional video (15 min). [MS Word accessibility guidelines video tutorial](#) using a Macbook (6min). See also [automated accessibility evaluation tools](#) for MS Office.

Guidelines for Accessible Videos and Audio files

The expectation is that 1) all recorded videos have accurate closed captioning available and 2) audio files such as podcasts have a written transcript available. The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA requires that video presentations must have captions that accurately represent what the person is speaking. The [SDBOR QA Rubric VIII.3](#). supports that captions are 99% accurate for online courses. USD has three university-supported options available for automatically adding closed captioning to recorded lectures and audio

presentations - 1) Panopto, 2) Zoom Pro, and 3) Youtube. More information on these tools is provided below. [Closed Captioning and Verbit tutorial.](#)



TIPS: All three of the video recording tools mentioned above provide the option to download a written transcript and edit a transcript file.

Audio recorded on individual Powerpoint slides requires the PPTX file to be saved as an MP4 file and then uploaded to a service such as Panopto or Youtube to automatically add captions to meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA. A hyperlink to the video with closed captions can then be embedded in D2L. NOTE: Uploading the MP4 file directly to D2L does not provide automatic closed captioning.

It is best practice for recorded video files to be no more than 15 minutes in length for ease of uploading and transcription clean-up. The bigger the file size, the more time it takes to upload and clean-up the captioning. Panopto and Youtube both offer video editing capabilities.

Guidelines for Accessible Images

Images and graphics embedded into electronic documents must have descriptive captions called “Alt Text” short for Alternative Text also referred to as an “Alt Tag.” Alt Tag description is the written copy that appears in place of an image if the image fails to load on a user's browser screen. This text also helps screen-reading tools describe images to visually impaired readers. To add Alt Text to an image, right click the image and choose Add or Edit “Alt Text”. If an image already has an image description set as a figure caption in MS Word, there is no need to add Alt Text again. If an image has no inherent meaning to the document, it can be set as “decorative.” The recommended length of a description is 126 to 150 characters, but it can be longer based on the complexity.

USD Coyote One Stop Knowledge Base

The Coyote One-Stop knowledge base is the primary resource for faculty, staff, and students looking for self-help training and support for digital accessibility. [Link to Coyote One Stop](#) Digital Accessibility knowledge base.

Digital Accessibility “Toolbox”

The UDL team at the CTL has compiled a list of approved and vetted technology-based tools and resources to assist faculty and staff with quickly making documents and digital content media accessible. Many of these tools automate the process and are very easy to use. If you have any questions on how to access these tools, please contact udl@usd.edu.



AbleDocs

USD has an approved agreement with AbleDocs to provide third-party remediation of PDFs. The cost is \$50 per hour. There is a general pool of funds available in 2021-2022 to cover remediation requests until it is depleted. To submit a request for remediation to AbleDocs please complete the [Document Remediation Request](#) form.

Adobe Acrobat Pro DC

Adobe Acrobat Pro is a third-party software for creating, editing, and remediating PDFs that is available for departments to purchase through USD ITS. Individuals can purchase an educational license directly from Adobe for a low monthly fee. Adobe Acrobat Pro is a university supported PDF remediation solution that has a built-in automated accessibility checking tool. The wizard tool guides the content creator through remediating the PDF in several easy steps. Adobe Acrobat Pro has the ability to convert image-based scanned files to text. Learn more at the [USD Coyote One Stop Knowledge base on PDF Accessibility](#).

Notes** Some computers have started to get the updated version of Adobe Acrobat. The general change with this is the tool bar is now on the left compared to the right as well as a few wording changes. If you need help navigating these changes, please view this video tutorial of [Adobe overall](#).

If you do not wish to have the updated changes, Open Adobe > Select Menu > Disable New Acrobat > Close and Reopen Adobe.

Ally formerly Blackboard Ally for D2L

Blackboard Ally for D2L is a third-party software integrated into D2L that automatically scans the original content, scores it against WCAG 2.1 criteria, and guides the content author to perform a series of steps to make course content more accessible. Blackboard Ally for D2L checks documents against the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1. The course report is accessed by logging into any D2L course shell and from the horizontal menu go to > Resources > Ally Course Report. Ally for D2L is the primary tool used for checking course content for accessibility and achieving a passing score of >85%. Beyond the course report, Blackboard Ally for D2L provides students with more accessible original content whereby they can choose formats that work best for them: HTML for improved reading on mobile phones, Electronic Braille for the visually impaired, and Audio for learning on the go. Learn more at [Ally Instructor Resources and Support PDF by Blackboard \(19pgs\)](#) and [Coyote One Stop Blackboard Ally Knowledge Base](#)

CART Services

Verbit.ai is the university-approved third-party provider for Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART) captioning services for faculty and staff. The cost for Verbit.ai cart services is \$80/hour with a 72-hour advance notice. CART services include two-layer captioning - automated machine translation and then human correction. CART services are typically provided for live meetings, conferences, training sessions, large public events, and

large online lectures. The expectation is that all large public events should have live captioning provided. Requests for CART services can be requested through the Digital Accessibility Coordinator at UDL@usd.edu or USD Marketing and University Relations.

Desire2Learn

D2L is the SDBOR managed learning management system at USD that has two built-in tools for checking content for accessibility. 1) the “accessibility checker” tool checks HTML content automatically to accessibility standards. It is available in every content module window. A wizard steps content creators through fixing HTML accessibility issues in easy steps. Learn more about digital accessibility within D2L at <https://www.d2l.com/accessibility/>. In addition to the D2L built-in tool, [Ally for D2L](#) is available.

FoxIt PDF Editor

FoxIt software is equivalent to Adobe Acrobat Pro for only \$26/license annually. It is available through the Center for Teaching Learning and installed by ITS. It can be used for PDF creation, editing, form creation, and accessibility checking and remediation. [FoxIt Software Request Form](#).

Grackle Docs for Google Docs/Slides/Sheets Evaluation and Remediation

Grackle Docs is a third-party add-on in Google Chrome that automatically checks 22 criteria against WCAG 2.0 and accessible PDF standards. It uses a wizard to guide the content author to make an accessible Google Doc that can also be exported to an accessible PDF. Google Doc does not have an automatic accessibility check feature built-in, however an “add-on” is available called “Grackle Doc.” Learn more: [CTL Grackle Docs Tutorial](#)

To access your USD Google account log in at www.google.com with your USD credentials.

To access Grackle Doc > Open a Google Doc > From the toolbar select **Extensions > Grackle Docs > Launch**



IMPORTANT: You will need to log into Google with your USD credentials to use Grackle Docs. The first time you use Grackle Docs, you may need to grant it permission to your USD-managed Google account. Once Grackle Docs launches, an inspector window will appear on the right side of your screen that identifies errors and warnings

Natural Reader

[Natural Reader EDU](#) premium educational service is an approved service provider with USD to provide online digital document screen reader services for staff, faculty, and student use. An online free version is available. Faculty can upload any text-based document and listen to it being read using one of many different AI voices available. Natural Reader is a great tool for checking reading order and functionality of a PDF.

ReadSpeaker

ReadSpeaker for D2L is a content reader that is built into D2L. It includes docReader, webReader, and TextAid. It reads back content in D2L courses to students to help with accessibility, reading comprehension, and limiting distractions. For more information about ReadSpeaker, please see our [ReadSpeaker guide](#). Certain features can be turned off such as translating and the webReader in exams. For help turning these off or concerns about ReadSpeaker, please contact the UDL at udl@usd.edu.

Toshiba Multifunction Copier/Scanners with OCR

Optical Character Recognition (OCR) is a technology that recognizes text within a digital image. It is commonly used to recognize text in scanned documents and images. It converts documents saved as an image of text to actual searchable text. To make scanned documents accessible, they must be converted to text so they work with screen reading software. OCR software processes a digital image by locating and recognizing characters, such as letters, numbers, and symbols. Once you use OCR to process your document, you must select the text and read it to verify the process was successful, and the text makes sense. There are two free automated software tools available to add OCR to your scanned documents post production - Blackboard Ally Alternative Format download feature (free) in D2L and Adobe Acrobat Pro OCR feature. A third option are the Toshiba multifunction copier/scanners on campus that have the ability to automatically add OCR to any original scan.

There are several Toshiba scanners on campus that have OCR capability built-in. This allows faculty to scan documents and convert them to text automatically in one step. The output can be saved to a USB thumb drive or emailed.

Model	Location	Contact Person
Toshiba 3015AC	McKusick 212	Lindsey Jorgensen
Toshiba 4518A	ID Weeks 1 st Floor	Sheryl Smith
Toshiba 4518A	Fine Arts 183A	Danielle Heeren
Toshiba 4518A	East Hall 302	Patty Rarick/Jenn Beerman
Toshiba 4518A	Delzell Ed 104	Jolinda Gray
Toshiba 4518A	Akeley Science 201	Brenda Walker
Toshiba 4518A	Continuing Education 103	Angela Jackson

PAC 2021

The PDF Accessibility Checker (PAC) 2021 is available as a free download for Windows PC only available through the PDF/UA Foundation, that you can use for automated PDF accessibility testing. It is used mostly by developers. It is not as intuitive to use as Ally for D2L.

[PAC 2021 download for Windows.](#)

Panopto

[Panopto](#) software allows for easy recording, uploading, and sharing of recorded lectures and presentations. Panopto has automatic captions available. A content creator can also manually upload caption files into Panopto. Panopto is designed to simplify the captioning process in the lecture-capture process using automatic speech to text technology; this is also called “automatic speech recognition.” Although good quality, It is only about 85% accurate so word clean-up is needed. [Link to Panopto](#) Tutorial created by the CTL. Panopto software is available in every course shell in D2L. It also has video editing capabilities.

Verbit.ai Post-Production Captioning Clean-up

Verbit.ai is an approved third-party provider for 99% accurate post-production captioning at \$1.28/minute to make existing audio files compliant to WCAG 2.1 Level AA compliance. Requests for post production video caption services can be requested through the Digital Accessibility Coordinator at UDL@usd.edu.



IMPORTANT: Check with your department first to see if a techfellow is available to assist with post-production captioning cleanup before sending requests for third party remediation.


Word/PowerPoint/Excel Accessibility Evaluation and Implementation Tools (AEIT)

Every version of Office 2013 or newer has a digital accessibility automated checking tool available called “**Check Accessibility**” and is accessed through the Review tab in most versions. Running this tool allows content creators to automatically check and quickly fix all their accessibility issues before uploading or linking online. Office 365 is free for USD faculty and staff and offers several accessible templates or themes that creators can use in MS Powerpoint. Log into www.office.com with your USD credentials to get started. See also [How to Make an Accessible PDF from MS Word KB Article](#) and [Guidelines for Creating Accessible Documents](#)

[MS Word accessibility guidelines video tutorial](#) using a Macbook (6min).



IMPORTANT: The “check accessibility” tool will not work on files saved in a format older than 2013. if you see error **Unable to run the Accessibility checker** re-save the file as Word Document .docx format.



Youtube

Youtube is part of the Google Workspace collaboration tools that is available for free to all USD faculty. Simply log into Youtube with your USD credentials and click on the Create icon to upload video files and start sharing. All uploaded MP4 videos have automatic closed captions added and a transcript file created that can be edited and downloaded. Youtube also offers video editing capabilities.

Zoom Pro


[Zoom](#) is a third-party university approved web conferencing software that has automatic speech to text capability for live meetings and captions available for audio/video recordings. Zoom allows for the easy clean-up of caption text and the ability to export the captions as a text file. Learn more: [Zoom Tutorial](#) by the CTL.

Comment from the USD Digital Accessibility Coordinator

We hope you found this guide useful. Beyond the legality of being compliant with federal regulation, digital accessibility is also in-line with the Board of Regents "Opportunity for All" framework and our goals for recruitment, retention, and to help students learn. While the impetus is to make content accessible to those with visible and invisible disabilities, these changes also support those without disabilities. Students taking classes while working can spend time reviewing course materials during their commute using audio versions of files, can download course files in a variety of formats to access them using whatever technology they have access to, and can more easily navigate all of USD's digital spaces. Staff and faculty will experience these benefits as well with the additional benefit of learning new technological skills, engaging in more mindful and effective content development, and benefiting from the additional format options available.

References

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