



State of the eNation Special

May 2006 – World Cup Sites



This State of the eNation report is in addition to our usual quarterly reports on an industry sector. With the World Cup tournament about to start AbilityNet has reviewed the accessibility and usability of two crucial sites:

1. **FIFAWorldCup.com - The Official Site of FIFA World Cup (English version) -** <http://fifaworldcup.yahoo.com/06/en/>
2. **TheFA.com World Cup 2006 –** <http://www.TheFA.com/WorldCup2006>

These sites will include a wealth of information and functionality to inform and delight football fans everywhere. What level of access can the many millions of fans who have a disability, dyslexia, or who simply can't use a mouse very well expect when trying to use them?

The results of the survey are overleaf.

Web Accessibility – why it's important

Today many services are only available, or offered at a discounted rate, on the Internet. Other sites provide vital information. If a website doesn't meet a base level of accessibility then it will be impossible for a large number of disabled visitors to use it. Many others with some sort of limiting condition will also have great difficulty.

It is illegal to bar disabled visitors from on-line services and information offered to the general public. No organisation would purposefully do this but many are either not aware of the problem, or don't know what to do to address it. In the UK there are estimated to be 1.6 million registered blind people, 1.5 million with cognitive difficulties, a further 3.4 million people who are otherwise IT disabled and 6 million that have dyslexia. The total spending power of this group is now estimated at £120 billion a year.

World Cup Websites – in summary

A 5 star scale was used:

- * = Very inaccessible
- *** = Satisfies a base level of accessibility
- ***** = Very accessible.

FIFAworldcup.com *

TheFA.com/WorldCup2006 **

For information on how we decide a site's ranking please see Appendix B.

Website Audit – The findings

All sites were audited in May 2006 for accessibility and usability using a wide range of in-depth manual checks. The testing process was assisted by Watchfire's accessibility testing tool 'Bobby WorldWide', the AIS toolbar and colour checking tools.

FIFAworldcup.com - <http://fifaworldcup.yahoo.com/06/en/>

Ranking: *

We looked at the English section of FIFA's World Cup website and found that it has some serious accessibility issues that will make it impossible for many fans to use it:

Whilst all pages on this site are quite busy, page elements are sufficiently separated by white space – facilitating those with a vision impairment and dyslexia. Text used is sans serif (again assisting these groups) but the text is generally too small under normal viewing conditions - with numerous instances of text that is very small (such as the language selector and stadia map).

Whilst the majority of text on this site can be resized by the user (so vital for many visitors who have a vision impairment or who are viewing the site on a small screen) some text (such as the language selector) does not. Moreover, when text is enlarged, links such as the "Classic football" link on the home page overlap - both issues will cause difficulties for visitors with a vision or cognitive impairment.

Often a text label appears when you put the mouse over an image. Blind visitors rely on the presence of text labels as a spoken description of the image. Without them the image is meaningless. Whilst most of the images on FIFA's site are well labelled, still many are poorly labelled or unlabelled.

Moreover, there are numerous instances of images that include movement. This movement will be very distracting for visitors with a vision or cognitive impairment and should be limited to one or two cycles of the animation before being stilled. Some of these moving images are 'Flash Movies'. Despite recent improvements in the accessibility of such page items, the majority of visitors who cannot use a mouse, are vision impaired, or use speech output or voice recognition software will not be able to access this content.

FIFA's site includes many videos of classic football moments. Whilst each clip includes a brief text description that could be read by blind visitors who would not otherwise be able to understand the action, this description is enclosed within the same Flash movie that displays the clip - and hence many blind visitors who cannot access Flash will not be able to read this description.

There are some instances of text and background colour combinations which do not offer sufficient contrast to easily be read by visitors with a vision or colour impairment, such as the count-down to the start of the tournament on the home page which is black text on a dark grey background.

Users of screen reading software pull all links on a page into a list - to more quickly access the link they want. Some links on the site do not make sense when read out of context in this way, such as 'More', that each take the user to a different page.

Many visitors are not able to use a mouse. Whilst this website is able to be used from the keyboard alone, one issue for keyboard users is that the drop-down box used to choose which online shop you require is automatically activated when the down arrow is pressed (taking the user to the first shop regardless of whether it was the desired choice).

Many websites use mini programs called JavaScript embedded in their pages which can often cause difficulties for those using older browsers, those with vision impairments using some special browsers, and those whose organisations disable JavaScript for security reasons. When JavaScript is not supported several items disappear from the site and others cease to function (such as the ability to change the items you have in your shopping cart).

TheFA.com World Cup 2006 - <http://www.TheFA.com/WorldCup2006>

Ranking: **

We looked at the FA site as a whole and in particular that section covering the World Cup. Whilst being slightly better than FIFA's World Cup website the FA's site will still be inaccessible for a wide range of fans for the following reasons:

The pages on this site are relatively busy, however page elements are sufficiently separated by white space – facilitating those with a vision impairment and dyslexia. The vast majority of text used is sans serif (again assisting these groups) but the text is generally too small under normal viewing conditions - with instances of text that is very small (such as the league table on the right hand side of the home page)

Whilst the majority of Text on this site can be resized by the user (so vital for many visitors who have a vision impairment or who are viewing the site on a small screen) the scrolling text at the top of the home page does not. Moreover when text is enlarged the “Latest Headlines from theFA.com” title on the home page overlaps this scrolling text – both issues will cause difficulties for visitors with a vision or cognitive impairment.

The ability to have news items spoken out using a synthetic voice (‘ReadSpeaker’ technology) has helpfully been provided. However this facility is very poorly signposted and could easily be missed.

Whilst most images seemed to have appropriate text labels (so vital for those with a vision impairment or dyslexia) there are numerous instances of images that include movement. This movement will be very distracting for visitors with a vision or cognitive impairment and should be limited to one or two cycles of the animation before being stilled.

Some of these moving images are ‘Flash Movies’. Despite recent improvements in the accessibility of such page items, the majority of visitors who cannot use a mouse, are vision impaired, or use speech output or voice recognition software will not be able to access this content.

Many visitors with a vision impairment or dyslexia rely on certain colour combinations that make reading easier. Some colours on this website have been ‘hard-coded’ so that a visitor’s colour preferences are not automatically reflected – causing text to disappear when, for example, white text on a black background is chosen.

Many visitors are not able to use a mouse. Whilst the majority of the site can be used from the keyboard alone, it is difficult to see which link is highlighted as you move through the main menu, and in the online shop site the main menu is completely unusable without a mouse.

A number of links open ‘pop-up’ windows without informing the user that this will happen. This could be confusing and disorientating for blind visitors, or those with a cognitive impairment or learning disability.

When those mini programs called JavaScript are not supported you are still able to undertake most of the functions on the site. However, you are unable to enter the online store when JavaScript is not supported – effectively excluding those using older browsers, those with vision impairments using some special browsers, and those whose organisations disable JavaScript for security reasons.

Appendix A - Further Sources of Advice and Support

- www.abilitynet.org.uk

AbilityNet is able to offer information, advice and a range of services to help make a website accessible and usable for everyone – including accessibility audits, disabled end user testing, training, support, accessible web design and a Key Info Pack to get you started.

For further details please call Robin on 01926 312847 or email accessibility@abilitynet.org.uk

Other sources of help and information include:

- www.w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) is the body at the forefront of the development of standards in good design on the World Wide Web (including accessibility). The W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) form the basis of all other standards.

- www.w3.org/WAI/wcag-curric

This link will take you to a subsite of the W3C website which tries to explain in plainer terms, with examples of good and bad code, the W3C guidelines checkpoint by checkpoint.

- www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/e-government/resources/handbook/introduction.asp

The UK E-government Unit has guidelines on web accessibility (based upon the W3C guidelines). These can be viewed on-line or downloaded as an illustrated Word document.

- www.drc.org.uk

Organisations are legally obliged to provide websites that are accessible to disabled people. This site includes information on the DDA, its accompanying code of practice and their recently published report outlining the findings of research into the accessibility and usability of 1000 websites.

Appendix B – How We Decide the Ranking

The world standards in web accessibility (W3C WCAG) have prioritised their checkpoints into 3 priority levels. Compliance of your sites with these levels are phrased as - level 1 (highest) = “must”, level 2 = “should” and level 3 = “ought”.

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) has meant that it has been law in the UK to have an accessible website since 1999. Arguably a site can only meet its legal requirement under the DDA if it is, at the very least, compliant with all level 1 checkpoints.

As it is only level 2 compliance which does not hinder some groups’ access (as defined by the W3C) it is our opinion that the true DDA requirement lies somewhere between levels 1 and 2 compliance.

This said, it has been our experience that many sites that meet level 1 and even level 2 priority checkpoints can nevertheless still present significant difficulties for disabled visitors in practice.

This can be due to a number of reasons. For example, over-reliance on purely visual clues to guide the user (leaving blind users without vital clues about where the designer intends the user’s ‘eye’ to be drawn), small or closely clustered links or buttons (causing those with fine motor control difficulties to miss what they intended to click on - or click on the wrong thing), lack of proper separation of page objects (meaning that users with vision or cognitive difficulties can miss important items which are not sufficiently separated from neighbouring content), the sheer bulk and complexity of links and sections on a page (making those who’s access technology or methodology is slow become frustrated or give up) or a host of other reasons.

Similarly a site that falls short of priority 1 or 2 compliance in a number of respects can nevertheless be very accessible and usable by the vast majority of disabled visitors in practice.

This can be due to the fact that particular checkpoints are only contravened very rarely (still denying the site level 1 compliance but having very little impact on a disabled users overall experience of the site), or because checkpoints that are contravened more widely only impact upon a very small number of users.

Thus we have tried to reflect the overall user experience of a site when deciding its ranking.

***** Ranking**

We have chosen our *** (“satisfies a base level of accessibility”) ranking as compliance (or near compliance where the shortfall has little evident impact on users) with priority level 1 checkpoints.

Further than that we look for significant (in our opinion based upon broad experience of working with disabled users) priority level 2 issues - such as the scalability of text, the avoidance of frames and any positive steps a site has taken to benefit visitors with an impairment (such as accessibility info or offering a choice of colour/text size schemes).

Note - It is our opinion that the addition of a Text only parallel site to the exclusion of addressing the accessibility/usability issues of the main site is neither necessary or in the spirit of inclusion or the W3C WCAG standards.

*** and ** Rankings**

We award * and ** to a site dependant upon how much it falls short of our definition of *** ranking.

****** and ***** Rankings**

We award **** and ***** to a site dependant upon how much it exceeds our definition of *** ranking.

For any further clarification please contact accessibility@abilitynet.org.uk