Web site usability for people with disabilities

RNIB Campaign for Good Web Design

Julie Howell
Digital Policy Development Manager

julie.howell@rnib.org.uk
www.rnib.org.uk/webaccesscentre

Impairments that can impact on web use

- 9m deaf and hard of hearing people
- 6m people are dyslexic
- 2m blind and partially sighted
- 1.8m people experience colour blindness
- 1.2m people with learning disabilities
- 450,000 people with epilepsy
- 350,000 people affected by strokes
- 85,000 people with multiple sclerosis
- other conditions such as cerebral palsy, head injury, injuries caused by accidents, etc.

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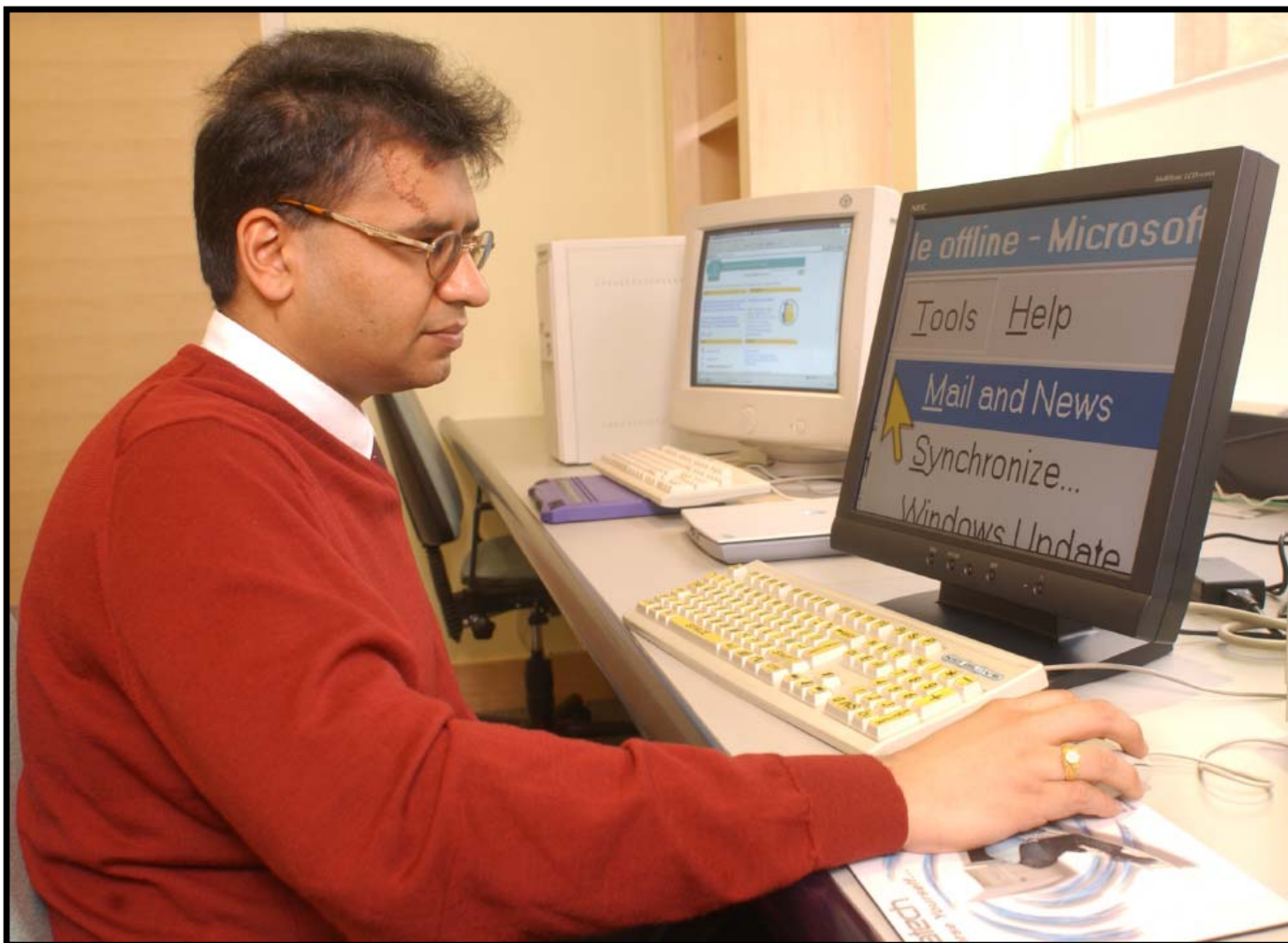
Impairments that can affect use of the web

- **Sight loss or blindness**
  - what helps: image description, control of layout
- **Hearing loss or deafness**
  - what helps: text transcript of audio
- **Diminished dexterity (arthritis, hand tremor)**
  - what helps: keyboard access
- **Cognitive impairments (memory, concentration)**
  - what helps: logical navigation, plain language

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1995 Disability Discrimination Act
and the web… a brief history

- **October 1999: DDA Section 21 came into effect**
- **February 2002: DDA Code of Practice (revised)**
- **July 2003: RNIB issued county court proceedings**
- **April 2004: Disability Rights Commission Formal Investigation into Web Accessibility report www.drc-gb.org**

- **Recommended article: Mason, Casserley & Howell 'Web site design and the DDA' in Computers & Law, Dec 01/Jan 02 www.rnib.org.uk/webaccesscentre**

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Disability Rights Commission research findings   www.drc-gb.org

- **Finding 1: 81% of web sites fail WAI Level A**

- **Violations of just 8 Checkpoints accounted for 82% of the reported problems:**
  - Provide a text equivalent for every non-text element
  - Ensure that colours contrast
  - Usable when programmable objects not supported
  - Avoid movement
  - No pop-ups without informing the user
  - Divide large blocks of information
  - Identify target of links
  - Clear, appropriate language

Disability Rights Commission research findings

- **Finding 5: 45% of the problems encountered by disabled users cannot be attributed to explicit violations of WAI checkpoints**

- **Implementing accessibility guidelines is not enough on its own**

- **Accessibility and usability are both essential attributes of good design**

- **Usability testing with disabled people is crucial as a means of detecting and correcting web design problems**

- **'The Usability Bonus': testing with disabled people could identify ALL usability issues**

Disability Rights Commission research findings

- **High awareness of web accessibility as an important issue**
  - **98% of large organizations**
  - **69% of small and medium organizations**

- **Yet 81% of web sites fail the most basic accessibility criteria…**

something is wrong !!!

Coming soon...

- **PAS 78: Guide to Good Practice in Designing Accessible Web sites**

- **Volunteers for review panel should contact julie.howell@rnib.org.uk as soon as possible!**

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Accessible & usable with 'web standards'

"The power of the web is in its universality.
Access by everyone regardless of disability
is an essential aspect." **Prof. Sir Tim Berners-Lee**

- **WAI Web Content Accessibility Guidelines**
- **WAI User Agent Accessibility Guidelines**
- **WAI Authoring Tool Accessibility Guidelines**
- **www.w3.org/wai**

Your toolkit also includes:
- **user involvement (early!)**
- **usability testing (often!)**
- **automated testing (with caution!)**
- **analysis by experts (check credentials!)**

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Accessibility standards for

- **People with any disability**
- **People with low literacy**
- **People with low numeracy**
- **People whose first language isn't English**
- **People in rural areas**
- **'Device independence'**
- **Any browser, any version**
- **It also works for 20-something, middle class, able-bodied, highly literate, city-dwelling, English-speaking technocrats...**

RNIB Campaign for Good Web Design est. 1999

"Accessible web sites, systems and services are those that can be used by everyone, regardless of ability/disability, technology and circumstance."

Julie.Howell@rnib.org.uk
01733 37 50 74

RNIB, Bakewell Road, Orton Southgate, Peterborough PE2 6XU

www.rnib.org.uk/wac

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