



W4A Steering Committee
c/o The University of Manchester
2.44 Kilburn Building
Oxford Road
Manchester
M13 9PL

Direct: +44(0)161 275 0599
Fax: +44(0)161 275 6204

<http://www.w4a.info>

sc-2008@w4a.info

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ACM SIGWEB Executive Board

Re: Sponsorship Proposal
Web-for-All (W4A)
5th International Cross-Disciplinary Conference on Web Accessibility 2008

Sponsorship Details

This year's theme will be 'One World, One Web: Surfers become Designers?'. The conference will be cross-disciplinary in nature and will mainly focus on technologies to support: end-users, authors, and technologists. Therefore, we are seeking sponsorship to bring together interested parties to discuss how these emerging technologies affect accessibility on the Web.

Purpose The sponsorship is mainly required to cover costs associated with the printing and shipping of conference proceedings (both in paper and electronic form). We would also like to waive the conference registration of our keynote speakers. Finally, a small amount from the sponsorship will be used for conference expenses (stationary, printing of programs, etc.).

Cost We would like to apply for the same sponsorship as last year namely 1000 US Dollars.

Benefit We expect both the ACM and the ACM SIGWEB to benefit by: (1) Acknowledgement and publicity on calls, the Website, and advertising (as per the Acknowledgement section below) and (2) Distribution of publicity material at the event.

Acknowledgement The sponsor's logo and name will be prominently displayed on the Website and related documentation. This will also include the conference proceedings. A section for extended information about the sponsor including a Website link will also be created as part of the W4A Website.

Conference Report A report on the conference findings will be created by the organising committee for use as the sponsor wishes.

Conference Overview

Conventional conferences on accessibility tend to be single disciplinary in nature. However, we are concerned that this focus on a single participant group prevents the cross-pollination of ideas, needs, and technologies from other related but separate fields. This conference is decidedly cross-disciplinary and will bring together users, accessibility experts, graphic designers, and technologists from academia and industry to discuss how accessibility can be supported. We also encourage the participation of users and other interested parties as an additional balance to the discussion. Our aim is to focus on accessibility by encouraging participation from many disciplines. Views will bridge academia, commerce, and industry and we hope that arguments encompassing a range of beliefs across the design-accessibility spectrum will be presented.

Conference Topic and Content

The World Wide Web (Web) is returning to its origins, surfers are not just passive readers but content creators. Wiki's allow open editing and access, blogs enable personal expression, Flickr, YouTube, MySpace, and Facebook encourage social networking by enabling designs to be 'created' and 'wrapped' around content. Indeed it seems that only the Web infrastructure supporting expression is immutable and invisible to the user. Template based tools such as iWeb, Google Page Creator, and RapidWeaver enable fast professional looking Web site creation using automated placement, with templates for blogging, picture sharing, and social networking, these tools

often require publishing to a system specific server, such as '.mac'. In this case we wonder if the conjugation of authoring tools and user agents represents an opportunity for automatically generated Web Accessibility or yet another problem for Web Accessibility? Will form based and highly graphical interfaces excluded disabled users from creation, expression and social networking? What problems exist, what are the upcoming problems, what solutions are required? What about the accessibility of the content designed and created by surfers? Finally, what effect will this have on the wider Web? We pose the question:

'What happens when surfers become authors and designers?'

In this case topics of interests include (but are not limited to):

- Investigations focused on Template Based Technology;
- User Experimentation looking at Social Networking and Freedom of Expression;
- GUI and Form investigations with regard to access;
- How Wiki's and Blogging Tools effect accessibility of content creation;
- Evaluation and Validation tools and techniques for Wiki and Blogging tools;
- Web Content Creation Tools;
- Web Authoring Guidelines;
- Design and best practice to support Web accessibility;
- Technological advances to support Web accessibility;
- End user tools;
- Accessibility guidelines, best practice, evaluation techniques, and tools;
- Psychology of end user experiences and scenarios;
- Innovative techniques to support accessibility;
- Universally accessible graphical design approaches;
- Design Perspectives;
- Adapting existing Web content;
- Accessible graphic formats and tools for their creation.

Conference History

The W4A conference have been running for 5years at the World Wide Web conference (WWW). These meetings (<http://www.w4a.info>) have been very successful, running over two a days, hosting 72 attendees, and including a practice session and evening lecture.

In the previous events all papers were reviewed by three of our programme committee and an average of around 40% of the submissions were accepted. We welcome attendees from a diverse set of companies ranging from the Governors of the US Federal Reserve to Healthcare Trusts and car manufacturers. We publish an ISBN'ed ACM proceedings and various Special Issues of respected journals within the field. Additionally, the workshop findings are published in the 'ACM ACCESS Computers and Accessibility'. Finally, previous keynotes have included Chieko Asakawa (IBM), Judy Brewer (W3C-WAI), Wendy Chisholm (W3C-WAI), Vicki Hanson (IBM), Eric Meyer (Complex Spiral), Bob Regan (Macromedia), Sarah Horton (Dartmouth College), Aaron Leventhal (IBM), Rhys Lewis (W3C) and Donna Smillie (RNIB).

Proposed Structure

The format will be a 2 day co-located Conference running on the Monday and Tuesday of the WWW2008Conference Week in Banff, Canada, in the same facility as WWW2008, and with the full support of the WWW2008General and Program Chairs and Organisers (<http://\conf.org/>). It will consist of six paper sessions, a Web Accessibility challenge competition session (this session will be a competition that will seek to identify the best Web accessibility application among the submissions. This session will be a great opportunity to companies and researchers to demonstrate their applications on Web accessibility.), a panel session to conclude.

Contribution and Outcomes

The conference will conclude with a panel session (as above) discussing possible future work directions and targets. In searching for targets we will be asking a series of questions that we feel are both important and need answering. These will include (but not be limited to) the questions... What happens when surfers become authors and designers?. We will also look at the areas that are going to become important within the next year and what role we can all play in influencing their outcomes such that accessibility is not forgotten. Finally, we intend to

create a road-map of important issues and questions for distribution so that a consensus can be reached on the focus our research should take. In conclusion the cross-disciplinary nature of the conference aims to reveal the current state of art in Web accessibility from different perspectives and provide possible future directions for multi-disciplinary research collaborations.

Relevancy to WWW2008

The “core values in Web design” are, according to Tim Berners-Lee, the “principles of universality of access irrespective of hardware or software platform, network infrastructure, language, culture, geographical location, or physical or mental impairment”. Universal access is not a happy accident: it is what the Web is for. Similarly, as Ted Nelson suggests in our 2004 event, *New Review of Hypermedia and Multimedia*, Special Issue: ‘Accessibility’ isn’t just a code-word for the challenged, it’s what everybody needs.’ We agree with Ted Nelson, and think what really needs to be addressed are ways to enable good design, maintaining the artistic imperative important to most designers, while enabling accessibility. Therefore, this workshop focuses on accessibility by giving participants the ability to work together across disciplines.

Submissions and their Evaluation

Keynotes have been solicited from experts in the field of both accessibility and graphic/visual design, and evaluated by the Programme committee. Keynotes and un-solicited submissions will be accepted in the SIG-alternate style as both long and short papers. Each submission will be evaluated by three referees chosen from our program committee and ad-hoc reviewers. We will accept both position and research papers. Position papers should only be in short paper format whereas research papers can be in short or long paper format. We also plan to solicit submissions giving perspective to each of our domains, end-users, designers, authors and technologists.

Publication

These papers will be refereed by our program committee and we have already agreed an ISBN’ed ACM proceedings and are in talks with Taylor and Francis regarding a special issue of *Disability and Rehabilitation: Assistive Technologies*. The conference findings will also be published in the ‘ACM SIGACCESS Computers and Accessibility’ if we are successful in our proposal.

Please contact me if you require further information.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Simon Harper', enclosed within a blue circular scribble.

Dr Simon Harper
for the W4A Steering Committee