Teaching Accessibility in Professional Writing Classes
The Purpose of the Surface

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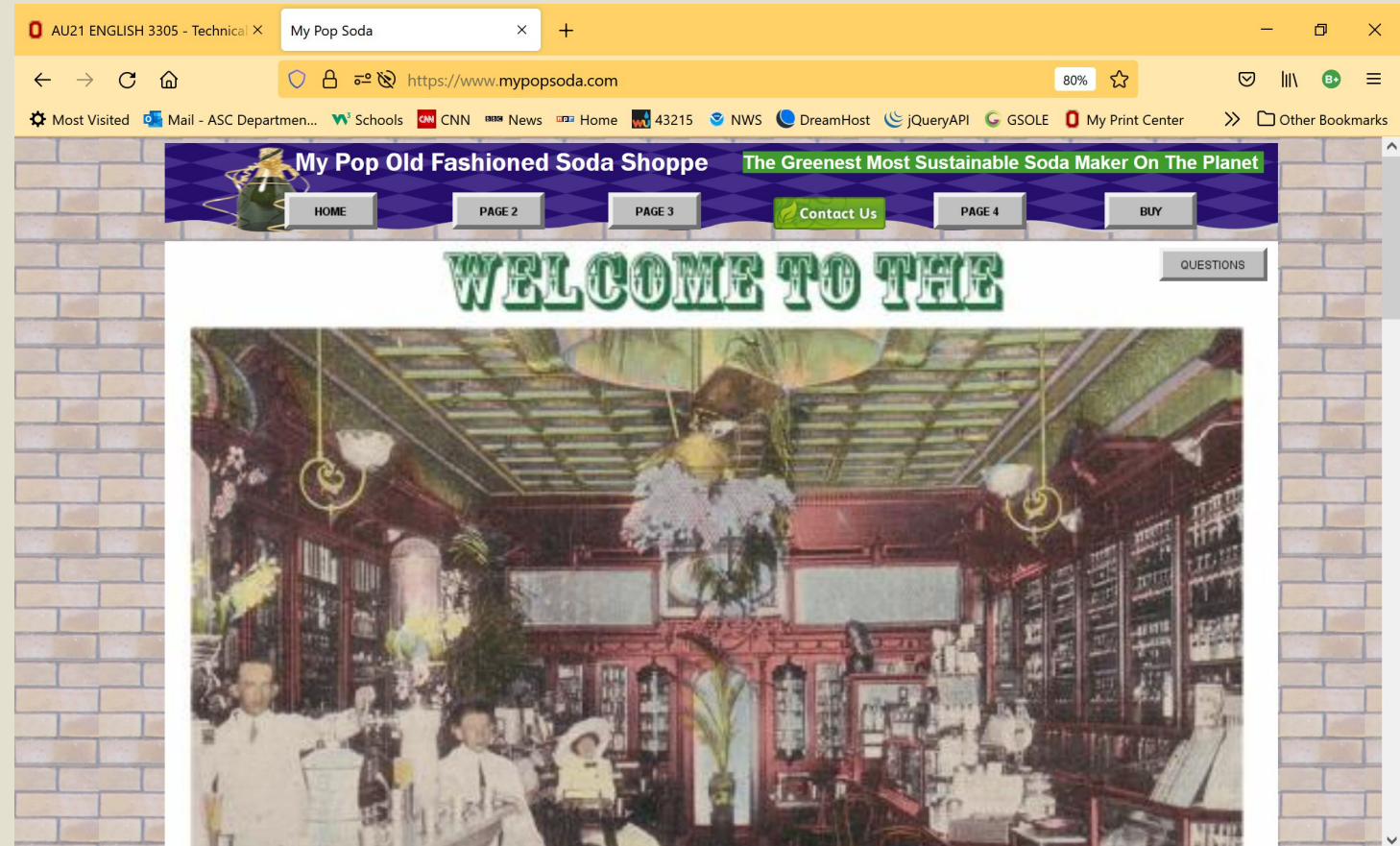
Tech Writing as Enabling by Informing

"Technical communication is a process of managing technical **information** in ways that allow people to take action"
-- Richard Johnson-Sheehan, *Technical Communication Today*, 5th ed.

"**Information** consists of differences that make a difference." -- Edward R. Tufte, *Envisioning Information*

When Surface Interferes with Substance

We start by examining a "quaint" website and a PDF document containing instructions for its drink carbonation kit.

Example: Poor Differentiation

The **MY POP OLD FASHIONED SODA SHOPPE** is an environmentally [...] ean reuse glass seltzer and plastic soda bottles many times. [...] ronment there are no bottle recycling taxes, there are no po[...] in many places that do not tax foods, no sales taxes you are forced to pay[...] **OLD FASHIONED SODA SHOPPE** has been pressure te[...] e fittings are high quality precision parts capable of provid[...] not abused. Unscrew one bottle (in the bag) it makes no difference which [...] bottle into normal shape. Fill with two teaspoons of baker[...] ter. Leave a 3 inch air space inside the top of the bottle for sh[...] hand over opening and shake to mix ingredients. This should yield enough[...] carbonate up to five 2-liter bottles over the course of a week's time. *To p[...] twisting, screw the bottle into the cap while keeping the cap from rotating.* [...] clamps are open and the pinch clamp for filling the soda bottle is closed. [...] fit in The **MY POP OLD FASHIONED SODA SHOPPE** carrying bag. Th[...] gauge and the tubing with the closed pinch clamp and blue male fitting h[...] ease of use. **Assemble all tubing connections finger tight. Hand tighten th[...]**

Motivators for Use

Conceptual Descriptors

Directives to Act

All-bold text in one long paragraph makes it harder for readers to distinguish varieties in information

There is some visual "weight" in type styles—but this draws attention to ancillary info.

Example: Meaningful Diff. in Bullet List

Instructions for First Use

1. **Unscrew** one bottle (in the bag) it makes no difference which one.
2. **Blow** into bottle if needed to pop bottle into normal shape.
3. **Fill** with two teaspoons of bakers' yeast, a cup of white sugar, add water.
4. **Leave** a 3-inch air space inside the top of the bottle for shaking.
5. **Place** palm of hand over opening and shake to mix ingredients.
6. **Screw** the bottle back into the cap while keeping the cap from rotating (to prevent the tubing from twisting).

This recipe should yield enough carbon dioxide to carbonate up to five 2-liter bottles over the course of a week's time.

The consistent typeface, black-and-white coloring, and left-hand alignment helps the *distinctive* bold type and numeric symbols stand out as *specific directive steps* for reader to take.
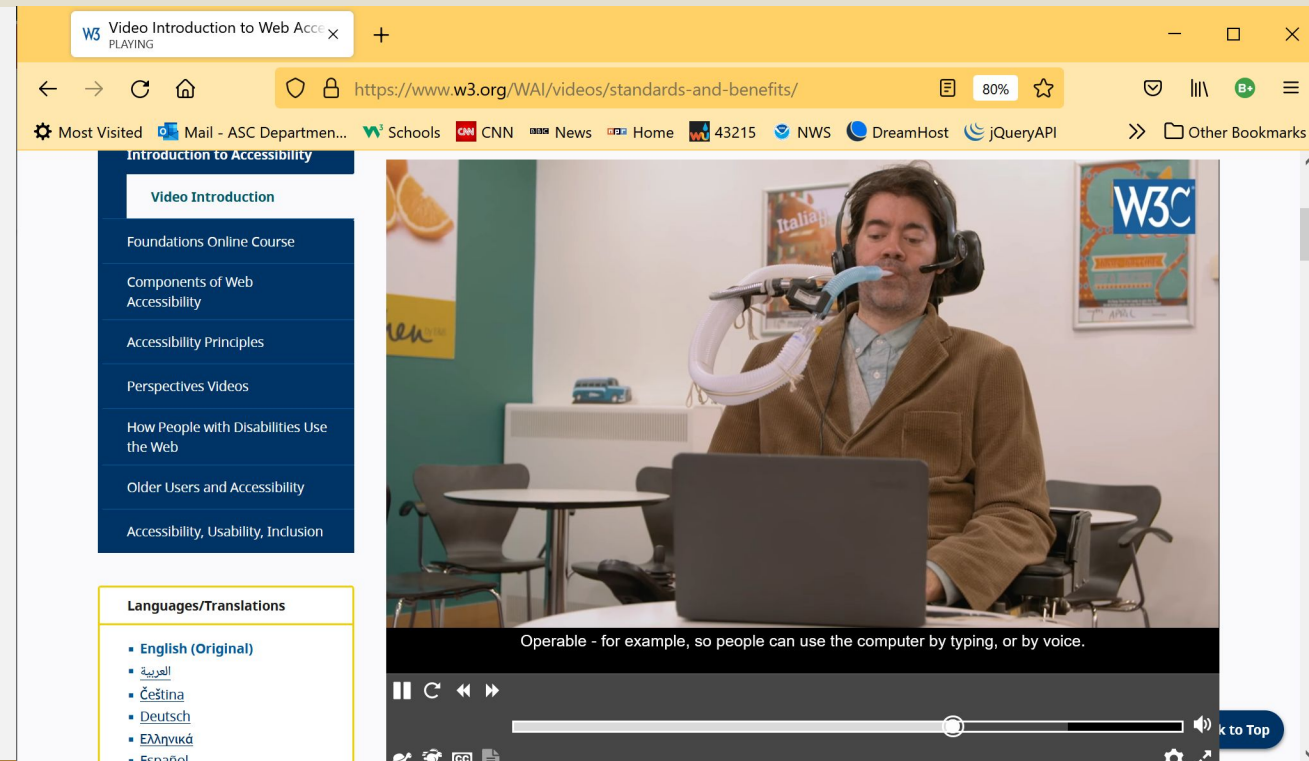
Introducing Web Accessibility: Why & How

We start by watching a four-minute video from the Web Accessibility Initiative (part of the W3C):

<www.w3.org/WAI/videos/standards-and-benefits>

FOUR qualities of accessible composition:

1) Perceivable

2) Operable

3) Understandable

4) Robust and reliable

First Hands-On Task: Edit *Carmen* Pages

We use <Hx> formatting and enter Alt-Text on *Professional Resources "Wiki" Page.*

Image Options ✕

File URL

https://image.freepik.com/free-ve

Alt Text ?

Cartoon Character climbing a mountain.

☐ Decorative Image

Display

Image Options

⦿ Embed Image

◯ Display Text Link (Opens in a new tab)

Size

Custom ⌄

View   Insert   Form...

⌄   Heading 4 ⌄

Stewardship - Care ab
amwork - Needs

Parks Managment: AU21 ENGLI ✕   +

https://osu.instructure.com/courses/110506/pages/parks-managment/edit   80% ☆

Mail - ASC Departmen...   W³ Schools   CNN   BBC News   Home   43215   NWS   DreamHost   jQueryAPI   » ☐ Other Bookmarks

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Parks Managment

it   View   Insert   Format   Tools   Table

Heading 4 ⌄   **B**   *I*   U   A⌄   🖊⌄   T²⌄   🔗⌄   🖼⌄   🎵⌄   📄⌄   ⌨   ⋮

- Stewardship - Care about the preservation and conservation of nature for the enjoyment and use of future generations.
- Teamwork - Needs to be able to work cohesively in a group setting.

Trending Topics within the Field

Matty Hong Becomes the 2nd Person Ever to Climb *Flex Luthor* [HR]

American climber Matty Hong made recent history after climbing the notoriously difficult route *Flex Luthor* in Rifle, Colorado this past month. The route, set by legendary climber Tommy Caldwell in 2003, has only been topped once (by Tommy Caldwell of course). That is until last week when Hong sent it (climbed the route without falling), breaking an 18 year long cold streak. Sport climbing is rated on a scale of 1 through 15, with the number 5 before each rating. Upon completion of the route, Hong proposed the route be upgraded from a 5.15a to 5.15b. If this rating is confirmed, Hong

Syllabus

Outcomes   👁

Rubrics

Quizzes   👁

Modules

Collaborations

h4 › strong   ⌨ ♿ 12   4,357 words   </> ↗ ⋮

Surface Level with a Deeper Purpose

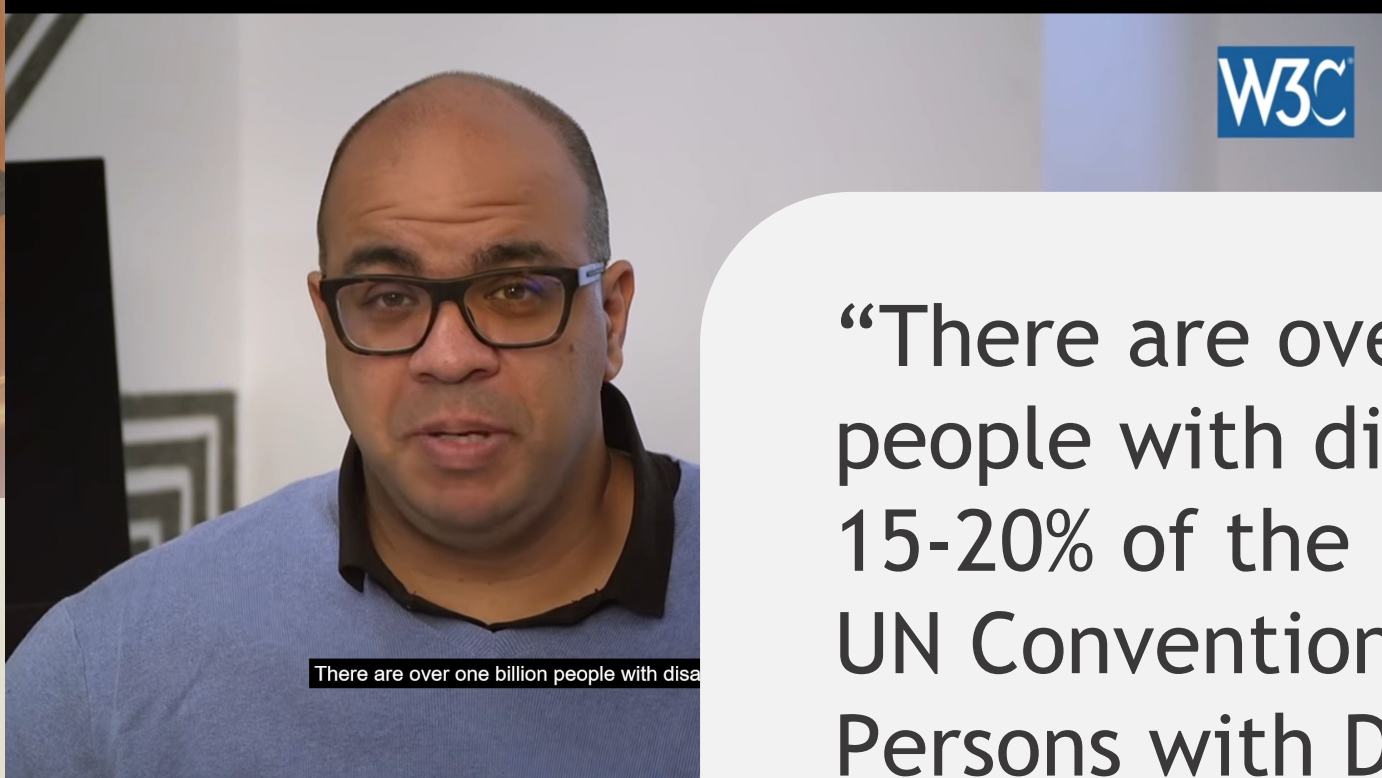"Do we really need to use the Hx-tags for *all* the headings on all our pages?"

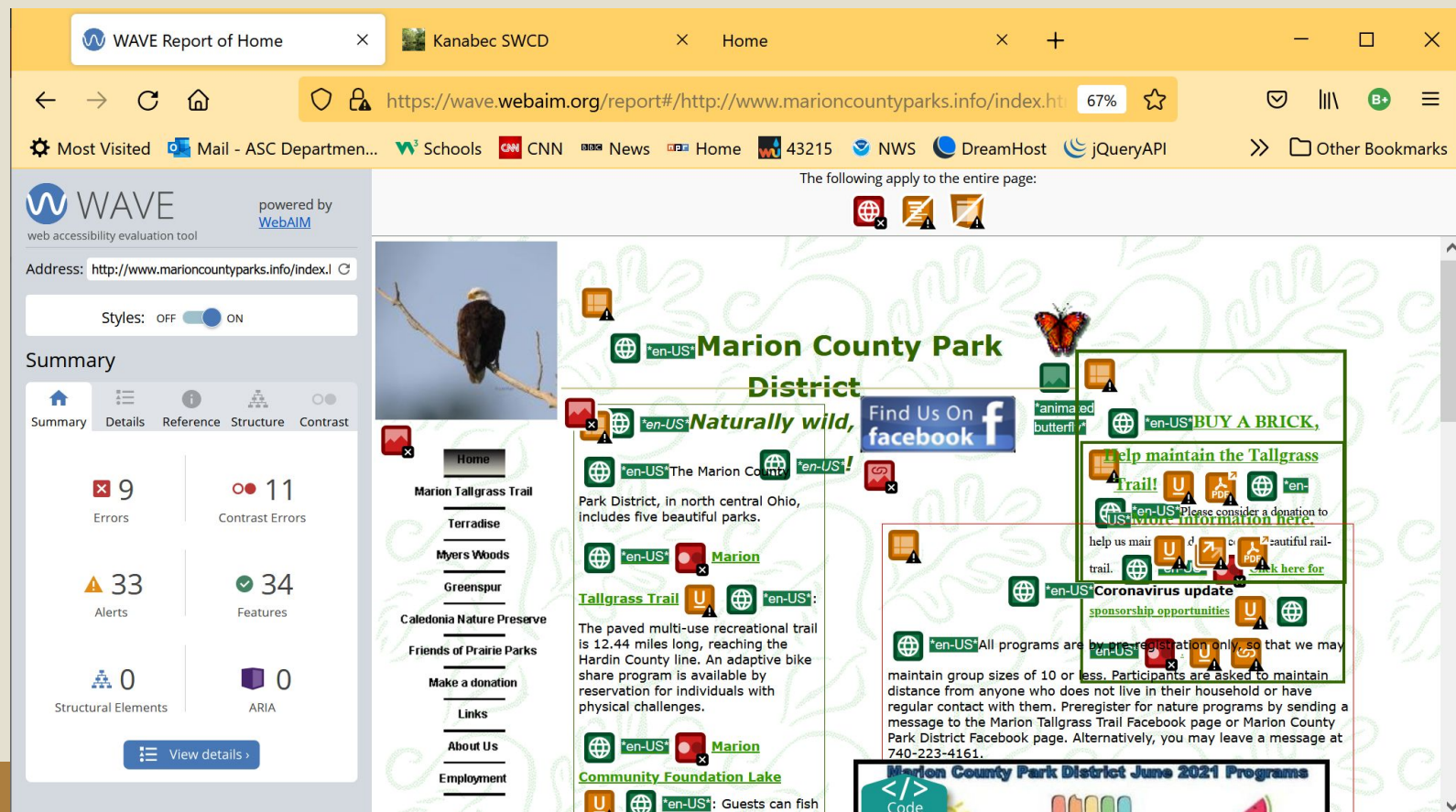—A question from an otherwise diligent student in my *ENG 3405: Organizational Websites* class

Introducing Web Accessibility: More Why

W3C

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"There are over one billion people with disabilities, or about 15-20% of the population. The UN Convention on The Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines access to information, including the Web, as a human right."

Second Hands-On Task: The *WAVE* Tool

We use the Web Accessibility Evaluation (WAVE) tool as part of website QA: <wave.webaim.org>

Third Hands-On Task: Analysis for Action

After gathering data with the *WAVE* tool, students will analyze the data and recommend action in their QA reports for their assigned websites.

Figure 7: Undescriptive Alt Text

"In Figure 7 above, the correct alt-text would read something like, "portrait of Dr. Hugh Hammond Bennett," to ensure that visually-impaired audiences understand just as fully as other audiences. Additionally, this was one of the few instances where alt-text was even included at all. Another main accessibility issue . . ." **-Quote from one group's report**

hhbennett