

Purdue University Calumet

Purdue University Calumet Improves and Documents Web Accessibility with HiSoftware Compliance Sheriff®

PURDUE UNIVERSITY CALUMET

Quick Facts

Organization

- Purdue University Calumet is an academically comprehensive regional university and part of the internationally respected Purdue University system.

Industry

- Higher Education

Challenges

- Automate the manual procedure of ensuring Web accessibility across all of their online content.

Solution

- HiSoftware Compliance Sheriff®

Benefits

- Automated compliance validation for websites, multi-media, learning management systems, online documents, software and applications.
- Able to easily:
 - Benchmark compliance against policy guidelines;
 - Prioritize issues for remediation;
 - Document evidence of these efforts.
- See measureable improvement in the accessibility of online content.

Background

Located in Hammond, Indiana, near downtown Chicago, Purdue Calumet is an academically comprehensive regional university and part of the internationally respected Purdue University system.

As part of the university's equal access, equal opportunity policy, Purdue University formally adopted its Web accessibility policy, covering the main campus and all of the satellites, including Purdue Calumet, in March 2010. Based on the Section 508 standard, the Web accessibility policy applies to websites, multi-media, learning management systems, documents delivered online, software and applications. Outlined within the policy are the Web accessibility guidelines, goals and a deadline to achieve 100% compliance by March 15, 2014. To reach its compliance objectives, Purdue Calumet required a comprehensive, automated compliance solution.



The Challenge

Purdue University Calumet benefits from a centralized Web administration, with University Relations responsible for the design, look-and-feel, navigational philosophy, functionality and oversight of the content on each site. University Relations works with every department and office to develop and customize their content.

To serve over 10,000 students annually, the Purdue Calumet campus' online presence includes over 200 WordPress sites with more than 300 content editors. Access to a site is granted on request, with the requirement that editors meet with the University Relations team to learn how to use WordPress and how to comply with the Web accessibility policy guidelines. Content contributors are determined by each department and have varying skillsets; some are clerical staff, some more specialized and others student workers.

Pamela Riesmeyer, Web Accessibility Coordinator for Purdue Calumet said, "With the many content contributors such as professors, TAs, Web developers, etc. adding to our Web site, we were challenged with finding a way to educate them about our Web accessibility policy, to monitor their work for compliance, and to remediate thousands of existing Web pages alongside new issues. All while documenting the process."

"The manual procedure to ensure Web accessibility across all of our online content was too lengthy. Initially we began by manually evaluating websites for accessibility. We would then meet with content editors to explain what was wrong, why it was an issue and how to fix the problems. We used a worksheet for each page that we reviewed, in order to document compliance based on the Section 508 checkpoints. Initially, we provided these worksheets to the editors, but they were overwhelmed. We then created a summary document to point out problem areas, but that also was overwhelming to our editors. The process took too long and wasn't helpful for the editors because they didn't always understand the problems or how to fix them."

As a result, Purdue Calumet chose to look for a comprehensive, automated compliance solution for auditing and reporting against its Web accessibility goals.

Requirements

The University outlined a number of key requirements central to the automated Web compliance solution. Riesmeyer continued, "We needed an easy to understand interface that was not intimidating or overly technical so it could be adopted with a minimal learning curve. We also wanted to provide a solution that would explain the accessibility violation to the content editor and show them how to remediate it. This would help us to improve Web accessibility over time."

To that point, the solution would need to document Web accessibility progress by tracking each site, comparing it against others and reporting on it.

Finding the Right Solution

In fall 2011, Riesmeyer's team began researching automated Web accessibility solutions. After

speaking with a number of other schools and investigating solutions through online demos, HiSoftware Compliance Sheriff was shortlisted amongst a number of other vendors. Following research of each solution that included information about effectiveness, ease of use and price point, the university attended demonstrations of two options. As a result, Compliance Sheriff was selected because of its capabilities, pricing model and the outstanding support Cryptzone offered.

Compliance Sheriff scans web properties and documents against more than 172 accessibility checks such as images, forms, and dynamic content interactions, plus 17 Alt text quality checks. Both structured and unstructured content is verified for accessibility – webinars, university videos, multi-media presentations; all of it is covered. It provides automated reporting to determine whether the information on any Web property complies with internal university Web accessibility policies alongside Section 508, and WCAG 1.0 and 2.0 standards.

Deployment, Training and Adoption

After purchasing the product in March 2012, the Purdue Calumet Web accessibility team worked with Cryptzone's support team to install Compliance Sheriff. The software was up and running in only a few hours. "Our Web server administrator had Compliance Sheriff installed and in test mode before our kick-off call," said Riesmeyer.

"We were able to use Compliance Sheriff immediately, but we decided to take our time introducing it to our editors. We knew they would be intrigued by it and we could then take the opportunity to meet with them about Web accessibility, using the software as an incentive."

The University Relations team was responsible for defining which scans and checkpoints would be used to validate content in line with the university's Web accessibility policies. To maintain control and consistency over the checkpoints used to validate all online content, the campus' content editors would be able to look at, but not change the checkpoints and scan settings.

Purdue Calumet's accessibility team initially employed the default settings to scan each

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Pamela Riesmeyer
Web Accessibility Coordinator
for Purdue Calumet

website for compliance. With the assistance of the Cryptzone support team, customized checkpoints and scan setting were created to align with the school's terminology. For example, one requirement of their Web accessibility policy is to provide links to free viewers like Acrobat Reader on each page which includes a downloadable document. After customizing the Compliance Sheriff checkpoint, the team could scan for both Adobe Reader and Word viewer verbiage and links throughout its web content.

As part of the roll-out, Cryptzone provided one-on-one training as well as group sessions. Riesmeyer said, "These sessions educated the University Relations team on how the software works to ensure we were getting the most out of it. Cryptzone provided valuable insight into how to use the software and ways to customize the checkpoints and reports to fit our needs. The Cryptzone team helped and supported us throughout the deployment, training and adoption process."

Benefits of HiSoftware Compliance Sheriff

Compliance Sheriff now automates Web accessibility compliance across the Purdue Calumet campus' websites, multi-media, learning management systems, and online documents and applications. The benefits include being able to benchmark compliance against policy guidelines, prioritize issues for remediation, as well as document these efforts.

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Manual evaluations are still part of the validation process, but the Purdue Calumet team uses Compliance Sheriff to better determine the sites most in need of remediation. "Doing this helps us establish priorities to focus our efforts. It not only saves my team time and resources, but also

allows content contributors to solve their own Web accessibility issues."

Compliance Sheriff has also played a big role in helping content editors understand and fix Web accessibility issues on their sites. They simply click on a scan result link to see the page and exact location of the error, as well as information on how to fix it. Riesmeyer said, "It helps to take the sting out of the critique. Editors now take immediate corrective action and accessibility scores are increasing dramatically – sometimes overnight."

The competitive spirit is sparking content editors and site owners to compare their Compliance Sheriff "Scorecard" against others all vowing to do better.

As a result of their efforts to clearly define their Web accessibility strategy, research the solutions available to help and implement a solution to automate the compliance process, Purdue Calumet now has a proactive solution that has become part of their institutional culture of Web accessibility. The end result is an online environment that promotes openness in learning.

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