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Northwest Greek Life Page Accessibility Report

Introduction

Purpose: The purpose of this report is to evaluate the accessibility of a webpage within the Northwest Missouri State University website. Accessibility is important because the webpage needs to be accessible to anyone, no matter if the user has a disability or not. When designing a website, the needs of everyone need to be considered, which can be a challenge. This report should help guide the Northwest marketing office to make the changes that are needed to make this webpage more accessible for all.

Problem: Accessibility is something that is commonly overlooked when designing and building a website because of the extra time and money it takes. While it is both the ethical and legal things to do there are still things that can be overlooked. For most, these issues will never be seen. For the people who will notice these errors it can make a world of a difference in their experience on the site.

Scope: In this report the WAVE browser extension will be used to evaluate the accessibility issues within the webpage. Since this is the only tool used in this report, there may be more accessibility issues that are not found by this browser extension. The narrator feature that is built into the Northwest issued HP laptop was also used to see what features could be read on the screen. This is a very basic screen reader, someone with a disability that requires a screen reader might have a more powerful one. Due to the fact that this is what every Northwest student has available to them, that is what I used.

Background

The Page: When you first open the page (figure 1), you are greeted by a picture of a member from each Greek life chapter. There is also a drop-down menu in the upper right-hand corner. The drop-down menu houses links to other pages such as policies, reports, upcoming events, and more. When you begin to scroll down the page you will find more links to the other pages. A small introduction to Greek Life at Northwest and a table describing things such as values, scholarship, brother/sister hood,



Figure 1

etc. The page also contains a graphic with numbers and statistics on Greek Life, as well as a carousel of pictures.

Audience: You would think the primary audience for this page would be current Greek Life members, but as a current Greek Life member I have never been to this page. This page is likely to be visited more by students who are coming to Northwest and thinking about joining a chapter and their parents. There is very basic information about Greek Life on this page that most active members would not have any interest in.

Analysis: Accessibility checks are valuable because you as a designer do not want to exclude anyone from the information on your page just simply by them not being able to access it.

Discussion

Findings: When looking at the page with an able eye you don't see anything wrong. Most of the page is text that could be ready by a screen reader. The last thing on the page though, is a carousel of pictures of various Greek life events. This carousel has a total of 13 pictures that show things from recruitment, homecoming, mixers, graduation and more (figure 2). The issue with these pictures is that there is no alt text to accompany these images. For someone with a disability that causes them to use a screen reader, they would not be able to know what these pictures were depicting.

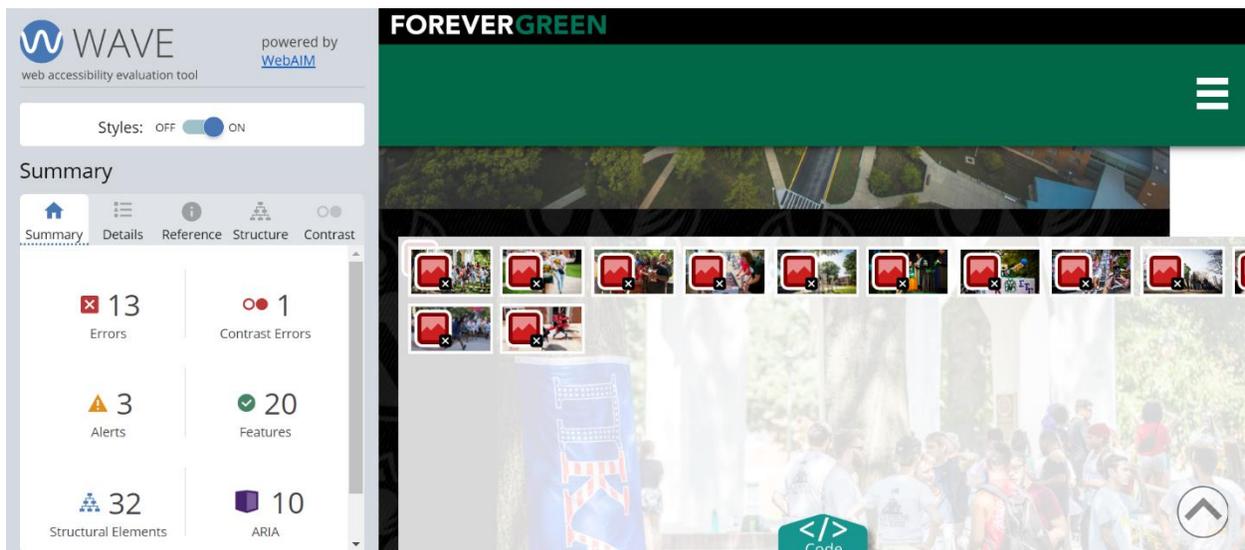


Figure 2

I also tried using the narrator feature that is built into the Northwest laptop just to see what navigating the Greek Life page would be like for someone using a screen reader. When going through the page, most of the page was not able to be read by the screen reader. It was only able to read the links and did not read any of the information on the page. There is a large graphic towards the bottom of the page (figure 3) that someone using a screen reader would miss out on. There is valuable information on this graphic

such as number of members in Greek Life and the total number of chapters on Northwest's campus.



Figure 3

Evidence: When using the WAVE chrome extension, the errors are shown first. There are 13 total, one for each picture. You can also see when you go into the code that there is no alt text there for the pictures (figure 4). If you refer back to figure 2 you can see all of the red symbols indicating that there are errors. Like stated earlier, I also used the narrator feature that is built into the settings of the computer to see what was readable by a screen reader on the site.

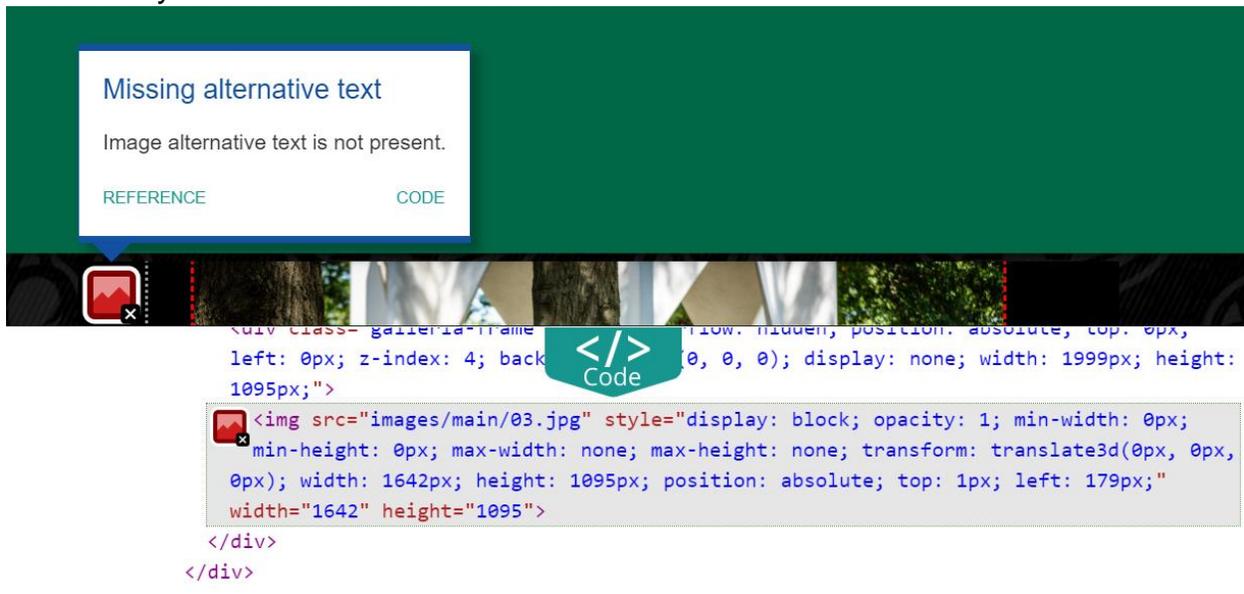


Figure 4

Implications: For someone who is able-bodied these issues would go unnoticed, but for someone with a disability they can alter their experience on the site. For example, if a prospective student wanted to learn more about Greek life while using a screen reader, there would be a lot of information left out. The main things they would be able to access on the page are the links to other pages on the site. Due to the pictures not

having alt tags there would be no description for what is happening in those photos. Same goes for the graphic on the page, there isn't much of a point to have an infographic if I can't be read to someone who is not able to read it. This can also be very frustrating to someone who would need these alt tags because they would feel the site is lacking information.

Standards: According to the Webpage Accessibility page on the Northwest website, "Northwest Missouri State University is committed to ensuring that its websites are accessible to students, prospective students, employees and visitors with disabilities." Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 applies to the Northwest website because they receive federal funding. The website also states that they are striving for Level AA, which is a more comprehensive level of conformance. Due to this commitment to a higher standard of accessibility on their website it would be expected that issues like this are fixed.

Conclusion

Summary: Overall, this is something that has probably been overlooked by the individual who coded the website. I believe that if it was pointed out it would be fixed. This would not be very hard to fix but would take a commitment to making sure that when pictures are updated that they have alt text included with them.

Recommendations: My overall recommendation would be for the marketing office, or whoever is responsible for this, to be more diligent about making sure that all features of their site are accessible to all. This Greek life page does not have a lot of info, but it does have features built into it that make it more visually appealing. For someone who can not get the full visual experience they should at least get the information from it. I would recommend getting alt tags on the pictures soon, which should be able to be done in a day or two, and then move to making sure everything can be read on the screen reader. After this page specifically is fixed, they can then branch out to checking other parts of the website for accessibility errors.