

# Web Accessibility Assessment of Ellensburg Grand Meridian Cinema

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## **Introduction**

This report is an assessment of the presence of accessibility principles from the book, "A Web for Everyone" on the website for the Ellensburg Grand Meridian. The book was written by Sarah Horton and Whitney Quesenberry as an informational piece on how to design an accessible website. The principles are used to organize the main aspects that a website should have. The guidelines are clear purpose and well-defined goals, solid structure, easy interaction, clean presentation, plain language, and accessible media. As a whole, these sites will make a site more accessible, but there are many details within these guidelines and within coding guidelines in general that are all necessary to make a website accessible. Before going through the successes and failures of this site, it is important to note that accessibility is not simply a recommendation. Accessibility is necessary for people with disabilities (PWDs) to be able to use a website easily, efficiently, or even at all. With the diverse technologies now available, people with blindness, deafness, physical disabilities, and cognitive disabilities can now find and access information through the web. A Web for Everyone ensures that PWDs can use their technologies while also improving website design as a whole for all users. Throughout this assessment, the comments will be directed mostly towards improving accessibility, but will also be applied to people without disabilities.

## **Clear Purpose and Goals**

From the title of the page to the background design, it is clear that this site is attempting to show you about the Ellensburg Grand Meridian theater. However, there is some confusion with the name of the site and the name of the theater. The official name of the theater is the Grand Meridian Cinema, yet the link and title of the page is Ellensburg movies. Because this is the only cinema theater in Ellensburg, it is not a detrimental problem, but it does add unnecessary confusion. While on the home page of the site, the priorities and main purposes are not emphasized while other less important aspects are in larger font. For example, the navigation which shows how to get to the movies that are now showing and shows how to buy tickets is smaller than the large "Like us on Facebook" link. This shows there is not a consistent clear purpose for the site. One thing that is great in showing clear goals are the titles of the navigation links, however these links are so small that it is not designed to direct you to fulfil the goals of the customer. When a customer goes to a website for a movie theater, they are almost always looking to see what is currently showing, how much tickets cost, and how do they get to the theater. When approaching the site, these goals are not easily achievable without extra effort, searching, and by downloading Adobe Flash Player from an insecure website.

## **Structure**

The site is structured with a basic home page and then a series of informational pages. These informational pages are linked through a navigation bar. This structure is very organized as the goals that a customer may have is referenced as a specific link. This is preferred over having everything on one page as it increases efficiency. Though the website is structured, it is lacking in stability and security. The site does not have a stable structure because it is not scalable across different platforms. By this, I mean that when the site is switched to mobile or a different section of the screen, the information

and the navigation is lost. The site is also very insecure. Not only is the site simply an insecure web link as noted by the url starting in “http” instead of “https”, there is also a request to enable Adobe Flash Player. I will go more in depth with the purpose of this request when discussing the navigation of the site in the “Wayfinding” section. This is an insecure request because Adobe Flash Player is how many hackers prey on naïve people. They present these requests and when clicked, the download will give the computer a virus.

## **Interaction**

Interaction on the site is possible through the navigational links and the scroll bar. The interaction is very unclear. Links are hardly distinguishable from other text as underlines are inconsistent, font color is inconsistent, and italics are also random. Because links are the only navigation for this site, it makes this site extremely difficult to interact with. In “A Web for Everyone”, the concept of interaction relies on user choice. The user should easily be able to understand and use the site to reach certain goals. With limited navigation and options, the user is forced to use the site in one way. If they cannot figure out how to use the site, they simply have to keep trying or find help. There are some things that are common among different sites or technologies. This is called external consistency. One main navigational consistency throughout nearly all websites is that if there is a large logo for the company at the top of the page, clicking that logo will navigate the user to the home page. This is not true in this case. In fact, the only navigation to the home page is on the actual home page, which means the button actually does nothing. This site is extremely frustrating to interact with and would be impossible to do using screen readers or the tab function.

## **Wayfinding**

The home page of the site includes a series of navigational links. However, this navigation has a few major flaws. The navigation that can be seen while navigating the site requires downloading of Adobe Flash Player. As many tech-savvy people know, Adobe Flash Player downloads are one of the easiest ways for someone to hack your computer or give you a virus. Because of these risks, I decided not to “Click to Enable Adobe Flash Player”. This meant that the only navigation I was exposed to were a few links at the bottom of the home page with no way to navigate to other pages in the site without hitting the back button to go back to the home page then clicking on the different page. This is not only extremely inefficient, but it is also a huge annoyance. It is impossible to leave the page that you are on or go to a different page without hitting back to go back to the home page.

## **Clean Presentation**

The site is presented stylistically like an authentic old-fashion movie theater. The page is relatively uncluttered and there is not too much to distract on the home page. However, on the home page, everything is written in blue font and the only distinction between a link and the text, because of this coloring, is an underline. When you click through the content pages there is very heavy wording for the movie descriptions and the use of color is distracting. Typically for a site with clean presentation, the use of

color would signify an actionable item or something that needs focus. In this case, the name of the theater is in big red letters as are the titles of each film. There are then small links to other information about the movie in yellow including showtimes and trailers. This makes the user assume that they are using the yellow coloring to signify a link. However, then the synopsis is yellow for no reason. The ticket pricing page also uses bright red, orange, and yellow as a background which is very difficult to read and look at. On the “theater rentals” page, the words are in alternating white and red font with no purpose while also shifting between different fonts and inconsistent use of italics.

## **Plain Language**

Much of the site is written with film jargon such as “showtime”, “starring”, and “runtime”. Some of the language used could have been simplified. For example, the word synopsis could have been changed to summary and runtime could have been length. This would have allowed a more general audience to be able to access and understand the website without difficulty.

## **Accessible Media**

The site includes a picture on the home page and pictures showing the movie posters for each movie. There are also images showing the facility for options to rent out the theater. When inspecting the code for the home page, I found that the image did have alternative text noting that the image was a picture of the cinema. On the page called “Now Showing”, there are picture posters of each movie with descriptions at the bottom of the page. For these images, the alternate text simply says “click for info”. This is very unhelpful for someone with a disability because they need to do additional steps to figure out what movies are playing.

## **Universal Usability**

These guidelines not only increase accessibility which increases the amount of users that can use the site, it also improves the experience of all users. The goal of applying these guidelines is to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and quality of the site while also breaking down boundaries restricting access for people with disabilities. These guidelines are a good way to begin designing a website, but to check a website for accessibility, it is often best to test for compliance to WCAG 2.0 Level AA guidelines as required by the Washington State Policy #188. This policy demonstrates the needs for accessible technologies, applications, documents, and other electronically published or distributed information. There are many tools and checklists used to look for and verify that these sites are in compliance. Much of them focus on the accessibility aspects of usability such as color contrast, font type, alternate text, captions, subtitles, and other elements that allow the information to be delivered through various forms. Overall, the addition of usability and accessibility can only improve any user experiences.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Imagine you wake up, go to the kitchen for a morning bowl of cereal, and then find that you have no milk. You decide that you will drive to the grocery store to quickly pick

some up. As you drive through the intersection, a car runs a red light and crashes into your car. The next thing you know, you are in a hospital and you have a head injury that has caused blindness. Your entire life is completely changed, and you have to learn how to do things in a new way. All you want to do is look through your favorite website, but now, you must use a screen reader and the site was not designed with accessibility. You not only struggle with that site, but many others. It is now difficult to research information for your essay, to find out when your favorite restaurant is open on a Sunday, or to find out when Captain Marvel will be playing in the Ellensburg theater! If only these sites were accessible!

In all seriousness, disability is prevalent in 1 in 4 Americans. This means that without accessibility, your business is excluding 25 percent of possible customers. This is a huge portion of the population to discriminate against and it causes the company to miss out on more money and more popularity. This assessment has uncovered many areas where the Ellensburg movies site could use improvement. With these modifications, there will be more inclusivity and business within the company creating a larger and more diverse customer base.

Areas where the site could easily improve include:

- Remove the background and adjust text colors
- Change navigation to not require Adobe Flash Player
- Make links distinct
- Add descriptive alt text for images
- Allow for navigation between pages through navigation bar that is always present
- Make the logo be a link to the home page
- Organize the home page so that the main goals are the largest and most prominent options for navigation

These are simply a start to a process that will need upkeep and effort to maintain. Accessibility often requires specialization and I would recommend either hiring an Accessibility Coordinator for the cinema or to hire a web designer that is more experienced with web design.