VRA EAC x Instruction SIG Community Hour

January 20, 2021 2pm EST // 1pm CST // 12pm MST // 11am PST

Topic: Accessibility & Equity in Online Instruction

Moderators: Kendra Werst

- Please keep your microphones muted--please use a reaction, raise your hand, or use the chat to indicate that you would like to speak.

- Video not required, virtual backgrounds welcome (be mindful of your virtual background selections). Feel free to add your pronouns to your Zoom name. co
    - How to change your name during a Zoom meeting
    - How to provide captions via PowerPoint or Google Slides live captions
        - https://webcaptioner.com/ - Free Captioning Right In Your Browser

- If you'd like to ask a question anonymously, please send your question through a private chat to [Kendra or Lael]

- **Community Hours are not recorded** for the sake of attendees' privacy and so that all attendees feel safe to express any concerns or questions they may have on various topics.

Feel free to add notes under the 'Community Notes' section of this document.

EAC webpage: http://vraweb.org/about/committees/equitableaction/
EAC email: ea@vraweb.org
Submit a topic for a future Community Hour: https://forms.gle/fENKfkEJjAC6Fqew5

** This document will be view-only starting January 27th. If you'd like to add a resource to this doc click here! **

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Thank you! Visual Resources Association's Equitable Action Committee

Guest Moderators

- **Bridget Madden** is the Associate Director of the Visual Resources Center in the Department of Art History at the University of Chicago. Bridget is Chair of VRA's Midwest Chapter, Implementation Team Co-chair for ARLIS/NA & VRAF's Summer Educational Institute for Digital Stewardship of Visual Information (SEI), and has been leading VRA's new Instruction SIG.

- **Berit Ness** is the Assistant Curator of Academic Initiatives at the Smart Museum, University of Chicago's campus art museum. Berit is involved in teaching strategies that support first-year core humanities courses as well as object-focused art history graduate seminars and everything in between. Working as both an educator and a curator at the Smart, she recently opened an exhibition Take Care which was used for both in-person and virtual teaching this fall.

- **Anna Boutin-Cooper** is the Research & Visual Arts Librarian at Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, PA. She is the liaison librarian to the Art, Art History, and Film and Theatre and Dance departments, and also serves as the co-curator for the artists' book collection and curator for the zine collection at the College. Anna is the co-moderator of the ARLIS/NA Teaching Special Interest Group. Anna's current research interests include critical librarianship, antiracist, feminist, and critical pedagogies, and the history of textiles and weaving.

Discussion Group Prompts

- Basics of accessible pedagogy
- Success and challenges of the past year, what have we learned?
- Shareable tips and tricks and suggestions for new resources
- Accessibility in archives, libraries, museums, and visual resources

Community Notes:

- Welcome!
- Guest moderators (see above): Bridget Madden, Berit Ness, & Anna Boutin-Cooper
- Bridget Madden's slides
    - Remote AI transcripts on one side of the coin, on the other students who require analogue transcription for less screen time
- Berit Ness's slides (slide link forthcoming)
    - How can the museum be a pedagogical resource?
    - How to engage with courses remotely when work was based on looking closely at objects in-person
    - Did reopen in fall

    - Focusing on overall museum accessibility
    - If never going there physically, what can be provided digitally? How to go forward?
    - Created Smart Accessibility Working Group Vision Statement
        - A working doc of prompts and standards
        - Questions to ask
            - What does accessibility mean? In different situations/scenarios? How broad is our sense of accessibility?
        - What they [Smart Museum] wanted to do most is provide **transparency**--so no one has to ask "can I come to this?" Want to make clear whether or not things are accessible.
- Anna Boutin-Cooper's slides
    - Accessibility in a classroom: accommodation model v. planning from the start--accomodation model problematic
    - Universal design https://udlguidelines.cast.org/
    - Important to streamline: only teach skills needed for course/assignments
    - Delegate class time to individual instruction

Discussion

- Bridget: In case others are interested in testing your web resources w/ screen readers:
    - If you're on a **Mac**, VoiceOver is a free, automatically installed program.
    - If you're on a **PC**, ADVP is good and free. JAWS is great but costs $$
- More recommendations for Luna database: what's recommended within constraints for the software in CDA report mentioned in slides?
    - Alt-text descriptions (hard because collections have hundreds of thousands images)
    - But before we get to that, the platform itself--lots of issues need to get through before even worrying about alt-text
        - Visual focus indicator is missing all together
        - Can everything be performed with a keyboard? With no mouse.
        - Asking Luna to do those two items, but going to work on alt-text on the back end
        - Indication that Luna and Artstor think metadata makes the record accessible, but not the same as alt-text
        - E-museum, TMS, but has Gallery Systems thought about this? [After an attendee connected with Robb Detlefs at Gallery Systems to answer this question and here is his response: "Yes, alt-text is typically displayed on eMuseum to describe the contents of an image. TMS definitely allows for the entry of that text and eMuseum can display it."]

- Doing lots of accessibility checks with online learning modules, but has anyone done anything with their websites for accessibility?
    - Really illuminating to try out a screen reader yourself and see what the issues are
    - Other automated systems to use
    - Webaim is a good resource for auto-checking accessibility issues: https://webaim.org/resources/evalquickref/#wave
        - But it might not catch everything, including keyboard accessibility
- **More of a technical question but what techniques are people using to implement breakout rooms?** I've found that they work well for small classes but have had disastrous results with classes of 10 or more students
    - In one case, staff are lucky to have other educators in their special collections department, so they usually ask one of them, in addition to the faculty member, to act as a 'guide' to pop in and out of break-out rooms with them if it is a large class. Each take a specific # of rooms (like room 1 to 3, 4 to 6, 7 to 9, etc.)
    - Ways to structure the learning objective--could have more rooms if needed to have smaller groups
    - Try a shared google doc prepopulated (content?) and have each room using that doc, helps with engagement
    - Have a collective note-taking document to share our observations, an idea stolen from this group
    - Google docs and google jamboards are fantastic. And always visit the breakout rooms
    - Problem with the students declining to enter the breakout rooms
    - Maybe try assigning the rooms in advance?
        - Pre-assigning participants to breakout rooms – Zoom Help Center
    - Try using Storiiies - Experiments in digital storytelling
    - Ways to strategically use the chat
        - Have students jot down ideas, then all hit enter at once
        - Ways to tweak platform to broaden engagement in a rigid space
    - A faculty member at one school uses breakout rooms regularly as their ticket for participation for that day - believe the students have to take somewhat detailed notes (maybe two or three sentences) and then send that in an email or something similar at the end of class to get points for the day.
    - Some places do NOT have the support from a higher level for accessibility
- I work within an AH department. For months we've been going back-and-forth with our AVP of Extended Learning about what exactly we are required to do to make our courses accessible to the visually impaired. IT seems to think we should offer a descriptive video service. We want to comply and are cognizant of the distinction between accessibility and accommodation. **How far beyond**

screen machine-readability/alt text can we go and not fundamentally alter our content? Is there a standard for art history courses or documentation from a university art history department I can use to make our online courses more compliant? The AVP said I should check U of Phoenix or Harvard. I went down a rabbit hole, but found helpful info at Art History Teaching Resources (AHTR).
    - This question resonates with others!
    - Hard to think about how to do enough to help students without rewriting alt-text every context and scenario
    - Thought about foregrounding in Smart Museum discussion, thinking about what engagement might look like even when back to in person--assumption everyone can see the screen. Prompt verbal descriptions, not just alt-text. Perfect challenge for art historians. We are all about building a skill set for describing visual things. **Toolkit for art historians has never been needed so much before**
    - Big push back from administration at certain schools that courses will be taken down if not properly compliant for visual impairment, but many faculty are adjunct and not paid enough to overhaul entire courses, so trying to figure out how best to help them
    - One level of getting past gatekeeper, and another level of doing best can for accessibility with infinite time
    - **Inclusive language and critical cataloguing**--can we also weave that into alt-text. If starting these alt-text workflows, can also implement those practices at the same time
- **Collaborative Guide to Pandemic Pedagogy**, may find helpful, and has accessibility stuff too
- **Can we talk more about inaccessible physical spaces?**
    - Disability office at one school had previously been on the 3rd floor with a barely working elevator
    - Again, an issue of transparency. Need to say in every program description whether a space is accessible
    - Need be as up front and truthful as possible
    - Other places, if elevator is out of service, space is inaccessible
    - **Some include accessibility (limits? Like stairs only, elevator available, etc) and directions to their location on campus in their email signatures. They also highlight this on their own institutional webpage**
- **Does anyone have student assistants assisting with writing alt text descriptions?**
- **For those who are working on alt-text descriptions, how are you managing that work - who is doing it, how is it balanced with other work, what team/department is responsible for it?**

- One school, alt-text has been simply dumped on the faculty, so that their posted PowerPoints can "pass" Ally, a Blackboard plugin that scores accessibility of content. One staff hasn't started to assist and is interested in establishing a work-flow
- There is a VRA Bulletin article on alt-text here Toolkit to Support the Description of Visual Resources for Accessibility in Arts & Humanities Publications.
- One school puts that information in the online appointment maker — just added one of those to their website, but so far all meetings are virtual. Libcalendar, part of Springshare suite--**tells folks what to expect**. Springshare has number of accessibility features that go along with it.
- In addition to the Springshare program, if your institution has Office365 you can use Bookings with your Outlook calendar
- Calendly is good and has some free options - you can add free text that could include more info on what to expect
- **It's important to introduce to student alt-text workers inclusive language so you do not have to go back and edit alt-text repeatedly**
- One school has student interns remotely creating visual descriptions for object records in their database. While this helps with alt-text when images are used online it also benefits database users with searchable terms. Prior to writing the text, interns read multiple articles on alt-text (like Cooper Hewitt's Guidelines for Image Description) to understand how to write long and short descriptive text.
- At Blanton at UT Austin, possible to engage community with projects like alt-text, good to think beyond student help although need some digital familiarity
- In one museum, there's a field for alt-text in the new DAM system which pushes information to the web, but there's no defined roles and responsibilities for this. Some staff have been working on it when all began working remotely, but it would be great if this could be built-in, sustainable.

Readings and Resources:

- Five Steps to University Design and 508 Compliance for Online Courses
- 20 Tips for Teaching an Accessible Online Course
- Beyond Compliance
- Works in Progress Webinar: Accessibility and Digital Collections
- Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST): Universal Design for Learning
    - CAST Universal Design for Learning Guidelines
- Carolyn Lazard, "Accessibility in the Arts: A Promise and a Practice"
- The Collaborative Guide to Pandemic Pedagogy - Includes accessibility items

- **Active Learning While Social Distancing (Worldwide Collaboration)** https://docs.google.com/document/d/15ZtTu2pmQRU_eC3gMccVhVwDR57PDs4uxlMB7Bs1os8/edit
- https://storiiies.cogapp.com/ - Experiments in Digital Storytelling
- Webaim is a good resource for auto-checking accessibility issues: https://webaim.org/resources/evalquickref/#wave
- Stephanie Rosen. "Toolkit to Support the Description of Visual Resources for Accessibility in Arts and Humanities Publications." VRA Bulletin
- Stephanie Beene, Glenn Koelling, and Dana S. Thompson, "Recommendations for Creating Inclusive Visual Communication During a Pandemic," VRA Bulletin