Chapter 5
Getting It Right:
Matching Resources to Technologies That Match the Individual Student's Needs and Preferences

Liddy Nevile
OZeWAI Inc., Australia

ABSTRACT

Anticipation of a user's profile of accessibility needs and preferences can be based on their actual needs and preferences, as stated by or for them, if these are in an interoperable, descriptive form. Enabling this means providing technologies that match resources to the user's nominated needs and preferences. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, endorsed by all countries, has been adopted as law in many jurisdictions. In Australia, for example, there is discrimination law that obliges publishers to make resources accessible to all who need them. This can be done by enabling students to describe their needs and preferences and matching those to accessibility features and functions of resources. This means developing a suitable metadata standard. The International Standards Organisation is engaged in such work.

INTRODUCTION

Anticipation of a user's profile of needs and preferences can be based on their actual needs and preferences, as stated by or for them, if these are in an interoperable, descriptive form. Enabling this means not relying just on the assistive technologies that support alternatives to inaccessible resources or their components, but on stepping

back and providing technologies that match resources to the user's nominated needs and preferences. Students have used metadata to find resources by title, author, or subject, and the AccessForAll approach simply extends this to the process of matching a resource to a user-specified form that supports their access needs and preferences.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is where this chapter starts. The Convention has been endorsed by all countries who are members of the UN but it has not, in many cases, been adopted as law for the jurisdictions of those countries. In Australia, the various jurisdictions have legislated according to their powers. For example, the federal government has empowered the Human Rights Commission to engage with discrimination problems and there is a Disability Discrimination Act that can be used when someone alleges discrimination because a resource is not accessible to them.

BACKGROUND

There has been unprecedented support for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2006), Article 9 includes the following:

To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas. (2006)

UN Conventions are not effective, despite being popular, until they are enacted, one way or another for a jurisdiction. One context for what is now known as 'accessibility' is a jurisdiction where prescriptive laws apply. The other, converse situation, is where there are recommendations for good practice but the ultimate question is, post hoc, such as 'has the user been discriminated against'.

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO THE SAME PROBLEMS

Jurisdictional Differences

Some jurisdictions prescribe what a publisher has to do to make a resource accessible to all who need it. In others, such as in Australia, it is generally not prescribed but there are implications for not making it suitably accessible. The first approach, a

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