

**GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON BLINDNESS AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENT
(GCBVI)
Assistive Technology (AT) Committee
Meeting Minutes
April 19, 2017**

Members Present

Jeff Bishop, Chair*
Nathan Pullen*
Terri Hedgpeth*
Sue Lehew*
Bea Shapiro*
Ed Gervasoni*
Julie Jones*
Adam Cruz*

Members Absent

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers, Admin Assistant
*Teleconferenced

Guests Present

Megan Lawrence*, Microsoft
Clinton Covington*, Microsoft
Rich Sorey
Jaime Trausch*
Amy Porterfield*
Bob Kresmer*
Ted Chittenden*
Sean Cummins*
Todd Steen*

Call to Order and Introductions

Jeff Bishop, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:04 pm in the RSA Conference Room, Phoenix, AZ. Introductions were made and a quorum was present.

Approval of March 15, 2017 Meeting Minutes

This item was tabled.

Microsoft Presentation

Megan Lawrence, Microsoft, stated one billion individuals worldwide has a disability, which was one in seven individuals. Ms. Lawrence stated the blind and low vision population was growing as individuals aged, increasing that

population. Megan Lawrence stated Microsoft used inclusive design principles, and wanted a broad range of individuals to be able to use Microsoft products. She stated inclusive design enabled individuals with permanent or temporary disabilities to be able to access various Microsoft products. Megan Lawrence stated Microsoft strived to reflect the diversity of the community with the technology and reduce the barriers to accessing technology. Megan Lawrence noted accessible technology should be created in an inclusive environment and workplace. She stated Microsoft was encouraging accessibility from the top of company and from within the company through the diverse workplace. Ms. Lawrence stated each year; Microsoft held a Hack-a-Thon, where individuals were challenged to solve accessibility issues and noted the previous year 102 hacks were developed. Megan Lawrence stated Microsoft was guided by three principles. She stated the company wanted to remain transparent and published the Accessibility Roadmap, and allow remain open and honest with the company and technology companies. Megan Lawrence stated Microsoft also wanted to be accountable and always develop use accessibility to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities as well as all users. Megan Lawrence stated Microsoft also wanted to remain inclusive and reflect the current society.

Clinton Covington, Microsoft, stated he was responsible for the accessibility in the productivity applications such as Word, Excel, Power Point, Outlook, SharePoint, and Skype. Mr. Covington stated he reached out to federal and educational partners and discovered that Microsoft needed to improve in providing accessible technology. Clinton Covington stated the markets had changed and Microsoft realized the company needed to improve accessibility in some areas. He stated Microsoft developed a plan inspired by the Department of Homeland Security, and implemented a Trusted Tester Program, which was a systematic way to test for accessibility. Clinton Covington noted Microsoft developed partnerships and created teams to test the accessibility in different areas. He stated the teams reviewed every control on the page, and checked the accessibility properties such as the high contrast and keyboard feature so that individuals with all types of disabilities would have a great user experience. Mr. Covington stated at one point, there were about 250 accessibility projects occurring at the same time to ensure that Microsoft was compliant with Section 508, the federal law mandating that all electronic and information technology be accessible, and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). He noted the teams were able to fix 1000's of high contrast, programmatic, and keyboarding issues and essentially revamped the accessibility implementation across most of the productivity applications.

Clinton Covington stated initially Microsoft identified the key goals of ensuring that individuals with disabilities should be easily able to create,

consume and communicate on content across any device, and to make sure the content developed was accessible. He noted that Microsoft developed a culture that embraced inclusive design and would be forward focused. Clinton Covington stated most of the accessibility improvements would be available with Office 365, in which customers would receive monthly updates. Clinton Covington stated Microsoft was inspired to overcome constraints and develop an inclusive design, which would allow all individuals with disabilities to use Microsoft products. Mr. Covington stated Microsoft hired suppliers that could provide usability studies as well as feedback from the community to ensure that the products were accessible. He noted Microsoft wanted to promote digital inclusion and noticed the accessibility improvements boosted productivity of individuals with disabilities as well as individuals without disabilities. He stated long term, the updates would simplify IT and support overall as the products would have an out of the box solution for all individuals. Clinton Covington stated Microsoft was interested in enabling users to consume content independently, whether through Assistive Technology (AT) or different product settings.

Mr. Covington stated Microsoft was able to boost productivity in four areas of enabling users to consume content independently, create content confidently, collaborate inclusively, and remain organized efficiently. Clinton Covington stated Microsoft released the feature, Tell Me, which allowed the user to type Alt Q, and find the control for the individual. He stated the user could also search all of the user articles, which would offer keyboard shortcuts to assist with using an application. Clinton Covington stated Microsoft created over 250 new user articles to assist users with using Assistive Technology. He stated Microsoft also developed Power Point Designer, which used Artificial Intelligence (AI) to review pictures and text on a slide and provide several slide options. He noted that Power Point was able to develop the slide and ensure that the reading order was correct, and that the content was accessible for users. Clinton Covington stated another new feature was Editor, which offered more effective spell-checking and grammar checking for individuals that spell phonetically and individuals with dyslexia. He stated Editor would detect misspelled words and offer better suggestions for words, synonyms or offer writing critiques. Mr. Covington stated another feature used AI to review a picture and generate an alternative text for the picture and generate an alternative text description of the picture.

Mr. Covington stated the accessibility checker was moved and is now next to the spellchecker, which increased the usage of the accessibility checker. He noted the accessibility checker was also available on the web versions of Office, and allowed users to develop more accessible products. Clinton Covington stated Web Express allowed a user to choose the preference to

revive accessible content, which would prompt someone sending an email to that individual to run an accessibility check prior to sending the email. Clinton Covington stated a user could also turn on automatic closed captioning, which would caption the conversations in Skype. He noted Skype also included a Skype Translator, which allowed individuals speaking different languages to communicate. Clinton Covington stated Office Lens allowed a user to take a picture and automatically add Optimal Character Recognition (OCR) to the picture and read the description for an individual that is blind or visually impaired. Clinton Covington stated Microsoft revamped One Note and added full accessibility to the application. He stated SharePoint was redesigned to be inclusive from the beginning and noted that individuals using SharePoint on Office 365 would have a much better experience.

Clinton Covington stated when Microsoft first began reviewing the accessibility of the applications; the company noticed the narrator did not read all of the content. He noted he was informed that a co-worker was unable to use JAWS within Microsoft products because JAWS would only read about 30% of the content. Mr. Covington stated through a partnership with Windows, Microsoft was able to improve the screen reading experience within Microsoft in which a user could navigate documents, tables, and lists. Clinton Covington stated a user could read and edit mathematical equations for individuals using screen readers. He noted Microsoft redesigned the hyperlinks, which allowed the user to copy a URL at the top of a document, to make that URL easier to locate. Clinton Covington stated one of his most favorite features was developed during a Hack-a-Thon, where the One Note team began learning about dyslexia and introduced One Note Learning Tool. He stated the tool allowed an individual to set line and character spacing as well as a read aloud feature. Mr. Covington stated the tool also identified certain parts of speech, or would break the words up according to syllables. Clinton Covington stated each user would require different needs, and could choose the appropriate tools to accomplish their goals. He stated Microsoft recognized that some users required a high contrast screen that was crisp and clear.

Megan Lawrence stated Microsoft also developed a Disability Answer Desk for individuals using AT that required technical support. Ms. Lawrence stated individuals could call the number or use video phones to speak through interpreters using American Sign Language (ASL). Clinton Covington stated Microsoft was able to use the feedback from the Disability Answer Desk and route those questions to the production team and implement changes from the beginning. He noted Microsoft revamped approximately 250 templates to be accessible from the beginning.

Terri Hedgpeth inquired whether Microsoft had made any accessibility improvements with Microsoft Project and Planner. Clinton Covington stated Microsoft had significantly improved the accessibility within Project, although the online version of Project was in the process of being redesigned. He noted that Microsoft had made improvements with Planner as well.

Jeff Bishop stated that Office 365 was the most accessible version of Office, and inquired regarding the current process for procuring software and technology for clients. Jaime Trausch stated at SAAVI Services for the Blind, staff would make recommendations for the technology or software that clients needed. Mr. Trausch noted that currently SAAVI Services for the Blind was unable to purchase subscription based software, which prevented the organization from purchasing the most updated Microsoft software. Amy Porterfield stated the Department of Economic Security (DES) Office of Procurement indicated that Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) was unable to purchase subscription based products because RSA could not authorize continued payments to a client. She noted that RSA could, however, purchase subscription services for a client, such as cell phone service, if that client proved that he or she could make those payments once that client was no longer receiving services. Ms. Porterfield noted the subscription based software was often less expensive than the boxed version, and offered more accessibility updates. Amy Porterfield stated the Legislative and Public Policy Committee was attempting to locate the specific language that precluded RSA from purchasing subscription based products. Rich Sorey stated the RSA was in the process of implementing LEAN processes to make the procurement process more efficient. Mr. Sorey noted he had discussed the procurement issue, and he would pursue the issue further with someone in Procurement. Amy Porterfield inquired whether the Office of Procurement had given Rich Sorey the specific language regarding subscriptions. Rich Sorey stated he had a lengthy Procurement document, although he had not been able to delve into the information yet. Clinton Covington stated Microsoft would prefer that individuals use the latest product that was the most accessible for users. Sue Lehew inquired whether other states purchased subscription software for clients. Jeff Bishop stated Microsoft informed him that Arizona was the first state they were aware of with the subscription software problem, although Massachusetts had a similar problem due to their procurement language. Sue Lehew stated some of the universities offered an inexpensive Office 365 version to clients, and noticed the issue might only affect the individuals not attending universities. She noted that she was unsure whether clients attending community colleges received Office 365. Ms. Lehew encouraged the committee to focus on the feature match approach for individuals that might require both online and the boxed version of Office 365. Clinton Covington stated Office 365 allowed the user to download and install the software, which included

licenses to all of the applications.

Bea Shapiro stated many companies and organizations were using SharePoint to share documents and noted that companies would benefit from using Office 365, which allowed employees to access those documents. Ted Chittenden inquired whether Rich Sorey had experienced the challenge in purchasing subscription software in the other states that he had worked. Rich Sorey stated that two of the three states that he worked for had a separate blind and visually impaired unit, and therefore had a more flexible procurement process. He noted the departments had some exemptions for purchasing AT products. Ted Chittenden inquired whether Rich Sorey was able to purchase subscription based products in his previous places of employment. Rich Sorey stated he had been able to make the authorizations to purchase subscription based products and could purchase those products as long as the individual's case was open.

Ed Gervasoni stated he was aware of situations where the automated captioning was quite inaccurate. Clinton Covington stated the captioning might depend on the quality of the microphone and the signal coming to the computer. He noted the Microsoft speech to text feature had recently set a new record for accuracy and was almost as accurate as dictation services. Sue Lehew inquired whether the designers of the accessibility products were certified in accessibility, and whether the Disability Answer Desk could provide instruction for proprietary software while using Microsoft. Clinton Covington stated Microsoft had not implemented a formal certification process for accessibility, although the goal was to ensure that all staff could create accessible content from the beginning. Mr. Covington noted the Disability Answer Desk could provide support for Microsoft products and might not be aware of outside products. Megan Lawrence stated the individuals working at the answer desk were trained on AT and were aware of how AT interacted with Windows 10 and Office 365. Ms. Lawrence stated the individuals could assist individuals using screen readers, for example, to navigate Microsoft products. She noted the answer desk received 20,000 calls a month. Julie Jones inquired how teachers and professionals could be trained to use Microsoft products. Clinton Covington stated Microsoft was trying to design the products to be inclusive and accessible to everyone, as well as articles that could be used to train individuals to use the products. Jamie Trausch inquired whether a setting could allow for a user to save and tag a PDF for accessibility by default and whether the existing tag structures could be honored. Clinton Covington stated a user could select the checkbox to tag by default. He noted that Microsoft was working to allow users to export PDF's to improve the export of accessibility tags. Ted Chittenden inquired whether someone could turn off the automatic Editor feature. Clinton Covington stated the spelling/grammar check offered an option setting for the user to turn those features on and off.

Jeff Bishop inquired whether Megan Lawrence and Clinton Covington preferred that individuals contact the Disability Answer Desk for any further questions. Megan Lawrence stated anyone experiencing any issues should contact the Disability Answer Desk or the Microsoft Office Insider page to ensure the problem is addressed quickly. Megan Lawrence stated users could also go to the Microsoft Office Accessibility page for any further information.

AT Trends

This item was tabled.

Agenda and Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Assistive Technology Committee was scheduled for May 17, 2017 from 3:00-4:30 pm in the RSA Conference Room, Phoenix, AZ. Agenda items are as follows:

- AT Trends
- AT in Schools Discussion

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Public Comment

A call was made to the public with no comments forthcoming.

Adjournment of Meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 pm.