WEB ACCESSIBILITY AND SECTION 508 COMPLIANCE

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ABSTRACT

With the recent addition of Section 508 to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (enacted August 1998, implemented June 2001), the need for accessible and Section 508 compliant Web sites has become imperative. Web Accessibility Evaluation and Repair Tools have been created to help Web developers make Web pages accessible, mitigating the enormity of this task. The focus of the project was to compare and contrast a number of software tools available that test and/or fix Web sites and individual Web pages for Web Accessibility and compliance with Section 508.

PROBLEM

As a result of Section 508, all Federal Agencies must provide fully accessible Web sites. Web Accessibility is important in to ensure all persons are able to fully and completely obtain content from the Web and, if necessary, interact with Web sites regardless of bandwidth, disability, or browsing technology.

APPROACH

Software Tool Selection

The software tools tested in this evaluation were chosen based on the list of thirty evaluation and repair tools produced by the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), a subgroup of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). The software tools selected provided the most functionality, including ability to correct errors as well as the variety and thoroughness of errors checked.

Software Tool Evaluation

In order to test each piece of software equally, a special Web page was constructed that highlighted the twelve most important areas of Section 508 compliance; including treatment of cascading style sheets, descriptive hyperlink names, alternate text tags for images, table layout, and client-side image maps. This Web site served as a basis for evaluating each software package in applicable cases.

A number of software tools that verified and/or repaired Web pages for Web Accessibility were evaluated. The top performers included: AccVerify, A-Prompt, Bobby, and WAVE.

RESULTS

A thorough analysis of the performance of each piece of software tested was utilized to create a detailed chart depicting the functionality and usability of each of the tools. In addition, a detailed analytical report that outlined specific strengths and weaknesses of each tool, as well as descriptive screen shots was created.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Continually these evaluation and repair software tools are updated and improved, and new ones are introduced. Further research would include testing these newer versions as well as updating the Web site used for testing to incorporate four additional rules that were not previously tested directly, and enhancing the study of some of the previously tested rules. In addition, the criteria for evaluations could be further quantified which would improve the accuracy of the report.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

REFERENCES

For more information, please visit http://www.tcnj.edu/~gibson2/508