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State of Maine
Information Technology
Standing Accessibility Committee
2004 Annual Report

PREFACE

Purpose of this Report

This report gives an overview of why accessible technology is important to the State of Maine, as well as to report on accomplishments of the Standing Accessibility Committee during this past year and initiatives planned for the upcoming year.

The Standing Accessibility Committee's overarching objective is, and has been, to integrate accessibility into our everyday business processes and practices. With ongoing budget constraints, many involved with deploying technology simply do not have time to take on additional workload. That fact makes this effort even more critical because when accessibility is simply a part of our regular business processes, it does not mean more work; it simply means we are doing it right the first time.

Should you have any questions and/or comments on this report, please communicate them to Kathy Record in the Office of the CIO (kathy.record@maine.gov or 624-7573).

Acknowledgements

As we continue to move forward with the idea that through education and example, we will build our culture such that accessibility is no longer a mandate, but simply part of how Maine does business. There are several individuals who we wish to thank for their contributions, time and effort over the past year. The new members to the Standing Accessibility Committee we wish to thank are Eric Dibner, Bruce Prindall, Leigh Wilkinson, and Ellen Wood. A special thanks goes to the exiting chairperson, Valton Wood, and the new chairperson, Pauline Lamontagne. There are several individuals who are not State employees but who have generously given their time and talents to advance accessibility: Kelly Hokkanen from InforME, Alan Parks from the University of Maine, and Steve Sawczyn from ATMaine, Inc.

How this Report is Organized

This report is organized into the following sections:

- The Role of Information Technology Accessibility in the State of Maine
- The Standing Accessibility Committee
- 2004 Accomplishments
- 2005 Operational Work Plan Outline

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ACCESSIBILITY IN THE STATE OF MAINE

The State of Maine is committed to ensuring accessibility to information technology for both citizens and employees with disabilities. This commitment is supported by several state accessibility policies and standards which apply to the Web and software programs, and with training and resources, <http://www.maine.gov/cio/accessibility/>.

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 defines accessible information technology in the following manner:

“Information Technology Accessibility is ensuring that technology is such that individuals with disabilities have access to and use of information and data that is comparable to the access and use by those who are not individuals with disabilities.”

In 2001 it was estimated that with the aging population in the United States, 35% of our population may have some type of impairment and/or disability that would require some type of accommodation. State of Maine 2000 Census figures show that almost 30% of Maine’s population was 55 or older. This does not consider younger individuals who are dealing with physical and mental challenges.

Statistics show that a third of individuals with disabilities are underemployed and require assistance due to their underemployment or non-independent living. Costs of support (estimated to be in excess of \$200 billion dollars nationwide) can not be solely based on cost of their assistance, as we must also factor in the loss of these individuals’ productivity (such as loss of tax revenues, contributions to society and creation of wealth).

President George W. Bush, signing the New Freedom Initiative, stated that this initiative would help Americans with disabilities by increasing access to assistive technologies, expanding educational opportunities, increasing the ability of Americans with disabilities to integrate into the workforce, and promoting their increased access into daily community life.

This additional/improved access to technology and related information is critical to Maine, especially with our aging population. Accessible e-government services for our citizens means that those requiring assistance in traveling can obtain services from the State without relying upon outside intervention. Additionally, through Maine’s portal, they can obtain information that may improve the quality of their lives in many areas, such as ordering large print library books through the mail, receiving air quality notices, updates on legislative issues and current events within their community, and eligibility for services and medical information, all without having to leave their homes.

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Obviously, the same pertains to those with physical or mental challenges who may not be a part of our aging population. Accessible technology can allow a student who is blind to obtain the same data on the internet that his peers can; provide a mentally challenged individual the ability to receive information in a format that he/she can more easily filter; and provide someone with limited mobility the technology that will allow them to perform the same job as fully mobile counterparts.

Eric Dibner, ADA Coordinator for the State of Maine states that, “Access to electronic and information technology for employees and members of the public will increase productivity and, for people with disabilities, access is required by state and federal regulation. Each State worker is responsible for removing discriminatory practices. When we send a document attached to an email, design a web page or site, post a document on the web, or arrange the purchase of electronic equipment or software, we have a responsibility to understand and implement standards of accessibility to ensure the materials are readable by people with sensory, cognitive, and mobility impairments.” He makes it clear that accessibility is not only the right thing to do, but it’s mandated by law.

THE STANDING ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE

Committee History

The Information Services Policy Board (ISPB) recognized the State's commitment to meeting the needs of its employees and citizens with disabilities and adopted a resolution in January 1998 that fully supported the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regarding reasonable accommodations in the workplace. The Policy Board authorized the establishment of a Standing Accessibility Committee to evaluate and advise the Board regarding technological developments and products to ensure compliance with the ADA and other relevant laws. The committee's charge was broadened in November 1999 and their charter outlined as follows:

Accessibility Committee Charter

- Propose and maintain standards for information technology accessibility
- Expand and maintain an evaluation methodology for current and future information technology endeavors
- Prepare periodic updates on technology, ADA compliance, and other legal requirements
- Complete an annual report on previous year's accomplishments and proposed future work plan
- Work in partnership with the Accessible Information Technology Coordinator on identifying issues and providing technical assistance and solutions

Functions of the Committee

The Committee provides oversight to chartered sub-committees and project teams that work in specific areas related to accessibility, while the Chair and Staff perform the administrative tasks related to managing the workflow of the Committee.

The Committee may establish project related work groups to address specific issues identified by the ISPB or the Committee.

The Committee is responsible for designing an ongoing process for membership recruitment, selection and decision making criteria that meet the ISPB policy mandate. The process shall include the review and approval of the ISPB.

Committee responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Evaluate current and future technology and workarounds using the testing lab and independent verification and validation.
- Facilitate accessibility demonstrations of products being considered for purchase or development by Maine State Government.

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- Evaluate national consensus standards to include but not be limited to: software applications and operating systems; web-based Intranet and Internet information and applications; telecommunications products; video and multimedia products; desktop and portable computers; information, documentation and support.
- Review and stay current with standards being developed by nationally and internationally recognized public and private groups, to ensure they meet Maine's needs and provide recommendations to the ISPB.
- Maintain and monitor procurement proposals for evaluation criteria in RFPs and vendor contracts.
- Develop a process for monitoring progress toward information accessibility statewide.
- Manage, expand and update the accessibility site and links.
- Provide ongoing information on new products, techniques and other changes related to accessibility in a variety of formats, such as articles in the Maine IS Technology newsletter.
- Review and stay current with federal and other states' legislation, policies, rules and regulations.
- Review and provide ongoing lists of accessibility tools and resources.
- Arrange for and provide information technology accessibility training for State employees, vendors, developers and buyers.
- Provide technical assistance for departments as requested.

Committee Membership

The Standing Accessibility Committee membership shall include expertise in all of the major disability, accessibility and information technology specialty areas. Major core areas represented on the Committee should include deaf and hard of hearing, blind and visually impaired, mobility and speech impaired and cognitive considerations. Members must have a vested interest in accessibility and represent a broad spectrum of skills and knowledge including legal, policy, national perspective, human resources, purchasing and various technologies.

Roles as defined by Membership Sub-committee*

<u>State and Community</u>	<u>Disability Seats</u>	<u>Technology Seats</u>
CIO, Staff Support	Cognitive	Assistive Technology
ISMG Representative	Hearing	Application Development
University System	Mobility	Webmaster/Designer
BIS (Central IT)	Visual	Telecommunication
Community		Hardware
Vocational Rehabilitation		

**It's understood that one member may fill more than one role on the committee*

2004 Committee Members

Committee contact:

Kathy Record, Office of the CIO, DAFS - Accessible Information Technology Coordinator for the State of Maine, Staff to the Accessibility Committee 624-7573 or kathy.record@maine.gov

Pauline Lamontagne Esq., Department of Education, Committee Chair

Carolyn Bebee, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired,

DOL

Jan DeVinney, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Division of Deafness, DOL

Eric Dibner, Rehabilitation Services, DOL

Kathleen Powers, Statewide Assistive Tech Project, Maine CITE Coordinating Center, University College, University of Maine System

Bruce Prindall, Office of Information Processing, DOL

Floyd White, Bureau of Information Services, DAFS

Leigh Wilkinson, Bureau of Human Resources, DAFS

Ellen Wood, Maine State Library

Valton Wood, Bureau of Information Services, DAFS

2004 ACCOMPLISHMENTS REPORTED BY FOCUS AREA

The Committee has documented six focus areas and identified initiatives that would support each one of those. No one area is weighted any higher than another as it is felt all are critical to the objective of equal access to information and technology.

Accountability

The challenge of this focus area continues to be providing guidance to agencies to ensure compliance with the existing state standards and policies on accessibility. The following are the accomplishments in this area.

Vendor participation

- Accessibility Language for State Contracts was developed and the Division of Purchases requires that this text be included in all requests for proposals which require application development, software licenses or enhancements. The standard must also be used in all sole source or renewal contracts for similar services.
- A cover letter to vendors was developed to be included with all contracts.
- The CIO has published a preferred vendor list on the Web. Each vendor will be ranked with a place for comments indicating why an agency gave a vendor a particular rating.

In house software development

The CIO has directed that all agencies prepare a Portfolio Management Plan. Included in the requirements must be a list of new software systems that each agency is developing. This gives visibility to new projects and the opportunity to address accessibility compliance during system concept.

Software testing (Internal and Vendor)

Committee members (Floyd White and Pauline Lamontagne Esq.) have continued to provide testing of software for internal and external development groups. The effort has included testing with screen readers, voice recognition software and testing of websites for compliance.

Web accessibility

The Web is now one of the most important means by which the State communicates with the public. As website usage continues to grow, it is critical that all websites be accessible to the broadest possible audience. The State of Maine Web Standards have been updated with the focus being to improve the quality, usability and accessibility of all state websites. To assist in this effort, new templates have been developed to meet industry standards for browser compatibility, usability and accessibility. Agencies will be required to use these templates in accordance with the Maine.gov Style Guide. There are several new administration requirements that will provide the structure which will ensure accessible sites with accountability control.

National Policy

Communication of national efforts

Kathy Powers continues to be the liaison between the State and national accessibility efforts. She represents Maine on accessible information technology issues to the Northeast Region ADA Technical Assistance Center, Boston MA, as well on a national work group of Information Technology and Training Technical Assistance Center (ITTATC) that identifies issues and develops resources related to accessible electronic and information technology for states and the federal government. She arranged for Maine to be a panelist on an ITTATC audio cast which highlighted progress states have made in the area of accessibility, as well as challenges they face. Additionally, Kathy was instrumental in providing scholarships to send two committee members to the Technology and People with Disabilities National Conference at CSUN (California State University at Northridge) for the purpose of increasing awareness of and knowledge about the impact of technologies to improve the lives of Maine citizens with disabilities.

Telecommunications

NexTalk Sub-committee

In the latter part of 2003, the Committee chartered a Telecommunications Sub-committee, with Jan DeVinney as Chair, to test a product called NexTalk that was identified by the Bureaus of Information Services as a substitute for TTY's. NexTalk is a network based system with special provisions for the communication needs of the deaf and hard of hearing, but with advanced communications and messaging features. It is a blending of telephone and computer technologies which links TTY callers with every NexTalk personal computer user on the local and wide area networks. This system can be compared to an instant messaging system. The product tested satisfactorily and the decision was made to implement. When implemented, we expect that NexTalk will increase the rate of successful TTY communications. The Bureau of Information Services assigned Lisa Thompson as Project Manager for this state wide project. Lisa developed the implementation plan which included testing with the deaf community outside the State. The sub-committee was fortunate to have the help of a summer intern, Dan Andrews, to write the required scripts and training documents. A state-wide education effort is in process and the implementation should be completed this summer.

Web Sub-committee

This committee was established, with Ellen Wood as Chair, in 2004 based on a recommendation from the Accountability Subcommittee's objectives. The goals were to review and implement the recommendations from the Web Accessibility Plan which was developed by Anna Flewelling, summer intern 2003. The Committee reviewed, updated and prioritized the recommendations. In the brief period of time since they were established, they have reviewed the web training curriculum, made basic web design training available for every state employee who works on web pages, set up a bulletin board for webmasters, and evaluated enterprise software to review all state sites for accessibility on a biannual basis. The decision was made, with the assistance of Alan Parks from the University of Maine, to purchase the enterprise software from HiSoftware. This software will evaluate each site for accessibility and produce a report to each department, providing the means to make the pages compliant. Additional purchase of a companion suite of

tools for webmasters will provide further verification, repair, captions to videos, and check web site links. This committee has also been instrumental in working with InforME, to implement the new Web Standards, which includes the new, required templates, designed by InforME.

Training

Web training

With the assistance of a new member from the Bureau of Human Resources, Leigh Wilkinson, the curriculum for State Web training courses was reviewed and is in the process of being updated to align with the accessibility requirements as stated in the standards. Additionally, a half day training session, sponsored by the Web Subcommittee, was provided for all webmasters on “Tools of Traveling the Web” and “Basic Steps towards Accessible Design”. Going forward, they are continuing to offer quarterly half day workshops which are open to all webmasters and their managers at no cost to the departments. Additionally, InforME hosts monthly webmaster meetings which include accessibility training and education. This also is open to all state webmasters.

Accessible web design

As part of the updated Web Standards, Dreamweaver and Contribute have been acknowledged as the required Web authoring software. While there are courses offered in Dreamweaver, no courses have been developed in Contribute. To familiarize webmasters with this new software, two monthly webmaster meetings discussed the use of Contribute, one using the internet as the medium.

Management training

All new managers are required to participate in management training provided by Bureau of Human Resources. As part of that training, we have incorporated accessibility awareness training into the Maine Management System training program.

Visibility and Awareness

MIST newsletter

The Committee continued to publish articles that focused on web accessibility. This year articles were published on NexTalk and the new accessible templates that are required as part of the updated Web Standards.

Report to the Governor

The CIO’s monthly report to Governor includes a section on accessibility which he uses to regularly update the Governor on the challenges and accomplishments of the Standing Accessibility Committee. The reports, along with the minutes of the Standing Accessibility Committee, are published on the OCIO website, www.maine.gov/cio.

InforME

Every year InforME hosts a day long off-site retreat for State of Maine webmasters. This year the Office of the CIO gave a presentation on accessibility and the future direction and requirement for the State agency web pages.

Leadership award

After serving as chair for the Standing Accessibility Committee for two consecutive terms, Valton Wood resigned his chairmanship, but remains as an active member. Valton was presented with the Information Technology Accessibility Leadership Award for his leadership and commitment to universal design and accessible information technology in support of access to information for all Maine State employees and the public. This is the first award of this kind given and honors Valton as one of the original active participants in the accessibility effort.

Resources and Support

Outreach to consumer groups

This year, a letter was sent to consumer groups to make them aware of the Standing Accessibility Committee and to invite them to assist with initiatives where we might be lacking expertise and/or resources. There was a response from the Maine Developmental Disabilities Council and communication, particularly related to web accessibility was initiated.

Summer interns

This past summer we were fortunate to have two interns assisting with the accessibility effort. Anna Flewelling who had worked for us the previous summer returned to continue to provide education and research on Web issues. Dan Andrews, who was hired through the Margaret Chase Smith Intern Program, provided strong support for the NexTalk project.

OPERATIONAL WORK PLAN OUTLINE FOR 2005

The 2005 work plan is framed around six focus areas, which is a change from past years. This year each focus area was assigned a lead, who may not be charged with accomplishing the tasks in the work plan, but will monitor progress of all efforts. The areas and leads are as follows:

Accountability	Floyd White
Telecommunications	Bruce Prindall
Internet/Web	Ellen Wood
Training	Leigh Wilkinson
Visibility and Awareness	Carolyn Bebee
Administration	Kathy Record

The work plan was drafted during an all day planning session, lead by a facilitator, and refined during a subsequent session. The final objectives are as follows:

Accountability

Complete IT Accessibility Law Workgroup research by winter 2005. This subcommittee will research Section 508, analyze other state laws, and determine proper elements of a good Maine State law. At this point, the Standing Committee will decide if they want to pursue implementing a law or if the existing policies are as effective as having a law.

Telecommunications

Implement NexTalk software to replace TTYs by fall 2005. The Department of Labor (DOL) will pilot implementation beginning in March. Since the DOL is the largest user of TTYs and with the most complex system, there will be lessons learned during this pilot that can be applied to other agency implementations.

Explore Video Remote Interpreting and prepare recommendations by the summer of 2005. The Department of Labor will be the first department to explore this technology in their Career Centers. Recommendations will be made based on their experience.

Explore Distance Learning and develop status report by the fall of 2005. Determine best practices for producing accessible software applications and accessible content for online distributed learning. Research other government online learning and develop a report for the full Committee.

Internet or Web

Ensure that each agency will have access to web testing and accessibility tools on at least one computer by the spring of 2005. The first step is to identify the webmaster coordinators who will receive the tools. They will be trained on the software and receive at least one copy for departmental use.

Evaluate all state agency home pages and primary navigation pages at least twice a year beginning in the spring 2005. Monitor the State of Maine Web page and primary/navigation pages

for each department. The definition of “home” page agreed upon was the first page that a visitor sees when arriving to the State of Maine page or another department. “Primary navigation” refers to the left and top navigation on the home page. HiSoft will be used to validate these pages and a report will be distributed to each agency indicating pages that require revisions.

Evaluate enterprise evaluation software in the summer/fall 2005. Continue the evaluation of the HiSoftware even after purchase.

Mandate all state employees who have access to and work on state web pages to register with the

Office of the CIO by the winter of 2005. This requirement exists in the updated Web Standards which will be adopted in February, 2005. InforME will create an on line registration form which must be completed in order to receive FTP rights.

Training

Assist with statewide NexTalk Training Plan spring 2005. The NexTalk group will identify individuals who need the training, have the software loaded on their machines and test it. They will identify locations for presenting the training and the training modules. The Web will be used as the vehicle to deliver the training and the training will be recorded for future use.

Inventory and collect all core accessibility training materials/modules. This will be an ongoing effort to insure there is up to date and available accessibility training material.

Make basic Web design training available to any state employee working on Web pages. The focus of this training will be directed towards the individuals who have registered using the InforME registration form for FTP accounts. To ensure that the Contribute and Dreamweaver software training is customized to meet the objectives of accessibility, the curriculum will be customized and the process for selecting a trainer will be updated.

Offer training on new software products. This includes the quarterly training workshops, such as training on the HiSoftware product used for testing and repairing sites, along with free tools.

Awareness/Visibility

Recruit a marketing person. The Membership subcommittee will identify and recruit a person from within state employment with PR/Marketing background to develop a marketing plan. The plan would include demos on accessibility. The intern will assist in this effort.

Continue presentations to managers during the Bureau of Human Resource Management training session (ongoing). Along with the webmasters, the managers have been identified as key to the advancement of accessibility.

Continue MIST articles (ongoing). Bi-monthly submissions to MIST will be an ongoing process.

Develop strategies to better organize the exchange of national information and

initiatives spring 2005.

Publicize award / recognition / Best Practices winter 2005. It was decided that three awards will be presented annually, one for leadership and two others with categories determined on a yearly basis.

Explore an organized system to communicate with community disability advocacy groups. There are to be quarterly announcements/status reports and the addition of in-house demos or on-site training with feedback.

Present to the CIO Council. This presentation will explain what IT accessibility actually means and the impact when an application and /or website are not accessible. The Accessibility Committee will seek re-chartering from that group and/or the Chief Information Officer when the ISPB (Information Services Policy Board), who originally chartered this group, is eliminated by statutory change.

Administration

Recruit new committee members by winter 2005. This will be done under the direction of the Membership Subcommittee. There remain areas, such as cognitive, that require a higher level of expertise than what is currently available.

Identify and secure needed resources/support and prepare annual Accessibility Committee budget by fall 2005. The activity and accomplishments of the Committee has increased and along with the added efforts additional funds will be required. In the past, there has not been an adequate accounting of expenses, making it difficult to plan. This year, a budget will be developed.

Prepare Annual Report by fall 2005.

Hire a summer intern from the Margaret Chase Smith Summer Intern Program.

For the past two summers we have had a summer intern working on accessibility. Because of their efforts, accessibility initiatives have advanced noticeably. We will apply for a summer intern for 2005 to help with accessibility.

STATE OF MAINE STANDING ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE
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