

Systemwide Collaboration on Accessibility: The Siteimprove Implementation Project

Jill Wolters, Web Standards Program Manager, IT Website Services, University of California – San Francisco, jill.wolters@ucsf.edu

Project Leaders

Lucy Greco, UCB
John Kealy, UCSF
Todd McGill, UCI
Chris Patterson, UCLA
Yvonne Tevis, UCOP
Judy Thai, UCOP

Siteimprove Implementation Team Members

Brandon Ayers, UCR
Jennifer Billeci, UCD
Meredith Ehrenberg, UCI
Eric Goodman, UCOP
Lucy Greco, UCB
Joan Holmquist, UCM
Joshua Hori, UCD
John Kealy, UCSF
Dave Krause, ANR
Travis Lee, UCLA
David Levin, UCD
Teresa London, Hastings

Kaitlyn Lucero-Sickman, UCSB
Eric Mayes, UCSB
Todd McGill, UCI
Chris Patterson, UCLA
Jim Phillips, UCSC
Michelle Tabula, UCR
Yvonne Tevis, UCOP
Judy Thai, UCOP
Andrew Waegli, ANR
Jeremy Wiles, UCSD
Jill Wolters, UCSF

Project Overview

Over the course of 2017 and 2018, UC accessibility experts from every location collaborated intensively on the systemwide Siteimprove implementation project. That project includes the selection, purchase and phased rollout of the Siteimprove tool and its training courses.

Siteimprove is an automated testing tool that monitors public-facing websites and provides a report of accessibility issues that can cause websites to be unusable by people with disabilities. Siteimprove also includes a robust library of digital accessibility training courses. Siteimprove was deployed across all UC locations and fully operational in March of 2018.

Websites become more elaborate and interactive with each passing day, and programmers can incorporate features in a way that makes the websites unusable by people who are blind, have low vision, are deaf or hard of hearing, or have mobility issues. It doesn't have to be this way. There are coding techniques to make websites usable by everyone, including those with disabilities, but programmers need to be made aware of the need and the solutions.

When locations incorporate Siteimprove into their website development process, it reduces the likelihood that people would sue the University over being unable to access information to complete their coursework or do their jobs. The Siteimprove e-courses teach UC staff why accessibility matters and how to incorporate accessibility into their work – even the procurement process! The training courses help raise awareness about how UC staff

members can do their part — whether they're programmers, writers, or people who participate in a Request for Proposal (RFP) process — to ensure that they're looking for ways to increase accessibility at the UC.

UC has a [systemwide IT accessibility policy](#), but it's not just about mitigating the University's exposure to legal risk. It's about ensuring everyone has the opportunity to access, benefit from, and contribute to the University's programs and services. Imagine how you would feel if you needed to enlist someone else's help to log into a website to take an employer-mandated training, or schedule an appointment with your doctor. As the world's leading public research university system, and a leading health care provider, the UC should support its mission of teaching, research, and public service by leading the way in website accessibility. It's simply the right thing to do.

This successful project, now in its third year, represents a significant and ongoing collaboration across all UC locations. It has been a success very simply because our implementation team leverages the collective knowledge of its members. They did so both in the initial rollout of the tool at *every single UC location* (including ANR and Hastings) and now in continued collaborative work to support the effective use of this tool. They know that they advance accessibility only by working together, sharing knowledge, and sharing commitment.

Problem Statement

A previous attempt to provide a systemwide accessibility testing tool did not ultimately make UC websites more accessible due to the following reasons:

1. Low adoption rate of the testing tool
2. Inaccurate results that reported high accessibility compliance
3. Vendor was unresponsive to feedback about the testing tool's inaccuracies
4. Existing users did not want to publicize a testing tool that was ineffective at improving website accessibility
5. Low awareness by UC staff on how to comply with the UC Information Technology Accessibility Policy, digital accessibility and the associated legal liability
6. Varying levels of digital accessibility online resources, training, and support available across locations
7. [Increasing number of ADA lawsuits in university websites](#)

UC's ability to create accessible website content are slim If UC staff members who create website content don't know about the UC IT accessibility policy, don't incorporate the automated testing tool into their website development process, or fail to increase their knowledge of web accessibility.

If our university website content — including PDFs, documents, images, and videos — is not accessible to people with disabilities, it puts the university at a high risk of ADA lawsuits for web accessibility because of the sheer number of people who have access to our public-facing content.

Ultimately, our project's goal is to reduce that potential legal liability by creating awareness among UC staff about how to build accessible websites, create accessible online content, fix accessibility issues in web content and PDF documents, and keep accessibility in mind in other facets of their work, such as the purchasing and development of software and web applications.

Solution

To help UC on the path to increased digital accessibility, our goal was to find a testing tool that provided more accurate results and to come up with innovative ways to introduce the tool to the locations. We also wanted to ensure that the vendor would provide users with training on how to use the testing tool.

We were committed to a two-phase rollout that incorporated lessons learned after the initial phase. We intended to create a positive experience for the project team and all users with these steps:

1. Fund the purchase of the Siteimprove tool and training courses for three years (systemwide funding was provided by Risk Services at UCOP)
2. Create a formal implementation plan with a phased approach and user awareness campaign
3. Identify a common set of high-traffic sites across all locations and collect data to measure success

The Impact

1. Successful systemwide deployment and fully operational in March 2018
2. Adoption of the automated accessibility testing tool by users
3. Improved accessibility scores of UC core sites across locations over time

Measures of Success

1. The average core site accessibility score has increased across locations during the first year. Scores increased from the 60s to the 70s out of a total possible score of 100, bringing greater usability of UC websites by all users, including people with disabilities. See https://datastudio.google.com/s/kYB_qfgFlkQ.
2. Smoother rollout for the implementation team for the 2nd phase locations
3. 1,084 users in the tool as of May 1, 2019.
4. 1,698 sites in the tool as of May 1, 2019.
5. 275 users signed up with the Siteimprove academy as of May 1, 2019, offering an improved user experience with enhanced access to training courses.

Collaboration at Multiple Levels

The project has exhibited successful collaboration at multiple levels: within the project team, between the team and Siteimprove, and between each location's Siteimprove administrator and users. In fact, rolling out a systemwide tool is a pretty massive endeavor to take on in the decentralized University of California. But our team accomplished it, and in a relatively short time span, because the spirit of collaboration has imbued every aspect of the project.

Collaboration within the project team

From the beginning, the team has focused on doing things together and has thought of the project as something for the whole University, not just something for each location:

- **One account.** We took a systemwide approach by creating one UC account with Siteimprove instead of a separate account for each location, enabling us to do systemwide reporting and demonstrate effectiveness and impact as a single organization, positioning UC as a leader in accessibility.
- **Regularly scheduled team calls.** The team met weekly and then monthly to plan the rollout. It continues to meet via video conference calls on a regular basis to share information and outreach methods for awareness efforts, including what worked and what didn't, and ideas for improvement.
- **Consistent training.** Prior to the Siteimprove launch, local administrators were provided with consistent and efficient training. The Siteimprove on-demand users training materials are available 24/7, providing users the opportunity to learn at a time that is convenient for them.
- **Contribute content for some of the Siteimprove training courses.** The team reviewed and edited every course that Siteimprove developed for us. In many cases, we provided content. For example, in the course "Testing for Digital Accessibility," we wanted to ensure users understood the importance of including manual checks with an automated testing tool like Siteimprove. Manual testing needs to be detailed, hands-on, and practical so, we made sure those concepts were covered in that course.
- **Create systemwide best practices.** Some of the best practices the team created include naming conventions and tagging protocols for sites, users, and training teams in Siteimprove. The team also

revised our best practice for the Siteimprove dictionary to better accommodate needs at the website vs. account level.

- **Provide reporting to leadership.** The team identified similar high-traffic core sites across most locations as the “core sites” we would review on a consistent basis. We defined metrics and identified what data to include in our Executive Summary to leadership.

Collaboration between the rollout team and Siteimprove

- Our dedicated Siteimprove customer service representative has been with us throughout the entire project. He also joins the regularly scheduled calls, so we can provide him with requests for features and improvements that would streamline our processes.
- While Siteimprove was still developing some of the content for its accessibility training courses, some members of the rollout team provided feedback to Siteimprove about the accuracy and clarity of the course content.

Collaboration between the Local Administrators and their respective Location Users

Local administrators help location users provision their accounts, get familiar with the tool and act as the support liaison between the location users and Siteimprove.

Project Timeline

Date	Action
Mar 2017- Sept 2017	RFP process for a UC systemwide accessibility tool
Nov 2017	Contract signed with Siteimprove
Dec 2017	Single sign on (SSO) integrated with UC’s MyAccess and Siteimprove
Jan 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core sites identified, the high traffic sites common to most locations • Location administrators and location leads identified
Feb 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Siteimprove web pages creation on EAC website • Phase 1: UCB, UCI, UCLA, UCOP, UCSD
Mar 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessons Learned from Phase 1 • Phase 2: ANR, Hastings, UCD, UCM, UCR, UCSB, UCSC, UCSF • Deployed systemwide and operational • Training publicized in the UC IT Blog

The Technology

Siteimprove is an online automated testing tool that routinely crawls websites and checks for conformance to the international accessibility standard, WCAG 2.0. It offers an intuitive interface, unlimited support, accessibility training courses, discussion forums, customized reporting based on website responsibilities and high-priority areas, and content management system (CMS) integration.

Testimonials

1. “Siteimprove really helps you get a sense of a site’s accessibility problems and see what needs to be fixed. It really helps you get started on the accessibility path,” said Lucy Greco, web accessibility evangelist at UC Berkeley and chair of the systemwide Electronic Accessibility Committee.

2. Roberto Ramos, a web developer who has been using Siteimprove at UCSF, said, “Siteimprove has been a great tool for informing our future website development and content editing decisions.”
3. John Talbert, a Siteimprove user at UCLA says, “Web designers at UCLA are required to have an accessible website following the WCAG guidelines. Invariably, we are not 100% accessible because we are not aware of proper design or we were rushed in putting up a webpage. So every department on campus needs to work on making their website more accessible. It is a daunting task since each department has hundreds of pages to review. Siteimprove is essential in getting this work done. The bottom line - in order to be accessible, we need Siteimprove.

Siteimprove’s interface is a joy to work with. For example, the dashboard quickly shows you everything on one page. The interface is intuitive so that makes it easy to use.

I like that Siteimprove uses a scoring system, from 1 -100. I put a lot of work in and my score went above 90, so that was rewarding. In short, you know when you are making real progress. Compliance levels are broken down into three levels: A, AA, AAA. This helped focus the work on the most critical issues.

Siteimprove is loaded with features: it helps with search optimization, broken links, missing images, page load time, reports, readability, and spellcheck. So it improves the website on several levels, making it a better experience for visitors.”

Supplemental Materials

Excerpt from the UC Information Technology Accessibility Policy

“The University of California is committed to supporting an information technology (IT) environment that is accessible to all, and in particular to individuals with disabilities. To this end, the University seeks to deploy information technology that has been designed, developed, or procured to be accessible to people with disabilities, including those who use assistive technologies. An accessible IT environment generally enhances usability for everyone. By supporting IT accessibility, the University helps ensure that as broad a population as possible is able to access, benefit from, and contribute to its electronic programs and services.”

Please see complete PDF of the [University of California – Policy IMT-1300 Information Technology Accessibility Policy Document](#) and the [University of California Office of the President Electronic Accessibility website](#) for more information.

Article [“Fifty colleges sued in barrage of ADA lawsuits over web accessibility”](#)

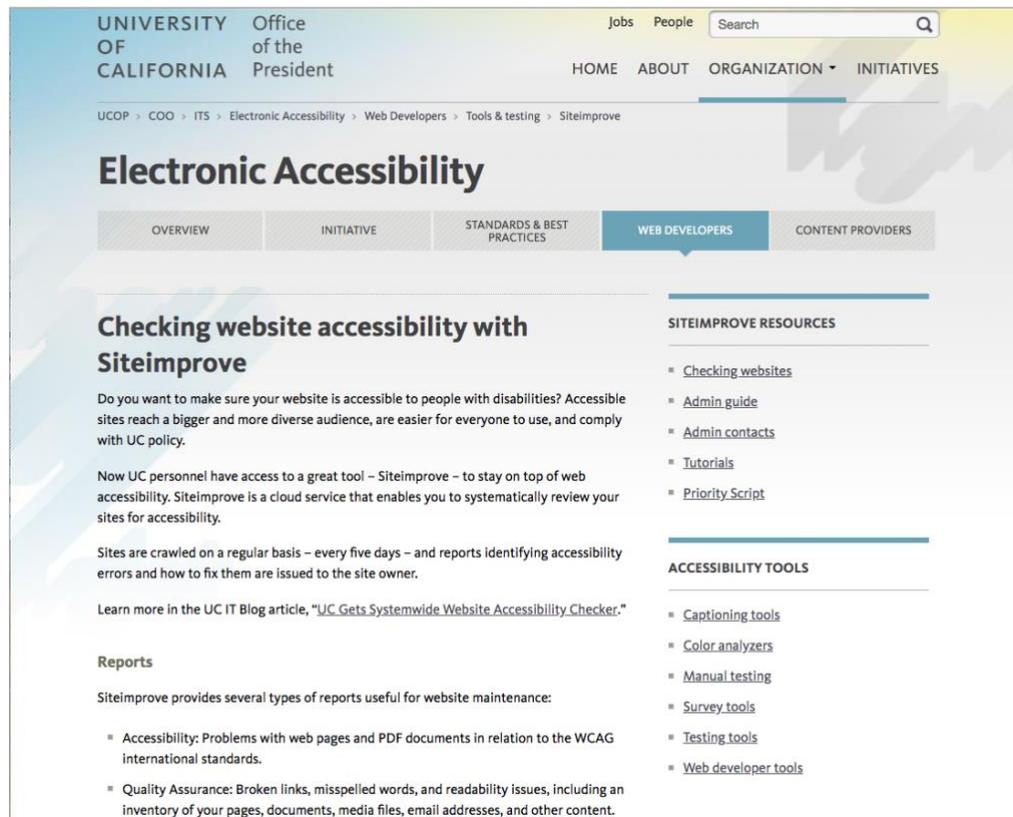


Fifty colleges sued in barrage of ADA lawsuits over web accessibility

A blind man is taking 50 colleges to court, alleging their websites are inaccessible to people with disabilities.

www.insidehighered.com

Snippet from [Systemwide Siteimprove webpage](#) titled “Checking website accessibility with Siteimprove.”



Sample contributions from UC to the Siteimprove training course “Testing for Digital Accessibility”:

Include the following manual checks:

- Consistent Navigation/Identification - check for consistency between pages
- Resize text - is content still readable at 2x magnification
- Captions - are captions present on videos, are they accurate?

Siteimprove Academy Course Library

Learning Paths (Collections of Courses)

1. Accessibility for Content Contributors and Designers
2. Accessibility for Leadership
3. Accessibility for Microsoft Office
4. Accessibility for Web Developers
5. Building a Sustainable SEO strategy
6. Mastering Web Optimization with Siteimprove
7. Web Fundamentals: Accessibility, Analytics, and SEO

Individual Courses

1. Accessibility for Designers
2. Accessibility for Marketers
3. Accessibility in the Classroom
4. Accessible Documents

5. Accessible Multimedia
6. Accessible Purchasing
7. Digital Accessibility for Content Contributors
8. Digital Accessibility for Developers - Part 1
9. Digital Accessibility for Developers - Part 2
10. Making Accessibility a Priority in your Organization
11. Making Accessible PDFs
12. Testing for Digital Accessibility
13. WCAG 2.1 New and Improved
14. Web Accessibility Fundamentals

Siteimprove Scores Cross Locations https://datastudio.google.com/s/kYB_qfgFlkQ

