# Transcript for Accessible Social Media Workshop

**Kathy Marks**

**kdmarks@asu.edu**

**webaccessibility.asu.edu**

## Slide 1. Intro

Hi! Welcome to this presentation on social media and what it means to ensure your social media posts are accessible to people with disabilities. I'm Kathy Marks, the IT Accessibility Coordinator for UTO at ASU.

Before we get started, I’d like to invite anyone who needs them to download an accessible copy of these slides or the text transcript I’m following from the webpage links.asu.edu/soc-med Again that’s links.asu.edu/soc-med

If you have any trouble, please interrupt me. In fact, at any point in this presentation that you have a question or something to add, please feel free to interrupt me. We’ll have time for questions at the end, but I know some questions can’t wait.

## Slide 2. Agenda

This workshop will be in three segments:

* First, let’s take a look out the state of social media when it comes to accessibility media?
* Then we’ll roll up our sleeves and get into some tips for making your account or profile page more accessible
* And finally, we’ll learn to make our social media posts more accessible

## Slide 3. Section 1: How accessible is social media?

## Slide 4. The Importance of Social Media

These days, social media has almost become *essential*. More and more universities, companies, government entities and other organizations use social media to engage with customers, share information, and deliver

For example, if you're looking for a job, social media could be vital...the percentage of recruiters who use LinkedIn? **94%.**

Social media is used for communication, collaboration, reviews & opinions, brand monitoring, entertainment, media sharing, political activity, news reporting and more.

## Slide 5. Why Does Accessibility Matter?

Because social media is so essential, accessibility to it is vital. As the slide shows, over 3.81 billion people worldwide actively use social media...and nearly a quarter of them have some form of disability—either visible, such as blindness and mobility disorders, or invisible, such as hearing impairments and cognitive or mental health disorders. Many, many other people experience temporary or situational disabilities every day—for example, trying to read with a migraine or outside with the sun glaring on your screen.

It's imperative that we remember--**these folks are a large segment of our audience.** The millions and millions of people with disabilities deserve access to the same opportunities and information that abled people have.

## Slide 6. Is Social Media Accessible?

Unfortunately, social media is not as accessible as it should be. For example, of the 1,695 respondents to a 2017 WebAIM screen reader survey:

* Only 14.9% found social media accessible
* 54.3% found it somewhat accessible
* 29.4% found it somewhat or very inaccessible

## Slide 7. Test Results for Popular Platforms

Every year AccessibilityOZ, a well-known Australian accessibility consultancy, performs accessibility testing of a number of popular social media networks. In 2019, they tested the ones in this table--Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pintrest, Twitter, and YouTube.

Their test was a standard user journey of: registering for an account, logging in, reading an item, and submitting an item. They tested keyboard-only access, increased text size, using a screen reader, whether videos auto-played and had controls, and much, much more. And they tested on Mac and Windows desktop operating systems and in iOS and Android.

As you can see in the table, none of the social media platforms was fully accessible. For instance, of the six social media platforms they tested, only three offered settings to control autoplay, only three allowed video to be paused, and only three provided page titles. Every one of the platforms had videos that auto-played and accessibility barriers with headings, forms, and ARIA. Facebook was the only social media outlet that was keyboard-only accessible.

(By the way, you’ll hear *“keyboard-only access”* a lot in accessibility. It means being able to use a webpage with only a keyboard. No mouse. This is an important test because most assistive technology operates with keyboard-like functionally. It’s also helpful for touch typists and keyboard superusers, who *prefer* to use only the keyboard.

## Slide 8. ->

So, why isn’t social media more accessible?

There are many reasons why these big companies haven't put more money into making their platforms more accessible. But, really, the main reason is that social media changes all the time.

For example, Facebook pushes out changes 5 times a day on average. And they don't give content creators warning about upcoming changes.

The image on this slide shows a mobile phone, displaying the Crickey news feed. You can see that some crazy-looking code made it into their newsfeed. Facebook made changes that resulted in code showing up in news headlines, and while many newspapers caught on quickly and made adjustments, not everyone did.

Even if you make your social media completely accessible today, that doesn't mean it will be accessible tomorrow.

## Slide 9. Section: 2 Make your account/profile more accessible

With so many problems with social media, how can you make sure everyone in your audience is able to access your messages?

I’ll let you in on a secret. Chances are your content will never be 100% accessible. There are just too many variables. The best we can hope for is to be ***as accessible as possible.***

But it ***is*** possible to be a lot **more** accessible to a lot more people. Here are some things you can do to make it easier for people to access your content.

## Slide 10. Make Your Account Accessibility Friendly.

First, you can make your social media account, itself, a lot more accessibility friendly.

1. Provide your contact information on your media page.
2. Post to multiple social media outlets.
3. Use multiple communication channels.
4. Highlight alternative apps.
5. Point out the platform's accessibility tips.

Let's go through each of these tips in more detail.

## Slide 11. 1. Provide Your Contact Information on Your Media Page.

Different social media platforms allow you to display different information in different ways on your main landing or profile page, but all allow some form of contact information. For users who are unable to access your content, adding an email address or a phone number provides them with a way to contact you to ask questions.

Here is an image of ASU’s official Twitter page. Above the tweets near the top, it gives both the geographic location of ASU and a website URL where people can go for more information. In addition, there’s an email address so that people can use this alternative form of communication.

## Slide 12. 2. Post to Multiple Social Media Outlets.

Not all social media networks are equally accessible to all people. Some groups will prefer one social media network over another; and some users won’t be able to use a social media network at all. For this reason, make sure you post the same content to multiple social media platforms to ensure that all users can access the content.

## Slide 13. 3. Provide Your Social Media Feed on Your Website or via Email.

Use multiple communication channels to get your message out. Allow people to subscribe to individual or daily or weekly email digests of your posts. In addition, HTML can be one of the most accessible formats. So, provide a feed of your posts on a webpage, like this feed from Barrett Honors College.

It’s an alternative way to consume the information for anyone who might find accessing webpages easier than figuring out the nuances of a social media app. For instance, many people without vision customize their screen reader, browser, or braille reader settings to meet their individual needs. It’s much easier for them to use their familiar setup, rather than a strange app that might employ unfamiliar controls, keystrokes, or gestures.

## Slide 14. 4. Point Out Alternative Apps That May Be More Accessible

Let users know about alternative apps that might provide more accessible ways to display social media. This is a recent list put together by AccessibilityOZ of some popular social media outlets. It’s by no means exhaustive.

Let your audience know about these alternative apps because some of them might not know these apps exist or that there’s another way they can get to your social media content. If you want this list, you can download the slides from the link I mentioned earlier -- links.asu.edu/soc-med

## Slide 15. 5. Highlight the Platform's Accessibility Tips.

Most of the popular platforms have accessibility help pages with information and tips for making their sites or apps easier to use. Often, users don’t know that accessibility tips exist or where to find them. Some may decide that the barriers preventing them from getting to your posts are insurmountable and might give up trying.

Posting links to help pages will help those users discover how to access your content and be able to participate in the social media network.

Again, you can copy these links from the slides later, so don’t worry about copying them down now.

In review, you’ll notice that many of the tips just mentioned are concerned with offering *multiple* platforms and communication channels, *alternative* apps and ways to consume your content. Those words *multiple* and *alternative* are key.

Being accessible is all about giving your users **options**—options for consuming your content in the way that works best for them. It stands to reason, then, that the more options you offer, the bigger your audience will be.

## Slide16. Section 3: Make your posts more accessible

## Slide 17. Create Accessible Posts.

Another and perhaps even more important way to make your social media more accessible is to create more accessible posts. Here are four (major) ways you can improve the accessibility of your content.

1. Write accessible content:
	1. Use CamelCase hashtags.
	2. Limit hashtags and add them only to the end.
	3. Avoid misspellings.
	4. Avoid abbreviations.
	5. Use a URL shortener.
2. Use good color contrast in images.
3. Caption your videos.
4. Add or edit image alternative text.

Let’s go over these one by one in a little more detail.

## Slide 18. 1. Write Accessible Content.

Writing accessible content is not difficult. It’s just something you need to remind yourself to do for a few weeks until it becomes a habit. So let’s look at the five ways you can write more accessibly.

1. First, use **CamelCase** hashtags. Hashtags are strings of words smooshed together. CamelCase is a programming term, but it’s a vivid one…and accurate. Capitalize the first letter of every word in your hashtags…it does sort of resemble a camel’s hump a little. For instance, you’d write #FIFIWorldCup2022 or #ArizonaStateUniversity
2. Limit **hashtags** and add them only to the end of your post. Screen reader users can hear the most interesting part of your message first, then skip the (sometimes long) list of hashtags that screen readers often mangle.
3. Avoid **misspellings**. Screen readers have a difficult enough time deciphering correctly written text. Throw misspellings into the mix and screen readers can sound really goofy.
4. Avoid **abbreviations**. Again, screen readers try to read abbreviations altogether as one word, which can result in some hilarious mistakes. Also, not everyone in your audience will understand what an abbreviation stands for. So, avoid them if possible.
5. Finally, use a **URL shortener** like the one used for these slides. The ASU-Google shortener is at **links.asu.edu,** or use any third-party shortener such as **bitly.com.**

Screen reader users the world over will thank you for saving them from having to listen to wildly long, nonsense strings of letters and numbers like this one at the bottom of the slide. Listen to JAWS reading this URL…
(https://video.ibm.com/recorded/128470152U)

I think we’d all agree that’s a crazy amount of jumbled garbage to have to listen to.

## Slide 19. 2. Use Good Color Contrast in Images.

Color contrast is a fairly easy fix. High contrast text is easier to see. Black text on a white background or white text on a black background is much easier to see than light gray text on an off-white background, for instance. The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, or WCAG, are the accessibility standards we must comply with for digital content in the United States. WCAG says that, for normal text, the contrast between the text and the background color must be 4.5:1 and for headlines or larger text it must be 3:1.

You can test the colors you use in an online color contrast checker. One of the best is from WebAIM. The WebAIM’s contrast checker is simple. You input the HEX color code of your text in the first field, and the color of the background in the second. The checker lets you know the contrast ratio between these two colors. In this case, the contrast ratio of the dark blue on a white background is 8.5:1, which exceeds the required 4.5:1 ratio.

WebAIM also tells you whether the resulting ratio passes or fails for both regular and large text. Notice that we’ve outlined just the WCAG AA results. WCAG has three levels of compliance—A, AA, and AAA. The legal requirement in the United States is to meet level A and AA compliance. Triple AAA is not required.

## Slide 20. 3. Caption your video.

At ASU, all videos posted online must be captioned. Captions are a text translation of a video’s sound, and include the dialog, speaker identification if there’s more than one speaker, relevant background noises, and other important audio.

Captions are critical for many people. They benefit users who are deaf or hard of hearing, individuals with cognitive impairments that make processing auditory information difficult, people in noisy (or quiet) environments, non-native speakers, and many others.

If the social media platform provides auto-captioning, enable it. Then **make sure you edit the captions.** The image of two men singing the Christmas song captioned “red off the rent those reindeer” illustrates how terrifically inaccurate some auto-captioning is.

If the platform doesn’t provide auto-captioning, check if you can upload a caption file, sch as an SRT file. You can create a caption file on another platform like YouTube, then upload the caption file to the social media site.

Some social media platforms don’t provide captions and don’t allow you to upload caption files. In this case, you should use software like Adobe Captivate or the free software [Handbrake](https://handbrake.fr/) to burn (or embed) captions into your videos.

## Slide 21. 4. Add or Edit Image Alternative Text.

Most social media platforms allow you to add alternative text to images, and it’s very important that you do so. People with low or no vision can’t see images and neither can their screen readers. Assistive technologies can only consume text. Image text alternatives are text descriptions of what an image is trying to convey.

As shown in the image, when you upload a photo in Facebook, before you save it, select the image to see an “Edit” button. This will give you the option to add text alternatives. Just select “Alterative text” and type in a description of the image. If the image is decorative—that is, if it conveys no real meaning and is basically just eye candy—type an empty space or two into the description field to tell screen readers they can ignore the image.

Almost all other social media apps have a similar way to add alternative text. As shown in the Twitter mobile screenshot, you can select or tap the image you’re uploading to get to the image options. Describe the meaning being conveyed by the image. Again, if the image has no real function and is just a nice embellishment, type an empty space or two to indicate to assistive technologies that they can skip the image

## Slide 22. Write good alt text: Context is everything.

You may be wondering how you know when an image needs a description and what makes good alternative text. You aren’t alone. Writing good alt text takes a little art, but a couple of rules can help.

First, ask yourself what would be lost if the image wasn’t there. If nothing, then you know it’s decorative.

Second, if the image adds meaning to the post or page, here’s a trick for deciding how to describe it. Pretend you’re on the phone and have to explain the image to a friend. Your friend isn’t very patient, so you’ll need to describe only the main relevance or function of the image, not every detail. In most cases, this will guide you in creating effective alternative text.

When determining the main relevance or function of an image, remember that context is everything. For example, there are many ways to describe this photo of a house. If the image is for an architecture newsletter, we might write: “The Georgian style Daniel Boone House in Missouri was built in 1800 from hand-hewn limestone blocks.”

If it’s a post about a club’s recent trip, we would probably emphasis the people—"History Club members visiting Daniel Boone’s house.”

Context can help you decide what’s most important to convey.

By the way, there’s no need to add “Photo of” or “Image of” to alt text. Screen readers automatically announce an image as an image. So, the alternative text “Image of Daniel Boone’s home” would be read aloud by a screen reader as “image, Image of Daniel Boone’s home”.

## Slide 23. Write good alt text: Text in images

Some images have text embedded in them. Images with graphic text are some of the easiest to write alt text for. Why? Because you’ll want to duplicate the text in the image word for word in the alt text so that people without vision get the same information afforded people with vision. In this case, we’d write, “Hayden 50 - Celebrating our past, building our future.”

## Slide 24. Decorative Images

Finally, for reference, here are a few examples of what decorative images are.

* Rules and similar typographic embellishments are almost always decorative.

## Slide 25. Decorative Images

* This photo of generic blank book covers shown under the title “6 books for your Alaska reading list” is nice, but it really doesn’t impart any extra information. It’s there to lend ambience or visual interest and the article loses nothing by removing it. It’s decorative.

## Slide 26. Decorative Images

* Finally, in a list of degrees, the image paired with Anthropology is abstract and doesn’t lend provide any new information. If it was a link, we would want to add alt text because all links must have text. But our alt text wouldn’t refer to the visual look of the image. Instead, we’d emphasis it’s **function** as a link and describe the destination, such as “Read more about the Anthropology BA degree.”

## Slide 27. Questions?

I’ve given you a lot of information all at once. I hope I haven’t overwhelmed you. If something occurs to you tomorrow, or even next month, please feel free to email me or Slack me on ASU’s #accessibility channel. For now, does anyone have any questions?