

**LILY BOND:** Welcome everyone, and thank you for joining this webinar entitled The Anatomy of an IT Accessibility Coordinator. This webinar is being live captioned, and you can view the captions by clicking on the link in the chat window of your control panel.

I'm Lily Bond from 3Play Media, and I'll be moderating today. And I'm joined by Kara Zirkle, who is, of course, the IT accessibility coordinator at George Mason University. We have about an hour for this presentation. In this presentation, we're going to have you feel free to ask questions throughout. We will take specific questions for each slide and compile any other questions to ask at the end.

The best way to ask your questions is to type them directly into the window at the bottom right of your control panel. This presentation is being recorded, and we will send out an email with a link to view the recording and slide deck as soon as they're ready. Feel free to live tweet at @3playmedia with the hashtag #a11y.

And this presentation is being held in conjunction with the Online Learning Consortium, and they wanted to let you know about a workshop that they have coming up in June, which you can register for on their website. And with that, I will hand it off to Kara, who has a great presentation prepared for you.

**KARA ZIRKLE:** So The Anatomy of an Accessibility Coordinator. Just to give you an idea of how things got started, so as part of Commonwealth of Virginia, they adopted rules and regulations similar to Section 508 a few years back, and as part of that, Mason actually decided to put a committee together to determine what that role or responsibility would actually look like and what they needed to do to help achieve the new requirements that the Commonwealth of Virginia put in. So as that, it became the IT accessibility coordinator position was created.

So each state has some type of requirement to themselves of whether it is policy, guidelines, whatever else it might be. Every state has that now.

So Mason is a Level II state school, so not to go too deep into it, but a Level I basically means we have to follow the state line-by-line to a T. Level II means that we can follow some of the state's stuff, but at the same time, Mason has their own policies in place that we follow based upon what we prefer in addition to what the state would actually require. And a Level III is actually the school themselves have their own policies for pretty much everything.

So we're in the middle of that at Mason, and as part of a requirement to move to Level II, there actually had to be an IT accessibility policy in place. That policy was actually signed within about a month's time of me actually starting at the university, and I was the first IT accessibility coordinator.

So it was a brand-new position. I was the first one hired. I had no idea what to expect, but all I knew was there was already this policy put in place that the CIO of the information technology group had signed off on. Now the interesting part about that is I'm not part of IT, so as an organizational structure, we are actually-- the Assistive Technology Initiative office is under Compliance, Diversity, and Ethics, which is housed under the Office of the President.

So as an organizational structure, we have a poll question here that's going to pop up. I'd actually like to know where some of you all are from, or where you're housed in your college or university environment, so we can kind of get some ideas of what this might look like.

Is the poll coming up?

**LILY BOND:** Yep. We're just going to give them a couple more seconds to answer the poll. And I will share the results on the screen now. Can you see that, Kara?

**KARA ZIRKLE:** No.

**LILY BOND:** So the results for the poll show, what department do you report to? 35% said disability services. 26% said information technology. 3% said compliance, equity, diversity, and equivalence. 1% said human resources, and 36% said other.

**KARA ZIRKLE:** All right. So our highest was other. So I'll throw a question out to a few of those folks of what are some of the others that I may have missed? The reason I like to ask this is because what are the advantages and disadvantages does it actually have as part of your organizational structure?

So if you are focusing purely on overall accessibility and compliance within the university, but you're housed under disability services, there's sometimes a stigma within that, because disability services is known for providing accommodations for students with disabilities. And that is completely the opposite of what overall accessibility compliance might be for the university.

Now they do tie together very closely, but they still are having to pave two different roads in which you're trying to work with. So when it's housed underneath that, it can sometimes add a little bit more difficulty or confusion to the folks that you're working with. If it's under IT, then it's the same thing. Sometimes it's actually very helpful to be housed under IT, because IT is the majority of where your technology, hardware, and software purchases are being made or decisions are being made that can implement the entire college or university infrastructure of these softwares and things like that.

But at the same time, because IT is still a part of the larger overall university, how far down are you in that organizational structure for you to work with the CIO or VP of IT to then be able to also work directly with and having the top-down approach from the president's position? And that also kind of goes along the line of within HR or anything else.

Compliance, diversity, and ethics has been very nice for where the assistive technology initiative has been housed, because we really are working for compliance. It's overall compliance for university for accessibility, and that has been part of the integrative process and the overall core goals and values of both of our offices, as well as working directly with the president and the university itself.

So that's been where it's very helpful for us and where it's been an advantage versus a disadvantage of where some of the others might be. So with that said, I want to try to open up to a couple questions that people might have based on how becoming an IT accessibility coordinator or the organizational structure, and what some of those other areas, that 36% that we were talking about, might actually be, so we can keep this conversation going a little bit.

**LILY BOND:**

So Kara, to begin, there are definitely some people writing in with the other departments that they're from. Some of the answers to that are public affairs, office of the associate provost, Center for Teaching and Learning. Someone said, IT at my school reports to academic affairs, and IT collaborates with DRC on student services with technology. Distance learning, instructional design department, instructional services, training for faculty. All my content is in the office of communications and distance education, academic services, an LMS admin transitioning to the design side, focusing on accessibility, communications and marketing, course development. A lot of people in instructional design.

**KARA ZIRKLE:**

So this will actually help me move on to the next slide of the reflection, for me at least, for what it means to be an IT accessibility coordinator. A lot of people actually think I'm part of the IT

technical support and that I'm here to help problems with software when it can't be accessed.

With that being said, as that type of title, given some of these other areas that have been mentioned or some of the areas that I had mentioned, you can see that this is sometimes maybe even a more difficult stigma to get around, because the accessibility, especially the IT accessibility, plays such an integral part throughout so many different areas of campus. And how can you correlate the area or office in which you're actually a part of throughout the entire university?

So really, when I was looking at the position itself and what it meant to me as an IT accessibility coordinator, it wasn't just websites. It wasn't just course learning or accessible classes or courses or online learning or anything else like that. It was actually a larger area of a lot of different projects.

So policy was number one. Procurement is huge, because everything is purchased, and you have to try to find a line somewhere along the way to be able to consider where you have a starting point that you can start to include and build accessibility into, versus where you have your legacy systems.

And with procurement, it's nice, because every year, you usually have a contract addendum or a renewal or anything else like that. So if you can get accessibility implemented from a procurement perspective, then really, that legacy systems-- it's going to eventually shrink on its own as it goes through these contract addendums and everything else as you start to work in accessibility. But you also have the academic software and the course design from where the instructional designers work so hard with the online courses themselves.

But you also have the websites and the web applications, the enterprise-wide. Everyone works within the library somehow in some shape or form, whether it's the students working with it. The library has different requirements, because they're open to the public, and how can that help. The accessibility of the university may be providing an AT lab within that library, so that was the library has accessibility for the public coming in, but it also helps the university to have a single place with larger hours for individuals with disabilities that have an area to go to have access to a computer. That also helps with sometimes the paper print stations and things. Those types of softwares aren't accessible.

So that brings you into some of the kiosks, so you have vending machines and ATMs, even laundry if you have housing on your campus, even videos, such as sometimes you're

captioning or even your video players. What about emergency signs and things like that? So I could go on and on for a list of areas that I thought was part of what it meant to be an IT accessibility coordinator, is I had my hand in all the different pots that could play a part in the overall accessibility. So I always like to understand where different people are coming from, because if it is from an academic-only or from an IT-only perspective, you can see sometimes where it might be a little bit more difficult to work with in some of the other realms that accessibility could still fall into.

Do we have any questions or anything so far with what I've covered?

**LILY BOND:** There is one question here so far. Someone is asking, is there a law I can point to that states face-to-face courses need to be proactive in the creation of accessible instructional materials?

**KARA ZIRKLE:** A law for it to be proactive? No. It's really more defined within the best practice. You do have, depending upon if it's a private or public school, you do have different laws and regulations. The part that you're falling into and a lot of where is this reactive to proactive prospective comes is at one point in time, we were always used to building in accommodations or face-to-face courses. But how many of those face-to-face courses are now using e-learning materials?

So your learning management systems-- you might be using third-party supplemental materials from publishers. You might be using documents or websites that are developed by other individuals or things like that, and all of this is being housed online. So it's no longer part of an accommodation to ensure these things are being fixed. It's because these things are already online, that's where the university actually has to look at the other rules and regulations and laws that may apply to the online materials.

And that's where that reactive to proactive approach gets into play, and it's not any one specific law that you can point at when it's a face-to-face, because a lot of face-to-face faculty still think of it as, it's an accommodation when I have a student. Period. But it's really more so because technology has advanced so much, it's the accessibility of that technology that needs to be implemented all the time during the design, during the purchase, the use of it, whatever it might be. So that way, the students can still have equal access to that material at all times, and it would still have accommodations for things such as extra time for exams or a quiet room environment, maybe the use of a calculator, whatever those types of accommodations might be coming from Disability Services.

So it's not that clean-cut, but you do have the WCAG 2.0, the Section 508. Whatever state law that you're in, look at the guidelines or look at the university policy, and see what they reflect within that 508, WCAG 2.0, ADA Title II, whatever it might be. And those are the areas that are really going to apply more so to the web versions of what you're working with for your learning management and things like that.

So it's no longer just a face-to-face using what's in the classroom-- it's because we're using so much technology, it's that hybrid version of what we need to design for online learning and our distance education courses.

**LILY BOND:**

Thanks, Kara. And someone is also referencing the Dear Colleague Letter from the Department of Education as a helpful resource. And we can link to that if anyone is curious about it.

Someone else is asking, do you perform any usability or accessibility testing?

**KARA ZIRKLE:**

Yes, we do. We provide testing for new purchases being made within the university. We have a large procurement procedure developed and that is actually part of a larger IT perspective. There's a committee there that reviews any new purchases coming in. And that's not just for accessibility, but that's also for security, implementation, just to make sure it's going to work with the technology that we have already in-house. If it's going to be an RFP, if there's multiple offices on campus looking to purchase the same thing, it might help save money. So we have testing put in place for things like that.

We also have automated as well as manual testing put in place for websites, web applications. And we work with a lot of different individuals along campus that are those content and web developer and managers there.

We provide training across the board for our faculty, our web design, our content managers-- really anybody that's wanting to learn a little bit more about designing for accessibility. Even mobile guidelines, because the mobile guidelines and accessibility overlap about 75%, so a lot of people sometimes come in just to learn how to design better for students who bring their own devices and access stuff mobile. It doesn't necessarily have a lot to do with accessibility for what they're wanting to learn.

So there's a lot of different areas like that that we do for testing and training.

**LILY BOND:** Thanks, Kara. There is another question here. What is the distinction between the EIT coordinator and the office serving students with disabilities?

**KARA ZIRKLE:** Can you say that second one again?

**LILY BOND:** The difference between the IT coordinator and the office serving students with disabilities.

**KARA ZIRKLE:** So the IT for the accessibility coordinator, and if that is asking the difference between someone within a disability office, it's still going back to the equal access. We look to our Disability Services office here to provide and determine, based upon documentation of disability, the accommodations that are needed. Assistive technology, they send over to us for recommendation and referrals, things like that. But that is all in the area of the disability themselves.

The IT accessibility, an individual shouldn't necessarily have to self-disclose to be able to ensure something is made accessible. It's that equal access, because they are signing up for an online course just the same as any other student would sign up for an online course. They can sign up two weeks in advance. They can sign up a week after it's started. But at that point in time, no one has time to run around and try to provide the accessibility of that course.

So that's not anything that the Disability Services would have necessarily work with in the beginning. That's really where the IT accessibility could actually be working with the instructional designers and the faculty who design that content. So they are working parallel with one another, but they're still working for two different goals that ultimately will make everything more accessible and easier for all students, but especially those with disabilities.

**LILY BOND:** Thanks, Kara. And let's do one more question here and then move on. Someone is asking, we have an ADA coordinator in HR who makes it clear that they have no knowledge of accessibility. How do we make leadership understand that this isn't good and that accessibility is much more than web accessibility?

**KARA ZIRKLE:** That would go back to that reference letter that someone mentioned, actually, would be a great use of something coming from OCR. Also, using some of the documentation of the lawsuits that have been pushed out by OCR and DOJ. The recommendations there, not using them as threats or anything negative, but by all means actually using them in a positive light to say, here are all of the things that have happened within other schools and universities. Here

are similar situations within our school that could've put us into the same realm that this university or school is facing right now.

In using those recommendations that they have, a lot of times, if you look at those, one of the top areas that the lawsuits will actually pull out as a recommendation is have someone that actually has accessibility authority. So where does that authority lie? Is it the ADA coordinator? Is it the Disability Services? Is it someone within IT or your compliance or anything else? And what does that actually look like in regard to the education and the backing of that?

Because if you ask someone that's within the Disability Services or even maybe someone within the ADA, they're not going to want that additional responsibility added to them, because it does conflict a little bit with the accommodation piece and everything that they're having to do. So by them having to handle both jobs, then sometimes that might be a bit much for one individual to try to handle.

But that's often how you see the start of an IT accessibility coordinator or an accessibility specialist or something along the smaller schools is someone who may have some knowledge or awareness of accessibility or disability in some way, shape, or form gets tacked on this other additional responsibility. That's how you also see it coming out of your IT office, your instructional designers, and everything else, and then someone just happens to get this added to them, and before you know it, they now have this added responsibility. So it's best to really define that responsibility and what the goals are for that to see if that's really something that can realistically be done within the role that it's being looked at.

**LILY BOND:** Thanks, Kara. So there are some other questions coming in. It's up to you whether you feel like we should move on and take more questions later or whether you want to take them now.

**KARA ZIRKLE:** Let me go ahead and move to key partnerships, because it might help some of where this conversation's going. But I do love the fact that the questions are coming in. I really kept my slide deck very short for that reason.

But regardless of where you're working at within accessibility, whatever office or organizational structure you work in, the key to all of these things are your partnerships. So what partnerships can you make that will help promote accessibility as an overall? This'll be different for everyone, but because I'm part of compliance, diversity, and ethics, my first one was IT. IT has opened doors, allowing me to sit on various committees that help me know the



different projects and purchases and information that are being made from a campus-wide or university whole.

Library, the library's open to the public, but they also purchase various databases that are used by students. We have a lot of consortiums. So it's not just our school and our students, it's the DC metro area consortium of however many colleges or schools might even be a part of that. I kind of cringe thinking about it sometimes.

But it's also your multimedia purchases of knowing whether or not the videos that are being purchased or, I guess, used for that semester, have captioning. And if not, then is captioning something that you can partner with maybe IT and library to provide for the overall university as a whole? Or different things like that. The possibilities are endless, and they're all going to be very specific based upon the environments of where each of you are at. But you can kind of see where the partnerships really do define and help you promote accessibility in those different ways.

Instructional designers in distance education or online learning is one of the absolute largest ways and best ways to get to the online teaching and faculty, because they are the front lines. They're the ones that see and hear and work with these faculty on an everyday basis.

So accessibility is certainly not about recreating the wheel. It's all about working with what you have in front of you. And with that, the instructional designers have such a difficult job ahead of them to try to work with faculty. They often have far more faculty that they're having to work with than what there are instructional designers, at least I see that from our campus.

So as one of those, our instructional designers actually created a four-week or five-week program called OCDI, and it is a course design that all new online teaching faculty need to take. And as part of that, one week's worth is all about accessibility. So it's helping the instructional designers teach a larger group of faculty, and it's teaching them how to use our learning management system, how to use our video management platform, how to use the library databases and implement things into the learning management platform, but it's also teaching accessibility.

So by working with these partnerships, it's allowed us to really build into a lot of different things. And this goes back to the question that someone had asked before of the difference between the accessibility coordinator and the disability is, this is really where you're building accessibility into the design versus what an accommodation would be to have that key and

level of success.

So let's go ahead and go back to some more questions.

**LILY BOND:** Great. Very much along the same line, someone is asking how much responsibility do your faculty have for creating accessible course content?

**KARA ZIRKLE:** Responsibility that they have. We have a policy within the university, and that is part of any faculty, staff, or vendor, contractor. So it does cover everyone, and it is specifically stating e-learning. So it does cover the design of courses as well as the technology used within teaching and everything from there. So we do have policy for those faculty.

If those faculty do go through our distance education office and work with our instructional designers, which is under our provost group now, they do take courses and our walked through areas of design that do include accessibility.

If you have your face-to-face courses, or if you have what I like to call your rogue online teaching, because there's a lot of faculty that can use your learning management system that might have Collaborate or Adobe Connect or whatever else it might be that they use that as part of their teaching, but not actually go through the instructional designers to learn the best practices, what do we do there?

So one of the things that we've actually done is we work very closely with a couple different groups, our Disability Services office, but also the advisers. Advisers are key for trying to find priority levels of where to include accessibility when you don't know who is teaching online versus face to face versus e-learning or whatever it might be.

So if you do know the degree program that your students with disabilities are taking that you've gotten through your Disability Services, then you can actually work with your advisers to see what a longevity may look like of a two- or four-year program based upon the likelihood of a general student taking that degree program. And then you can start working with those faculty or those academic units to teach them about accessibility, because the probability of them having someone with a disability is much higher than another course design, or so on and so forth. So we use that sometimes as well to help within our teaching and training, and help push that as a best practice for our faculty.

**LILY BOND:** Thanks, Kara. And that brought up another question from someone. Who is responsible for

checking to see if faculty are actually making their content accessible after they've been through your training?

**KARA ZIRKLE:** So we also provide audits for our online courses. We actually have a form on our [ati.gmu.edu](http://ati.gmu.edu) website, which is our standard ATI website. And under that, under requesting services, is a form to where any faculty-- it doesn't matter whether it's face-to-face, online, one of the rogue online-- they can actually submit their course to be audited for accessibility. They can submit documents to have them checked for accessibility. They can send us videos for free captioning. Whatever it might be. And as part of that, we also have a partnership with our distance education to where when faculty are designing courses to be put online, then we will actually go through and randomly audit these courses to see that accessibility is actually being included.

So this is a phased process that continues on. But people can also ask us as they need to if it's something along the lines of a new course, or they haven't gone through the audit for a while, or maybe they went through the audit the first time, and now they're doing a different course. Whatever that might look like. But we've done audits as well for them.

**LILY BOND:** Thanks Kara. And speaking of audits, there are a couple of questions about those here. Do you recommend any specific companies to begin accessibility audits with? They see SSB Bart referenced on GMU's site. But people are also wondering about QM Quality Matters or [siteimprove.com](http://siteimprove.com).

**KARA ZIRKLE:** So it depends upon what your overall objective is and how much money you have. There's a lot of different companies out there that can do audits. Are you looking for a web audit for accessibility? Or are you looking at a web audit in general that will give you all kinds of information, and maybe, if you're lucky, get you some accessibility information? Are you looking for an audit for accessibility plans for your entire campus and university? Or are you looking for it only within a library or distance education?

So it depends upon what your business case and need is. It depends on what the overall objective is to that audit as to which companies might fit the need or the realm of that area that you're looking at. Then, based upon that, it also looks at your pocketbook.

So if you're looking at something like an overall accessibility plan, or something that may be a little bit more specific to library or distance education and things like that, you're really not using some of those vendors that have the online audit or online automated testing system,

such as SSB Bart or DQ or Siteimprove or [INAUDIBLE] art or anything else like that. You may actually be looking more at some of the accessibility contracting type vendors of Interactive Accessibility, Accessibility Partners, a couple of ones like that. Because they actually go and look at the overall accessibility as a whole for that college or campus, versus just the web itself.

So that's a really detailed question that I can probably answer in an email from someone. But it has a lot of variables to it. Because if you're looking for just a web automated-- like an accessibility web automated audit, then that is where you can look at your Siteimprove or your SSB Bart or your DQ's or your Accessibility [INAUDIBLE] and Cryptzone. There's tons of them out there that can do that, because they'll use their automated systems to help within that.

But are you really wanting something more automated that you could purchase on your own to use as needed, versus someone that's really going to come in and dive into what it is that you need to actually create a plan? So you got to look at a few different things there.

**LILY BOND:**

Thanks, Kara. And let's take one more question here and then move on to your next slide. And this may move into that anyway. People are asking, what qualifications are required of an IT accessibility coordinator? And can you please speak in more detail about exactly what you're doing in your job day to day? Are you developing the trainings you mentioned? Are you doing the accessibility audits? Or some combination or something totally different?

**KARA ZIRKLE:**

Well, background-wise, it really just comes down to understanding the technology, understanding the accessibility as the whole. For me, my degree platforms were psychology and instructional design. So that is where I came from within my learning aspect. I've been in the field of accessibility and started out in AT in the home and that universal design aspect well over 15 years ago. So I basically kind of transitioned and learned as technology and Section 508 started to become a thing. And I just got sucked in and followed it ever since.

So there needs to be some type of background, whether it's technology or the understanding of accessibility and disabilities, or something within that realm for the accessibility coordinator, really. And then as part of a daily job that looks like for mine, if I would be looking at what a daily environment would be for me eight years ago when I was still pretty new in the job, I would be jumping from office to office, committee to committee, trying to learn as much as I could about any processes or policies being written or committees being held to see how accessibility might be able to be applied.

And then I would work with all of these different units and just go and do meet and greets and do all kinds of open house trainings for accessibility overall to really just try to get the word out for people to understand who I was and what I was doing and why I was there. Because when I first started, people started to hear accessibility, and they just thought, oh, well, great. We now have another process we have to go through. Well, that's just going to add more time. So that was probably my daily eight years ago.

Now that's changed to where the office itself of The Assistive Technology Initiative has evolved so much that we as an office really push out and promote accessibility as a whole for working with our distance education to get those audits to come in. Yes, I do audits for courses. But I'm not the only one to do the audits for the courses now.

We have worked where we created a captioning proposal. And I was one of the ones that worked on that at the beginning stages. But that's now grown so much to where we have an accessible media coordinator to where she handles these requests. So that was a part of it as an in between, as an interim. I now house and oversee a lot of the document accessibility stuff. But we've also now started to provide an automated server platform that can create some more accessible or more usable solutions from what image PDF's and things like that might be to help an automated process.

A lot of my day-to-day now is working with the procurements, looking at the policy, the procedures, talking a lot with vendors back and forth to educate them about the accessibility, seeing who will be willing to work with us and build accessibility into their platforms versus who's not. And then working with the business case and the Mason requesters to see what other options we have. Testing and training all the time. Working with all of the different partnerships that I've talked about just to see what new is going on within their environment, to see what new we can build accessibility into.

So it's always trying to figure out all the new things that are going on to figure out how we can implement accessibility overall into everything new that I started to do eight years ago. So every day's different. It's certainly not the same thing every day.

**LILY BOND:**

Thanks, Kara. And I think at this point, we should move on. But we have a lot of questions coming in and I promise we will get to some of them moving forward.

**KARA ZIRKLE:**

All right. Well, with that said, some of the greatest great successes-- and we also have

challenges along the way-- but we have to find success in anything that we do, even if it's some of the smallest things, because we have to learn, we have to train, we have to practice anything else along the line. But some of the biggest things for myself was working with IT as part of our Architecture Standards Committee. That is the procurement review board that we now are a part of. And we review about 150 purchases per year on average for accessibility.

So think about how that was five, six years ago once the policy and everything was in place. And that's 150, five or six years, we're looking into thousands of projects. But then you're also looking at the addendums of all of those older purchases and those older contracts that are slowly starting to come through as well, to where chomping at the bit, bit by bit, we're starting to include accessibility a little bit more.

The DE audits and reviews were a huge success because we worked with our distance education office. If they weren't as open as what they were to accessibility and the instructional designers learning and helping us implement that into the training process, we wouldn't be able to provide as much accessibility for our online courses as we could.

And then finally, the updated policy and adding the procurement policy as well. Because the policy, as I stated early on, it was actually signed and created by the CIO of IT about the same time that I got hired. So we actually didn't have anything to do with it. It was just designed in a way that they thought was best for the university. Which was good at that time, because it was when we were first starting out. But now, we've actually updated it to include the e-learning.

The procurement policy is actually stating that the individuals don't go through the review board, that they could get their products pulled. So on and so forth. So we've really been able to tighten that up and make it a little bit more secure and add some teeth to it to insure people were really actually following things and making sure accessibility is part of what they do.

But then that goes back to what I was saying before-- some of the biggest challenges. Getting a top-down approach is such a huge challenge. Especially for a very large university, because it seems like you're always working at a top-down approach, because there's always a new top-down, or a new academic unit, or a new break-off to another unit, Or something like that, where you're always having to find the new top person to then bring them into the access of accessibility.

Providing that equal communication. If you would go around to three different offices and ask them what does accessibility mean to them, how many different answers are you going to get?

Really defining accessibility and making sure everybody is on the same page of what that means was a big challenge. Because until you get to that point, people are always going to be confused and they're always going to have a different level of what accessibility means to them.

And really then, after that, is keeping up with the demand. I was the only person looking at the past websites, purchase items, you know, trying to help implement and find ways to design accessibility into projects. And then finally, there was a program support that was hired just about two, 2 and 1/2 years ago, that she's now been able to do some of the deep dive testing of some of these websites and vendor purchases and things like that.

So really being able to keep up with demand, our office as a whole really did an entire-- we got to a more proactive stage to where we weren't just trying to keep up with the accessible text, or keep up with the assessments or the trains. But we're actually able, as an entire office now as a whole, really look at accessibility of the university. And because of those things, it helps with the demand itself.

So those are some of the biggest challenges that I've seen that I've faced. But I'm sure there are far more that it's just harder to come up with some of the specifics. So with that said, I'm open to questions.

**LILY BOND:**

Great. Thank you, Kara. And there are a lot of questions coming in. I wanted to mention as we pull them in that we have several webinars coming up shortly on-- a couple on captioning and then some on identifying accessibility gaps at your organization. One with Mike Paciello from the Paciello Group. And another on evaluating web application accessibility with Jared Smith from WebAIM. So those may be helpful given some of the questions that have come in.

And Kara, you were mentioning policy. So someone is asking-- let me just find it quickly-- how important is it that accessibility is a part of the policy versus just a part of the process and procedures?

**KARA ZIRKLE:**

A lot of times, I've had a question directed of, well, why do I have to do it? If I have policy to be able to show, then that gives so much more emphasis on the answer that I can give versus just part of a procedure. So if there's no policy there, there's really not as much added bonus for me to empathize why I'm here to do my job. So policy's very important in that aspect. If it's not-- like for procurement itself, the accessibility policy is all about the e-learning and the contractors, things like that.

The procurement policy does have something very specific within the procurement, and then it has the procedural base that then has accessibility within that. Because sometimes policy has to be very generic. It can't be very specific. So it's all about looking to see how you can implement accessibility into other policies that may be in place, but you really should still have your own accessibility policy somewhere.

**LILY BOND:** Thanks, Kara. Several people are asking if you could talk more about the team that you work with. How many people are there in the department? What types of titles do they have? And what roles do they play?

**KARA ZIRKLE:** So our Assistive Technology Initiative office started out about 10 or 12 years ago as a grant project. It quickly moved half and half from grant to university funding to then full university funding. At that point in time, there was one manager and one part-time individual who was blind and testing. And they hired another part-time individual to help and work with some of the accessible text within those two individuals.

That has morphed now into we have four full-time staff. We have the ATI manager. We have the accessible media coordinator, myself as the IT accessibility coordinator, and we have a full-time program support who-- that program support is kind of meshed and shared between myself and the ATI manager. They do a lot of the AT assessments and training for the students on specific assistive technology.

And then we have a part-time support for the-- and she does all the accessible text, and she's there as support for the accessible media coordinator as needed. Outside of that, we also have a part-time student that we employ pretty much year-round. And that's our office.

So we've all meshed. And at one point in time, we all needed to learn a little bit and overlapped where if one person was out for a week, anybody else could step in. It got so busy that now we're all so independent and we do our own thing to where if someone comes in, if we don't leave some detailed instructions, I don't know that someone else is going to be able to pick up where someone else left off.

We're trying to get back to the overlapping a little bit, just because the stuff that's being done is requiring more than one person sometimes. Going back to that demand. But that's really our office.



**LILY BOND:** Thanks, Kara. That was helpful. Some people are looking at hiring or recruiting someone to be an IT-specific person for accessibility. And they're wondering, when recruiting for that type of position, what requirements should we look for? What degrees do you feel are most beneficial for the position? And what types of tasks or goals should they be able to handle?

**KARA ZIRKLE:** So they definitely need to have worked in the field of accessibility, disability somewhere along the line. More accessibility than disability, but there's nothing wrong with the overlap of that. It's just-- it's the different mindset sometimes.

Depending upon the level on which they're wanting to hire would go back to the amount of years of experience. If you're wanting someone that's very new out of school wanting to come in and start doing some testing stuff, just a couple years' knowledge might be enough. If you're wanting someone to really come in and take control of whatever this office or create an office or whatever something like that might look like under a manager position, then you're going to want at least seven to 10 years experience within that, so that you can comfortably be able to let that be created on an over-- as-needed basis with some minimal oversight.

If you're looking at degree programs, anything technology-related, anything-- psychology, HR, understanding working with people. That's really the majority of it. It can be instructional design. It can be a lot of different backgrounds.

The degree program itself is not actually as important as the environment in which they've worked in. Do they know how to work with people? Do they know how to deal with sometimes some more difficult circumstances or situations? And how knowledgeable are they of the technology, the assistive technology that's out there specifically?

There are a lot more programs now that's offering assistive technology as part of their degree units, so those are definitely some hot topics to look at. But at the same time, because they're so new, you might not have a lot of people who have majored in them yet. Either that or someone like myself, I've been in the field for so long, I would never look to major in something like that, because it's duplicate to what I'm looking at.

So it's kind of a hit or miss as to what exactly you're wanting to put down. But kind of include it all, because you don't want to leave any one person out that still might fit the criteria for what you're looking for.

**LILY BOND:** Thanks, Kara. You mentioned at some point in the presentation that faculty can submit for free

captioning of video. Someone is wondering how this is funded.

**KARA ZIRKLE:** So we actually put together a captioning proposal at one point in time, our office put one together, and sent it out to the provost president for additional funding for our office. At the time, I believe it was about \$35,000 to \$40,000, and that was for a captioning proposal that allowed us to hire a couple grad students, that allowed us to have some of the different technologies needed, and that then morphed into what we now have. As we go through those funds every year, any additional funds goes to overall university funds, and it's paid from there.

And that's actually part of the presentation that, Lily, you and I had done as one of the previous webinars. So that gives some of the detailed information of costing that we've done. I think we've gotten down to about \$1.35 a minute. Some of the different numbers of videos we have based upon academic units and things like that. So actually, the detail notes on that can be found, I think, both on your side of the archived webinar as well as on our ATI website as an archived webinar.

**LILY BOND:** Yeah, and the link on the screen, [3playmedia.com/webinars](https://3playmedia.com/webinars), will show you our full archive of recorded webinars, so you can find that pretty quickly there.

So Kara, a couple of questions here are about whether or not you experienced any resistance on implementing compliance and what your strategy was for getting departmental buy-in to be proactive rather than just getting by.

**KARA ZIRKLE:** There's always resistance. There's still resistance. It's always going to be an uphill battle. It doesn't matter what group that you might be working with, and I think that's a lot of the times because titles change, people leave, departments change. But buy-in is a hit or miss.

You take your allies, use them how you can, burn the candle at both ends. Work in the weeds as well as work on the top levels of that buy-in that you can get. And then really it depends upon that structural process. You've got to have the buy-in of your highest level of VP or CIO or whoever that may be. If you don't have the support and buy-in from them, then I'm not really sure how you're going to get that pushed out much more across the campus.

We have always had that buy-in, so I don't know how to speak to that as not having it. But you really have to have it from somewhere to be able to allow that expansion. But there's always going to be resistance, because it seems as something new, it seems as something change, it

seems as more time or money. There's always resistance.

**LILY BOND:** Thanks, Kara. Several people are asking how much you feel that accessibility and usability overlap.

**KARA ZIRKLE:** I think it overlaps a good bit. There are some areas, a good example to that is when we do testing of websites and applications, we do provide an area of usability as part of the testing when we can in that, because it's really just bettering the program or the application or website overall for everyone.

And a lot of the usability features are actually becoming what used to be accessibility features. Look at our cellphones. We all have a microphone app or a button on our keypads and things that we can use that to talk into our phone. That's really more of a usability feature now, but it was designed originally as accessibility for disabilities.

So it's very common and it's very important. But I also think sometimes it's best to keep them separate, because sometimes people can still see usability as easier to implement than accessibility. So as long as they're still kept separate within that, sometimes you'll see the usability implemented quicker. But to have separate testing, we've just not been able to have the manpower to do that.

**LILY BOND:** Thanks, Kara. Relatedly, someone is asking, how critical is training specifically in instructional design and UDL? And where might someone get this training?

**KARA ZIRKLE:** It's very important to have it, just because you're using-- it's kind of the web, basically, of web accessibility. You're branching that web out to throw it out to larger units, using other folks to learn that then reach a larger portal of people from there. So teaching your instructional designers, teaching the faculty about universal design or any of the administrative staff from there it might be, that allows them to then be able to go and branch out and talk to others. So on that level, we see it as key. We, ourselves, provide that to the university, to any offices or groups that are wanting it.

As to where you could get outside of that, there's a lot of different areas or companies that do provide these types of trainings. We're one of them. But there's a lot of them that can actually offer some of that stuff.

**LILY BOND:** Thanks, Kara. Someone is asking-- someone is trying to develop a better process around their

captioning workflow, and they're asking if you could specify whether the evaluation and vetting process of the content happens in the department first before requests come to you, or if it's your group that tells faculty what can and can't be captioned because of copyright issues, expense per person, et cetera.

**KARA ZIRKLE:** So if they would visit our website [ati.gmu.edu](http://ati.gmu.edu) and under the About Us is Requesting Services. You can actually select Faculty and Staff, and under that, you can see what the captioning request looks like. That asks all the questions that we ask a faculty or staff member for them to know what is needed.

Copyright versus fair use, we've been told that fair use is going to trump copyright. So if we need to caption it, caption it. We've done that sometimes by saving it and keeping it on an internal YouTube channel. We have Kaltura as our video management platform. So there are different ways that we can keep it private to that specific course or individual that might be needed if it is going to be something that could be copyrighted considered. But at the same time, we do a lot of things like that within our captioning.

There was a second part of that question.

**LILY BOND:** The other part of the question was just wondering whether it's the department that vets it or whether you vet it.

**KARA ZIRKLE:** We do. Well, part of the vet is through that form. Once things are submitted, then we see all that's submitted. Through the accessible media coordinator, she'll actually check through the library. She'll do a quick Google search, see if we can find it captioned somewhere else first. If not, then we send it out directly to the vendors. Sometimes the vendors work directly through our Kaltura video management platform. I know that you all have a API for that.

So depending upon what the environment looks like for that school or university, it's sometimes just the click of a button to then send out what's needed to be captioned from there. And then that way, we have the SRT files, things like that, we keep on hand. And we keep a database of everything that's been captioned, so that way we know if someone else requests something, we already have it there in hand, so it's not duplicate work and cost.

**LILY BOND:** Thank you so much, Kara. And that looks like it's about all that we have time for today. Thank you, everyone, for all of your very thoughtful questions. And Kara, thank you so much for another great presentation. It was great to have you back.

**KARA ZIRKLE:** Thank you so much. And good luck to everyone in your prospective areas.

**LILY BOND:** I hope everyone has a great rest of the day. A reminder that we will be sending out a recording of this presentation, most likely tomorrow, so keep an eye out for that. And yeah, have a great rest of the day. Bye.