

LILY BOND: Welcome, everyone, and thank you so much for joining this webinar entitled "Who Should Be Involved In Your Campus' IT Accessibility Initiative." I'm Lily Bond from 3Play Media, and I'll be moderating today. And I'm thrilled to be joined by Rob Carr, who is the accessibility coordinator for Oklahoma ABLE Tech. And he has a great presentation prepared for you. And with that, I'm going to hand it off to Rob, who has a great presentation prepared.

ROB CARR: Lily, thanks very much. And thanks to all of you for joining us this afternoon. We're here to talk a little bit about accessibility at maybe a different level than what you might commonly encounter. And that's to talk about it in terms of where accessibility fits into specific roles and specific individuals and departments around a campus.

All too often, accessibility ends up being something where all the accessibility eggs go into one basket. And that's what's on screen now. I've got this picture of a basket full of eggs. And I'd like to ask you all-- there are a decent number of folks here-- I'd like to ask you all a quick question. And that is, in just a couple of phrases maybe if you can type in some risks that you can think of of putting all the accessibility eggs into that one basket. And then we'll kind of see what you all have to say. And then I'll add some thoughts as well.

But I'll keep talking while you all are responding. And this happens quite a bit. This can happen in a lot of different ways.

One of the things that happens pretty frequently or one of the places where accessibility ends up getting stuck, I think, is in the QA, in testing. So it's at the very end. And folks end up really in a situation that's kind of tricky because they end up being the bearers of bad news really consistently.

If it's only in testing, it's often late in the project or it's late in a sprint if you're using an agile project management methodology. And so the folks that know accessibility end up not being as popular as they should be. They're more like the police, exactly, the accessibility police who are sitting there pulling people over in a speed trap somewhere.

So it's a difficult situation with that. And we'll take a look at some of the answers here.

LILY BOND: So, Rob, a lot of people are typing in answers. We have, learner needs are different. Lack of knowledge. Lack of larger campus perspective. Accessibility isn't integrated. It's an

afterthought which becomes expensive. Limited resources, limited ability to share information. There's a lot here. I'm sure you can look through yourself as well.

ROB CARR:

Yeah, and these are fantastic. I'm just going to turn the rest of the talk over to the audience because you all are nailing most of the points that I wanted to make here. And that's the great thing about something like this is we have folks who are from all over the spectrum when it comes to accessibility.

So, yeah, one of the things that stands out is the ability to scale anything around campus when all the eggs are in one basket. And that can be one individual, which happens pretty frequently. There's one accessibility subject matter expert, and that's it. And they're the go-to for their department. They might be the go-to for the entire university. But it's just tricky to pull it off, to pull off an accessibility initiative that goes across the campus when you've just got that one person or maybe that one department that knows about it.

So thank you all very much for your feedback there, some really good points. And I think that there are just a lot of risks in taking this approach.

So instead and thinking about kind of framing the rest of the conversation here this afternoon, there are a few themes that we'll keep in mind as we go through our conversation. And one is somebody touched on, the distributed responsibility. Accessibility by nature really does need to be shared. It's a shared campus responsibility. And it's something that you really can't pigeonhole into one place.

When it comes to content subject matter expertise, for example, if you're authors of, say, open educational resources-- you're writing your own textbooks. And if they create those and then send them off to another office to have them all magically made accessible, you're almost guaranteed that some stuff is going to get lost in translation, whether it's the structure of the textbook or alternative text for images. So accessibility really lends itself to being distributed around to a whole bunch of folks.

And I have a former boss who used to say all the time, many hands make light work. And that's one of the opportunities that we have, given that accessibility is, by nature, distributed. And that's to spread the work around, create fewer bottlenecks, make sure that people are empowered to still control their content, to still really implement their pedagogy in the way that they want to, because they have ownership of all aspects of the creation of the digital space.

And so then we move into some of bigger picture themes-- integration, which someone touched on in one of the answers as well. Integrating accessibility into processes, that's a big part of what the purpose of this talk is. It's to help to identify where we can better integrate and inject accessibility into what we're already doing.

And as we break things down a little bit, we'll see that it's pretty easy to tailor specific pieces of accessibility knowledge for a particular audience as opposed to just pointing somebody to web content accessibility guidelines and saying good luck. When we think about injecting and integrating accessibility, then we find ourselves having a conversation about a more sustainable initiative. You don't have that single point of failure, that one person who really knows it who gets picked up by the private sector or changes responsibilities within their own department or on campus. So you see sustainability become very possible.

And you also see a potential to scale the effort up. If one person is, say, just doing some testing within one department on campus, it's really difficult to envision a way to scale that one person's capacity up toward the trajectory of testing websites for the entire campus. It's not really feasible with just one person. But if you have begun to kind of share this with maybe folks who are upstream from the testing end, with the design team, with some of the project managers and such, you create something that is more scalable across the campus. So there are lots of advantages here to taking a look at how to inject accessibility into roles.

So we'll get into some specifics. And I've got a very quick polling question that I want to put out for you all, to just get your feedback a little bit about how accessibility might fit into some particular roles.

LILY BOND: So the poll question should read, accessibility fits into which of the following roles? And you can select content authors, librarians, multimedia producers, print designers, or human relations professionals.

ROB CARR: And so jump in. And I think you can pick-- we'll see the numbers creep in here. But this is just to get a feel for how many opportunities you can identify to inject accessibility into what we're doing around campus.

So a couple of clear front runners in content authors and multimedia producers. So those are the two that are ahead by the most. You've got about half have identified content authors, 35% multimedia producers. And then in single digits we've got librarian, print design, and human relations professionals. And what I'm going to do is talk specifically about each one of these

roles and talk about some opportunities that you might not have thought about to inject accessibility into what these folks are doing.

Now, of course, everyone's roles are different. Everyone's libraries, for example, are different and do more or less digital. So this isn't necessarily going to fit in your campus or your organization. But I know that many folks do see a lot of technology in these particular areas.

So with content creators and accessibility, the content creator umbrella is pretty big. That covers folks like many of us, more than likely, who might create documents in Word or we might create PowerPoint slides and publish those out through social media or the web. You might do some content management yourself directly on the web.

And in the case of all of the folks who do content work, one of the best pieces of advice and one of the places where we see accessibility align with the work is in the authoring environments themselves. Most of them have really good support for accessibility and for creating an accessible end result. So things like headings and list structure and accessible tables, providing text equivalents, those are the kinds of things that the platforms anymore do a really good job of making sure we can do as content creators.

And much of the time that I-- many of the times when I do a workshop or a training on Word, I feel like I'm really just showing folks how to use Word as more than a typewriter, because the oral tradition around Word seems to be basically using it as a typewriter. But all of the pieces that are in authoring environments like Word that make it easier for us to create documents also let us make them more accessible.

And then we have direct control over things like the way that we use color or the way that we pick-- pardon me-- the way that we contrast for foreground colors and background colors, text against background. So content creators, that's one that definitely stands out to folks.

And I think, though, too, we can look to other parts of our campus. We can look to our libraries and our librarians. And many of your campuses may well have some kind of digital archiving or digitization project going on that the library's very much a part of. I know with some of the schools that I get to work with across Oklahoma, that's very much the case.

And if they're not taking on something in a really grand scale, they may still do quite a bit of scanning. They might scan textbooks for course packets, which now anymore are often available directly through the learning management system. And it's not something you have

to go to the bookstore to get. So even in terms of selecting a tool for scanning or making sure that when the tool does a scan it doesn't just create an image of the text, it at least runs optical character recognition, those kinds of process definitions fit really well in a lot of libraries.

And one of the places where the library is really, really important is in procurement. And this is something that you'll hear me say a few times throughout the next, oh, 45 minutes or so.

Procurement is just a huge, huge opportunity for us to account for accessibility better. And the libraries oftentimes will be the product owners of things like the web-based book search that students, faculty, and staff can use in order to search for material within the library itself.

So you have this whole group of folks, outside maybe even of IT, who might handle the purchasing logistics of a platform like that. And there's a great opportunity for them to help to keep accessibility as a focus in that effort.

Multimedia producers are our second place group of finishers. And there are a lot of different ways that multimedia producers and accessibility align as well. And the one that jumps to mind for many of you, especially given that this is a 3Play webinar and you pay attention to what 3Play is doing, is in transcription and captioning. When I do a recorded webcast, I end up falling into this-- again, under the umbrella of multimedia producers, although I feel like that's a little bit too upscale sounding of a term. But I basically am. And many of you might be as well. So if you record a webcast and you script it and you do the captioning and everything, that's all part of the production process.

And, of course, we all know that there are challenges in getting captioning resources available on campuses. But at the very least as folks who produce this stuff, we have some ownership in that process, whether it's creating the captions or making sure that the platforms that we use to do live streams or to stream out webinars, we need to make sure that those support captioning somehow, whether it's directly in the platform itself or through a third-party tool that folks can use to view captions.

And then we get into distribution. If you have a learning management system that has its own embedded media player, then the accessibility of that player is really important as well. So the folks who were involved in that conversation, whether they are from an on-campus video production shop or IT or both, have a lot of opportunities, again, to check and double check to be sure that all of these things are accounted for.

Then print design-- might ask just a real quick, off the cuff question, maybe just a show of

hands of who among you when your university or your department orders something from a print shop, either on campus or off, have many of you all take that stuff and put it out through social media or the web, some kind of digital format?

So there are several of you that say, yeah, our stuff isn't only for print. So this is why I assert that print design can be a really important part of this conversation as well, because much of the time, even if we don't really think that our print design work is going to end up online, one of the deliverables that comes through with those is almost always a PDF version of the flyer or brochure or what have you.

So it's really tempting to take those deliverables and put them on bulletin boards and have them available in print for people to take with them. But it's really tempting to put those out through the web. Maybe it's a big email that announces something for faculty and staff on campus.

And so print designers have a share in this too. And accessibility aligns with print designers and things like configuring their design tools. I know with InDesign that a lot of the work that goes into creating an accessible PDF out of InDesign comes back to doing things like mapping visible heading styles to specific heading levels. So there are things like that at the tool option level where you can go in and make sure that a lot of this stuff comes through into a PDF.

Then it's things like visual design. Print designers, if they're designing just for print, then they don't have the kind of regulatory environment. They don't have print standards that are written into law the way that we do in the web space. But you still have total control over visuals like, again, color, use, and contrast, the font size and style, the layout and overall readability. And all of these things are a regular part of print designers' work. And if they're making sure to incorporate the accessibility piece from the digital realm in their work, then that PDF that we get is at least much more accessibility-- is at least much more accessible, excuse me.

And then at some point, PDF accessibility comes into the conversation as well for print design. Your mileage is going to vary quite a bit on that front. I know in our shop, our designer does a lot of work in InDesign and has configured it to create really accessible output. And there are times when she'll send a PDF version of one of her design files to me and just say, could you do a quick look? The great thing is that I can make it a quick look. I don't have to go in and dig through layer after layer and really do a time-intensive check because I know she's done so much of the work in advance.

And then we've got HR, human relations, which I think represents, again, a great opportunity to inject accessibility in some ways that you might not have thought about. I know on our campus-- so Oklahoma ABLE Tech is housed at Oklahoma State University. And on our campus, our HR oversees both in-person and web-based training. Well, there are great opportunities to inject accessibility into that training curriculum.

And that's one of the things that I think is potentially huge in getting the word out a little bit more. What I see a lot of the time is a separate standalone accessibility training, which is great. That's fantastic. But if accessibility is just a part of the curriculum for your online or web-based office training, then it's there and it reaches a much broader audience. It's not a separate and other thing. It's integrated into what people are already participating in training-wise.

So with direct training and training content, HR has an opportunity to make sure that this stuff is mentioned and discussed in the regular flow of existing training. And that's true whether you create training modules in-house or you work with a vendor to create those.

HR also has a product role, a product manager role there. Very similar to the library and looking at platforms, HR can make sure that third-party training providers give you training content that includes accessibility and provides it in an accessible format. And then if you move into the other side-- one of the other sides of an HR professional's job, they can help to make sure that the right job descriptions include accessibility, either as a required or a preferred skill.

And then this is a great thing for everybody. At that point, hiring managers know to ask a little bit about accessibility. It stays very much literally a part of the conversation throughout the application and interview process. And in some institutions, you can see things like including accessibility in a job description begin to affect the curriculum a little bit. Especially if it's a student web design job or something, maybe it's an internship over the summer, and accessibility is part of that, the student may go back to their instructors and say, what's this accessibility stuff? And if the instructors and the academic units begin to see a demand for these skills, then maybe that will increase the chance that it works its way back into curriculum.

And then the last piece is that as product owners, again, HR has, in many cases, a really big hiring platform. For many of us, I would imagine that we have applied for jobs, maybe the jobs that we have right now, completely online. We haven't done a single thing on paper. And so

accessibility in those platforms is really important. And again, HR, in a product manager kind of role, can do quite a bit to help to keep accessibility in the top of mind for everyone.

So I want to see if anyone has questions. What kind of questions do you all have to this point, before we kind of really move on into a few more examples that you'll be able to take with you?

And I'm having a little bit of trouble seeing questions in the questions pane. I'm not even getting quite a full line. So if any have come through--

LILY BOND: Sure. A couple just came through. Someone's asking if you have tips for enforcing training in unionized states.

ROB CARR: Ooh, that's a really good question, and I don't. I'm not even going to try to jump in because that's well outside of my experience, I'm afraid.

LILY BOND: Fair enough. Someone else is asking, who do you think should take the lead-- faculty, tech services, disability services, or others?

ROB CARR: Let's kind of build to that. The most direct answer is it depends on the reach. In my opinion, it depends on the reach of those different groups. I don't know that I can be specific without knowing more about the specific instance. But, in general, what I advise folks to do is to look for an office that has reach across the different silos that tend to pop up on campuses, and can reach in and influence across an entire campus.

And then, also, it needs to be some place that can't just kind of nudge and cajole. It needs to be housed somewhere with a little bit of authority as well to make sure that things happen. I think that's why an initiative like this often ends up in IT because they have a policy environment that might be a little stronger. Sometimes it's in disability services. But I've also encountered institutions where disability services doesn't really have the clout to bring a policy or any kind of real weight to an effort.

And they also may not have the reach. Sometimes disability services shops that I've worked with have been in student affairs and they haven't been able to or don't commonly work with someone like HR. So I think that, in general, again, you want to look at where is the office positioned? Where can it reach and what kind of influence can that particular home department to kind of the authority side actually reach and influence things on campus?

LILY BOND: Thanks, Rob. Another question here, how do you respond to instructors that use academic freedom to justify not being accessible?

ROB CARR: Yeah, I think that, again, it's going to depend slightly on the policy environment on your campus. One of the ways that I advocate to address that is to work toward a university policy that is really clear about commitment to accessibility and the distributed responsibility and such. I think that that-- well, I know from talking to a few institutions that implemented policies that it made those conversations quite a bit easier. I think that one of the ways to make the environment a little more open to it, as well, is to get your academic leadership very much on board.

Even with all of those things in place, I will say that I know that on several campuses that I talk to pretty regularly, there are still holdouts that just don't do it. And no one has, to my knowledge, come up with the magic combination of carrots, sticks, or a magic wand to really force the issue. So I think that's one of the ongoing challenges in terms of just meeting it more head-on.

I think it depends on how head-on you would like to address that. So as an example, one of the things that I will remind anyone of, anyone who builds digital spaces is that we're not doing this for ourselves. We owe it to our students to make sure that we provide learning material that they can use. So it can work to come at it from that angle. But again, I don't know that there is a set and defined way to just move the people who aren't going to do it to a place where they will.

LILY BOND: Thanks, Rob. Someone else is writing in from the instructional design team at their institution saying, how can you stop your organization from being reactive rather than proactive? Faculty don't want to work with us and they'd rather not produce things because of the hassle.

ROB CARR: Interesting. Yeah, I think that speaks to some of the points I'm going to make here in a bit. And I'll give you a little preview. It has a whole lot to do with leadership on campus. When these efforts begin grassroots and kind of stay grassroots, I think you're more likely to encounter something like that.

Now, whoever asked might be sitting there saying, no, we have a policy. We have all this infrastructure in place. But where I have seen the situation described more often than not, it's a place where it's the instructional design group who has ended up being the home for all of the eggs. They've ended up being the basket with all the accessibility eggs. But they're not in a

position to really influence things more broadly on campus. And they run into exactly what's described. So I think that speaks to the need for more people in leadership to be directly involved in this kind of conversation.

LILY BOND: Thanks, Rob. There are a couple more really great questions. And then maybe we can take some more later on. Someone is asking, what are your observations of the practical synergies between diversity services and disability services?

ROB CARR: Yeah, I am a very strong advocate for disability services to work with any kind of a diversity initiative on campus to get your disability student groups involved with whoever might be bringing those diversity efforts to bear. I strongly encourage that.

I know here in Oklahoma it was a really big conversation really statewide in higher ed after an incident at one of the universities a couple of years back. And that did things on campuses like create basically vice presidents of diversity at a couple of the institutions who have a charge to help to reach out to and work with the marginalized student groups.

So in my mind it's a direct connection. And I would think that disability services, working with whoever is overseeing those efforts, it seems to me like it would bring the community of students, faculty and staff with disabilities into, again, this mainstream conversation about diversity that so many of the institutions are having. And I can't see that slowing things down, personally. But so far I haven't really seen it tested. But I think it makes a lot of sense to try to align those.

LILY BOND: That's a great response. Let's do one more question now. Someone is asking, how do you implement accessibility for blind or low-vision users for extremely visual content-related online courses such as art appreciation or, for example, deaf or hard of hearing students who take classical music appreciation?

ROB CARR: Specific to the really rich visual work, I would refer you over to the DIAGRAM Center. I can't think of the web address right off the top of my head. But the DIAGRAM Center I think is a part of Benetech. And they've been doing a bunch of work on, I know, STEM content. And I recommend them because I know they have done a tremendous amount of work in looking at text equivalents for really rich imagery. You might get over there and find that it is just STEM stuff. And I apologize if I'm sending you down yet another incorrect rabbit hole. But that's the first thing that comes to mind.

When it comes to students who are deaf or hard of hearing and music, I can't think of a resource off the top. That's a little outside of what I'm trying to get at today. But thank you, see somebody put diagramcenter.org up there to give us that web address.

So on the deaf or hard of hearing, I'll tell you what, I'll have my contact information at the end of the slide deck. And maybe we can connect afterwards and get into that conversation a bit more.

LILY BOND: Great, thanks, Rob. I think that's all the questions that have come in at this point.

ROB CARR: Very good. Well, I'm going to go through a few more examples of different roles and, again, where accessibility might fit. Some of these I'm sure you've thought about, some maybe not as much.

And one of the things, as we talk about these specific roles, I've been in higher ed for a while now. And I really understand that roles like project manager might not exist as a standalone role. You may well do project management work on your own projects. You might do your own project planning or you might have project management in among many of the job duties that you have. But the important thing, as we go through this conversation, is to think about where these roles live, even if it's not a specific job title, and look again at where the alignment happens and how we can inject accessibility into the tasks.

So project managers plan projects and execute projects. And so they're in a really good position to be able to take a look at a team. Maybe it's a design team or if you have on-campus software development, there's a tremendous opportunity for project managers to help in this process we're talking about, which is aligning accessibility with the folks who are on the team, making sure that people have the right skills and that they have access to the right resources to be able to create more accessible deliverables.

Project managers can identify some of the limitations in tools. Sometimes there are development environments or there are code or design libraries where the accessibility support really isn't there. And a project manager can be in a good position to get word of that or experience it directly and help to adjust maybe even with the tools.

When you think about project managers, I think about scheduling, time allocation, determining how long it's going to take to take this idea and turn it into a small web application, for example. And in that time allocation and in scheduling a project, it's really important to account

for acquiring new skills.

So if a new request comes in from a department on campus and they want a tool to do X, Y, and Z, the project manager is going to sit there and say, OK, team, how long will it take to create this? And they can also recognize along with their team that they might need a little bit of extra time because there's a new feature that's on the feature list that they're going to have to research a bit before they can create it so that it is accessible.

Project managers do a lot of process integration just in general, so there's a natural fit there. Project managers are often in a really good position to recognize processes that work, processes that don't work, how some automation can help. And so accessibility naturally fits into that.

And then documentation is a really big part of this. And whether a project manager is doing documentation directly or not, they can influence the documentation. They can influence specific standards. A lot of the times you have to, in an acquisition, for example, you have to make sure that you account for standards for information security or student privacy, student data privacy. So it's a really good opportunity, again, to put accessibility into that same conversation. So project managers, again, have a great opportunity to influence accessibility around a campus.

Information architects-- and again, this is a role that you might not even have in your job description, but when you sit down and think about it, you do a whole bunch of information architecture. And information architecture is basically deciding and determining how all the content in a site fits together, kind of a big picture level. And it is often a combined role. I think if you looked at the strict definition of what an information architect does versus what information architects are often asked to do in the wild, there's a little bit of a discrepancy. And there are some other roles that come into this.

But one of the biggest opportunities that I see for folks who are involved in early planning is to account for accessibility really early on. And a lot of the time through this planning you'll do things like create documentation for requirements. You might do wireframes. And wireframes to me give us a really good, again, opportunity to account for accessibility really early on.

And one of the quick questions that I have for you all is where might you be able to inject accessibility into something like a wireframe? And a wireframe, for those who might not be familiar but want to take a crack at the question, it's basically the layout of a page. Doesn't

even necessarily have colors. It's not really about the design visually. It's about the interactions that people will have. So wireframes will show things like your top navigation menu and indicate that it's got flyouts and it'll show different interactive elements in a web page or a web application.

So that's my quick question for those of you that might already have some experience in wireframing. And that is, can you think of ways to inject accessibility into your wireframing process?

LILY BOND:

So some answers that are coming in-- indicating tab navigation sequence, tab order, check to see that it can be used without a mouse, logical reading order, not duplicating linked titles, and predictability and intuitive UX.

ROB CARR:

Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. And a lot of times wireframes will include information about structure. You might have notes about what heading level particular headings are in different sections of the page.

The great thing about capturing that information in a wireframe is that this is a document that will get handed on to folks who actually implement the plan. And it could be that you're sitting there going, well, yes, I sketch stuff out and then I take it in my left hand and I hand it to myself in my right hand. Or you could pass that on to a development team or a design team.

But, in any case, you've captured a lot of the accessibility right there in the wireframe so that folks do have it as top of mind and don't have to worry downstream as much about captioning every piece of accessibility. Again, you've taken away some of the cognitive load that they would have had to put into planning an accessible interaction by documenting it in a wireframe.

So the consistency and the logical architecture, the tab order that you all mentioned, and the structure and the interaction-- and I think there's a comment about the accessible behavior of a button. So especially when people are implementing custom controls instead of using native HTML controls like buttons and text boxes, defining that interaction in something like a wireframe goes a really long way. So again, a great opportunity whether your job title is information architect or not to influence the project and to make accessibility part of the design document set itself.

So you think about web designers and accessibility. And there are some parallels with web

designers. Again, your mileage will vary as far as the role versus the title and such. But web designers might take a wireframe, and from that they might create mockups. That's another really good place to inject accessibility by accounting for things like color use and thinking about the color palette in terms of accessibility long before the site is ready to roll out.

For example, at Oklahoma State University, we pride ourselves on being America's brightest orange. Well, it turns out that America's brightest orange doesn't contrast with light backgrounds very well at all. So the web folks at Oklahoma State put a significant amount of effort into managing America's brightest orange during a website redesign to try to make sure that they minimized the use of that orange up against light background colors.

But stripping it out isn't an option. It's such a part of the visual identity of the institution that not using that color was not an option. And if they made it darker, then it becomes another school's color. If they made it lighter, then it becomes another school's color.

So these kinds of determinations, if they are made during design as opposed to just kind of made without respect to accessibility, the site goes live and someone realizes, gosh, this doesn't contrast well at all. We need to change the color palette of the site. It's much better to catch that early on.

So things like color use and contrast, potentially reading order and more about page structure, dealing with the interactive elements and taking those and making those work-- third-party features are another area where, maybe it's the information architecture stage, maybe it's web design, wherever someone makes decisions about bringing on widgets for the site-- for example, someone says, hey, we need a carousel, which is kind of literally a whole other talk about why you might think about some other ways to present that data, or present that content. But if someone says we need a carousel, well, then really early on in the design process, you can document all of the implications that that has in terms of designing and creating an accessible carousel.

Because they're pretty complex when it comes to just interaction to begin with. And a lot of times what I've actually seen is that all the design considerations and all of the actual real world use considerations are accounted for upfront. And the design team says, we're not sure about the carousel. Let's look at a tiled layout, because we think it meets the business needs better. It's easier to make it accessible. And it's more generally usable to begin with. So again, it's about accounting for this stuff upfront and documenting it in any kind of design documents

that a team or an individual might create.

So we move on to purchasing and procurement. And I've touched on it a few times already in terms of product owners, like with the library or HR. Procurement processes are one of the best places that an institution can stop tripping over itself, to an extent.

So if you inject accessibility into a procurement process, then at the very least, as an institution, you find that you're no longer going out and buying things that are completely inaccessible. They might not be perfect. And that's fair. But, there are times when you can at least take care of some of the big issues. You at least bring accessibility in as something that's weighed in the decision-making process.

There are literally entire webinars that are very, very good about procurement and accessibility. But I'll make a couple of points. One of the things, if you've read about this process, then you've read about a voluntary product-accessibility template, which is basically a vendor's self-assessment of its own product in the context of accessibility standards. So they'll take, say, Section 508 standard, and they'll indicate that either the product meets that standard, doesn't meet it, or maybe is kind of in-between.

But it's about more than just getting this self-assessment or looking at other documentation that a vendor has, that ideally you would build in a vetting process, which may just be a desk audit of the different documentation and some questions and a conversation with vendors that you're considering. It may be a demonstration of the features. And in that demonstration, you're asking about specific ways that accessibility is provided or supported by the tool.

Again, documenting this stuff really early on, making sure that you have accessibility language in request for proposal boilerplate language and contract boilerplate language, and even when you have something that doesn't go out to an RFP, if you document other resources-- or if you document, excuse me, other requirements, then you can inject accessibility into that and go quite a long ways.

And then finally you've got to weigh accessibility into the decision. It's not the only thing when it comes to making a decision about a purchase, but it needs to be one of the things that weighs into any kind of procurement or use decision. So huge opportunities that we can align accessibility and inject accessibility into our procurement processes, that we can do a lot, again, to stop working against ourselves and buying tools and platforms that don't have good accessibility support.

So now, management and leadership, and there is just a picture of a big key, because I really do believe-- and I think that this opinion has been shaped by talking to people in higher education, in the public sector, state and municipal government. The consensus is that management and leadership are just key to this whole thing.

And so I'll ask a question, again, of you all and get some input from you before I go into why I think this is the case. But if you would, just type one reason that you would identify as justifying the statement that leadership is vital to an accessibility effort. In other words, give us one reason that leadership is critical to an accessibility effort on a campus.

LILY BOND: Someone is saying, ensuring that it occurs. Accountability. You can't get things done without it. Whatever happens at the head flows to the bottom. Set priorities. Allocation of resources. Enforcement. Account for staff time. A lot of comments about the reach of leadership.

ROB CARR: That's all very good. And that all factors in. And again, I can see a little bit of a line at a time. I don't know that I've seen anything that I would go, huh, I don't really agree. Leadership needs to lead on something like this. And they need to know the right slices of information about accessibility in order to be able to do that.

Resource allocation is a huge part of it. I don't know about other states, but I know Oklahoma's fiscal climate is not that great right now. And higher education has-- well, the entire public sector has dealt with significant cuts over the last few years. So when the resources are more sparse, it's even more important that leadership is there to help to keep the university's or the agency's or organization's eye on the accessibility ball. They're the ones who, as many have said, can make sure that this happens.

And it's some of the subtle things that leadership can do. So if you have one of your executive committees where the vice presidents sit down and have a meeting, if you have a couple of vice presidents start to talk about accessibility and do some really subtle advocacy, then that's a great way to spread the initiative across into other parts of the campus. So that leadership and visible leadership is critically important in terms of doing what we're talking about, which is making this effort a more broad, reaching, and wide-reaching effort around the campus.

Leadership controls time. And it might not be directly. You might not send a request to go to a training, whether it's local or further away, you might not send that request to a vice president. But at some point the climate within their sphere of influence is going to have an impact on

whether or not your training request is approved. Even if it's entirely justifiable and really necessary, if leadership is aware of how critical it is to the work that the entire institution is doing and if that awareness goes up very high in leadership, then there's a much greater chance that things like the training requests will be approved. And it may even be for online training or in-person training to bring someone on site so that people can bolster their skills. So, yes, leadership is hugely important.

I think about policy as well here. Without leadership leading on this, there's not much of a chance that any kind of a meaningful policy will come to be. And there's a chance that even if a really well-written policy is drafted and available, that it ends up put in a place where it doesn't have the wide reach that it might need.

So leadership's critical really to making any of this happen. And I would say that's probably, again, another topic for another webinar to get into more specifically and think about messaging and such. But for now we'll leave it with the great ideas that you all suggested and move on a little bit.

And I'm just going to hit on a few other folks, and this is not an inclusive list, but the other folks that I think about. More specifically within leadership, you can think about your provosts on campus, if you have a bursar, all the vice presidents and on in through to chairs and directors as well in order to have everyone get the kind of support. It's the same theme that many hands make light work and make this something that's sustainable and scalable.

Then they're kind of obvious, but just really quickly, graphic designers often have an influence on the color palette. So while logos themselves might not need to meet the standard for color contrast, it's still important. The graphic designers' influence on the color palette, does it lead to other issues. So they need to be aware of things like that.

Web developers make the web applications work. So they need to be able to take the design documents that we create and turn them into something that works.

Business analysts are there capturing requirements, and, again, can help to keep a focus on accessibility as they go through the requirements. The folks who create professional development, your quality assurance who I started out talking about from the very beginning, they still obviously have a huge role. My point was not at all to marginalize them. It was just to point out that they can't be the only ones.

Your ADA coordinator on campus may be pretty important to having this conversation to be able to bring in a little bit more context in looking at the ADA or the Rehabilitation Act and kind of the general civil rights provisions in that environment. That's helpful as well. And then legal counsel to look at the strict legal environment itself.

So there are definitely other whos. And what I would ask from you all is, who am I leaving out? Who have I not talked about? If you have any suggestions, by all means type them in there. And then, Lily, it looks like there might be a question as well.

LILY BOND: Yeah, someone was saying, why isn't faculty included in this list?

ROB CARR: Yeah, faculty, absolutely. And I can answer that. Faculty, when it comes to much of this-- and we talked about faculty a little bit earlier. Faculty create content and they're product owners. And so when I look at this, they fit in so many of the different areas that they're accounted for in these different roles.

And that's another example of how we can be pretty pliable when we think about these different roles, because faculty and staff are critical to this stuff because they play those different roles as product owners. Faculty senate will likely be pretty involved in, say, the selection of a new learning management or social learning platform. It might not be faculty senate, but it might be other members of the faculty that are drawn into that as product owners. And then certainly faculty are content creators as well.

What are some of the other suggestions that have come through?

LILY BOND: Other people are saying instructional designers, board trustee members, students and users, distance learning, diversity and inclusion, the community or focus groups of users with known disabilities.

ROB CARR: Yeah, fantastic, fantastic suggestions. And there's a rhyme to the reason. If we give away all the answers, then this is just a talk and you don't get to think. So there is a little bit of a rhyme and reason to not having everyone on this list. So I thank you all for that.

I see another one about accessibility in the classroom, which I'm a huge fan of. Absolutely, working this into curriculum, working this into the instruction so that the students at least have an awareness of accessibility as they move out and contribute to the digital realm, that's also a great, great way to engage faculty. So not just what they create but what they actually teach. So fantastic suggestions all the way around. Thank you all very much for contributing there.

So let's take this and move now to what in the world can we do with this information. And if you're sitting there and hopefully-- and from the looks of things, many of you have been thinking about where accessibility fits. And that's fantastic because that's a really important mindset to have. Now the thing is to find where these roles are.

For faculty and faculty senate, those are very specific. But in looking again at something like project managers, you may or may not have a project management office in your procurement shop or in your IT. But there are people that have that role on campus. So if you can begin to look for those and the other folks that we've talked about, find where they live on campus, find the departments that they're in, then that's a place to begin to inject and integrate accessibility. And that's really the purpose of the exercise is to know who's critically important and to begin to bring accessibility into their sphere of awareness and knowledge, and to bring folks together.

On most campuses that I talk to, accessibility initiatives began literally by committee. And so this is another way to identify the folks who would have a voice in that conversation and who might actually go on to be part of a policy-authoring committee, for example. So this is a good way to begin to bring folks together. If you don't know who to ask, then it's hard to really get a group going.

So you have some folks. You get some folks together for some meetings to begin to talk about this from a bigger picture, a broader view. This is a high level overview of the system that I'm trying to take into higher ed when I go and work with institutions around Oklahoma. And I start by getting that group that the institutions identify with me helping in many of the ways that I've steered this conversation this afternoon. And we sit down and we inventory the technology.

And what that does is that gives us a big-- often a very big painting that shows all of the technology that reaches students, faculty, staff, the public, prospective students, et cetera, et cetera.

So we have this really big list, in most cases. And we begin to look at the folks who own it. We keep going through the conversation about roles and the way that accessibility fits into roles. We often find that the group that we've brought together initially we need to tweak a little bit. Maybe we missed someone from the beginning and so we need to invite someone else to be a more direct part of the conversation.

And then start to go through the hard work-- setting a scope of the effort, looking at priority, looking at training and resources. But this alignment of roles and accessibility is really central to this entire process. And making sure that we understand how accessibility can fit into different roles can help to make into that big campuswide effort that everyone is really working to achieve.

And then it helps to frame the conversation, too. And when you go out and have a conversation, many of you have probably spent quite a bit of time discussing accessibility on your campus. So illustrating the campuswide responsibility, or at least a wider responsibility, helping people to understand that the people that build the web and that contribute to the web are the ones that make it accessible-- and, again, I think that knowing how accessibility fits into people's jobs helps you to kind of paint that picture for that. You can go and have a conversation with someone and hear from them what they're doing specifically. And you can recognize, well, hey, accessibility fits here and there. And you can really tailor the message so that people have the specific resources in front of them that they need.

And I mentioned this earlier, the thing that tends to happen when you're kind of new to accessibility is you'll start to hand out really big checklists or just send people to web content-accessibility guidelines. You can really tailor all of that stuff in so that it's much more effective.

And then you can understand and identify challenges too, at the individual level, at the departmental level. And much of the time you find that the challenges aren't necessarily because of a lack of nuts and bolts skill. It is because of processes or it is because no one has taken the time to help, to do what you might be able to do a bit more now. That is to look at accessibility in the way that it fits with peoples' jobs.

So I have seen some kind of natural and organic results. And one of them is opportunities to share work across different folks. As you all are thinking about this, hopefully some light bulbs have gone off and you've thought, hey, well, you're right, we're not the only department that is doing this. Or you've heard of a department that is doing it and you might be able to go in and help to lighten their load a little bit by moving the work around a bit.

You can recognize previously hidden expertise. On almost every campus there's someone who's doing a lot with accessibility. This is a way to maybe find that person. That doesn't mean find them and take advantage, but knowing where those folks are is really helpful.

I have seen folks, again, recognize a need for policy. And especially at the leadership level,

those conversations often lead to the conclusion that we need a policy on campus and recognize the need for a bunch of support. Which you can phase in, but it's something to plan toward.

A couple of additional resources. The World Wide Web Consortium Accessibility Responsibility Breakdown is a really interesting tool to go in and look at individual web content guidelines and see them mapped to specific roles. This is more looking at the technical team view. But it is really interesting work. And then Deque Software, on their blog, they have a couple of posts about how accessibility fits more specifically for UX folks and for information architects. Also a really interesting read.

And I will close by asking you all in the last, what do we have, a couple of minutes, what questions you might have?

LILY BOND:

So Rob, there was one question from a little bit earlier that got missed. Someone was wondering, how does privacy play in when accessibility spec and DE needs info from disability services?

ROB CARR:

When staff in-- oh, distance ed. I'm not in disability services, so someone who is may be able to answer this more directly. But more often than not, when disability services reaches out to an instructor or instructional designer, they're looking more at what the accommodation is that is necessary for the student. And disability services typically does not and won't disclose anything about a student's individual disability.

When we talk about accessibility, I don't want to say that it's not relevant. But when we talk about accessible digital material as opposed to an accommodation, it's not really as focused on an individual's needs. So when we talk about creating more accessible content, the idea is that it's more accessible for everyone. And, ideally, then it'll interact without a mouse. It'll interact with a touch screen interface. It'll interact with screen reader use, et cetera, et cetera. So that's part of why I stand from the outside of disability services on this because when you're making content more accessible, you're putting it out there for everyone in a more accessible format as opposed to relying on accommodation.

Great. Well, I thank you, Lily and 3Play, and I thank all of you for joining us this afternoon. And I hope everyone has a great one.