ORALL NEWSLETTER

OHIO REGIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LAW LIBRARIES

President's Column – Ashley Ames Ahlbrand

As another year draws to an end, I find myself reflecting on the highs and lows of 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect travel plans, resulting in our second virtual Annual Meeting. While I was overjoyed to see all your faces over Zoom, the social aspects of a virtual conference just cannot match the camaraderie of an in-person event. And yet in spite of my disappointment that we could not gather together in Akron this October, I cannot help but reflect on the positive aspects of virtual conferences – the cost savings, both for the association, but especially for members, as well as the potential for more to attend the conference, because they do not have to arrange for travel. (Despite these positive attributes, I still desperately cling to the hope that I'll see you all in-person in Lexington next October!)

Another significant positive in the life of ORALL this year has been our at-long-last migration to a [new website](#), and with its built-in forum capabilities, the retirement of the ORALL listservs! Please join me in extending another

huge thank you to the Internet & Social Media Committee for their hard work bringing this project to fruition. Remember that if you have any questions about the new site, you can email [Jennifer Mart-Rice](#), our fantastic webmaster, for assistance.

The end of the year, of course, lends itself to anticipation as much as reflection, so I can't help but hope and dream of what 2022 will bring. At the top of my list, of course, is the ability to meet up in-person this year, but beyond that, I wonder what changes await us as legal information professionals –what new resources will emerge?

ORALL
Ohio Regional Association of Law Libraries

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<u>**Newsletter**</u>

The ORALL Newsletter is the official publication of the Ohio Regional Association of Law Libraries. Published quarterly in March, June, September, and December.

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Unsolicited contributions are encouraged; contributions submitted for publication are subject to editorial review. For extra copies, contact the editor.

Deadlines for submissions: Feb. 28, May 30, Aug. 30, and Nov. 30

Advertising (per issue) : $150 for full page, $90 for half page, $55 for quarter page, and $35 for eighth page.

Profile

ORALL is a 3-state chapter of the American Association of Law Libraries [Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky]. It was formed in 1949 "to further the development and usefulness of law libraries and to stimulate a spirit of mutual helpfulness among law libraries of this region." An annual conference is held each fall. ORALL publishes or sponsors the following publications: *Core Legal Collection* [bibliographies for Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan], ORALL Membership Directory, ORALL Newsletter, Ohio Legal Resources Annotated Bibliography & Guide 3rd.

President's Column *continued*

What trends will fade out? How will technology continue to impact, improve, and disrupt our work? Most importantly, in my year as ORALL President, I would like to hear from you: What can ORALL do to better serve you, your institution, and your patrons? Are there programs you would like to see, resources you would like us to create, or services you would like us to offer? If you have thoughts on what ORALL should be doing in 2022, please send me an email, aaahlbra@indiana.edu. I would love to hear from you.

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Digital Accessibility 101
by Susan M. Boland, Robert S. Marx Law Library, University of Cincinnati

At this year's ORALL Virtual Annual Meeting, Sara Sampson presented on *Digital Accessibility 101*. As I prepare for spring semester, I also know that I will have someone living with a disability in the classes I will be teaching. So, I've been thinking a lot about digital accessibility. As was pointed out by Sara Sampson, one in four Americans have some type of disability and even more will have a temporary disability at some point in their lives. It is impossible for libraries to fulfill their missions if we are leaving a large group of people behind.

As addressed in the *Digital Accessibility 101* program, there are immediate things that librarians can do to make our materials more accessible for everyone. In fact, making our materials more accessible for those living with a disability will make them more accessible for everyone. One of the easiest things to implement to improve accessibility is to build in accessibility from the beginning and to use the automated accessibility checkers that are built into many software programs to make sure our documents, PowerPoints, PDF files, and other materials are accessible. Things specifically mentioned in the program to build in accessibility from the beginning include: (1) making sure there is alternative text for images; (2) using document structure such as templates, headings, and styles; (3) using sufficient color contrast for text and background colors; and (4) using captioning for videos.

Below are some resources to help:

- Access for All, Free PDF Accessibility Checker (PAC 3)
- Adobe, PDF Accessibility Overview
- Kaltura, Using Subtitles and Captions
- Microsoft, Improve Accessibility with the Accessibility Checker
- Microsoft, Accessibility Video Training
- Panopto, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About Video Captioning, Answered

- [John Oldman, 10 Free Screen Readers for Blind or Visually Impaired Users, Usability Geek](#)
- [W3C, Accessibility Fundamentals](#)
- [WebAIM, Contrast Checker](#)
- [WebAIM, PDF Accessibility](#)
- [WebAim, WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool](#)
- [YouTube, Add Subtitles and Captions](#)

What if you are using someone else's materials or something from a library database? Scanned images are not accessible. PDFs are often images and not text. You would need to convert that image to text using optical character recognition in order to make it accessible. PDFs are often untagged or tagged incorrectly. If you create documents in Word and print to PDF, for example, you may lose any heading, alternative text, and other tagging structure. To find out if something is accessible, you can test those materials using one of the [free screen readers listed in the link](#) to the [Usability Geek](#) post.

One of the things Sara mentioned in the program was to acquire and examine the VPAT for products and databases that you use. VPAT stands for Voluntary Product Accessibility Template. At many institutions, VPATs are a requirement of the purchasing process. Often you can find VPATs already provided at the vendor's website. For example, Google provides VPATs for its products on their [accessibility page for customers](#), or you can run a web search using the term "VPAT" and the product's name. As she noted, VPATs are voluntary self-evaluations so they may not be enough. Third-party services will also test products and databases. Sara listed the [Big 10 Academic Alliance Libraries](#) as a resource for [evaluations](#).

A thing touched on at the beginning of the program but not addressed in-depth was making social media accessible. If you are involved in marketing your library, it is important to make your social media posts accessible. This means your copy, hashtags, emojis, images, etc. Make sure you capitalize the first letter in each word of any compound hashtags. The capital letters help assistive devices spot the separate words as opposed to trying to read them as one big word. If using emojis, make sure that the icon descriptions that a screen reader translates it into do not compete with the content. If you're not sure what the emoji description would be, use [emojipedia.org](#). When creating text copy, use the default font and formatting of the social media platform. Screen readers may have difficulty reading third-party fonts and formatting. When using images, make sure you add alternative text. Although many platforms will generate automatic alt text, it is usually terrible, so it is better to do it manually.

This was a much-needed program and provided some great resources. I have added a few more in this article. Law libraries seem behind when it comes to accessibility, particularly with evaluating our databases, but it is something that

we need to be in the forefront of, pushing our institutions and our vendors to be as accessible as possible.

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A Note from Your Newsletter Editor

Thanks to Ashley Ames Ahlbrand and Susan Boland for making this quarter's newsletter possible. I am truly hoping that come March, 2022 (articles due end of February) we will have a more robust selection of information. Without your contributions, this newsletter will not continue to exist.

Until then, I hope you all have a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

If you ever have any questions, concerns or ideas, please e-mail me at
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