Accessibility: The Basics

CISC 282

November 29, 2017

AODA

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
- Concerned with five areas
  - “Information and Communication” includes websites
- Standard for website accessibility is WCAG
  - Web Content Accessibility Guidelines by the W3C
- As of 2014, new public websites must meet WCAG 2.0 Level A
  - Public sector organizations
  - Businesses and non-profit organizations with 50+ staff
- In 2021, all public websites and their content that are less than 9 years old must meet Level AA
Colours

- Don't rely on colour alone to suggest functionality
  - e.g., use red **and** an * for required fields

- Maintain contrast
  - e.g., dark text on a light background

- Don't mix a lot of red and green
  - Confusing for those with colourblindness

Text

- Use easily legible fonts
  - Some “handwriting” fonts can be difficult to read

- Don't make the text too small
  - Define font-size using em

- Structure your HTML correctly
  - Hierarchical headings
    - Do not use **strong** instead

- Text is better than files
  - Make it a page rather than a PDF

- Do not rely on direction and colour for instructions
  - e.g., don’t use “click the green button to the right”
Images

- Images should not stand in for text
  - *e.g.*, do not display a slogan in an image
- Must provide alternative text for images
  - Include any information (*e.g.*, text) in the image
  - Describe the image efficiently
  - Avoid using “Image of ...”
    - Adaptive technologies state that to the user
  - Do not copy and paste text content from the same page
    - Will sound repetitious

Links

- Links should be “clearly marked and distinguishable”
- Reserve underlining for links ...
  - ... although this is often not used in many designs
  - Use `strong` or `em` for emphasis elsewhere in the text
- Use descriptive yet efficient link text
  - Include where the user will be going
    - *e.g.*, “School of Computing’s course schedule”
- Do not open in a new tab or window
  - Can make navigation difficult or disorienting
- For files, include format and size [*e.g.*, ... (PDF, 217KB)]
Other

- All form elements must have an associated label.
- Try to eliminate older PDFs
  - If it was scanned using a photocopier, it’s pretty much an image.
- Migrating older content into a new site?
  - Eliminate non-compliant downloads (where possible)
    - Convert what you can’t eliminate into HTML (where possible)
  - Organize content using HTML5 outline elements and hierarchical headings
  - Edit older content to meet the requirements
- Can use accessibility testing/scanning software to find errors
- Look at WAI-ARIA from the W3C

Motivation

- Not all clients wish to ensure their sites are AODA-compliant.
- Motivation #1: it’s the law (depending on the organization)
- Motivation #2: good for accessibility → good for SEO
  - Search Engine Optimization
- Motivation #3: good for accessibility → good for all users