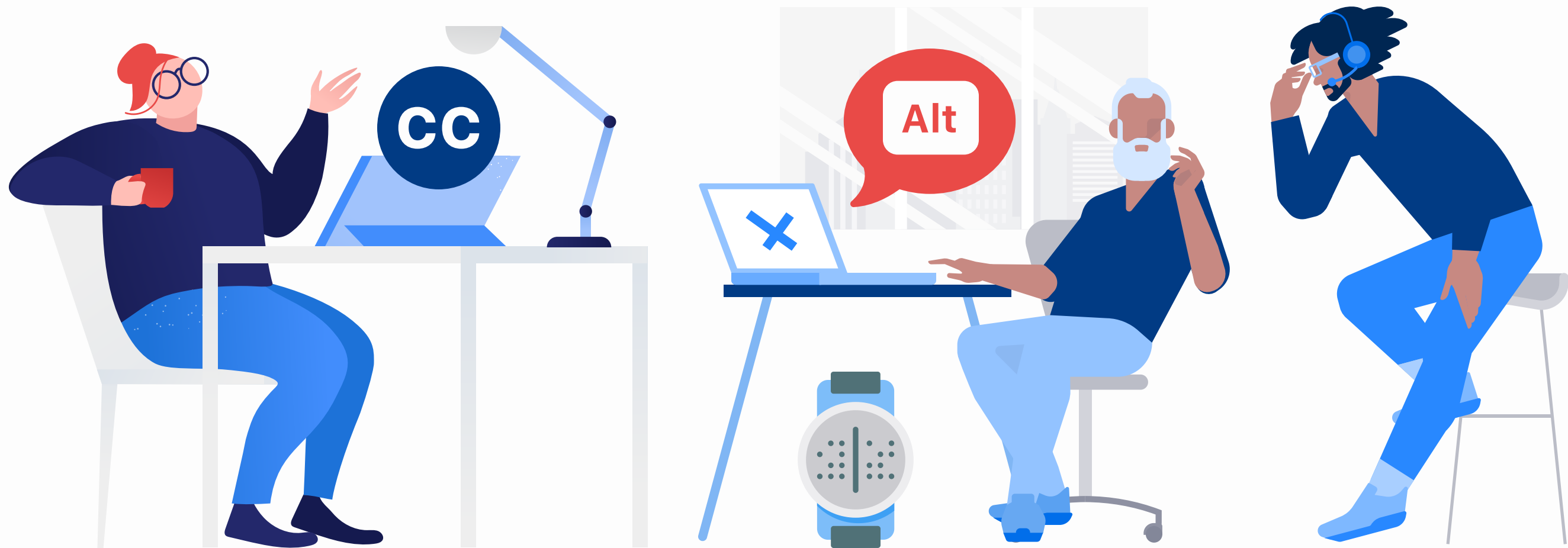


MYTHBUSTERS!!

The Truth Behind 7 Rumors About EPUBs

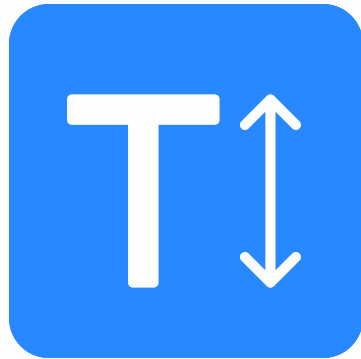
ACCESSIBILITY
EDITION



Laura Ciporen



Christine Foushi



About Us

Laura Ciporen

- Digital Content Accessibility Manager.
- With McGraw Hill Higher Ed since 2009.
- 100% focused on content accessibility since 2015.
- M.A. in Educational Communication and Technology from NYU.

Christine Foushi

- 20+ years of publishing experience.
- Accessibility Advocate.
- Loves networking.
- EPUB Higher Education Working Group & WCAG Working Group Contributor.

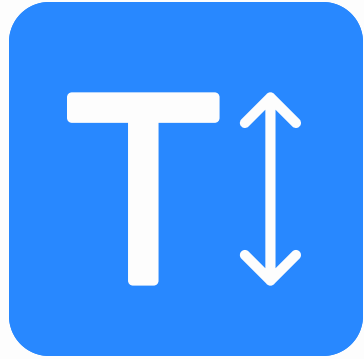
EPUB Higher Ed Working Group

ATN SURVEY



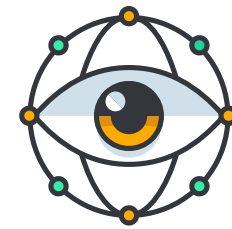
Survey conducted in August 2023

- Sharing some survey responses that we have received.
- 194 participants
- Basic Foundational Questions
 - How long have you been working in Accessibility/Disability services?
 - Less than a year: 6 percent
 - 1-2 years: 22 percent
 - 2-5 years: 14 percent
 - 6 plus years: 69 percent
- Publishers may offer file formats such as PDF, EPUB, and DOC. Have you received an EPUB file from a publisher on ATN before?
 - Yes: 57 percent
 - No: 29 percent
 - I don't know: 13 percent.
- Could you tell us what your and/or your student's experience was using the EPUB file? (111 Responses)
 - Positive: 23 percent
 - Negative: 56 percent
 - Mixed: 17 percent
 - No Categorizable: 4 percent.



EPUB Myths & Rumors

- Something new for students to learn.
- Dissimilar from the print book.
- Publishers do not provide appropriate accessibility features.
- Hard to use.
- Don't work with the software our students use.
- Not as accessible as PDFs.
- MYSTERY... To Us!



1. Something new for students to learn.

Myths

- Training required.
- Requires students to learn special software.
- Students prefer familiar PDFs and want to stick to one format. Until EPUBs become the default, students will want PDFs.
- EPUBs require dedicated devices.

Facts

Valid concern!

But the a11y benefits of EPUBs over PDFs make the effort worth it.

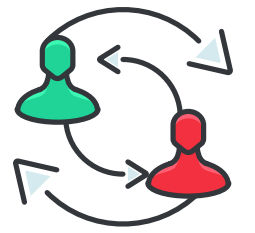
- Reading Systems are for more than textbooks.
- Learning curve is eased because content is (X)HTML-based, like the web.
- EPUB format IS becoming the dominant format; publishers reluctant to create PDFs.
- Many simple Reading Systems available for free or built into devices.
- Reading System apps are available for phones, computers, and tablets.

Just a few more things ...

- Reading Systems (computers):
 - Amazon Kindle
 - Apple Books
 - Colibrio Reader
 - Adobe Digital Editions
 - Dolphin EasyReader
 - ElevenLabs Reader
 - Kurzweil 3000
 - Playbooks
 - Redshelf
 - Simply Reading
 - TextHelp Read&Write
 - Thorium Reader
 - VitalSource Bookshelf
 - Voice Dream Reader
- Reading System apps phones/tablets:
 - Apple Books
 - Kindle
 - Google Play Books
 - Moon+ Reader
 - FBReader

Just a few more things ...

- What's Available?
 - Bookshare: 1 million titles available
 - Higher Ed Textbooks/EPUB3: 273
PDFs: 0
 - Pre-K-beyond: ALL GRADES/EPUB3: 34,925
PDFS: 0
 - ALL BOOKS/ALL GRADES/ALL EPUBS:
100,000
PDFS: 15
 - VitalSource
 - 90 percent of deliverables are EPUBs
 - AccessText Network



2. EPUBs dissimilar from the print book.

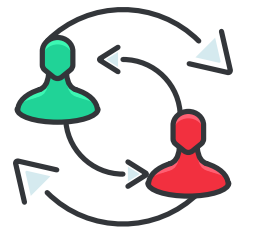
Myths

- Half truth: EPUBS do not resemble the layout of the physical textbook.
- EPUBS do not contain page numbers.

Facts

- The content is still the same.
- Most EPUBs are 1-column layouts with less side-by-side content than PDFs. This allows content to “reflow” and be easier to read on small screens or with large zoom without horizontal scrolling.
- Accessible EPUBs must have print page numbers per the EPUBs standard. Demand accessible materials from your publishers. (More on this coming up.)

3. Publishers do not provide appropriate accessibility features.



Myths

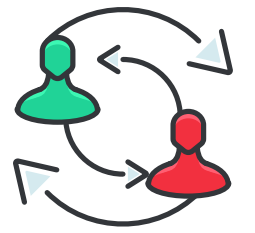
- EPUB files are generally not made accessibly.
- EPUBs have missing alt text.
- Half truth: Tables aren't described or are skipped.

Facts

- More and more publishers are creating fully accessible EPUBs fulfilling business, social and legal obligations.
- Good quality EPUBs from publishers have required features such as alt text, headings, print page numbers, metadata about their accessibility, and much more.
- Tables should be authored correctly as HTML tables but are sometimes images without alt text or just done poorly. However, remediation from the publisher should be possible.

Just a few more things ...

- If you can, hold publishers accountable. Good publishers will work with you to fix issues you find in their EPUBs.
- Or, vote with your money / adoption of materials: be sure the publisher knows the lack of accessibility is what might cost them the business.
- More and more EPUBs (and all digital content) should comply with accessibility standards in Europe and US.
- According to EPUB standard, at minimum, publishers shouldn't have any ePUBCHECK errors or WCAG violations.



4. EPUBs are hard to use.

Myths

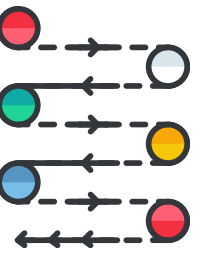
- You need to be online to read them.
- Half truth: The files are too big.
- PDFs are easier to create, remediate, and distribute.

Facts

- Many EPUB Reading Systems allow downloading for offline access.
- Files are big; however, it is possible to request further assistance from publishers.
- PDF files are often difficult to modify because of embedded fonts, set layouts, and other characteristics. Tagging for accessibility is also notoriously difficult.

Just a few more things ...

- EPUBs offer a great deal more functionality than PDFs such as easy page and chapter navigation, bookmarking, ability to take notes, multimedia, etc.
- EPUBs readers are available for phones, tablets, and computers so students can read their books on whatever device works best for them.
- Many Reading Systems will remember where you last left off.
- Some work across devices and keep your highlights, notes, etc. no matter how you access the content.



5. Doesn't work with the software our students use.

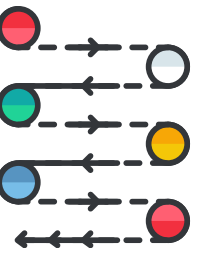
Myths

- Text-to-speech software (such as Kurzweil) and EPUBs don't get along.
- EPUBs are not compatible with other assistive technology the students use.
- Half-truth: Different OS systems make it cumbersome to use EPUBs vs a PDF.
- Challenge: Some institutions provide AT software for students and / or do not allow freeware or open source software.

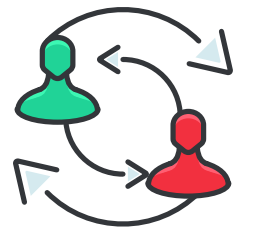
Facts

- Kurzweil 3000 supports EPUBs file type for both Windows and Mac.
- Because EPUBs are essentially HTML files, many forms of AT work very well and easily with them. Keystroke commands that work on the web work the same for EPUBs.
- Macs have built-in EPUBs reader: Apple Books (formerly iBooks). If a student has a PC, it's not as friendly to set up but there are still many options.
- Many EPUBs Reading Systems are from companies with reliable reputations which might sway the administration to make an exception.

Just a few more things ...



- Many readers have a built-in “read to me” function which will be enough for students who don't need a lot of assistive tech functionality.
- Many Reading Systems, such as Thorium reader, are fully keyboard-accessible and work well with JAWS, NVDA, Narrator and Voiceover.



6. PDFs are more accessible than EPUBs.

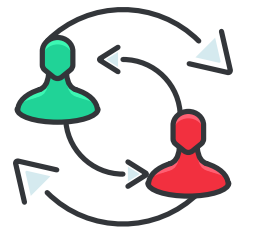
Myths

- EPUBs are not accessible.
- need a PDF that we can remediate or a DOC file to the specification of the accommodation. EPUBs are fine for those who do not have a disability and just want to listen to their books.
- Cheaper and faster.

Facts

- EPUBs are (X)HTML-based, just like the web, allowing for clearly defined headers, alt text, tables, etc.
- Math is accessible and navigable!
- Customization of fonts, colors, etc. is possible through many EPUBs Reading Systems.
- Reflowability: EPUBs will reflow to fit the student's window or screen size. PDFs will shrink down because the layout is fixed.
- Modifying or changing the content can be done using free tools. Adobe Acrobat subscription is required to make adjustments to PDFs.
- Timeliness: Converting files to other formats and remediating the new version will take longer.

Just a few more things ...

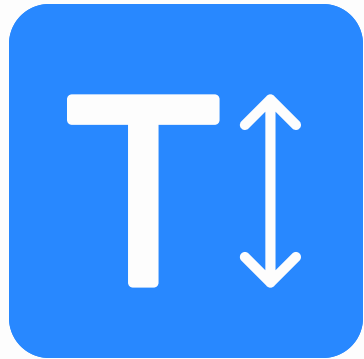


- If a publisher is giving you inaccessible EPUBs, ask them to remediate before asking them to convert to a different file type.
- EPUBs can be richer experiences with media files, interactive elements, and more.
- Where publishers have native EPUB files for their eBooks students will be able to get the files faster and have more accurate files if they don't need to be converted to PDF.
- Creation tool examples:
 - WordToEPUB by Daisy
 - InDesign output to EPUB
- Remediation tool examples:
 - Sigil
 - Visual Studio Code

7. MYSTERY ... To Us!



To Review: EPUBs & Reading System Facts



- Learning a Reading System is a shallow curve, EPUBs read like webpages, and the effort is worthwhile.
- Not being laid out like the print book is an accessibility advantage.
- EPUBs standard is to make accessible books. If your publisher won't, many others will.
- Reading Systems have many features which make them easy to use.
- High compatibility with a wide variety of AT.
- EPUBs are more accessible and flexible and can be a richer experience than PDFs.

THANK YOU!

Prepared using



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