**The Importance of Web Accessibility**

Web accessibility is the practice of insuring that the website you create is accessible to everyone who visits your webpage. It is extremely important to make sure that your website can be visited and accessed to its entirety by everyone who visits. To me, this means thinking a bit outside the box and adapting your website to reach your entire target audience, not just those who use a computer with the mouse and keyboard. Accessibility is important because the purpose of your website is to get specific information or data out there to as many people as possible. Your website may appear to be functioning properly and easy for you to use, but that doesn’t mean that everyone who uses the site has the same user experience. For example, people who are colorblind, visually impaired (can’t read small text), completely blind, hard of hearing, cognitively impaired, have tremors, and so on, may have a much more difficult time at using the site you’ve created than you do personally. It is the website developers’ responsibility to take into consideration what all can be done to grant full usability to the site. In fact, there are lots of relatively simple things that can be done on the development end to grant better access to those with disabilities. For those who are colorblind, you could offer a version of your site with high contrast that makes specific colors really stick out and easier to see; or for those who are completely blind you could make your site screen reader accessible; or for those who are hard at hearing you could add subtitles to any audio or video that plays on your site. All of the mentioned user accessibility options are normally overlooked or not even thought about to begin with for someone who access a computer normally, but to someone with a disability, they make a world of difference. With an ever-evolving field like Information Technology there are even more sophisticated accessibility tools coming out all the time. One example of such tool is the, not so new now, tool called dragon dictation which allows for users to input text to a computer via speech and/or have text on a computer read back to them. Tools like this can greatly increase accessibility and the user experience for any user really, not just for those who are disabled. It is very handy to be able have your words automatically transcribed, as it will usually save time compared to having to sit down and type it all up. Another way to increase the accessibility of your sites is to thoroughly test the usability of the site with things such as tabbing from field to field and using the spacebar on checkbox’s or the enter key on buttons/links to make sure they function as intended. It is also important to make sure that a user who must use only the tab key to navigate from field to field can go all the way through every option and back to the first option. The tab order can be changed with varying values for the tab index, but insure that doing so does not make some elements on the page unreachable. One example of this mistake was shown in the video “Accessibility for the Modern Web” by Derek Featherstone, where he demonstrates a, not so well tested, site where the “Forgot Password?” field cannot be accessed for users confined to tab key input only, which can make the site completely unusable if the user has forgotten their password. There are also ways to incorporate dictation software with buttons added to an API where the user can tell the site commands such as, “Button 8”, instead of having to press the tab key 8 times or say something like, “Check Box 9”, instead of having to tell the browser, “Check (insert some long-named checkbox option)”. This makes it much easier for the atypical user to access a site than having to take the long way so to speak. Web accessibility is an extremely important concept to keep in mind while developing websites, and the examples above are just a small portion of the many ways that browsing your site can be improved on to guarantee a great user experience for everyone, not just the typical web user.