Accessibility Guidelines for Presentations

Introduction

Founded in 1972, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference (MARAC) is a vibrant, volunteer-run organization welcoming archivists who live and work in the mid-Atlantic region, which includes Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia. MARAC is focused on our members' needs and interests. MARAC strives to offer members affordable archival education, encourage diversity and inclusion in the profession, foster collegiality among archivists, and support archival advocacy throughout the mid-Atlantic region.

MARAC seeks to promote a diverse and inclusive membership which does not discriminate against individuals of different physical conditions, including visual, auditory, motor, and/or cognitive disabilities. To further the strategic goal of allowing accessibility, this set of guidelines were developed to ensure participants can easily read presentations offered at both virtual and in-person meetings, as well as gain access to presentations posted online.

Accessibility benefits everyone. Creating meaningful slides that are accessible can help convey meaning and aid in retention. Too many visual aids can detract from the presentation at large. Bad color contrast or small font can make slides difficult to see for anyone.

These guidelines are written to be general enough for all presenters to adhere to without strict limitations. All presenters at MARAC meetings are kindly asked to follow these guidelines to the best of their ability to ensure a sense of inclusivity and collegiality among colleagues.

Contact Information

Should any errors or updates need to be made to these guidelines, please contact MARAC's Administrator (administrator@marac.info).

To access this document online, visit MARAC's website under the Conferences tab in the [Meeting Planning Guides](#).

Acknowledgements

This document was produced by a thorough review of a number of comparable documents. These guidelines were produced in an effort to remain compliant with

initiatives such as [W3C Web Accessibility Initiative](#) (W3C WAI) or [Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.](#)

In particular, MARAC would like to thank Disability Access Services of the Department of Rehabilitation for their "Seven Steps to Creating an Accessible PowerPoint Slideshow." Much of this document has been repurposed from that framework. The document may be found in the [Resources](#) section.

Limitations

The guidelines listed below showcase how to create accessible presentations for Microsoft PowerPoint or Google Slides. Presenters using alternative tools or formats should try and adapt these guidelines as best as they are able to other formats.

Individual institutions may have requirements for presentations, including use of specific templates, fonts, colors, logos, etc. When possible, adhere to these guidelines while still remaining compliant with institutional requirements.

Basic Guidelines

Slide Layout and Order

Most applications for creating presentations like Microsoft PowerPoint and Google Slides will include templates and various slide layouts. These templates have built-in formatting to help with accessibility. Choosing a good template and proper slide layout for the information being conveyed on that slide will help ensure readability.

When creating a presentation also ensure that your slides are in a logical, meaningful order. Additionally, give every slide a unique title to help with navigation with screen readers. Should multiple slides have the same title, provide numeric order. (For example: *Results 1, Results 2.)*

Fonts and Font Size

Since presentations will most likely be projected onto a large screen with audiences at various distances, font choice and font size are important.

Sans serif fonts are frequently easier to read, particularly from a distance. Arial, Verdana, or Calibri are all excellent choices for presentations. If chosen, serif fonts

should be easily legible, such as Times New Roman.The minimum font size for a presentation should be 12 points, but 24 or larger are best practice.

Color and Contrast

Color contrast refers to the differentiation of colors between background, text, and any additional elements. Colors with high contrast are much easier to read, particularly from a distance.

Confirm that your presentation has sufficient contrast by using free contrast checkers, such as those linked in the [Resources](#) section under Color and Contrast Resources.

Avoid using just color to indicate a change or mood. Add accompanying text or other information.

Use of Animations or Transitions

Avoid animation and automatic slide transitions since they:
- Can be distracting
- Can cause screen readers to re-read slides
- Can read parts of the slide out of order
- May not give users enough time to read slide content

Presentation of Data

Data can be particularly helpful to convey information in a presentation. However, presentation applications may not be compatible with screen readers.

If the slideshow contains more than the simplest tables, consider saving the presentation to PDF and adding the additional accessibility information, such as alt text, discussed below. Consider allowing individuals to access data in alternative formats before/after the presentation for ease of access. If necessary, create a QR Code or hyperlink so participants can access the data in alternative formats.

For additional information on making PDFs accessible, look at the [Resources](#) section under Making PDFs Accessible.

Embedded Multimedia

Just like data, multimedia can convey information in new ways or provide depth to a presentation.

However, when utilizing embedded multimedia:
- Ensure video files are captioned
- Ensure audio files include a transcript
- Keep player controls available

Alternative Text

If an image is important to the content of a slide, add alternative text (or alt text.). Images which are purely decorative or have no added value do not require alt text.

For additional assistance in creating alt text, refer to the [Resources](#) section under Alt Text Resources.

Using Hyperlinks

Hyperlink text should provide a clear description of the link destination, rather than providing either the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) or simply words such as, 'Click Here'.

For instance, your link to the MARAC website should say "[MARAC website](#)" rather than "[click here](#)."

If the linked item has a title or originating site, be sure to include that information. Should the hyperlink be inaccessible, viewers can still find the original link with little effort.

Checking Accessibility

Best practice includes checking accessibility prior to presentation or posting on the Internet. Some presentation applications include built-in accessibility checkers, while others require additional software or browser extensions.

The links in the [Resources](#) section include checking accessibility for both PowerPoint and Google Slides.

Format

Presentations also can be saved for future access. Individuals with screen readers often find PDF to be more accessible, due in part because of small file size. Presenters at MARAC meetings are invited to submit their presentations, posters, and handouts to the Digital Repository at the University of Maryland (DRUM).

Should presenters want to include their presentations as part of their submission to DRUM, they should save their presentation as a PDF/A for ingest into the digital repository. Follow steps for the respective presentation application for creating accessible PDFs.

For information on saving PDFs as PDF/A documents, look under Saving PDFs in the Resources section.

Resources

Standards

- [W3C Web Accessibility Standards Overview](#)
- [Section 508 Presentation Guidelines](#)

PowerPoint Accessibility Walkthroughs

- [Microsoft, "Make your PowerPoint presentations accessible to people with disabilities"](#)
- [University of Colorado Boulder Digital Accessibility Office "Understanding PowerPoint Accessibility"](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control, "Creating Accessible PowerPoint Presentations"](#)
- [WebAIM, "PowerPoint Accessibility"](#)
- [Disability Access Services, "Seven Steps to Creating an Accessible PowerPoint Slideshow"](#)

Google Slides Accessibility Walkthroughs

- [Google Docs Editors Help, "Accessibility for Google Docs, Sheets, Slides & Drawings"](#)
- [Google Docs Editors Help, "Make your document, presentation, and sheets more accessible"](#)

- [Accessibility Checker](#)
- [Oswego, "Accessibility with Google Slides"](#)

Color and Contrast Resources

- [TBGI Colour Contrast Analyzer (CCA)](#)
- [WebAIM Contrast Checker](#)

Making PDFs Accessible

- [Section 508, "How to Test and Remediate PDFs for Accessibility Using Adobe Acrobat DC"](#)
- [Disability Access Services, "Three Steps to Creating an Accessible PDF File (without Adobe Acrobat)"](#)

Alt Text Resources

- [W3C, An Alt Decision Tree](#)
- [James Madison University, "What is Alternative Text?"](#)

Saving a PDF as a PDF/A

- [Wikipedia, PDF/A, "How to create a PDF/A File"](#)
- [Adobe, "How to convert a PDF to a PDF/A"](#)

Review

These guidelines should be reviewed periodically. In particular, reviews should be done with major updates to guiding documentation, such as the W3C Web Accessibility Initiative (W3C WAI) or Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Additionally, review should occur along with updates to MARAC's Strategic Plan.

Last review date September 1, 2023.

Reuse and Adaptations