Screen Reader Summary

Using the screen reader was an interesting experience from installation to closing the application. It dictated far more than I thought it would, and to Seeing individuals this could be seen as annoying to use in everyday life. Even typing this document with screen-reader on, it couldn’t keep up with my typing speed for dictation and it ultimately crashed my desktop and Word. However, it is because of this deliberate dictation that non-Seeing individuals have access to the information on the internet and websites.

Accessibility is an important tool that humans have utilized since the dawn of time, even prehistoric societies took care of their disabled and ancient elders. Having that security for disabled or otherwise hindered individuals is a testament to human kindness, compassion, and determination. For these reasons, it is important for website to follow accessibility guidelines.

My mother, for instance, may not know exactly what it is that I do on my computer, but she loves showing off my accomplishments at dinner parties. “He made this! I don’t know what it is, or how he did it. He’s basically a wizard, and coding is magick,” is a hyperbolic, but accurate sentiment. For her, accessibility is more important for some, she’s only 46, but has Multiple Sclerosis, and her eyesight is starting to go. She never needed glasses until last year, and it breaks my heart to think she may never again see my paintings, my websites, or my programs. For this reason, I will happily go out of my way to provide accessibility options for the things I create, and not just for her. For anyone impaired.

Using NVDA on the Unit F website was interesting to say the least and helped me understand why things in HTML are given certain names. For instance, instead of using different <p> classes for headings, making the h1-h6 distinctions allows the screen reader to differentiate headlines and titles for reading a website. Not only that, it gave you feedback on items you hovered over. I hover over “meals” and it would say that, letting me know my cursor was spatially over a word or link. It tells you what is or isn’t a link, but there is a slight problem. Although it reads aloud what is and isn’t a link, when your mouse hovers over a link it doesn’t make that distinction. So it might be a good idea to not have repeated words in the Nav bard that are in the main content areas. For instance, “sources” is both in the nav bar and in the main content as a heading. It makes no distinction between these two and someone blind may end up furiously clicking the wrong “sources” and often having the screen reader repeat information.