TBR Libraries | Accessibility Audit Plan

Submitted to TBR Office of Academic Affairs on April 29, 2016.

# **Background**

Information accessibility is a core tenet of the library profession. TBR librarians and TBR share a desire to ensure more materials are more accessible to more people more of the time. To this end, TBR has asked TBR Library Deans/Directors to deliver a plan for an accessibility audit of library resources.

To meet this goal, the TBR Library Deans/Directors group established a task force of volunteers from TBR university and college libraries to develop recommendations focused in the following two areas:

1. Process for conduct of an initial library AIMT accessibility audit
2. Process to support greater collaboration among TBR libraries regarding procurement processes related to accessibility.

This document outlines recommendations for the consideration of TBR Library Deans/Directors in both areas.

The TBR Libraries Accessibility Task Force is currently comprised of the following:

* Glenda Alvin (TSU), Coordinator/Collection Manager
* Robert Benson (RSCC), Director of Library Services
* Travis Clamon (ETSU), Electronic Resources Specialist
* Alison DePollo (ETSU), Acquisitions Librarian
* Jennifer Mezick (PSCC), Acquisitions Librarian
* Rosemary Milburn (Chattanooga State CC), Purchasing/Contracts
* Brittany Richardson (Chattanooga State CC), Coordinator of Instruction and Assessment
* Livy Simpson (VSCC), Electronic Resources Librarian
* Sarah Smith (VSCC), Director of Library Services
* Vivian Stewart (Southwest TN CC), Associate Director, Library Services
* Celia Szarejko (ETSU), Director of Technology and Content Services

It is our hope this group will continue its work with support of additional members.

# Purpose/Scope of initial audit and procurement collaboration

TBR uses the phrase “Accessible Instructional Materials and Technology” (AIMT) to describe a variety of resources, materials and technologies used across the system to support teaching and learning. For TBR’s purpose, the scope of AIMT is a broad category including, but not limited to, course content, course materials, and textbooks as well as a variety of library resources and other resources.

A full-scale audit of all library AIMT holdings is daunting. Library resource collections are vast and complex, generally comprised of an assortment of resource types, including: bibliographic article databases, eBooks, streaming video/multimedia products as well as physical books, media, serials, and microforms. Additionally, our libraries license many third party web-based tools and utilities for doing our work and helping users connect to needed resources. Such tools include communication tools, automated library systems, Discovery layers and CMS platforms (ie. LibGuides). Our libraries also employ a wide assortment of software tools in the conduct of our daily work. A complete audit of all resources would take many people many months. Given the current rate of change with product interfaces, the findings of a full-scale audit would be out of date before the audit is complete.

The results of our audit must be useful and the conduct of audit sustainable. Audit findings should inform real decisions about product procurement and our ongoing communication with product vendors. For this reason, the task force recommends looking beyond the resource audit as a one-time, isolated activity. The initial audit can be a platform from which we can move toward greater on-going collaboration in addressing mutual procurement requirements related to accessibility. Despite the tremendous variety that make our collections unique, there is considerable overlap in the resources to which we subscribe. Many of our libraries’ AIMT resources are subscription-based. These resources are procured through a variety of paths and renewal cycles vary widely across institutions. The wide array of renewal dates and procurement cycles complicates our communication with vendors. If conducted by each institution, vendors would be working with 19 individual libraries each with its own message regarding requirements. Vendors will be confused and our libraries will be bogged down.

Greater collaboration is needed for us to standardize and streamline the review process; standardize and streamline communication with vendors and coordinate the sharing of key documents required by the TBR procurement process. TBR expects an accessibility review of newly procured resources as well as several significant documents describing explicit vendor commitments to accessible design. Since many TBR libraries license resources on an annual basis, we feel an urgent need to clarify how we will work together to share procurement responsibilities related to product review; vendor communication and document sharing.

The vision is to develop a process by which vendors can work with our libraries on a coordinated, system-wide basis and the resulting VPATS, Accessibility Statements, and Conformance/Remediation forms are provided one time and take effect for all TBR libraries. This will reduce confusion and duplicate effort by vendors and TBR librarians alike. This is no small undertaking.

## **Conduct of initial audit**

Initial audit of library AIMT will be coordinated and conducted by volunteers from TBR Libraries on behalf of all TBR libraries. By necessity, our initial focus will be on web-based subscription databases. Any audits required of other resource types will follow in subsequent years.

Initial audit will focus on resources with greatest potential impact to the most users. Resources selected for initial audit will be selected from those resources held in common by the majority of TBR Libraries with attention to a balance of format types. Formats will include: bibliographic databases; AV/streaming media; PDF; eBooks and mixed content databases such as Viewpoint/Context type databases.

The purpose of our initial audit will be two-fold. First, the audit will help characterize the general state of accessibility for significant library resources held by most TBR Libraries. Audit findings will help identify areas where library AIMT tend to be most in compliance with TBR expectations and areas where library AIMT tend to fall short. This information will help focus future product reviews in areas of greatest potential concern.

Our initial audit will also drive the adoption of tools, techniques and experiences that can be used to train and support other TBR librarians as needed in their ongoing review of their local collections. Adoption and refinement of standardized audit process, including an operational rubric for review and sharing of actionable results, will be a useful outcome of the initial audit.

### **Selecting resources for initial audit**

A survey of web-based library AIMT is currently underway. From that survey, a list of resources for initial audit will be compiled and assignments made for audit.

The initial audit will exclude resources procured by TBR and/or TN eCampus as these resources will be reviewed by TBR staff.

This initial audit will also exclude resources provided to TBR Libraries via Tennessee Electronic Library as these resources are purchased by the TN State Library and Archives, who is sole conduit with vendors regarding procurement and licensing of these specific resources. The task force will seek information from TEL administrators about applicable vendor statements as well as findings of any audits conducted by the TN State Library and Archives regarding accessibility.

The initial, selective audit will be conducted May – December 2016 so that the audit experience can inform the work of local librarians in any necessary reviews required throughout the 2016-17 fiscal year.

Initial training and support will be developed and delivered as part of ROCC Library Summer Academy in June 2016. Ongoing training and support will be developed and delivered online via the TBR Library Deans/Directors website as needed.

### **Tools for audit**

TBR requires that web-based AIMT be measured against WCAG 2.0 Level A and AA accessibility standards. If TBR libraries are to benefit from the findings of product review, the audit process must both simplify and standardize the review process and sharing of any findings. Meaningful review will require a standard rubric or checklist for consistent review of those standards.

The initial audit will be conducted using the WebAIM Accessibility checklist provided by TBR as a baseline checklist for WCAG 2.0 compliance. The task force will conduct a few early audits to test use of this checklist and recommend any adaptations needed to optimize its use for our purpose. If the checklist is found to be insufficient, the task force will recommend an alternative tool for adoption. Selection and testing of appropriate audit rubric will be a focus for audits conducted in May/June so that information can be shared with all libraries in time for FY2016-17 fiscal year.

Additional tools not yet identified will be needed to assess accessibility of PDF, eBooks and other media formats. The task force will also need to research and gather these tools.

Given the scale of review across our libraries, automation of accessibility reviews is essential. Automation will allow for more efficient, consistent gathering of data in standardized reports which can be shared with all interested parties, including the product vendor. Free tools like the WAVE plug-in for Chrome are valuable but limited in the depth of their review. We recognize that meaningful audit will always require direct inspection by trained, knowledge humans. However, TBR can greatly enhance the quality and efficiency of needed reviews by providing access to web-scale compliance tools such as Compliance Sheriff.

## **Ongoing review**

Full-scale accessibility review of all library AIMT is not possible given the staffing and workload of existing library staff. Careful review should be conducted as part of procurement for new products. This is the point at which customers have the greatest leverage with vendors and content providers.

Regarding existing library subscriptions, we advocate a crowd-sourced approach to ensure vendor compliance. We respectfully request that libraries be exempted from the product review requirement for renewal of existing products whose vendors have agreed in their license terms to address accessibility issues brought to their attention. Vendors should have clear, simple processes by which to report issues related to accessibility and should be held accountable for failures to provide and follow those processes.

Full-scale reviews would be reserved for any vendors who do not accept license terms related to accessibility and/or vendors who demonstrate an unwillingness or inability to address reported issues.

## **Areas of responsibility**

TBR Libraries can accomplish more by working together in a coordinated, collaborative fashion than we can working independently through our various institutions. By working together, we can streamline AIMT review; simplify vendor communication; and establish greater leverage with vendors regarding accessibility.

Library deans/directors will establish a continuing task force with representation from every institution that wishes to be represented. The task force will be responsible for coordinating the conduct of ongoing review activities; supporting the conduct of review; and coordinating vendor information regarding accessibility.

Task force members should have posting permission with TBR’s AIMT Accessibility database to ensure library-related product documents are being posted and updated in a timely manner. The task force will maintain a presence on the TBR Library Deans/Directors website where accessibility information, tools and updates can be shared with the entire system. The TBR database will be the primary repository for required vendor documents. The library accessibility website will provide access to additional VPAT repositories and other sites specifically related to accessibility of library resources. The site will also provide access to results of conducted reviews so all libraries can see which resources have been reviewed and findings of the review.

The task force will recommend tools and processes for accessibility testing available for use by TBR librarians in conduct of ongoing review.

Our move toward collaborative vendor communication begins with an Accessibility Document Roundup.

For vendors shared by most/all, a member of the TBR task force will be designated as official accessibility contact to help ensure required documents are gathered proactively, are up to date and shared for benefit of all. Documents gathered in this fashion will be shared through the TBR database for use with local procurement departments.

The task force will develop a standardized template for vendor communication for use with vendors who fall outside the initial document roundup.

## **Next Steps/Timeline**

The following tasks represent next steps:

* Identify resources for initial audit, assign responsible parties and develop timeline for initial audit (May 2016)
* Test Web AIM checklist for use as rubric. Recommend use or seek alternative. (May/June 2016)
* Presentation/training at ROCC Summer Academy (June 29, 2016)
* Add task force members (Summer 2016)
* Ensure task force members have posting permission with TBR database (Summer 2016)
* Initial accessibility document roundup (Summer 2016)
* TBR provide tools for review automation (Summer 2016?)
* Initial audit of web-based subscription resources (May - December 2016) \*\* *Note: More detailed audit timeline with aspirational deadlines will be posted as addendum to this plan once sources targeted for audit are identified. Timeline is contingent upon availability of web-scale compliance tools.*
* Develop website for TBR Libraries Accessibility initiative (Summer 2016/Fall 2016)
* TBR review of TBR-procured resources (TBD)
* Task force contacts TEL re: accessibility status of products (Fall 2016)
* Progress report (TBR Library Deans/Directors meeting Fall 2016)
* Assess progress of collaborative model and recommend needed changes (TBR Library Deans/Directors meeting Spring 2017)
* Develop timeline for future audit of other library AIMT resource types (Summer 2017)