A source book for accessibility guidelines

This item was submitted to Loughborough University’s Institutional Repository by the/an author.


Additional Information:

- This is a position paper presented at Interact ’99.

Metadata Record: https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/2134/1024

Please cite the published version.
Position paper submitted to Interact'99 Workshop:  
Making designers aware of existing guidelines for accessibility

A source book for accessibility guidelines

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At Interact '97 in Sydney, Australia, IFIP WG 13.3 held a workshop in order to collect and discuss previously issued sets of design guidelines for usability of systems by older and disabled people. That workshop prompted the idea for a book, stemming from presentations at that workshop, although most contributions are now being written specifically to cover additional topic areas. The book is authored by many well-known experts in the area of guidelines for people who are elderly and disabled, and its objectives are:

- to present general issues concerning the inclusion of older and disabled people in the design process
- to discuss the development, uptake and use of guidelines by designers
- to make suggestions to designers to help accomplish effective HCI for older and disabled people
- to review the external influences on design decisions, including the market, regulations and standards
- to discuss various software tools for accessing and using guidelines, as well as validating the accessibility of a system or www site
- to identify, discuss and point the reader towards existing guidelines, both in hard copy and on the www
- to discuss the use of guidelines for specific application areas (such as information services and the use of smart cards, assistive robotics, and systems for travellers), how well general guidelines apply to these areas, what further guidance may be needed
- to discuss future technologies and their accessibility

This book (in preparation) is expected to be used in both undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the teaching of user centred design of human-computer interaction
systems. It will also be essential reading in courses aimed specifically towards the assistive technology and rehabilitation areas. For example, Loughborough University will be using it as core reading for our new module entitled Ergonomics, Ageing and Disability.

Introducing these topics to potential designers may indeed be one way of raising awareness of existing guidelines for accessibility. The editors bring to this workshop a question for designers: Would they use this source book, in the field, as an introduction and source book to point them towards existing guidelines for accessibility? If not, what can we do to make this valuable information more used and more usable for them?

The editors wish to emphasise that, even when designers have guidelines in an accessible format, there is still much work to be done. Further increased awareness is needed so that designers know not only which guidelines are available but also when to use them. To facilitate this process, developers of guidelines should work together in coordinating their efforts and integrating their guidelines, thus providing a ‘one-stop shop’ for designers wherever possible. How can this best be accomplished?

**Acknowledgements**

Acknowledgement and thanks are given to those authors who have already drafted their contributions to this work. Their names and specific chapter titles are not given here, as some are still under discussion.