

## **Editorial Comments: Advancing Accessibility in Library Digital Environments**

When we first envisioned this special issue, libraries across the United States were actively preparing for the implementation deadlines associated with the updated ADA Title II regulations. Institutions were auditing websites, assessing digital collections, planning remediation efforts, and developing strategies to meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA requirements. The urgency was clear, but so was the opportunity. Accessibility was no longer a niche concern. It had become a strategic priority for libraries.

This special issue emerges from that moment, but its focus extends beyond compliance. While regulatory requirements have helped elevate accessibility on institutional agendas, compliance alone is not the end goal. Libraries have long been committed to equitable access to information, and digital accessibility is a natural extension of that mission. The challenge before us is not simply meeting a standard but creating digital environments that are genuinely inclusive and usable for all.

The six papers in this issue illustrate both the complexity of accessibility work and the progress libraries are making in response.

Two papers explore how accessibility work is conceptualized and organized. *From Collective Care to Compliance* presents a user experience–informed approach to remediation within an academic library, arguing that treating library employees as primary users of accessibility systems can fundamentally reshape institutional culture. Through collaborative web-editing sessions, microlearning initiatives, and shared tracking mechanisms, the authors demonstrate how accessibility work can become more sustainable, less overwhelming, and more widely embraced. Similarly, *From Compliance to Inclusion* challenges libraries to move beyond a narrow focus on technical conformance. Grounded in principles of disability justice and continuous improvement, the authors distinguish between compliance and genuine inclusion while offering a practical framework centered on co-design, procurement accountability, and accessibility-by-design.

Two additional contributions focus on the practical realities of large-scale remediation efforts. In *Consortia Collaboration for ADA Title II Compliance*, the Texas Digital Library's experience illustrates the value of collective action. By developing shared toolkits, training resources, and policy guidance across 28 member institutions, the consortium reduced duplication of effort and expanded institutional capacity. The model offers important lessons for other consortia facing similar challenges. At a more operational level, *Stumbling through the Forest* examines the use of PDF remediation software within course reserves. The paper provides a candid assessment of the limitations, tradeoffs, and practical challenges libraries encounter when applying remediation tools

to real-world collections, offering a useful counterbalance to more idealized discussions of accessibility work.

The final two papers focus on governance and accountability. *Accountability for Web Accessibility* presents the Emory Libraries experience, synthesizing existing scholarship while outlining a comprehensive framework that integrates assessment, remediation, staff development, and governance into a broader model of organizational accessibility maturity. Complementing this perspective, *Influence of Collaborative Models Between Libraries, IT Departments, and Disability Services* provides empirical evidence for what many practitioners have observed firsthand: informal and reactive collaborations often yield inconsistent accessibility outcomes, whereas formalized partnerships with clearly defined roles, shared training, and institutional support produce stronger and more sustainable results.

Taken together, these papers point toward several shared commitments for the profession.

First, accessibility must become an ongoing practice rather than a time-limited project. Compliance deadlines may pass, but accessibility requires continuous attention, evaluation, and improvement.

Second, we must invest in the people doing the work. Content creators, web managers, librarians, and other staff need training, support, documentation, and collaborative processes that make accessible practices achievable and sustainable.

Third, we must design with disabled users. Technical standards provide an important foundation, but meaningful inclusion requires engaging users with disabilities in the design, testing, and evaluation of digital services.

Fourth, accessibility accountability must extend beyond locally created content. Libraries increasingly rely on vendor-provided platforms, databases, and digital resources. Procurement practices and vendor relationships therefore play a critical role in the accessibility of the user experience.

Finally, we must continue sharing what we learn. The papers in this issue offer thoughtful and candid accounts of successes, challenges, and lessons learned. That spirit of openness and collaboration will remain essential as libraries continue to strengthen accessibility practices across the profession.

The work of creating truly inclusive digital library environments is ongoing. Yet the contributions gathered here demonstrate that libraries are not only responding to accessibility requirements. They are developing new models, partnerships, and practices that can help shape a more accessible future for all users.

We hope this special issue contributes to that effort and encourages continued conversation, collaboration, and innovation across the library community.

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