

Confessions of a Web Accessibility Author, Developer

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My Story

- Background
- Fairness, Taxi
- Michigan to Florida
- Web Axe
- Accessible Twitter
- Concerns
- Lessons Learned
- Quiz
- Contact Info

Background

- Married with two boys.
- From Michigan; now in California; also lived in Florida.
- Likes:
 - Espresso con panna (usually at Starbucks)
 - Motorcycling
 - '80s music (DJDen on Blip.fm)
 - Star Wars
 - Judge Judy



Background

- Creator/author of Web Axe and Accessible Twitter.
- Recent freelance writer for DesignFestival.com.
- Day job at Research In Motion (RIM) – maker of BlackBerry.



Confession 1

- My personal mobile device is an iPhone.



I'm Non-Partisan

- BlackBerry for day job.
- Windows main desktop computer.
- MacBook Pro laptop.
- Android tablet (Samsung Galaxy).
- Ubuntu (Linux) on old Dell laptop.

How did you get started?

- People often ask how I got involved in web accessibility.
 - “What’s your motivation?”
 - “Are you or someone in your family impaired?”
- No, just believe in equality & fairness.

About Fairness

- Blind, color-blind, partially-sighted, or fully sighted.
- Deaf, HOH, or hearing.
- Memory loss or good memory.
- Native language, second language, low reading level.
- Mouse, keyboard, single switch, or head wand.
- Modern browser, IE6 or text-only.
- 800x600 or 1680x1050.
- JavaScript or no JavaScript.
- 14.4 kbps dialup or broadband.

About Fairness

- Choice of technology must not create an unfair burden or provide unequal content to the user.

NYC Taxi Fail

- New York city fails to pick an accessible taxi for new fleet.
- Has “bells and whistles” but can’t accommodate all customers. Sound familiar?!



Tweet



AccessibleTwitr AccessibleTwitr

RT @blacktelephone: Wheelchairs in New York City cabs? Fugheddaboudit!
<http://tinyurl.com/42cukk2> #a11y #fail #nyc #cabs #nissan

57 minutes ago

— in reply to @AccessibleTwitr ↑



@margalit

margalit

@AccessibleTwitr @blacktelephone

People in chairs don't hail cabs, they use
handicap vans by appointment.

39 minutes ago via web ☆ Favorite ↻ Retweet ↩ Reply

Missed the point

- Not equal access; not fair.
- People could also:
 - Call the airline to make a flight reservation.
 - Travel to the water company to pay a bill.
 - Get news from newspaper or radio.
- Who also missed the point (on NYC taxis):
 - Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg
 - Deputy Mayor Stephen Goldsmith
 - Taxi and Limousine Commissioner David Yassky

Missed the point

- Poor parenting?
- Poor environment?
- Poor education?
- Poor training?

Michigan

- My parents raised me to be fair.
- Raised in Dearborn, Michigan.
- University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, MI) 1992.
- Four years at Entertainment Publications, Inc. (Troy, MI).



Confession 2

- I don't have a degree involving computers.
- BA in Communications, Advertising/Public Relations.

Florida

- Moved to Orlando in 1997.
- Several jobs in marketing, tech writing, and web development.
- Yes, I worked at Disney. No, I didn't play Mickey Mouse.
- It's really, really humid.
- Fun for weekend trips and theme parks!

Entrance to Tomorrowland



Confession 3

- I was laid off at two start-ups in Orlando.

Carley Corporation

- Web-based training.
- Mostly government and military contracts.
- Section 508 went into effect in June 2001, just after starting at Carley Corp.
- As first web developer at Carley, took on task of learning and implementing Section 508.



Carley Corporation

- Apply skills.
- Learn basics of web accessibility.
- Crossover
 - Accessibility
 - Usability
 - Standards

Confession 4

- Went to England 6 times for 2 projects at Carley Corp, and never took my fiancée. She's (still) not happy about that.



Moved Back To Michigan

- We got married.
- We got pregnant.

Web Axe

- Podcast and blog on web accessibility since 2005.
- <http://webaxe.blogspot.com>

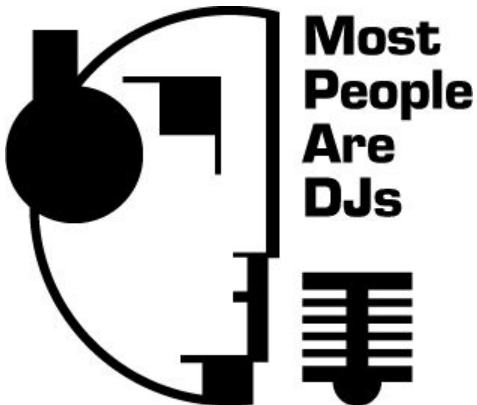


Confession 5

- It wasn't my idea to start a podcast.

Early Influence

- Detroit Podcasters Network
- Mike Pfeiffer of Most People Are DJs
(alternative music podcast)



In the beginning...

- Early Web Axe podcasts were brief, basic.
- Fewer blogs more podcasts (now opposite).

New Life

- Ross Johnson of 3.7 Designs (downtown Ann Arbor) joins Web Axe in 2006.
 - Successful web design company.
 - GM
 - Michigan State University
 - AnnArbor.com
 - Currently writing a book on design.



Refresh Detroit

- Chapter of Refreshing Cities community.
- Co-founder with Ross Johnson.
- Still active: May 26th meeting on PhoneGap.
- Ross and I no longer have active roles.



Web Axe Highlights

- 5-Year Web Axe Anniversary podcast
 - Bruce Lawson
 - Denis Boudreau
 - Jennison Asuncion
 - Karen Mardahl
 - Mike Gifford
 - Paul Boag
 - Steve Grobschmidt
 - Terrill Thompson
 - Tom Babinszki

Web Axe Highlights

- Other guests and interviews.
 - Chris Heilmann
 - Jeremy Keith
 - Andrew Kirkpatrick
 - Paul Boag
 - Patrick Lauke
 - Everett Zufelt
 - John Foliot
 - Mike Cherim

Web Axe Highlights

- 3-time nominee for "Podcast of the Year" in .net magazine's Best of the Web awards.



Web Axe Highlights

- Critiques
 - CA.gov Web Site Accessibility Page
 - New Section 508 Web Site
 - Podcast #69: Recovery.gov Site Review
- Can consumers trust website accessibility declarations?
 - Study for ANEC by the University of Middlesex
 - “Only 3 websites out of 76 government and public body websites certified by a third-party were accessible, while none of the commercial websites out of 24 that had self-declared could be considered accessible”

Confession 6

- I actually enjoy doing the critiques.

Web Axe Highlights

- Blog: Music About Web Accessibility (Feb)
 - WCAG 2.0 Theme Song by David MacDonald (YouTube).
 - Assistive Technology Boogie - fun, and it's accessible Flash!
 - "Man With Small F" (The Inaccessible PDF Song) by Terrill Thompson.
 - Inaccessible song by Daniel Davis.
 - Listen to the Web Axe theme song!

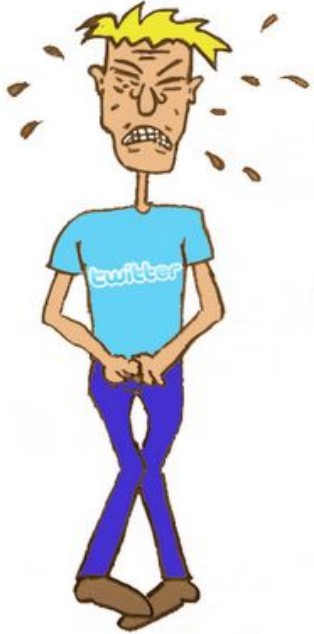
Web Axe Highlights

- Accessibility The Musical
 - Tomorrow (Wed): 3:30 to 5 PM
 - Sharron Rush
 - Panel of people with disabilities on how they experience music, dance and media through rich internet experiences and events made accessible through the use of assistive technologies.

Web Axe Highlights

- “Fixing alt” series.
- So many comics and infographics *still* do not have alternative text.
- Fun examples of how to write.

Fixing Alt Example



Social Media Definition by Peeing

- Man in Twitter t-shirt, holding crotch, face strained: "I need to pee."
- Man in Foursquare t-shirt pointing at pee on floor: "I'm peeing here."
- Man in Slideshare t-shirt, arms raised: "Why I am Great at Peeing."

First Web Apps

- Screenplaze
- Great Wedding Plans (never built)
- My Client Time

Accessible Twitter

- Accessible web-based Twitter application.
- <http://www.AccessibleTwitter.com>



Confession 7

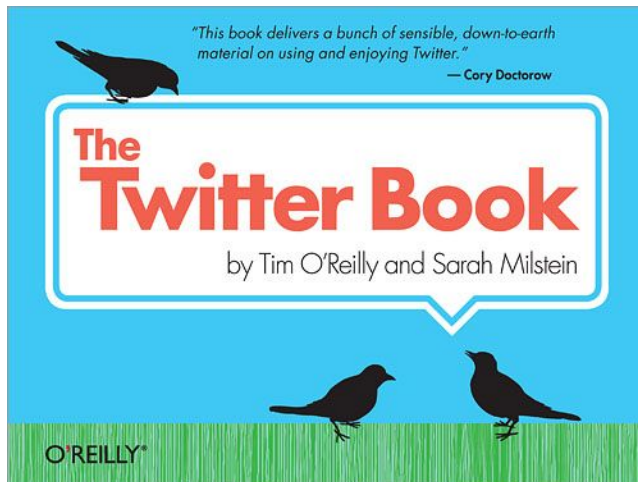
- It wasn't my idea to create a web-accessible Twitter application.

How started

- Gez Lemon's article [Twitter Focus on Juicy Studio](#).
 - Greasemonkey script makes favorite, reply and delete links keyboard accessible (Old Twitter).
- Doug Diego's suggestion.

Great mentions

- The Twitter Book
 - By Tim O'Reilly and Sarah Milstein



Great mentions

- Articles
 - Accessible Twitter: how it should have been done to start with
 - by Andy Bryant, LessFuss Design
 - Accessible Twitter: Advancement through technology
 - by Léonie Watson, Nomena
 - Accessible Twitter on .eduGuru
 - by Nick DeNardis
 - Interview with Accessible Twitter creator Dennis Lembree
 - by Accessify.com

Great mentions

- Alyssa Milano tweet!
September 5, 2010.



@Alyssa_Milano

Alyssa Milano

Accessible Twitter - a Twitter client for
blind and disabled users

<http://bit.ly/9M4nOA> /via @kvox

@brainpicker

5 Sep via [Twittelator](#) ☆ Favorite ↻ Undo Retweet ↩ Reply

It's nice to be appreciated

- Recipient of the American Foundation for the Blind 2011 Access Award.
 - Other recipients are CBS, Lexmark, and Walt Disney Parks & Resorts.
 - Irony: Class-action lawsuit against Disney for inaccessible websites around same time.

Eat my own dog food

- I use Accessible Twitter for all my Twitter accounts.

Confession 8

- I use HootSuite for timed tweets.
- (And usually Seesmic on mobile)



Owly on AT

- HootSuite owl mascot trying Accessible Twitter.
- Twitter Executive Conference, San Francisco, Nov 2010.



Concerns

- No text link underlines.
- Lack of proper headings.
- Lack of keyboard access, focus.
- Redundant title attributes (pet peeve).
- Missing alternative text in comics (and infographics).

Concerns

- `longdesc` attribute *obsolete* in HTML5.
 - My 2-part article about long description on DesignFestival.
 - John Foliot, Stanford
- `alt` attribute *optional* in HTML5.
 - In the mix: `title`, `aria-labelledby`, `role=presentation`, `figcaption`, generator meta tag
 - HTML5 Accessibility Chops: the alt decision
 - Steve Faulkner, The Paciello Group.
- Change Proposals have been opened on both issues.

Lessons Learned

- Take opportunity when arises.
- Always consider all types of users; be inclusive.
- Use different types of technologies.
- Relationships rule; personal growth.
- A great user experience is ultimate goal; not complying with checklists and validation tests.
- Try, try again.
- Take your significant other to a foreign country with you when you have the chance.

Quiz 1/5

- What's my favorite drink at Starbucks?

Quiz 2/5

- In what year did I start at Carley Corporation?

Quiz 3/5

- For what award is Web Axe a 3-time nominee?

Quiz 4/5

- What Twitter celebrity tweeted about Accessible Twitter?

Quiz 5/5

- From what university did I graduate?

Contact Info

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<http://AccessibleTwitter.com>