

Disability Rights and Digital Rights Management: Lock out pirates not disabled people

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Presenters

Hugh Huddy, RNIB Digital Policy Development and Lead for Good eDocument Design

Henny Swan, RNIB Web Access Centre and Senior Web Accessibility Consultant

e text opens the doors to accessibility

- Printed word is information "trapped on paper"
- Bad for blind people!
- e text is an accessibility revolution
- Screen reader software converts e text to synthetic speech
- Text to speech is now a widely available technology
- Optional install on computers, mobile phones and digital players
- No need to pay human readers anymore!

Setting the scene

- All publications now exist in e format
- No reason why e content cannot form accessible versions
- Compliance with good design standards and principles is critical
- DRM can conflict with accessibility technologies
- Must be designed to support access not lock it out

Case study

- Lynne bought herself a PDF e Book from Amazon
- Security locked out her screen reader
- 'Allow screen reader access' function switched off by Publisher
- Amazon said not their fault
- Publisher said nothing to do with them
- Catch 22 Lynne is stuck
- Illegal DRM?

Disability Rights Management

- DDA (UK) and 508 (USA) outlaws discrimination
- Same rights of access
- Same terms, same time, same price
- Technology can realise these rights
- DRM that blocks accessibility probably unlawful

Technology and the regulatory challenges

- Evidence shows widespread lack of understanding and application of accessibility technologies and standards
- Website designers fail to put web accessibility into practice
- Publishers fail to structure digital content files for efficient conversion into accessible formats.
- Technical protection measures disrupt accessibility
- e-book formats allow content providers to easily disable accessibility functions
- Providers suspicious of accessibility and perceive as threat
- These attitudes prevent content reaching disabled users
- Publishers uninterested in 'market of vision impaired people'
- Publishers unwilling to release digital source files
- Worried about unauthorised redistribution
- Confusion about whether 'audio rights' are needed for text that is converted to spoken word audio

Copyright law is failing disabled people

- International and European copyright laws fail to provide exceptions that facilitate accessibility
- WIPO anti-circumvention of technical protection measures not matched by legitimate accessibility exceptions*
- Article 6.4.1 of European Union Copyright Directive does address this issue...
- but gives no indication how the conflict is to be resolved
- nor does it require resolution of the conflict for content made available via interactive digital services
- Legislative provisions at national level are not co-ordinated
- At least two of the countries referenced in EUAIN† study yet to implement EU Copyright Directive
- One country has elected not to include the exception for visually impaired people

* Anti-circumvention of technical protection measures introduced by WIPO copyright Treaty (WCT) and WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty (WPPT) 1996 are not matched by any provision to accommodate legitimate exceptions to copyright protection

† Ref: Garnett, N., Mann, D., & White, M., (eds) (2005) Accessing & Protecting Content, EUAIN Consortium, FNB Amsterdam (enquiries to euain@fnb.nl)

Accessibility and Adobe PDF eBooks

- Adobe Reader offers range of accessibility features
- High contrast and colour controls for vision impaired users
- Adaptability to integrate with screen magnification software
- 'Read Aloud' built in text to speech engine (very crude)
- Keyboard shortcuts for screen reader users
- 'Reflow' gives users function to fit enlarged text to screen width or correct bad reading order
- but Reflow doesn't work for complex layouts
- Limits to extent features can compensate for inaccessible design of source document
- Tagging a PDF using Acrobat creates invisible text alternative accessible to screen reader users

Accessibility and Adobe security

- Security and accessibility often conflict
- Due to failures in technological design
- Adobe have taken initiative (unlike other vendors)
- Added 'Allow screen reader access' to Acrobat security settings
- Checked by default with Acrobat tools
- Not checked / non-existent with third party authoring tools

Contacts and further information

- RNIB Web Access Centre
<http://www.rnib.org.uk/webaccesscentre>
- The EUAIN Network <http://www.euain.org>
- eDocument Accessibility hugh.huddy@rnib.org.uk
- Web Accessibility henny.swan@rnib.org.uk