MAKING ACCESSIBLE MEDIA: ADOBE ACROBAT PDF TUTORIAL

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INSTRUCTOR: In this tutorial, we will explore some tips on how to improve the accessibility of a PDF once that's already been created. Of course, it's always best to ensure that the original document was created with accessibility features in mind before creating the PDF, however, sometimes that's out of your control. Acrobat Pro allows you to solve common issues such as reading order, content tags, and adding alt text to the images.

For this example, I'm starting with a PDF that was designed without any accessibility features built in, and I have it open in Acrobat Professional. So, I'm going to start off by going into my "Tools," and I'm going to come down to the "Protect & Standardize" menu, and you'll notice, at the end, you have an "Accessibility" menu option. So, we're going to open that and once we have it open, then we'll notice that we have a bunch of options here on the right-hand side. I just want to point out that if you're working in an older version of Acrobat Pro, older than 10, your accessibility features are a little bit limited and you may not actually see such a robust menu.

Now, with the panel open, the first thing I'm going to want to do is I'm going to want to run a "Full Check." So, this is Acrobat's accessibility checker. It will scan the document and let us know which elements need to be corrected. So, when we click on that, it opens up the "Accessibility Checker Options." Many of these we're going to leave as default because we want it to check as much as possible. The one thing that we will change though is the category. So, we do have four options here to tell the Accessibility Checker what to focus on. If I had created this document in Word or in Design and I had the source files, I would do a document check. However, in the scenario, we're just working with the PDF. So, we're actually just going to select "Page content" and we're going to get it to start checking.

Does the check fairly quickly and you'll notice here on the left-hand side, that this is now our accessibility report, and it highlights that we have four issues that need to be dealt with. Let's work through each one of the issues that the Accessibility Checker highlighted for us. So, we're going to open up the document issues and we'll see here that there are quite a few things that we did do correctly but then there are some that have been flagged as an error.

So, the first is the primary language. So, what you can do is you can just click on that and if you come to the little menu in the top left-hand corner here, we can choose "Fix." So, we want to fix this problem. This is a really easy problem to solve, we just need to tell the PDF that the primary reading language is English, right, so that way, when a screen reader is reading the document, it knows that it's in English. So, that one's easy, problem solved. You'll see now a green checkmark will appear. And we're now counting down, we've only got three issues left.

So, the next one here is the title. So, the document was created without a title, so, again, I'm going to highlight it and I'm going to go to "Fix." And this now opens up my description panel. As you can see, everything's blank, so I need to add in a title for my documents, which is making-- Making Accessible Media Course. And then I'll add in a subject. So, "Humber Launches a New Course for Broadcast Students." Okay. And then, the author will be Humber College. And then I'll just add in a couple key words here that'll help it be searchable. So, here, we're going to put "Broadcast media" and... "Broadcast media and accessibility." And I'm going to hit "OK." And then you'll see that my title has now passed, so all that meta description information has been added so that the screen reader can properly introduce the document to a user.

Now that we've dealt with all of our document issues, let's close the document issues and let's start dealing with our last two issues here: page content and alternate text. So, let's open up "Page Content." And so, here we have a flag for the tab order. So, what we want to do, again, is just we can right click or go to the menu and select "Fix." And here, we want the tab order to match the structure order and all the pages successfully. So, what that means is we want the tabs, when someone is using a keyboard to navigate the content, that the tabs will go in the reading order. Okay. And we'll deal with reading order in a moment. So, it's arranged the tab order to match the reading order, so that's great. We've solved that issue.

And now, let's deal with our Alternate Text. So here, the images in our document do not have alt text. So, if you remember from previous tutorials, alt text is related to any graphic element. It needs a one-line description of what it is portraying. So, we're going to fix this issue. So, you'll see that Acrobat Pro has highlighted that there are three images here in our document, which is correct. And you'll also notice that as it cycles through the images, it will put a light blue highlight on them, so you know which one you're adding the alt text to. So, in this case, this is the larger image here. So, this is going to be a "Close up of a microphone in a TV studio." And in this case, this image is a decorative image. So, I'm going to check "Decorative Figure." What that means is that it's not

integral to the understanding of the piece, so the screen reader can actually bypass it and the piece will still make sense.

So, we're going to go to the next image here, which is the "We Are Humber" branding elements. We're just going to call this, "We Are Humber" logo. Again, this is decorative. It's not really important to the understanding of the content of the piece, so I'm going to check "Decorative Figure." And then I'm going to come here to the bottom, which is actually our Humber logo. So, that's going to say "Humber College Logo." In this case, I'm not going to check "Decorative Figure" because it is an important part of understanding where the piece came from. So, now I'm going to save and close. Great.

And now we'll see that all of our alt text has been dealt with. But now we have this new flag that's shown up, which is "Other elements alternate text." So, there's an element here which is tagged incorrectly, so what we want to do is we want to now deal with how things are being tagged. To solve our tagging issue, what we want to do is we want to highlight element one and we're going to just right click and we're going to say, hey, show us this tag and the tags panel. So, the tags panel basically just shows some backend descriptions about the content, what type of content it is, and so here it's been flagged as an image but because we've said it was decorative, there is now a conflict. So, we just need to change the tags. We're just going to right click on image 69 here and what we're going to do is we are going to "Change Tag To Artifact." So, we're going to change the tag to an artefact, that way it makes it a background element and it's no longer flagged as a figure. Now, when we go back, if we close our tags panel, we just run our full check again, really quickly, then you'll see that that problem has been solved. Great.

So, really, there's just these two issues here, which are the Logical Reading Order and the Color Contrast. You'll notice both of these have a question mark and it says it requires a manual check. And that's because these are things that Acrobat can't check for you. Only you know the reading order, as the creator or publisher of the document. With regards to the colour contrast, again, Acrobat can't detect if the colour contrast is not suitable for someone who is colourblind. However, there's lots of online tools where you could check it and ensure that the PDF is, in fact, high contrast.

The one issue that we can solve, however, is the Logical Reading Order. So, what we want to do here is we want to come over to our menu over on the right-hand side, and we want to select "Reading Order." And when we do that, it'll open up our "Touch Up Reading Order" menu. And you'll notice that there's lots of grey boxes that appear with different little tags. So, what we want to

do is we want to-- it's not really exactly the way I want it to be, so I'm going to clear the page structure, and what that does is that it kind of lets me start from scratch. A lot of times, if the reading order wasn't set up in the creation of the document, it comes out all jumbled in the PDF. So, we're going to clear it and start from scratch. So, to start from scratch, all we're going to do is we are going to click and drag a box around each element. So, this is the title. That's the first thing I want read. So, I'm going to select "Heading 1," okay, and that way, the screen reader knows that's the first thing to read. Then the paragraph. So, click and drag a box around it and then I'm going to tag that as text. Then I'm going to move over here. I'm just going to move my menu so it's not in the way. I'm going to drag a box around this content here. And that's also text, so now it knows to read one, two, three. And then the last piece here is the logo, and that I'm going to do as a figure, right, because it's an image. Okay, great. And I'm not going to tag this element here simply because I don't really want it to get picked up. It's just a decorative element, so I can ignore it. And I'm going to close this. Perfect. So, now I've got the correct reading order and I've solved a bunch of other accessibility issues as well. So, the last thing we need to do is we just need to save our document, so we can capture all the changes that we've made.

So, using the tools in Acrobat Pro, we've been able to resolve many common issues that would make this information confusing or inaccessible to someone using an assistive device. As we mentioned earlier, it's always best to create your documents with accessibility in mind right from the beginning, however, the Accessibility Checker in Acrobat Pro is a really great tool to verify that you haven't missed anything and correct some small issues that you may have with your document.

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