

CSU INSTITUTIONAL REPOSITORY REPORT:  
ETD COLLECTION ACCESSIBILITY

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction ..... 3

Survey Responses..... 4

    Current Measures Implemented (Q1)..... 4

    Accessibility Validation (Q2-Q4)..... 5

    Accessibility Remediation (Q5-Q6)..... 6

    Barriers (Q7) ..... 8

    Policies (Q8)..... 9

    Comments (Q9) ..... 9

Conclusion..... 11

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## INTRODUCTION

As part of an upcoming ACRL book chapter, Elyse Fox (Sacramento State) and Daina Dickman (former Scholarly Communication Librarian at Sac State) conducted a survey in Spring of 2022 to assess what accessibility practices or considerations have been planned or implemented for ETD collections across the California State University (CSU) system. With the launch of the CSU-wide ScholarWorks, the authors of this report hope that the results of the survey will inform and support the overall accessibility practices for the shared repository system. This report may be useful at the local and consortia level, identifying areas and opportunities to share trainings and best practices to facilitate the ingest of accessible ETDs into ScholarWorks.

# SURVEY RESPONSES

These questions are based in part on Anderson and Leachman's 2020 article "Centering Accessibility: A Review of Institutional Repository Policy and Practice," <https://doi.org/10.7710/2162-3309.2383> . 19 of 23 campuses responded to 9 questions evaluating accessibility validation, remediation, and outreach practices and policies.

## Current Measure Implemented

*Question 1 (Q1). What current measures are you taking to improve accessibility for theses/projects/dissertations/capstones (both ETDs and retrospectively digitized). Check all that apply.*

(Out of 21 respondents\*):

- Remediate all submissions = 8 campuses (36.4%)
- Provide accessible materials on demand = 10 campuses (45.5%)
- Enhance metadata for accessibility = 4 campuses (18.2%)
- Provide accessibility training to staff = 10 campuses (45.5%)
- Provide accessibility training to student submitters = 3 campuses (13.6%)
- Provide accessibility guidelines to student submitters = 5 campuses (22.7%)
- Collaborate with stakeholders = 10 campuses (45.5%)
- Authors are responsible = 5 campuses (22.7%)
- Implementing plans soon = 3 campuses (13.6%)
- Currently taking no measures = 4 campuses (18.2%)

\*Some campuses submitted multiple responses.

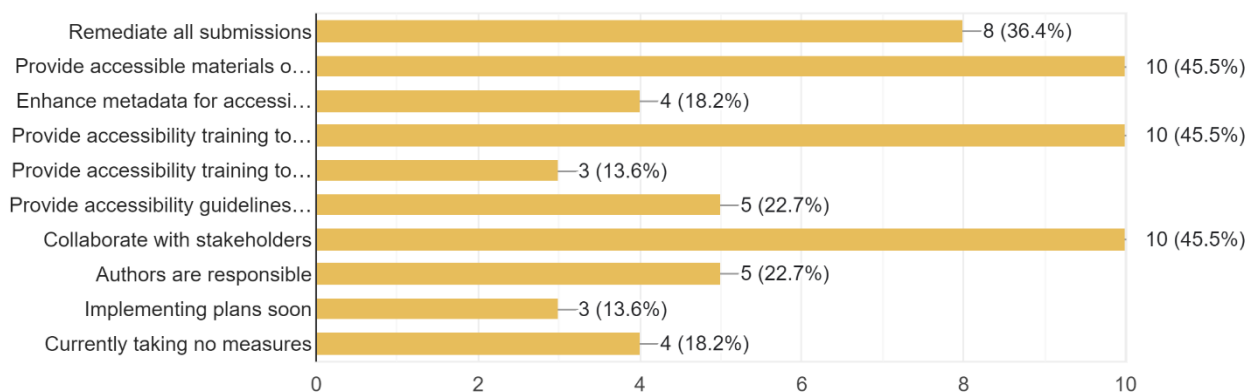


Figure 1. Bar graph reporting accessibility measures in practice across CSU ETD collections.

## Accessibility Validation

*Q2. If authors are responsible, is the accessibility of documents verified by the library upon deposit?*

(out of 16 respondents):

- 12 campuses (70.6%) **do not** verify the accessibility of incoming submissions, where authors are designated as responsible for the accessibility of their works;
- 5 campuses (29.4%) do validate the accessibility of incoming submissions, even in cases where the authors are responsible for the accessibility of their works.

*Q3. If yes, what tool(s) are used to assess accessibility? At what point is a document considered accessible?*

(out of 6 respondents):

- Adobe Accessibility Checker = 5 campuses (83.3%)
- Word Accessibility Checker = 3 campuses (50%)
- Verify captioning/transcripts = 2 campuses (33.3%)
- Verify alternate text for images = 2 campuses (33.3%)

Comments:

- Submissions considered accessible if they meet the CSU Accessibility standards (CSU accessibility document published 2010).
- “For PDFs, we check with word and adobe accessibility checkers. For video, we make sure the captions are there or that there is a full transcript available. For audio files, we check the transcript. For images, we check for alt-text.”
- “For digitization only: We scan to OCR, then run through ABBYY FineReader for better recognition and basic tagging. We then open in Adobe Pro and run their accessibility report. We fix all the simple issues, but we do not attempt to provide alt text for all illustrations in text or markup tables/graphs.”
- “Students submit Word documents based on templates that we've created. They are expected to do the best job that they can do and our Department of Graduate Studies helps them with formatting. Once we receive their Word files, one of our staff members checks every document to make sure that alt text is provided and remediates headings and other lingering issues. He then exports it to PDF. At that point, another staff member checks the PDF in Adobe Acrobat, focused on making sure that Bookmarks, and Table of Contents,

Reading Order, and other smaller issues are formatted correctly. After completing this stage, the document is considered accessible. We are planning on adding a simple requirement for dealing with accessible color soon.”

- “Ally tool (Canvas LMS), Adobe Accessibility Checker. If ally tool scores 85% or higher, the document is considered accessible. Remediated files considered accessible once they reach/pass threshold.”

*Q4. If remediation is being conducted by the library (whether on demand or all submissions) what tools are being used to perform and assess accessibility (please list). Example, Adobe acrobat, Ally tool in Canvas.*

(out of 15 respondents):

- Adobe Acrobat DC = 14 campuses (93.3%)
- Word = 6 campuses (40%)
- Abbyy FineReader = 6 campuses (40%)
- Ally (Canvas LMS) = 3 campuses (20%)
- Compliance Sheriff = 1 campus (6.67%)
- Panopto (captioning) = 2 campuses (13.33%)
- Vendor (captioning) = 2 campuses (13.33%)

### Accessibility Remediation

*Q5. What types of accessibility remediation work is performed? Check all that apply.*

(Out of 20 respondents\*):

- Perform OCR = 17 campuses (85%)
- Add captions/transcripts = 7 campuses (35%)
- Revise elements like reading order = 6 campuses (30%)
- Add/update tags = 9 campuses (45%)
- Add alternative text to images = 9 campuses (45%)
- Adjust color = 4 campuses (20%)
- Do not remediate = 2 campuses (10%)
- Other: As necessary to conform to WCAG 2.1 standards = 1 campus (5%)

\*Some campuses submitted more than one response.

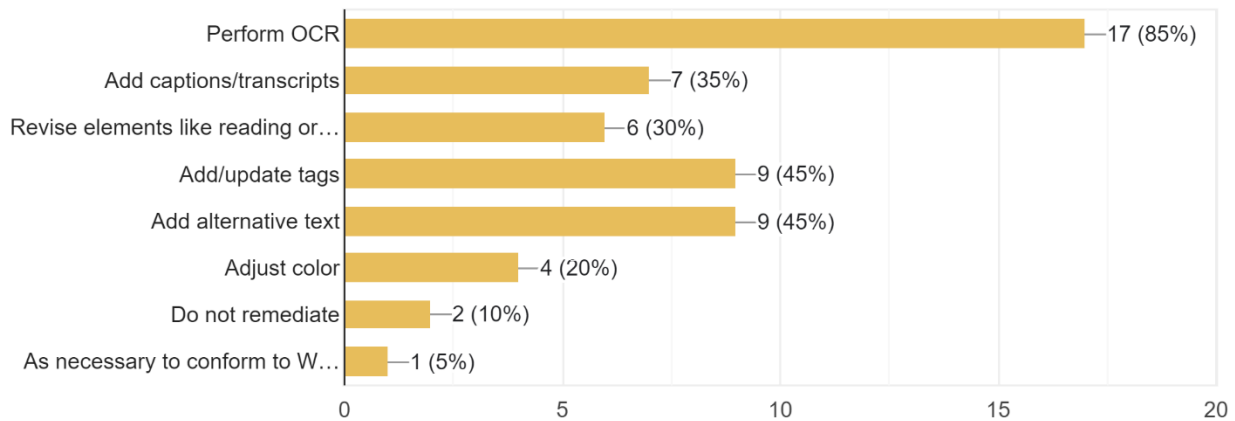


Figure 2. Bar graph reporting the types of accessibility work performed on ETDs and digitized theses in ETD collections.

Q6. Who performs accessibility remediation work, if any. Check all that apply.

(Out of 18 respondents):

- Librarians/staff = 17 campuses (94.4%)
- Student submitters = 4 campuses (22.2%)
- Student assistants = 4 campuses (22.2%)
- Other: Planning on student assistants, but we have not had any since we started this work, due to COVID = 1 campus (5.6%)

## Barriers

*Q7. What barriers do you face in ensuring accessibility? Please rank.*

Most frequently identified as most important barrier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Insufficient resources, including staff</li> <li>▪ Insufficient time</li> <li>▪ Inaccessible legacy documents</li> </ul>
Most frequently identified as second most important barrier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Insufficient time</li> <li>▪ Inadequate training</li> <li>▪ Insufficient resources, including staff</li> </ul>
Most frequently identified as third most important barrier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inadequate training</li> <li>▪ Insufficient time</li> <li>▪ Product restrictions/software limitations</li> </ul>

Figure 3. Top three barriers to accessibility in ETD collections, ranked by importance and frequency.

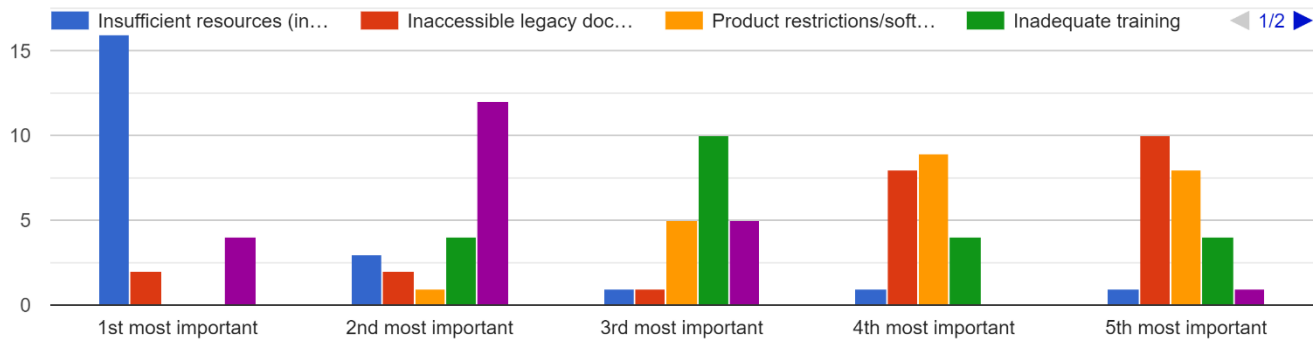


Figure 4. Bar graph reporting the frequency of responses to the primary barriers to accessible content in CSU ETD collections.



## Policies

*Q8. What accessibility policies have you implemented in the IR, if any? You can provide a link to your policy/guidelines if publicly available (Example: LibGuide, ETD submission guidelines)*

Out of 13 respondents, most noted that they do not have an accessibility policy at their campus (61%). 2 campuses noted that the ETD submission process involves their respective Offices of Graduate Studies, which can impact the ability to enact a policy as the majority of the submission process is being facilitated by another department. One campus reported that they make all submissions accessible, and another two noted that they rely on either a statement on ScholarWorks or on their submission guidelines that ETDs must be accessible, but with no guidelines or verification.

## Comments

*Q9. Please add any additional questions or comments.*

- “We are in a time of transition. Our Office of Accessibility and Technologies was providing remediation for submissions to ScholarWorks, but are in the process of hiring a staff person to perform the work.”
- “We had to draw the line at born digital theses, because we have neither the staff nor the time to fully remediate our retro digitized print collection. We will, to the best of our ability, remediate any of our theses if a request is made.”
- “ETDs in the IR are uploaded by ProQuest (I believe) and linked to records in Alma/OneSearch by another staff member in Technical Services. I am not sure who is responsible for creating guidelines for submission but I can tell you nobody has officially been responsible for theses for a handful of years...”
- “While our campus has launched a concerted effort to ensure accessibility for outward-facing public materials as well as instructional materials, there is no mandate concerning faculty publications that are not used intentionally for instruction, nor for student work. I am interested in researching this possibility...”
- “ETD's, which are submitted by the student authors and reviewed by the Office of Graduate Studies. We pressed the Office of Graduate Studies to make all current ETDs accessible when they started posting them online, but they said it was too much work for their small office. They did produce a Word template, which is generally compliant if the students don't mess with it. However, they don't insist that people use it, and they don't check submitted documents for accessibility.”
- “...I worry that remediation will become another unfunded mandate for an already overburdened library staff and faculty. Because ScholarWorks is neither website nor learning material, we've not

been able to secure any financial or staffing support for remediation of existing items. [We] are hoping to use student labor eventually for a project, but that requires letting other digital collections projects languish in the interim.”

## CONCLUSION

On behalf of the authors of this report, we just want to thank all those who participated in this survey. Accessibility is often framed as a burden, a task to be completed to avoid legal issues. We know in our line of work that we are consistently asked to do more with little to no resources to accomplish those tasks. One way that Sacramento State has found success has been to reframe accessibility work as more than just a legal requirement: it fulfills a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusivity, (and accessibility!), which is a key point in our current library strategic plan. By providing key stakeholders with guidelines, resources, and the knowledge to create accessible documents, we empower our student submitters to do their own accessibility work.

We hope the information in this report will serve useful to the CSU community, supporting consortia and local accessibility initiatives in the future.