Breaking down barriers: Design for Accessibility

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The power of the Web ...

"The power of the Web is in its universality. Access by everyone regardless of disability is an essential aspect."

(Sir Tim Berners-Lee)
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3. Quality assurance with a testing scheme (BAFIN)
A few examples …

Although there uncountable issues concerning Web accessibility, there are a few major problems in Web 2.0:

- Keyboard navigation
- Dynamic content and no JavaScript
- Compatibility problems with user agents
- Images with no alternate text
Keyboard navigation

At Yahoo! Finance someone forgot to consider keyboard navigation.
And it can go worse …

The same page with user color settings.
On Flickr we see, that people try, but there usability issues concerning keyboard navigation.
 Compatibility

A simple feature …

In Google Suggest keyboard navigation is possible, but there are compatibility problems with screenreaders.
Images and alternate text

There are limitations to accessibility, or how would you transcribe a Google Map?
The range of Web accessibility

- User needs
- Legal issues
- Workflow
  1. Concepts and experiments
  2. Technical implementation
  3. Visuals and graphical design
  4. Web Content
User needs

From a user's point of view, content providers will have to focus on the following seven aspects to comprehend accessibility:

1. Text orientation
2. Contrast and colours
3. Resizeability
4. Linearisation
5. Device-independence and dynamic content
6. Understandability
7. Structured contents
Legal issues

W3C has published recommendations on:

- Web Content Accessibility
- Authoring Tool Accessibility
- User Agent Accessibility

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines are the basis for legislation, including most European countries.
Workflow

Web accessibility is often a technical issue - at first. To be successful, though, project managers and designers will need to relate to technical ideas such as:

- standards compliance
- web page prototyping
- progressive enhancement
Concepts and experiments

- accessibility and semantics
- cascading style sheets - art in web design
- navigation - a site's backbone
- text-only? For whom or for what?
Technical implementation

- layout techniques - writing letters with MS Excel
- forms
- flexibility, not optimisation
- device-independence
  1. Input devices
  2. Formats (PDF, Flash …)
  3. Dynamic content
Visuals and graphical design

Accessibility refers basically to content, not to design. There are a few checkpoints to be reflected, and art directors should ideally be able to develop their designs with Cascading Style Sheets. The accessibility issues for the graphic designer:

- contrast and colour are always subjective
- multiple formatting
Web Content

The next step is the day-to-day work, which is often in different hands. In a way, keeping accessibility up to par in a growing system is the hardest bit, not because of its complexity, but because there might be more people involved.

- orientation
- images (contrast, alternative text)
- technical accessibility (tables, abbreviations …)
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