



JISC RSC Scotland South & West Case Study @ University of the West of Scotland

Using the JISC TechDis Toolbar to Make Your Website More Accessible

Transcript of the Video at www.rsc-sw-scotland.ac.uk/podcast/video/uws.m4v

Hello, my name is Margaret McKay and I am the Accessibility eAdvisor at the JISC Regional Support Centre, Scotland South and West. Today I am at the University of the West of Scotland, Hamilton Campus, with Caroline Lindsay. Caroline works as part of the Enabling Support team here at the University and today Caroline is going to talk to us about the JISC TechDis toolbar and how she is intending to implement this within the Enabling Support Service.

We are looking at the JISC TechDis toolbar - can you explain to us what that toolbar is and what it does?

Sure. It allows students, or any person, to access a website in a particular way that they choose, so they can magnify the screen, they can change the font, they can check their spelling and they can also use the dictionary function on a specific word on their webpage, so it does give a wide range of people access to websites that they may not have had access to. They can personalise it the way that they want to - they can change background colours and things like that as well.

If a College or University were planning on adopting the Toolbar, how would they access it?

The toolbar comes in two forms. There is the light version which you can use by adding a link on to your website or you can add it to your favourites and it will give you access at any time. You can download a version of it as well so that you can access it on any webpage and it won't shut down again when you leave that webpage. We are going for the light version (at UWS) and we are using it on the Enabling Support pages of our website at the moment. Basically we have a button on the webpage that students can click and it will launch the TechDis toolbar.

And what about if somebody is accessing it at home or someone is interested in having this on their own machine - how would they do that?

They'd be able to go to the TechDis Toolbar website and would be able to download the new version of it and it means that they can access it on their own personal browser that they choose and they would be able to change the websites as they see fit and the toolbar will always be there for them and they won't be a case of re-launching it again.

So there's the option of having the toolbar light on the University webpage which somebody at home or in a library or in a friend's house, can click on the toolbar and they can change the way they view the Enabling Support website but equally somebody could download it in their own house and have

it available on their own computer and that means that any website they open is accessible to them - not just the UWS website but any website at all.

All the buttons on the toolbar are really self explanatory - there is no need for training with it as it is just a case of playing about with it and you'll get the hang of it really.

So, you are planning to use it at UWS in just the Enabling Support website?

As University as a whole, we are looking at the whole website but at the moment I have it on the Enabling Support pages. We are putting this on offer over the summer so that when the students come back they are going to have access to this toolbar on the Enabling Support pages and we'll see what the reaction to this toolbar is and get feedback from the students.

So, you are kind of evaluating how this toolbar is potentially going to be used?

Yes, we are evaluating it so that we can bring it to the wider University website as well.

Excellent, so this is free?

Yes, it doesn't cost anything at all.

Great - what do you think the benefits will be for learners or for anyone who may be accessing the Enabling Support website?

I think that initially it is that they can personalise it whichever way they want to, so if the font isn't to their choosing, they can change the font to whatever suits them best. They can change the background colours and when they do this, it will make the webpage into a list layout rather than being more visual, so for some people that will suit them better. They can also select a certain word and get a dictionary definition of that word which is going to be helpful for people who don't have English as their first language and will suit dyslexics as well.

So, basically it allows people to access it in the right way that suits them, they can personalise it to suit their own preferences?

Yes, they can also have font on the screen read back to them, so its just another way of learning for people as well. Reading text from a website can be quite monotonous and difficult as well.

Have you had any feedback from any of the learners?

Not at the moment because we have actually started it over the summer so all of our students are away at the moment. We will be promoting it once they come back and asking for feedback once they have been able to use it..... but I'm hoping it is going to be positive!

So basically you have got a resource that allows you to change the look of the website or webpage that you are reading; you can change the background colours; you can change the text colours; you can have it read back to you; there is a dictionary if you don't understand a word you are reading then you can have a dictionary definition..... what about references - can it help with referencing?

Yes, for students maybe doing some research on a subject there is a referencing button and it will give them details of that webpage. It might not suit for different types of essays that you are handing in, but you can certainly have a look and it will give you some of the information you are looking for.

So people who may be using it for literature searches or information retrieval as part of an assignment...?

It's just for webpages though, so it will just give you the details of the specific webpage you are looking on at the time.

Can you listen to what is on the screen as well?

There is a text to speech option, so if you highlight a word or a paragraph and hit the "text to speech" button, it will play that back to you.

So I guess you are thinking of prospective learners who are thinking of coming to the University, current users who are accessing the services and looking at the support that is on offer but I guess as well as students who have maybe identified disabilities, this is really going to benefit students with maybe literacy issues or language support issues or just those who may be tired reading - they can listen to it as well as read it.

For sure - it can be quite draining reading from the webpage so speech definitely helps with that.

We are going to have a look at the toolbar but just for reference, if people are interested in the toolbar, you can have a look at the JISC TechDis website:

www.techdis.ac.uk/gettoolbar

Now we are going to have a wee look at the TechDis toolbar and Caroline is going to show us how she has added that to the Enabling Support Service and basically how it works... so Caroline can you maybe show us the toolbar and how it works, please?

Yes, sure. This is the Enabling Support pages of the University of the West of Scotland website and this is the TechDis toolbar icon. You can see there this is the launcher for it. So if I click on that, it then launches the toolbar in grey at the top of the page. On this end you've got all sorts of symbols and if you roll over them there is a definition of each as well and you can see they are pretty self explanatory. The buttons are:

- style change
- referencing options
- text to speech
- dictionary
- spell checker
- font settings
- decrease text size
- increase text size

So, if we start with increase text size, if we click on the icon it increases it a little bit and you can continue to increase the text size by clicking.

Excellent! That's grand because that kind of facility allows people to enlarge it to suit their visual preference and it may be that an individual doesn't need to access something commercial like ZoomTxt, but they just need to magnify what they are reading. It might be that their eyes are tired at the end of a day or just maybe to highlight an element of what they are reading.... that's excellent.

...And you can decrease the text as well. Next we have the font setting options. We can click on that and we can change the font on the page. So, if I go to Tahoma, you can see that the information has changed on the page.

And again, some people have a particular preference as to the type of font that might be more readable for them or more accessible to them. I know that a lot of learners who are dyslexic find some font styles more readable or more accessible than others.

Yes, that will definitely give them the option to do that. It's got a dictionary option here as well, so if I just highlight the word on the page and press the dictionary option it will come up with information about that word.

Excellent. And again, that is very useful or helpful I guess for people for whom English isn't their first language, in terms of making sense of what they are reading or understanding what is happening on the screen....

yes, or if there is a just a difficult word on the screen and you just want more information on.... you've got the text to speech option here. So if I highlight some text on the screen and hit the button, I can choose to read back the entire page or just the selected text. (Male Scottish voice reads the selected text aloud).

I'll have a look at changing the colours on screen. So, you can change the toolbar colours, so if you don't like the grey you can change it to a colour that suits you better. You can change the text and the link colours and you can change the page style as well. So, you can go yellow on black and you can see it displays the webpage in a more linear fashion as well so it can be easier to find exactly what you are looking for.

I can change the text colour to green and the link colour to red and you can see all the text has gone to green and you can easily identify the links on the page, which can be quite useful. You do also have this referencing option on the toolbar. This will basically pull out any information about the webpage so it can be used for bibliographies.

That's really useful if people are researching information or doing a literature search or anything like that. It might be useful for them to source where they got the information from.

That gives us the page title, name of the website, when it was accessed and the full URL of the pages as well.

Excellent.

We do have the spell checker option as well. You would use that if you were actually inputting into a webpage so you would check your spelling before you input the information is there.

So, there is a whole range of features. You can opt in or opt out. You can choose one feature and ignore the rest.

Well, Caroline has explained to us a wee bit about the JISC TechDis toolbar and how the UWS Enabling Support Service intend to use this resource. We have heard about the different features and how it will benefit learners who have additional support needs, but some of the fantastic features of this are that:

- *it is free for anyone to access, to use and download to their own machines.*

- *it is accessible in any browser - internet explorer, safari, firefox, chrome.*

As well as supporting students with additional support needs, it is a fantastic resource for learners who have English as a second language, overseas students, learners who have literacy issues as well. So, it's the kind of tool that is going to support a wide range of users at the UWS. Caroline, I'd like to thank you for your time today. Thanks for sharing this information with us. I know that you are piloting it this year so I wish you the very best of luck with piloting this. Students will they be able to access this on the Enabling Support website at the University?

Yes.

Well good luck with that.

Thank you.

Thank you.