

This report provides an accessibility analysis of the University of Michigan's notable alumni webpage (<http://alumnus.alumni.umich.edu/notable-alumni/>). The analysis is based on the Vox Accessibility Guidelines for Quality Assurance professionals.

I. Issues

WAVE Chrome Extension.

Errors and alerts generated by the WAVE accessibility evaluation tool include skipped heading levels and headings that are empty. Tools like keyboard readers can use these labels to help navigate the page, so having missing or empty levels can be a source of error on their parts resulting in confusion for the users. Social media icons also generate errors for links that contain no text.

Keyboard Navigability

Content sections (actors, art/design/architecture, etc.) are not accessible via keyboard. The main content of the page is not available without opening these dropdown menus. If they are opened by mouse, the individual elements within them are keyboard accessible as long as they are in frame--if the next element is out of frame, the tab does not go to the next element and adjust the frame, but instead skips down to the footer.

Screen Reader Accessibility

Social links have no helpful text associated with them. When reading the contact us information, the relevant labels (address, phone number, fax number) are not stated beforehand, leading to confusion. Degrees are not noted as abbreviations on this website (M.A. instead of MA) which leads to unclear pronunciation. The keyboard issue above makes the website incomprehensible for those who are relying on a screen reader, as the text is not selectable by keyboard and therefore not readable.

General Architecture and Hierarchy

Nav tag is present but empty. Headers go from H1 to H5 in some places--the main title is an H1 element, the section labels are H5, the names of the notable alumni are H2, and the headings of the footer sections are H4. There are no H3 elements.

Alt Text

One image that is referenced in the javascript (line 1166) has a present but empty alt attribute. Other images have alt text.

Decorative Images

Issues: The social images have no labels communicating to screen readers that they can be skipped.

II. Recommendations:

I think that many of these issues can be fixed by making the changes that follow.

1. Add ARIA labels to images like the social media icons, which currently are very confusing when read aloud on a screen reader. These attributes allow screen readers to identify or skip content as is appropriate. I would recommend text like “Follow us on Facebook” or “Find us on Instagram” for labels--something short but descriptive.
2. Fix heading order. A H2 should be nested under a H1 and a H5 under a H4, for example, and no headings should be skipped. Styling can be applied to make each heading appear with the correct size and position; headings are an important way that screen readers navigate pages and should be applied for semantic value, regardless of initial styling of the element. The same goes for the nav tag; it should be present and it should have content.
3. Add the tabindex property to the notable alumni sections and to the individual names within. Currently, when navigating solely by keyboard, these sections cannot be opened; if you open them with a mouse and try to navigate through by keyboard, there are additional issues. (See Keyboard Navigability section above.) Adding a tabindex to each property allows these elements to be tab-accessible.
4. Write for screen readers. Things like writing degrees as abbreviations will go a long way towards making this site more understandable for those who need it to be read aloud to them.
5. Add alt text to every image. Alt text is something that a screen reader will read when it encounters a photo, but it is also useful for people with slow internet connections or people trying to preserve data by turning image loading off. Images with a present-but-empty alt attribute do not provide any of the accessibility benefits of having an alt attribute.