Distance up close

NEWS FROM THE
OFFICE OF DISTANCE LEARNING

FROM THE DIRECTOR

One of FSU's greatest strengths is in our commitment toward the success of our students. We are also nationally recognized as a champion for the importance of a diverse and inclusive academic community. Our students have unique experiences, backgrounds, and abilities, and many rely on various accommodations and considerations to participate in their education. An important part of ODL's strategic plan is our commitment to creating an inclusive learning environment for both online and on-campus students.

To best serve our students, we recommend that instructors adopt the principles of universal design. This involves proactively creating accessible course documents and websites. Guaranteeing equal access to all students is not only a legal requirement, it is also our obligation as educators. Our goal is to provide you with the tools, training, and support you need to ensure your materials are accessible and available in a variety of formats. In this issue of *Distance Up Close*, we offer a number of resources to get you on your way.

We're currently piloting Bb Ally, a tool that will help instructors identify and address accessibility issues. You'll also discover how the Student Disability Resource Center is working to support students and faculty, including using an assistive technology platform for reading, writing, and study tools.

FSU has a broad range of resources available at your disposal to help meet the educational needs of all learners. The Student Disability Resource Center, the Center for the Advancement of Teaching, and the Office of Distance Learning are here to help you achieve this goal.

Sincerely,
Robby Fuselier

IN THE NEWS

Ally Pilot Extended to End of Year

ODL received funding in 2018 from the FSU Student Technology Fee Advisory Committee to conduct a one-year pilot installation of the accessibility tool Bb Ally. We launched the pilot in summer 2018 with a select group of colleges and departments, including the College of Social Work and the College of Education. The pilot has been extended through December 2019. Our goal in the extension is twofold – to allow

faculty more time to work with the tool and to work with the software developer to improve areas of the software.

Ally, which is integrated into Canvas, focuses on ADA compliance of course materials and Canvas course pages. It will help faculty and staff create course content in a variety of formats, increasing content accessibility for all students. Benefits include:

- Feedback to faculty on content accessibility issues and how to correct them (see graphic)
- Immediate access for students to use alternative accessible formats generated automatically by the Ally system
- Institutional and course compliance reports that can help departments and colleges track their progress toward full ADA compliance

"Using Ally was really eye-opening for me," said Dr. Lisa Schelbe, Assistant Professor in the College of Social Work, who is participating in the pilot. "The directions on how to make materials more accessible were clear, and I greatly benefited from attending an ODL workshop. Being part of the Ally pilot helped me realize how small changes in my Canvas site could make course materials more accessible to all students. My students seemed to appreciate the various formats they could download, and I have come to really see that universal design is beneficial to all of us."
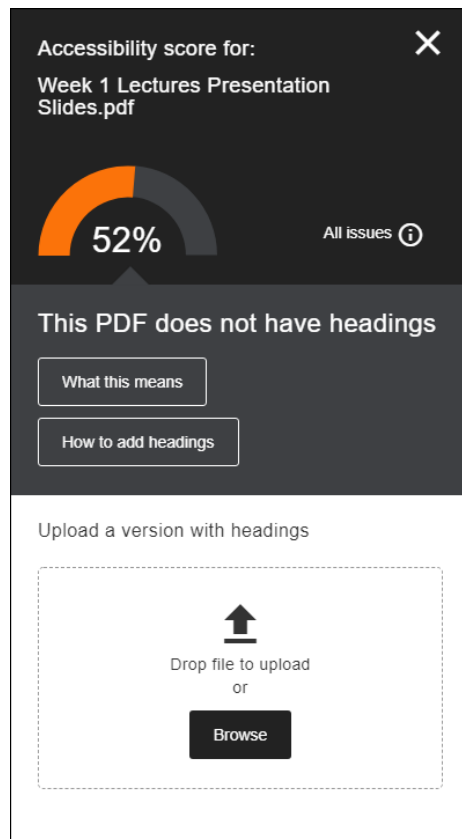
Pilot participant Dr. Dina Vyortkina, Director of the Office of Information and Instructional Technologies in the College of Education, shared how Ally can enhance the learning experience. "Using Ally opened many possibilities to improve student learning experiences and provide them with alternative ways to interact with course materials either in text or audio. I liked the availability of support materials to facilitate faculty usage on Ally in their courses and I also learned a lot by participating in the online user group."

For instructors currently participating in the pilot, we're offering **one-on-one assistance** in remediating inaccessible course documents. For faculty interested in participating in the pilot, please contact ODL Business Analyst **Dewel Lindsey**.

Checking Course Content for Accessibility

Do you want to review your course content for accessibility? While there are a number of areas, the following five are the most common and a good place to start.

1. **Documents are scanned but not OCRed.** Scanned documents, especially those of poor quality or those containing handwriting, highlighting, or underlining, can be difficult to read. When these documents are images only and not converted to text using OCR (optical character recognition), other usability issues arise such as not being able to select text or search inside the document.

2. **Document color contrast.** These documents contain text with low contrast between the text and its background.
3. *Documents with images and image files without an alt-text description.* Having a clear alternative textual (alt-text) description for an image can help everyone better understand the content of the image and how it relates to the course context.
4. **Documents do not have defined headers.** These documents don't contain any defined headers, such as using Word's styles. Headers provide structure to a document, especially multipage publications. When headers are properly and consistently used, the document is easier to understand and navigate for all users and provides additional benefits such as the ability to automatically generate a table of contents.
5. **Documents have tables without defined headers.** These documents contain tables that don't have or properly specify a header structure. While users with screen readers or other assistive devices rely on a semantically meaningful and correct heading structure to help them navigate the table and understand the meaning of each cell, a clear table structure can benefit all users.

If you have questions about accessibility, our Technical Support team is here to help, so please call us at 850-644-8004.

SDRC Serves Students with Disabilities

The **Student Disability Resource Center** (SRDC) serves as an advocate for students with disabilities and works to ensure the academic success of all FSU students. While the SDRC is a resource primarily for students, the center also assists faculty and staff regarding accommodations for the unique needs of students. Students with disabilities are provided with reasonable accommodations, including assistive technology, lecture recording, alternative text services, note-taking assistance, and extended testing time. For more information, contact SDRC at 850-644-9566 or **sdrc@admin.fsu.edu**.

Assistive Tech Helps with Reading, Writing

By KimBoo York (MLIS, FSU), Assistive Technology Coordinator at the Student Disability Resource Center

One of the challenges of working in accessible technology with modern college students is how fast technology is changing. The highly expensive, difficult-to-install-and-manage software packages of just 10 years ago are now simple and cheap phone/tablet apps. A good example of this is speech-to-text programs like Dragon Naturally Speaking. These days such a complex and powerful program is needed by only a small percentage of students who require specific features. Otherwise, especially for short term or limited use, the recommendation is to use one of the browser-based services/apps, which do spectacular jobs of capturing speech-to-text.

At FSU, one of the solutions we've landed on in trying to cross the divide between "feature rich" and "convenient/easy to use" is the robust educational program Kurzweil3000. It is a holistic platform for reading, writing, and study tools that can be used independently as a downloaded application or accessed through a browser, making it accessible on all platforms and devices.

The proliferation of multiple file formats means that having such a robust system that can adapt to various texts is critical. The range of file extensions for different text formats is very long and can be a

hurdle if a student is using an older, specialized format (such as DAISY) or even just reading texts online via websites or learning management systems.

Furthermore, the shift to online textbooks, with publishers using their own proprietary student portals for access, does not necessarily translate into easier accessibility. As well, faculty still regularly provide class readings that are image-based PDFs of old journal articles that were scanned years ago. Kurzweil3000 provides a way to bridge the many gaps that the variety of technology leaves in its wake.

The learning curve on using features such as text-to-speech remains the primary obstacle for students to overcome if they did not experience using such technology in secondary school. However, that barrier is lowering quickly, particularly in the case of the online, browser-based service Kurzweil3000, which is doing a fantastic job of making the technology easy to use, convenient, and feature rich.

Accessibility Guidelines

ODL has compiled a **comprehensive overview on accessibility and usability** to familiarize instructors with the importance of creating accessible course materials. The following guidelines address both the design of your course site and the format of materials included in your site (e.g., media, documents, presentations). Each bullet links to a detailed description of the topic.

- **Overall course site design**
- **Course multimedia**
- **General text recommendations**
- **File format accessibility resources**
- **Communicating with students**
- **Resources for accessible web design**

If you have questions about making your course materials accessible, please call our Technical Support team at 850-644-8004, **submit a support ticket**, or **schedule a one-on-one consultation**.

Universal Design for Learning Guidelines

© CAST, Inc. 2018. UDL Guidelines v. 2.2. Retrieved from http://udlguidelines.cast.org

When designing online courses, instructors should keep in mind the importance of **complying with accessibility standards** and striving toward inclusiveness. The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Guidelines, developed by the education research and development organization CAST, can help you create learning experiences that meet the needs of all students.

This interactive website details the three core principles of the UDL Guidelines:

- **Representation.** Present content in multiple formats that best align with students' learning strengths (e.g., audio, video, graphics).
- **Action and expression.** Give your students various options to interact with the material and express what they have learned (e.g., test, group project).
- **Engagement.** Provide different ways to motivate and engage students (e.g., assignments they find relatable).

Distance Learning Champion Remembered

FSU Photography Services

Talbot "Sandy" D'Alemberte, who passed away May 20, 2019, was a visionary on many fronts. In addition to his accomplishments as FSU law professor, dean of the College of Law, and president, he was an early champion of distance education.

Beginning in the 1990s, Sandy developed an online learning partnership with The Open University, a distance learning institution in London. During his tenure as president (1994–2003), FSU invested heavily in teaching and learning technologies. The university adopted the Blackboard learning management system and funded faculty through summer workshops that were designed to enhance their technology skills. When Sandy began his tenure, there were no computers in any classrooms on campus. By the time he left office, FSU was on its way to becoming the digital campus we know today.

After stepping down as president, Sandy returned to the classroom. His online courses—International Human Rights and Florida Constitutional Law—used technology to great advantage.

In remembering Sandy, ODL instructional technology faculty John Braswell said, "I have never seen anyone as eager to learn new ways of connecting students than Sandy D'Alemberte. His course in human rights was truly cutting edge. Sandy challenged his students at FSU and abroad with some of the most controversial issues that we face today, and through video conferencing and discussion boards, he was able to leverage technology to bring a small part of the world together."

In 2015, Sandy worked with the ODL media team for several months to capture all the lectures for his **International Human Rights and Florida Constitutional Law courses**. "I remember how much fun Sandy had putting together those lectures," Braswell recalled. "Every time he came over to our recording studio he was an absolute joy to work with. No one in the media group wanted to be out on the day that Sandy was coming in. My favorite memory was how he brought a big bag of bow ties with him, so he could switch them out between lectures."

Thousands of students have benefited from Sandy's support of distance learning as has our office, which wouldn't exist without his vision. He will be greatly missed.

Reminder: Kaltura Media Storage Policy

Kaltura has implemented a new policy pertaining to media storage. Under this policy, videos and audio recordings uploaded to or recorded within Kaltura that have not been accessed for playback within the last four years will be removed from Kaltura. Once this policy goes into effect on July 31, 2019, media removals will occur daily. For 2019 media removals, we recommend instructors download any videos or audio recordings they wish to keep to a remote storage device before July 31. *Note that if a video has been played at all over the past four years—even for two seconds—it will be retained.*

Instructors, please notify your students of this change so they can retrieve any materials needed for a career or graduate school portfolio. For information on downloading media items, please see our **support article**. If you have any questions about this policy, please **contact ODL Technical Support**.

Kids Ahoy!

For the second year in a row, children of ODL staff showed their Seminole spirit by participating in Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day in April. The kids tackled tech by logging into Canvas and later experimenting with the media lightboard. They lunched at the Seminole Café, followed by an exhibit at the FSU Museum of Fine Arts. Touring the campus for a scavenger hunt was a highlight of the day.

CANVAS FYI

Summer Training

Whether you're new to Canvas or want to update your current course site, ODL offers a variety of training sessions to help you enhance your skills in the Canvas learning environment. You can register for in-person workshops or noon webinars on our **Appointments & Workshops** page.

If you're seeking individualized Canvas support, our **in-person and online consultations** can target your particular needs. Our media team can help you develop course videos, use the **One Button Studio**, or record a lecture using the **lightboard**. For instructors currently participating in the Ally accessibility pilot, we're offering **one-on-one assistance** in remediating inaccessible course documents.

If you would like to arrange departmental training, contact **John Braswell** at 850-645-0469 to schedule a session.

New Gradebook

ODL switched over to the New Gradebook in May, between the spring and summer semesters. The New Gradebook introduces an updated interface and new features to help you manage student scores and submissions. If you haven't had the chance to review the improvements, here are some highlights:

- Improved navigation
- Easy column organization options
- New, color-coded assignment statuses
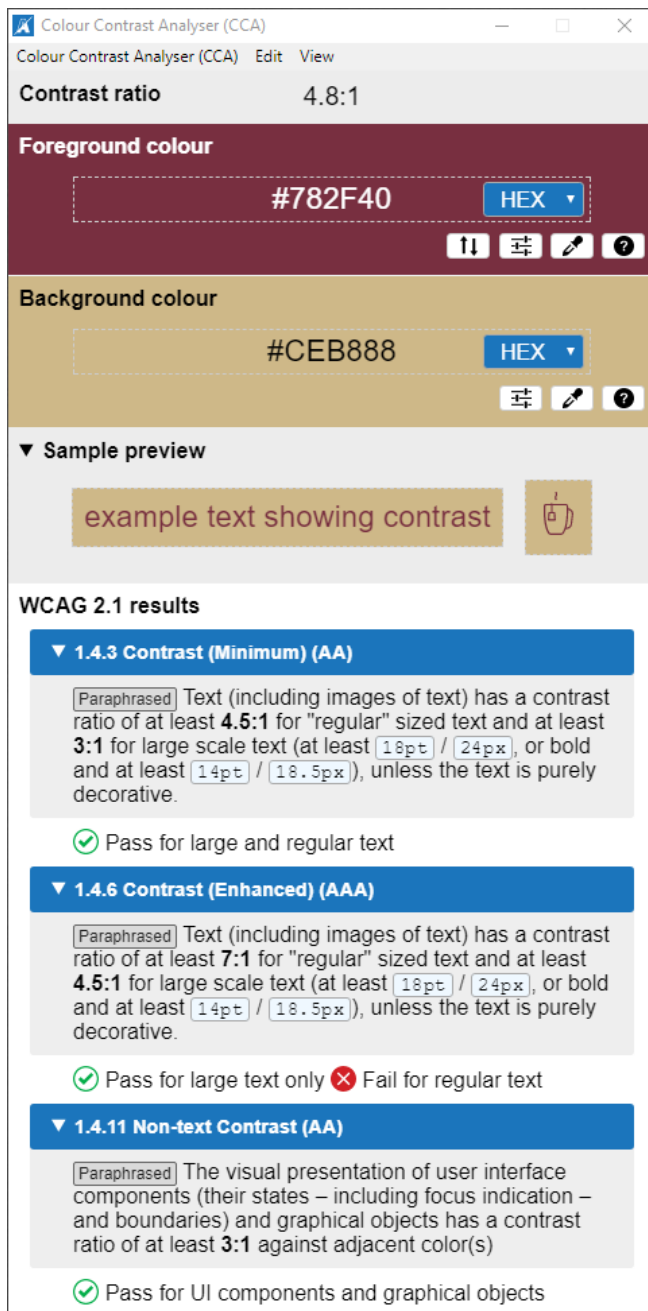- Automated assignment policies that can be enabled for late and missing assignments

For more information, check out our article on **best practices for the New Gradebook**. If you have questions about using the new version, please contact ODL Technical Support at 850-644-8004 or **canvas@fsu.edu**.

Release Notes

The June production release notes from Canvas describe feature options, external tools, and bug fixes. Updated features cover the New Gradebook, Conversations, and account settings. You can access the **complete release notes** on the Canvas Community page.

TOOL TIME

Tool Aids in Color Contrast Analysis

Sufficient color contrast is an important accessibility item, and faculty and staff can take advantage of a tool that will help them meet color contrast guidelines for their course materials.

The **Colour Contrast Analyser**, provided by The Paciello Group, helps determine text legibility and the contrast of visual components, alerting users to any potential issues with their documents or web pages. This analysis can help faculty maintain sufficient contrast between foreground text and the background, thus avoiding aesthetic choices that can unintentionally decrease clarity.

Among the tool's benefits:

- **Free download for Windows and Mac** (note that Microsoft Office and Adobe Acrobat accessibility checking does not offer a similar built-in tool or color contrast checking).
- Helps ensure that documents and web pages comply with the color contrast principles of the **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)**, as issued by the World Wide Web Consortium.
- Can use eyedroppers to select colors anywhere on your screen to get instant feedback as to contrast compliance within WCAG standards. You can also enter color values using hexadecimal, RGB, or HSL values.

It is helpful to understand how color contrast works in order to ensure the accessible design of your course materials. Color contrast is determined by the color's relative brightness. WCAG uses a formula that produces a ratio between the relative brightness of the foreground compared to the background. The minimum standard (AA) for normal text (non-bold under 18 point) is a 4.5:1 ratio. Appropriate color contrast for large text (over 18 point) is a 3:1 ratio. WCAG also has an enhanced (AAA) standard, which means at least a 7:1 ratio for non-bold text under 18 point and at least a 4.5:1 ratio for text above 18 point (see graphic). Using the Colour Contrast Analyser will help you verify these ratios. For a more detailed description, view the **WCAG documentation on color contrast**.

By keeping color contrast in mind when creating documents and web pages, you can produce materials that are both aesthetically pleasing and clear to read for everyone, including those with less-than-perfect eyesight.

TECHNOLOGY TIPS

Hotspots a Cool Addition to Videos

For instructors seeking to increase student engagement with their course videos, using hotspots in Kaltura is an option. A hotspot is a clickable object in a video that you can customize to make the media experience more interactive. For example, when the student clicks a hotspot within the video, it could point to a different time marker, offering the option to skip an introduction or repeat a particular section. You can personalize a link or timestamp over a media entry or customize the hotspot to point toward external resources such as other videos, webpages, wikis, or PDF documents. If students choose not to click the hotspot, the video will continue without breaking the flow of the content.

For more information about how to create hotspots, please **view our support article**.

Support Articles

Check out the latest articles from our **Canvas Support Center**.

- **Getting started with Design Tools**
- **How to create a Kaltura video quiz**
- **Flipgrid overview**
  - **Instructors: Important Flipgrid settings**
  - **Students: How to submit Flipgrid assignments on mobile devices**
- **How to embed Spotify content into your Canvas pages**
- **How to create peer review assignments**

LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

We are eager to receive your feedback on what you would like to see in future issues of the newsletter, so please **send us your suggestions** about ways ODL can better serve you.

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