Kent Academic Repository

IS – Research and Scholarly Communication Support Team

Embedding accessibility in repository and open journal services

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The Templeman Library, University of Kent, Showing the front steps.

Context

We are a library based team responsible for the support of research at the University of Kent, we manage 3 systems:

- KAR – a publications repository on an Eprints platform
- KDR – a data repository on an Eprints platform
- Kent Open Access Journals on the Open Journal System (OJS)

Each system consists of a platform and content. The platforms are based on freeware, supported by external agents.

The content is created by staff, students and publishers.

We're committed to embedding inclusive practices across our service and we knew these systems were not meeting this ideal.

Solutions

The platforms: we've some freedom to improve the accessibility of the Eprints platforms. We used tools to identify accessibility issues and test fixes:
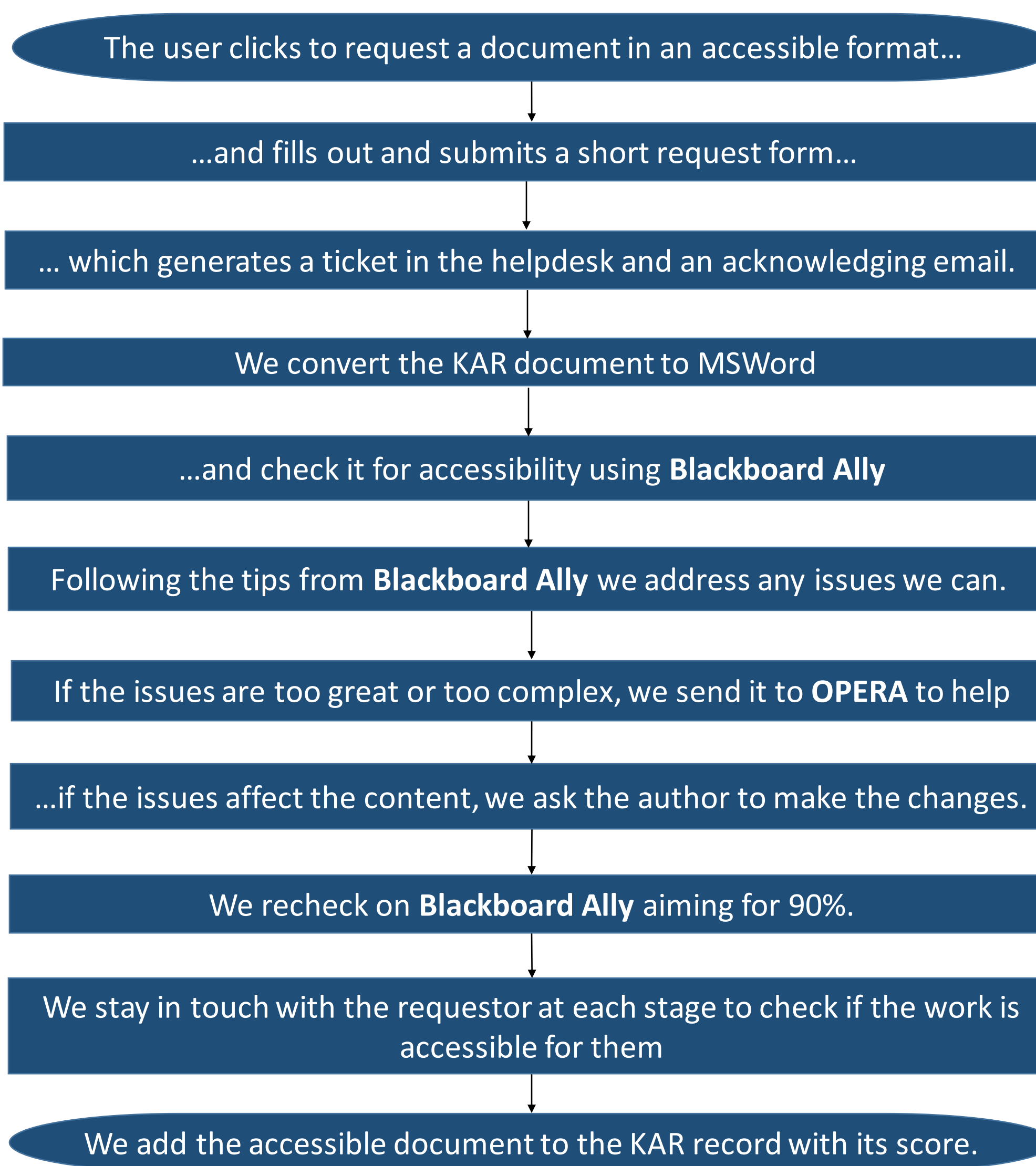
- Lighthouse identified navigation issues – fixed using Andi Bookmarklet
- Wave revealed low colour contrast – fixed with Colour Contrast Analyser

The content in all systems is created by academics and publishers:

- We link to SensusAccess from every page in the repositories
- We developed a new service to address individual requests using Blackboard Ally
- We keep Word versions of documents wherever we can for

New service for Accessibility requests

A new button on open access documents in KAR, so people who need a more accessible version can request it.

- The user clicks to request a document in an accessible format…
- …and fills out and submits a short request form…
- … which generates a ticket in the helpdesk and an acknowledging email.
- We convert the KAR document to MSWord
- …and check it for accessibility using **Blackboard Ally**
- Following the tips from **Blackboard Ally** we address any issues we can.
- If the issues are too great or too complex, we send it to **OPERA** to help
- …if the issues affect the content, we ask the author to make the changes.
- We recheck on **Blackboard Ally** aiming for 90%.
- We stay in touch with the requestor at each stage to check if the work is accessible for them
- We add the accessible document to the KAR record with its score.

KDR

We used the same tests and solutions for the platform. Because of the specialist content we'll deal with accessibility requests on a case-by-case basis. We also found a conflict with some of the FAIR principles e.g. txt. file formats for text documents.

OJS

We're working with hosts -- PKP, journal editors and Mantra to ensure the platform and the content are accessible. We are developing accessible templates for articles.

Lessons learned

- We need to work with multiple internal and external partners. This complicated workflows and timescales.
- Automated tools can't tell us everything – they provide a guide but a fully accessible and meaningful format needs us to check every work.
- We rely on our external hosts to deliver our accessible services, therefore, accessibility must be included in procurement decisions.
- We can't control the format of published works. Even as version of record open access increases, we must keep Word versions of AAMs
- We have much to do to create a fully inclusive process, but everything we can do now helps. We can't get there in one giant leap.
- Retrospective conversion to accessible documents is time consuming

The future

- Training, guides and advocacy to build accessibility into content at the point of creation. Starting with PgRs, ECRs and OJS journal editors
- Embedding cultural change in all our services, so accessibility is as natural to all staff and students as correct spelling and grammar.
- Working with suppliers and colleagues and putting pressure on publishers to create born accessible platforms and content.

The click-button on KAR to request an accessible copy and the accessible version
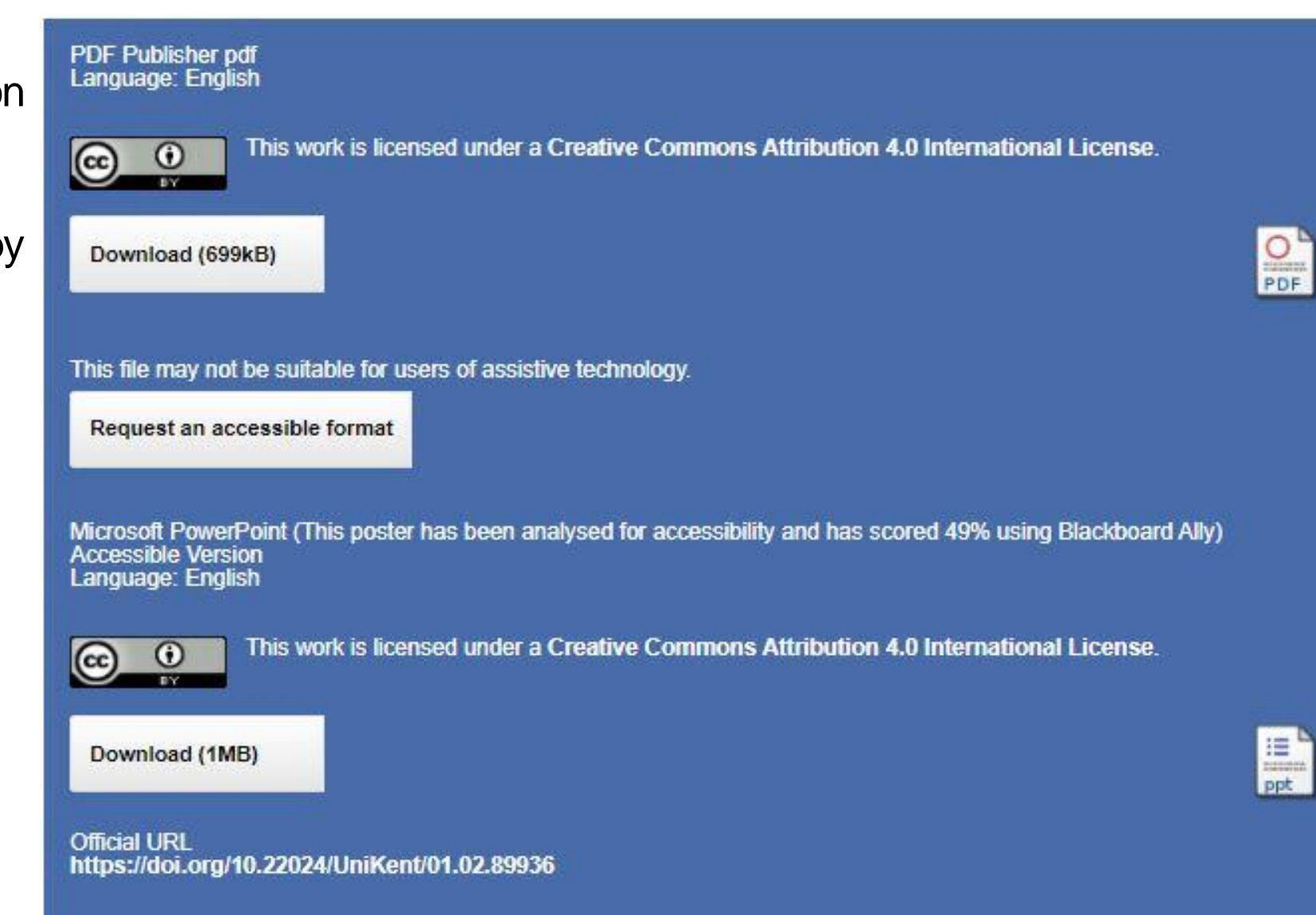
Links

1 Our Accessibility blogs
2 Watson, Ben, Caplehorne, Josie (2020) Open or ajar? And how we can blow the b****y doors off! In: Open and Engaged, 19 Oct 2020, Online. (Unpublished) (doi:10.23636/1232).
3 Caplehorne, J, Bass, R, Cooper, H, Duffy, S, Green-Hughes, L (2021) *Embedding accessibility in research support and scholarly communication systems and processes: a reflective case study.* Advanced Journal of Professional Practice, . ISSN 2059-3198. (Submitted)