



Book Review: The ADA Book

BOOK REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

“The ADA Book” by Kris Rivenburgh is a clear, concise explanation of applicable Americans with Disabilities Act laws, its connection to the World Wide Web Consortium’s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, and a thoughtful analysis of U.S. Department of Justice litigation and resolutions on website accessibility. This book is relevant for web developers, designers, digital content creators, faculty, instructional designers, legal professionals, and individuals responsible for producing accessible digital content. This book provides readers with up-to-date recommendations to address existing digital accessibility issues, ensuring readiness to address future obstacles and proactively prevent legal disputes. This book review summarizes the “The ADA Book” content, structure, and contribution to providing actionable digital accessibility recommendations.

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“The ADA Book” by Kris Rivenburgh is a clear, concise explanation of applicable Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) laws and a thoughtful analysis of the U.S. Department of Justice litigation and resolutions on website accessibility. This book provides readers with up-to-date recommendations to address existing digital accessibility issues, ensuring readiness to address future obstacles and proactively prevent legal disputes. As an author, attorney, and the founder of [accessible.org](https://www.accessible.org), Kris Rivenburgh is a credible source who has authored several guides and articles on digital accessibility.

This book is relevant for web developers, designers, digital content creators, faculty, instructional designers, legal professionals, and individuals responsible for producing accessible digital content. Content creators include individuals creating content in digital spaces such as distance education and e-learning. Getting started with digital accessibility can be daunting, but this book makes the process easier to understand. The language and duties associated with ADA compliance can seem complicated, making the basics of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1) conformance appear challenging to implement, with expertise limited to digital accessibility experts. Rivenburgh explains that meeting ADA compliance does not necessarily equate to total WCAG 2.1 AA conformance.

Digital accessibility ensures that people have meaningful access to websites and digital content. Rivenburgh provides a brief but comprehensive overview of the Americans with Disabilities Act, relevant laws and amendments, and examples of previous Department of Justice (DOJ) enforcement actions and settlement terms. By analyzing recent DOJ settlement agreements from Rite-Aid, Hy-Vee, Kroger, and Meijer and comparing them to earlier settlements with QuikTrip, Commentary, H&R Block, and Peapod, Rivenburgh provides actionable guidance based on what the DOJ has previously required from litigants, which generally starts with posting a website accessibility statement page. This review summarizes the book’s content, structure, and contribution to providing actionable digital accessibility recommendations.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

“The Ada Book” simplifies complex topics using plain language to clarify ambiguities surrounding the ADA and digital accessibility. Upon opening the book, the reader will be pleased to see the book is broken into blocks of quickly consumable information and published in large print. Combining these two factors makes the book’s information easy to read, consume, walk away from, and return to reading without losing key concepts and ideas. Practical examples make the standards and guidelines understandable to a broad audience, from digital accessibility novices to experienced professionals.

The preface begins with the simple notion that ADA compliance encapsulates three tasks: making websites, mobile applications, or learning management systems WCAG 2.1 AA conformant, posting a web accessibility statement, and providing contact information so people can quickly contact entities to request accessibility support. As of this book’s publication, no law definitively says digital accessibility is required, nor does it provide a detailed checklist of compliance measures. However, the Revised Section 508 Standards include WCAG 2.1 AA conformance. Rivenburgh recommends best practices for creating accessible digital assets based on the requirements outlined in DOJ settlement terms.

The book begins with an overview of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), which are technical standards for web accessibility that web developers, designers, and content authors follow. The next topic describes different types of disabilities. Then, it provides a history of the Americans with Disabilities Act and its efforts to formalize digital accessibility regulations into the ADA. The author explores the role of the DOJ, private enforcement actions, and previous settlements to find similarities in DOJ guidance imposed on entities that are open to the public. Places open to the public are also called places of public accommodation. In the compliance versus conforming section, the author clarifies the difference between being ADA compliant and conforming to WCAG standards, reiterating that WCAG is a global standard, not a legal one.

There is a concise explanation of court decisions and how the federal and state court systems are structured, a recap of Titles I, II, and III of the ADA, which apply to the workplace, state and local government, and places of public accommodation, respectively. Additionally, it describes the applicability of Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which are commonly

referenced sections applied to digital accessibility. The Revised Section 508 standards for electronic content refer to WCAG 2.1 AA as recommended conformance standards.

For anyone considering accessibility overlays, the reader will dismiss that idea after reading the author's reasons why overlays do not make websites and web applications accessible. Overlays mask accessibility issues and may provide an unfamiliar experience for readers attempting to use them to access the website. There are no shortcuts to digital accessibility, and through systematic steps of working through the requirements listed in DOJ settlements, entities can implement digital accessibility to improve user experience, achieve compliance, and avoid litigation.

OVERALL IMPRESSION AND RELEVANCE TO THE FIELD

In short, after reading this book, following and implementing the accessibility recommendations provided by the author is an excellent start to ADA compliance and a deterrent to opportunistic plaintiffs and lawsuits. Distance education and e-learning take place in a digital space, making the provisions in this book relevant to individuals working in this field. A strength of this book is its alignment with the changing landscape of ADA laws and evolving conformance guidelines of WCAG 2.1 AA that apply to digital accessibility. The dynamic nature of applicable law and accessibility standards emphasize the need for a continuous improvement cycle of keeping abreast of recent ADA developments to ensure current and future compliance.

This reviewer wishes they had read this book in 2018 when starting their digital accessibility journey. "The Ada Book" by Kris Rivenburgh is a must-read for individuals responsible for ensuring digital accessibility. It is a simple, concise resource that makes it easy to grasp complex topics before moving on to the nuts and bolts of executing digital accessibility.

DATA ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analysed during the current study.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTIONS (CRediT)

Adrienne Curley: Writing – original draft, writing—review and editing. The author has read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

This paper was reviewed and refined with the assistance of Grammarly, complementing the human editorial process. Grammarly is a browser plugin that calls attention to possible tone, grammar, spelling, tense, wordiness, punctuation, and APA issues. It is not always accurate so suggestions must be evaluated

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