Quick Tips for Accessibility

The Why

- We want all of our students to have ready access to course materials.
- The law requires us to make materials accessible.[1]

The How: Easy Steps Faculty Can Take

Faculty are most likely to encounter accessibility issues when students need to make use of a screenreader to access course materials. There are two simple things that faculty can do to ensure that students will be able to use course materials with a screenreader, and neither takes much time.

- *Submit book orders in timely fashion.* This allows the Disabilities Resource Office and students to work with publishers to obtain accessible versions of the texts they need.
- *Be sure that screenreaders will be able to read any PDF files used in a course.* Most of the time, a PDF of an article obtained from one of the College's subscribed databases will be readable. In case of uncertainty, there's an easy way to check. It's especially important to check scanned materials — some scans are done using OCR (Optical Character Recognition) and will therefore be accessible, but others are not.
    - Is it possible to select an individual word when the PDF is opened in Preview, Adobe, or other PDF reader? If so, a screenreader will likely be able to handle the file.
    - If selecting an individual word is *not* possible, the file is not accessible.

Our colleagues in Instructional Technology can assist with making scanned materials accessible; they just need a bit of lead time.

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[1] "A Clear Standard", found on the AHEAD (Association on Higher Education and Disability) website (http://ahead.org/), explains the implications of the DOJ's settlement with Lousiana Tech and gives a good definition of "accessibility": " 'Accessible' means a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to **acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally effective and equally integrated manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use.** The person with a disability must be able to obtain the information as fully, equally and independently as a person without a disability. Although this might not result in identical ease of use compared to that of persons without disabilities, it still must ensure equal opportunity to the educational benefits and opportunities afforded by the technology and equal treatment in the use of such technology. (Resolution Agreement South Carolina Technical College System OCR Compliance Review No. 11-11-6002, [emphasis added])" (http://ahead.org/DOJ_Louisiana_Tech_Settlement)