Accessibility of Open Access Books

	PDF	EPUB
Grade A	0.5%	13%
Grade B	71%	20%
Grade C		38%
Grade D	25%	28%
Grade F	2%	1%

Easy fix?

Can we improve the description of pictures, using the AI tool Claude? We tested this for 100 random images from books of the OAPEN collection. Where the publisher has made an effort to supply alt-text, they did better than the AI. The AI gets confused by characters and icons, which might be improved by changing the prompt. Ironically, AI works best for complex images.

Alt-text: Dos and don'ts

DO
- use an empty string for purely decorative images.
- when an image is meant to convey an action, try to use a single word: download" or "email".
- be concise.
- remember that the purpose of a cover image is to intrigue a reader.
- use the language of the text for the alt-text
- think about what an image is meant to convey

DON'T
- use text like "image" or "figure 22" in alt-text. That's just taunting a blind reader.
- use the file name for alt text
- repeat what is already in a caption.
- describe details that are irrelevant to the narrative.
- describe logos. Just identify them.
- make up shit

How did we grade?

EPUB accessibility grades (1157 books):
- A (156 books) These EPUB3 files had useful alt-text and accessibility data.
- B (226 books) These EPUB3 books had accessibility data but no useful alt-text.
- C (443 books) These EPUB3 files need accessibility mitigation.
- D (329 books) These EPUB2 files will be hard to upgrade for accessibility.
- F (13 books) These books failed to download as EPUB files.

PDF accessibility grades (based on 1000 randomly sampled books):
- A (5 books): These PDFs comply with WCAG-1 and PDF-UA accessibility requirements.
- B or C (714 books): These PDFs comply with WCAG-1 requirements but fail PDF-UA accessibility requirements.
- D (251 books): These PDF fail all requirements tested.
- F (20 books): The PDFs could not be opened. (Either too big or not valid PDF)

Focus on: Alt-text

Image	Publisher Alt-Text	AI Alt-Text
	"img10.png"	"The image shows a close-up view of a grey wolf standing in a grassy field. The wolf has thick grey fur, pointed ears, and is looking directly at the camera with its golden eyes. A shallow depth of field keeps the background blurred while the wolf's face is in sharp focus."
	" "	"The black and white image shows a Burger King restaurant storefront. Standing in front of the restaurant are two young children, an older girl in a long dress holding a younger girl's hand. The Burger King logo is prominently displayed on a large round sign above the entrance."
僅夜處	"image"	"Three Chinese characters written in calligraphy style using black ink on white background."
	"FIGURE 30. Advertisement for Vendome—promoted for its address, 6666 Sunset Blvd., and its proximity to the Writers Club—in the trade paper published by Vendome's owner, W. R. Wilkerson. Source: "6666 Sunset Blvd." [Advertisement], Hollywood Reporter, April 24, 1933, https://lantern.mediahist.org/catalog/hollywoodreporter1215wilk_0692."	"The image is a vintage-style map showing the location of Sunset Boulevard and Highland Avenue in Los Angeles. It mentions "The World's Fair opens soon in Chicago, 6666 Sunset opens soon in Hollywood!" The address 6666 Sunset Blvd is highlighted, along with text promoting a new business opening there called "Hi-De-Ho!" The map uses a fun, retro graphic design style with bold lines and shapes."
	"Graph depicting the gap in total outgoing requests and transfers"	"The line graph shows the total outgoing requests and outgoing transfers over time from 2004 to 2016. Both metrics have increased exponentially, with total outgoing requests growing from around 20,000 in 2004 to over 120,000 in 2016, while outgoing transfers rose from nearly 0 to about 20,000 during the same period."
GHF GEISS HSU FOUNDATION	"The Geiss Hsu Foundation logo."	"The image shows a simple line drawing of the letters "G", "H" and "F" overlapping each other, with the text "GEISS HSU FOUNDATION" below it."
	"Back Cover: A Passion to Preserve: Gay Men as Keepers of Culture, by Will Fellows (profile picture at bottom left). (Top) Gay and Lesbian Interest/History/Architecture/Historic Preservation. Lambda Literary Award Finalist. Quotes by The Advocate, Library Journal, Richard Florida (author of The Rise of the Creative Class), Bay Windows. The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, Wisconsin www.wisc.edu/wisconsinpress. Cover design: Ann Weinstock. Author Photo: Ellen Cook. (Bottom right) ISBN-13: 978-0-299-19684-4, ISBN-10: 0-299-19684-4. Barcode Numbers 9780299196844, and 52695."	"The image shows the back cover of a book titled "Farm Boys" by Will Fellows, which was a finalist for the Lambda Literary Award in 1997. The book explores the lives of gay men who grew up in rural communities across the United States, providing early and contemporary preservationist accounts that highlight their contributions to the larger culture. The cover features a photo of the author, a bald man with glasses smiling at the camera."
	" "	"L'image montre un gros plan en noir et blanc d'un cheval. La tête et le cou du cheval sont visibles, avec l'œil, les naseaux et la crinière bien détaillés. L'image est centrée sur l'œil expressif du cheval, qui regarde directement la caméra. Le contraste élevé entre les zones claires et sombres crée une atmosphère dramatique et saisissante."
	"cover"	"The image shows the cover of a book titled "Fields of Gold: Financing the Global Land Rush" by Madeleine Fairbairn. The title text is in white on a wooden background with small nails scattered across the surface."
村民小相	"image"	"The image shows the Chinese characters "村民小相" written in a traditional Chinese calligraphic style with black ink on a plain background."
	"cover"	"The image shows the cover of a book titled "Signature Pieces: On the Institution of Authorship" written by Peggy Kamuf. The title and author's name are printed in white text on a dark green background, with a red vertical stripe on the right side of the cover."
	"images"	"The image shows handwritten Arabic text on a weathered sheet of paper. The text is written in black ink and appears to be a poem or piece of prose. The paper has a rough, textured appearance with some stains or discoloration. A small circular stamp or seal is visible in the upper right corner of the page."
	"Screenshot of an iOS workflow to append clipboard text"	"The image shows an iOS Shortcuts workflow with the following actions: 1. Get Clipboard: Retrieves content from the clipboard 2. Text: Allows entering or manipulating text 3. Clipboard: Sets the workflow's output to the clipboard 4. Copy to Clipboard: Copies the workflow's output to the device's clipboard with an expiration time of 3 PM the same day The workflow seems designed to retrieve content, possibly modify it as text, and copy the result to the clipboard, optionally with an expiration time."
本土人	"image"	"The image shows two Chinese characters printed in a black serif font on a white background."

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