# Designing Accessible Learning with AI Inside and Outside the LMS

## Introduction

Welcome to the accessibility and AI series brought to you by Every Learner Everywhere and the Northwest Higher Education Accessibility Technology group. It's a pleasure to have you with us today. My name is Norma Hollebeke, and I'm the director of innovation and programs at Every Learner Everywhere. Here at Every Learner, we are committed to creating an accessible, all of our materials to be accessible and inclusive. Our slides are designed with high contrast visuals, large text, and descriptive Alt text for images.

If you scan the QR code to view the slides on your phone, that is available for you, and I'll leave the QR code up there for a few seconds for you to do that, if that is your choice. If you need the slides in an alternative format or additional accommodations, please let us know. We value your feedback, and we want to make our content accessible to everyone.

Before I introduce our moderator, I'd like to take out just a few minutes to tell you a little bit about Every Learner Everywhere and the mission of our network. Every Learner Everywhere is a collaboration of higher education organizations with the expertise in evaluating, implementing, scaling, and measuring the efficacy of education technologies, curriculum and course design strategies, teaching practices, and support services that personalize instruction for students in blended and online learning environments. Every Learner Everywhere is sponsored by the Gates Foundation, and here at Every Learner, our collaborative work to advance access to higher education centers on the transformation of post-secondary teaching and learning.

We build capacity in colleges and universities to improve student outcomes with digital learning. Our mission is to partner with institutions to harness digital technology, driving innovation in higher education to improve outcomes for Every Learner.

The Northwest higher education accessibility technology group is a joint project of the Orbis, Cascade Alliance, and the Northwest Academic Computing Consortium to ensure the digital resources are equitably accessible to all users. Now, I'm going to hand it over to our panel moderator Patricia O'Sullivan, associate director for strategic execution at Every Learner Everywhere. Patty.

Thank you, Norma, and thank you to our three panelists, who I will introduce briefly. And you can read their full bios on our website. So up first is Michele Bromley. She's a digital accessibility and inclusivity

specialist and manager of the digital accessibility and content team in Portland State University's office of information technology.

She holds a bachelor's and master's degrees in English from Oregon State University, grounding her work in accessible, inclusive content practices. Her past roles include business and professional writing instructor, alternative formats coordinator, adaptive technology specialist, and IT accessibility coordinator. Michele's expertise spans project and change management, enterprise service management and accessible digital procurement, design, validation, and remediation, and incident response.

Our second panelist is Dr. April Crenshaw. She is an associate professor at Chattanooga State Community College and a student success advocate with over 20 years of experience in higher education and K-12 education. Her innovative teaching has earned her the Pearson Exemplary Teaching and Learning award, the AMATYC Teaching Excellence Award, and a D2L Excellence Award. She's committed to ensuring every student has a clear path to success. She focuses on inclusive course design and an evidence-based support strategies. workshops, including her recent WCET 2025, and As We Rise session, Gen AI and higher education ethics, innovation and empowerment. That was just last month.

And finally, we are pleased to welcome Erik Ducker. He is the senior director of product marketing for 3Play Media, where he leads market research and go-to-market execution for new services.
Erik has helped hundreds of companies, including WCET, our parent organization and Every Learner Everywhere, execute engaging and accessible video campaigns for a variety of applications during his 10-plus years in working in video. Erik is actively involved in the small community of speed skating in Minnesota, serving on the board of directors for the largest speed skating club in the country. That's fascinating, Erik. I love that little tidbit.

## Panel Discussion

So I'm going to open by asking each of our panelists to talk about how they're using AI in their accessibility work. They each bring something very different to the table, which is why we asked them to be on this panel. So let's start with Michele. Michele, can you tell us about your work at Portland State and how AI is supporting your accessibility work there?

Yeah, absolutely. Thank you. So as shared a couple minutes ago, I'm the manager of the digital accessibility and content team at Portland State University. So we support consultation and training for digital accessibility, including, of course, accessible digital design and digital accessibility validation, which then often requires digital accessibility remediation. And especially leading into the Title II changes deadline in April 2026, there's a lot of interest in how AI can support that bulk remediation work.
The analogy that I've been using a lot in trainings at PSU, as I am a very neurodivergent, I individual myself when I face a giant pile of laundry. The demand avoidance makes me just want to just burn down the house and buy a new wardrobe because I don't know where to start. And so there's been a lot of interest in, OK, what tools can we use?

We're a Google campus. So we have been exploring generative AI, specifically through Google Gemini, and one of the tools we've been really emphasizing on campus is this, there's a common concept in higher education for PDF remediation reduce, rebuild, remediate is the version that I borrowed from Oregon Health and Science University.

And that reduce is what are we no longer need? What can be deleted and archived? And the rebuild is let's rebuild it as HTML because generative AI can support that in bulk quite a bit. The most important piece for me as a digital accessibility specialist is to remind folks that the HTML tools, you can convert just even the scariest of PDF scans to HTML using generative AI. But human validation is non-negotiable and required at the other end. So you can convert a bunch of things in bulk. Save yourself the hours and hours that it would take to translate that inaccessible document into HTML if you were coding from scratch, but then that human validation piece. So that's the piece that we're working primarily with right now, trying to build out a gem right now to replicate myself to share with the university that converts things and then says, OK, don't trust my output because I'm not human. Here are your validation checkpoints.

That's wonderful, and I do think we're going to return to that theme quite a bit, of human validation. April, can you tell us how you're using AI to support accessibility in your various roles? And just for full transparency, April also does a lot of instructional design work for us at Every Learner. April. Oh, you're on mute.

So let's unmute. Yeah, so thank you and good afternoon to everyone. Thank you all for having me here. I'm April Crenshaw, and I'm associate professor of mathematics at Chattanooga State Community College, where we're an open access community college. And so, in addition to teaching, I've worked on course design and course redesign, building and creating instructional materials. I've also supported AI policy and faculty professional development. And then, starting in January, I'll step into an interim, a new interim leadership role. And so I guess from the faculty side of things, Michele, I really love that idea reduce, rebuild, remediate, trying to figure out what to do with our PDFs and this idea of changing them over to HTML. But on the faculty side, like all great, hard working faculty, when the emails first came through the inbox about this accessibility mandate, I ignored them. And so then others came. And so it's like, OK, we've got to pay attention to this, what's going on?

And so, first, I had to figure out, OK, so what does it mean? And then what was it going to mean for me and my students? And so what it boils down to is that this mandate is saying that our content must be easy for our students to see, hear, understand, and use on different devices, whether that's their computer, their desktop, their laptop, their phone, even if they have disabilities. So, for me, the way I understand accessibility and where I think I can have, and faculty can have the greatest impact is looking at it threefold. First of all, our resources, are they available, whether that's a textbook instructional resources, course access? The availability, then the affordability, and then lastly, what I call academically accessible. And so my work with belonging and OER and creating course material and doing course instructional design for you all is looking at whether we can create these materials at a level, where students can grasp the material and see relevance so that they feel like, for me, as a math person, that

math is for them too. And so that's where I've been using AI the most, just now, getting into the technical side of it as an extension of something that we as a college did pre-COVID with Alt text and captioning, and that sort of thing. And so now, we're going to get that extended in time for this deadline in April.

So, April, I believe you have an example to show us.

Speaking of Alt text and in trying to get the Alt text for these slides, I actually used AI before you could tell me, hey, this is the Alt text I want you to use. And so that's what I did too. I sent Patty something late last night. She got it earlier this morning. And it's like, hey, we're in the accessibility training. So we've got to have some Alt text for these images. And so I pulled over to the side and asked Copilot because that's all I had available on my phone for some Alt text. And I'm guessing you were right there ahead of me as we were getting that together.

Yeah, I was building the slide deck in Canva, and they have an AI-generated Alt text feature as well, which I didn't find to be, it basically said, here's an example of a customer dashboard, and I was like, yeah, that's not good enough. So hence, we come back to circle back to what Michele was saying about the human validation. But do you want us to put those slides up so that you can show? Are we ready for that piece yet?

Sure. I'll follow your lead with one of the things that has helped us. Major concern on campus right now, again, is being compliant by April 2026. And one of the things is like, OK, so this feels like a big task, a big lift. And the first thing we wanted to know in math and science is where do we start, and where are we right now? So are we far off from being compliant? Are we close? Just where do we start? And what's our baseline? And so we are D2L Brightspace campus. And we found within our courses-- now, pardon me for not knowing if this has been there for a while, or if it's new. But there's a feature that's there called Panorama. And what we were able to do and all math and science faculty did that. I'm sorry. I'm fixing my screen so that I can see the image better. And so under the Activities tab, there's the menu for Panorama. And what it does was it scanned all the files that we had uploaded, that I uploaded in this course that I'm showing you. Patty, can you show the one before this one?

Yeah, Norma. Can we go to the, there we go. Thank you.

That's the one. And so it generated this course report. So this is one of my precalculus courses. And so right now, it says that my accessibility score is 75%, that it looked through about 165 files. And then the other picture if we can switch back to that one. So it didn't just leave me with the 75 and 165 files that were processed. Further down the report, there was the opportunity to look at what was flagged as the issues. And so when I'm looking through my courses and I feel like my colleagues will see the same thing, we don't have isolated issues. There are a lot of patterns here. And so this is I have nearly 300 instances of something where I'm missing an alternative description. Another 160 instances where I have text in a Word document that should not be justified. And then the main thing was these slides that don't have a title. And so I think this helped give us a baseline. And it also made it seem, for me, it made it seem more

manageable. It's like, OK, well, what do I need to do? And these are some things that I can start with because there's also a fixed button in there, and it'll help you walk through some of the issues. And then after that, we come back, and after the training and everything that's scheduled for us, then we can find out and figure out what we'll do with the rest of it as a collective. Well, and this is great. This also reminds me of something Michele had said, that just being overwhelmed with knowing where to start, and it sounds like this, breaks it down into manageable tasks. See, like, OK, it's not everything. It's these things. I like how there's a major and minor designation there too. So we know where to start first, you know?

Exactly. Well, this is great. I want to invite Erik into the conversation. Erik, most of us are familiar with the need for captions and transcripts and videos. I as a middle-aged person, use closed captioning when I'm watching television because I'm old. But what was new to me when I first met you, was to talk about remediation of our videos that Every Learner Everywhere was audio description. I've never heard of it, and I had that reaction that Michele did. I kind of freaked out. I was like, oh, my God, this is overwhelming. And you really helped us understand what it is and how it can be fixed, especially using AI, which made it really affordable for us to do that. So let me talk about all the work that you do at 3Play. But I'm especially interested in the audio description using AI.

Yeah, no, thank you. And I want to keep on the same theme of evaluating what you have and how do you remediate the right files and where to apply your budget appropriately. Just for this audience, I get to usually speak with the Disability Resource centers at universities and the IT accessibility groups, so it's great to be able to speak more directly to the faculty, because at the end of the day, you're the ones who have to do the work, usually to make sure that your courses are truly accessible. So it's really great to have an opportunity to speak a little bit about what we're doing and how we're partnering with your universities to support you in making sure videos accessible across campus. So first off for Patty's perspective, we focus primarily on closed captioning and audio description work. And we use AI in a lot of different ways. But I'm just going to keep it simple of where we really emphasize AI. One, with the updates to Title II, the requirements of compliance have become very black and white in terms of what you have to do now in terms of the language. You're not really relying on case law anymore. It's really just descriptive law that's actually been written down. So this is providing clarity, but also to everyone's point, can be overwhelming because it's going from, hey, I'm going to do remediate files for students who have raised their hand for student accommodations to proactively saying all content on campus effectively needs to be accessible. So with regards to how we deploy AI, we always try to start with AI first. We really try to start with making sure that we use the least amount of budget to accomplish the task of accessibility. So with captions, for example, we use AI first. We produce a transcript. And then what we do is we actually measure the likelihood of that being an accurate transcript. And then we can make decisions around do we need to upgrade this to human quality to make sure that it meets the needs of the University and the budget, or do we just publish it as is? And we are able to then communicate to the faculty directly and say, hey, every single file that lands back in Canvas or your LLMs, we know is at least 90% accuracy because we've measured every single file proactively. And then, if things fall below 90% accuracy, for example, we'll just auto upgrade it and it'll look like 99% accuracy. So this is going to help faculty have to look at less content and review less content. And so we're partnering with, we've rolled this

out across campus in University of Florida. There's a whole webinar around it that we did, not to cross-promote too much. But that's really what a lot of universities are really exploring, is they have these choices of, like, do I just do AI on everything, but I don't know what actually is good quality anymore, because you don't have the evaluation tools? And so that's what we're solving for while also allowing people to have that same access to 99-plus percent accurate caption files with our human workflows.

Going over to audio description, this is a much less mature kind of service in general in the market, and a lot less people know about it. But audio description under the definition is it's an alternate audio track that's provided in sync with the source video content to describe visuals that are not present in the dialogue. So that key part is really important. If you do a good job of presenting your content with a universal design concept, with a universal design mindsight, yeah, sort of, sorry, mindset, then you might not need audio description because you cover it in your dialogue track. So audio description and really born out of the media and entertainment industry where there's lots of visual information that's really critically important to understand the narrative of the visual of the content is this alternate audio track that describes what's happening in addition to the dialogue cues that are happening as well. So we're using AI and funny enough, we're using parts of Gemini because they have a really, really good vision model to basically do this automatically without human involvement as an initial go. So this allows us to provide audio description using pure generative AI techniques, with controls with a lot of prompt engineering around it to provide an output that matches and doesn't overlap with dialogue. And as Patty mentioned, is something that Every Learner Everywhere uses on their content today. Of course, we also provide human audio description. So for student accommodations, we still push and recommend that we use human audio description because you do not know what generative AI is going to do. You can put as many controls as possible, but it's still generative and you have to be careful about that. So 3Play is one thing investing in measuring that. We want to be able to predict, OK, what's the likelihood of the AI audio description being good enough for this type of content. So that's something that we're rolling out over the next few months so that we can provide more insight into our customer base who are relying on generative AI.

Great, and that actually helps me pivot to our next question, because I was thinking how when I get a transcript rendered from 3Play or an audio description file I'm allowed to edit it first. So there's that human oversight. So I want to go back to Michele, but I want to ask all of you eventually, across your areas of expertise, how do you recommend balancing AI automation with human insight to avoid accessibility failures? So Michele, why don't you start us off?

This is such a great question. And I want everyone at my University to be asking this question. One of the things, the analogy that I often use in trainings is that using an AI tool is like working with an extremely competent assistant or technician on their first day, but it is always their first day. So their work will probably be quite good based on their interview and work portfolio, but you would never ship their outputs on their first day to an employee or student population before validating and either returning the work to them for correction or applying that correction yourself, depending on the complexity and expertise required. So it's still 100% worth it in the two different camps of like, oh, should we even try to use AI? It's

going to ruin it. As a internationally certified digital accessibility expert with 15 years of expertise, I can say it is worth it. And it does save a substantial amount of time. But human validation is required.
Having an assistant, even on their perpetual first day, where review and validation is an absolute must, it still means that you're able to delegate the busy work, and you reserve your focus and your expertise for validation, refinement, and delivery. And that ability to delegate the busy work to AI is invaluable. But the human validation piece is non-negotiable. One of the comments that I shared in the chat in this regard, because we as a campus, we are likewise exploring a solution to integrate with our learning management system. Right now, we're looking at using Panorama. We've looked at Blackboard ally in the past.
And one of the most important things with tools that do a lot of automated work and save you a huge amount of time is to emphasize in trainings, just ad nauseam, that human validation is super necessary, and especially with STEM content too. As Dr. Crenshaw was sharing, it does a huge amount of the work for you in recognizing things. But then when you've got those advanced equations and formulas, the built-in optical character recognition and tools like Google Gemini and Panorama aren't always equipped to handle some of the more intense STEM content. And I noticed a question in the Q&A about that. For those things, you need a more specialized optical character recognition tool like Equatio by Everway or Mathpix, which is open-source. We love open-source and actually I believe Equatio is OCR is using the math engine. It's a lot more user-friendly, which is probably why it costs money. But yeah, it's just emphasizing and it's one of my favorite analogies to use is that assistant on their first day, because it's like, yes, this is so useful, incredibly helpful. But human validation is absolutely non-negotiable.
I love that analogy.

April or Erik, do you want to add anything to what Michele said about human validation?

I think there's one or two things I would add. One is not all AI is equal, and the industry has adopted the term AI to mean everything. And what it actually is doing in the background can be fundamentally different. So you do want to check with yourself of generative AI is a very different system and process than discriminative machine engineering models, sorry, machine learning models. And so for automatic speech recognition, most automatic speech recognition engines are discriminative.
And so that means that they're not going to make up stuff if they run off course, whereas generative AI, you do have to worry for that risk. So it is important to understand are you using the right tool for the right problem. And ultimately, generative AI is not always the answer. There's many negative externalities of LLMs and generative AI in our environment. So we have to be careful about making sure that we're using it for, to Michele's point, really treating it as an assistant, as opposed to trying to solve all of your problems with it and then ultimately wasting either budget or time on it.

April, do you want to add anything to that?

No, I think they covered it. It's just for us with math, I have not used Equatio, but I'm familiar with Mathpix. And so one of the concerns on our mind. What do we do with our equations? What do we do with our graphs, with making sure that our content is accessible? And then even something like auto caption, looking to see if sigma got translated as signal or something like that. And so we really want to be very

watchful for anything that deals with how students understand the material, where we might be incorporating AI or generative AI, or in particularly anything that we are grading. And that's going to be high stakes for students. We really want to make sure that if we've run it through some tool to help us convert or remix or rebuild that we really go back line by line and problem by problem and item by item, and make sure that everything is what it needs to be for our students.
So I'm going to stick with you, April, because a lot of what you've been saying speaks to me of making sure that AI not only supports accessibility and access, as you mentioned, but supporting equity and education. Can you speak to that a little bit? How do we not just be compliant but we're equity-focused for students as well?

So again, I like to, as faculty, I like to drift back to the academic accessible part of it, more so because that's where I'm more comfortable than the technical side. But I think that accessibility it's more of a ceiling or a floor or an invitation rather than a ceiling, because I've looked at a couple of checklists for being compliant and going through the different parts. And you can check every box and an online course still be difficult for a student to navigate. So it's not like because we checked all the boxes, that meant that the organization or the structure of the course was good for the students. We could still check every box, and that doesn't mean that the materials we're requiring are affordable for the students. We could check every box, and that still doesn't mean that the language, the level at which the material is written is academically accessible for students. And so I love that we're on the 2.1 or whatever. Is it AA with the compliance? There's actually AAA as well. And it goes so far as to say that the language to that content is written at an eighth grade reading level. And that's something that I think is important again, so that we have it written at a level for our students and not where we're faculty are impressing other faculty with the material that we put out, that it's really written with our students in mind, and for them to grasp and not only for them to understand it, but to see relevance in it so that they want to participate, they want to engage and again, with STEM so that they feel like, hey, this is for me too. And so I think that's what you hear me drifting back to when talking about AI use with this accessibility mandate that we have.

I love that Michele and Erik, do you want to add anything to that piece about ensuring equity as well as compliance?

Yeah, Michele, do you want to go? I can go.

Oh, you go ahead.

OK. So whenever I get this question, I really always draw back to and I cannot figure out who said this to me at some point or where I read it. But accessibility is an innately a human experience. And so we use AI, we use technology to help us. But ultimately, what's accessible is a human experience. And so we have to keep that in mind that we have humans at the end on the other side of our content, the other side of our courses that are engaging with you. To Dr. April, Dr. Crenshaw's perspective, it's not a checkbox. The checkbox is a guide, a starting place for you to make sure that you are producing content that might be accessible to that end audience, but it doesn't guarantee it. And I think that's really, really important for

everyone to understand. It is an innately human experience, and humans can help other people who need support and technology helps that person do their job faster, but ultimately, the humans at the end of the day. Yeah, and I think the main thing that I think of in terms of ensuring equity rather than just compliance, I love that Dr. Crenshaw brought up the AAA guidelines. We've got this baseline of level AA success criteria for the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.
But one of the reasons that the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines are iterative and continually reworked by the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Accessibility Initiative, is that they're trying to improve them to recognize the importance of universal design for learning, and the fact that everyone, every single person on the planet intakes and processes and outputs information differently. And it's hard to capture that in technical guidelines. So one of the things that I share with folks is that it's important to remember that any specialized AI assistant or AI augmented tool be programmed to consider cognitive and learning considerations as much as WCAG specific guidelines. Things like typography, readability, effective use of empty space in a given resource, these are things that aren't necessarily captured in the technical guidelines, but are really critical for people with cognitive and learning disabilities and just the vast swath of neurodivergence in general among the student population.

Wonderful. That's great. Erik, I'm going to start you off with our next question, because I think you often talk to a different audience than maybe Every Learner webinars talk to. So what misconceptions of fears around AI and accessibility do you most encounter in dealing with your population? And maybe you could just explain to our audience who your population tends to be.

So obviously, our system processes basically most of the people on this calls' content. Most likely, we just do it on behalf of the university that you work for. So I think one of the misconceptions that we run into is like, not everyone's trying to steal your data. Like, we are really just trying to help you move faster. And that is our only goal. And so we do run into a lot of universities who are protecting, rightfully protecting faculty against the data scraping. we're at the end of the day, there are the lawsuits against The New York Times and/or, sorry, The New York Times is putting lawsuits out there against OpenAI and other publishers who are fearful of their IP being put out there. But it's also at balance with how do you make sure that you provide enough data so that you get the benefits of using AI. So there is a balance in terms of how do you make sure that you have secure protocols with your data, but also it's not everyone out there is the boogeyman in terms of trying to scrape your data and steal it. At the end of the day, for us, all of what we do is provide better and cheaper services based off of the learnings that we get from working with your content. And ultimately, that makes it cheaper for you guys to comply.

Yeah, that's something I hadn't even thought about. So thank you for bringing that up. Michele, when you work with faculty, is there a similar, like, is what Erik's saying sounding true to what you're hearing from faculty? Or do you have a whole different set of fears around AI and accessibility that you're hearing?

I think the fears tend to be generally pretty similar. A director in my department has said many times, so the sound bite is in my head, that the problem with AI is almost never the technology itself. It's just a tool. The problem with AI tends to be the people. Higher education professionals, typically, seem to fall into

one of two camps. AI is going to change the world as we know it. It will flawlessly validate information security, conduct WCAG compliant accessibility remediation, and generate all of our trainings in one fell swoop. Or AI is going to change the world as we know it. It will destroy creativity and innovation, take all of our jobs, and just maybe become sentient and kill us all before we have a chance to balance the budget. It might be both. And as a subject matter expert in digital accessibility, I strive imperfectly to position myself in the middle of that Venn diagram. I think that AI has the capacity to positively transform a higher education professionals work experience, and correlatively an institution's ability to design and procure accessible and usable technologies if it is accepted and understood for what it is and what it is not. AI is not the solution. It's a resource. It's not the answer. It's an augmentation. It's an incredibly useful tool that is going to take care of the busy work that destroys our calendars when we're all wearing five different hats for our respective institutions. So a very useful tool, but absolutely not the solution, just a tool like any other tech. I come out of information technology. And so, there's technological innovations in educational technology that come out every year, every decade and can be incredibly helpful.
And one of the things that's wild to me as an IT professional and a digital accessibility professional is seeing these reactions to AI that, like, well, it's just, I mean, you put something in and if you use one of those HTML converters, you can just take that HTML and pop that straight into your learning management system. You don't need to check it. It's WCAG-compliant. None of that is true. And for the recording later, I'm hoping people finish that sentence so when I use that example, they don't think that's what I'm teaching. You cannot just paste it directly into your learning management system and your library website. So yeah, I think it's very similar misconceptions. It's either that folks don't want to touch it at all. It's going to destroy creativity and academic freedom, or they want to use it for everything. And they're like, yes, security, data privacy, accessibility no longer a concern. We have a solution, which again, for the recording, that is not true.

We have so many questions from the audience. I'm just going through. There's some in the Q&A and there's some in the chat. I guess a bunch of them are for you, Michele, but asking about which tool are you using for converting PDFs to HTML. Is there a particular tool you'd recommend?

Yeah, well, there's a lot of tools that are capable of it. I mean, I think back to what Erik was saying. There's so many tools who are like they're all mostly the same, but using different engines. And they're all programmed differently. And so they're, whatever, I think my biggest recommendation is whatever AI tool has been reviewed by your IT security team is the one that you should be using. And the reason that I say that is because a lot of the AI tools out there that you can just open source, you can just use it for free, the stuff that you're feeding into it is then going out and feeding the world. And so, for example, I think ChatGPT is great, lots of different tools. I don't use that for work. And that's just because Portland State University is a Google University. And so we vetted Google Gemini very closely and worked very closely with Google to ensure that our instance when we sign in with our pdx.edu addresses, the things that we're feeding in are not going out. And that's going to be super, super critical for that pesky security data privacy and also copyright considerations. So I would say, yeah, my recommendation for the tool is whatever your IT security team tells you is the appropriate tool for to use. But how you use the tool is the most critical piece. Because again, when you're programming your specialized AI assistant, you kind of

can't just throw WCAG 2 at it and say like, all right, reference the entire Web Accessibility Initiative website, convert this thing, and it'll be good. In fact, actually, can I, I definitely didn't ask to do this before, but can I share some, like, my screen with y'all? Is that a thing I can do?

That's our facilitator, Norma. Is that a possibility?

If not, I can send a link to folks. Let me see. I work in higher Ed, so I am a huge fan of just sharing anything I build. So I actually built this over the weekend because I was doing a presentation on Tuesday to the Orbis Cascade Alliance on PDF remediation, like at scale. And oh, my gosh, we have so many things. So I'm going to pop this link in here. Oh, I can share too. Great. So I'm going to share the link, and I'm going to share my screen.

Great.

Exciting. Whoa. There's a ton of people in this document now. OK, let me see. This is switch screen. I have too many screens going on. So what you're looking at—

Yeah, we can see that.

Yeah, what you're looking at is the back end design for my Gemini gem, and the reason why is because I could, I'll share the gem too. You're welcome to use my gem. But it's really important to be thinking about your requirements and the type of things that you're feeding into an AI tool. And so I shared, so in building a gem, you build a precise role and persona. I basically built me. I'm a digital accessibility specialist with 15 years of experience. I've got some certifications. Here's what I need you to do. The first task is to perform end-to-end conversion for any number of uploaded PDFs into individual, accessible semantic HTML files that are fully compliant with WCAG 2.2. Please also reference these other resources. That's not all I'm telling it to reference, because it could reference it, but I'm like, hey, at minimum, because you're an AI and I have no idea how you're going to read these resources, or whether I don't know the web page is down that day or something. So at minimum, use a sans-serif font like Verdana that clearly differentiates between the characters number one, capital letter I and letter L, and capital letter O and 0. Minimum font size, I talk a little bit about all caps, lots of stuff spent on headings. Alt text, I say, hey, every image when you output this HTML to me, every single image should be preceded by HTML comment syntax that reads Check All Text in all caps, because I'm not going to just check that. I'm not just going to trust the output. I tell it to make an attempt because by all means, I save me some time. Make an attempt at a 100 to 200 character image description between the quotation marks for the Alt attribute, and I tell it to consult the surrounding text. I also tell it to shout at me with comments and text, check use of color, but talk about links, language attributes, creating accessible tables. Oh, I'm getting a little thing that says due to heavy collaborator use, some tools in this document may become unavailable. But then look at all this essential context background information. I'm like, not only have I told you specifically the absolute minimum that has to be applied to this HTML output, but here are all the things that I would like you to reference. I want you to greet the person. And yes, I did put some accessibility puns in there. I said,

please include accessibility-related puns, if appropriate, like a cup of accessibility. I made it very kooky, so if anybody replicates this, you probably want to take out the kookiness, like holy mackerel and such.
I did give it the caveat, you can be kooky, but also please be inclusive. Use the University of Washington's IT inclusive language guide. But the most important thing, this is the most critical thing, is I tell it that it has to give a validation guide at the end. So it outputs the HTML and then Gemini. Y'all are going to see what all my recent searches are. But here we go. Actually, I'm sure. Here's an example. Sorry, I will stop sharing here in a second. But I gave it three absolutely horrible scans. And, of course, it said hello there. Holy mackerel. Three PDFs at once. But after, it gave me the HTML output, and I'll scroll down to the bottom here, your validation guide. And it gave me, hey, OK, heading structure, validate this thing. I did it, but double-check. Language check, hey, there's French and German in here. I tried to put the tags in, but double-check it. So I'm trying to ensure convert the thing, but also validate. I'm happy to share the gem and the design because we're in higher Ed we have to help each other. But one thing I would ask, since I'm constantly iterating my stuff, if you all end up using some version of this design, please add a comment to the doc with your name, institution, and contact because I want to know the amazing things you do with it so that I can copy your amazing things.

This is wonderful. I'm going to move on to another question before we wrap up. And April, I want to start with you because you're pretty heavy AI user in your multiple roles. If you could design, or somebody could design, the next generation of AI-enabled accessibility features for whatever you want in your teaching role or in your instructional designer role, what would be the top of your list? Where do you hope is coming down the line?

I think Michele designed it for us. We want the Michele tool. So I think I would want, I don't remember the group, I deleted the email. But there was a group that was promoting a tool that they had, that basically said, hey, we'll do everything, all of the stuff that popped up on my panorama report for the tags and the font and the labels and the cap, all of that. So, hey, if you sign with us, we'll take care of all of that for you. If your PDF can be fixed, we'll fix it. If it needs to be broken down and rebuilt, we'll rebuild it. And you don't have to worry about a thing. And once we're done, we'll, you know? No matter how many files you have, whether you have 10 or you have 1,000, we'll fix it all for you. Turn it back in and the work is done. So that would actually be ideal. But Michele mentioned delegating the busy work to AI. And so making sure that our faculty can do that responsibly and ethically. And then the other part of it is going forward. So we're going back and we're fixing things that are there. But, 5, 10 years from now, we don't want to have to go back and fix the things that we're doing now in the same way. So I would love it if there could have an AI accessibility coach within the tool so that while I'm in the tool and I'm building, it's keeping me mindful of certain things, so that I take care of them on the front end and then not have to go back and fix them on the back end. And so it would take care of all of the technical things. But then, at the same time, here I am making sure that we're written at the appropriate level, that we're free from technical jargon, academic jargon that often are first-gen students may or may not get that all of my equations and graphs and all of that stuff is taken care of on the front end. And if I'm missing it, then it's there to flag me. And if it's missing it, I'm there to tell it. And that's how we go forward. So that at every stage beginning, middle, and end, as

we're creating and developing and incorporating new material, we have a coach there that can help us make sure that we get it right for students.

That's fascinating. Yeah, that sounds like a great tool mixed with Michele's. I want to move into, we just have a couple minutes, so we'll try to keep these answers short. But not a lightning round, but like a last word, if there's something I haven't asked you and that you really want to share out with the people who are attending today. And Erik, we'll start with you. Do you have any last words or advice or anything that you wanted to say to our audience today about AI and accessibility?

I think the most important thing is building a good relationship with your IT team. I think building a good relationship there is going to be really helpful in making sure that you're getting the tools that really help you succeed. I think everyone I talk to in the IT world and space really want to help out faculty.
And sometimes they're doing really, really challenging and manual workarounds to make it work. And I think that's where being very clear about what your needs are, not necessarily like what I have time for, but what is it that you're trying to accomplish. And if you can make that change and start pushing for, OK, let's centralize accessibility from a video perspective. We're all using the same Panopto and media space and Kaltura account, like, let's centralize it. Let's make sure that we're not decentralizing things unnecessarily when we have the power to make it really seamless for faculty. And I think that's, everyone in the room that I talk to is always looking to how do I make the faculty job a little bit easier despite all of these needs and regulations that we work within.

No, that's great. And in higher Ed, we're famous for siloing ourselves, aren't we? And, Michele, you've talked a lot about check with your IT. The tool that you should be using is where your IT department has approved. Do you have any last thoughts or last words for our audience today?

I mean, I love what Erik said. Be friends with your IT teams. I mean, I'm in IT and even within IT, be friends with your fellow IT teams because we would have gotten nowhere in terms of accessible procurement workflow without working with our security team. Because regardless of the fact that the Americans with Disabilities Act has been in place for over 30 years, still you ask the decision makers at your University about digital accessibility law and risk assessment. And they're like, mhm, what now?
I mean, maybe a little bit more familiarity now. But you would talk to them about security and data privacy, and they're like, oh, my goodness. Yeah, no, that is very serious. We need to take care of that. Here's the thing. If you're ever feeling alone in digital accessibility work, make friends with your IT security team, because you're not alone. They are doing very similar compliance work that often feels like they're sort of shouting into the void, hey, security and data privacy matter. And so that partnership, oh, my goodness. Digital accessibility. and IT security. it's a partnership of dreams because technology needs to be reviewed and considered through that data privacy, security, and accessibility lens. So putting it all together is an umbrella of digital inclusivity that also takes on a usability and user experience is really, I think, critical to making any movement in digital accessibility maturity.

And April, 30 seconds, last words.

I love the message that faculty we want to hear that we're not alone in this, that we have IT. We have a director of digital accessibility. They are training folks at the institution so we're going to have accessibility champions in our divisions that are going to help us do this work because faculty want to get it right. And what we don't want to happen is for it to end up feeling like such an overwhelming task, rather so that rather than to fix it, we just take stuff down because that will end up hurting, that will in the long run, hurt our students. And so this idea that we're not alone, there is support. And whether AI help, whether it's one-on-one help, whether it's smaller training sessions like one, I've reached out to our director of accessibility and one of the first meetings that I'll have in my new interim role, I've scheduled a training just for the math department. So it's outside of the large training, and it's just for us to be able to ask our math questions. I think that's what we want. That's what we need to make sure that we are able to do this and do it right.

## Conclusion

Well, before I hand it back over to Norma for a couple of housekeeping messages, I just want to thank everyone on the panel and thank all of you who joined us today. Norma, do you have some last words for our audience? We have our, go ahead.

Just clicking buttons here. Yeah, I do. Thank you all very much. I want to thank the panel as well and our audience. They were so active in the chat and in the questions. I wish we could have gotten to everything, time being what it was, though.

For our audience, though, we do ask that you just take out a few minutes to complete our survey for today's webinar using the link that we posted in the chat for you. And if you've got something else going on immediately after, don't worry, we'll send you the link in a follow-up email that will also include the link to the recordings for these webinars. So please, give us that feedback. We really appreciate it, and it helps us with our continuous improvement cycle.

And on behalf of Every Learner Everywhere, our partners, and the audience for being here with us, we would like to thank you for being here. Thank you for the work you do every day to support your students. Have a nice day.