

**iSCHOOL  
DIGITAL COURSE  
MATERIALS  
ACCESSIBILITY  
AUDIT  
CAPSTONE  
ARCHIVE  
DELIVERABLES**

## CAPSTONE PROJECT CHARTER

# Project Information

**Project Title:**

iSchool Digital Course Materials Accessibility Audit

**Abstract:**

This project was intended to evaluate the existing status of digital course material accessibility to better understand potential points of improvement the iSchool can make. We found that while Canvas site design almost always met the standards recommended by Washington State Policy #188, text materials and video content had areas where they lack. The results of this project will allow the iSchool to better understand where to begin remediating its courses to align with legal accessibility standards and accessibility best practices, ensuring disabled iSchool students get the support they need.

**Team Member Names:**

Lex Van Horn

**Sponsoring Organization:**

University of Washington iSchool Learning Technologies Team



Digital Course  
Material  
Accessibility Audit

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# Introductions



**Lex Van Horn** (they/he) is a second year online MLIS student. As the project lead, they worked with the sponsor to establish the project scope, design the student survey, acquire audit materials, and establish the evaluation criteria for the audit. He was in charge of auditing the course materials and creating the final deliverable.

**Sue Morgan** (she/her) is a Learning Technologies Specialist at the University of Washington iSchool. As the project sponsor, she oversaw Lex's efforts and created the sandbox courses which Lex used to audit the course materials.



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# Background

As a disabled student, Lex's academic career has been rife with difficulty accessing both classroom spaces and digital learning platforms. Having heard similar concerns from other students both at their undergraduate institution (University of Idaho) and at University of Washington, Lex was interested in finding pathways to make higher education more accessible to all students.

During the 2022–23 academic year, Lex and a few fellow MLIS students investigated the legal standards UW is beholden to in terms of accessibility. As a public state institution, UW must abide by the ADA, Section 504 (Rehabilitation Act of 1973), Section 508 (Rehabilitation Act of 1973), and Washington State Policy #188. Summarily, these documents state that UW must not exclude disabled people who have passed the admissions process from participating in or receiving the benefits of services, programs, and activities provided by UW.

One of the key benefits of instruction through UW is access to materials provided by instructors, like readings and recorded lectures, which are frequently distributed online via Canvas. As it stands, there is no formal UW requirement for instructors to ensure their digital materials meet legal accessibility standards, which means many items fall through the cracks and, as a result, leave disabled students without the resources their non-disabled peers have access to.

This project was meant to assess the current accessibility levels of class materials distributed by the UW iSchool and provide recommendations for how instructors can make a difference in improving the accessibility of digital classroom materials.

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# Project Objectives

- Clarify the expectations iSchool students have of digital course accessibility
- Establish an understanding of the current state of accessibility for online iSchool class materials
  - Core goal was an evaluation of MLIS materials. Given instructor responsiveness and time, materials from the INFO, MSIM, Ph.D., and Museology programs were also analyzed, in that order of priority
- Provide concise, clear recommendations for instructors to improve the accessibility of online class materials

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### **Work Plan**

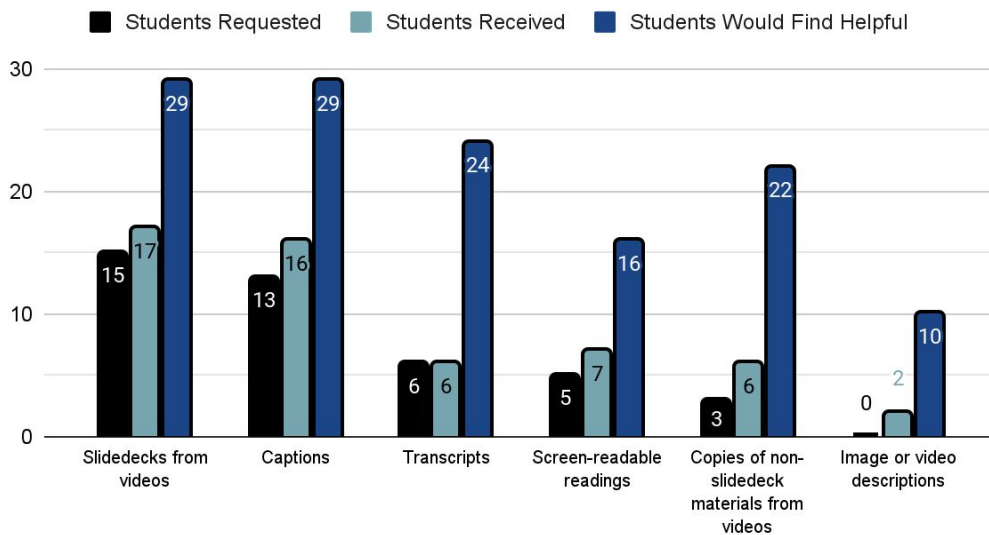
- Survey current iSchool students (Jan 8–Feb 19)
  - Design, Revision, Response Requests
- Determine accessibility standards (Jan 8–Feb 26)
  - Standards/Practices Research, Project Standards Selection
- Collect online iSchool course materials (Jan 8–Feb 26)
  - Selection, Collection Requests
- Analyze course materials according to standards (Feb 26–Apr 8)
- Write recommendation document (Apr 8–Apr 22)
- Request feedback on recommendation document (Apr 22–May 20)
- Share recommendation document with stakeholders (students, disability offices, instructors) (Jun 3)

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## Survey Result Insights

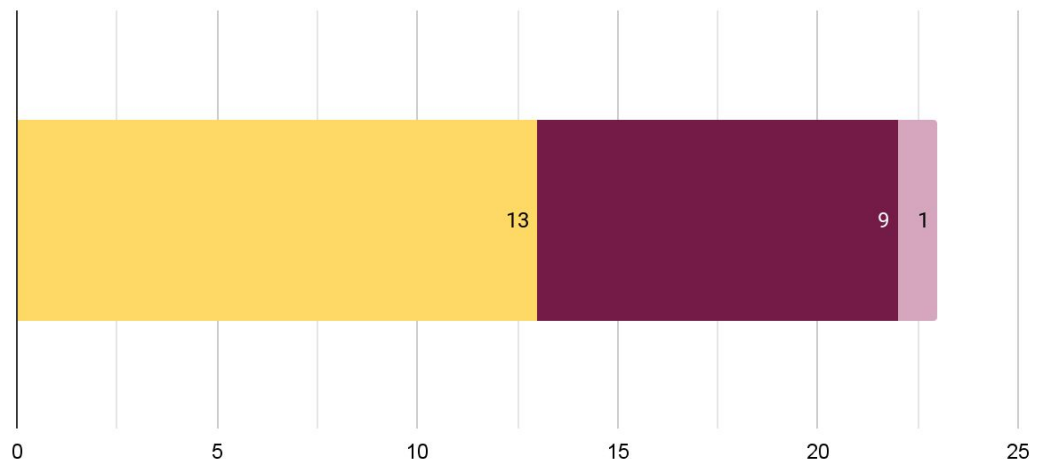
- Significantly more students would find each of the suggested accommodations helpful than the number of students who actually requested or received the accommodations
- Not every disabled student will arrange for DRS accommodations or informal instructor accommodations, but many of them may still find accessible classroom materials helpful to their learning

### Student Accommodation Experiences



### Disabled Student Accommodation Preferences

■ Accommodated students    
 ■ Unaccommodated students who WOULD find accommodations helpful    
 ■ Unaccommodated students who would NOT find accommodations helpful



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# Audit Insights

## Highlights

- Most Canvas site designs met minimum standards for WCAG 2.1 level AA criteria, according to our rubric
- About two thirds of the Canvas sites (n=10) utilized readings which consisted of text instead of images of text, which are not screen reader accessible
- About one half of the courses (n=7) provided alternative content for pre-recorded video audio, such as captions or transcripts

## Areas of Improvement

- Only three courses provided text alternatives for pre-recorded video content which accurately described its audio
- Audio description, as a means of describing non-speech audio, was only utilized in videos for four courses
- About one half of the courses included readings where the machine reader software was able to determine the appropriate sequencing of words



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# Recommendations for Further Work

### For Researchers:

- How much time does it take to remediate courses?
- Which accommodations do students report not receiving?
- How frequently do disabled students avoid using DRS and why?

### For Instructors:

- Attend [WebAim trainings](#) or [events recommended by DO-IT](#)
- Implement a start-of-course survey to better understand what accommodations your students most often need from you
- Audit your own course(s) using the rubric provided in the final deliverable

### For Administrators:

- Implement a policy which requires instructors to remediate their courses to meet legal accessibility guidelines and accessibility best practices
- Find methods to pay instructors to spend non-teaching time on accessibility remediation