

Accessible Content Is Better Content: The University of Glasgow's Journey Towards Inclusivity

Anthology® Ally helped the institution achieve its accessibility and inclusion goals — and improve the student experience.



Founded in 1451, the University of Glasgow is the fourth oldest university in the English-speaking world. For the academic year 2020-2021, the university had nearly 35,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students from over 140 countries worldwide. It is also in the top 100 in the Times Higher World University Rankings 2022 and is a major employer in the city of Glasgow with more than 9,000 employees, including more than 4,800 research and teaching staff.

INSTITUTION TYPE:

FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC

LOCATION:

GLASGOW, SCOTLAND

ORGANIZATION SIZE:

26,000+

ANTHOLOGY PRODUCT:

 Anthology Ally



The Challenges

Equality and diversity are a core focus for the University of Glasgow. Students from a broad range of backgrounds study at the institution. This included James McCune Smith, the first African American to be awarded a medical degree, who graduated in 1837 and more recently had the James McCune Smith Learning Hub - a world-leading learning and teaching facility - named after him. As Andrew McConnell, Information Officer, said, "Inclusivity has always been a big part of the university, for literally hundreds of years now." The University of Glasgow has traveled many roads on this journey towards inclusivity, such as decisively responding to the 2019 Equality and Human Rights Commission report and meeting the Public Sector Bodies Accessibility Regulations 2018 which builds on the 2010 Equality Act. In 2019, Glasgow began searching for a solution that would help them respond to the Digital Accessibility Regulations requirements for alternative formats and to assist learning and teaching staff in making their content more digitally accessible.



The Solutions

The University of Glasgow found all of the features they were looking for in Anthology Ally. "It was so obvious we needed to get this tool," McConnell stated, "because it would help our academics make their content better and would allow students to easily download content in alternate formats." Alternate content formats created by Ally have been a huge success at Glasgow, with nearly 50% of their students taking advantage of them. These alternative formats are clearly extremely useful for all students, not just for those with disabilities. As a result, the University of Glasgow has improved the student experience in terms of content accessibility by 17% over the academic year 20-21.

Ally has also helped the institution change the way content is created, making it more accessible every time an instructor creates new course materials. It does this by scoring each course and then identifying any accessibility issues, providing guidance on how to fix them, and showing the reason for the best practice. Through this ongoing feedback and guidance provided by Ally, good practices are promoted among educators to mitigate accessibility barriers and to create an environment of continuously improving content. McConnell noted that "The user interface of Ally for the instructor content checking is really easy to use - and I really appreciate a good user experience!"



Insights Delivered

It's not always "no pain, no gain"

Contrary to common belief, an implementation can be very painless and as simple as plug-and-play. "Ally does not need training for people to use it," explained McConnell. "You just need to know you click on the score button and do what it recommends." A frictionless Ally implementation helped the University of Glasgow to start improving accessibility in record time. It quickly gained popularity among the colleges and schools and helped the University of Glasgow to achieve their accessibility and inclusion goals in a short amount of time. "There are 7,400 courses that are being scanned now and over 21,000 scanned last year. The actual overall accessibility scores are pretty good," McConnell shared. "We're currently sitting at 85% on average across the course content, and we've seen an increase again this year in our accessibility score. We're seeing more and more accessible content."

The use of alternative formats at the University of Glasgow is on the rise:

For the entire last academic year there were about 131,000 alternate format downloads, compared to over 92,000 since September 2021.



Andrew McConnell

Information Officer at the University of Glasgow



Epilogue

Accessibility and inclusion are — and always will be — top priorities for the University of Glasgow. According to McConnell, "We're on a journey to accessible content that hasn't entirely been about legislative compliance. It's been about making better content and improving the student experience. Accessible content is better content." To that end, Ally is the right partner on the road. "We've had such a positive experience, so just start from where you are and take the first step. It's really about starting this journey and heading towards where you need to get to," concluded McConnell.

Product highlighted in this success story:

 Anthology Ally



Learn more at anthology.com

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