

Accessibility with WordPress

Limitations and benefits.

Who am I?

- A web designer and WordPress developer
- An advocate and consultant on web accessibility
- A writer on practical accessibility
- Read more at <http://www.joedolson.com>

Why WordPress?

- 1) WordPress is a free, open source CMS
- 2) WordPress has an enormous number of active users and developers.
- 3) Many of the accessibility limitations in WordPress can be easily overcome, with the right knowledge.

WordPress Accessibility: the problems

3 Areas to examine: #1

The public side: WordPress for web site visitors

- Inaccessible themes.
- Inherent problems in WordPress.

Themes pose challenges

- Almost all of the public experience of a WordPress site comes from the theme in use.
- Most themes are not accessible.
- Finding accessible themes is very, very difficult.
- Building custom themes can be expensive.
- Customizing existing themes is not necessarily cheaper.

Some fundamental problems.

- Most of the base HTML and functionality generated by WordPress is **great**
- A couple things don't quite meet specs:
 - Empty searches do not return an error
 - Default values for “more” links are not specific.
 - Tons of redundant title attributes
 - *These are all fixable in themes*

3 Areas to examine: #2

The admin side: WordPress for web site editors

- Dynamic editing.
- Keyboard navigability.
- Change management.

WordPress 3.5 was a big push:

- Removes tabindex
- Adds skiplinks
- Fixes tabbing order in numerous contexts
- Now possible to log out by keyboard
- Numerous form fields now properly labeled
- Keyboard navigation has clearly visible focus
- Screen Options now much more easily found and used, giving better access to screen customizations and accessibility modes

3 Areas to examine: #3

Using WordPress Plug-ins

- WordPress plug-ins are **all over the map**
- There is little to no quality checking in the plug-in repository.
- Even if there was, checking for accessibility would be almost impossible to do.
- Yikes.

What can you do?

Themes

- Options for Accessible themes:
 - Visit <http://wp-accessible.org/themes/> to locate reviewed accessible themes
 - Audited accessibility tag is coming to the WordPress theme repository – but it's not there yet.
 - Install and configure my plugin WP Accessibility:
<http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/wp-accessibility/>

What can the WP-Accessibility plug-in do?

- Remove redundant title attributes
- Enable skip links with WebKit
- Add skip links with user-defined targets.
- Add language and text direction attributes
- Remove the target attribute from links.
- Force a search page error on an empty search
- Remove tabindex from elements that are focusable.
- Strip title attributes from images in content.
- Add post titles to "read more" links.
- Add an outline to the :focus state for focusable elements.

What **can't** this plug-in do?

- Fix color contrast issues.
- Correct forms to add labels or give meaningful errors.
- Fix heading structures for screen reader navigation.
- Give appropriate alt attributes to images
- *Correct for many other specialized circumstances...*

Is that all?

- For now, yes. There are undoubtedly other accessible WordPress themes around: but there is no easy way to find them.
- Searching for accessible themes will find some, but you need to judge them critically. Self-labeling as accessible is a mixed bag.
- WP Accessibility can fix some problems, but not all.
- The Cities Project is working on building accessible WordPress themes: <http://accessiblejoe.com/cities/>

The Admin Side

- Many of the problems currently in WordPress will be resolved soon – WordPress 3.5 is due out in December
- It will probably release late; currently about three weeks behind schedule.
- Not all accessibility issues will be fixed: submitting bugs is the only way to keep the pressure on.
- <http://core.trac.wordpress.org/newticket>
- Or, email me at joe@joedolson.com – if I can reproduce your bug, I'll report it for you.

Using Plug-ins

- There are over 20,000 plug-ins in the repository. You cannot assume that most of them are accessible.
- Due to the nature of the WordPress.org plug-in search engine, most of the results for 'accessible' do not relate to accessibility.
- Most plug-ins must be vetted independently.

What's the summary?

- On the public side, WordPress makes very few mistakes, and these can be corrected by a theme or plug-in. **BUT:** WordPress only controls a small percentage of the presentation of a web site.
- Currently available themes are generally lacking a focus on accessibility; and there isn't a good way to find accessible themes.
- Extending WordPress via plug-ins is hazardous, and requires careful vetting.
- The admin, though not perfect, is improving.

And what's coming up?

- The Cities Project is developing accessible WordPress themes at <http://www.accessiblejoe.com/cities/>
- The WP Accessible project highlights plug-ins and themes that help accessibility at <http://wp-accessible.com>
- The <http://make.wordpress.org/accessibility/> is working to add an audited theme tag to the WordPress theme repository to help locate accessibility-ready themes.
- There's momentum in the WordPress community to improve accessibility at all levels of the project.

Questions?