State of the eNation Reports
December 2005 – Favourite Websites of Disabled People

State of the eNation Reports – a summary

The AbilityNet State of the eNation Reports have till now been a quarterly review of a number of websites in a particular sector. This report departs from that theme and concerns the accessibility and usability of the top 10 favourite websites of disabled people.

A large number of disabled people were asked for their favourite websites and the 10 reviewed in this report were the most popular. What level of access can the many millions of visitors who have a disability, dyslexia, or who simply can't use a mouse very well expect when visiting these sites?

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.

A Commitment to Accessibility

All the parties reviewed were contacted several weeks before publication of this report and asked to make a public commitment to accessibility. To date the following have done this (please see Appendix C for the text of these statements):

- BBC
- Guardian
- Lastminute.com
- Nationwide
- premierleague.com
- Times Online

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Favourite Websites – in summary

A 5 star scale was used: *   = Very inaccessible
                            ***   = Satisfies a base level of accessibility
                            *****   = Very accessible.

10 sites were reviewed: 3 sites had a *** ranking
                           6 sites had a ** ranking
                           1 site had a * ranking

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

Website Audit – The findings

All sites were audited in October 2005 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.

Please note – Some websites also offer a 'text only' alternative. We will only comment upon the 'text only' site in those cases where it offers significantly improved accessibility to the main site. (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.)

Amazon – www.amazon.co.uk

Ranking: **

Whilst making it into the top ten sites of disable people, Amazon still only scores two stars (the same ranking awarded in our Christmas retail sites eNation of December 2004) for the following reasons:

The home page has a lot of content but page elements are sufficiently separated with white space and text is clear and of a decent size. Other pages are less busy and also well spaced out, but with the occasional use of italicised or serif text which may be difficult for some visitors with a vision impairment or dyslexia to read.

Whilst the Text on every page 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, numerous images of text have, however, been used (including main navigation 'tabs') meaning that the user cannot resize this text, or change its colour.

Often a text label appears when you put the mouse over an image. Blind and dyslexic visitors rely on the presence of text labels as a spoken description of the image. Without them the image is meaningless. Critically on this site almost every image, including most importantly images that are also links (amongst them the main navigation 'tabs') are unlabelled. Imagine trying to make a journey where signposts at every roundabout are left blank!

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 many occurrences of 'Click here' that each take the user to a different page.

The colours on this website have been 'hard-coded' so that a visitor's colour preferences are not automatically reflected in most areas of the site. Many visitors with a vision impairment or dyslexia rely on certain colour combinations that make reading easier.

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. Amazon, however, appears to be fully functional when JavaScript is not supported (including the online shop).

There is a text only version of the site which is clear and easy to use. Whilst it affords access to those unlabelled tabs mentioned above on the whole, there are some graphics included in the text only site which have not been assigned alternative text. The 'text only' link is located at the foot of the web page which will be easily missed by someone with a vision impairment.

BBC – www.bbc.co.uk

Ranking: ***

bbc.co.uk very comfortably qualifies for our *** ranking. Whilst still containing certain issues outlined below, the sheer ease of access in practice, and wealth of useful information it offers, has ensured its place in the top ten favourite websites of disabled people. It is worth commending the BBC on the amount of work that has gone into making this 3 million plus page site as accessible as it is – a monumental task when compared with the effort required to make other (much more modest) sites accessible and usable.

Bbc.co.uk is a vast site comprising many sections that differ one from another in some respects. Many sections (e.g. home page and Education) are quite cluttered without sufficient white space to separate page elements, making reading difficult for some visitors with a vision impairment or dyslexia. The text used across the site is sans serif

(assisting these groups) but in several sections (e.g. Education or Health) it is too small under normal viewing conditions.

The text in every section of the 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) with the notable exception of the large News section – which has been 'hard-coded' making resizing of text difficult.

A keyboard user will have difficulty navigating some of the 'Flash movies' and the occasional drop-down box found on the site which is automatically activated when the down arrow is pressed (taking the user to the page associated with the first item regardless of whether this is the desired page or not). However, with the exception of Flash games in the CBeebies section all Flash movies have alternative links that are keyboard navigable.

Some links on the site do not make sense when read out of context in this way, such as the repeated 'More' on the Family History page.

A number of links (such as the Royal Mail postcode finder on the 'Where I live' page) open 'pop-up' windows without informing the user that this will happen. This could be confusing for blind visitors, or those with a cognitive impairment or learning disability.

With a very occasional exception the vast majority of images on the site are well labelled – so vital for blind visitors, someone using a text only browser, or someone with dyslexia relying on speech output.

When those mini programs called JavaScript are not supported every aspect of the site appears to continue to function properly – with alternative content being displayed where JavaScript functionality was normally employed.

Bbc.co.uk offers a 'text only' alternative which, whilst not entirely free from accessibility issues, can offer a simpler and higher contrast page presentation for some visitors with a vision or cognitive impairment.

A well signposted 'Accessibility help' link found on almost every page takes the visitor to a significant accessibility resource for Windows, Mac and Linux users and the BBC should be commended for this recent addition to the site.

eBay – www.ebay.co.uk

Ranking: **

eBay is widely used by people with a disability despite including a number of issues that make aspects of its functionality difficult:

The pages on this site are relatively uncluttered, with page elements 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 with instances of text that is too small under normal viewing conditions.

Whilst the majority of Text on every page 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, there are instances of text that does not, and other instances where enlarged text overlaps (for example on the search results page). Images of text have also been used instead of actual text. This means that the user cannot resize it or change its colour.

Furthermore, many of these images of text, and the vast majority of images on the site including those that are also links, are unlabelled or poorly labelled making it very difficult for a blind person, someone with dyslexia relying on speech output, or someone using voice recognition software to access the link or know what the image is. For example, as sellers are not impelled to describe an item fully in words they often rely on the buyer looking at a picture of the product – as these images are unlabelled it is often impossible for a blind buyer to fully appreciate what it is they are purchasing.

Many links on the site do not make sense when read out of context by screen reader users, such as 'More'.

The colours on this website have been 'hard-coded' so that a visitor's colour preferences are not automatically reflected in most areas of the site. Many visitors with a vision impairment or dyslexia rely on certain colour combinations that make reading easier.

The site also uses "in-line frames" (a way of creating separate sections of the page usually used to feature adverts) which will cause problems for text-only browsers and speaking browsers used by blind visitors.

A number of links open 'pop-up' windows (such as 'Related Links' in 'My eBay') without informing the user that this will happen. This could be confusing 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 such as being able to bid on items and complete the purchase process. However, some content disappears when JavaScript is not supported (such as the 'eBay Explained' section on the home page) and you are also not able to set up a seller's account – effectively excluding those using older browsers, those with vision impairments using some special browsers, and those whose organisations disable JavaScript for security reasons from becoming sellers on eBay.

Google – www.google.co.uk

Ranking: ****

It is no doubt that relative simplicity, ease of use and accessibility have contributed to Google's popularity both within the disabled community and at large. However, it still has some issues that will cause difficulties for some visitors:

The pages on Google are clear and uncluttered, with page elements separated by lots of white space – facilitating those with a vision impairment and dyslexia. The text used is sans serif (again assisting these groups) and of a decent size under normal viewing conditions (with the exception of a few instances of small text – the Advanced Search link, for example).

Whilst the Text on every page 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, there are a very few instances of text that does not (such as that on the 'Google Search' and 'I'm feeling lucky' buttons).

A number of links are quite close together and may be problematic for visitors who find controlling a mouse difficult – these include the 'Advanced Search', 'Preferences' & 'Language Tools' links, as well as the set of numbered links to other search results pages.

The vast majority of images on the site are well labelled – so vital for blind visitors, someone using voice recognition software or a text only browser, or someone with dyslexia relying on speech output. Surprisingly, however, images listed from a Google image search were unlabelled – even though they were presumably found using their text labels.

There is a useful spell-checking facility that offers alternative search terms and which will greatly assist visitors who have a learning or literacy difficulty or dyslexia.

On the whole the site is able to be easily navigated by keyboard users – this is facilitated by the cursor being placed automatically in the search box. An exception is a drop-down box found in Froogle which is automatically activated when the down arrow is pressed (taking the user to the page associated with the first item regardless of whether this is the desired page or not). A 'skip to search results' link at the top of the page would also greatly assist keyboard users.

The site still works fully when those mini programs called JavaScript are not supported - an essential feature for those using older browsers, those with vision impairments using some special browsers, and those whose organisations disable JavaScript for security reasons.

Guardian – www.guardian.co.uk

Ranking: **

This website was first reviewed in early 2004 and its ranking has not changed. It still does not meet a base level of accessibility and will cause difficulties for many visitors:

The pages on this website are uncluttered, with page elements sufficiently separated by white space – facilitating those with a vision impairment and dyslexia. The text used is sans serif (again assisting these groups) and of a decent size under normal viewing conditions. A notable exception is the links in the left hand menu which are small and also close together – causing difficulties for visitors who cannot easily control their mouse.

Whilst most of the text can be easily resized by the user (except, significantly, menu text), some pictures of text have been used instead of actual text – this means that the user cannot resize it or change its colour.

Whilst the site can be easily navigated by the keyboard, a number of drop down boxes are automatically activated by a keyboard user when the down arrow is pressed (taking the user to the page associated with the first item regardless of whether this is the desired page or not).

All images on guardian.co.uk are well labelled – so vital for blind visitors, someone using voice recognition software or a text only browser, or someone with dyslexia relying on speech output. There are, however, several moving advert images which will be distracting for visitors with cognitive difficulties.

The colours on this website have been 'hard-coded' so that a visitor's colour preferences are not automatically reflected in most areas of the site. Many visitors with a vision impairment or dyslexia rely on certain colour combinations that make reading easier.

The site includes numerous "in-line frames" (a way of sectioning the page) that include picture adverts that do not have tooltips. Both in-line frames and unlabelled images cause problems for text-only browsers and speaking browsers used by blind visitors.

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

When those mini programs called JavaScript are not supported every aspect of the site appears to continue to function properly – with alternative content being displayed where JavaScript functionality was normally employed.

Lastminute.com – www.lastminute.com

Ranking: **

Lastminute.com was first reviewed in December 2004 and they have improved on their single star rating of that time. They still do not, however, satisfy a minimum level of accessibility and many visitors will continue to have difficulties using the site:

Although other pages are slightly less cluttered, the home page of lastminute.com is quite busy with little white space separating page elements – making reading difficult for those with a vision impairment and dyslexia. The text used across the site is sans serif (assisting these groups) but there are instances of text (such as that at the foot of every page) that is much too small under normal viewing conditions.

Most of the text on the site can be easily resized (so vital for many visitors with a vision impairment or who are viewing the site on a small screen). However a number of boxes cannot cope with the larger text sizes (such as the 'Departure date' drop down box on the home page). Additionally there are a number of instances where images of text have been used instead of actual text which means that the visitor cannot resize it or change its colour.

A number of images on the site are unlabelled – causing great difficulty for blind visitors, someone using a text only browser, or someone with dyslexia relying on speech output. There are also many moving images and scrolling text that will cause difficulties for many with a vision or cognitive impairment.

The colours on this website have been partially 'hard-coded' so that a visitor's colour preferences are not entirely reflected – for example a user who requires white text on a black background would find that only their text colour preference was reflected (giving white text on a white background).

On the whole the site can be easily navigated by the keyboard, however a number of drop down boxes are automatically activated by a keyboard user when the down arrow is pressed (taking the user to the page associated with the first item regardless of whether this is the desired page or not).

Numerous 'pop-up' windows containing adverts may be confusing or disorientating for blind visitors, or those with a cognitive impairment or learning disability.

The site also uses "in-line frames" (a way of creating separate sections of the page usually used to feature adverts) which will cause problems for text-only browsers and speaking browsers used by blind visitors.

At a lower than normal screen resolution (often preferred by those who need slightly larger text and images) the user cannot see the entire width of the page and must scroll horizontally.

When those mini programs called JavaScript are not supported you are still able to navigate around lastminute.com and successfully complete the shopping process. The only effect is to remove all adverts on all pages and in pop up windows – with a potential improvement to accessibility.

Nationwide – www.nationwide.co.uk

Ranking: ***

Nationwide's site is awarded three stars because it is overall a very accessible and usable site. It does, however, still contain a few issues that will hinder some visitors:

This is a good, clean, site with page elements sufficiently separated by white space – facilitating those with a vision impairment and dyslexia. The text used is sans serif (again assisting these groups) and of a decent size under normal viewing conditions.

Whilst the Text on every page 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 menu 'tabs' at the top of the page distort and their text overlaps at larger text sizes. Text headings are properly coded so that blind users can get a summary of the page and quickly jump to the desired section.

A number of links on the site do not make sense when read out of context by screen reader users, such as 'More info' on the home page – each linking to a different page.

With the very occasional exception all images on this site have appropriate text labels, assisting blind visitors and those with dyslexia who rely on speech output.

A small number of links (such as that for the 'Accessibility order form') open 'pop-up' windows without informing the user that this will happen. This could be confusing for blind visitors, or those with a cognitive impairment or learning disability.

The colours on this website have been partially 'hard-coded' so that a visitor's colour preferences are not entirely reflected – for example a user who requires white text on a black background would find that only their text colour preference was reflected (giving white text on a white background).

When those mini programs called JavaScript are not supported the site continues to function properly – so vital for many visitors using older browsers, those with vision impairments using some special browsers, and those whose organisations disable JavaScript for security reasons.

Premier League – www.premierleague.com

Ranking: **

Whilst avoiding many of the more serious accessibility issues of the premier league football clubs reviewed in the eNation report of autumn 2004, the website of the Premier League itself contains a number of significant barriers to accessibility that will impede effective access for a number of groups:

The pages on this site are quite busy with little white space separating page elements–causing difficulties for some with a vision impairment or dyslexia. This is alleviated somewhat by the use of colour to segment the page.

The text used is sans serif but extremely small under normal viewing conditions (again hindering visitors with a vision impairment or who are viewing the site on a small screen). Although the Text on every page can be easily resized by the user its tiny initial size means that the largest a user can make it is equivalent to what can be considered a good default size – and certainly will not be large enough for many visitors.

Whilst some of the images on this site have appropriate text labels, assisting blind visitors and those with dyslexia who rely on speech output, numerous others have been left unlabelled, whilst other decorative images have been given unnecessary labels - adding much 'auditory clutter' for blind users.

Whilst most of the site can be easily navigated by the keyboard, a number of drop down boxes are automatically activated by a keyboard user when the down arrow is pressed (taking the user to the page associated with the first item regardless of whether this is the desired page or not) – for example the club list on the home page.

A number of links on the site do not make sense when read out of context by screen reader users such as the repeated link 'More' – each linking to a different page.

The colours on this website have been partially 'hard-coded' so that a visitor's colour preferences are not entirely reflected – for example a user who requires white text on a black background would find that only their background colour preference was reflected (giving in some cases dark blue text on a black background).

Whilst the majority of the site still works fully when those mini programs called JavaScript are not supported the drop down boxes mentioned above cease to function – hindering those using older browsers, those with vision impairments using some special browsers, and those whose organisations disable JavaScript for security reasons.

Times Online – www.timesonline.co.uk

Ranking: *

The Times Online site was first reviewed early in 2004 and its ranking has not increased from its single star ranking of that time. It still includes a number of significant issues which will make access difficult for many visitors:

Pages are relatively busy but uncluttered with good use of white space – facilitating those with a vision impairment and dyslexia. Whilst most of the text is a decent size under normal viewing conditions (again assisting these groups) there are instances of text that is too small - such as the 'Other top stories' section on the home page.

All text on timesonline.co.uk has been "hard-coded" so that a user cannot easily make it larger – so vital for many visitors who have a vision impairment or who are viewing the site on a small screen.

Blind visitors rely on the presence of text labels as a spoken description of an image. Many of the images on this site have not been labelled, with many others very poorly labelled. For example, all images on the photosales page are unlabelled, making it impossible for a blind or visually impaired user to buy a print without assistance. There are also a number of moving images and scrolling text that will cause difficulties for many with a vision or cognitive impairment.

Occasional links open 'pop-up' windows without informing the user that this will happen. This could be confusing for blind visitors, or those with a cognitive impairment or learning disability.

The colours on this website have been 'hard-coded' so that a visitor's colour preferences are not automatically reflected in most areas of the site. Many visitors with a vision impairment or dyslexia rely on certain colour combinations that make reading easier.

At a lower than normal screen resolution (often preferred by those who need slightly larger text and images) the user cannot see the entire width of the page and must scroll horizontally.

The site also uses an "in-line frame" (a way of creating separate sections of the page usually used to feature adverts) which will cause problems for text-only browsers and speaking browsers used by blind visitors.

When those mini programs called JavaScript are not supported some links cease to function such as the 'Pictures' or' Visit the cartoon gallery' links on the home page – thus excluding visitors using older browsers, those with vision impairments using some special browsers, and those whose organisations disable JavaScript for security reasons.

Yahoo – www.yahoo.co.uk

Ranking: **

This website includes a number of serious issues that will present difficulties for many visitors with an impairment:

Yahoo's pages are busy with a lot of content, but nevertheless clean and uncluttered with page elements sufficiently separated by white space – facilitating those with a vision impairment and dyslexia. The text used is sans serif (again assisting these groups) and of a decent size under normal viewing conditions with the occasional exception such as the 'Buzz Log' section on the home page.

The vast majority of Text on the 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.

Although many images on this site are well labelled, many others are either unlabelled or poorly labelled – causing difficulties for blind visitors, someone using a text only browser, or someone with dyslexia relying on speech output. Moreover there are several moving images which will be distracting for visitors with cognitive difficulties.

A number of links are quite close together and may be problematic for visitors who find controlling a mouse difficult – for example the 'Advanced', 'My Web' and 'Shortcuts' links on the home page.

The colours on this website have been partially 'hard-coded' so that a visitor's colour preferences are not entirely reflected – for example a user who requires white text on a black background would find that only their background colour preference was reflected (giving black text on a black background).

Whilst yahoo.co.uk can be navigated by the keyboard, a number of drop down boxes are automatically activated by a keyboard user when the down arrow is pressed (taking the user to the page associated with the first item regardless of whether this is the desired page or not).

The site also uses "in-line frames" (a way of creating separate sections of the page usually used to feature adverts) which will cause problems for text-only browsers and speaking browsers used by blind visitors.

When those mini programs called JavaScript are not supported much of the site's functionality ceases to work fully – including many links across the site and most notably disabling the special offers in the 'Great Gift Ideas' section of the online shop. This will cause difficulties for 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

Appendix C – Statements of Commitment to Accessibility

BBC

"The BBC is delighted to hear that it is in the top ten websites used by disabled people. We welcome AbilityNet's eNation review of bbc.co.uk – it is a useful indication of how our site is faring in its public service commitment to serve all of our users. We have been on an accessibility journey over the last few years which is still in progress. We have worked with Systems Concepts in reviewing the accessibility of our site, and with AbilityNet in training our staff to understand the needs of disabled users and how we can make our site support those needs more closely. Our practices are evolving to consider the needs of disabled people throughout the development of new areas of our site, and we normally test these new areas with disabled users to ensure that they are usable to them. It is good to see that the eNation report has indicated both some of the places where this work has already proved successful, and also where there is still work to be done. Some more of our accessibility initiatives have recently been delivered: for example, the bbc.co.uk's accessibility help site – My Web, My Way (bbc.co.uk/accessibility) – has been published to the praise and endorsement of the Disability Rights Commission, RNIB and RNID, and is linked to from almost all of bbc.co.uk's over 3 million pages. We have also conducted a trial of subtitling some of our video content, which has been very well received in the deaf and accessibility communities (see http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/click_online/4421335.stm). News of our continuing work in improving bbc.co.uk's accessibility in the future will be published on bbc.co.uk/accessibility."

- Jonathan Hassell, Accessibility Editor, BBC Digital Curriculum

Guardian

"Guardian Unlimited is committed to providing equal access for everyone to its network of websites. Our pages are currently designed to work in the widest variety of browsers possible. However, like many popular websites, we do fall short of recent W3C markup and accessibility standards. We are setting in train plans that will bring the sites up to date, and increase their accessibility."

- Lloyd Shepherd, Deputy Director, Digital Publishing, Guardian Newspapers Ltd.

lastminute.com

"We're committed to achieving the highest standards of usability and accessibility across the site. We are continually pushing ahead with our accessibility initiative and are aiming to meet the "AA" compliancy level as set by the WAI (Web Accessibility Initiative) for the whole site. This is a steady, ongoing process, given the complex nature of lastminute.com, it's diversity of platforms and technologies, together with a

wide variety of products and services we offer. Current initiatives include evaluation of employing a third party consultancy to advise us on accessibility and help us develop an ongoing plan to allow us to attain and stay at AA compliancy, moving much of the lastminute.com site over to a new platform that has been specifically designed with accessibility in mind and revamping our sign-off processes to ensure all areas of the site receive accessibility approval at all stages of development. We will be updating this with further information over the coming months."

- Gavin Hanly, Customer Experience and User Interface Manager, lastminute.com

Nationwide

"At Nationwide we strive to build web pages that conform to well documented standards (W3C) and are totally accessible. Our various web sites are navigable using just the keyboard, are tested prior to going live using screen readers and any problems that are obvious to us are addressed accordingly. We also make full use of Watchfire's Web XM testing tools to inform us of problems such as missing alt attributes. In addition we have taken great care to ensure that pop-up windows are kept to a minimum (and where they are used, they do not rely fully on JavaScript for them to work), we have a consistent 'Skip navigation' link on all our product information pages, and font sizes are not expressed in pixels (thus making them scalable in all modern browsers). However, we acknowledge that we are not perfect, and there are known issues on our site that we still need to put right, but they are certainly not show-stoppers. Indeed, we have received very favourable feedback in the past about our inclusive approach with the internet bank (Nationwide was the first UK financial services organisation to provide Internet Banking and we have supported Macintosh since day one – our service is tested and works on a wide variety of platforms and browsers). We look forward to seeing AbilityNet's report and will take on any recommendations that may arise from the report"

- Paul Towers, Head of Electronic Channels, nationwide

Premierleague.com

"A full and independent accessibility audit of premierleague.com was undertaken earlier this year, resulting in a number of recommendations to bring the site in line with AA compliance. The FA Premier League is committed to accessibility for all and will be implementing the recommendations in the coming months to ensure premierleague.com meets the needs of all users."

- Cathy Long, Head of Customer Strategy, premierleague.com

Times Online

"Times Online is very much aware of the need to make news and content websites more accessible to all users and we have a number of improvements planned to the site structure and presentation which will help this area. We also have some

innovations likely in audio content which may help address the issue in ways those with differing problems in making the web accessible may find really useful."

- Peter Bale, Editorial Director, Times Online