Errors Subgroup Scope Statement

Document information

8 January 2021: Draft shared with Silver Taskforce
13 January 2021: Finalized and posted to Errors wiki

Introduction

The purpose of this working document is to define a framework to guide the work of the Errors Subgroup in developing accessibility guidelines that address user needs that arise from errors:
- Error: An action or omission of action yielding an unintended result from the actor's (person or program performing action or omitting action) perspective.
- User Needs: Features that, if not provided, mean users with impacted functional needs will likely face a critical accessibility error.

Scope

In Scope

- How digital product teams should address the possibility of errors, where errors include but are not limited to:
  - Automatically detected input errors
  - Typical input errors that modern digital products can now be expected to detect, fix or prevent
  - Non-typical input errors
  - Mistakes (for example, a content author might discover they have been editing in the incorrect chapter)
  - Digital product errors, such as 404 errors
  - Actions a user might expect to be able to take, but cannot
  - Errors that can be expected to occur during content creation
- We will strive to encourage those methods that benefit the user the most.
  - Prevent Errors: Prevent errors from occurring
    - For example, a digital product team might decide to use a form field that only allows a user to choose a month name, instead of writing JavaScript to show an error message if the user types something other than a month name
  - Forgive Errors: Handle errors through coding
    - For example, a digital product team might decide to reformat some text before placing it in the database, rather than detecting the "wrong" format and presenting an error message to a user.
  - Avoid Errors: Help users avoid anticipated errors

- For example, a digital product team might decide to include the expected format in the form field label
    - Correct Errors: Help users correct errors
        - For example, a digital product team might decide to present an error message to the user
- How-to make error message content accessible specifically when that how-to information differs from what is needed for other content. (See also Out-of-Scope in this document.) In scope examples:
    - Social issues: embarrassment if the error content reveals that an error was made (e.g. noise in a classroom)
    - Frustration issues: are there sensory effects that might be acceptable outside of the context of an error, but that might cause users unacceptable frustration if used in the context of an error (e.g. if each spelling mistake made while typing causes unpleasant auditory feedback)
    - Common issues with types or error messages. Are there presentations of error messages that are common, but that cause an issue for a user group?

Out of Scope

- How to make error message content accessible (alt-text, semantic markup, plain language, etc) will all be addressed by reference. For example, a method might require providing "an accessible error message," and the details of what makes that bit of content accessible would not be part of the errors-specific guidelines, outcomes or methods.
- How to make elements that accept user input accessible (making sure a drag and drop activity accepts keyboard and single pointer input, making sure labels are correctly marked up and associated with form elements, etc)

Undecided

As we process user needs, example error flows, and various feedback, we may find that preventing errors requires us to address the following. It is not clear at the moment to what extent these will be in scope.
- Clear labels and instructions in general
- Learn: Help users learn the interface (e.g., tutorial, Help — may be subset of Avoid?)

Timeline

Target Date	Context	Milestones
End of January		- Complete draft **Errors User Needs Summary**: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1mTrr0hSsQrApmC4N0tF4fQOF-PiLsK-FNZproi7WQcA/edit#heading=h.s6cmfinlgb3q

		● Present draft of Errors User Needs Summary for review by a wider team as suggested at https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gfYAiV2Z-FA_kEHYlLV32J8ClNEGPxRgSIohu3gUHEA/edit#heading=h.s6cmfinlgb3q ● Most brainstorming work and work on errors user needs complete.
During February		Sketch the big picture for this set of guidelines: ● Work on draft guidelines and outcomes ● Identify the methods Goal 1: While the details won't be exact, a proposed vision for the big picture of these guidelines will be available for comment. Goal 2: Have draft **Errors Guidelines Outline**, outlining guidelines, outcomes and methods to share with the Silver Taskforce.
Beginning of March		Begin Refining: ● Address Silver Taskforce feedback on Errors User Needs Summary and Errors Guidelines Outline ● Begin wordsmithing ● Begin writing method content ● Begin checking that the guidelines cover what is needed and will be relevant to a variety of situations
Mid-March	First Heartbeat Publication after the FPWD	Choose portion of the above is solid enough to be part of the March 2021 Heartbeat Publication.
During April		● Develop and Administer Survey or Surveys 　○ End users 　○ Guideline users ● Address responses to the Heartbeat Publication ● Wordsmithing: 　○ Refine guidelines 　○ Polish outcomes 　○ Polish methods 　○ Add additional methods
During May and early June		Create supporting documentation: ● Guidelines how-to content ● Techniques and secondary resources for the outcomes Further Refine:

		● Revisit brainstorming materials (which may be added to at any time as participants discover examples in the wild) ● Uncover aspects of errors-related accessibility that might have been overlooked, but can be revealed through examples ● Uncover exclusions/inaccuracies unintentionally introduced by the wordsmithing ● Refine guidelines, outcomes and methods if needed
Mid-June	June is the subgroup's goal for completing the work, based on discussion in the Dec 16th Errors Subgroup meeting	Finalize draft **Errors Guidelines Content**, with guidelines, outcomes, methods and supporting documentation for review with the June 2021 Heartbeat Publication.

Second Half of June		● Document our process
		  ○ Functional needs
		  ○ Rationale for guidelines
		● Document lessons learned

Ongoing	We anticipate feedback from a variety of sources.	At any times that feedback is available and related to these guidelines, this group will reconvene to help address that feedback.

Literature Review and Collaboration