LIS 638

Accessibility Review of an OER Resource

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I haven't always been knowledgeable about Open Educational Resources (OER), but as I began my journey in the library science program, I learned more about them and their impact. An OER according to UNESCO is, "...learning, teaching and research materials in any format and medium that reside in the public domain or are under copyright that have been released under an open license, that permit no-cost access, re-use, re-purpose, adaptation and redistribution by others." An OER that immediately came to mind is Khan Academy, as it helped me tremendously during my undergraduate studies. Khan Academy is a free digital platform that provides an array of educational videos, lessons, and practices. It can range from the subjects of math to history. The primary purpose of the platform is to provide educational resources to students of all ages, and I've found that it also supports students who perhaps might not have the access to traditional learning/educational resources.

Using the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) to evaluate Khan Academy, I've found it does well in including alternative texts and for some instructional visuals, however, at the same time, there are some graphs and other visuals in the website could be improved by providing descriptive alt text. An example of this is that in the math and science sections, there is a lack of adequate descriptions for someone who might use a screen reader. Now, one thing that I've noticed for a while is that Khan Academy does provide captioning for their videos which is extremely important for students who have a hearing impairment. From my experience, the captions are accurate and I find them to also be synchronized to the material that is being presented in the video. Another thing that I noticed is that they have some videos, particularly in the math section, where they include ASL. However, I did notice that not all videos have it included, and I think that expanding the selection of videos that have ASL included would be

helpful to individuals who utilize it. Now, I also find that it would be helpful to include other sign languages in order to make the educational content more accessible.

As for the site itself, I would say that it is responsive but I read a few comments online where the font used is difficult to read for some users. This is an issue because it can cause a gap in the accessibility of the website. In terms of the navigation of the website, it is rather navigable with menus that are easy to follow. The text can only be enlarged with your computer settings, which can make it confusing or difficult for someone who is trying to find that function on the website. Back to the text, it's not necessarily readable to everyone and there should be an option where users can change the font or sizing in order to help learners even more.

My recommendations to enhance this OER will be listed in this paragraph. My first recommendation would be to enhance alt text for visuals such as graphs because users would benefit a lot from having detailed alt text, especially so individuals with visual impairments have the ability to engage with the content. I would also recommend having a feature where they could have higher contrast modes, specifically for users who have low vision. My other recommendation would be to include more options for sign languages and voice-over descriptions for visuals that might be a bit more complex.

Khan Academy has a statement about accessibility commitment, and it looks like they have been working on creating accessible spaces in their learning community, but there are a few things that definitely need to be changed or added. I would say that by implementing some of the recommendations that I made above, they would be able to create a more accessible learning environment to ensure that we are all learning.

References


Open educational resources | UNESCO. (n.d.).
https://www.unesco.org/en/open-educational-resources