

The DRC Strategy for website accessibility

**Helen Petrie
Centre for Human Computer
Interaction Design
City University London**

Disability Discrimination Act (1995)

Part 3 requires providers of goods, facilities and services to avoid the less favourable treatment of disabled people and also to make reasonable adjustments to services which are unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of
does not mention the Web explicitly

Statutory Code of Practice (2002)

authorised by Secretary of State for Education and Employment
clarifies that a web site is a service

No cases yet brought to court, but a number settled out of court

Urban myth that 1 October 2004 is a deadline relevant to websites, this refers to Part III of the DDA concerning physical access, not provision of goods and services

The UK DDA is part of a range of similar laws -

ADA in the USA, DDA in Australia (both these countries have had successful prosecutions of websites)

most recent successful case against Ramada.com and Priceline.com

http://www.oag.state.ny.us/press/2004/aug/aug19a_04.html

European Action Plans, Communications, Resolutions, and in 2005 further action is likely

Why? Beyond the legal obligation

But much more than simply a legal requirement

it expands your markets

it is a good thing to do – “win-win” situation

it enhances your brand image

it has other benefits – the accessibility bonus

Disability Rights Commission Formal Investigation

A general formal investigation undertaken to clarify the current situation of website accessibility

Could not “name and shame”

DRC needed to understand more about the area and the criteria that might be used in a case

Key findings

Only 19% of websites passed WAI Priority A

Only 76% of basic website tasks could be completed by disabled people

Only 53% of basic website tasks could be completed by blind people

[A case answerable under the DDA ?]

Relationship between WAI compliance and ability of disabled people to use a site “murky”

Conclusions from the DRC FI

Need to complement designing to the WAI Guidelines (and monitoring your adherence to them) with:

Testing the site with a variety of users with different disabilities (at least blind, partially sighted and dyslexic users, and if relevant to the site, hearing impaired users)

Making sure that people can complete key tasks in times that are reasonable to them

Making sure they have satisfactory and pleasant experience

Other benefits: the accessibility bonus

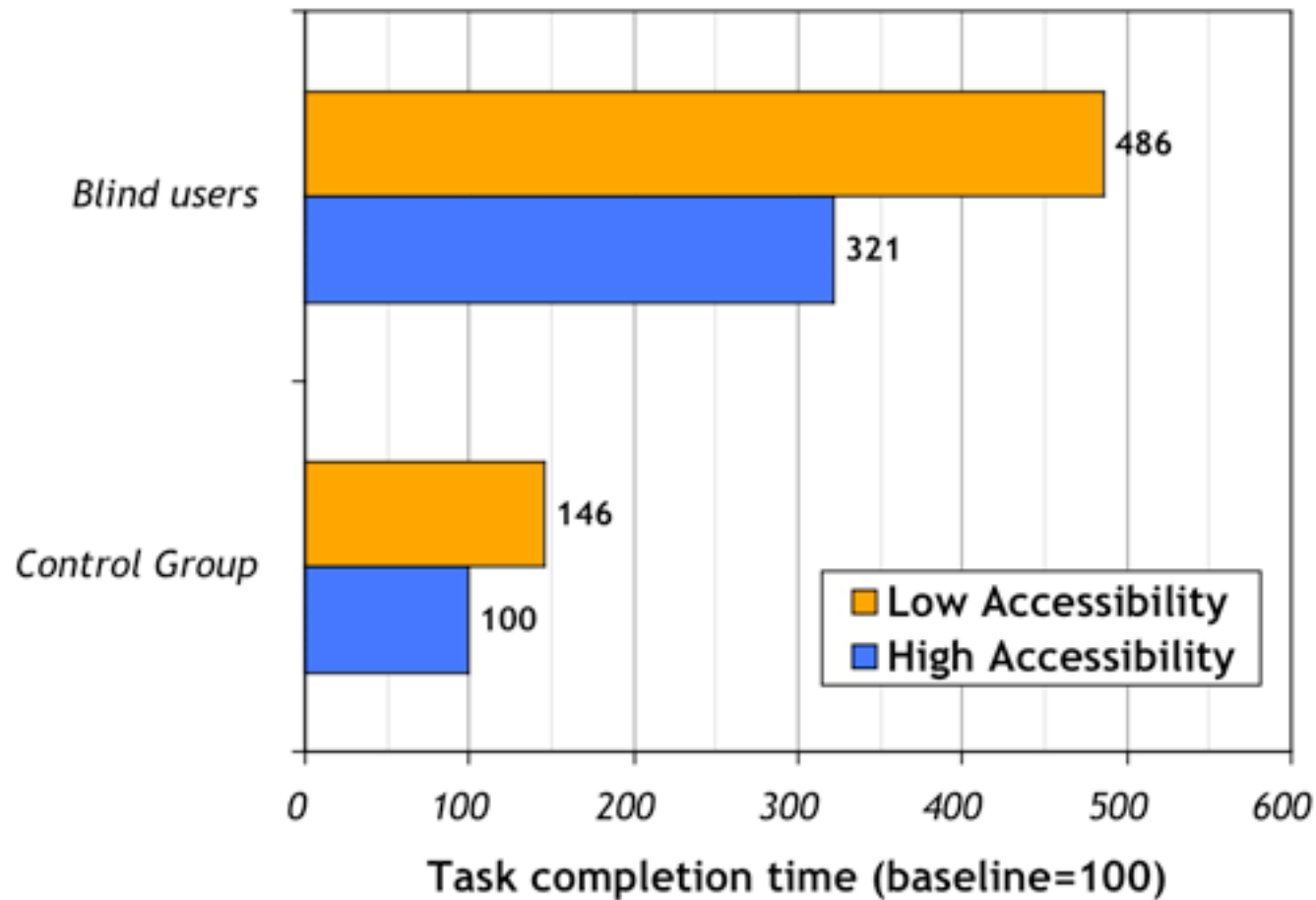
In our study for the DRC, we conducted a small, conducted study of web sites

High accessibility – performed well on WCAG and disabled user testing

Low accessibility – performed poorly on WCAG and disabled user testing

Asked a group of blind people (using screenreaders) and a matched group of sighted people to perform a series of standard tasks on the web sites

Usability bonus - task completion times



Usability bonus - task completion times

Sighted people were 35% faster on the high accessibility web sites than on the low accessibility web sites

Analysis of the problems the disabled users encounter will also reveal many/all of the usability problems of the site

So, investigating accessibility will yield a usability bonus as well

How to proceed?

Need an **accessibility strategy document** (probably a very good idea in light of the DDA anyway)

What are the goals, targets?

How will they be achieved?

How will accessibility be maintained

Need regular automatic and manual checking against WAI Guidelines

Need user testing - initially and with any major updates

Conclusions

Accessibility seems complex, is a minefield of acronyms, technical issues and legal obligations

However -

Investment in web accessibility will yield many benefits both to your customers and your organization

Particularly, a website that is accessible is a website that is usable by everyone

Thank you!

Questions?

h.i.petrie@city.ac.uk