JACLYN LEDUC: Hi, everyone. Thank you for joining this webinar entitled Accessibility and Social Media. I'm Jaclyn Leduc from 3Play Media, and I'll be moderating today. I'm joined by John Foliot who is the Principal Accessibility Strategist at Deque Systems.

JOHN FOLIOT: So good afternoon, everybody. As they said, my name's John Foliot. I work at Deque Systems. And today I'm going to talk about social media, accessibility, and you.

And so one of the things that I would like to mention, if I could get this thing to go, that there is a lot of social media channels out there, and there's more springing up all of the time. And so this is not an exhaustive review or discussion of all of the social media channels that are out there, although I hope to touch on some basic principles that are really applicable to all social media channels. So for the purposes of the conversation today, I focused on the six social media channels that you can see presented on the screen, specifically Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Pinterest, and Instagram.

And so with that, one of the things that I wanted to do and one of the things I wanted to share was that there was a number of issues that-- I went and I did a review of those six sites. And so what I did is I used the Axe Developer tool. It's a free browser plugin that Deque provides to the accessibility community. The plugin in can be installed in both Firefox as well as Chrome. And what it does is that it does a mechanical evaluation of web pages on a page-by-page level, and it provides us back with a list of failures and successes on the page.

The plugin is, in fact, as I said, part of a tool offering that Deque provides to everybody. And it's based on a manifesto that we have that it has zero false positives, that the tool itself is lightweight and fast and works on all modern browsers. And so this is not a sales pitch for the tool, but just to let you know that it is a free and open-source thing, and we welcome contributions from the larger community. But it was the tool that I used to evaluate a number of social media channels. And it's something that I've been doing over a couple of years now.

So the first site I ran the evaluation tool on, I found 99 violations of WCAG 2.0, the Web Content Accessible Guidelines version 2.0. And the test parameters were set to test for both the A and AA success criteria. By comparison, when I did the same test last year around the same time, I found 168 violations. So one of my early takeaways is that Twitter is getting better.

But as I look through the list-- and I'm going to point out this list, and I encourage you to look at the other lists that I'll follow-- but a lot of the issues that we found were very much related to the source code-- the misuse of ARIA elements in the publishing platform, duplicate IDs or mistakes around ID attribute values. The last two images or the last two things on this bullet list, images lacking alternative text and elements that have insufficient color contrast, those two things tend to be very variable because it really does depend on what's on the screen when the test was done. So I could run the same automated test five minutes later and those numbers might change because the content on the screen would have changed. But my general takeaway is that Twitter is getting better. And when I look at the images and color contrast, I think we're seeing some improvements there.

Facebook has done a really good job, actually In comparison to where they were last year where we found 72 issues on the page, this time around-- and I ran all of these tests earlier this week, so they're fairly current-- I found 57 violations. Again, when I go through the punch list or the bullet list of the issues that we found, a lot of them-- certainly the first three are related to ARIA, issues around IDs and frames. And so a lot of the issues that we find, again, are based on the source code of the Facebook publishing platform, right down to even links having discernible text.

Interestingly enough, I didn't get any pings on a lack of alt text because now we know Facebook is automatically generating alt text for images when they're being provided. Nonetheless, there was 24 elements on the page that, when it was tested, had insufficient color contrast.

Moving on to LinkedIn, probably the social media channel that's seen the best results. Last year there was 51 issues that we found. This year when I ran the test there was a grand total of eight. Most of them were primarily linked to misuse or improper use of the ARIA attributes-- again, source code of the publishing platform. And there was one link that was missing discernible text. But by and large, the LinkedIn website was really accessible. I was very pleased to see those kinds of results.

Looking at Pinterest, again, we've seen some progress. Pinterest is probably one of the hardest sites to test simply because it's constantly changing, and we know primarily that Pinterest is all about images. In 2018, I found 11 violations of source code, but one of the most critical things that we noted last year was that none of the images had any kind of alternative text. Nowadays, to my surprise and delight, Pinterest is, in fact, providing alt text for most of

the images.

I'm not a Pinterest user. I'll caveat upfront, but it appears that you can provide some kind of additional text at the author level that is being applied to be the alternative text. And so most of the images had some kind of alt text. There were a few that I noted that were alt equals quote quote, which is not a violation. It's not a very useful value, but it's certainly not a WCAG violation. The quality of the alt text varied dependent on who uploaded the picture to Pinterest. But nonetheless, some really great results.

YouTube, unfortunately, seems to be going backwards. Last year we found the 86 violations, and earlier this week when I ran the evaluation, I found 121. Again, the bulk of them seem to be coming from the publishing platform. Look, there's 102 issues of an ID attribute that did not have unique value. So that could be quite problematic for certain types of assistive technology.

On the upside, there was only one issue of a color-contrast violation, and there was only one link that didn't have any discernible tech. So the practical inaccessibility of YouTube is hard to judge, but in terms of a legal conformance compliance to WCAG 2.0, they have a number of issues related to that.

Finally, Instagram, again, another site that seems to be going backwards. Last year we found 41 violations, and this year I found 53. Again, part of the issue here is that the numbers may have changed because of the number of color-contrast issues. And because these social media pages-- I tested all of the home pages. And so they're constantly evolving, constantly changing, as frequently as multiple times per minute, and so getting an accurate read is a little bit difficult. And so perhaps that increase from 41 to 53 was simply based on insufficient color contrast of whatever was posted on the page when I ran the evaluation.

And I think part of that is probably one of the bigger issues that we need to deal with, and that is that the more diverse the content and the more frequent that the content is updated, the more likely we're going to get varying results from an automated tool because automated tools are basically just a snapshot. And in the world of social media, there's a million snapshots a day kind of thing.

So one of the things that I wanted to also touch on was some myths around accessibility for social media. So one of the most-- well, I won't say one of the most common myths, but one that I hear frequently is that people with disabilities don't use social media. Au contraire, and

actually many of my nonsighted friends are very active in areas like Twitter and LinkedIn where being able to be part of a larger community digitally online is actually a benefit. And so a lot of disability groups actually are using social media now to find their community and to have a collective voice. So if anything, I think maybe people with disabilities are using social media more than the mainstream population.

Social media is accessible. It can be used without limitation, again, is false. The ability for users to interact with social media is getting better, but there are still a number of limitations, and many of them are based on the publishing platform, but then some of them are under your control. And we'll talk about that in a couple minutes.

There's the myth that organizations are using social media to reach everyone. They're trying. Most organizations today, whether they're in the commercial sector, the educational sector, whatever, everybody is now using social media as part of their total digital online presence. And so they're trying to, but whether they are reaching everyone or not is an open question, again, because of some of the limitations of the platforms.

I hear frequently that it's expensive and time consuming to make social media content accessible. Like any other digital media, the longer you wait to make it accessible, the more expensive it will be. And so like any other digital activity, if you're really concerned about the accessibility of it, it needs to be planned for early on. And I'm going to go through some of the things that you should be planning for a little later in this session.

Finally, compliance with WCAG 2.0, or Section 508, guarantees that social media is accessible. Not true, and whether it's social media or whether it's any of your other digital publishing platforms, you can have web content that is fully compliant to WCAG 2.0, which is essentially Section 508 today, and it still may be inaccessible to various groups or individuals with various or different disparate disabilities.

We know, for example, that WCAG 2.0 left a lot of gaps that left members of the cognitively disabled community on the outs. There has been a lot of work to try and address that. But just because you're in full compliance doesn't mean that every user is going to be able to fully engage with your content.

So those are some of the myths. Really to debunk them, the US federal government has a really good website. And so if you find you're in a situation, an organization where you're struggling to counter some of these myths and get some traction around accessibility and your

social media content, that resource there, digitalgov.gov/2013, 2013, slash 06/25/5-myths-about-social-medial-accessibility, all one string with hyphens between each word, dash 2 slash. We'll make sure at the end of this seminar that the slides are going out, and all of these links will also be provided in that email, but I felt like I'd speak them out anyway.

I went out and I was looking at some of the other resources that are on the internet today related to social media content, and I found this really good online poster from Danya International where they've summed up what they consider to be the golden rules of social media accessibility, which is be reachable, be redundant, be a resource, be simple, and be considerate. Again, the URL is on the screen. It's danya.com/files/sma_poster.pdf.

And when I looked at that and I thought about it a little bit more, what does that mean? Well, to be reachable, you should provide some kind of contact info on your profile such as a web address or phone number or whatnot. Most of those social media platforms do have a home page related to your organization and whatnot, and you can usually provide those kinds of information. I strongly urge you to do so.

And one of the things that I also recommend is that if you already have an internal accessibility policy within your organization, or if you already have a process that basically addresses what happens when somebody finds an accessibility issue on any of your other web properties, that you provide that information on the social media platform as well. So basically we're turning our user not into adversaries but actually partners, that if they find an issue, that they can advise us. And I would much rather hear from a person with a disability who's found an issue than to be hearing from their lawyer.

Point two, be redundant. Post on multiple social media channels so that you're covering as much as possible.

Be a source. Really learn about the accessibility issues-- and we're going to talk about some of them here-- and share them with your followers.

Be simple. Write in plain language. Be careful of the use of acronyms, hashtags, and abbreviations.

And really when you think about it, these are-- I don't want to call them no-brainers, but these are very common recommendations for all media or all digital content that we're publishing on the web. And so as a publishing channel, just think of social media as just another publishing

platform. But all the things that you would apply in terms of your readability and simple language and whatnot that you would provide on your mainstream website should spill over into your social media channel as well.

And then finally, be considerate. Consider the user's perspective. One of the biggest problems we have with social media is that it amplifies the visual aspect of the web as a publishing medium. And so whenever possible, one of the things that we see frequently, especially from the commercial sector, is that they're using social media platforms as basically a marketing channel. And so a lot of the content that they're posting tends to be very image heavy.

Some of the social media channels-- Pinterest and Instagram, for example-- are all about pictures. And so we want to remember that while the visual information is there and it's great for the visual users, that we need to provide some kind of textual alternate or text component whenever possible. And so really when it comes to dealing with social media within your organization, it really boils down to, in my opinion, policies and standards.

So the big question is does WCAG 2.0 or 2.1 apply to social media, and, if so, how? So I believe that it does. WCAG stands for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, and so what we're really talking about here is content. Social media is a publishing platform where third-party organizations may control the platform but we as the content producers actually have control over the content. And so with that in mind, I believe that there's a certain subset of WCAG 2.0 that applies.

I need to be really, really careful, and I have a T-shirt that says "I am not a lawyer." And so I am not a lawyer. I cannot speak to legal precedent here. I've been following this space fairly closely. I'm unaware of any specific legal precedent, but I suspect that many of you are here on this call because who wants to be first, right? Nobody wants to be the guinea pig that has to go through the legal system and define it.

And so based on that, I went back and I looked at WCAG 2.0. And when you go through all of the success criteria that are part of WCAG 2.0-- and I'm assuming for the purposes of today's call that most attendees are familiar with what I'm talking about when I say WCAG and the A and AA success criteria. But when you go through those 35 success criteria that constitute WCAG A and AA, there is roughly 10 that are specifically focused on content, and there's another 25 that are specifically related to the publishing platform.

And if you think about some of those errors that I showed you earlier, those ARIA areas and

the duplicate ID areas and issues, all of those things are all related to the publishing platform. And because you have zero control over that, there's not much we can do, right? We can file bugs at Facebook or Twitter or whatnot, and all of those platforms are actually happy to get the bugs. And when I look at a platform like LinkedIn where I know over the past two, three years a gentleman by name of Jennison Asuncion has been there, has been really leading the charge for accessibility at LinkedIn, and we're starting to see the fruits of his labor. So the platforms have a role to play.

But as far as content producers, there are 10 specific success criteria that I think are relevant to us. So the most important one, the critical one is success criteria 1.1.1, which is basically that add the alt text one, that all non-text content requires a textual alternative.

We're getting lucky now. The social media platforms are getting better at allowing you to provide a specific alt text. And I did mention earlier that a lot of organizations, to really extend their reach, are publishing social media content across multiple channels. Not every channel is going to provide the same depth of quality in terms of allowing you to provide a text alternative. They're getting better.

Facebook now, you can go in and you can actually edit and improve the machine-generated alt text that Facebook is providing. Twitter now provides a mechanism where you can provide alt text. As I noted, Pinterest now appears to be allowing that as well.

From a production perspective, however, when you're creating visual content, visual assets for the social media platforms, as part of your just production checklist you should ensure that you always have good and appropriate alternative text. Some platforms may not allow you to apply that, and that's on the platform. But from a content-production perspective, as you're creating your visual assets or selecting your visual assets, you should also be specifically creating what the intended alternative text will be so that when you start publishing across multiple platforms you have, A, a consistent alt text but B, a well-thought-out alt text that you can apply.

The next one is really-- there's a number of success criteria in WCAG that are specifically related to multimedia. And for the most part, we're talking about video. And so I'm not going to go through all of the success criteria on the screen, but in a nutshell, we have two, perhaps three requirements for multimedia.

The first one is that to address the needs of people who cannot hear, we need to provide essentially closed captions or open captions. And I don't need to talk about captions. We're all

at 3Play Media's website, so we know what a wonderful job they're doing there. They can go through the differences of open and closed captions, but what is important is that a caption is provided.

For people who cannot see, we need to provide an audio description. And if you want to be WCAG AA compliant, fully AA compliant, providing an audio description is a specific requirement to meet that AA success level. So again, 3Play Media can talk to you at length about both audio description and captions. I know that they're providing those services to people, and so I'll leave it at that.

Again, what's critical is that when you're producing video content for your social media platforms, again, you want to make sure you have all of those additional support assets-- the audio-description file, the caption file, perhaps a transcript. You want to ensure that they've been produced. Not all platforms may allow you to use all of those things, but at least you have them at the ready. And so for those platforms that do support them, you've got them ready. So again, it's about anticipating your needs going into the social media platforms and when the platform will fully support one or more of these requirements that you've got the digital assets ready.

Another one is really at the point of content creation, success criteria 1.3.3, which basically says that we want to ensure that we're not dependent on one specific sensory input. So the reason why we provide textual alternatives is for those people who can't see. The reason why we provide closed captions is for people who cannot hear.

And so as you're creating your content, whether it's multimedia or whether it's static, you just want to make sure that you're not appealing to a specific sensory characteristic as a single way of providing information, which is not to say that you cannot. I mean, obviously we're going to be appealing to visual users, but be mindful of them and don't just use things that are dependent on that.

If you are building visual content, again, for sighted users you want to be careful that you're not just using shapes or location or those types of things within the visual asset. If you provide a pie chart, make sure all of the pie slices are labeled or that kind of thing.

Again, the use of color and color contrast are two success criteria that are relevant to the production of content. Again, I'm envisioning this primarily towards your visual assets. We see

a lot of visual content for social media platforms where you've got an image and then there's text burned into that image. And so in that case we want to make sure that that text that's burned into the image-- not ideal, right? There are other success criteria that would say we should actually avoid doing that, but in social media platforms, they don't allow us today to overlay text on a background image, and so we're left with no choice but to burn text into that image.

So again, be careful with your color contrast. The color contrast numbers, 4.5 to 1 is text against the background imagery. To be AAA compliant, it's 7 to 1.

I've included 3 to 1 as a color contrast here. For those of you that are only mandated to meet WCAG 2.0, the 3.1 applies to bold text above 14 points. But in WCAG 2.1, we extended that measurement to also include non-textual elements. And so for example you'll see around the numbers I've got that ring. That is the rainbow of colors that goes around the horn from orange to yellow to blue to purple.

And so in a pie chart or something like that, the requirement is that when we have two colors adjacent to each other, they should also have a three to one color-contrast ratio-- if you're using focus indication and whatnot also. And so keep that number in the back of your mind when you're creating your visual elements, that at a minimum whenever you have contrast that is important to discern information, that the minimum, minimum color contrast that will not have an impact on low-vision users is 3 to 1.

Pardon the kind of corny slide here. We want to avoid three flashes or less. And so basically what we want to do is we want to avoid flashing and strobing that could, in fact, trigger epileptic fits. The WCAG standard is a little bit loose on this, but basically they say three flashes in one second is kind of at the rate where the flashing or strobing would have an impact.

In the old Section 508, they actually had a measurable number. I don't remember the number of the top of my head, but they had a specific measurable number that as a point of reference is useful to look at as well. But again, as I said, WCAG is just basically three flashes in one second. So be mindful of that because that could, in fact, actually have a fairly negative impact.

We also want to make sure that when we're providing links in our social media content that those links make sense when taken out of context. We don't see a lot of, especially-- I know a

number of nonsighted users, and I chatted with them in preparation for this webinar. And we know that nonsighted users will use as one of the techniques querying a list of all of the links on a page.

Mostly users that I spoke to that are nonsighted, they don't really use that technique on social media simply, again, because the fact that the screen is updating on a regular basis. The relevancy often tends to be very minimized. Nonetheless, we want to make sure that any linked text that we provide in any of our social media postings that the linked text is more than just the click here, read more kind of things that I think most of us are fairly mindful of today. So that extends to web accessibility on social media as well.

And so really in terms of how I look at the accessibility of social media, these really are the only 10 success criteria that you can have a direct impact on. All of the other success criteria really are related to the publishing platform. And while I think all of us are here on this call because we want to try and make our social media content as accessible as possible, whether it's because we have legislative concerns and wanting to remain out of the legal doghouse or it's because we really do care, that we want to extend our content to as many users as possible-- so whether you're here for carrots or sticks, these really are kind of the things that we can do. Everything else is really dependent on the publishing platform, which really comes down to there are some things that you can't do.

And so one of my larger recommendations is also that if you're a large content producer, if you're a large organization that your social media content should, in fact, be part of a much broader marketing campaign, and I would recommend that you provide all of that social media content on a page that is hosted completely under your control. And that goes back to-- I mentioned earlier that on these home pages from the various social media platforms, you should be able to point back to that subsite or subpage of your large organization, the social media marketing page, where you can, in fact, ensure that all of those things that need to be provided in terms of content can be posted there, even if a specific social media channel doesn't allow you to do that.

So what is your legal liability exposure? We don't know. We don't have-- as I said, I'm unaware of any kind of legal challenge around the accessibility of social media. I do know that large organizations, the big social media platforms-- whether it's YouTube, which is owned by Google, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter-- they all are aware of their legal obligations or the state of accessibility of their platforms. All of those organizations do have full-time digital accessibility

experts employed within their organizations. They're moving forward.

But right now, we really just don't know. And so in my opinion, again, having a social media accessibility policy within your organization-- failing to have one means you're unprepared. And so one of my bigger recommendations is to have that.

And so what I have here-- and I'll go slowly over the next couple of slides-- is I've put together what I consider to be a draft policy for social media. And really what it does is it acknowledges the fact that it's for the social media content, that there's only so many things that you can do, those 10 of 35. And so the policy basically is a commitment that says that on the things that we can directly control, on the content creation that we are specifically creating for the social media platforms, that we will meet those 10 success criteria.

We will do the testing. We will do the evaluation. We'll ensure that every image has a specific alternative text created as part of our punch list, our checklist, that when we create multimedia content that it will be captioned and will have audio description. We'll check for color contrast and all those things so that the things that you directly control you can document that you are, in fact, meeting the requirements. And the things that are outside of your control-- your honor, here's the list of the 25 things that we have no control over because it's the platform, but here's the things that we do have the control over. And look, we're meeting all of the success criteria there.

So that, to me, that final piece of the puzzle, is to ensure that you have a policy in place that both provides guidance and instruction. Right now everybody knows these 10 things, Within the marketing department, we need to ensure that we meet these 10 things all the time. They're very clearly articulated. They are part of measuring what is success, and that it also gives you that preparation.

When a lawyer comes knocking at the door, you can turn around and say, we have a policy and here it is, and oftentimes that's enough to-- there's two classes of lawyers. There's those that are very genuine and moving the thing forward. And as I'm sure many of you are aware now, there's that other class that are-- well, not to be unkind, but to be candid, I consider them to be ambulance chasers. They're sending out as many demand letters as they can, and they're just fishing, looking to see what they can find. And in either case, having a policy in place and showing that you've thought about it, you've planned for it, and you're doing everything in your power is usually the best lawyer repellent that I can think of.

And so really that's where I am today. Some additional thoughts-- if you cannot do a specific page within your organization, you might look at doing something separate. Again, you've got to get the policy and the publishing rights.

There's a number of platforms now, a number of content management systems-- and I'm thinking specifically of WordPress-- where there are plugins today in tools like WordPress that when you make a posting in WordPress, the plugins will automatically post that same thing to Facebook and Twitter and what have you. And so one of the things you might consider is making your internal CMS site the single source of truth that then feeds the different social media platforms.

There are plugins I believe today for most if not all of the social media platforms. And so that might be one way of managing content flow and whatnot, that you publish it to the CMS, and then the CMS does the distribution to the platforms.

And so I've provided two URLs. Again, there's this group out there called IndieWeb, and one of their goals is to ensure that you own your own content all the time. They started originally around URL shorteners and what happens when a URL shortener goes out of business, and then all of a sudden your links are dead, but they've extended now to just all content that you are publishing, that they truly believe you should be in control of your content. When you just give content to social media platforms, they take control of it, and you don't have control.

So I won't get into the deeper philosophy and whatnot, but they do provide a number of links to some of the plugins for tools like WordPress. And I've not done a deep investigation, but I suspect that there's probably similar types of plugins for other open-source content management systems like Drupal and what have you.

And so with that, I finished a little bit early. I have 1:40 on the clock. But I'll stop talking. Thank you. And I'll turn it over to our hosts at 3Play Media to manage any questions and answers.

JACLYN LEDUC: Great. Thank you so much, John. I really enjoyed that presentation. We're now going to get ready to do the Q&A. And if you're ready, I have the first question for you.

JOHN FOLIOT: Absolutely.

JACLYN LEDUC: Great. So the first question is, does the ADA require organizations to make social media accessible?

JOHN FOLIOT: So that's actually a really good question. It's as much a policy question as anything else. The ADA, the Americans with Disabilities Act, when it was written, the internet as we know it today, the World Wide Web as we know it today, wasn't a thing. It was, but it was not something that most people were aware of. It was very much in the realm of academia.

As such, there is no specific language in the ADA that talks about the accessibility of digital content. There was a move not too long ago to try and reopen the ADA, revisit the ADA and update it and freshen it up for the 21st century. But then we had a change of government in Washington, and the current administration is less interested in regulatory issues. And so that's sitting on the back burner.

The Department of Justice nonetheless has weighed in. And the DOJ has said that, in their opinion, that the spirit of the ADA of providing accommodation to all people equally so that you're not discriminating against anybody, that that spirit applies to digital content. And so that's really where the legal lawsuits and the legal scenario is today, certainly in the United States is that while the ADA is not explicit, the DOJ believes that is implied.

And so what happens is not the DOJ that launches-- it's not the US federal government that launches challenges. It's usually third-party organizations. And then when the challenge is launched, the Department of Justice will attach themselves to that legal challenge as a person of interest or a member of interest.

In terms of social media, I did mention earlier in the presentation, it's untried. I really am unaware of anybody being sued for the lack of accessibility on a social media platform. My suspicion is that if a lawsuit were to be launched, it would be against the platforms themselves. The National Federation for the Blind or the National Association of the Deaf or what have you, one of those advocacy groups would sue Twitter or Facebook or LinkedIn or whatnot, that they wouldn't necessarily go up against organizations that are using social media as part of a marketing platform because who are they going to sue? There's so many people on those platforms. That would be really hard to single one out.

That being said, if an organization is in the middle of an OCR investigation-- and if anybody's ever gone through one of those, an OCR, Office of Civil Rights, investigation, when they come into an organization on a complaint of accessibility, one of things that happens is that they can open up all the doors. And so they could then start investigating, what are you doing in the world of social media?

So again, having that policy and having a work production flow that says we're doing the best we can. We're doing everything that we humanly can today in terms of content creation, but the platforms themselves may or may not be as accessible as we want them to be. But everything that we feed to the platform, we've got that checklist of 10 things that we're ensuring we meet our compliance needs.

JACLYN LEDUC: Great. Thanks, John. And the next question is, could we get a recap of those 10 criteria for accessibility?

JOHN FOLIOT: We can. I can go to that slide right now. There they are right now. Again, this is unofficial. This is based on my opinion and my understanding of WCAG and accessibility issues. I didn't really do much of an intro, but for context, I've been working in digital accessibility for 19 years now.

So this is my opinion based on experience and understanding, but those were the 10 WCAG success criteria that I believe are fully under the control of content authors, content creators. And, of course, we'll be sharing this deck out at the end of the webinar as well.

JACLYN LEDUC: Great. Thank you. The next question is how do you recommend creating accessible content in a management platform such as the Hootsuite?

JOHN FOLIOT: I'm sorry. Can you repeat that question, please?

JACLYN LEDUC: Sure thing. The question was, how do you recommend creating accessible content in a management platform such as Hootsuite?

JOHN FOLIOT: Well, again, a tool like Hootsuite is really about managing the content. And so I used to use Hootsuite. I haven't looked at it in quite some time. I got off the Twitters myself. But again, that's a tool.

And so you're going to have internal-- especially if you're Section 508 obligated, but there are aspects of the ADA around workplace accommodation. So the accessibility of a tool like Hootsuite may fall under there.

But again, a tool like that is about taking the content that you've created and posting it on one or more social media platforms. And so the tool that you use-- I mean, in my presentation I talked about using something like a content management system that has plugins that basically fires off your posting to the different platforms as well. And so that's a midline tool as

part of your publishing process.

But going back to that list of 10 things, it's really about the content that you're creating. That's where you can or cannot fall into problems. And again, if you meet these 10 things, then I think anybody could stand up in a court of law and say, these are the things that are fully under our control. Everything else we cannot control because it's somebody else's code.

And so Hootsuite is like Facebook in that regard in that if you're using it as a publishing tool, you have no control over the source code. So your only really legal exposure would be under that ADA providing accommodation for tools for employees. But that's under a tool, right, and that applies to all tools, whether it's for publishing social media or what have you. And so in terms of ensuring accessibility to social media, again, it happens earlier in the process. It happens at the content creation stage.

JACLYN LEDUC: Great. Thank you so much for that. The next question is, if a platform doesn't allow audio description, is it acceptable to upload a separate video to fulfill the requirement?

JOHN FOLIOT: Absolutely. And I've actually seen that in some-- Deque works with a large number of Fortune 500 companies, and so I have seen some of our clients using that kind of an approach where they are actually providing multiple videos. There's like the main video, and then they have alternative versions that include audio description and/or captioning.

I don't want to get too technical, but if you're producing a lot of multimedia content, a lot of video, I'm pretty sure that you could have a conversation with some of the technical people at 3Play about how to actually include that content.

On the web today, there's two ways of providing things like captions. It boils down to in band and out of band. And so without wanting to get too technical, you can put all of those support materials, your caption files and whatnot, in band, inside the MP4 wrapper. And so if you're producing a lot of content like that, I would encourage you to have a talk with some of the technical people at 3Play, and I'm sure they'll fix you up.

JACLYN LEDUC: Wonderful. Thank you. The next question is how can someone who does not screenreading accessibility software determine whether an image has text or not? ?

JOHN FOLIOT: That's a really good question. There is a number of browser plugin tools and bookmarklets that you can use that can expose alt text on the screen very quickly. There's also a more geeky way of doing it where you can do DOM inspection, but for a lot of content users in some

of our training I point to browser extensions, browser plugins.

So there's one called the Web Developers toolbar. It's created by a gentleman by the name of Chris Pederick, P-E-D-E-R-I-C-K. I believe that's how you spell it. And it has a whole series of-- basically they're JavaScript kind of functions, but you can click on a button. And so one of the buttons you can click on, it says Show Alt Text. And when you click that button, it does an overlay on the screen, and it will actually show you what the alt text is or isn't for all of the images on the page. So that's one way.

A former colleague and accessibility warrior, a gentleman by the name of Paul Adam, also has a number of bookmarklets which are these tiny little JavaScript things that you can drag up into your browser bookmark toolbar. And when you click on that, it will expose different information as well. And so pauljadam.com/bookmarklets, and there's a list of those bookmarklets there. They're free and open source, and so that's another way that you can expose alt text.

JACLYN LEDUC: Great. Thank you. The next question is, are there specific WCAG guidelines or best practices for caption placement and formatting for open captions?

JOHN FOLIOT: There is not. And at this point in time, I'm fairly active inside the W3C and then the evolution of these standards. It's not really something that has been discussed or thought about. There are some broadcast-industry standards that we can certainly look at in terms of getting some guidance and hints. Oh, and I'm also getting a message. In Easy [? Trip, ?] I can view the alt text provided on the image.

But specifically to-- I'm sorry, that threw me off. What was the question again? I'm sorry.

JACLYN LEDUC: No problem. The question was, are there specific WCAG guidelines or best practices for caption placement and formatting for open captions?

JOHN FOLIOT: No. Sorry, yes. So no, there are no specific guidelines. That being said, when I look at some of the requirements that are on screen right now, I would certainly want to make sure that I have a minimum color contrast for my captions, which most of the time we have. We've got white on black or a semitransparent black background.

I have seen some video files captioned where they're using color to identify different voices. And while I don't know whether that would ever be challenged in a court of law, it contravenes

the use of color alone. If I've got two people speaking on screen and it goes from yellow to white to yellow to white, the change of color there is being used to indicate change of speaker voice. But that's using color alone, and for somebody on a monochromatic screen or who may have some kind of color blindness, they may not actually see the difference in those two colors. And so I would recommend that you actually provide the name of the speaker as part of the caption file. But there are no specific requirements outside of the fact that captions and audio description must be provided.

There is an organization in North America called Caption Key that have published best practice recommendations. I don't know if they're official legislative recommendations, but I know a lot of academic institutions have used them as the baseline requirements. And so you could look at that, but there are no specific legal mandated requirements in WCAG.

JACLYN LEDUC: Thanks, John. The next question is, how do you create relevant text for hyperlinks on Facebook and Twitter? Would using a shortened link like a Bitly link be OK?

JOHN FOLIOT: Well, actually that's part of the problem is that a Bitly link does not give you the hint because it shortens the URL. And so the answer to that would probably be primarily editorial. And so I would lead up to the link with having a-- I mean, in that case we cannot. And I know some social media platforms will automatically shorten URLs, which is a little bit frustrating. But again, it's one of those things that's outside of our control.

And so all I can do is suggest, A, that the lead-on text to any link be as descriptive as possible, and B, that recommendation of having a web page or a website that is your single source of truth, that if the social media platform fails, you can always come back to our home base where we'll provide all of that information.

And so, again, it's mostly about having a plan B in place. When a social media platform shortens the URL, they're doing it without even asking you, would you like us to do it? Some of the platforms just do it automatically, and so they break the link purpose and context because now it's just bit.ly or what have you.

So again, this is in the area where if the original content has been authored that the link text makes sense when taken out of context, then at least you've got that on the site that is completely under your control. And if the social media platforms then subsequently break it, that's on them. It's not on you.

JACLYN LEDUC: Thanks, John. The next question is, what is the best practice for making livestreaming video accessible? Are there any livestreaming platforms have are more accessible than others?

JOHN FOLIOT: I've not done a lot of investigation in that area in terms of livestreaming. However, we're all here together thanks to the good folks at 3Play Media, and so I think that might be something that you might want to pursue with them. They are specialists in that particular area of ensuring accessible video on the web today. Again, not to put the folks at 3Play Media on the spot, but they may be able to provide some better feedback in that area. Myself personally, I'm really not aware of a specific platform, one better over the other, so I really can't comment.

JACLYN LEDUC: Hi, John. Thanks for [INAUDIBLE]. We aren't currently really aware of any livestreaming platforms at the moment. Certainly reach out with any questions you have, and we will do our best to answer those.

And we have time for maybe one or two more questions. The next question is, is there a desktop Facebook accessible client like there is for Twitter and Pinterest?

JOHN FOLIOT: I'm unaware of one. Which is not to say that there may not be one, but I'm not aware of one myself personally.

JACLYN LEDUC: Sorry about that. Thanks, John. And then we'll take one more question. The last question is, is a transcript a sufficient substitute for audio recording?

JOHN FOLIOT: Well, so that's a really good question. If all you want to do is be A compliant, success criteria 1.2.3 says an audio description or media alternative, which is interpreted to be a transcript. And so providing captions and a transcript will certainly meet the first three success criteria here of 1.2.3, but if you really want to be WCAG AA compliant, then an audio description is pretty much mandated.

Now the problem is that I'm unaware of any social media platform today that supports an audio description unless you actually have it embedded into your media asset, which goes back to that question, conversation we had that somebody brought up about can you post multiple versions? And so one of those versions may, in fact, have the audio description included in band.

From a practical perspective of providing the transcript, providing a transcript as a mandated requirement is actually a AAA, but it can stand in, in success criteria 1.2.3, as the alternative to an audio description. So it really depends.

And I know because I'm a Canadian citizen that the government of Canada actually has an exemption to their federal websites that recognizes that audio description is complex and adds to the cost. And so they have a limited subset of content that must have audio description, and then all other media assets, they relax the AA requirement.

So again, it really depends on the amount of content you're producing, who your target audience is and whatnot. Part of the answer there, again, really is having policy in place. And so it's about risk tolerance. And so I would talk to your legal counsel about whether or not taking a page from the Canadian government is something your organization might want to consider.

Again, if somebody comes to your site looking for audio description and it's not there, there's some negative cultural pushback there. I remember that when Netflix came out-- I forget the name of the series, but there was a series on Netflix that featured a blind superhero. And the blind community was all excited that one of their own was going to be the hero, the protagonist of the series. And when they went to go and actually watch the series on Netflix, it lacked audio description, which was a real slap in their face.

So again, knowing your audience-- depending on the content, there's a number of things there, but I don't have a specific answer for you outside to say that, no, to be AA compliant, a transcript alone is not sufficient.

JACLYN LEDUC: Thank you so much, John, for answering all those questions. And thank you, everyone, for joining us today. We hope you enjoyed this webinar.