DOI:10.1145/3047268

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ACM's Commitment to Accessibility

It is no secret that my passion for being an ACM volunteer began with SIGACCESS—the ACM Special Interest Group on Accessibility and Computing. As a new volunteer, I was

highly motivated by a talk by Ben Shneiderman in which he said he was proud to be part of an organization that had, as part of its code of ethics, the following: *“In a fair society, all individuals would have equal opportunity to participate in, or benefit from, the use of computer resources regardless of race, sex, religion, age, disability, national origin, or other such similar factors.”* I, too, am proud to be part of a society that supports these goals.

As ACM's President, I remain focused on issues of diversity. I would like to highlight two key aspects of accessibility already being addressed by ACM. The first is digital accessibility; the second is conference accessibility.

Digital accessibility. PDFs in the ACM Digital Library typically are not accessible. Within the next year, however, a new set of conference and journal templates will be rolled out that will include enhanced accessibility features. Working with a new publications vendor, automatic accessibility features will be created wherever possible and features that require author input will be flagged for author attention as part of the production process. Both accessible PDFs and HTML5 will be the outputs and will begin populating the Digital Library. Of course, as with all new processes, we can expect a few bumps along the way. Before release, however, ACM will have thoroughly tested these enhanced documents with users representative of disability communities.

Notably, ACM has committed to subtitling/closed captioning all video

materials released by ACM. Thus, all new content on the ACM YouTube channel will be accessible. This will benefit not only those with a hearing loss, but also should prove helpful to individuals who do not have English as their first language.

The new ACM website, which rolled out last year, had accessibility as an explicit requirement. Representatives from SIGACCESS and SIGCHI were involved in shaping the details of these requirements. Critically, users from disability communities were involved in testing pages generated by the new ACM page template.

An **ACM Web Accessibility Statement** is included on the ACM website, <http://www.acm.org/accessibility>. It is worth mentioning that much material on that website comes from vendors and volunteers, not from ACM headquarters. ACM is working with these contributors to make their offerings accessible. The **ACM Web Accessibility Statement** includes an *accessibility style guide* to assist those contributors in making their content consistent with ACM's Web accessibility standards.

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Conference accessibility. ACM has long had a commitment to making conferences accessible for attendees as well as presenters. SIGACCESS and SIGCHI again are leaders in conference accessibility (For details, see the article by Lazar et al. on page 50). The SIGACCESS ASSETS conference has long been a valuable proving ground given the high proportion of ASSETS attendees experiencing disability. The SIGACCESS conference guidelines provide a useful source of information for other organizers on how to create an accessible conference, <http://www.sigaccess.org/welcome-to-sigaccess/resources/accessible-conference-guide>.

For conferences that occur within the U.S., venues should meet ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) requirements. Conferences that occur outside the U.S. are subject to local regulations governing accessibility. Each conference's contact at ACM's SIG Services is knowledgeable and committed to providing conference experiences that are accessible. Conference organizers are encouraged to avail themselves of these services. In all cases, ACM strives to meet the needs of attendees who need accommodation. This is a long-standing commitment and an aspect of ACM that sets it apart as a premier professional society and about which we can all be rightfully proud. □

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