

Digital and Content Accessibility at Elsevier, as of July 2025

These FAQs are intended to address author queries

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Elsevier’s approach to digital and content accessibility

What is Elsevier’s approach to ensure accessibility?

Elsevier is committed to digital accessibility and accessible design and has a long history of developing easy to use products designed around end user needs, while following industry accessibility standards such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

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| | <p>(WCAG) standards. This includes adoption of accessibility features including image descriptions, captions and transcripts for videos, accessibility metadata and accessible file formats including ePub3 and tagged PDF. We have already implemented several of these features and are in the process of implementing more across our book and journals programmes in line with international standards, guidelines and laws.</p> <p>Additionally, we follow an accessibility design process for UX, which includes user personas and tools to simulate disabilities. We test our platforms (websites and native apps) for accessibility using a variety of automated and manual testing methods.</p> <p>Our websites and native apps use accessible design systems which are comprised of accessible user interface components. We continuously improve our design systems through expert review and guidance to sustain accessible building blocks for our products and services.</p> <p>Read our Accessibility Policy, and our public statements on the European Accessibility Act (EAA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for more information.</p> |
| <p>Have Elsevier solicited feedback from individuals with disabilities to ensure they have the right approach to accessibility?</p> | <p>End user involvement has always been an integral part of Elsevier’s approach to accessibility. We conducted our first end user accessibility research with the blind community in 2001, and we continue to include people in the disability community in our design and testing of products. We continue to validate new accessibility features, such as alt-text, with our end users to ensure that they are meeting the purposes for which they are designed.</p> <p>Part of our accessibility policy is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continually test and incorporate product feedback, supported by an extensive collaboration network including industry experts and people with disabilities - Partner with external agencies, industry experts, users with disabilities and others to enhance and share our accessibility insights and capability. |

Regulatory compliance and industry standards – EAA, ADA, WCAG

What is the EAA and what is Elsevier doing to be compliant?

The **European Accessibility Act (EAA)** is a landmark EU directive aimed at improving accessibility for products and services, setting requirements for some everyday products and services to be accessible to people with disabilities. Key for Elsevier: it specifically includes **e-books** and **e-commerce services** (any website or app through which a consumer purchase may be made). Companies providing these in the EU must ensure they meet specific accessibility requirements (essentially based on WCAG principles) from **June 28, 2025**.

Elsevier has made significant efforts to enhance the accessibility of our content and our products in order for our frontlist content to meet the requirements set forth in the European Accessibility Act (EAA). For frontlist content, we ensure that the following accessibility features are included:

- Alternative text image descriptions.
- Captions and transcripts for videos. Where a video has no sound, there will also be audio descriptions.
- Metadata highlighting the accessibility features included in each book or journal article.
- Accessible formats including ePub, PDF and HTML for books, and PDF and HTML for journals.
- Colour contrast that meets the WCAG 2.1 AA standards of ratio 4.5 to 1.

In addition to focusing on our newly published content, we will also be adding accessibility features to many of our previously published books and we expect to roll out a durable backlist solution by the end of 2025. We will take a phased approach to this, starting with our most recent and most used books in 2025. We also plan to roll out an ‘on request’ service for other backlist books content.

Elsevier has published our commitment and approach in a statement on the EAA: <https://www.elsevier.com/about/accessibility/ea-statement>.

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| <p>What is the ADA and what is Elsevier doing to be compliant?</p> | <p>The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a US civil rights law prohibiting discrimination based on disability. While it predates the modern web, courts and the Department of Justice (DOJ) have consistently interpreted it to apply to websites and digital resources under Title II (for state and local governments, including public universities and healthcare) and Title III (for public accommodations, including private universities and businesses). The DOJ in April 2024 issued a formal rule under Title II, explicitly requiring web and mobile app accessibility (WCAG 2.1 AA) for public entities, with deadlines starting April 24, 2026. This significantly increases the compliance requirements on many of our core US customers, especially public institutions of higher education.</p> <p>The scope of Americans with Disabilities Act Title II Update includes all web content – including journals – which differentiates it from the European Accessibility Act, which specifically specifies eBooks and eCommerce solutions.</p> <p>Elsevier has published our commitment and approach in a statement on the ADA Title II Rule: https://www.elsevier.com/about/accessibility/ada-statement.</p> |
| <p>Does Elsevier follow WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines)?</p> | <p>WCAG, developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) – the main international standards organization for the Internet, is the globally recognized benchmark for web accessibility. It defines a set of success criteria that digital products and websites have to meet in order to be considered accessible. It has three conformance levels: A, AA, and AAA. Level AA is the most common target referenced in legislation and institutional policies worldwide. Elsevier currently targets WCAG 2.1 Level AA for our products.</p> <p>WCAG 2.2 is the latest version, published in late 2023, extending 2.1 with several new success criteria. Several Elsevier products have been assessed against WCAG 2.2.</p> <p>Our accessibility policy specifies our aim to comply with WCAG 2.1AA for all products.</p> |

Compliance documentation – ACR and VPATs

How do we ascertain product accessibility?

Our primary method for documenting accessibility conformance for each product is the **Accessibility Conformance Report (ACR)**. This report is based on the **Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT®)** – a standard template created by the Information Technology Industry Council (ITI) that helps organizations and users assess the accessibility of a product or service.

The VPAT is completed by vendors. (The terms “ACR” or “VPAT” are often used interchangeably.)

The ACR details how a specific product measures up against accessibility standards (i.e. WCAG 2.1) and accessibility-related features such as its support for assistive technology. It provides transparency about the level of conformance and any known issues. Elsevier’s Digital Accessibility Team evaluates products impartially to produce accurate and trustworthy VPATs, utilizing a combination of manual and automated methods to conduct comprehensive testing.

ACR Directory: <https://www.elsevier.com/about/accessibility/acr> (centralized repository for product accessibility documentation)

How can a librarian or institutional customer request a VPAT?

First check to see if an ACR is available on our **ACR Directory**: <https://www.elsevier.com/about/accessibility/acr>

Librarians or institutional customers can request a Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) from Elsevier by contacting them directly through their accessibility support email at accessibility@elsevier.com

Author responsibility

What responsibilities will authors have regarding alt-text, and what will be done by Elsevier?

Elsevier uses Generative AI technology to generate the draft alt text for new books, which is then checked, finalized and approved by a subject matter expert before being included in the content. For new titles or new editions, authors are offered the option to review the alt text as part of their regular proofing process for new books.

We are currently finalising our approach to producing alt-text for our journal content.

Do submission platforms include tools to enable and encourage the creation of accessible content?

For platforms where users contribute content (such as Elsa, EMSS, and Editorial Manager), we aim to provide tools that facilitate the creation of accessible content, aligning with principles from WCAG. Publishers, Book Project Managers, Content Project Managers, Content Development staff for books, Digital Media Producers, Journal Managers and Customer Support teams will be able to advise further on the responsibilities of authors during the submission stages.

What is the procedure if an author declines to review the alt text provided?

Authors are not obliged to review alt text, but for new books going forward, we offer them the option. If there is no input from an author on the alt text, it will be published as per the publication schedule.

Can an author request additional time to review the alt text?

The alt text process is designed not to add additional time to the publication schedule. As with all other matters of scheduling, the book PM or journal manager will maintain the overall schedule and publication date and will liaise with the author accordingly.

Content accessibility features

Alternative text (alt text)

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| How does alternative text work? | Alternative text (alt text), accessed in the epub format of the book, provides a detailed description of the images in a text. The alt text description becomes part of the image attributes, and is separate to an image caption. Sometimes there is both a short and long version of the alt text available, for example where there is a very detailed or complex image. The alt text is exposed to and read by a screen reader (an accessibility tool widely available to all users) and the screen reader will read the short version of the alt text for each image. The user will also have the option to listen to the longer version of the alt text, where it is available. |
| How is alt text generated and how are authors involved in this process? | <p>Elsevier uses Generative AI technology to generate the draft alt text for new books, which is then checked, finalized and approved by a subject matter expert before being included in the content. For new titles or new editions, authors are offered the option to review the alt text as part of their regular proofing process for new books. Read about Elsevier's Responsible AI Principles here.</p> <p>We are currently finalising our approach to producing alt-text for our journal content.</p> |
| What is the process for correcting alt-text/captioning, etc. post-publication | If corrections to alt-text (or other accessibility features such as captions etc.) are needed post publication, this will be handled via the regular resupply workflow, just as any other content related corrections are handled. The author or reader should contact the Elsevier Corrections (ELS) team at: elseviercorrections@elsevier.com which is responsible for handling all post-publication corrections. |

Tagged PDFs

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| What is PDF tagging and how does it help users? | A tagged PDF is a PDF document that has been organized and labelled with metadata, such as information about the document's structure, such as headings, paragraphs, lists, |
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| | <p>tables and also alt-text. By tagging our book and journal PDFs, we enable individuals using screen readers to efficiently navigate and read our PDFs, ensuring they have the same access to information as everyone else.</p> <p>Specialist screen reading accessibility software uses the tagging information to read content in the correct way. For example, where there is a two-column design, without tagging a screen reader would read straight across the two columns of the page and the article would make no sense to the reader; tagging ensures the content is read in the correct order (first one column, then the next).</p> |
| EPUBs | |
| What is EPUB and how does it help users? | <p>EPUB files are the most accessible digital format and designed for readability on various devices. These files offer adjustable text size and layouts, the ability to reflow (adapt) to different screen sizes, and smaller file sizes for faster downloads and efficient data usage. Accessible EPUBs will benefit all users, especially those with visual impairments, by providing a more adaptable and efficient reading experience, and further enhance the accessibility and customer experience of our digital content.</p> <p>Our books are published in the latest ePub3 format and conform to ePub accessibility specifications 1.1.</p> |
| Video Accessibility | |
| What are we doing to make video content accessible to all users, including those with visual impairments? | <p>To help make video content is accessible to all individuals, we are implementing a range of media alternatives beyond closed captions and transcripts. For video where content is only displayed visually, since there is no speech track to create closed captioning, we are adding text descriptions which detail what is visually represented in the video, so the information gained from reading the text description is on par with watching the video.</p> |
| Have Elsevier provided transcripts or captions for multimedia content such as videos to make them accessible to individuals with hearing impairments? | <p>Elsevier has provided captions and transcripts for a significant amount of our video content and will continue to create and deliver quality captions and transcripts for video in new books going forward.</p> |

Accessibility for other functional needs

For those with neurodiversity, and dyslexia, are print formats being made accessible (fonts, text density, colors, spacing, etc.)?

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1 AA), which we target, are designed to address a wide spectrum of functional needs and conforming to WCAG supports greater flexibility in applying user preferences and ensure compatibility with assistive technology. For example, criteria ensuring logical reading order and clear structure help both screen reader users *and* users with certain cognitive or reading disabilities like dyslexia. The product's ACR (see above) will document conformance against the entire diverse set of WCAG criteria.

Is Elsevier pursuing audiobooks (other than the “read to me” function in the VST eBook player)?

We are not currently pursuing audiobooks at this time.