

Team and Topic

1. Team Name & Team Members

Access-Ability Innovators

- El Shammam, Lama Rita
- Li, Jiaying
- Jones, Jhane M
- Truong, Tam K
- Srinivasan, Siddharth

2. Topic

How does the Office of Disability design accessible documents for students who are blind (or we can keep it general to any disability)?

3. Description

Empowering Accessibility in Education: A Design Thinking Approach for Creating Accessible Learning Materials

The design thinking method is a human-centered strategy that seeks to comprehend and address the demands and difficulties of users. The use of design thinking ideas to assist a university's office for people with disabilities in creating materials that are accessible to students with disabilities is described in this project. This procedure seeks to empower students with disabilities and offer equitable educational opportunities by building an inclusive learning environment. Empathizing with the users—in this case, students with disabilities—is the first step in the design thinking process. To better understand their unique difficulties and needs, the Office of Disabilities conducts in-depth research and interviews. These could include problems with vision, hearing, cognition, or the ability to move. It is essential to comprehend the various demands of students with disabilities to produce documents that are accessible and take into account their particular learning preferences and styles.

The problem statement for the Office of Disabilities is "How might we create accessible learning materials that accommodate the needs of students with disabilities and enhance their learning experience?" based on the knowledge obtained. The ideation phase entails arriving at myriad answers to the bounded problem. The group comes up with creative solutions while taking accessibility guidelines, inclusive design principles, assistive devices, and alternate formats into account. Concepts are honed and turned into prototypes, which might be anything from tactile materials to screen-reader-friendly papers to interactive digital content. Considering these special needs, the Office of Disabilities develops the problem statement.

Students with disabilities sample prototypes to get input and repeat the designs. The Office of Disabilities runs focus groups, polls, and usability tests to ensure the suggested solutions are tailored to the target audience's requirements and preferences. The prototypes are improved through an iterative feedback loop that identifies potential implementation-related difficulties or barriers. There are various difficulties in creating learning resources that are accessible for students with impairments. The wide range of disabilities and personal needs, which call for the consideration of multiple accessibility aspects, is one difficulty. For adequate

accessibility, it is also essential to guarantee compatibility with various assistive technologies and platforms. These difficulties are acknowledged by the design thinking methodology, which aims to resolve them through user input, teamwork, and continuous development.

Creating a tool to complement the design thinking method for creating accessible learning materials can significantly improve productivity, teamwork, and documentation. With the application, the Office of Disabilities may be able to survey users, obtain their opinions, and share prototypes with academics, staff, and other interested parties. To ensure a systematic and consistent approach to accessibility in education, it can also provide tools, guidelines, and best practices for producing accessible publications. Designing accessible learning materials involves making choices that prioritize inclusivity, comprehend the potentials and constraints of various disabilities, and balance usability and adherence to accessibility requirements. Aspects, including user feedback, technological viability, institutional backing, and resource availability, must be considered by designers and stakeholders. To develop practical and significant solutions, a collaborative decision-making process that incorporates input from students with disabilities, educators, accessibility specialists, and design thinking practitioners is crucial.

The university may provide an inclusive and encouraging learning environment for students with disabilities by using a design thinking process and creating an application to assist the Office of Disabilities build accessible learning resources. The strategy combines empathy, cooperation, and iterative design to guarantee that people with disabilities have comparable access to scholastic resources and have the opportunity to realize their full potential.