

Stop Scanning and Start Downloading! Alternative Format Procedures in Higher Ed

Maine AIM Program

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Presenter

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Objectives

Participants will have knowledge of

- Laws related to the provision of materials in alternative format for postsecondary students.
- Sources of postsecondary textbooks in alternative formats.
- Suggested components of an effective acquisition process.
- Tools and strategies for supporting students with Assistive Technology (AT).

What is the Maine AIM Program?

[Follow this link to the Maine AIM Program](#)

- Formed in 2007 to implement AIM training and technical assistance across Maine.
- Administered by Maine's AT Act Project, known as the Maine CITE Coordinating Center.
- Guided by a Community of Practice that represents school administrators, special education teachers, service providers, librarians, parents, higher education disability providers, disability specialists, and the Maine Department of Education.

Alternative Format

Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) are specialized formats of curriculum materials that can be used by and with students who are unable to read or use standard print materials.

- Digital text
- Audio
- Large print
- Braille

Print Conversion

The visual presented in the webinar is of a standard print book (specifically, a page from Nathaniel Hawthorne's The House of the Seven Gables). This book can be converted to multiple specialized formats:

- The book can be scanned with optical character recognition software (OCR) and provided to a student in digital text format.
- It can be read aloud by a volunteer and saved as an audio format recording.
- It can be converted to a large print book with a text size of 18 points or greater.
- It can be converted to braille format for blind students.

[Follow this link for information about AEM and text](#)

Relevant Legislation

- Section 504 and ADA
- Chafee Amendment of 1996
- Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008
- Technology, Equality and Accessibility in College and Higher Education (TEACH) Act
- Dear Colleague Letter 2010

Chafee Amendment of 1996

[Follow this link to an article about the Chafee Amendment](#)

Allows authorized entities to reproduce and distribute previously published works in specialized formats for use by blind or other persons with disabilities.

HEOA 2008

[Follow this link to the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008](#)

The sections of the HEOA that are relevant to the provision of alternative format for students with print disabilities in higher education include Title I and Title VII. Title VII is presented first because it makes explicit references to accessible materials. Title I has implications for the provision of alternative format but its purpose is not related.

- Title VII Graduate and Postsecondary Improvement Programs
 - Part D- Programs to Provide Students with Disabilities with a Quality Higher-Ed Education
 - Subpart 3-Commission on Accessible Materials; Programs to Support Improved Access to Materials
 - Sec. 771. Definition of student with print disability 20 USC 1140k
 - ‘Student with a print disability means a student with a disability who experiences barriers to accessing instructional materials in nonspecialized formats, including an individual described in section 121(d)(2) of title 17, United States Code [the Chafee Amendment]’

- Sec. 772. Establishment of Advisory Commission on Accessible Instructional Materials in Postsecondary Education for Students with Disabilities
 - “The Commission shall conduct a comprehensive study to- (i) assess the barriers and systemic issues that may affect, and technical solutions available that may improve, the timely delivery and quality of accessible instructional materials for postsecondary students with print disabilities, as well as the effective use of such materials by faculty and staff; (ii) make recommendations related to the development of a comprehensive approach to improve the opportunities for postsecondary students with print disabilities to access instructional materials in specialized formats in a timeframe comparable to the availability of instructional materials for postsecondary non-disabled students.”
[Follow this link to the AIM Commission Report](#)
- Title I – General Provisions
 - Section 133 Textbook Information
 - Section 133 requires IHEs that receive federal funding to disclose information of required and recommended textbooks for each course listed in an institution’s course schedule used for pre-registration and registration.
 - “The purpose of this section is to ensure that students have access to affordable course materials by decreasing costs to students and enhancing transparency and disclosure with respect to selection, purchase, sale, and use of course materials.”
 - “To the maximum extent practicable, each institution of higher education receiving Federal financial assistance shall (1) disclose, on the institution’s Internet course schedule and in a manner of the institution’s choosing, the ISBN and retail price information of required and recommended college textbooks and supplemental materials for each course listed in the institution’s course schedule used for preregistration and registration purposes. If no ISBN, then author, title, publisher, and copyright date.”

The relevance of Title I of the HEOA is that the timeliness with which students receive their materials in alternative format can be effected by delays in the posting of course textbook information. Regardless of the reasons for this, Section 133 makes clear that the institution is responsible for making the information available to students at the same time that course registration opens.

TEACH Act: Technology, Equality and Accessibility in College and Higher Education Act

[Follow this link to information about the TEACH Act](#)

Directs the Access Board to develop accessibility guidelines for electronic instructional materials and related information technologies in institutions of higher education (IHEs).

In December of 2011, the AIM Commission issued a report with 18 recommendations for specific actions to be taken by Congress. The target of the recommendations is the facilitation of the incorporation of accessibility features in technologies used in postsecondary settings. The Technology, Equality and Accessibility in College and Higher Education Act (TEACH), implements the first recommendation of the AIM Commission. Jointly drafted by the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) and the Association of American Publishers (AAP), the TEACH Act directs the U.S. Access Board (Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board) to develop accessibility guidelines and the Department of Justice to adopt these guidelines as enforceable standards.

Dear Colleague Letter of 2010

In June of 2010, the Department of Justice and the Department of Education issued a joint letter to college and university presidents, reminding them that deploying technology that is inaccessible to students with disabilities is a violation of the ADA and Section 504.

[Follow this link to the website of the U.S. Department of Education to read the Dear Colleague Letter](#)

[Follow this link to the list of FAQs about the 2010 letter](#)

Accessible Educational Materials

Of course, the landscape of instructional materials used in higher education has been broadened beyond print to include digital, audio, video, and graphics. Material in these formats can be designed to be accessible when created (e.g., a video with closed captioning and audio description) or retrofitted to be accessible (e.g., a transcript created for an audio podcast). Graphics can be made accessible by including alternative text descriptions in electronic files (e.g., web pages or Word documents) or by creating alternative tactile versions.

[Follow this link for information about AEM and video](#)

[Follow this link about AEM and audio](#)

[Follow this link about AEM and graphics](#)

Steps to Providing Alternative Format of Print-Based Materials

1. Determine that the student needs materials in an alternative format.
2. Select the appropriate format(s).
3. Acquire materials in the selected format(s).
4. Support the student in the use of the material with assistive technology (AT).

Determining A Student's Need

Can the student:

- See content on a printed page (text, images, graphics, etc.)?
- Hold the material and turn its pages?
- Read the material with fluency and comprehension?

Supporting documentation will be determined by the nature of the student's disability (i.e., learning disability, physical disability, blindness/low vision).

Selecting The Right Format(s)

Similar to the determination of other accommodations, selecting the best format for a student should be an interactive process.

- What is the barrier the student is experiencing?
- Has the student used alternative formats in the past?
- Does the student learn through listening?
- Does the student need to both see and hear the text as its read aloud?

If possible, give the student an opportunity to "sample" the formats.

Acquiring Materials

Effectively providing students with alternative format materials requires patience, creativity, and perseverance. Here are the basic sources of books that can be included in an acquisition system:

- Commercial sources
- Accessible Media Producers (AMPs)
- Postsecondary network
- Publisher request

Commercial Sources of Books in Digital Text and Audio Format

Ideally, students would be able to purchase the materials they need directly from publishers. This is sometimes possible and students can be encouraged to "shop around" for their format before submitting a request to Disability Services. This promotes student independence. It's important, however, for students to understand if a digital version is going to be accessible to them, which may require your support.

A Digital Version Is Available From The Bookstore

Consider partnering with a representative from your institution's bookstore to learn about the digital book readers used by the publishers whose books they sell. Here are some strategies:

- Contact the publisher directly and ask about specific features of the ereader that opens their books.

- Search YouTube for video demonstrations of a publisher’s ereader.
- Guide the student to communicate directly with the publisher about their disability and the potential need to request a refund in the event they can’t use the digital reader.

[A Digital Version Is Available Commercially Through Amazon, CourseSmart, Audible, Etc.](#)

Online stores are often overlooked as sources of digital and audio textbooks, as well as many books that students might need to purchase for courses in the humanities. The accessibility of these books will depend on the needs of the student, thereby requiring some investigation on a case-by-case basis. Here are some tips on how to determine if a commercially available digital book will be accessible to a student.

Amazon

Kindle eBooks are screen reader and/or text to speech accessible, depending on a combination of factors (features of the book, device, app, etc.). Here are some resources that will help with navigating the multiple and varied ways that Kindle eBooks might be accessible to a student with a print disability.

[Features Available in Kindle Books: Text to Speech](#)

[Amazon: Whispersync for Voice](#)

[Amazon: Switch between reading and listening with Whispersync for Voice](#) (iPhone/iPod touch; Android Phone; Windows Phone; iPad/iPad mini; Android Tablet; Windows Tablet; Kindle Fire HDX/3rd Gen; Kindle Fire HD/2nd Gen; Kindle Fire/1st Gen; Kindle Keyboard; Kindle Touch; All Other Kindles)

[Android: Enable Talkback](#)

[Kindle for Android: Read Aloud with TalkBack](#)

[Kindle for iOS: Read Aloud with VoiceOver](#)

[How to Enable Text to Speech on iPad & iPhone for Kindle, iBooks, etc.](#)

CourseSmart

CourseSmart sells etextbooks that can be accessed on multiple devices. In addition to computers (laptop/desktop), CourseSmart has free apps for iPad/iPhone, Kindle, Android devices, Kindle Fire, Windows 8.1 tablets. CourseSmart books support AT for accessibility.

In addition to the following instructions, CourseSmart books may also be read aloud using the text-to-speech feature built into a student’s device (e.g., Speak Selection in iOS and TalkBack in Android).

[Contact CourseSmart with questions regarding a specific device](#)

[From Penn State: Using CourseSmart etextbooks with VoiceOver](#)

[From Penn State: Using CourseSmart etextbooks with Kurzweil](#)

[CourseSmart: Using Read & Write Gold 11 for Text to Speech \(Windows\)](#)

[CourseSmart: VoiceOver Instructions](#)

[General information about acquiring an accessible textbook from CourseSmart](#)

Audible

Audible, a seller of spoken audiobooks, is not a source of textbooks. Its collection, however, includes numerous titles that may be required for courses in the humanities. Audible's free app is compatible with Apple, Windows, and Android devices. Other reasons to refer students to Audible:

- To find books that may provide background knowledge on topics that may be new (e.g., history; science and technology; bios and memoirs; business; drama and poetry; health and fitness; language instruction; religion and spirituality)
- To spark an interest in reading for students for whom reading has always been unpleasurable and may not have tried audiobooks.
- Audible offers a 30-day trial membership, which includes one free book.

[Follow this link to Audible](#)

Acquiring Books from Accessible Media Producers (AMPs)

AMPs operate under the 1996 Chafee Amendment of the U.S. Copyright Law, which allows Authorized Entities to convert print materials to specialized formats for the exclusive use of individuals who have a condition that qualifies as a print disability. The accepted categories of print disability are:

- Blindness and visual impairment
- Physical disability
- Learning disability

Higher Education disability services offices are considered Authorized Entities, thereby allowing us to convert print materials to other formats. Doing the work ourselves, however, should be a last resort when AMPs are available to us. The most common AMPs are

- Bookshare for digital text
- Learning Ally for human-narrated audio recordings
- AMAC (digital text and braille)
- American Printing House for the Blind for braille and large print
- National Library Service

Bookshare

Bookshare is a popular AMP because memberships are free through federal funding. It's a good choice for students who need digital text, which can be read aloud by a device's text to speech feature.

Membership options include individual and organization. In order for students to take full advantage of Bookshare's services, as well as to promote independence, individual memberships are recommended in addition to your institution's membership.

[Follow this link to Bookshare's membership page](#)

In addition to books, Bookshare has both free and commercially available ereaders. Bookshare books are also compatible with many braille devices. Because Bookshare's books are in a specialized technical file format (DAISY), students will need a reading tool that opens Bookshare books.

[Follow this link to Bookshare's page on reading tools](#)

Bookshare offers a University Partnership program. You can become a member by sharing books you scan with other higher ed institutions. Bookshare has a specific section of its website for uploading and exchanging books.

[Follow this link to Bookshare's University Partnership program](#)

Learning Ally

Learning Ally has an impressive collection of postsecondary textbooks. Although this service is most well known for its human-narrated audio format, Learning Ally has a growing collection of "VOICetext" files, which synchronize the recorded narration with the text.

Membership is fee-based and includes individual and campus site licenses. Students can be added to your membership list. If they wish to have their own individual membership, it must be paid for separately.

Like Bookshare, Learning Ally's books are in a specialized format, which requires one of several Learning Ally ereading tools. These are provided as part of the membership fee and are available for computers (Mac and PC) and mobile devices (iOS and Android).

[Follow this link to Learning Ally](#)

AMAC Accessibility Solutions

AMAC is a full service accessibility resource, including etext, braille, captioned and described media, AT, and accessibility compliance. Several membership options are available.

[Follow this link to AMAC](#)

American Printing House for the Blind (APH)

The American Printing House for the Blind (APH) provides textbooks in hard copy braille and large print.

[Follow this link to the APH Accessible Textbooks Department](#)

National Library Service (NLS)

The NLS administers a free library program of braille and audio materials for patrons with print disabilities.

[Follow this link to the National Library Service](#)

Postsecondary Network

The AccessText Network (ATN), founded and supported by the Association of American Publishers (AAP) and higher education textbook publishers, provides digital text files from leading postsecondary textbook publishers. Membership is free for all U.S. postsecondary institutions.

[Follow this link to AccessText Network](#)

ATN's Accessible Textbook Finder (ATF) is a free service that searches multiple sources of accessible books by ISBN or title and provides the combined results with links to the source materials. ATF searches ATN, AMAC, CourseSmart, Bookshare, Learning Ally, APH, and NLS.

[Follow this link to the Accessible Textbook Finder](#)

Publisher Look-Up is another service offered by ATN. It helps disability support services professionals find publisher contacts to request electronic files of textbooks.

[Follow this link to the Publisher Look-Up Service](#)

Supporting Students with Using Alternative Format Materials

Providing students with their materials in alternative format should include support with the technology they need to access the material. Regardless of how savvy today's typical students are with using the kinds of ereaders associated with digital text and audio files, we need to ensure they have the skills necessary to successfully access and use the materials we provide to them. The AMPs referenced above provide tutorials, including video demonstrations on YouTube. Disability services staff should be familiar with the tools students will be required to use, and provide training as necessary.

Suggested Components of an Alternative Format Process

A formal process can expedite the provision of alternative formats to students. Here are some recommended components:

- A website that describes the overall procedure for requesting alternative formats, including the deadline for making requests and other student responsibilities.

- A request form available from the website.
- A student resource that explains each of the AMPs and steps for accessing books from each.
- Optional workshops for groups of students.
- Individual training for any student who prefers not to participate in a group setting.
- A search procedure for Disability Services staff that are responsible for finding books in alternative format.
- A recordkeeping system.

Key Points

The key points of this webinar were

- Federal law requires the provision of materials in alternative format for postsecondary students with print disabilities.
- Sources of postsecondary textbooks in alternative formats include commercial vendors, AMPs, ATN, and direct publisher request.
- Students need to be supported in accessing and using the digital material we provide to them.
- A formal procedure will help your office expedite the provision of alternative format materials.

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(TTY users may call Maine Relay 711)

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