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<https://compass.copim.pub/books/09-open-book-accessibility>
<https://copim.pub/category/accessibility/>

Final Report

Overview



[COPIM](#) (Community Led Open Infrastructures for Monographs) is a research project concerned with establishing the infrastructure and communities needed to enable small publishers to deliver diamond open access monographs, running from 2019-2026. [Open Book Futures](#) (OBF) is the second iteration of the project, which encompassed work in the years 2023-2026. Within this second project, Work Package 5 is the [Accessibility Working Group](#), which seeks to support open access publishers by helping them to meet the accessibility needs of their readers. Members of the group are:

- Rupert Gatti (Lead), Cambridge University/Open Book Publishers/Thoth Metadata
- Jordy Findanis, OAPEN
- Joanne Fitzpatrick, Lancaster University

Outputs



The group produced extensive accessibility guidance for small publishers of monographs, that includes

- short term tasks,
- a longer term planning model,
- a custom auditing checklist,
- condensed overviews of relevant legislation, standards and mark up languages,
- our curated list of other guidance, checklists tools and courses,
- advice on completing accessibility documents including Accessibility Statements, author guidelines and Voluntary Product Accessibility Templates (VPATs).

These were all produced through extensive consultation with our communities, a process that also led to suggesting a list of ethical principles that capture the sentiment of small publishers towards accessibility. We also inspired conversation on the topic of accessibility through meetings, webinars, our panel at the [Copim Conference 2026](#) and our JISCmail list OPENBOOK-ACCESSIBILITY@JISCMAIL.AC.UK

We also documented our progress and our thoughts using the [accessibility tag on Copim's wordpress blog](#).

Our outputs are available here on Zenodo and consist of documents, spreadsheets and videos:

01 Short Term Accessibility (document) - A description of three essential tasks that we identified as being the most important to put in place for all publishers, to enable them to continue their operations and engage and communicate with stakeholders on accessibility.

02 Short Term Accessibility (video) - A short video that gives an overview of our short term recommendations.

03 Legislation Exemptions (video) - A short video that explains the first of our three essential tasks.

04 VPATS in Plain Language (spreadsheet) - A spreadsheet that accompanies the second of our three essential tasks, that describes each VPAT requirement in plain, sector specific language.

05 VPATs (video) - A short video that explains the second of our three essential tasks.

06 Accessibility Statements (video) - A short video that explains the third of our three essential tasks.

07 10SOAPT (document) - A description of our custom long term planning model 10SOAPT (10 Step Open Accessibility Planning Tool).

08 10SOAPT (spreadsheet) - A spreadsheet that accompanies our planning model, 10SOAPT.

09 10SOAPT (video) - A short video that gives an overview explanation of our planning model, 10SOAPT.

10 OARC (document) - A description of our custom auditing tool OARC (Open Access Review Checker).

11 OARC (spreadsheet) - A spreadsheet that accompanies our auditing tool, OARC.

12 OARC (video) - A short video that gives an overview explanation of our auditing tool, OARC.

13 Long Term Accessibility (document) - An extensive description of all our long term advice, including our planning model and auditing checklist above, but also our condensed overviews of relevant legislation, standards and mark up languages, our curated list of other guidance, checklists tools and courses, our advice on completing accessibility documents (e.g. Accessibility Statements) and our ethical principles.

Updates in the Near Future



As we finish our time on the project, we are aware of some upcoming changes that may impact on the guidance that we leave behind. As the project finishes and we are no longer available to update our guidance, then the more time that passes, the more likely that these changes will need to be taken into account alongside our advice.

WCAG 3

A major update to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) is planned, with no set release date as yet, but work is ongoing that will be finalised within the next few years. W3C have produced an [Explainer](#) and a [Working Draft](#) of the planned new standard. While the technical details of each requirement are largely the same, and are always backwards compatible, the structure of the standard is significantly different, offering a simpler to understand format alongside a more nuanced application.

W3C Accessibility Maturity Model

The W3C has a [Maturity Model Task Force](#), who are developing an Accessibility Maturity Model, which currently has a draft group note detailing the model as it stands now available here: [Accessibility Maturity Model Group Note](#). The model is still open for correction and for issues to be raised, but at some point in the future, this model will be finalised and will hopefully come into common usage.

Canadian Legislation

We know that in Nova Scotia and British Columbia, provincial standards relating to accessible Information and Communication that will be relevant to scholarly communications are planned to be developed. We also know that Saskatchewan, New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador do not yet have standards of this type, and although there is no information on plans to create them, we think it likely that there will be in the future.

Additional Accessibility Work



As we have had a limited amount of time on the project, we have of course focused on our limited set of deliverables. However, during the course of our work and especially during our consultations, we have identified many areas where there is a need for additional work. This is a list of suggested work that could be picked up in the near future by other individuals and organisations within the community that Copim has built.

Accessibility for journals, a version of 10SOAPT and OARC for journal publishers

Many small publishers, both within the project and those mission aligned with it, do not just produce monographs, but publish journals as well. Although this project seeks to centre monograph discussion in a scholarly environment that is dominated by journals, more than one publisher that we consulted expressed an interest in a version of our guidance that is designed to support the accessibility of diamond journal publishing. While many of the standards and requirements are the same, it's the tailoring for the context, the specific language and the guidance's structure being designed for existing workflows that makes it so useful, and this could be changed to centre diamond journals.

Accessible green open access content in repositories

Similarly, while gold open access is made accessible by the publisher, with green open access there is an accessible version behind a paywall, while the open access version in a repository is often not accessible. This also featured within our consultations, especially those with librarians and print disabled readers. Guidance could be produced to enable document accessibility at the point of ingest into an institutional repository. Repository managers are subject to the same time, funding and capacity constraints as small publishers, and so this guidance could focus on streamlining the context and language, and workflow integration needed, in a similar way that our monograph guidance does.

Keeping our guidance up to date

Our guidance, planning model 10SOAPT and auditing tool OARC is gifted to the community with a CC-BY license. While accessibility standards especially WCAG are always designed to be backwards compatible, we know that our guidance will

date quickly. As the project is finished and we are not in post to make updates – groups within the open access monographs community could decide to make these updates on our behalf, or produce newer versions of our models and tools.

Testing and refining our planning model

Similarly to the above suggestion, we did not have much time within the project to test our planning model in depth. This would involve small publishers creating custom accessibility roadmaps using the tool, feeding back how that went and tweaking and refining the model to produce a new version if needed.

Archiving and Accessibility

Another area identified towards the end of the project for further work was exploring the synergies between archiving and accessibility requirements, specifically relating to Copim's custom guidance in both areas and focusing just within the unique context of open access monographs. We began this work with discussions between ourselves, [Copim's archiving work package](#) and the [Digital Preservation Coalition](#), however we were not able to progress beyond this due to time constraints. We envisage in the first instance we could examine both our sets of guidance and highlight the synergies and possible efficiencies (and also any conflicts). We also think there is a wider piece of work for standards bodies or organisations such as the W3C to look at this generally across all contexts.

Accessible grey literature research outputs

Less pressing, but still important to those with access needs, is the accessibility of grey literature and alternative research outputs, such as presentations, reports, policies or posters. As these increase in number and importance within research over time, so their accessibility should be considered, in a similar way to journals and repository content that we have suggested above. These outputs are niche and have small audiences, similar to the research communities described by the small publishers involved in the project, so a version of our models tailored to this context may also be appropriate.

Advisory board of print disabled academics i.e. end users

Small publishers who we worked alongside on this project all reported that they had not had many specific accessibility requests from their readership, and all reflected on why this was in a similar way. Rather than there being no access needs, publishers were aware the needs were likely there but end users were not routinely reaching out. As many publishers are exempt from legislation, and are instead driven by the needs of their research communities, capturing this 'reader voice' is important. We suggest the establishment of an advisory board, somewhere within the open

access monographs community, that is made up of print disabled academics who can offer this valuable guidance routinely.

Goodbye From Us!



Thankyou Copim and Open Book Futures for having us as accessibility champions within our open research community, and enabling us to contribute to the improved access to monographs in a broad sense. You can carry on the accessibility conversation with us and the open monographs community post project at this JISCMail list: OPENBOOK-ACCESSIBILITY@JISCMAIL.AC.UK

Joanne, Jordy & Rupert

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