

Universal Design Online content Inspection Tool (UDOIT)

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Approximately one third of all credit hours generated at UCF are from online courses, and the faculty required to make sure all of their course content is accessible to students with disabilities in compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Historically, faculty have looked to the Center for Distributed Learning (CDL) and Student Accessibility Services (SAS) for help with accessibility issues in their courses. Unfortunately, this dependency created a bottleneck, limiting us to performing “immediate need” accommodations rather than being proactive.

Additionally, attempts to automate the accessibility evaluation and remediation process were met with limited success. Web-based accessibility checkers typically are not able to access content on password-protected websites, much less Learning Management Systems (LMS), which store content in a unique way. Even if LMS content could be scanned, remediation of accessibility issues requires working knowledge of HTML, which many instructors do not have.

In late 2013, we applied for, and ultimately won, a \$10,000 grant from Instructure (the company that created the Canvas LMS) to work on the Universal Design Online content Inspection Tool, or UDOIT (pronounced “You Do It”). It is an open source, self-service, faculty-facing tool that scans online courses in Canvas for possible accessibility issues. Once issues are identified, faculty can learn about why they exist and how to avoid them in the future. Many issues can even be fixed from within UDOIT using the included U FIX IT tool. Faculty can scan their courses as many times as they like, and old scan results are saved for later review.

Within the Center for Distributed Learning, UDOIT has made our team more effective and efficient at discovering and remediating accessibility issues for “immediate need” accommodations. Prior to UDOIT, an average of one hour of work was required to evaluate a course and generate an accessibility report. Because these accessibility reports were highly challenging for faculty to understand, scanning for and summarizing critical issues was also required, which added to the report turnaround time. Now, the same task only requires 10 minutes per course.

We chose to release UDOIT under an open source license so that other institutions and their students could benefit from it with as few barriers as possible. Any institution can download UDOIT, install it on their own server, and integrate it with their instance of Canvas using the Learning Tools Interoperability (LTI) standard. To date, there are over 30 institutions using the tool, and five institutions have contributed code back to the project.